

## The Fall 384

### Chapter 384: Apparitions

Zac had expected to be stuck in darkness for a prolonged duration, but the two appeared almost immediately some distance away from the base of an enormous set of stairs. Transportation that the System provided itself sure was different Zac reckoned as he looked around to get his bearings.

People kept appearing around him as well, most of them looking quite young. Some looked around in confusion and wonder just like himself, while others immediately started to ascend the steps after orienting themselves. Zac's eyes followed the stairs until his eyes finally reached the crest.

"Holy crap," Zac muttered as his eyes tried to compute what was in front of him.

"Pretty impressive, yeah?" Ogras echoed as he looked up at the Tower of Eternity in wonder.

They were currently standing at what seemed to be an endless square, as there was nothing in all directions apart from the people who kept appearing out of thin air. This whole space seemed to be made solely for one thing; the Tower of Eternity. Its name was truly apt as it really towered into space itself, breaking all logic and convention.

The tower itself was a pristine white and completely without adornments as far as Zac could tell from this distance. There were no windows and no decor, and it didn't get any thinner at the top. It essentially looked like a massive tube made from marble, but Zac had trouble getting any sense of its actual size. He could only confirm that it spanned at least a couple of kilometers in width.

As for its height, it was impossible to tell.

The tower itself didn't look very impressive apart from its mindboggling size, but that wasn't the only magical thing about it. Mysterious lights trailed along its massive surface, causing a beautiful spectacle that stirred something in Zac's soul. It was like a subdued but never-ending firework show that brightened up the sky.

It reminded Zac a bit of the gaudy display of his own Towers of Myriad Dao, but there was a vast difference in their essence. The lights that Brazla conjured around the Dao Repository felt empty and pretentious, but it was completely different with the radiance around the Tower of Eternity.

It was as though the lights were communicating the Grand Dao itself, and Zac's mind shuddered slightly when he watched them. Zac finally understood that the original Brazla had tried to imitate the Tower of Eternity when he created his Dao Repository, but only managed to project a cheap copy.

Zac had a feeling that if he observed the lights for a few months it wouldn't be impossible to gain a completely new Dao Seed. The sight made Zac better understand why almost everyone stayed for the full year inside the Base Town if they could. Just living next to the tower itself was a precious opportunity.

But the divine lights suddenly disappeared and were instead replaced by an impossibly large snake that coiled around the tower. It was majestic beyond comprehension, and Zac couldn't stop gaping like a fool as he watched it stretch its scaled head toward the sky.

The snake actually had a horn on its head, and Zac could barely distinguish some sort of fractals covering it but it was too far to discern any details. It was a shame, as he felt that the inscriptions on the horn contained shocking insights into the Dao.

Everyone around them had stopped what they were doing as well and looked at the snake with rapt attention. A few people even seemed to have been struck by an epiphany as they quickly closed their eyes, delight clear on their faces. The mythological beast only appeared for a minute or so before it dissipated, and was once again replaced by the mysterious light.

“A flood dragon,” Ogras muttered. “I think that is the 38th level? Pretty auspicious to see a sign the moment we arrive.”

“What do you mean?” Zac asked curiously, finally taking his eyes off the tower in the distance. “I thought there were only 9 floors?”

“Well, each floor has nine subfloors, each a world in of itself, so most people simply count it as there being 81 levels,” Ogras explained. “The 38th level means that someone has completed the first four floors and another two levels before exiting.”

“Apparitions appear when people pass specific floors, and there are a few rules to it,” the demon added. “It essentially showcases that a powerhouse just completed his climb in the tower.”

“Aren’t there always powerhouses undertaking the trial?” Zac asked with confusion. “Wouldn’t people get blinded by constant apparitions, especially if the time inside the tower is accelerated?”

Zac heard a few snorts from around him and noticed that a few cultivators looked at him like he had a hole in his head. He even heard someone mutter ‘country bumpkin’ under his breath, no doubt talking about him. Even Ogras looked over at Zac with exasperation.

“Don’t underestimate the difficulty of the Tower of Eternity, especially the 36th floor and beyond. I only barely made it past the 27th because my grandpa spent a good chunk of his life savings on me gaining a good score,” Ogras whispered.

“But still,” Zac said.

“If you stay here for a year you might see one of the apparitions between the 36th and 40th levels a few times a week, so it’s nothing too exciting,” a voice drifted over and Zac looked over to see a young man with a bow strapped to his back smiling in their direction. “But the others are pretty rare.”

“Oh?” Zac said with interest.

“This is my second time here. Last time I saw the apparitions for the 45th level ten times during the year I stayed here, which meant someone passed the 5th floor. The last level of each floor represents a huge spike in difficulty, so it’s a tremendous achievement,” the man explained.

Zac looked at the man with some confusion before he understood what he meant. The tower of eternity possessed 9 true floors, each of which had 9 subfloors. That meant that the 45th level was the final subfloor of the 5th floor, and the next true floor ended at the 54th level.

“I also was lucky enough to see an apparition for the 52nd floor,” the man said, seemingly enjoying Zac’s attention.

“And for higher floors like 54th and beyond?” Zac asked with interest.

“No, that’s something that you might only see by chance. It doesn’t even happen once every ten years,” the bowman said with a shake of his head. “But you never know. One of my family’s ancestors had the fortune of witnessing the apparition for the 63rd floor, that’s a grand occasion taking place only once every few millennia.”

