

The Fall 378

Chapter 378: Fallout

There were unmoving bodies in not only the outer layer, but even in the inner one where his core people were seated. Just a glance around indicated that over a third of those who entered the building were lying on the ground right now.

His sister looked tired but otherwise fine, and she was currently walking around trying to help others with the help of Janos. The illusionist seemed to be mostly fine, though it was always a bit hard to tell with that man. Perhaps he had an easier time resisting the mental corruption due to having Wisdom as his main attribute.

Zac grimaced when he saw Emily shakily helping Joanna to her feet, both of them looked ready to keel over from the simple action. Next to Joanna one of the Valkyries lay unmoving in a pool of blood, and her bloodstained eyes were blankly staring into the beyond.

"Don't blame yourself. This is what it is to be a cultivator; braving death for a chance at greatness," a hoarse voice echoed from behind, and Zac slowly turned over to see Ogras. "Besides, not all of them are dead. Some are just in a coma."

The demon was pale as a sheet and his hand was visibly trembling. There was even blood running down his nose and from one of his ears.

"Are you okay?" Zac asked with a frown.

"I'll need to rest for a day or two," Ogras said without hesitation as he ate a healing pill. "Did you... Did you see a lot of visions as well?"

"Scenes of me killing people and dying. Even scenes of complete strangers. It was a chaotic mess that happened over and over," Zac nodded.

"What's going on," Ogras muttered as his bloodshot eyes turned to the funnel. "It shouldn't be like this... Unless?"

"Unless what?" Zac asked.

"Resentment," the demon concluded. "The Origin Dao was dragged out of that lunatic's victims at their time of death, and perhaps their resentment and other negative feelings came with and tainted the Origin Dao. Perhaps that was even the plan. The gathered resentment of a whole planet would contain shocking power."

Zac nodded in agreement, though this wasn't the time to discuss the topic. He instead started walking around the people to check on their condition. He also opened up the array to let the doctors enter, giving strict instructions for everyone to not look at the walls and avoid loud noises. A few, like Ryan, were still in a meditative pose and couldn't be disturbed, but Zac felt that those were out of harm's way.

"They should have passed the trial and are currently reaping the rewards," Ogras agreed as he followed Zac's eyes. "They should be out of it soon enough."

Those who still were in the middle of their epiphanies woke up one after another, and after 30 minutes everyone was awake. It was at that time they finally could make a proper tally, and Zac once again felt his insides churning with regret even though he remembered Ogras' words.

Only the lone Valkyrie had passed away in the second layer, but another one was in a coma. The same went for one of the Demons and Mr. Trang. Six people in the outer layer passed away from the experience, all dying from a brain hemorrhage. Another 8 people were in comas, caused by their minds getting overtaxed.

The doctors planned on moving the unconscious, but Zac stopped them for a second as he arduously walked around to check each one of them. There was an extremely strong correlation between the amount of ghosts people were surrounded by, and the severity of their condition.

Those who had teetered on the brink of collapse when Zac tried to intervene were those who now lay dead on the ground. Also, most of those who were now in a coma were the same people who sported the silver fractals in their foreheads. Sap Trang was the only exception, and Zac guessed that the reason of his unconsciousness was rather his advanced age.

The fractals were thankfully all gone now, but that fact didn't allow Zac to breathe easy. The Great Redeemer was an expert in Karma and seeing his people sporting his marks felt like trouble waiting to happen. He made a mental note of the appearance of everyone who had been marked before he allowed the people to be carried away.

He did also give the order to one of the Valkyries stationed outside to place a secret guard on those people, and to keep a watch out for any suspicious behavior. The woman looked confused, as a few of those who were carried away were her own fellow Valkyries, but she quickly accepted the order and brought a few people along.

Zac shook his head as he walked back into the Dao House, and only then did he start to feel some happiness about the results. The atmosphere was subdued due to those that had fallen, but many of the remaining people were discussing their enormous gains with low voices.

At least it seemed that those who made it through did reap amazing rewards, taking multiple steps forward with their Dao at once. He really wanted to check with his sister how she had done, since she seemed to have been the best at handling the side-effects of the Funnel. But he first gave Ogras a look and the demon shuffled over to talk in private.

Zac recounted what he encountered the brief instant he woke up, how the ghosts had appeared, and the silver fractals that shone on some people's foreheads.

"Did I have a fractal?" Ogras asked. "Or anyone that's still here?"

"No, you just looked to be in extreme pain," Zac said with a shake of his head. "And I don't think anyone conscious right now had any fractals, but I was only awake for less than a minute. Oh, Mr. Trang is in a coma now, but he didn't have a fractal."

"It might just be a phenomenon that indicated that they were failing against the onslaught of resentment. The puppets were created when Salvation touched their foreheads, placing a fractal there.

But salvation is not here, so the fractals might just be a shadow reflecting the ghost's last moment alive," the demon mused.

