

The Fall 364

Chapter 364: Crusade

Zac was back in New London soon enough after changing back to his Mr. Black persona, and he was relieved that nothing too alarming happened while he was gone. The two incursions who previously traded with the Union had begun raiding settlements in the area, but Zac was already about to deal with them in any case.

Verana and her Beast Masters didn't need a lot of prodding as most of them were bored from staying put in New London or taking stock of the various properties that were previously owned by the Union. They got ready for war in less than an hour after hearing that they were going to battle with the Abyssal Demons. Zac knew that closing the Incursion of an elite Demonkin species would likely count as a great achievement for their people, and eagerness could be seen on their faces as they streamed toward the teleporter.

The demons who Zac initially brought to the Underworld still hadn't entered the real Underworld due to the presence of the Abyssal Demons. Some of them had stood ready in the hidden cave beneath the Underworld Nexus, whereas others had helped Mr. Trang in scouting out the massive continent above. Those who had been stuck in the darkness for weeks were all too happy when Zac instructed them to secure the Technocrat Incursion as soon as possible. He only had time for a quick sweep after the fight, and there might be more things of value in the area.

Six hours later Zac and his punitive army stood some distance from the demon Incursion. They had long been spotted by some flying bat-thing, which apparently was the demon version of a drone according to Verana, and the demons were waiting for them. There was no way that they would manage to sneak attack these guys.

The Abyssal Demons had built a decent-sized city in the open Underworld, which formed a half-circle against a mountain wall. Zac couldn't really see, but he suspected the demons had dug into the wall for resources, as large plumes of smoke rose from the back of the town, indicating there might be furnaces or some other sort of industry there.

The town itself was covered in a reddish glow from an Array, and it seemed quite sturdy. Billy was not available this time, so Zac turned to Verana for ideas on how to get int. He would no doubt be able to crack it open with [Nature's Punishment], but he wanted to fight in his undead form.

"Grub can probably cause a crack in the array, which would allow you to sneak inside. But he would get killed even before he got close," Verana said with hesitation.

"I can protect him," Zac said as he looked over at the wall in the distance. "Unless they have someone over level 100 my shield will hold."

"Okay, so jump on board," Verana smiled as Grub appeared out of nowhere, and the furry beast quickly grew to its real size.

Zac had already learned that most Beast Masters could keep their pets in some sort of stasis in their bodies. However, the tamed beasts couldn't cultivate while in stasis, so most of the time they were kept

in the open. It did however allow them to conjure their pets in the middle of the fight, surprising the enemy.

Slither woke up from its nap on Verana's shoulder, and it started to rapidly grow as well. It ballooned into a terrifying beast reaching over thirty meters in length. Even Zac's hair stood on end when he saw the transformation, but he quickly jumped on top of Grub's head and took out his replacement shield. It was nowhere near as good as the large tower shield he found in the hunt, but it would allow him to activate his skills.

Zac nodded down at Verana who raised a thin sword.

When Grub saw his master's signal he opened his impossibly large maw and emitted a resounding bellow before it slammed its mouth shut, releasing a shockwave by the collision of its large slabs for teeth.

It started rushing forward with a speed that belied its short stubby legs, and the army behind started to follow as soon as there was a comfortable distance. Hundreds of purple fireballs rose from the demon town to meet the charge, and Zac quickly summoned [Immutable Bulwark] and expanded it to its largest possible size.

Even then it wasn't enough to properly protect the huge beast, so Zac infused the shield with the Seed of Sanctuary to make it even larger. However, Grub wasn't completely helpless himself, and he deftly dodged quite a few of the attacks to lessen Zac's burden.

The next moment Zac's vision swam, and he suddenly found himself looking around in confusion. His surroundings had changed, but he quickly realized that he was right above the expansive town. Grub had somehow teleported, just like when the two fought the first time he met Verana, and it started to descend with amazing momentum.

