

The Fall 339

Chapter 339: Battleroach King

Zac stared at the mouth of the entrance with confusion, not understanding who could have placed an array there. He couldn't imagine anyone managing to sneak all the way down to the bottom of this roach-infested cave system in one piece and not leave a single trace behind.

The effect of the array wasn't limited to simply blocking out the light from the crystals, but it was also hindering most of the green gas from escaping. Judging by the density of the green mist in the tunnel Zac guessed that only 10% of the gasses escaped through the array, if even that.

He carefully looked around the entrance for any array flags, hoping that the design would give a hint of the origins of whoever had placed it there. However, no matter where he looked he couldn't find a hint of the source of the array, making him wonder if this thing might actually be one of the natural formations he had read about.

But a clattering from further inside the tunnel quickly caught Zac's attention, and he slowly moved forward with his axe and shield at the ready. The radiant tunnel turned out to be less than 50 meters long, and he immediately reached another large cave after turning around a bend.

The whole cavern was filled with a green mist, reaching all the way to the ceiling tens of meters in the air. But even with the thick haze he had no trouble seeing what was going on inside. The cave was blasted by the emerald light of the large crystals, and the light pierced through the mist without any trouble.

His eyes only lingered on the surroundings for a fraction of a second as there was something that immediately commanded his attention. A huge hulking battleroach lay unmoving close to the center of the cave, seemingly asleep. The layered carapace along its back slowly moved up and down as though they were fans, but Zac noticed that green mist was continuously being sucked into the gaps beneath the shells.

It was the Battleroach King that commanded the center of the cave, and there were quite a few differences between the king and its subjects. The Battleroach King was completely emerald for instance, rather than the brownish-black of the normal battleroaches. It was also huge, spanning over five meters in length.

Its long legs looked a lot sturdier compared to its brethren, and short serrated blades ran along their length. A casual swipe would likely bisect most people without effort. Its mandibles were enormous, spanning over a meter as well. Finally it even had a large horn, reminding Zac of some beetles.

The presence of the huge battleroach was so intense that Zac didn't notice the other object in the cave for a few seconds. But soon enough he spotted the large stubby mushroom that grew just a few meters away from the large beast.

It was almost a meter tall and had a fat bulbous stalk and a spherical cap. All in all, it looked a lot like a supersized fly agaric, apart from its colors. The stalk was a deep purple while the cap was emerald and studded with black spots. It looked extremely toxic, though Zac had a feeling that actually wasn't the case.

It was the first plant that Zac had seen inside the cave system since entering. More interestingly it looked like the mushroom was the source of the massive clouds of green mist. After putting two and two together he quickly realized that the mushroom was the [Primordial Breath Amanita].

Zac frowned when he saw that the treasure was out in the open. A battle at his level would cause pretty massive shockwaves if he went all out, and he was afraid that the precious mushroom would get ruined.

Then again, the cave was quite massive, a few times larger than the outer caves where thousands of battleroaches had been crammed together. He would simply have to move the battle away from the Amanita. Seeing how close the beast was to the mushroom it should be quite important to it, so it would hopefully comply immediately.

There was nothing else for Zac to do at this moment apart from getting on with it, so he stepped out into the cave and immediately used [Inquisitive Eye]. Zac breathed out in relief when he saw that the beast was level 94, just 2 levels above the minimum required to complete the quest.

Luckily he had only cleared out the last floor to avoid any reinforcements during the battle. If he had slowly made his way down while killing the roaches on each floor there was no way he would have been able to finish the quest for [Profane Seal].

A piercing screech suddenly echoed through the cave as the roach king woke up. It had noticed the prying and it was enraged that someone had encroached upon its domain. Zac wasn't surprised that he had been exposed because his observation skill was truly basic. He immediately ran into the cave, wanting to move as far away from the mushroom as possible.

Zac only had time to take a few steps along the edge of the cave when his danger sense screamed at him. He quickly summoned [Immutable Bulwark] to protect his front, but the next second a huge force lifted the bulwark with lightning speed. The battleroach king used its horn to wedge beneath the shield, and had yanked it up with superior power.

It was the first time his skill had been so effortlessly circumvented by a beast, and Zac barely had time to move his real shield as well before the beast slammed into him with tremendous force. Zac was thrown into the wall with enough momentum to make his head spin, and a few of the crystals embedded in the wall painfully dug into his back.

The attack wasn't over though as the enormous mandibles closed in around him, aiming to split him in two. Zac's brows rose in alarm as he quickly pushed his large shield upward to use it as a wedge, and he immediately infused it with the Dao of Hardness.

But Zac's couldn't believe what he was seeing when the top of the sturdy E-Grade shield was being slowly pincerred, the metal starting to twist and bend as the large mandibles cut into it. Seeing that the shield wouldn't be able to hold for much longer he ducked down and forcibly twisted the shield with all of his power.

