

## The Fall 303

### Chapter 303: Punishment

This was the weakest leader Zac had fought so far. He was clearly E-Rank, but neither his attributes nor Dao enlightenment were anything special. The weapon he used was pretty amazing though, likely a gift from his clan.

The soldiers looked on aghast at the fate of their lord, either worried about the incursion or the fate that awaited them when they returned. After seeing how easily Zac had handled one of the strongest men of the incursion their battle spirit quickly waned, and many started to look around for means of escape.

"We surrender, we'll leave your planet as once!" one of the generals immediately shouted, and the eyes of many soldiers turned toward a structure in the distance. "The wealth accumulated during our stay is all inside Lord Thanso's Cosmos Sack!"

"We can't let them!" Joanna spat from the side.

Zac touched the Cosmos Sack as he mulled over what to do. He remembered what he learned back in the library, and this wasn't necessarily the last time they encountered people from this confederation. He was still infuriated by how the Earthlings had been treated, but it would perhaps cause trouble down the line to act excessively.

There were no doubt a few who had already fled, making it impossible to keep the results of this battle on lockdown. But the moment he sensed what was inside the Cosmos Sack his pupils turned to needlepoints, and his rage was completely rekindled. Any thought of a ceasefire was immediately thrown out the window.

Corpses. Hundreds of corpses, mutilated and abused. Most of them were young women, but there were men and even children there as well. Zac looked down at the headless corpse of Thanso, infuriated that he died so easy. It took a special kind of monster to torture these many people then keep their bodies as mementos.

"Leave no one alive," Zac growled, and the next moment he exploded into action.

Despair filled the eyes of soldiers when they saw Zac's reaction, and they fled toward the Nexus Hub as fast as they could run. But how could it be that easy to escape an enraged Zac? Explosions of blood and gore erupted wherever warriors were clumped together as Zac arrived with [Loamwalker], destroying everyone around with wide sweeping arcs of death.

The others needed little prodding either as they unleashed all their strongest attacks on the collapsing defensive lines of the soldier. Ogras had taken the opportunity to assassinate one of the generals who was caught off-guard by Zac's wanton slaughter. That left only two more powerhouses on the side of Ez'Mahal, and Zac and Ogras picked each one. An all-out assault by Zac overwhelmed the mage, his defensive skills and treasure were whittled down in seconds.

Afterward, Zac simply shot out a handful of blades at the last general, who quickly got lost his life from being pincered. By this point, quite a few people were starting to stream in through the gates, and Zac was wondering if they were reinforcements. But when he saw their appearance he realized that they likely had received some prompt and wanted to escape back home through the Nexus Hub.

The fires of fury were far from abated after seeing the bodies Thanso kept in his Cosmos Sack, and Zac's eyes turned toward the large cathedral-like building that the Ez'Mahal people ran toward. The next moment a huge tear in space opened as the enormous hand of [Nature's Punishment] emerged. Zac wasn't thinking straight as he flooded the hand with his Peak-grade Dao and Cosmic Energy.

The only thing on his mind was to completely destroy their last hope and punish the invaders. It almost looked like the hand was shrouded in green flames as it ripped through the air, quickly arriving at the teleportation hub. A dense aura radiated from it, its very existence having a restraining effect on the soldiers beneath it.

Suddenly a fractal twenty meters across appeared above the hand as the fractal rings on the hands shone with blinding intensity. It was not something Zac had seen before, but when he laid his eyes on it he felt as though he breathed fresh air from a mountain top and smelt wet soil. It was the embodiment of earth itself.

Most importantly the aura kept intensifying, and everyone in the area was soon forced down on their knees, some even exploding due to the otherworldly pressure. It was as though the area in front of the building was being crushed by a mountain. However, that wasn't all. The fractal suddenly flew straight down toward the ground, passing right through the wooden hand.

The fractal caused a hundred-meter wide indent to form around where it slammed down, and only those possessing decent defensive skills or treasures were still alive, albeit barely. The grand building that housed the Nexus Hub was barely standing. Its roof was caved in from the pressure and one of its walls had completely collapsed. It looked like it wouldn't stay up for much longer unless it was reinforced.

Wails in pain and panic echoed across the area as the Ez'Mahal soldiers still alive found themselves in a pit full of bodies and debris. The fighting had largely died out amongst those who had chosen fight instead of flight, and even those of his own side looked at Zac with wide eyes. But only he knew that the attack was only half-way over.

The next moment the wooden hand punched down with monstrous strength. The last remnants of the house were completely destroyed, and a second shockwave expanded as though a bomb had gone off in the epicenter. The screams of the few survivors from the fractal were drowned in the dust cloud of the explosion, and the whole area was covered in the haze.

Then there was just silence.

Zac took a few deep breaths as he looked at the destruction with hard eyes until they switched over to Ogras who walked over.

"What about the rest?" Ogras said, not commenting the wanton slaughter Zac had just committed.

"We've gone this far, we might as well hunt them down."

"Quite a few people arrived here through the Incursion, we won't be able to hunt them all down with our small squad," Zac sighed, the fires in his chest having slightly abated. "Let's focus on freeing the slaves. And kill anyone who looks like he can become a threat."

