

The Fall 361

Chapter 361: An Overdue Meeting

"What's the point of delaying the stay?" Zac asked with a frown.

"There are all kinds of reasons. The Tower of Eternity is the gathering place of young elites and a way for forces who would never be able to contact each other to interact. It's a great opportunity for trading or making connections. Some of the larger forces have a permanent presence there, hosting auctions or the like," Ogras explained with excitement glimmering in his eyes.

"Auctions?" Zac said, his eyes lighting up. "You think we might be able to find a soul-mending treasure for sale?"

"Perhaps," Ogras said with hesitation. "But you should know we're just country bumpkins compared to most people that are there, and there are no restrictions on the wealth they bring. Some bring tens of billions in spending money, and soul-mending treasures are always in demand. I brought a billion nexus coins I got from my grandpa last time, yet I was only a small fish over there."

Zac frowned in realization. It was true that his net worth was a few billion even excluding the shipyard and the repository, but a lot of it came from the mountain of gear that he looted from Rydel and the hunt. If he easily could convert all that to real money he would have long done so.

There was a significant pile of Nexus Crystals accumulated from the mining operations, but that would make up less than a Billion Nexus Coins even if he sold it all at Calrin's. A C-grade powerhouse might make more than Zac's whole net worth in a day or two from exploring a Mystic Realm. So the financial prowess of old established forces was something that Zac couldn't even dream of matching up against.

He remembered how Average offered a Billion Nexus Coins just for Zac to back off and let him fight the Star Ox. If he encountered such a scion who wanted the soul mending for himself there was no way he could compete. Zac suddenly felt quite impoverished for the first time in a long while.

"Don't look so glum," Ogras snorted. "We'll figure something out. Besides, auctions are not only about spending strength. If we gather enough funds to seriously overspend we'll most likely win the treasure in an auction. Even most rich scions would stop at a certain point unless they really need the item, as they would look like wasteful idiots who are only good at spending their parent's money otherwise."

"Can we rob people over there?" Zac suddenly asked. "In case we get outbid."

He didn't relish the idea of turning to robbery, but if it came down to it some thievery was nothing compared to what he had already done. If snatching a Cosmos Sack would save his people's lives, then he would do so. Of course, stealing was the last possible solution if they truly ran out of options.

"Rob people?" Ogras said as his eyes widened, clearly not liking Zac's idea. "Don't even think about it. There's technically no laws over there, but it's very uncommon for daylight robbery to take place."

"Why not? A bunch of rich targets from another side of the cosmos. It seems like a pretty good place to rob someone," Zac said with confusion. "Chances are you'll never see them again afterward."

"It's not that easy. The Ruthless Heavens will restrict you if you attack someone," Ogras said with a shake of his head. "You can't just snatch the Cosmos Sack and disappear, teleporting out will get a one

minute delay. I've heard that even a quest might be created to take you down, depending on what you did. Besides, there's the issue of treasures."

"What do you mean?" Zac frowned.

It sounded like the System didn't directly stop you from robbing people, but you needed the strength to survive the ordeal. It was almost like a quest for the robber as well. You can rob someone, but you needed to survive for a minute to keep your spoils.

"The Ruthless Heavens restricts what treasures you can bring to the Tower of Eternity," Ogras explained.

"Like the hunt?" Zac asked with a frown, not wanting to leave behind all his stuff again.

"Not exactly. You can bring as many items as you want, but defensive and offensive treasures are limited to E-Grade. Raw materials and other types of treasures can be D-Grade, likely since the Ruthless Heavens wants to give young elites a chance to trade valuable items that can help them grow," Ogras said.

"So what's the problem then?" Zac asked. "I already have E-Grade defensive gear and an E-Grade Spirit Tool Weapon."

"Yes, but both are at low stage," Ogras snorted. "Made for Peak F-Grade warriors and the recently evolved. But what if someone takes out a peak E-Grade defensive treasure to block your attack, then a peak E-Grade offensive array to attack you. Mind you, the [Void Ball] you threw at the Technocrat monstrosity was a High E-Grade item, not peak."

Zac frowned, finally understanding what Ogras was getting at. If some rich guy snatched the soul healing treasure out from under his nose it was also possible that he brought some extremely strong defenses, since he was already wealthy.

"How is that fair?" Zac muttered with annoyance. "So some rich guy can just rip through the tower with the help of his family's wealth? Just throw out thousands of offensive arrays at everything around him?"

"Having a rich family or strong friends is a strength in of itself," Ogras smiled. "The Multiverse was never fair, and neither is the Ruthless Heavens. Just look at yourself with all your Progenitor titles or the other Earthlings with their Tutorial title, how is that fair? But the tower tests potential in the end, and external strength gets more and more restricted the further up the tower you progress."

"But those restrictions don't apply to the town outside?" Zac asked, understanding what the demon was getting at.

"Exactly," Ogras nodded. "That's why there's so little violence outside apart from the occasional village idiot who doesn't understand the immensity of the heavens and earth. No one knows what hidden tricks the other people are carrying around. Starting a fight might kill you, even if you're the young master of a large clan."

"Okay, you've sold me," Zac finally said with a nod. "We're heading to the tower as soon as we're ready. I just want to reach the peak of E-Grade in my second class to get the quests, and we need to figure out the Dao Funnel as well."

