

The Fall 304

Chapter 304: Plantations

Zac knew a lot of blood would be shed from his order, but he didn't want to leave cancerous individuals behind. Every force he liberated would also become part of his jurisdiction, and he could not leave such hidden risks in times of war.

Next, he purchased a teleporter, as the moment that he had killed Thanso and the last general the town was considered his by the System. A Valkyrie immediately stepped through it to report back to Port Atwood, and to relay his orders. Hundreds of reserve fighters would join the area soon enough to stabilize the situation and return some order to the chaos.

He internally winced at the cost of all these transportations, but he also knew that the value of the area far outweighed the cost. It became increasingly clear from reading the intelligence on the incursions that they were all placed close to some sort of natural resource.

The demon Incursion not only got the Nexus Vein, but also the Tree of Ascension. It had already been confirmed that the mountains of the second Incursion he closed were rich in valuable metals, and this place had the farmland with spiritual soil.

That farmland was also why Zac was a bit hurried. And after giving a few more commands to Joanna he gathered Ogras, Emily and half of the Demons and Valkyries. The others would be led by Billy to keep things in check. All the strongest people had long been killed, so Billy would have no trouble keeping things in check as long as the remaining Valkyries shielded him.

The rest needed to go to the vast plantations and claim them before the Ez'Mahal people could ruin or plunder the fields in revenge. Winter was coming, but that didn't affect Spiritual Soil and Spirit Herbs who could grow year-round straight through the ice if need be.

"Who here has been to the plantations?" Zac asked as he looked at the slaves.

The bloody spectacle of Joanna had once again cowed the crowd, but soon a middle-aged man stepped forward.

"There are three large plantations, my lord," he said with a posh British accent. "I have been to all three. I have also heard chatter of a higher-grade garden, but I never learned where it was situated."

Zac had the man enter the car they used to get inside before he entered as well. Just as they were about to drive out they noticed people streaming out of the teleporter. The reserves clearly had been on standby since less than three minutes were needed for them to organize everything. Zac felt confident in leaving the town now when there were hundreds of his soldiers keeping things in order.

The car once again sped through the streets of the Grand Escape. It turned out the man that Zac brought was called Henry, just like the Marshall patriarch. However, his history was quite different. He was a trained butler, and Thanso had thought it was novel to have a native servant to wait upon him.

He was one of the few people that had been treated somewhat decently of the slaves. Not though benevolence though, but because Henry was very skilled, and Thanso did not want to waste time finding a new native Butler.

More impressively the reason that he seemed so popular amongst the slaves was that he had dared to lie straight into Thanso's face, saving dozens of poor women who would have met grim fates otherwise. Of course, he had only been able to save a scant few of Thanso's numerous victims, but Zac was still impressed with the guts of the man.

As they drove through the town chaos was already taking hold. A lot of the people in the city were various non-combat classes supporting the invasion, and when the leaders and the soldiers fell, pandemonium soon erupted.

No matter where he looked former slaves were rising up against their masters in an all-out brawl. Neither were very powerful, but the slaves didn't seem to care about their lives as they mobbed the foreign invaders like a swarm of angry bees.

Zac didn't have any means to help them out, but after throwing Ogras a look, shadow spears started emerging within a hundred meters of the cars. No matter where one looked Ez'Mahal natives were getting skewered and by the time they left the town hundreds had fallen to Ogras' attacks. Ogras had understood Zac's intent though and only attacked those who were killing Natives.

They followed the directions of Henry as they sped through the roads, heading toward the closest plantation. According to the butler, around ten thousand slaves were working there. Zac couldn't understand how a plantation could need so much manpower, but when he understood why he was livid.

The Ez'Mahal possessed an extremely sinister array to speed up the growth of the plants. A slave was needed to continuously infuse the array with energy, and the energy helped the herbs grow faster. But it didn't only sap the slaves of their energy, it also slowly sapped them of their life force.

They even had special cultivation manuals that were extremely efficient in restoring lost Cosmic Energy, but in turn were essentially useless in progressing in levels since it harmed one's foundations. They forced any slaves who were cultivators to swap to this manual and used them to feed the most precious herbs.

Not only did that help the Ez'Mahal to harvest the plants far quicker than usual, but it also prevented rebellion. The slaves were always so drained that they could barely stand, let alone fight in an insurrection.

The group drove for roughly 30 minutes on a newly constructed road until the forests gave way to an enormous field spanning god knows how large an area. They didn't even see it all due to some fields having plants reaching a few meters into the air, but it had to be at least dozens of football fields large.

"Is all this on Spiritual Soil?" Zac asked with wide eyes.

"I am not too knowledgeable about what Spiritual Soil is, but the actual area with the better soil is even larger than this," Henry said after thinking it over. "Deforestation has been ongoing since the integration to open up more farmland. But apparently, the soil is littered with solid rock, and they have been forced to move a mountain's worth of boulders to clear it."

As they entered the plantation Zac soon noted mats placed through the fields, and on some of them people were sitting, seemingly in meditation. But at other spots people were aimlessly wandering with confusion and hesitation in their eyes.

They approached a large mansion that was almost in the middle of the fields, and Zac's brows rose when he saw it was surrounded by people. They looked emaciated but spirited, holding everything from wooden clubs to large rocks in their hands.

Unfortunately, the car Zac and the others sat in was a stolen Ez'Mezal vehicle and the moment they approached they were pelted by rocks as the revolting slaves closed in on them. Henry's eyes widened in alarm, but Ogras only snorted as he stepped out.

