

The Fall 353

Chapter 353: Production Lines

Zac immediately realized the same cloaking technology was being used in the settlement as down in the battleroach cave. The camouflage of the technocrats was truly amazing to completely trick one's eyes while not emitting a speck of cosmic energy.

The drone moved about the desolate town, scanning the buildings one by one. Soon afterward it flew over to the battlefield and scanned the hundreds of corpses that Zac and Ogras had left where they were. Finally it flew over to the newly bought teleportation array and scanned it. Zac frowned and took out [Verun's Bite], readying himself for battle.

"Be patient," Ogras whispered as his eyes were trained on the hidden spot the drone came from. "What do you want to do if people show up?"

"Kill everyone, I don't want anyone escaping through the hub," Zac said without hesitation.

The drone passed around the area a few times, but luckily its scans didn't reach their secluded ledge. Their patience was soon rewarded as a group of Technocrats finally emerged from the cave wall and rushed straight toward the Nexus Hub. Only when the group was half-way there did Zac and Ogras appear in a blast of shadows.

The Technocrats were shocked to see two cultivators appear right in their midst and barely managed to put up a resistance before they all lay dead on the ground. Ogras still had trouble moving about and was forced to fight sitting down on the ground while blasting shadow spears in all directions. Zac was a little better off, but he had to use the axe with his off-hand since his right arm was unusable.

"The quest is completed," Ogras said with excitement after the battle group of Technocrats was finished off.

Zac breathed out in relief since that most likely meant that there were no more invaders around. But he still wanted to make sure.

"Can you keep watch while I check things out?" Zac asked, getting a nod in response.

Zac slowly walked over toward the cloaked entrance in the wall, and he activated the upgraded [Immutable Bulwark] just in case as he stepped through the illusion. The shield soon passed right through the wall, and Zac stopped in his tracks to see if anything happened.

Luckily everything seemed completely fine, so he walked through as well. As expected no Technocrats were lying in wait, and he was only met with silence as he stepped into a large empty space. But he still kept the skill active to see what changes there were since it got upgraded.

The size of the bulwark was pretty much the same as before, but after some testing he realized he now was able to change its size. He could make it almost ten meters wide and four meters high, making it look like a proper rampart, but he could also shrink it down to the size of his tower shield. He was also able to move it within fifty meters of himself, allowing him to use it to defend others with greater ease.

There was no change to the shield itself though. It didn't get thicker or gain any new fractals, making Zac guess that its defensive capabilities were still pretty much the same. Of course, it wasn't the end of the

world since only the cyborg had been able to crack its defenses so far. Zac only played with the skill for a few seconds before refocusing on the scene inside.

The hidden structure was shockingly different compared to the outside, and it felt like he stood inside a hangar of a spaceship. The floor, walls, and ceiling were all made in metal, with electrical lights rather than mushrooms and moss illuminating the area. There was not much to see in the surroundings apart from a few rows of containers full of raw materials, but there was also the tunnel.

The tunnel that the Technocrats had arduously worked on for months could truly be called a marvel of engineering. It was hexagonal with a diameter of roughly twenty meters, and it was also clad in the same metallic walls as the hall. It was completely symmetrical, with not a single blemish or aberration, but most importantly it was long. Extremely long.

Zac felt as though he was looking at an optical illusion when he peered into the endless tunnel that had a straight 45-degree incline. It looked like when one placed two mirrors in front of each other, creating the appearance of an endless tunnel. There was no way for him to see the end, but he guessed a tremendous excavation machine was at the other side, somewhere close to the surface.

There was also a large platform at the entrance of the tunnel, silently hovering a decimeter above the ground. Zac guessed that the platform was a lift that could take one to the top, but he saw no console or buttons to steer it. Besides, he had no intention to enter the tunnel at this juncture, as it would take hours to get to the surface with this thing.

He finally understood what happened after going through the area. The Technocrats who just arrived had most likely been working on the mining rig at the other side of the tunnel when they suddenly got the alert that their Incursion had fallen. They took the lift back down, and only just arrived to see a desolate battlefield and a hill of corpses outside.

Zac took a final look around before returning to the demon's side. There was still a bit over half the time before the Nexus Hub would shut down, so Zac once again sat down to wait it out while recuperating.

Ogras was well enough to get back on his feet around two hours later, so he left for New London to gather provisions and prepare for the rescue of the Port Atwood Army. Zac himself stayed on, and only stood up the moment that the Nexus Hub was inactivated, finally quenching any chance of any unwelcome surprises. The connection between the Technocrats and Earth was finally broken, which would hopefully keep his sister safe for at least a century, perhaps forever.

However, Zac didn't immediately leave the area but instead hurried back toward the battlefield. He had already looted the Cosmos Sacks belonging to the four cultivators and the foreman, but there were still hundreds of bodies lying on the ground with all kinds of precious items scattered about.

Apart from the Technocrats there were also the droves of broken-down machines. Some were destroyed beyond salvation, but a few were somewhat intact. Perhaps some engineers back at Port Atwood would be able to piece together a couple of whole robots from the scraps.

The drones had fallen pretty easily to Zac's assault, but that didn't mean they were weak. A single one of the battle droids would likely be able to defeat the average peak F-Grade warrior. Not only that, but their hulls were also extremely sturdy, and Zac had been forced to sometimes swing twice before destroying them.

Getting a handful of these things to guard his towns would be a huge boon since he was spreading his personnel thin as it was. It was one of the more glaring problems with Port Atwood at the moment; they were lacking people. They had liberated quite a few islands by now, but there were only so many people placed on the remote archipelago.

