

## The Fall 419

### Chapter 419: Tumbles

A shell that could withstand an offensive Dao Fragment, along with Zac's terrifying force, was definitely a material that could be refined into some very sturdy armor. Hell, he could cover a whole ship in shells judging by how big the centipede was.

The problem was how to kill it without completely crushing the animal with something like [Nature's Punishment] and ruining the materials. Zac activated [Inquisitive Eye] in hopes it would provide some useful information, but it only managed to find out that the centipede was level 91.

It was actually the highest level beast Zac had fought since entering the Tower. There had been stronger beings in the worlds they passed through, such as the devil titans on the 28th floor, but he had never been expected to fight those.

Zac guessed that the centipede and the massive succulent it was guarding could be considered a side quest, providing an increased challenge in return for a valuable item. Zac also realized there was no time to waste, as it turned out that the centipede was not only able to touch the Tool Spirit, but it was getting the better off it against it.

Verun repeatedly tried to bite through the tough carapace, but it simply didn't possess the strength to do so. The centipede easily shrugged off the attacks as it tried to strangle the Tool Spirit. Zac wasn't worried about Verun though since it had already been proven on multiple occasions that the spectral beast essentially was immortal in its current form.

At least that was Zac's guess as the Tool Spirit had been ripped to shreds on multiple occasions, yet it was fine after sleeping it off inside the axe. It also was in line with what he had learned about Spirit Tools. The Tool Spirit was almost impossible to kill and would persist as long as the Spirit Tool wasn't broken.

But he still didn't want to stand by while his companion was getting harried, so he quickly reentered the fray. He freely moved between the sections of the centipede, effortlessly dodging the hundreds of sharp legs thanks to the near-omniscience provided to him by [Hatchetman's Spirit]. There was no chance of getting trapped or accidentally stabbed by one of the legs while the trees were his eyes.

Finally, he reached the front section, and with a grunt jumped up toward its head. The centipede immediately sensed the threat and tried to head-butt him away, but Zac shot out a fractal blade that hit the beasts' head with enough force to push it to the side. Zac kept flying toward its neck unencumbered and managed to grab onto the edge of one of its protective plates.

The centipede started to wildly thrash and twist to throw Zac off, but Zac would be able to hold on even if they were thrown into a hurricane with his inhumanly strong grip. He simply allowed himself to be flung back and forth while he held on with his left hand and methodically started to swing toward the gap between two chitinous plates.

This was pretty much the same tactic he had tried against the Battleroach King without any success. But things were different this time around. The centipede didn't seem to possess any real skills for one,

especially not a fractal shield to block Zac's strikes. Secondly, his corrosive power had improved by quite a bit since the fight against the battleroaches.

It just took two swings before the plating had turned from a lustrous brown to a withered grey, and another swing to completely break through the thinner protective membrane between the protective plates. The centipede noticed that something was wrong, and it rose over ten meters into the air before it swung its whole body into the ground with all force it could muster.

The whole valley shook from the terrifying body slam, and Zac felt his mouth fill with blood even if he had expended both a defensive charge from the divine tree while also imbuing himself with the Fragment of the coffin.

Zac's vision blurred as the centipede was up in the air again the next moment, revving up for another attempt at crushing its unwelcome passenger. But the corrosion worked extremely quickly since it had turned into a Fragment, and Zac only needed one more swing to slash through its protections.

[Verun's Bite] keened as Zac cut down into the same spot one last time, and the protective membrane crumbled like rotten wood as the axe bit into its neck. This time he hadn't imbued the fractal edge with the Fragment of the Coffin, but rather with the Fragment of the Axe, and Zac effortlessly gored the centipede with [Chop] until the fractal blade hit the shell on the other side of its neck.

The beast flailed and spasmed in its death throes, and Zac realized he might have made a mistake when he saw himself falling toward the massive flower. It would probably turn to mush from the fall even if it was a precious spiritual Herb.

But the whole centipede was suddenly flung away as Verun slammed into its massive body as though the Tool Spirit's life depended on it. The final push was also the final straw that broke the camel's back, as Zac felt a surge of Cosmic Energy entering his body. He jumped off at the last moment, avoiding getting inadvertently bodyslammed by a carcass.

A shroud entered his axe just as Zac landed, no doubt meaning that the beast had maxed out the time it could spend outside. A burst of impressions quickly followed, and Zac realized what Verun wanted him to do.

He ignored the dead centipede for now as he climbed up on the massive flower. While he had been flailing about he had spotted what it looked like from above, and there was a large flower in the middle. The fat leaves gave way to far more delicate petals halfway in, and Zac couldn't reach the core of the flower, afraid he'd ruin it.

"You sure about this?" Zac asked as he looked down at the axe in his hand, and received an affirmative response.

Zac only shrugged and threw the Spirit Tool toward the core of the flower, where it landed on a bed of pollen, causing a small white cloud to rise into the air. Just a whiff of the stuff made Zac's blood almost boil, and he felt though he was ready to go slaughter the whole beast tide himself.

But he regained his senses in just a moment and quickly climbed down the flower again. The feeling of inhaling the pollen had been pretty similar to when he activated [Hatchetman's Rage], and Zac wondered what the effect would be like if the massive succulent was refined into a pill.

He also wondered why Verun was so interested in the flower, but he soon found a possible answer. One of the fatty leaves at the outer edge had been damaged during the fight, and a thick liquid slowly poured out from it, staining the ground red. It really looked like the flower was bleeding.