"Agreed," Ogras nodded. "But we're truthfully running out of time. We can only delay these hordes from completing the Terraforming Array for so long. We will probably need a week or two in the tower to accomplish all our goals, so we can't just go at the last minute either."

"I know," Zac sighed, all too aware of the constraint of times.

Where was the peak quality Clone Technique when he needed it? Splitting up into ten people to hit all his targets at once would make his life so much easier. But he knew he was stuck in the middle of the wilderness for the time being, so he could only make the most of it.

Since Zac had figured out his next steps there was nothing much else to do. He asked his sister to pause on the Technocrat research, and instead double down on the Dao Funnel. Meanwhile the two returned to switching between pondering on the Dao while riding in one of the cars and keeping watch for enemies.

But Zac's mind was unable to properly calm down, and his brain was constantly churning in an effort to solve all the various issues that plagued him and his people.

On the sixth day since setting out Zac was making some small talk with a couple of the Valkyries and John, the American expat he once met outside Eastern Hills. John had initially been a bit awkward around Zac after reuniting, even apologizing for trying to recruit him into his small zombie hunting party back when Zac went under the alias David. But he soon calmed down after seeing that Zac didn't carry himself like some Emperor or ruthless warlord.

It was a nice break to just hang around a bit. He needed a break from constantly running back and forth to make sure the world wasn't ending. But his a small spike of danger suddenly appeared in his mind, and Zac instinctively looked in the distance, trying to find the source of the feeling. The Valkyries looked at him in confusion, proving that they hadn't noticed anything amiss.

"Is something wrong?" Jenna, one of the Valkyries, asked.

"It's nothing," Zac said with a shake of his head. "Thought I heard something. I'll check it out just in case."

"Do you need us to come with?" another Valkyrie asked with a frown.

"No, that's okay," Zac smiled. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

With that he activated [Loamwalker], disappearing in a flash. He quickly moved toward a small hill in the distance, each step moving him dozens of meters forward.

When he saw the person on the other side of the hill his eyes widened in alarm as a storm of leaves erupted around him. His axe had already appeared in his hand as Zac was mentally preparing for a fight for his life.

It was a Zhix warrior who was sitting on a chair, clearly waiting for him. Zac instantly knew the insectoid was bad news because he was completely unable to sense it even the thing it sat just ten meters away from him, leisurely inspecting him with interest. It was just like with his meeting with Inevitability, though this clearly wasn't the same person. This Zhix looked older, and it emitted a cultured aura.

There were no weapons that Zac could see, but that didn't mean he was unarmed. He was wearing a robe that was a bit similar to Zac's own get-up that he got from Yrial, but the Zhix's went in a maroon hue. It made the insectoid emit a slightly sinister aura even though its otherwise refined appearance.

"Do not worry, I am not here to fight you. I am not as prone to violence as my daughter," the Zhix smiled. "Our meeting was long overdue, so I thought we should have a chat."

"Void's Disciple?" Zac said as he kept his distance, not daring to sit down in the empty seat.

"So cautious. Well, it makes sense after your meeting with my child," he smiled.

"Daughter?" Zac couldn't help himself from confirming since that wasn't nomenclature that should exist among the Zhix.

"Well, that's how I see those two. They were the last survivors of a branch that was almost completely eradicated during the War of Emancipation. I raised them from ignorant children scurrying in the darkness to great warriors in service of our Lord. I am not sure if they see me as a father though," the Zhix smiled. "I only learned the name for it after arriving here, since we have diverged from the old to embrace the new."

"So, what do you want?" Zac asked instead of delving further into Zhix pronouns or genealogy.

"I have come to talk to you about the Undead Empire," Void's Disciple simply said.

"I guess you want me to take care of them for you so that you don't get your boss in trouble?" Zac snorted, not bothering to hide his disdain.

"Did Salvation tell you?" the Zhix asked with a shake of his head. "It's an embarrassing story that one. He somehow found the inheritance that the Lord left for us. Unfortunately my ancestors underestimated the power of the Zhix legions, causing us to lose the war. Our Holy land was lost as well, and along with it much knowledge."

"And you're not here for revenge?" Zac said with suspicion.

"No, his talent was high but his mind was already broken before he found the opportunity. He mixed up our grand undertaking with the religion of your old world, making him inadvertently work against his own master," Void said with disdain. "Perhaps him joining his so-called Unity was the greatest outcome."

"In any case, does my reasoning matter why I want to assist you? You have your path to follow, as do I. I can see it in your eyes and through your actions. You carry the hopes of your people on your shoulders, and only you have the strength to fulfill those dreams. You are nothing like that crafty little beastman who cares more about profits and image than his people," Void said. "He is currently working toward getting his hands on a teleportation token rather than fighting the invaders."

Zac stared at Void's Disciple for a few seconds, not sure what to say. Honestly, what he was saying was true. He knew he had to close the Undead Incursion as soon as possible, even if it helped the Dominators as well. The alternative was to let the whole planet get terraformed, and that was not something he would allow no matter what.

"I met with the Lich controlling the undead incursion not long ago," Void suddenly added, making Zac's eyes widen in shock. "He is quite strong. Taking him down will not be easy."

"We're aware," Zac tersely said.

"I'm sure," the Zhix smiled. "But are you aware that the array they are building is already functional?"