

The Fall 380

Chapter 380: Coastal Incursion

Not being encumbered with a group of soldiers had its own advantages. Zac could move with over twice the speed he usually did when his elite squad joined him for battle, and it only took him a bit over 8 hours before he reached his destination.

It was an incursion manned with extremely ugly aliens. There was an image attached to the intelligence report, and Zac felt like they looked like humanoid toads who had injected themselves with super-charged steroids to grow oversized muscles.

Their heads were large enough for them to fit a human head in their mouths, and they sat straight at their torsos without a neck. They had two sets of large murky-green eyes, but no ears or noses. They also had four arms, with the second set being slightly smaller and extending from slightly above their thick hips.

Judging by their stocky builds Zac would have thought them leaning toward Strength-based classes like himself, but he learned that they also had quite a few water-based mages. The incursion was placed by the shore, and they had caused massive tsunamis to drown the people of the close-by settlements.

There was also an unconfirmed report that the frogmen were adept at illusionary skills since there was one thing that set this incursion apart from most others. There was no Incursion pillar to showcase their position, and the general guess was that these frogmen had hidden it somehow in a bid to stay under the radar.

These invaders were quite brutal, but Zac had held off on targeting this place until now because they had already killed everyone close-by and it didn't look like they were expanding their territory. The Marshalls were guessing that they were busy with something underwater, as their class-choices and appearance indicated an amphibian nature.

It quickly became obvious to Zac as he crept closer to the Incursion that they mainly lived on land, even if they might be comfortable in the water as well. A sprawling town right on the shoreline spread out, and Zac saw some frogmen walk back and forth along the streets.

Interestingly enough the town didn't have any physical wall, but a wide moat had been dug to encompass the town, turning it into an artificial island. There was only one bridge, and it looked like they could lift it like a drawbridge if needed.

Walls were technically not needed in a world with arrays, but a proper wall kept out weaker beasts without wasting any Nexus Crystals. Walls were so easy to construct now that people had both Cosmos Sacks to transport material and superhuman strength, so almost all settlements that Zac had visited would sport defenses that would make any medieval lord proud.

The fact that there was no wall only made Zac more confident that there was an array protecting the town, but he couldn't sense it even after spying on the town for over twenty minutes. Of course, that didn't mean it wasn't there. The invaders had killed pretty much all humans in the vicinity, so perhaps they didn't bother keeping it active to reduce their running costs. However, any force strong enough to receive a chance to helm an Incursion would at least have the smarts to protect their encampment.

His hunch that the place wasn't as unguarded as it seemed was soon confirmed as the large head of a frogman suddenly appeared in the middle of the artificial river, before it once again submerging under the depth. They actually had guards staying underwater.

Zac wasn't sure how to best attack the town. Taking out a ship and entering from the ocean would be playing straight into their strength, but just walking up to the bridge felt like walking into a trap.

Unfortunately he had no skills for infiltration in either of his classes, so he decided to get as close as possible while using the natural covers at hand. He crept along in the high grass, but soon enough he couldn't get any closer without stepping on open land. Since Zac had no way to hide any longer he immediately accelerated to a full-out sprint as he ran straight toward the closest section of the moat.

He had eventually decided to go straight in, and the ground cracked beneath him as he barreled forward like an enraged bull. It only took a second for screams and warning sounds started to blast across the town, but Zac wasn't deterred as a storm of miasma was released from him as he activated [Fields of Despair] before jumping across the river.

A blast of water suddenly surrounded him as the water in the moat rose with shocking speed, and Zac's brows rose when he noticed that the water had somehow stolen all his momentum mid-jump. The water surged around him as he started to feel a huge pressure bearing down on every part of his body. Luckily he didn't need to breathe in his current form, saving him from drowning due to the trap.

He had been wrong about his assumption that these people didn't have a wall. It was only that it was made out of water rather than stone or wood. The whole moat had risen over ten meters and the water stayed in the air, defying all gravity.

Sharp stabs of pain erupted across Zac's body as the nearby guards launched ranged attacks on him while he was stuck in place. Something was off with the water as well, as no matter how much he flailed his arms and legs to swim out he was still stuck in place. The liquid was somehow enchanted, and it truly was a bane for most land-based cultivators.

Of course, it was not that Zac was completely helpless inside the block of water. Since he couldn't swim out he would simply have to cut his way out. His arm swelled with power as he kept infusing it with miasma, and he noticed that he was able to cram a lot more energy into his muscles since his latest boost to his Endurance.

The water started to shudder and twist from the huge concentration of power, and Zac finally unleashed a mighty vertical swing that contained a force that shouldn't belong to someone who still hadn't even evolved to E-Grade. The wall of water in the area was completely ripped to shreds from the immense force, and Zac fell down to the exposed riverbed.

The water wall was temporarily dispersed, though another huge gout of water headed straight toward him. It was only barely that Zac managed to jump inside the town in time, avoiding getting trapped once again.

However, he made for quite the sorry figure as he crawled up on dry land. He was completely caked in mud, and there was even a crab that angrily ran along his shoulder. That was fine with Zac, as his embarrassing display had emboldened the frogmen to launch a direct assault on him.

Over a hundred warriors rushed toward him, and Zac sensed a surprising amount of power from the warrior in the lead. The frogman held a large golden trident that Zac immediately could tell was a Spirit Tool, and he also wielded two aquamarine crystals in his second set of hands. The two crystals suddenly lit up with a lustrous shine as he approached.