The smarter slaves quickly stopped in their tracks when they saw the demon's appearance, but the most irate slaves didn't even register the set of horns on Ogras' head.

"Don't kill anyone," Zac said as he stepped out as well.

The next moment the slaves had frozen in place, with everyone who still held a weapon in their hand having a shadow spear trained on their throat or hearts. Resistance immediately crumbled in the face of overwhelming power, and the rebels quickly discarded their makeshift weaponry.

"We are not part of the Ez'Mahal. We are their enemies. Where are the leaders who ran this place?" Zac asked with a loud voice.

"They ran in that way!" a woman shouted, pointed in the direction of the woods with anger. "They took everything they could carry as well. Treasures and herbs! We had no way to stop them or keep up with their speed."

"How long ago?" Zac asked.

"Fifteen minutes ago," she said with a note of uncertainty.

Zac looked over at Ogras, who nodded and suddenly got swallowed in shadows, disappearing from sight. Zac probably possessed the speed to run them down as well, but he was pretty bad at tracking. Ogras was even faster than he was, and his skill set was far more suited for assassinating the slavedrivers.

Those who remained hesitantly looked at Zac, their eyes occasionally darting toward their weapons again. But a burst of his bloodsoaked aura quelled any thoughts of resuming their rebellion.

Zac coughed and repeated the same story to this set of slaves, about who he was and what had happened. This time no one had seen the battle in the Grand Escape, so convincing the plantation slaves about the situation wasn't quite as simple. But the flight of all the Ez'Mezal personnel was a clear indicator that what Zac said wasn't without merit.

"What now?" one woman suddenly asked. "Where is the government? Will they help us?"

"I am sorry, but no," Zac said, realizing that these people likely had no idea what was going on with Earth.

"The governments have all fallen, and a few new ones have taken their place," Zac said. "Around 15% of the world's population remains, the rest have fallen to Incursions or wild beasts. Desperate battles are taking place all over the world."

“My armies are currently marching against a horde of tens of millions of Zombies. Yes, literal zombies like in the movies,” Zac said. “There is even an old monster heading toward Earth, a being so strong that he can destroy a whole city with a punch.”

“So there is nowhere I can take you all. And honestly, even if I could, why would I? It costs a fortune to teleport someone, and the world has become too massive and dangerous to travel by road or air. But you are welcome to stay here. We are currently rooting out the last of the invaders, but this area will be part of my sphere of influence, and it will be somewhat safe at least,” Zac finished.

Hopelessness filled the eyes of the people gathered in front of him. Many had likely dreamt of being saved by the government, followed by a return to normalcy. But such a thing no longer existed on this planet, and it wouldn't return until their place in the universe was secured through strength.

“Will we be forced to continue using these arrays?” the woman who pointed out where the overseer fled asked.

“No one should be using those things,” Zac said with a shake of his head. “From what I understand they will sap your life force, slowly killing you.”

The colors of the faces in front of him turned noticeably better when they learned that they wouldn't have to slave in the arrays any longer though. Zac sighed when he saw their weak erratic auras, and the next moment a small hill of Nexus Crystals appeared in front of him.

“Each of you take one,” Zac said. “If you don't know, these are Nexus Crystals. They are used for either restoring one's energy or gaining levels. There is no side-effect to using them, but they aren't as effective for gaining levels as killing beasts.”

The slaves hesitantly looked at the mound of crystals for a bit until a few of them stepped forward. Zac noted that some of them were around level 15 to 22, and likely Cultivators. These people had probably been caught the moment they returned from the Tutorial, and barely had any progress since then due to the cultivation manual they were forced to use.

Since everything was dealt with for now he took out a chair to wait for Ogras, and he fielded any questions the people in front of him had. As the minutes passed more and more people were joining, especially after Zac told a few people to gather those out on the fields.

There were still quite a few who were still infusing their arrays, afraid that the odd situation might be a trap to trick them. But soon over a thousand people had gathered in front of him, each clinging to a Nexus Crystal as though it was a heavenly treasure.

“In the next few days, I will open up a store in the town. You can buy more Nexus Crystals there, or anything else you may need. From supplies to weapons and armor,” Zac said. “We only take Nexus Coins though.”

“Most of us barely have any coins at all, how will we survive?” one of the braver men asked.

“Port Atwood will provide for everyone for a limited time, but sooner or later you will have to provide for yourselves. You can either get jobs or hunt monsters for Nexus Coins and materials,” Zac explained.

“What can we even do? You’re level 74, but most of us aren’t even level 10. We weren’t allowed to gain levels, any energy we managed to gather went straight into these god damn plants,” another man grunted.

“It hasn’t even been a year since the integration took place. I am sure it has felt like an eternity to you, but in terms of the multiverse, it is nothing. If you manage to upgrade your race to E-Grade your lifespan will increase to 500 years. Upgrade it again you will live for thousands of years. What are a few months lost?” Zac retorted.

"The means to upgrade your race will be available for purchase in our shops. Even Mortals can evolve their race," Zac continued. "But you should know that nothing in this world comes free. Only those who struggle and gain enough resources will be able to afford the treasures needed."

Quite a few of the haggard slaves perked up at Zac's explanation. A fire rekindled in their eyes, shining with determination to overcome their current situation. However, Zac sighed when he saw that most of them were still downcast. But at least he gave a few of them something to strive for.

Not much later Ogras returned with a lazy expression, his eyes flashing with a hint of disdain as he looked at how the slaves clutched their Nexus Crystals.

“I thought you would want to see this,” Ogras said as fifteen heads thumped down on the ground. “This should be the leaders of this place. I didn’t bother with the heads of the others.”