

## The Fall 286

### Chapter 286: Sneaking Inside

Zac's heart was beating like a drum as he hurried along a secluded path of the Profound Yin sect. Things were starting to get a bit out of hand, and he had already left 8 unconscious disciples in his wake. Honestly, he was unsure whether he had actually killed a few of them by mistake, but he pushed down any such thoughts at the moment.

The initial infiltration had gone just fine. Some sort of silent alarm went off, but he had already anticipated such a thing and he hid to see what kind of response sneaking past the wall elicited.

Three guards arrived a minute later, and Zac had already hidden inside a nearby house, knocking out the occupant. She had only been level 31 and was likely a pretty fresh recruit to the sect.

Judging by the conversation of the guards they didn't put much weight to Zac jumping over the wall. His token belonged to the disciple named Tilri, and they believed it was her who had crossed the wall rather than passing through the gate for some reason. They noted a demerit in her name then went on with their day.

However, everything didn't go as smoothly from there. He took a very roundabout way toward the small garden that housed the Profound Yin Orchids to avoid people, but it was impossible to avoid them altogether. The garden was against a mountain wall in the back of the sect, and he had to pass a lot of structures to get there.

It only took Zac 30 seconds to get spotted, and the girl he encountered only need another second to realize he was a man. Luckily one second was all Zac needed to flash forward and tap her forehead with enough power to knock her out cold.

He dragged her into the nearest house, which alerted another person inside. Soon another disciple was lying unconscious with a large bump on her forehead next to her sect sister. From there one mishap after another happened, and he felt it was only a matter of time before he would hear sirens blaring across the whole valley.

But he still hadn't given up. As far as he knew everyone that had realized who he was had been knocked out, and the sect was only so big. He just needed to endure for another minute before he reached the garden.

A petite figure suddenly appeared from around a corner, and Zac instinctively slammed the hilt of his axe in her temple before she had even come into full view. Zac grimaced when he saw that she was barely as old as Emily, but what done was done. She was stuffed behind a few sacks of rice inside a shed before he kept speeding forward.

A wave of relief spread through his body as he saw the cave that was his destination. The orchids grew inside, perpetually secluded from the sun. Their only nourishment was water an extremely cold stream rising from the underground and the Nexus Vein that was placed beneath the valley.

The cave was off-limits to normal people, and there were no buildings or disciples close to the entrance. But Zac knew from his memories that a low-level E-Grade elder sat inside to tend to and guard the flowers. It was mainly to keep any greedy disciples away, while also being a reward to the elder. Sitting

amongst the flowers to cultivate drastically improved one's cultivation, though not as much as directly imbibing them.

Zac hurried through the entrance with his head lowered, taking one last look around to make sure that no one saw him enter. The moment he entered he immediately changed directions toward the elders trying to make his hair shroud his face for as long as possible. But the elder seemed to realize something was wrong, and a frown immediately adorned her face.

“Wha-“ was all the elder had time to say before Zac was upon her with a monstrous momentum from activating [Loamwalker].

However, she clearly was no slouch as a thick wall of ice immediately appeared in front of her as she started to fade away. Zac saw she was using some movement skill, and he knew he couldn't let her escape. The wall looked extremely sturdy, and it was empowered by some Dao, but Zac barreled into it like a bull with the help of the Dao of Heaviness.

Zac felt like some bones in his arm would break from the impact, but they held while the wall cracked. But Zac wasn't completely unscathed as a layer of frost completely covered him and hindered his movements. It seemed to be the effect of a Dao, and Zac wasn't able to simply shrug it off.

But he was already in melee range, and his fist slammed straight toward the elder guardian before she could completely escape. He was still imbued with the Dao of Heaviness, and the fist slammed into her midriff like a wrecking ball.

The fist connected and forced her back into a completely corporeal form, and she was slammed back into the wall behind her, causing widespread cracks. However, his hand felt like it was frozen solid from the hit, and before Zac even had time to follow up with another strike to knock her out he was pelted by dozens of extremely sharp icicles.

He managed to dodge a few and endure a few others, but he knew he couldn't take too many of these strikes. A couple of them managed to hit his body before he had time to activate [Nature's Barrier] and it felt like they contained some sort of cold poison.

If he didn't end the fight quickly he would be turned into a popsicle, so he forced his stiff body to move, and he landed another slam straight in her face. Blood spurted everywhere and her face was almost caved in from the force of the punch.

She was pushed back into the frozen wall, and this time she didn't get up again. A few twitches was the only sign that she was still alive, and Zac quickly moved his attention toward the dozen flowers in the garden.

He knew he was out of time. There was no way that the battle hadn't been heard from the outside even though it was over in just a few seconds. Worse yet he saw that some of the icicles had flown straight out of the cave mouth, likely alerting everyone in the area.

He ignored the elder and immediately flashed over to the closest flower and dug it out of the ground. There was already a cold-attributed storage box in his Cosmos Sack, and he quickly placed it inside before he put it back into his pouch. A glance in the quest menu showed that the progress of the quest had changed to (1/2).

Zac sighed in relief but he knew his difficulties had only started. He could hear the subdued shuffling of feet outside, yet no one entered. There was no doubt an ambush waiting outside, but Zac hoped that it couldn't be too organized since only a couple of seconds had passed. It was likely only the first responders to the scene.

