

The Fall 307

Chapter 307: Finality

Zac's mind couldn't help going down various venues of betrayal when he realized that the demons weren't as cut off from their homeworld as Ogras had initially led him to believe. What if Ogras' Grandfather came stomping through Earth in 99 years as a result of the scheming of the demons of Port Atwood?

"Where did that innocent wide-eyed youth go?" Ogras sighed in mock exasperation as he noted Zac's look. "Here, look at this."

The next moment a screen appeared in front of the demon. It was the part of the status screen that showed his alignment, and it actually said Port Atwood. It didn't provide any title though, like his own status screen that also denoted him as lord.

"I've already told you, we have cut ties with our homeworld. To be able to use the Nexus Hub you would need to maintain your allegiance," Ogras explained.

"What about the other demons? Not all of them stayed on earth voluntarily," Zac probed, not ready to completely drop the subject.

"I have it all in hand. There are a few who maintain the old alignment, but as long as they work for us it doesn't matter. Worst case they'll have an accident before the world gets properly integrated," Ogras shrugged. "Besides, I don't think that's how it works."

"What do you mean?" Zac asked.

"From what I understand it's a one-way ticket for those who have failed their invasion, but managed to survive for a hundred years on a hostile planet. A reward of sorts, I suppose," Ogras explained.

Zac slowly nodded but made a mental note that he would have to research how things worked from a second source as well. He knew that interplanetary travel was prohibitively expensive, but most D-Grade powerhouses should have no problem to teleport themselves in case they felt the potential pay-off was large enough.

"In any case, this might also be a good opportunity to recruit some people," Ogras continued. "Just like there were people like us who wanted to stay behind, so are there likely people from the Ez'Mahal who wouldn't mind becoming Earthlings. I can't imagine a great fate is awaiting these people if they return to the Ez'Mahal Confederation."

"We can't recruit these slavers!" Joanna immediately interjected. "Not imprisoning them is bad enough."

"Girl, I know you had a rough start of it, but one needs to be pragmatic to survive. You are part of the multiverse now, and the only law is the law of the jungle," Ogras said with a shake of his head. "So what if they kept slaves? It was their right as the strong. And if you get strong enough you can kill all of them without anyone speaking up in their defense."

Joanna only unwillingly glared at Ogras, clearly not convinced by his argument.

“We’ll go with labor for reduced merits for now,” Zac finally concluded. “We’ll revisit the issue of formally incorporating the willing people at a later date, depending on how they behave. For now, is there anything else we need to do before we can head out toward the Tal-Eladar?”

“I would like to draft two hundred million Nexus Coins from Port Atwood’s coffers,” Gredas said, speaking up for the first time since the meeting began, as his only interest was agriculture. “I need your permission for that.”

“Two hundred million?” Zac exclaimed with wide eyes. “That’s not a small sum. What do you need it for?”

“The Spiritual Soil we will transplant to Port Atwood could become a true moneymaker for us,” Gredas said when he noted Zac’s shock. “You are approaching E-Grade, and in another year or two most elites of this planet will start evolving. The demand for medicinal baths will explode, and it will only keep growing.

“I want to plant huge fields of Spiritual Grass to prepare for that. But we need to buy seedlings and better arrays to get production going,” the demon farmer said, enthusiasm shining in his eyes. “It will give a return your investment tenfold within a few years, and it will just keep giving as long as we control the Nexus Vein.”

Zac slowly mulled it over. Two hundred million was less than he privately held, but it was still a large chunk of the free resources of Port Atwood. And agriculture was only one of the many expenses that the town faced. Who knew how much it would cost to integrate all these Zones that he was about to conquer?

But Zac also knew that you needed to spend money to make money. All that money would come back into his town coffers, which essentially was his own money. If worse came to worst he could simply pillage and loot a few more incursions to make up for it.

“Fine, but you will have to make a proper budget to show what you need everything for. We are not in a position to waste any money at the moment,” Zac agreed.

With that, the meeting was over, and everyone was given two hours to prepare their gear. Zac didn’t need to do anything at the moment and simply went back to Port Atwood to have dinner with his sister.

Kenzie almost continuously stayed in the cultivation cave nowadays, since her AI allowed her to make tremendous improvements. No energy was wasted between the calculating power of the small chip and the improved cultivation manual that Kenzie utilized.

Zac only returned to Verdant Green ten minutes before the deadline, and the others were already waiting. The laidback manner of the demons was gone, replaced with bloodlust and determination. It appeared that old habits die hard, and they still carried their inherited grudges even if they had cut ties with Clan Azh’Rezak.

Zac activated the teleporter, and they soon arrived at their destination. It was a large hall without windows, and only two young men sat by a table at one side of the room, looking fidgety.

“Thank god you’re here,” a man immediately said as he hurried over when he saw Zac and the others appear. “The town is being raided as we speak!”

“Raided? By the invaders?” Zac asked with some surprise.

“We believe they found out that this small town possessed a teleportation array and is used for intelligence gathering. Their force is a lot bigger compared to the usual raiding parties that they use to capture new workers,” the young man frantically explained.

“We’re almost out of crystals to maintain our shield, and it has only been three hours,” the other man added. “We have sent requests for aid from headquarters, but their resources are all tied up in the war with the undead. We have been instructed to start evacuation in twenty minutes.”

“How many are there?” Ogras asked as he walked up next to Zac.

“Around three hundred warriors, and many of them are stronger than their normal combatants. They also have over a thousand of their huge wolf-things with them,” the guard explained.

