

The Fall 442

Chapter 442: A Break from the Monotony

Finally succeeding in upgrading [Profane Seal] during his climb was one of Zac's greatest gains while climbing the 7th floor. The upgrade added five more chains that extended from the top of five massive tombstones that had been added to the cage, and they would be sorely needed to catch the slippery assassin.

The additional chains wasn't the only benefit from the skill evolving. Dense scripts lit up with azure luster on top of the huge tombstones, and they formed a large fractal in the air that covered the entirety of the cage. It was a restrictive array, somewhat akin to the gravity array of the Zethaya Pill House.

It was another layer of restrictions that hindered anyone who had been caught in Zac's cage. Along with [Fields of Despair], the spectral chains, [Winds of Decay], and the taunting effect of [Vanguard of Undeath] the area within [Profane Seal] had become a real hellscape for the living.

But the man caught in Zac's trap was no normal man, and he barely seemed troubled at all by the situation.

Another warning of danger exploded in Zac's mind, this one even more urgent than before. He desperately moved [Undying Bulwark] to block his torso while infusing it with the Fragment of the Coffin. A sharp snap could be heard as the bulwark was pierced straight through as the pitch-black spike continued toward Zac's body.

Almost all of the strike's momentum had been absorbed by the defensive skill though, and the spike didn't even manage to piece the next level of defense, the thick miasmic armor that covered Zac's whole body.

Zac was ready to retaliate with his axe, but his brows rose in surprise when a spectral projection suddenly appeared on the other side of the cage. He pushed the confusion aside and infused the ghost with the Fragment of the Coffin just as it stabbed the man, creating another shallow wound that immediately started to fester.

It was shocking how far the man had instantly moved after stabbing him, but the fifteen chains of [Profane Seal] immediately set out to trap the assassin while Zac started to release torrential amounts of corrosive mists into the cage. He had failed in taking the man down with one strike, but Zac was still confident in whittling him down using his standard approach.

The assassin tried striking Zac's vitals a few more times, but between [Immutable Bulwark] and his shield he was able to escape unscathed, while adding more and more wounds with the help of [Deathwish]. Faceless 9 was probably the fastest enemy he had ever fought, but his defense wasn't too impressive.

Besides, the spectral projections were immutable. The masked warrior had unleashed flurries of stabs at them the moment they appeared, but the stabs went straight through their incorporeal bodies. They could only be blocked, which made them the perfect counter for people who relied on not getting hit.

The assassin suddenly appeared far in the distance, and Zac frowned as he realized the assassin was up to something. Bleeding abscesses could be seen at various parts of his arms, whereas the wounds on his

body were continuously leaking pus. A smaller spike suddenly appeared in his hand, but rather than attacking Zac he stabbed himself in his heart.

Zac's eyes widened in shock witnessing what looked like a suicide, but he quickly realized that things were about to get rough. The man's muscles suddenly started to writhe and wriggle as black liquid reminiscent of his ichor poured out of his wounds before they coagulated, forming thick scabs around his wounds.

The nine closest chains were suddenly thrown away with enough force to cause cracks all along the links as the man stabbed forward with enough speed to become a blur, which gave the man another short breather. Impenetrable darkness spread through the cage the next moment as the assassin unleashed some sort of domain, and any clue of the man's whereabouts was gone. The man's attuned energies had completely blended in with the surroundings, rendering [Cosmic Gaze] useless.

Even his life-force was hidden by the dome of darkness, rendering the unique vision brought by his Draugr race impotent. Just as Zac tried to figure out his next step a sharp pain erupted in his left leg, and he realized a hole as wide as a quarter having appeared seemingly out of nowhere.

The hole went straight through not only his armor but his whole leg, and he felt his black ichor pouring out of the wound. He sensed that another spectral ghost had automatically appeared some distance away, but Zac didn't have time to imbue it before it had struck the assassin. What had just happened?

Another wound suddenly opened up, this time on his right arm. Zac frowned at the fact that he couldn't sense a thing before being struck, not a single warning from his Danger Sense that he was about to get attacked. This time he managed to imbue the projection from [Deathwish], but Zac couldn't help but worry.

Zac had already heard that there were methods to circumvent the special senses from Luck, but this was the first time he had seen it to such a degree. Was this the hallmark of a top-tier assassin?

This was a fighting-style that was completely different compared to anything else Zac had witnessed during the Battle Royale. The man had no big avatars and there were no flashy skills that emitted massive outbursts of energy. However, that didn't mean the man was weak, and it wasn't without reason that none of the spectators had dared to target him.

Zac was sitting at over 300 effective luck, but he couldn't even begin to sense when the attacks were coming. Not only that, but his Endurance and multiple layers of defense barely impeded the man as two gristly wounds had appeared on his body without him impeding the strikes in the slightest.

There was an extreme penetrative force between his jabs, and just one or two attacks might be enough to kill most people. The man had no doubt been able to effortlessly assassinate one guardian after another during his climb using this method, barely sustaining any wounds.

However, a muted pang of danger suddenly erupted, and Zac hurriedly protected his head with his shield, safely looking another strike aimed at his head. Zac nodded in understanding as he realized that his Danger Sense at least could sense lethal strikes. It meant that the darkness hadn't changed much.

So Zac simply ordered the chains to flail about at random as he stood rooted in place, only focusing on staying alive and infusing the [Deathwish] with the Fragment of the Coffin.

Finally, there was a break from the monotony.

Iz Tayn curiously looked at the weird cage formed from death-attuned energies, and the two fighters who were grinding each other down within. Luckily she had been gifted the skill [Sungod's Eyes] by her uncle before entering the tower. Otherwise, she would have missed out on the melee due to the [Red Hand Shroud].

