

The Fall 368

Chapter 368: Glimthain

Joanna initially wanted Zac to hold a rousing speech as well, but he staunchly refused. Instead, a few Valkyries walked alongside the army and told the news about how only one incursion remained, and that they were heading to war against the Fire Golems.

The procession only stopped when they reached the teleportation station, where the back-up from the surface already stood.

"You set things up at Rennbach while I visit the Council," Zac told Verana as he jumped down from Grub's head.

Glimthain was quite far from the Fire Golem Incursion, so teleporting the whole army there would be a pretty huge waste of resources. Teleportation costs were already by far the largest drain on Port Atwood's resources, so he decided to send the army directly to the frontier town to prepare. He also didn't want to cause some misunderstanding by bringing an army on his first visit to the Underworld Council.

Verana quickly agreed, and Zac indicated for the young woman that worked for the Underworld Council to open the array. Her name was Linn, and she had arrived together with the Councillors back when they visited New London after the Union takeover. Linn immediately complied and entered the array along with Zac and Joanna, while the rest waited for the array close down.

Soon enough the trio reappeared in another grand hall, but Zac's eyes widened in alarm when he saw four enormous cannons trained on the platform he stood on. They were even larger than the monstrosities the Ishiate tinkers on Port Atwood had created, with their barrels having a diameter of almost two meters.

Zac's first instinct was to take out his axe and quickly destroy them, but he realized that no one was preparing to fire them. It looked like a defensive measure in case enemies stepped through the array. Luckily they had the ambassador with them, otherwise the welcome might have been quite different.

"This way, sir," Linn said as she led them past the cannons and defensive line of soldiers who curiously looked at him.

"Can you take us to the council immediately?" Zac said. "I don't have much time to spare."

"Certainly, they await your arrival," the ambassador answered without hesitation and the group exited the fortified structure.

Zac and Joanna curiously looked around when they stepped outside of the building, and Zac whistled with surprise when he saw what Glimthain looked like. He had always considered the modern faction of the Ishiate to be somewhat steampunk, and this town truly made that impression stronger. Cramped structures fought for space within massive brass walls that were lined with all kinds of brass weaponry.

A glance at the wall told him that at least a hundred cannons were fastened to the wall walk, and even some rooftops were equipped with ranged siege weaponry. He saw multiple ballistae that appeared to

be relying on steam pressure for example. The houses themselves were covered in tubes, and no matter where he looked it seemed to be one pipe or another leaking gas or water vapors.

The town was well illuminated by a mix of Day crystals and gaslights lining the streets, and it seemed to be rush-hour since the streets were filled with people. It was a truly chaotic scene as there were not only pedestrians, but a mix of modern cars and other odd machines that forced their way through the jumble. The chaos wasn't helped by the constant eruption of steam whistles and honks from the cars.

"Oh wow," Joanna said. "How do people live like this?"

"It took some getting used to," Linn said with some embarrassment. "Too many have lost their homes, and the town has become completely overcrowded by now. A new town has even started to grow outside of the walls since there simply is no room left within. Those buildings regularly get destroyed during the attacks of beasts in the area, but the inner town is one of the safest places in the Underworld due to all the weaponry."

Zac understood as well that people normally wouldn't live in such an environment, but the dangers lurking in the dark were just too abundant, and it was better to live in squalor than getting eaten by a bat or killed by the Flame Golems. The group immediately entered a jeep that waited for them, and it thankfully only needed to drive a short distance to a grand castle in the center of the town.

The castle itself reminded Zac of a larger version of the main hall of the Cogstown, the Ishiate settlement under his control. But this castle was far larger, and it was not only equipped by a huge number of weapons pointing at the sky, but there were even three zeppelins slowly floating around it.

"This way, sir," a guard said as Zac stepped out of the car.

"Zac!" a familiar shout could be heard from the distance just as Zac was about to enter the palace, and he looked over with a smile.

It was Emily who was running over, dragging along a slightly embarrassed woman in her early twenties. It was no doubt Emily's sister as she was essentially an adult version of the brat. Zac glanced at her to approximate her strength, and he was surprised to see that there was a faint aura around her.

It meant that even if she wasn't a Ranker she wouldn't be too far off, and she had likely gained a Dao seed judging by the spirituality around her. It looked like not only Emily was a talent when it came to cultivation, but her sister was as well. Then again, it shouldn't be too surprising that they had good genes since all three siblings turned out to be cultivators.

"She's pretty, right?" Emily grinned when she noticed that Zac looked at her sister curiously. "She's very single as well."

"Idiot, what do you mean by very single?" Johanna said with some embarrassment as she gently slapped the back of Emily's head. She then turned back to Zac who looked at the two with some amusement. "I am Johanna Larkin. I owe you a great debt of gratitude. If it wasn't for your intervention I would be without any family."

"It was no problem," Zac said with a sigh, giving Emily a consoling look.

It seemed like the brother had truly fallen back then after all. Emily looked downcast for a second before she looked up again with an intense stare.

"Are you here to destroy the Flame Golems?"

"Yeah," Zac said without any preamble.

"Great!" Emily said with burning eyes. "We will help you kill those guys!"

"You can come, but be careful. We don't have a lot of ways to deal with a room flooding with lava," Zac said as he handed over two large balls. "Use this in case you run out of options."

"What's this?" Emily asked with sparkling eyes as she held the two crystals that seemed to have a small snowstorm inside.