The demons nodded as he turned around. A sea of shadows suddenly emerged at the gate and dozens of spears impaled the few people who hadn't already fled after seeing Zac's attack. Billy simply sat down when seeing the battle was over, his lungs moving like bellows as he gulped for air. Tears were streaming down his eyes as he sat unmovingly, and Zac walked over with a frown.

"Are you ok, Billy?" Zac asked as sat down in front of him.

"Mama said to never hurt people," Billy said. "But Mama never met people this bad. These people deserved it, but Billy is still sad."

Zac sighed as he looked at the giant. He realized that Billy might not have ever killed humans before he joined on this mission as most of his time was spent in the Ratlight. The scene also made him wonder what kind of person he had become. He had killed close to a thousand people in just a few minutes. Yet he felt nothing, neither joy nor sadness or shame. It was as he had cut down a bunch of trees, eliciting no emotional reaction.

He patted the giant on his shoulder before he walked over to Emily and the squad of Valkyries who had protected her. They had stayed away from the thick of it, mostly providing support while keeping themselves safe.

"Are you guys okay?" Zac asked as he looked at the group.

"People are messed up," Emily muttered before she looked up. "We need to become stronger, or we'll become slaves as well when the world loses its protection."

The Valkyries emphatically nodded, having all too much experience in that department. When people could attain the powers of gods some truly started to treat normal humans as ants.

"We'll sweep this place clean before we liberate the slaves in the town," Zac said. "We'll also bring over a few hundred of the reserves to take control while we head over to the plantations. I'll watch over the remaining soldiers."

The girls nodded, and soon the small strike squad went through every nook and cranny of the castle. Soon hundreds of slaves had been found, some in extremely horrible conditions. A few even chose to immediately end their lives the moment their shackles were removed.

Everyone was moved out to the square, standing some distance from the timid group of Ez'Mahal soldiers who had thrown down their weapon. They didn't dare to move a muscle after Zac had told them to stay put before sitting down to restore his energy.

No one even as much as dared to breathe loudly when sensing the immense aura that Zac emitted. He was sitting in the middle of the square as both a deterrent for any foolish actions and also because he was simply a bit tired. The attack had cost far more than a normal [Nature's Punishment] had, and he curiously opened his menu as he waited for the others to finish their sweep.

[Nature's Punishment - Proficiency: Late. Awaken the wrath of the world. Upgradeable]

It had actually upgraded to late proficiency. Furthermore, Zac had a feeling that it upgraded before he even used it. After reading the flavor text he had a strong feeling that the upgrade was linked to his

emotional response. He had been well and truly infuriated after seeing Thanos's bag, and that rage had fueled the skill.

Unfortunately, he also noticed that the battle hadn't been enough to reach level 75, even though he had killed two E-Grade cultivators. He even felt that he wasn't all that close, meaning that the final level seemed to require far more energy than the earlier ones. Still, if there was one thing he wouldn't lack the coming weeks were enemies, so he wasn't worried he wouldn't get there soon enough.

Eventually, Zac turned his eyes to the hundreds of ragged people who stood huddled on the square. Their eyes were all trained on him, some with hope, and others with fear. He retracted his aura as he stood up, gripping an E-Grade Nexus Crystal in his hand. His sudden movement made the group instinctually shrink back, and some even tried to hide the few children behind their emaciated bodies.

"I am Zac Atwood," Zac said with a loud voice. "You might know me as the Super-Brother Man from the Ladder. We have killed all the leaders of the Ez'Mahal, and we will begin clearing out the area to kill every one of these scum. You all are free."

All the people stared blankly at him for a few seconds, until a few broke down and started crying in large tears of relief. Others simply fell down on their knees, holding their heads. A few even knelt in front of him in thanks.

But suddenly chaos erupted in the ranks of the former slaves as a young man around 17 or 18 jumped a middle-aged woman, ruthlessly started to punch her. Weirder yet was that not a single person tried to help her, instead opting to either look away or look on with schadenfreude.

"YOU FUCKER," he shouted and started to relentlessly punch and claw at the woman, seemingly intent to tear her apart.

Zac frowned and flashed over before lifting the youth and tossing him away with one hand.

"What are you doing?" Zac asked with a frown.

"That bitch sold so many girls out to those alien psychopaths. It's because of her my sister was tortured to death," he screamed, tears running down his cheeks.

"We all did what we had to do to survive!" she said, her eyes thick with fear as she glanced at Zac. "They would be found out soon anyway! They had eyes everywhere."

A spear tip suddenly burst out through her chest, and she looked down at her engorged chest with confusion, before her eyes turned vacant. Zac looked up at Joanna who stood behind her with ruthless eyes.

"Question everyone, find the other conspirators," Zac said, steeling his heart. "Purge everyone who betrayed Earth."

His order quickly caused a few individuals to be isolated as they screamed and pled to be spared. But the Valkyries had long turned to ruthless killing machines as the targets were quickly executed after the details were confirmed. Zac himself didn't act, but he passively looked at the result of his order. But while his exterior was calm the same couldn't be said of his thoughts.

He felt he was walking down a dark path, the weight of his victims causing a heavier and heavier burden. Would he emerge with his soul intact, or would the sin of his actions consume him?