Not that the fight was anything impressive. The assassin from the Red Hand Society had actually been forced to infuse himself with their disgusting compound to keep fighting, whereas the odd one was just unusually competent at taking a beating. He would no doubt be able to make a decent living as a sparring partner at one of her family's Trial Planets.

She had been deeply disappointed that there wasn't anyone interesting in the arena after something interesting finally happened in this dull Tower climb. The two siblings from the Primeval Lake were pretty strong, but they were still not strong enough to force her hand even if they joined forces. It was a shame that there was no one like their grand-uncle in their current generation. Then it would have truly been a clash of fates.

She felt a bit bad about scorching a few unlucky people out of frustration, but then again it could be seen as them lacking in fate by being spawned so close to her. After that she let the others escape in time, apart from the despicable fellows who didn't respect the proper rules of conduct. Such people could burn for all she cared.

But something interesting finally had happened. He seemed to think that no one had noticed his transformation, but everything that her sun illuminated was within her domain. How could she not see what happened? What kind of encounter would allow one to change between a Human and a Draugr?

More importantly, was he really human? It was extremely minute, but there was something odd hidden within that she had never encountered before. Something primordial.

Mixing an ordinary Human bloodline with the blood of higher beings was nothing unusual, as humans in general were extraordinarily average. Her own family was a prime example of that practice. But the odd thing was that her own bloodline felt some pressure from that man, which she had never encountered before. At least not against someone in her own grade who hadn't undergone their bloodline evolutions yet.

That wasn't the only odd thing, and she couldn't help herself from being engrossed as she replayed the events in her mind. It didn't make sense. She saw him almost dying from his soul shattering, then somehow being saved by an errant arrow that forced the Red Hand-Assassin to move away.

He then proceeded to eat a natural treasure that somehow changed its provenance mid-consumption, and finally recovering over two minutes. All without being targeted or hit at all as battles raged all around him. It was as though his surroundings had been shifted to a separate dimension. Was it dumb luck? Or accumulated Luck?

She didn't think that even she would be that lucky if put in such a situation, and she had almost 200 Luck along with her Fate-augmenting treasures.

So Iz felt like a child who had found an odd colorful bug in their family's garden, and her eyes followed the bulky man as he tried to take down a much more skilled opponent by sheer stubbornness.

The man from the Red Hand Society was clearly one of their stronger cadets, likely someone who had survived the hellish training on one of their induction planets. Anyone who survived long enough to enter the Society from one of those hellholes was an emotionless murderer who had solidified their path with a million corpses.

He kept opening up one wound after another on the Draugr, who was leaking like a sieve by this point. He was using some nurturing Dao Fragment from the looks of it, but his control of the Fragment was atrocious. Why didn't he form proper Dao Arrays on the wounds?

The humanoid cockroach tried, again and again, to catch his opponent with his axe and the fifteen chains that flailed about in the cage, but he didn't seem to possess any means to pierce through the darkness of the shroud. The assassin effortlessly moved back and forth between the attacks, bursting forward with one stab after another.

Of course, the assassin was facing his own troubles as well. He was starting to look disfigured from the wounds of the retaliatory strikes. Absolute strikes were the worst to people like him. If it was her she could have simply formed a shield of flames to block out any such attempts, but the assassin seemed to follow a much more extreme path lacking such tools.

He had quickly expended the few defensive treasures in his arsenal, and since talismans and arrays didn't work here he had to endure a thousand little pin-pricks infused with a corrosive Dao Fragment. However, the fragments the Draugr used, were just Early Stage, a far cry from her three Middle Fragments that empowered each other. Even worse, he seemed unable to properly coordinate them into something more potent.

Should she kill the assassin to make sure that the colorful bug didn't die? She had already moved a flame tendril to stand ready beneath the miasmic cage. A quick poke and the struggle would be over.

But that would be a bit rude, not to mention somewhat embarrassing to butt in on a fight after having killed a few people for that kind of transgressions. She guessed she would have to leave it up to fate.

Finally it seemed like the assassin had enough, and he launched a rapid succession of furious stabs as he moved quickly enough to make it hard even for Iz to follow. But the armored warrior was like an impenetrable fortress, enduring the strikes he could endure and blocking those he could not.

The failed assault was followed by an attempt at escape, and the assassin first tried to teleport out of the miasmic cage. But he was completely unable to leave, and another special warrior attacked him the moment he tried to slip through the cracks. A furious assault on one of the towers was only met with a storm of ghosts as well it seemed.

The moment the assassin realized that both killing the man and escaping was impossible he immediately reached down and crushed the token on his belt. Ever the pragmatists, the assassins.

The Red Hand Assassin disappeared in a flash, taking the domain with him. The Draugr stumbled around for a few seconds, seemingly unaware that he had actually won. The fifteen spectral chains kept flailing back and forth inside the cage as he stood hunched over, ready to eat another stab.

Only after twenty seconds passed did the man have enough presence of mind to look up at the sky. He had appeared on the 6th spot, meaning that the battle was won. Only then did he slowly start to move toward the Cosmos Sack, leaving a trail of black goop in his wake.

Iz was unsure what to do. The man was very interesting, but he was some random person from another part of the universe. Was there any point in trying to look into his secrets? There were a lot of oddities on his body, but who didn't have a secret or two? But it was interesting.

Of course, there was one easy way to test if they had some connection of fate. She instructed Uyirrik to get to work, and Iz's bloodline familiar formed another seal as she channeled a piece of her [World's End] into the array.

Someone who was dead obviously couldn't carry any fate or secrets worth fretting over.