

## The Fall 317

### Chapter 317: Explosions

Zac's eyes widened in alarm because the scene was the same as when Salvation summoned the enormous head in the sky during the hunt, only on a far grander scale. If this attack was allowed to complete its buildup the face would at least be ten times the size of the last time.

Something needed to be done, but his limbs didn't respond to his commands. His last attack had completely overtaxed his body, and apart from the broken bones in his arm and shoulder, he felt he had ripped most of his muscles as well.

He still had some remaining Cosmic Energy in his system, but he couldn't even stand up at the moment, let alone launch an attack to stop Salvation from bringing the equivalent of a comet down on their heads. He only saw one possibility to turn the tides.

[Beauty Yrial's Great Transformation Skill] activated around his core, and his battered body was immediately flooded with Miasma. Zac's vision blurred and a sense of weakness immediately spread through his body. The effect was even worse as [Hatchetman's Rage] was forcibly canceled before it's time limit, and it looked like switching Class was not a viable method to avoid the backlash from activating the buffing skill.

The transformation would take less than ten seconds, but he started to despair as he realized he wouldn't make it in time. An enormous silver river formed in the clouds above, and it quickly moved down to swallow Salvation's exposed body.

But blood suddenly spurted out of the mad prophet's mouth as a shadowy lance erupted from his chest. He looked down with bafflement as even more lances skewered him, making him lose blood like a sieve.

It was Ogras who had somehow teleported into Salvation's own shadow to attack him before he had time to get back into the protection of his silver rivers. It looked like Ogras had been patiently waiting like a hunter for Salvation to appear to get a shot at assassinating him.

A wet cough escaped Salvation's mouth as he slowly turned his head toward Ogras. The demon was just about to slice off his head when his eyes widened in alarm. The golden fractal on Salvation's forehead lit up with blinding light, and the demon fell back as though he was grievously wounded.

"So it is my time to join the unity," Salvation rasped as he rapidly started to age. "But redemption comes to all. I will be accompanied by thousands, my last gift to the great Lord."

Ogras suddenly started to scream as though he was being ripped apart as he was bathed in golden light. He desperately tried to move away, but it looked like his body didn't respond to his actions.

"Horned one, join me in ete-" Salvation said, but was forcibly interrupted as a huge spiked shield slammed into him with the force of a ballistic missile.

Half of Salvation's body, including most of his head, was destroyed, instantly killing him. The golden fractal lost its source of energy when the grimy priest lost his remaining life force. Ogras soon calmed down, but he was still on his knees panting from whatever he had experienced.

It was Zac who had finally finished his transformation but had found himself unable to move even in his Draugr form. Luckily one of his arms was still mostly intact apart from a few pulled muscles. He had forced it full of miasma with [Unholy Strike] and hurled his huge shield at Salvation since he was afraid he'd miss if he threw his axe with his left arm.

Zac was filled with new energy after the shield hit home, confirming that Salvation had truly died from the attack. But the energy was extremely lacking for how taxing the battle was since Salvation was only level 62. It was enough to push his level to 54 and some ways toward the next level, but nothing more than that.

He arduously got to a sitting position as he sardonically wondered what his opponent would think if he ever got killed in battle. Would he be shocked at the minuscule amount of energy compared to the strength that Zac exhibited? But he was soon dragged out of his musings from the rumblings of the sky.

The silver clouds had stopped condensing with Salvation's death, but they hadn't dissipated. The enormous amount of energies they contained rapidly became more and more chaotic, and alarm bells were starting to go off in Zac's mind.

"Good job, though I believe kill stealing is my job," a weak voice came from his side as Ogras appeared with the shield gripped in a shadow tentacle.

The demon was pale as a sheet, and tear streaks were running down his face. Zac wondered just what the demon had experienced inside that golden light to look like that. After glancing over at the demon's original position Zac saw that the body of salvation was gone, likely snatched up by Ogras as he rushed over here.

"Unfortunately we don't seem to be out of harm's way," the demon continued. "The arrays have stopped gathering energy, but they are still active. My soul is wounded and I'm out of energy, are you able to destroy a rune to let us out of here?"

Zac sighed and shook his head.

"I don't have a lot of offensive skills in this class. The only thing is that throw," Zac explained.

Ogras only groaned and started to desperately rip up huge chunks of the scorched ground beneath them.

"Then get to digging," Ogras said. "We have twenty seconds at best before the energies in those clouds above us rip this area into pieces."

Zac's brows rose in realization, and he punched a deep hole with his working arm, ignoring the pain from using his torn muscles. It only took them ten seconds to dig over twenty meters down in the ground, after which they covered themselves with layers of soil.

However, they weren't done with just that as Zac summoned [Immutable Bulwark] to form a thick shield above them, and he immediately imbued it with the Seed of Hardness. Ogras still wasn't satisfied as one Array Disk after another appeared, along with a few other defensive treasures that Zac had never seen before.

"Treasures are no good for you dead," Ogras muttered, though he seemed a bit pained as he clutched his items.

Zac was about to respond but a shockwave that almost knocked him unconscious slammed into them, even with the multiple layers of defense. The next moment the world turned white as a massive explosion erupted that drowned out everything else.