A surge of energy from the center of the flower meant that Verun had started whatever it wanted to do with the flower, so Zac walked over to the centipede. Thankfully only the plates around its head had been damaged, while the rest of it was intact, so Zac took out [Hunger] as he tried to carve up the massive beast.

However, Zac found it surprisingly difficult to dismantle the massive beast even if it was dead, and only after three hours had he managed to stash away the dozens of shells along with its legs. Its flesh smelled quite rancid though, so Zac decided to leave it in the valley for the vultures.

Verun hadn't been lazing off while Zac was working on the centipede, and the massive succulent had shrunk to a noticeable degree over the past hours. Its bulbous leaves looked a bit withered, and its lustrous color had faded somewhat.

It still took the Spirit Tool a full 8 hours before it had completely drained the flower though, and it was completely bereft of life-force when Zac walked over to fetch his axe. The spirit tool looked pretty much the same after having absorbed the flower, except that there now were two fractals that were lit up on the handle.

Zac immediately wanted to see what the extra fractal meant, but he realized that Verun was unresponsive inside the axe. It either needed to rest from the upgrade, or perhaps it was still in the process of digesting the energies it had consumed.

Everything was dealt with in the mountains, so Zac immediately started running back toward the town. He had only been gone for 9 hours or so, but a lot could happen in that time. And his fears were realized when he saw a thick black plume of smoke rise from the town they were supposed to protect.

He held nothing back as he pushed through the beast tide like a hurricane, but Zac breathed out in relief when he saw the demon standing on the wall walk with a lazy expression. His appearance didn't match his demeanor though, as his face was slightly scorched and a new scar had appeared on his throat.

"What happened to you?" Ogras said with a laugh as Zac approached, and Zac realized he wasn't much better off himself when he looked down at his bedraggled appearance.

He didn't have any obvious wounds as Ogras did, but he realized his face and hands were caked in centipede blood and mud. He had long gotten so used to being covered in gore that it no longer registered, but he realized now he really needed a bath.

"A bit of a tumble," Zac shrugged as he jumped up on the wall. "What about you?"

"The same," the demon smiled.

"Have you figured out who the guardian is?" Zac asked.

"Well, it can't be the matriarch of the Oylan line, because she's already dead," Ogras said.

"Must have been some tumble," Zac snorted as he glanced at the town behind them.

There was widespread destruction in the neighborhood next to the mayor's mansion, and some of the buildings were still smoldering. Zac didn't think that the demon would go out of his way to antagonize that woman while he was away since she was possibly the guardian. She had probably launched an all-out assault at the mayor's mansion, and Ogras had been forced to step in.

"So what do you want to do now?" Zac asked.

"We can just kill that big bugger over there immediately, make some turtle soup," Ogras said.

Zac agreed and immediately set out. The battle was quickly over. The turtle possessed a pretty strong ice-attributed attack, but it still was much weaker compared to the centipede he had just killed. Besides, being a ten-meter turtle might be worse than being a small one.

When it realized that Zac was far too powerful it tried to retract its neck while it fled, but it didn't provide a lot of defense as Zac could freely enter the shell as the hole was over three meters tall. The alpha beast tried to snap Zac in half in one desperate bite with its powerful jaws, but Zac ended its life with one fluid swing.

The beast horde quickly scattered when their leader was slaughtered, and Ogras joined him not much later as the teleportation array appeared next to the corpse of the alpha beast.

"Are you sure about this?" Zac asked as he stood up, having restored his spent cosmic energy over the past hour.

"I'm sure. You go ahead," Ogras nodded. "I'll stay behind here for a while to prepare myself."

"You're not setting out immediately?" Zac probed.

"Well, things worked out pretty well for me while you were gone. The mayor treats me like I am his ancestor after I saved his life, and he just so happens to have a pretty fetching granddaughter who didn't seem immune to the hero's allure..." the demon said with a grin.

"Well, remember we're on the fourth floor. Don't relax and get yourself killed," Zac said with a shake of his head.

"Speaking of, could you leave that array behind?" the demon asked.

"The [Voidfire Array]? I guess," Zac said as he took out the massive crystal and the six spikes from his Spatial Ring.

It was a pretty good item, but Zac felt it was better utilized by Ogras in his efforts to conquer the fifth floor. He felt confident enough without it, and he doubted that an array that he snatched on the 28th level would be of much use on the 6th floor or higher.

"Perfect," the demon said as he put away the array.

"So what is the plan when we exit?" Ogras added with a serious face. "Who knows what the situation will be like."

"Do you have any ideas?" Zac asked.

"We still want a patron to get rid of that Redeemer for us, right?" the demon said.

"Right," Zac nodded.

"Then we, or rather you, might just have to spill some blood when we leave. Kill the chickens to scare the monkeys. If you feel the situation is chaotic but manageable, immediately destroy anyone who steps up for the quest," Ogras said.

"And if it's too much for us to handle?"

"Then we can only run," the demon shrugged. "Try to stay alive until we can crush our tokens. Scream for that Peak-girl to save us, perhaps that might make a couple of the pursuers back away."

"I guess we'll just have to play it by the ear," Zac said with some helplessness.

"You better climb pretty damn high so you'll scare all the rich assholes on the outside. I don't want to risk my life against these floor guardians only to get skewered the moment I leave. It's bad enough you'll steal my spotlight with whatever crazy apparition you'll summon."

"I'll see what I can do. See you on the outside," Zac said as he stepped onto the teleporter.