“Tal-Eladar and their god damn war beasts,” one of the demons muttered, making Zac shoot a questioning glance at Ogras.

“Well, the main reasons our family keep a bunch of Barghest and Gwyllgi is because the Tal-Eladar is extremely adept at beast mastery,” Ogras explained. “Their beasts are stronger and better controlled, so we can only try to lessen the impact with waves of dumb barghest. Better our fodder dies to the war beasts than our warriors.”

“So what do you think we should do with this army?” Zac asked.

It wasn’t that Zac was unsure whether they could defeat the army outside the gates, but rather that he wasn’t sure if it was the right move. His tactic was to hit fast and hard with a small squad before the enemy could prepare themselves, and decimating an army would hamper that strategy.

“Good opportunity to gather some up-to-date intelligence,” Ogras said with a spurious smile, though the killing intent was palpable in the room.

“Won’t it be a problem if they find out we’re here?” Zac hesitantly said.

It was unethical, but perhaps it was better to let this town fall if it meant that they could attack the incursion unnoticed.

“The intelligence report was clearly flawed. It never mentioned this large an amount of war beasts. We probably have no chance of succeeding in a surprise attack as it stands, those things are like scouts,” Ogras said. “We might as well weaken their forces a bit. An attack like this should be led by one of their generals, and killing him would make our lives easier.”

Zac finally agreed and the troop streamed out of the Marshall Clan headquarters that hid the teleporter. As they exited the building they immediately spotted a large number of people standing on a square, fearfully looking in the same direction. It was the townspeople who were likely waiting to be teleported out if things went sideways.

Zac’s eyes followed theirs and saw a large shimmering shield that continuously shuddered from attacks. It was clear, however, that they were content on slowly draining the power of the defenses, rather than forcefully breaking it like Billy usually did. This tactic was much slower, but it also didn’t waste any resources.

"I can handle this alone," Zac said. "No need for others to expend their energy."

Ogras seemed fine with it, but the other demons were rearing for battle. However, a look from Zac made them look down. Zac's overbearing strength made them pretty much consider him a powerhouse of an earlier generation, and they wouldn't dare speak against him even if they had recently evolved.

"You'll get all the battle you wish for, and more, before the month is over," Zac said as he flashed away toward the gate.

It only took him a minute to reach the newly erected wall, where he saw a few soldiers stood trying to kill at least a few of the beast swarming right outside the shield. But the Tal-Eladar easily intercepted the ranged attacks, allowing the beasts rake the shield unimpeded.

The animals were one size larger than even the barghest, and he understood why the guard called them wolves earlier. These things likely weighed as much as a bison, but they possessed a far more balanced build allowing for both power and agility.

However, their faces didn't exactly look like wolves, but rather like the head of enormous vampire bats. They possessed two wide pointed ears, and pitch-black eyes. The nose was pretty flat, and beneath was a large fanged maw. Its paws possessed nasty claws as well, and judging by the powerful aura the animals emitted they would have no problem ripping a person in two with one casual swipe.

"Who are you, head to the square with the others!" a guard captain exclaimed with some shock when he noted that Zac had appeared next to him out of nowhere. "We might need to evacuate you all at moment's notice."

"I'm the reinforcement," Zac calmly explained. "Do you know who the leader of their army is?"

"Reinforcement? You alone?" the grizzled captain said with some doubt.

Zac only sighed as he leaked some of his aura.

"I'm sorry about that," he hurriedly said with a pale face as he involuntarily took a step back.

"It's fine," Zac shrugged. "Their leader?"

"We think it's that guy with a green band on his arm at eleven o'clock," the captain said, not directly pointing him out of fear of alerting the man. "He singlehandedly routed our try at breaking out and culling these animals. We lost half our men in five minutes."

"Thank you," Zac said with a somber expression, and the next moment he disappeared again.

A monstrous killing intent suddenly billowed out in the middle of the animal pack as Zac appeared with [Verun's Bite] in his hand. Any thoughts of right and wrong that had plagued him the past days were completely suppressed, replaced with ruthless finality.

The frenzied roars of the war beasts were soon replaced with pained wails, and just a few minutes later the sounds of battle were replaced with an eerie silence. Zac stood alone in a field of blood and viscera, his robe fluttering in the wind, completely untouched by the carnage.

One Tal'Eladar warrior was all that remained, and he was lying on the ground with extremely bad wounds. The arm with a green band was lying a few meters away, still gripping a broken spear. The rest were all dead or having fled fast enough for Zac to not bother with them.

A whole army dying would be immediately noted by a proper force like the Tal-Eladar, and they likely already knew that the army had fallen through the use of life-bound talismans. Catching each and every soldier wouldn't really stop the news from reaching the Incursion, so Zac had opted to not pursue the fleeing soldiers.

"Who are you? This world shouldn't have someone like you," he said with a wet cough.

"There are no absolutes in the multiverse," Zac said as looked down at the warrior who had valiantly fought to stop his onslaught. Of course, it had been impossible to completely curtail Zac's advances, but it had allowed some of his men to retain their lives.

"What will you do with our people?" he weakly asked, obviously understanding what would happen next to the incursion.

"That depends on how you treated our people in captivity," Zac said.

The humanoid man sighed with relief as he closed his eyes, his last breath slowly leaving his lungs.

From the ramparts the soldiers looked down in awe and horror, unsure whether what sort of Grim Reaper had arrived to their town.