Zac’s brows rose in surprise when he learned of the details. Apparitions above the 54th level happened every decade or so, but the 63rd was once every couple of thousands of years? That was over a hundred times more difficult from the time it took. Then what about the 72nd level? The young ranger seemed to understand Zac’s thoughts, and he was obviously happy to showcase his expertise.

“You’re wondering about the higher tiers, right? The last time an apparition for the 63rd level appeared was around 4600 years ago now. It was actually a loose cultivator called Parvan Beradan, though most know him as Lord Beradan now that he’s become a C-Grade Lord. As for the 72nd level?” the young man said, pausing for dramatic effect.

“That was the Eveningtide Asura.”

Both Zac and Ogras blankly looked at the young man after his grand proclamation, neither of them ever having heard that name before. The ranger seemed a bit embarrassed about the lack of reaction, and he coughed while scratching his chin. But just as he was about to explain the origin of the so-called Asura, an attendant stepped up to his side.

“Young Master, your reception is waiting,” the young girl next to him discreetly said.

The man gave a start before he sighed with annoyance.

“Anyway!” he said as he started to move away from Zac and Ogras. “Witnessing those top apparitions is an opportunity that one can hope for, but never control. If you need to stock up on goods or intelligence before you try your luck in the tower, remember to visit the Trentach Society!”

After that the ranger started ascending the stairs with rapid steps, and a retinue of ten people quickly followed behind. Only then did Zac realize that the people around him were all elites that completed a quest for the tokens. But even elites who qualified to get a token were only assistants to that guy, so they might just have met a bigshot.

Zac’s eyes followed their figures as they pushed forward, and he realized that the endless stairs simply led up to a vast plateau that the tower itself stood on. The plateau itself was crafted from some black stone, and Zac guessed it was a few kilometers in height. The only reason it didn’t feel so massive was since its size was dwarfed by the tower itself.

“Well, let’s go,” Ogras said with a shrug. “And remember to keep a low profile. There’s no law and no restrictions here, and anyone can be a true monster.”

“That guy told us to visit his store. Do people live here permanently?” Zac asked as the two started to walk up the stairs.

The steps were hundreds of meters wide, so it wasn’t cramped in the slightest even though quite a few people were appearing on the platform.

“Rydel and I were the only ones who had gone to the Tower in my family among those who entered the Incursion, and no one had gone for well over a decade before us,” Ogras said. “But some forces are so big that they always have some people here. Maintaining a compound or a business here is a show of strength since it proves that the force is flourishing with young talents.”

“So any place up there is controlled by some real powerful families?” Zac asked with a whistle.

“Not all,” Ogras corrected him. “The top forces control the structures closest to the entrance of the towers. But most buildings don't have a permanent owner, especially at the outer parts of the town. Anyone could live or set up a temporary business there if they want, and close it down when they leave this place.”

The two kept walking and soon enough they reached the summit of the plateau. A sprawling town full of palaces and luxuriant compounds entered his eyes, and it felt extremely bustling. The architecture was extremely varied as well, making Zac believe that the System had simply stolen a bunch of large mansions from different parts of the multiverse.

There was no way that there was a single society that had created all these buildings. But even though the mansions and storefronts varied in both style and size it all seemed to blend perfectly into some sort of cultural melting-pot. It also wasn't cramped at all, with the streets being over a hundred meters wide.

Even though there were dozens of people ascending the stairs at any moment, the enormous town didn't seem to have any trouble swallowing them all. Some walked in certain directions with purpose, while others simply chose to meander around. The new arrivals were walking along both in groups or alone, and Zac was shocked to see some of the creatures.

The cultivators they passed came in all shapes and forms, including quite a few Humans. Zac already knew that humans were one of the most populous races in the multiverse, but yet it was a bit mindblowing to see all these humans who were probably from all corners of the universe.

It was a far cry from how many believed that Earth might be the only planet housing life back in the day.

Still, humans were only a somewhat large minority in the mix of people around. Zac couldn't help look over at a dour contingent of undead warriors silently walking toward the center of the town, all of them releasing dense clouds of miasma to avoid the Cosmic Energy in the environment.

Most cultivators took a wide berth around them, some out of fear and others not wanting to get sullied by the death-attuned energy. There were also enormous golems, flying pixies only as large as a hand, and all kinds of other odd beings.

There was one thing that essentially looked like a flying disco ball, and it slowly flew forward with a low hum. There were also a couple of Stargazers as well, and when Zac accidentally looked into their cosmic eye he couldn't help but twitch a bit as his mind got a small shock.

He remembered that these guys almost always used mental classes, and just looking into one's eye was to ask for trouble even if they weren't hostile. Abby was different since she was an administrator without any combat capabilities.

Zac also noted with some interest that the groups of cultivators were more diverse than he had expected. He had thought he might stick out by traveling together with a demon, but he realized that

was an unnecessary worry. At least a third of all groups were comprised of a mix of races, so they weren't exactly unique.

But even though all these diverse groups of people were put on the same street it was all surprisingly harmonious. There should be quite a few grudges between races, especially with the System's instigation, but people seemed to get along just fine.

Of course, Zac believed that this serenity was only the surface of the Base Town.