Zac quickly readjusted his shield as he unleashed his Dao Field rifle with Heaviness. He wasn't able to infuse the large beast directly, so he could only slightly increase their momentum with the help of his Dao.

Grub didn't need much help though as he landed like a furry meteor on the shield, and it immediately cracked to let the two through. Unfortunately, the array seemed to have impressive healing capabilities, and the damage had almost completely healed by the time they landed with a tremendous crash that toppled a dozen buildings around them.

Zac quickly activated [Fields of Despair] as he looked around for the control crystal that supported the Defensive Array. Destroying the control crystal wouldn't destroy the whole array, but it would no longer be supplied with energy. From there Verana and the others should be able to quickly whittle down the array to gain entry to the town. That meant that Zac and Grub were isolated inside the town for now, but he wasn't too worried about it.

He soon spotted a command platform with an enormous Abyssal Demon wielding a jagged two-hand sword on his back. To his side there were two skinny, for the massive Abyssal Demons, demons who stood in front of a large crimson crystal, continuously infusing it with power. A third demon was quickly exchanging a handful of crystals to replenish the lost energy from Grub's descent.

Zac prodded the large beast, and it immediately understood what Zac wanted to do. Unfortunately it seemed it was unable to teleport once again in such short succession. With a lack of better options it started to rush straight ahead with undeniable momentum. The beast also started slamming its teeth to cause massive shockwaves that spread like waves of destruction toward the demons who hurriedly got down from the wall to form a new defensive line.

Dozens of attacks soared toward the charging beast, but Zac immediately activated [Immutable Bulwark] once more to erect a shimmering wall covering the two from all directions, effectively turning Grub into a fortified bulldozer.

Screams and wails echoed across the battlefield as Grub's attacks and [Deathwish] started to cause mayhem, but a sudden sense of danger made Zac immediately perk up and infuse himself with the Dao of Hardness. His eyes immediately found the demon leader who had gripped his sword and swung it in a massive arc that seemed to make the air itself crackle.

Zac's eyes widened and he immediately changed his tactic to infuse his bulwark with the Dao of Hardness instead of Sanctuary. It shrunk the shield considerably, leaving Grub's flanks open, but it significantly increased the sturdiness of the shield.

A tremendous arc of pure power shot out from the demon lord's sword, and it ripped through the air with terrifying momentum. Even buildings were cut in two and crushed from the residual shockwave as it sped toward them, but Zac was ready to intercept the strike with his skill.

The whole town shuddered when the blade of energy slammed into Zac's bulwark, and he immediately lost a surprisingly large chunk of Miasma. But Zac breathed out in relief when he realized the power of the swing was well within his limits, and the bulwark wouldn't crack like when he fought the Cyborg.

However, the next second a large wound appeared across his chest, and the black ichor in his body started to freely flow down his chest. Even Grub received a nasty wound across its side, and he bellowed in pain as he glared around in all directions to find who hurt him. Zac's eyes met the Demon Lord's in the distance, and he immediately changed strategy. It wouldn't be so easy to charge the platform like this.

"Big guy, head toward the gate and blow it up, ok?" Zac said to Grub beneath him and it bellowed in understanding.

The Demon Lord kept shooting out his odd attacks, but Zac deftly controlled his defensive skill to swap between the large coverage and the smaller but sturdier one. But wounds still kept accumulating across their bodies, and Zac realized there was no way for him to completely block out the damage.

Zac wasn't exactly sure what was going on, but he had a suspicion that the Demon Lord had something akin to a Seed of Penetration that reached Peak Mastery at the least. Perhaps it was even a Fragment. Part of the attack simply side-stepped all his defenses, rendering them ineffectual.

Luckily both Zac and Grub were extremely durable, so the beast made it to the gate without any life-threatening wounds. The gate turned into scrap metal with a tremendous crash as the beast rammed straight into it. The moment Zac saw that Grub was out in one piece he jumped off the beast and stomped his foot in the ground, and the next moment he disappeared.