Zac was also pretty sure he wouldn't be finding too many more citizens stranded on the remaining islands that had yet to be scouted out. The beasts were too strong by now, and the average people would have long been killed. It was the same on the mainland, where fewer and fewer towns remained standing. But the people on the mainland at least had the opportunity to cooperate with others in the area to form larger settlements for protection.

Besides, even if Zac didn't manage to turn these robots into competent footsoldiers they would still be worth salvaging. The machines were made from either some high-grade materials or some impressive composite alloys that the Technocrats created. In either case, he might be able to recast the robots into armors or weaponry.

Zac noted with some annoyance that he actually wasn't the first to scour through the battlefield since he only found a handful of cosmos sacks. The large mecha that Ogras defeated was gone as well, already snatched by the demon. Ogras had most likely looted while fighting since he had been mid-battle up until the cyborg made its appearance.

Luckily there was a lot of ground that the demon hadn't been able to pillage. Neither Ogras nor Zac had entered the structures in the small base camp, and Zac swept through them one by one like a locust. He first hit a warehouse that was filled to the rafters with tens of thousands of ingots of all kinds of metals.

It seemed that they kept a lot of the resources ready on hand for the production lines in the neighboring structure since there was some sort of gravity-defying conveyor-belts connecting the buildings. Zac didn't care about that though and swept all the materials clean.

The next building housed enormous rectangular machines that just looked like large metallic blocks. They reached over ten meters in the air, and their sides were roughly four meters. However, they seemed to be somewhat hastily put together, and not one of them was exactly alike. It looked like they were something the Technocrats had scrounged together to start production as quickly as humanly possible.

Zac didn't understand the function of the large machines, but he guessed that they were some sort of molds that created the robots from scratch. They reminded Zac a bit of the first furnace he bought from the system, the one he used to turn his first batch of raw crystals into real Nexus Crystals.

Unfortunately, there wasn't a repository of freshly made war machines, but that wasn't surprising since they would all have been sent to the battlefield. The large constructors themselves were the real prize in Zac's opinion though, and he would definitely have some people looking into setting up a production plant back on Port Atwood.

Of course, he'd make sure to check them for bugs or any other failsafe. These things could be programmed to blow up like a nuclear bomb in case someone unlicensed personnel tried to operate them for all Zac knew. Jeeves would hopefully be able to assist them in that department.

There was also the issue of hidden risks of using technology. The things Zac had seen from the Technocrats had all seemed extremely convenient. Who wouldn't want a few thousand drones keeping their place safe at all times? It made sense if a clan in the multiverse purchased a batch of goods from the Technocrats for this very purpose.

Yet no one in the multiverse utilized this sort of technology as far as Zac could tell. It made no sense to Zac, who had long realized that there were no such things as morals or scruples amongst the warriors of the multiverse. Such things were luxuries that very few could afford, and he felt that the anti-technology sentiment didn't make sense unless there were something more to it.

That meant that there was something else that held all these forces back, stopping them from using these things. Ogras had mentioned some unknown costs that would outweigh the benefits when modifying one's body, and it was perhaps the same with incorporating technology into one's force. He essentially needed to understand the situation better before he started transforming Port Atwood into some future-city.

But he still stowed away all the machines and everything else in the production plants. He did put all technology-based in a spare Cosmos Sack though, not wanting to mix them with his real belongings. Apart from the constructors, there were a lot of spare parts, and a row of extremely heavy tubes that Zac suspected were some sort of high-tech batteries. Each one of them was only as long as his legs, but they weighed more than a car.

In the rest of the buildings there wasn't much of interest as most were just residential structures crammed full of bunk beds. He did find what looked like a laboratory, but it seemed to have been ransacked. Perhaps it once belonged to the researcher that Zac killed, and his place was searched for clues when he never returned to the camp.

He also found what he suspected was the foreman's house and study, and he made sure to take anything that might be worth something there. He even broke apart the walls and floor in search for hidden compartments, but there was nothing of the sort. It hopefully meant that everything of value was kept in his Cosmos Sack that Zac had already looted.

He had briefly scanned the five Cosmos Sacks belonging to the E-Grade warriors, but he didn't have time to properly check everything out. The Sacks belonging to the lightning cultivators weren't very exciting at least. They just contained a decent amount of Nexus Crystals along with various pills and daily necessities. They would likely have left their real assets back home before entering the incursion.

Zac had hoped that the cultivators would have things that would give him a nice boost when he finally reached E-Grade. But 8 months had passed since the Integration by now, and the four had likely already used all such resources on themselves by now. The foreman's sack was filled with all sorts of things, but most were of technological origin, so Zac didn't understand their purpose.

Content that there was nothing left of value Zac finally got back to New London. On his return he learned that Ogras had already left for Port Atwood, and was asked to meet him there. Zac didn't mind and soon enough he stood in his private Teleportation room in his compound, he immediately found the demon after stepping outside.

"How are you feeling?" Zac asked when he saw that Ogras still looked a bit pale.

Honestly, he didn't feel much better himself, and he just wanted to lay down and sleep for a bit. But he couldn't do that just yet and instead used his transformation skill to change to his human form.

"I'll survive," Ogras muttered after Zac stood up again. "Everything is prepared. Are you ready to go?"

"I'll just head over to the Mystic Realm to tell Kenzie that we're okay but that we're heading out again," Zac said.

The demon didn't object, and the two entered Kenzie's study within the Mystic Realm a few minutes later.

"Wow, the two of you look like walking corpses," Kenzie said with shock when she saw their bedraggled appearances. "Are you trying to blend in with the Undead?"