"Of course, there is also the risk that those people now possess some latent problem," Ogras muttered with a ruthless gleam in his eyes. "It's lucky you managed to wake up and notice the anomaly. What if we have created ten new beacons that will lead that old bastard to Earth? Perhaps... It would be best if they never woke up from their current condition."

"Out of the question," Zac said without hesitation. "We can't just kill them. I caused this, so I will figure something out."

"Then what's your plan?" the demon asked skeptically.

"We monitor them, for now, to see if they act out of the ordinary. The Abbot once shared his Karmic vision with me, and it allowed me to see the Karmic Links of the Dominators and the beacon. Perhaps there is a treasure or pill that will allow me to do the same thing for a short while," Zac said. "That way I'd be able to tell if they have formed a connection to the Redeemer."

"Besides, even if they are beacons their link should be far weaker compared to the Dominators', so we only need to make sure they're not transmitting anything after dealing with Void's Disciple and the other two," Zac added.

"Fair enough, I guess it's worth pursuing other venues first. So what do you think?" Ogras acceded, changing the topic. "Are you ready for the tower? If we leave now we'll have a bit over two weeks before your deadline."

"There is no stress," Zac finally said after some consideration. "I want to gain the two last levels for my other class."

"You can still gain experience inside the tower," Ogras said. "Or you'll probably be able to buy a pill that gives a level for an F-Grade warrior when we get there. They're not very rare."

"I know, but I want to gain the levels beforehand in case the skill quests can't be completed inside the tower," Zac explained. "I want both my classes to be at their best before entering the tower. You know I won't get a second chance like you."

Ogras sighed and nodded.

"How is your human class? Need help with your second quest before we go?" the demon said.

Zac froze for a second before his eyes widened. He had completely forgotten because of the hectic events just now, but he had actually completed his second class quest! Zac quickly scoured through his body and found a new fractal firmly placed on his back.

"The quest was Dao-related, I just finished it," Zac admitted.

"Oh? What type of skill is it?" Ogras asked with curiosity.

"No idea," Zac shrugged. "I will try it out before we leave."

"Keep me posted, no secrets in the tower," Ogras smiled. "It will affect our teamwork."

Zac just threw the demon a contemptuous look. Ogras had tried to pry out all of Zac's secrets since day one, and it was shocking how many of them he had actually figured out if you looked back on it. But Zac wouldn't give him a complete understanding of his strengths and weaknesses.

"I think I will be good to go in an hour or two, will you join me or will you stay behind for a bit?" Zac asked as he looked over at the pale-faced demon.

"Monster siblings," Ogras muttered. "The rest of us had our minds turned to putty but the two of you are fine."

Zac could only wryly smile as he looked over at his sister who had been helping everyone in the building since he woke up. She was healthy enough that she was able to emit a soothing field made from her Dao, which helped people around her recuperate faster.

He initially thought that the reason he was mostly fine after that event was the fact that the splinter in his mind had made his soul sturdier, but perhaps that wasn't the only thing he had going for him. Unless Jeeves could somehow help Kenzie block out the visions it might be due to their ancestry.

Having a big-shot mom came with all kinds of perks it seemed.

"I need to solidify my gains," Zac said as he stood up with a grunt. "Can you look after things here?"

"It's fine," the demon nodded. "I'll stick around here for a few days before heading out to play with the zombies. When do we leave?"

"In five days," Zac eventually decided.

But there was something he needed to do before leaving the Academy. He walked over to Alyn who had bloodshot eyes as she sat on a chair with a Divine crystal in her hand.

"I'm sorry," Zac sighed as he sat down next to her. "This thing exceeded my expectations."

"Such is cultivation," Alyn said, but her eyes darted over to the corpses that were lined up not far away.

The bodies that Alyn looked at were the seedlings that she had recommended. Out of the 10 youths, four were in a coma and another three were dead. Only three were still conscious, but they were barely better than the unconscious ones. Only one, a young man looking just a bit older than Emily, managed to stand on his own, whereas the other two seemed to have wounded souls.

It would be a devastating blow to the group of talents that had been slated for grooming if they were forced to take extreme measures because of the silver fractals. Would only three out of the ten youths walk away from this encounter alive in the end?

The results for the group of seedlings were the worst, whereas the demons were best off. They only lost one person, with another three in a coma. Zac could only assume that their accumulated experiences had hardened their minds, allowing them to more effectively resist the resentment.

"Do they have families? If so make sure they're taken care of," Zac said with a heavy heart.

“They were all orphans, which is one reason I chose them,” Alyn with a small shake of her head. “They had no attachments left to their countries or families, which would allow them to work wholeheartedly for Port Atwood.”

“Then provide them with a proper funeral at least,” Zac said as he closed his eyes, a wave of tiredness washing over him. “Do what you can for the others. I’m afraid I can’t stay here, there’s too much to do.”

“Don’t worry. Everyone understood the risk, and also the burden you carry. Just look forward and keep walking,” Alyn sighed.