Miasma was being drained at an astonishing rate as torrential forces continuously slammed into his shield, and three quarters of his death-attuned energy was gone in just a few seconds. Finally, he was forced to remove the shield while shouting out a warning to Ogras, letting the defensive treasures take the brunt of the attack.

The shimmering layers of shields started shattering at a rapid pace by the unceasing onslaught, and Zac was starting to wonder if he would have to resummon his shield and push it until he ran out of Miasma. But as suddenly as the force erupted it also disappeared and calm once again returned to the area.

Zac and Ogras found themselves at the bottom of an enormous crater, and the two couldn't help but gawk as they looked around. There was simply nothing there apart from the enormous hole that was at least fifty meters deep.

There was a clean line of demarcation in a circle where the edge of the array once was, as it seemed the blast had been contained and pushed downward, at least in the beginning of the eruption. The large fractals in the sky were all gone, clearly unable to hold against the massive forces that had been unleashed.

The two were both pretty bad shape, but they knew it was risky to stay here. The dominators hadn't appeared in the fight, just like they had hoped, but the massive discharge just now could likely be seen from outside Salvation's area of control. So they arduously made their way out of the crater, only to see another scene of utter desolation.

Half the forest they came from had been toppled, and anything aboveground had been ripped to shreds from the blast after the array containment failed. Zac shook his head in wonderment, feeling as though he had survived staying in the epicenter of a nuclear explosion, mostly through his own power.

The world of Cosmic Energy was both terrifying and wondrous.

Thomas walked through the streets of New Washington, or what remained of them. A somber face marred his tired face as he looked at the scene of devastation.

"Do we have a tally yet?" Thomas sighed, turning to his aide who walked along him with one of her arms in a cast.

"The cleanup process is still underway, but we fear that up to twenty percent of the population died from the explosion, and many more are wounded. The commercial and residential districts were particularly badly hit," she said with a downcast face.

"Do we know how Salvation managed to smuggle so many of his puppets to our sewer system?" Thomas growled, an ember of fury burning in his chest.

"We still have no idea, the routes were completely destroyed from the explosion, making it impossible to map. One theory is that he found an abandoned sewage outlet that ran out of the town that provided him ingress," she said, though it was clear she did not believe in this theory.

"What do you believe?" Thomas sighed, though he had a good idea of what she was thinking.

"Wasn't Salvation allied with... them?" the aide said with a low voice, avoiding eye contact with Thomas.

Thomas sighed again as they returned to his office after making the rounds.

"They served the same master, but from how we understand it they belonged to rival camps. I reached out to our contact earlier and they fervently denied any involvement in this terrorist attack. Truthfully I believe them, if only because this insanity is against their goals as well," Thomas said with a tired voice.

He knew what his aide thought of those monsters, and the path of no return they had embarked upon. But they were out of options and time was running out. Perhaps that man would be able to defeat the Dominators given enough time, but their lord was on his way. He knew that fighting against him was futile, like ants trying to destroy an elephant.

It was time to salvage what could be saved. He knew that only a small fraction of humanity would survive the arrival of The Great Redeemer with his plan, but that was better than the whole world getting harvested. If he needed to sell his soul to save at least a small part of humanity, so be it.

But he hadn't completely given up. As long as he had two hands he would do everything in his power to turn the tides.

"Have there been any news from our other project?" Thomas asked, and the aide immediately took out a few documents, knowing what he was referring to.

"The spies we caught had limited knowledge about the movements of the church, but we have finally managed to locate one of the four entrances that the Church of Everlasting Dao control. We are amassing our armies to strike that outpost as we speak," she said.

"Any new intelligence?" Thomas probed, as he had been too occupied with the Zombie threat as of late to be up to date to the activities of this clandestine project.

"We have confirmed from multiple sources that they all lead to the same Mystic Realm and that it is an enormous structure that would likely be able to house millions of people. But it is already populated by multiple indigenous forces, and even the core members of the Church have found themselves in pitched battles without making much headway," she read from the reports.

"Have you found out what's inside that's so important that they ignore all the resources of Earth?" Thomas asked with a sharp look in her direction.

"The infiltrators have no idea, even they seemed pretty shocked at the resources their High Vicar spends at conquering that place," she said. "And the main branch of their church seems to have spent a huge sum to provide reinforcements to help in their efforts."

"Do we have the strength to conquer the base?" Thomas asked next.

“It is guarded by multiple E-Grade warriors, though they are still somewhat limited by the restrictions. We will need to expend both plenty of lives and a sizeable portion of our old-world weaponry to seize it according to our generals,” she said, waiting for instructions.

Thomas nodded in thought. In fact, he knew more about the situation inside those portals than his aide. Only a handful of people from the Government knew the true reason why the Church so desperately wanted to seize the enormous facility. It had cost them a shocking amount of lives and resources to receive that snippet of information since it had required them to capture one of the Churches’ bishops.

It was the key to not only surviving this calamity but actually making huge strides forward. Their alliance with those lunatics under the Great Redeemer was just the back-up plan to save some of their people if things didn't work out. It wouldn't be necessary if they attained their goals with this Mystic Realm.

“It is the gateway that might lead to the salvation of humanity. Spare no expense, we need to seize that entrance.”