The move allowed him to drag the shield out of the battleroach's grip before it was ruined, but ducking down put Zac in clawing distance of the front legs and their sharp blades. A burning pain erupted in his shoulder as one of the legs raked a bleeding gash with its first swipe. The other leg tried to cut open another wound as well, but Zac slammed into it with [Verun's Bite].

A sharp clang echoed across the cave as axe and leg met, and Zac looked with dismay when even his axe barely left a mark. This was a swing empowered by his huge Strength and the Dao of Sharpness, not a random swing from some middling cultivator. At least the collision allowed Zac a breather as the leg was pushed back.

Zac didn't want to stay in such a place surrounded by bladed legs, but he had a feeling that the belly was his best bet if he wanted to cause any real damage to this thing. Miasma surged in his arm as he rushed forward two steps. He blocked another swipe from one of the beast's legs as his arm kept swelling from [Unholy Strike], and with a roar swung upward in a ferocious swing.

The air screamed as [Verun's Bite] went in for the kill, but the huge target above Zac's head suddenly disappeared. Zac looked in all directions, but the roach was nowhere to be seen. But the roaring mists quickly gave a hint as to where the huge beast had run off to; the skies.

A set of huge magical wings spread out from the back of the emerald battleroach king. Their span was only a few meters, but it was obvious the set of wings didn't follow the laws of nature to keep the huge beast afloat. The wings were made from pure emerald energies, looking extremely similar to the lights in the crystals.

"What the fu—" Zac groaned, but he suddenly had to jump out of the way as the flying roach dove for him with terrifying speed.

The ground trembled and gravel shot in all directions when the battleroach king slammed into the ground where Zac had just stood. The shockwave from the collision threw Zac a few meters away, and he shot a glance at the mushroom with alarm.

Sometime during the battle a golden shield had encapsulated the natural treasure, and Zac recognized the System's handiwork immediately. He nodded in relief, knowing that nothing would harm the Amanita even if the two tore the whole cave apart.

The fact that the battleroach managed to crack even the rocky foundation in the cave was a testament just how powerful it was. A level 94 beast was closing in on the level that Inevitability had when he fought it during the hunt, and Zac really felt the pressure. But constant battle had turned Zac's nerves into steel, and he unhesitantly rushed toward the beast as it tried to extricate its mandibles from the ground.

The green mist swirled around him as he jumped forward, his axe swinging down with terrifying momentum. The weapon was once again infused with the Dao of Sharpness as Zac aimed down at a joint in the beast's neck. But a green radiance flashed as a shield appeared right above the joint, stopping Zac's swing in its tracks.

Zac couldn't believe what a cheat-like existence the battleroach king was, even possessing defensive skills on top of its abnormally hard shell. But he refused to give up and jumped up on the back of the beast as he stowed away his shield to grab hold to a shell for balance.

Terrifying swings rained down on the head of the battleroach king, and Zac alternated between the Dao of Heaviness and Dao of Sharpness to crack open the thick plating to kill the beast. If that didn't work he hoped that he would at least be able to cause some blunt force trauma with his powerful attacks.

The roach roared in rage, but no matter how many swings Zac unleashed he couldn't seem to break open its head. But it did start to stumble around, proving that the force was starting to have an effect. Zac resolved to keep slamming down at it, sure that his Spirit Tool would last longer than the brain of the beast.

Suddenly a searing pain erupted in his side, and Zac looked down to see green beam shoot straight through his body and into the wall beyond him, causing a huge scar. Zac screamed in anguish, feeling like his insides were boiling. But he forcibly ignored the pain and quickly looked back to see that the massive wings had changed form to instead form two large arrays, one of which had released a massive beam at him.

The attack had been instantaneous, and not even his danger sense had been able to give a warning in time. Worse yet, it looked like the second array was charging up a similar beam. Zac knew he wouldn't be able to dodge in such close proximity, so he quickly took out his shield and summoned [Immutable Bulwark].

Just a fraction of a second later another terrifying beam hit the bulwark, causing a tremendous impact. Luckily the shield held, but a large amount of Miasma was expended from the blast. But since he had taken out his shield for protection he had let go of the beast, and between the bucking battleroach king and the shockwave he was thrown off from the beast.

A spectral projection looking like the battleroach king bit down at the emerald array hovering above beast's back as Zac was flung away, but it was as though [Deathwish] tried to strike a cloud and it ripped right through. Zac sighed in disappointment when he saw the specter slam down on the extremely thick backplate instead. It looked like destroying the arrays was not an option either.

Zac groaned in pain as the wound in his side made itself reminded from the impact of landing on the ground, but Zac forcibly got back up on his feet. He was unwilling and unable to give up, knowing that if he didn't destroy insectoid tank he'd be trapped down here for a year.