"Fire extinguisher," Zac said with a smile. "Perhaps it will slow the magma long enough for you to escape in case things go south. I need to speak with the Council now, come with me if you want."

"I can't go there, I am just a captain," Johanna said with a quick shake of her head as Zac started, but Emily only dragged her along with a giggle.

"Who cares, being with this guy is like having an all-access pass," the teenager smiled as she walked over to Joanna's side.

The four were led into a large chamber with a massive circular table made from steel and brass. There were already 13 people sitting there, with representatives from all races. Six were humans, while there were 3 Ishiate and 3 Molemen. Finally, a single Zhix sat to the side.

Zac was a bit surprised by the somewhat even distribution as there were at least five times as many humans in the underworld compared to the molemen and Ishiate combined. But perhaps it was by design so that the humans on the council wouldn't bully the others. Zac was also quite surprised by the presence of a Zhix, but perhaps it simply was a representative for its hive.

The 13 people took up half the table, giving Zac ample room as he sat down on the other side. Emily unceremoniously sat down next to him, but Joanna immediately dragged her back to stand a few steps behind with herself and Johanna. The teenager shot the Valkyrie a glare, but only received another slap in the back of her head from her sister.

"Lord Atwood, It is an honor to finally meet you," one of the molemen spoke up. "I am Romal, the current speaker for the council."

Zac had already read an information package on the Council during the days he stayed in the Union Headquarters, and he knew that the speaker was simply a rotating position amongst the council, and it changed person every month.

"It's nice to meet you all as well," Zac nodded. "You should know why I'm here."

"I won't hide anything from you, things have deteriorated quite a bit on the surface. When your Councillors met your general a few weeks ago he spoke about the Great Redeemer, who is still a looming threat to our planet. But we have a more immediate threat that will destroy Earth within two months unless we do something.

"The Undead Empire is currently singlehandedly fighting against all the combined forces of the world, and they still have the upper hand. Even the other invaders have joined in battle with us, but the zombies are pretty strong. We need assistance," Zac said, immediately divulging his reason for visiting.

"So you're not here about the Flame Golems?" one of the human Councilors said with disappointment.

"No, don't get me wrong. My generals have already closed the other four Incursions of the Underworld, and I am here to immediately close the Flame Golem Incursion. The reason isn't simply benevolence. I need your armies to come with me to the surface afterward," Zac said. "Immediately."

"I am not questioning your motives, but I am a bit unclear on something," one of the human councilors said. "Your force is strong enough to close four incursions without you even lifting a finger, something that would be impossible for us. If you still can't deal with these zombies, what use are we?"

Zac sighed and explained the situation with the array, and the dozens of massive undead hordes that were still drawing the lines for the massive array.

"So you need more armies to take down the hordes and destroy the array, while you focus on the leaders in the middle..." Romal muttered in understanding.

The meeting kept going for a few hours, where Zac essentially reiterated the situation on the surface and the various threats that Earth still faced. It was easy to see that the gravity of the situation was causing some shock to the Councillors, but he kept narrating what was going on with brutal honesty.

Of course, there were some details that he left out, such as the disappearance of Abbot Everlasting Peace, the Dao Funnel, and the situation with the Mystic Realm. Everything was to push them toward the decision to join the fight without delay.

All three of the molemen on the council were in the top 5 on their ladder, and the lowest rank amongst the others was rank 20. All apart from one were also on the Dao Ladder. These people made a stronger faction than anyone on the surface, barring Port Atwood. Neither the Marshall Clan nor the New World Government could boast of having nearly as many peak elites.

Getting these people to the surface to fight the zombies was Zac's greatest priority. The hours passed as the two factions ironed out the details until Zac finally left with his group in tow. A small smile adorned his face when he sat down in the car, and he didn't even mind the chaotic swirl of people crammed around the vehicle as it drove through the streets.

Zac was quite pleased with the results of the meeting as he returned to the teleportation array with his group in tow. The Council was far more utilitarian compared to the shrewd Marshall Clan, and things were sorted out quite quickly. The Underworld Council would immediately join the battle against the Undead provided that the Fire Golems were dealt with.

They even went so far as to promise to bring their whole force, leaving just enough manpower to protect their settlements from the beasts in the area. All in all, they would bring almost two hundred thousand experienced warriors, and they would cover the teleportation expenses themselves.

Of course, Zac knew their choice was not only about saving Earth. They wanted to bring enough strength to secure a corner of the surface, turning it into their own kingdom. Zac could understand their decision,

as Humans and Ishiate were ultimately not built to permanently live underground, and many would no doubt want to live under the blue sky again.

The Council didn't explicitly tell Zac about their plan, but their intentions were quite clear from their line of questions. Zac himself didn't mind at all, feeling their decision made sense. If it was one thing that new earth possessed in abundance, then it was free space. The expansion in size of the planet and the monumental losses amongst the four species had resulted in massive stretches of unclaimed land.

The amount of high-quality land was far more limited though, such as lands close to Nexus Veins or other valuable resources. Those kinds of places were few and far between, though Zac had already claimed a large percentage of those places through closing the Incursions.

The armies of the council would also participate in the upcoming battle. They would assault the massive area under the control of the Flame Golems from almost a dozen tunnel systems simultaneously in a bid to spread out the golems' forces. It would hopefully allow Zac to strike at the core with less resistance.

Zac felt the idea was perfect as he stepped through the teleporter to join his forces. The fight against the Fire Golems would essentially be a practice-run for their battle against the Lich King and his forces.