

The Fall 272

Chapter 272: Corpsebloom Mantra

Zac panted as he popped a healing pill while looking at the surroundings. The large fortress largely lay in ruins, and much of it was his own handiwork. The battle between himself and the Incursion leader had caused widespread destruction, especially due to the stone-thaumaturgy of the rockman.

He bent over and snatched the cosmic sack of his opponent, but he didn't join the efforts to drive the remaining rockmen toward their nexus hub. This time there were no quests rewarded or titles, just pure battle between two forces. The blitz of himself and Ogras had broken the defensive perimeter in a furious assault, and in just seconds a large part of the elite defenders was dead or dying from either his fractal blades or innumerable stabs of shadowy spears.

When the defensive line was broken Ilvere had commanded the Demons and the Valkyries forward, and Zac was shocked by their improvement. Of course, Ilvere was doing the work of ten men, though most of his efforts were spent on making sure his soldiers stayed alive.

Any time a skirmish seemed to go awry his huge metal ball flew over with the force of a truck, instantly swinging the battle in their favor. There were a few strong rockmen who had tried to do the same, but they were met by insidious attacks from Ogras.

As for the leader, Zac took care of him. He had been quite powerful, but Zac got the sense that even Ogras would have been able to defeat him in a one-on-one. Then again the demon fought without any restrictions, while the power of the Incursion leader was still limited by the System's restrictions. But Ogras kept showing new cards, and even Ilvere seemed surprised by the power of Ogras.

Zac finally learned what hid beneath that mold on his stump. It was like he had crammed thousands of shadows and forced them into the shape of his missing arm. But the arm was also able to change shape according to his will. It was very strong, but it was also clear that Ogras lacked proper control of it, and it started to fall apart after a short while in the open.

Zac hadn't even needed to go all out in his battle, and he was in much better condition after this fight compared to after his battle with Nenotheop. But unfortunately, the battle didn't give him a level, and he realized that he would need to fight quite a few people to reach the two final levels before he reached his bottleneck. He had gained the past eight levels thanks to the rewards of the hunt, and the amount of energy that was required to reach level 74 shocked him.

The moment he killed the rockman leader the rest of the soldiers immediately initiated an organized retreat through their Nexus Hub. The hub was located inside the battle, and the support staff of their incursion immediately entered while the soldiers kept Zac's forces at bay.

Of course, he didn't push the matter. There was no way for them to kill all of the rockmen before they managed to flee, so their force definitely would get a report of what transpired here. There was no need to go on a widespread rampage at this juncture, causing unnecessary enmities in the multiverse.

For the rockmen this was likely just business. They wanted access to resources and Origin Dao, and they were willing to risk their lives for it. That they would be ousted was always a real risk, and no one

would waste their resources on finding Earth again. But it might be different if Zac caused a vendetta with them.

So the soldiers were mostly pushing the forces toward the Nexus Hub, killing anyone who tried to act out. In just 15 minutes no living rockmen were remaining in the fortress, at least not that they could find.

Interestingly enough, the moment the last rockman disappeared Zac got a prompt from the system.

[Annex RCKV-4433?]

Zac hesitated a bit about what to do before he agreed.

[Appoint Mayor?]

Zac frowned a bit before he hurried over to Ogras who looked a bit pale as he cradled the form that contained his weird shadow-hand.

"You ok?" Zac asked as he looked down at the slightly pale demon.

"Just field testing. It drains more energy than I expected. What's wrong?"

"I annexed this place. Can I elect a Mayor at a later time?" Zac asked.

"Not sure, but I don't see why not?" muttered with some uncertainty. "What do you want with this shithole?"

"It's time to build a presence on the main continent. It's good to have alternatives if our efforts at the coast doesn't work out," Zac said.

"Fair enough, it would be nice to not have to rely on some random strangers to move about the continent. Besides, Nexus Hubs are strategic resources that are worth a lot," the demon agreed.

Zac nodded and opened the town shop. Most of the options he had available at his main town were available here as well, though it was clear that his population in Port Awood did not count here toward structures that had building restrictions.

He quickly bought a new defensive array and a teleportation array, creating a defensible position for his soldiers.

"We'll leave a few people here until Adran can send someone over to sort things out," Zac said.

"I think the golems chose this place for a reason. Perhaps there are good things in the mountain," Ogras said as he looked over at the towering peaks right behind the fortress where they'd fought.

Zac nodded as he stepped through the teleporter, arriving back at Port Atwood. He didn't have time to make the arrangements for the new outpost, and he left that for others to figure out. Instead, he headed over to The Thayer Consortia, and in minutes the Sky Gnomes were back at his courtyard full of energy.

"Your language crystals," Calrin said and handed over a box. "The Undead Empire has five official languages. I could not get all of them though. The fifth one is apparently only used by the higher-ups, and it's not for sale."

