

The Fall 330

Chapter 330: Transit Camp

The scene below was even worse than Zac had feared when he first heard Smaug mention the slave trade. There were long rows of people kept in place by fetters, placed like cattle in small enclosures. All four races could be spotted amongst the slaves, though humans were by far the most common.

Groups of slavers patrolled the area, and there were robust fortifications at all the exits to prevent any slaves from escaping from the cave. There was also a pile of corpses lying in plain view in the encampment, just a few meters from the pens where the slaves were kept. Perhaps they were left there as a deterrent, or perhaps they simply hadn't had time to throw the corpses out to the beasts in the open Underworld.

The Underworld was quite different from how Zac had imagined it, and it was only after traveling for the last hour he realized that the Underworld wasn't an intricate network of tunnels and caverns. Most of the Underworld was actually an open expanse.

The prevalent belief amongst those who were teleported here was that the underworld was between two layers of tectonic plates or just between two rock sediments. It created a continuous subterranean landscape that sometimes had a ceiling height of thousands of meters, and sometimes it was so narrow that one had to crouch to move forward.

There were even forests and arable farmland, though the things that could be grown were generally different types of edible moss or mushrooms. Rivers ran across the hilly grounds, and it if wasn't for the utter lack of sunlight, one might have forgotten they were underground. Instead, everything was illuminated by luminescent plants, creating a mesmerizing display of colorful spots that lit up the boundless darkness.

Most towns were constructed in caves like the one they were spectating through, as the open world was quite dangerous for most people. Enormous packs of mutated bats roved in the sky, and all kinds of subterranean beasts walked the ground.

Even the insects had mutated and turned into monstrous creatures in the underworld, perhaps due to the massive amount of Nexus Crystals boosting the energy in the atmosphere. Getting caught in ten-meter tall spiderwebs or skewered by a scorpion pincer were both real risks in the underworld.

The extremely solid rock walls of the caverns made for a natural defense against the horrors of the underworld, and people only had to fortify the cave exits to create a safe space. Top tier caves were the ones who possessed a natural ecosystem to sustain them, like the cave the Underworld Nexus was built inside, with its own lake.

It was this reliance on caves that the Flame Golems exploited in with their ruthless tactics. They simply blocked up the few exits in the town before flooding it with lava. A few of the citizens had time to rush to a teleportation array, but most towns didn't possess one and could only helplessly wait to get swallowed.

The tunnel they stood in was something that Smaug himself had created to spy on the slaving activities of the Union. It ran for hundreds of meters from a hidden spot in the open underworld, with both sides

hidden by arrays. The walls of the tunnel looked oddly melted, and Zac guessed that Smaug had used some treasure to somehow melt the extremely hard stones.

Being reminded that the mysterious fellow might be useful during the fight Zac released the energy restraints that shackled Smaug. Of course only after giving him a stern warning to not mess around.

But any interest in finding out Smaug's hidden means was long pushed to the back of Zac's head as he looked down at the misery beneath them. He was just about to jump down and start a rampage when the energy in the camp started to fluctuate.

"The teleportation array just activated," Ogras commented as he looked down with curiosity.

This transit camp was located close to the human incursion since the invaders they traded with weren't able to use teleportation arrays. This also meant that whoever was arriving was not an invader, but rather someone from the Union. The fluctuations soon ended and a small group of people emerged from a building not too far away.

"Here, use this," Smaug suddenly said, producing yet another ball from nowhere.

"A temporal destabilizer?" Ogras said with surprise. "Where did you get your hands on this?"

"A what?" Zac asked with confusion as he looked down on the thing in Smaug's hand.

"The teleporters transport people through subspace or whatever the fantasy equivalent is," Smaug said. "If you crush this ball within 50 meters of the teleporter subspace will be made unstable and safeguards in the array will make it impossible to activate for 10 minutes."

Zac shot a glance at Ogras who nodded in confirmation.

"Can you get your hands on more of this?" Zac asked.

It was an extremely convenient item that could change the course of a battle. It would make sure that his target wasn't able to escape, or that his activities wouldn't leak.

"This is my last one, I got it as a reward for a quest," Smaug said with a shake of his head.

Zac looked into Smaug's eyes for a few seconds, but he couldn't tell if the man was lying or not. In any case, there would be time to find out more after the situation in the underworld was stabilized. So he grabbed the ball with a nod, and Zac leaped straight out from their hiding spot immediately after, with Emily throwing a fiery axe into his back.

Zac soared straight toward the large stone building the group of people emerged from. It was likely the place that housed the teleportation array, as it was guarded by a squad of soldiers armed to their teeth. With Zac's power, he had no problem jumping all the way to the structure, and he ripped through the air toward the soldiers like a falling star.

"Attack!" one of the guards shouted with panic in his eyes as he spotted Zac in the air, but the next moment he was crushed by the massive weight of Zac's shield as it slammed straight into him.

Zac's landing killed three of the guards and threw the others in the air from the kinetic energy in his landing. He immediately crushed the orb in his hand before taking out his sword. [Hunger] keened as it turned into a grey streak, dismembering the remaining seven guards in a flash.

With his attributes, it didn't matter that he barely possessed any offensive skills in his current class. Against random warriors on Earth he was essentially an unkillable monster. The commotion alerted the soldiers stationed in the camp, and they streamed toward his location. There were actually over a hundred of them, most having stayed out of sight.

Zac didn't mind that as he instead turned his attention toward the group who had just arrived. It was two middle-aged men dressed in some sort of defensive gear, but it was clear they were not warriors. They had no weapons and they did not emit any dangerous aura, making Zac believe they were businessmen from the Union.

This belief was only strengthened by the four bodyguards who accompanied the two. The moment Zac had arrived they created a protective barrier in front of the merchants, and they didn't care in the slightest that Zac dismembered their presumptive allies. They were only interested in protecting the two VIP's.