Zac immediately sensed danger approaching from behind, and he instinctively threw himself forward, barely avoiding a block of ice the size of a truck slamming into the ground where he just stood. The attack caused a huge shockwave, throwing Zac another few steps forward. The moment he landed his foot stomped into the ground, and Zac disappeared from sight.

It was [Profane Seal] that Zac activated now that he finally had his target in sight. He had held back on both unleashing his Dao Fragment and his more impressive skills since he was afraid that the incident with the Flame Golems would repeat itself. He wanted to close the incursion as quickly as possible, but he also needed to gain the last two levels.

And now that his prey was caught it was finally time to put his Dao of the Axe to the test.

The towers of [Profane Seal] immediately trapped the whole army, and a terrifying aura spread out as Zac unleashed his Dao Field to cover the entire cage. His attributes might not have undergone a huge change by forming a Fragment, but his Dao Field had received a shocking transformation.

The frogmen caught within his aura were no longer harassed by a constant stream of small cuts, they were now receiving huge gaping wounds from nowhere. Energy started streaming into his body almost immediately, as there were unlucky frogmen who received fatal cuts from his Dao Field, their throats getting slit open without any warning.

The number of kills quickly slowed down as shields of water quickly covered the warriors which blocked out most of the power of his Dao Fragment. Unfortunately for the frogmen the nightmare had only started, and the spectral chains started to dance through their life, punching straight through the walls of water with only minimal resistance.

The macabre scene of corpses getting strung along like Zac was making a necklace repeated itself, but Zac's attention was on the leader.

Storms of ice rampaged outside the cage as a hailstorm had formed in no time. It was no doubt the frogman leader who utilized those two crystals to attack [Profane Seal] from outside. The power contained in the barrage was impressive, likely because he had such a huge amount of water readily available from the ocean.

However, the Seal had already been upgraded to middle mastery, and it would take some time for the storm to break down the sturdy towers. And Zac reckoned a minute should be all he needed as he pushed toward the froglord, his right arm already swelling from [Unholy Strike].

The frogman seemed to sense the danger from Zac's approach, and a huge swirl of energy quickly gathered around him as he swelled up to three times his original size. Living streams of water surged around him as a liquid armor formed on his body. The transformation made him look like a god of the ocean, and it became especially poignant when the frogman's trident started to crackle with extremely potent lightning.

The invader pointed his trident straight at Zac, and one of the crystals suddenly started to spew out a rampant stream of water that possessed such speed that Zac didn't even have time to summon [Immutable Bulwark]. Worse yet, the froglord had crammed the stream with enough electricity to run a small town, and the barrage made Zac's whole body spasm painfully. A spectral ghost appeared to stab the frogman in his chest, but the water armor effortlessly absorbed the strike.

The ground cracked beneath his feet as Zac forcibly resisted getting washed away, but the stream of water seemed endless. He considered activating his Bulwark-skill to redirect the blast, but he instead decided to simply use his axe instead. Rampant energies made the water churn as Zac swung his axe down with all his might.

He had no skill to add range to the attack itself, so he could only use his Dao and his Strength in hopes to create an extended shockwave. The moment he imbued his axe with his newly acquired fragment it felt like he had ability to cut all creation in half, and his axe ripped down through the torrent of water with undeniable momentum.

For a moment it felt like time had stopped, but the illusion only lasted for a fraction of a second. There was an unmistakable feeling that Zac had cut something more than just the water even though his eyes couldn't make sense of the intuition. It did feel like he had unquestionably cut apart space in front of him, and that the space in front of him was actually two separate pieces even now.

But at the same time everything looked the same, making Zac wonder if his mind was just making things up in its belief that the Fragment should create a larger spectacle. Zac had learned to trust his guts by now though and he truly believed that something had changed even if he couldn't see any conclusive proof.

Thankfully there was a reaction to his swing soon enough as the torrent of water stopped slamming into him, allowing Zac to once again see his opponent. Zac's eyes turned to the hulking form pointing his trident at him, ready to meet its second attack. However, the frogman stood completely frozen, and a huge surge of energy entered his body the next moment.

Zac's eyes widened in surprise as the body of the frogman fell apart into two pieces, and the enormous cut looked so smooth that one could think that he had used a laser from the technocrat's armory. Zac still couldn't figure out exactly what happened, but one thing was abundantly clear; the froglord was as dead as dead can be.

Was that it?

Zac had expected the frog to have a water clone, or do something to avoid the fatal blow, but it simply died where it stood from a single swing empowered by his Dao Fragment. It had emitted such a mighty aura, was it all bluster? Or was the difference of power brought by the Dao Fragment simply that huge?

The fight from there on out went without suspense. The moment the leader fell the barrage of ice from outside stopped, ending any hope of escape for the remaining soldiers. The area was blanketed in dark corrosive clouds and deathly mists, and wails could constantly be heard from within. Just a minute later it the clamor gave way to a deathly silence, with only Zac walking out from one of the gates before [Profane Seal] dissipated.

It was at this point the remaining invaders usually fled toward the Nexus Hub in a bid to escape earth, but Zac looked on with confusion as he saw the remaining frogmen streaming into the ocean. Most had already fled, and the town was pretty much desolate by the point that he exited.

Had the invaders chosen to stay on, hiding in the oceans until they could enact revenge?