Zac nodded in thanks as he opened the box. Four black crystals lay inside, each one with a different insignia engraved. Zac picked up the first one and placed it against his head, and the next moment it was filled with a burst of information. The transfer continued for a few minutes until the crystal finally cracked and turned to black dust.

The crystals were unfortunately one-time use, but that made them much cheaper than the type of crystals that could be used repeatedly after allowing them to restore their energies. Zac was a bit woozy by the mental shock, but he kept going and soon he had absorbed the information of all four languages.

He knew he was pushing it by doing so. Absorbing this much knowledge with his very limited Intelligence could hurt his brain, but he didn't have time to let his mind rest. He quickly turned back to the gnomes, who eagerly looked at his Cosmos Sack, and once again started to go through his treasures.

As they worked Abby also came by, updating Zac on the tasks he had given out. The renovation of the area around The Towers of Myriad Dao was underway, and over a hundred people were working at it to get it done in record speed. They had also teleported over hundreds of Zhix workers to dig as far down as possible in their mines. Since they lived underground they were natural diggers.

"Regarding the Zhix, Nonet wants to speak with you at your convenience," Abby said.

"And I guess Nonet still does not want to leave its hive?" Zac asked, to which Abby simply bobbed in confirmation.

"I will try to make it, but honestly there's a bit much on my plate at the moment," Zac sighed.

"I think it's in regards to the Dominators, but I cannot be sure," Abby ventured.

"I'll try to speed things up. Can you call over my sister?" Zac asked.

Soon Kenzie ran over and took over the job of managing the four Sky Gnomes. In a perfect world, he wouldn't need to waste his sister's time for this. But he had caught every single Sky Gnome trying to pilfer a few goodies for themselves multiple times. The ancient one had especially sticky fingers, making him not a small source of exasperation.

So instead he released a small hill of treasure at the time and had Kenzie watch over the proceedings as he started looking through the things that he had found in Mhal's Cosmos Sack. The first things he took out were information missives similar to the one he got from Ogras, though they seemed to be created by some intelligence faction in the Undead Empire.

They were quite exhaustive, and Zac learned about quite a few forces that he hadn't heard about before. There was even a pretty decent rundown of the Allbright Empire, the place where Average and Greatest resided. It was a strong C-Graded force that consisted of seven sectors, one of which was the Emyrean Sector. The Red Sector that Greatest mentioned was ranked in the middle, and it was run by low-tier C-Graded hegemony.

It was very valuable information since it gave him a pretty good gauge of the power level of not only Greatest but also The Great Redeemer. Everything pointed toward Greatest being in the top tier of the Red Zone, though not necessarily at the peak. That meant he was likely at the bottleneck of the D-Grade.

That also meant the Great Redeemer might be around that power level as well since he seemed to be pretty close in power from the aura he released. It didn't really change things since he had no way to defeat that man no matter whether he was D-Grade or C-Grade, but finding protection against a peak D-Grade warrior should be far easier than from a C-Grade old monster.

Of course, that was all conjecture. Zac also learned the shocking reality of The Church of Everlasting Dao. Who would have thought that the zealous cult was just a front for a large corporation that collected bodies and sold them to people running out of their lifespan?

It made Zac remember what The Great Redeemer had said when he asked if he was part of the Church. He had called them body-peddlers and that their path toward immortality was a dead end. Zac was shocked that it was even possible to transfer to a new body to prolong one's life, but he had a feeling there were severe limitations to such a thing.

Apparently, the Undead Empire and the cult were in constant war since they fought over the high-grade corpses wherever they met.

Apart from the information on the church and the Allbright empire, thousands of other forces were listed, which was too much for Zac to go through at the moment. He placed the information crystals to the side, and he'd hand them over to someone else that could go through it all in case there was anything of importance.

The second thing he took out was the cultivation manual that Mhal's clan used. It was called [Corpsebloom Mantra], and it said that it could boost compatible attacks up to 22% at E-Grade, and it was possible to use all the way to level 150 provided the cultivator's body was proficient enough.

Zac hadn't looked too much into cultivation since he found that he was a mortal, but he knew that 22% wasn't a bad percentage. Ogras had once said that a boost of 10% per grade up to D-grade was good, but after that, he wasn't sure.

That was also why he hadn't seen cultivators as a real threat so far. Even those with good manuals were only boosted to a pretty limited degree, but that would change in E-grade. 20-30% was completely possible, which was like a permanent boost of [Hatchetman's Rage] without any downsides.

Besides, those numbers came from Ogras whose origin was a pretty weak D-Grade clan, so it wasn't impossible that the manuals from higher-tiered forces were even better. But that wasn't really what was on Zac's mind as he thoughtfully looked down at the manual.

He had already resigned to being a mortal until he could get his hands on one of those treasures that would enable cultivation, or reaching a high enough grade. But he hadn't considered one aspect. He now had two races, which was essentially like having two different bodies.

Was the second body truly unable to cultivate as well?