"Yet another idealistic fool trying to rescue these wretched people?" one of the merchants sneered.

Zac didn't answer, instead unleashing both his aura and [Fields of Despair]. The insidious energies from the splinter in his mind were already magnifying the rage in his heart, and it somehow entered his aura as well. It made his killing intent almost palpable, and a few soldiers actually started to bleed from their noses or ears when they were buffeted by his aura.

The soldiers were obviously not part of some elite force, and the hastily erected line the warriors just formed immediately collapsed, with over half heedlessly fleeing from the towering killing intent that radiated from Zac. The four bodyguards were better off, but they still slowly backed away, likely looking for an opportunity to escape as well.

"Activate the array!" one of the merchants screamed in fright, the arrogant demeanor replaced with abject horror.

An immense weight immediately descended upon Zac, but how could some random restrictive array stop his onslaught? He had ripped through even stronger arrays when he was looting summit palaces during the hunt, and since then he had only grown even more monstrous.

He took a step forward with a grunt, and a loud snapping sound could be heard as a shockwave was released from his body. The sound came from the array collapsing from brute force, and the sight was so shocking that one of the merchants fell to his knees in despair.

"Wait!" the still standing merchant screamed when Zac started to approach them. "We can pay you! One hundred million Nexus Coins! Just let us leave with our lives!"

Zac was completely indifferent to the pleas, and he steadily took step after step toward the group. The stationed soldiers of the town had given up any idea of sticking their noses into the battle, and one after one they started to flee toward the various exits.

But long before anyone managed to escape through one of the tunnels they fell over with large holes in their bodies, caused by some unseen attacks. Zac noted the shadowy spears that appeared and quickly disappeared though, and he realized that Ogras and the others were containing everyone.

He didn't care that Ogras killed these soldiers at all since they had been complicit to the horrors of this place. If he had been in his human form he would have already mowed down that rabble with a few fractal edges. But he was currently out of ranged attacks since his shield's spike attack still hadn't recharged.

"Two hundred million! And precious cultivation pills!" the merchant screamed when Zac ignored him.

"You forfeited your lives the moment you betrayed humanity," Zac said a hollow voice. "I do not need your blood money."

The four guards disappeared the moment Zac finished his sentence, but they immediately appeared all around him. Their weapons were already sailing toward his body the moment they reappeared, and it looked like they tried a surprise attack as a last-ditch-effort.

The four guards were likely around level 40 to 45 from their auras, just a handful of levels shy from entering the ladder. But Zac also sensed that their auras were, for a lack of a better word, hollow. He hadn't sensed anything like it before, but he had learned from Alyn that it likely meant their levels were mostly propped up by pills and crystals rather than battle.

All four of them were sword wielders, and it even looked like they possessed the same skill. The swords lit up in blue flames as they sailed toward Zac's body from four different directions, but Zac opted to not even respond to the attacks, instead only activating the Dao of Hardness across his body.

Four specters appeared and launched attacks the moment the swords landed on his body. It was [Deathwish] that activated, starting the dance of death. Zac could easily have intercepted the attacks with his sword, but he wanted to see the effect of his skill against cultivators since he hadn't sensed any real danger from the attacks.

The results were surprisingly different even though each attack was the same. One of the guards was taken completely by surprise and didn't even react when a spectral sword slit his throat open. He fell down on the ground, and Zac knew the man would bleed out in less than a minute unless he got immediate medical attention.

The second guard managed to react in time and angled his body as he was being attacked, changing the trajectory of the blade as it entered his body. Instead of getting his heart pierced he only got a lung punctured. It was still a pretty bad wound, but not lethal with the existence of healing pills.

A golden shield appeared around the last two warriors, completely blocking the reflected attack. The shield came from a bracer they both wore. They originally had four crystals inlaid, but one of them cracked when the shield blocked the attack.

Pleased with the result of [Deathwish] Zac killed the man on the ground with a stomp as he decapitated the wounded guard with a swing of [Hunger]. His own wounds were negligible, and he only needed to pat his robe a few times to snuff out the flames. A small amount of black ichor ran down his throat from one of the swords hitting his neck, but the swing had barely managed to break his skin.

The remaining two guards looked at Zac with despair, knowing that they never would be able to kill Zac even if he didn't put up any resistance. Zac's body was already far sturdier than that of the Corpse Lord he fought during the beast waves, and only the strongest warriors on Earth would be able to wound him by now.

The two immediately started to run away, they were soon rebuffed by two lightning-quick stabs from a long spear. It was Joanna who had joined the battle, and Nenothep's spear was a blur in her hands as she unleashed a barrage of attacks at the two guards.

Zac stopped in his tracks when he saw the Valkyrie take over, and he looked with interest at how deftly she handled her weapon. The two bodyguards assaulted at her like rabid dogs since she was standing in the way of their escape, and flames danced around them as they tried everything to cut her down. However, she was like an impenetrable spear wall, not budging an inch.

The remaining defensive charges on the guards' bracers were expended in less than 20 seconds, and a few seconds later the last guard fell, his throat torn open by a quick stab from Joanna. The Valkyrie's skills weren't flashy but they were direct and lethal, without any frills or unnecessary motion. Every move she performed was to kill or maim with as little energy expenditure as possible.

When the last of the elite guards fell a suffocated silence spread through the camp, with no one daring to speak up. There was a small group of soldiers who stood rooted at their spot, neither daring to retreat or advance, and the merchants looked like their souls had left their bodies, blankly staring at their downed bodyguards. Even the slaves were completely silent, peeking at the proceedings with sunken eyes.

But suddenly the silence was broken by a shocked scream from Emily.

"Millie!"