If he could break out of the encirclement before the elders could wake up from their closed-door cultivation he had confidence he would be able to escape. The powerhouses were mostly in deep meditation from what he understood, and they couldn't simply wake up and be fight-ready in the blink of an eye. That was the only reason he dared to break in like this.

Zac activated [Nature's Barrier] again and imbued it with the Dao of Trees. He even imbued himself with the Dao when he noticed that it seemed to have a small restraining effect on the frost that still covered parts of his body. One of his insights was based on resilience against the elements after all, the ability to survive in any climate.

Wasting no more time, Zac rushed outside with his axe at the ready. The reason he didn't use it before was that he wanted to give himself a small window where the elder was confused due to how he looked. But if he sported a large barbaric axe when he entered the cave he would have no doubt have been immediately discovered, foiling his ambush.

He flashed out with his movement skill, and as he suspected he was immediately met with a barrage of ice-attributed attacks. Zac growled and launched five fractal edges imbued with the Dao of Heaviness to crush any incoming ice. Frigid winds were trying to root him in place, but his blood pumped through his body due to his high Vitality, allowing him to keep running.

His fractal edges were extremely powerful and destroyed everything in their path before they kept moving toward the horrified disciples. But two strong auras erupted from two women who looked to be in their mid-thirties, and they quickly moved to intercept the strikes.

Luckily these elders were amongst the weaker ones as well, likely barely past level 80, and it took all they had to intercept the five massive blades of death coming for their disciples. Zac took the chance and immediately activated [Loamwalker], escaping the same path that he entered.

"Stop! Thief!" an enraged shout echoed behind him.

"Elder Gemoa is badly hurt!" another voice echoed with a tinge of panic.

Some worry started to rise in Zac's heart as he sensed one dangerous aura after another waking up, each more powerful than the last. Zac quickly took out a small pill from his pouch and ate it as he kept utilizing [Loamwalker]. The pill was a low-grade Blood Boil Pill that gave a temporary boost to Cosmic Energy and power, though using them too often would harm one's foundations.

But since Zac was just in a dreamscape he didn't care about that and used every tool in his toolbox. Since he no longer cared about stealth the way that took him minutes before only took him a few seconds. Zac saw the air shimmer above the wall, and he unhesitantly launched one [Chop] after another, each imbued with either the Dao of Sharpness or Hardness.

As he suspected a shield had been erected, though it seemed that it mainly was used to protect from attacks from the outside. It only took 3 strikes to cause a large crack, and another strike to blast open a

temporary hole for Zac to jump through without losing any speed. However, just as he was about to exit the shield a massive ice boulder slammed into him out of nowhere, making him cough up a mouthful of blood.

He landed face-first into the snow outside, but immediately sprung to his feet and kept pushing Cosmic Energy through his legs as he sped out of the valley. Zac ignored his ragged state as he pushed himself toward the mountain in the distance. Hot on his heels were hundreds of women, each more beautiful than the last.

The only problem was that they all looked completely enraged, like they couldn't wait to tear Zac apart.

Now and then everything from large icicles to huge snowballs sailed toward him to slow him down. A few of the Profound Yin Disciples that seemed to focus on cold-attributed combat classes even ripped out trees from the ground and hurled them at him. But thanks to the distance Zac had no problem avoiding them, often without even having to waste Cosmic Energy.

After almost a day of running more and more female disciples started to fall behind, and after another day only those that were at least late F-Grade could keep up. However, the E-Grade elders that he sensed in the dwindling group did not seem inclined to push ahead of the disciples.

Perhaps they wanted Zac to lead them to a supposed leader, or perhaps they had already realized where Zac was headed and wanted to escalate the conflict. He even considered that they wanted to kill him in full view of the Everlasting Yang sect to show what happens to those who encroached on their bottom line.

Whichever case was right, Zac felt more than happy to play along as he lugged toward the Everlasting Yang sect. He could actually speed up himself and lose most of those behind him, but he opted to conserve his Cosmic Energy instead.

Besides, he was afraid that if he sped up to a pace that only the elders could endure they would immediately pounce on him. So he leisurely ran forward while dodging the occasional icicle as he tried to figure out his next move. He already knew that his original plan likely wouldn't work with the Profound Yin sect hot on his heel. However, he felt it would be possible to sow some chaos and use that chaos to fish in muddied waters.

Finally, after another 4 hours, he was closing in on the Everlasting Yang sect. Even Zac was starting to get winded by this point, whereas the remaining disciples who were still at F-Grade were deathly pale, while others were actually carried by their elders. Perhaps they wanted to retain a certain number of experts for whatever would happen next.

Luckily he wouldn't have to scale the whole volcano, since the sect was cut into the mountain, starting at the foot and going roughly halfway up. He also knew from memories that they had carved paths all the way to the magma inside, and the elites cultivated as close to the magma as possible since it emitted Fire-attuned energies.

As Zac started to close in on the gates leading up to the sect he started to sense that his pursuers started to slow down. That wasn't good news for his plan so he needed to improvise a bit. He took a deep breath and infused his lungs with Cosmic Energy.

“THE PROFOUND YIN SECT IS ATTACKING!” he roared on top of his lungs, his energy-empowered volume enough to push away the snow around him.

The shout had a pronounced effect as in seconds a stream of red-robed disciples started to appear on the wall as the sounds of heavy drums echoed across the Volcano.