Zac immediately reappeared in front of the control crystal and stomped into the ground again before those around him could react, activating [Profane Seal]. The five towers rose out of the ground as the world turned monochromatic due to the influx of massive amounts of miasma into the area, the change was so sudden that Zac actually managed to kill one of the captains with a quick swing before the others had time to back away.

The Demon Lord was clearly the largest threat, so the five spectral chains flew directly toward him in a bid to seal his dangerous attacks. But Zac barely had time to destroy the control crystal with [Hunger] before one of the chains was riddled with cracks. Zac frowned when he saw it, but he kept using three of the chains to occupy the lord while he used the other two in quickly dealing with the remaining two mages who stood next to the crystal.

A torrent of black corrosive clouds also spread out across the field as Zac took deep breaths while he fought, and the clouds intermingled with the miasmic haze from [Fields of Despair]. Screams of pain and rage already echoed across the cage as a large number of trapped soldiers started to get wounded by retaliatory strikes from [Deathwish] when trying to escape the entrapment.

The miasma inside Zac's body surged as it kept dropping only to increase again due to the continuous cycle formed between [Deathwish] and [Fields of Despair]. However, he realized that he would run out of miasma soon enough, as it was overall quite costly to keep this many warriors trapped.

But the Demon Lord didn't give Zac any time to thin the number of enemies as he suddenly roared before he literally caught fire, and the conflagration around him pushed away all of Zac's attacks. The chains were unable to pass through the purple flames without quickly melting, and even the clouds from [Winds of Decay] were burnt to cinders as they got close.

The demon sneered at Zac as he lifted his enormous sword toward the sky, and the next moment a hundred-meter version of that very sword appeared above the cage. The sword emitted a tremendous sharpness, and it reminded Zac of the time when he looked at the enormous axe in his Dao Vision.

The sword ruthlessly stabbed into the fractal in the sky, and a large crack immediately appeared on one of the towers. A spectral demon appeared at the same moment, stabbing at the Demon Lord. However, the stab barely harmed the demon lord, and he only laughed uproariously as he seemed to be consumed by battle lust.

Zac wasn't as happy as a new wound had appeared on his back the moment the sword in the sky stabbed down on the shield he had created. It was the same as the earlier strikes, where part of the force went right through his defenses.

But Zac wouldn't give in against something so minor. The Tal-Eladar had already broken through the town defense array since the control crystal was destroyed, and Zac spotted Verana riding her enormous snake outside, causing utter mayhem amongst the demonkin ranks.

The fight outside was clearly pitched, as two of the demons outside had actually turned into 10-meter giants to curtail the snake's wanton destruction. The demons didn't seem deterred just because their leaders were locked inside [Profane Seal] at all, and they unhesitantly threw themselves into the meat grinder while emitting guttural roars.

Zac didn't have time to worry about that as he rushed toward the Demon Lord as he swung his sword with tremendous force. He had already changed the size of [Immutable Bulwark] to that of a normal tower shield, allowing him to use the skill rather than his subpar replacement shield to block the demon's sword.

The fires burned around him, and Zac was forced to continuously release Miasma from his body to not get burnt, but he wouldn't let up as the two exchanged one brutal attack after another. Neither would back down a single step and both were more than happy to gain another wound if they could retaliate in kind.

Eventually, Zac started to get the upper hand even though the Demon possessed surprising power and the mysterious ability to always cause some damage. Zac was simply too durable. The Abyssal Demon seemed to have some innate advantages due to his race, but it couldn't match up the power of pure attributes.

Zac suddenly saw an opening as he suddenly threw away his shield when the demon swung too wide due to exhaustion. Zac quickly grabbed the arm of his opponent and yanked it, making the demon stumble forward. The demon didn't even have time to find his balance before [Hunger] fell toward his neck with ruthless finality.

The large horned head of the Demon Lord thumped into the ground, and it was the sound symbolized the beginning of the end for the Abyssal Demons.