

The Fall 489

Chapter 489: A Frayed Web of Uncertainty

What had changed?

Who had made such a mess of his Karma, turning it into a frayed web of uncertainty? Finding the source of the Karmic Turbulence had proven futile though, with connections having formed from every single direction. There was a larger overlying cause, but any attempt of his to scry the source was met with failure.

Voridis hesitated for a while longer until he finally made a decision. There was a populated world just one jump away, and Voridis realigned his vessel after casting an obscuring haze to confuse any potential pursuers. He needed to know what was going on. Had the orthodox faction among the elders finally made their move?

That was the only explanation Voridis could think of as he descended upon the planet. The humanoids of the town he chose fell to the ground as their futures were drained clean, but these morsels wouldn't even pay for the delay to his plan. Only the Mayor was left alive, turned into a marker to enable his return.

Anger bubbled in Voridis' chest as he located the Nexus Hub and teleported away after donning his disguise. He was finally reaching fruition of his goal, thousands of years of planning on the cusp of producing results. His wretched circumstances over the past eons would all change as long as he succeeded, but something was threatening to ruin it all.

A brief bout of darkness swallowed him before he appeared in a simple tower.

"Identification," the golem rumbled with a threatening tone, but it immediately backed away when Voridis flashed his token as a member of the Hephasar.

His identity was stolen, of course, the token was taken from the body of one of their Chieftains. But they wouldn't know for a few centuries as the corpse of the man was currently soaring through the outskirts of the sector attached to a meteor.

His family was still believing him to be traveling the Zecia sector in search of opportunities to form his inner sanctum, when it was just his body kept 'alive' by special means. Voridis snickered at the thought as flew straight toward the floating palace in the distance, the local chapter of The Hidden Whispers.

Just emitting a hint of his aura, modified to be unrecognizable of course, was enough for him to immediately receive VIP treatment. He was led into an opulent room where an elderly man waited. Voridis inwardly snorted in annoyance when he realized the old man was not only Peak D-Grade as well, but also wearing multiple layers of protection.

So much for free information.

"What do you wish to know?" the man said with a smile as they sat down.

"Voridis A'Heliophos," Voridis said with a growl.

“Oh, you too? Well, it is no wonder,” the old man smiled, his eyes never leaving Voridis in search of any clues.

“Hmph,” Voridis grunted noncommittally, though he was extremely anxious to know what the man meant.

It really looked like there was something wrong, to the point that it was already spread to the better information houses within a day.

He wanted to trap the old bastard's soul and drain it of its secrets, but he knew he couldn't cause any waves in this place. There was a C-Grade Monarch presiding over this town, after all. Voridis normally wouldn't have come to a place like this at all, but he was afraid some backwater Information House wouldn't have the information he needed.

“What does Sir need to know? I am afraid we have no clues about his current whereabouts. But we have gathered his known movements over the past few Millennia,” the old man said. “We are also buying any pertinent information.”

“I heard there are opportunities related to his capture from certain channels, but I just emerged from cultivation,” Voridis said. “I need to know what rewards there are.”

“I understand. Sir can buy the relevant information for 1 Billion Nexus Coins. The price is steep due to how fresh it is, these things will not become public knowledge for some time,” the old man smiled.

“Hmph, old thief,” Voridis snorted, but he still transferred the money without hesitation.

A few minutes later he was returning toward the Nexus Hub with haste, not wanting to spend one second longer in this place than necessary. He paid the exorbitant fee and teleported away, once again returning to the remote town at the edge of the Zecia sector.

Voridis culled the Mayor as well before he flew off in his vessel, not leaving a soul behind who could bear witness to his appearance. He quickly performed his obscuration rite before he jumped back to the original plane, only then feeling safe from pursuit once more. He didn't immediately set the course toward the closest beacon though, but he started reading the contents of the missive he just bought.

He needed to know who would have to pay the ultimate price for messing with his plans.

However, Voridis' anger was exchanged for exhilaration the more he read. Ninth Floor? Known across the Sector? Powerhouses of the upper realms asking about him? How was it possible that he had lucked into such a huge windfall?!

A soul embraced by the fate of a world, a world steeped in the Energy of Inception. Two Fulcrums, and one world would be born from the death of another. But what if the Fulcrum of Fate was powerful enough that it could impact the whole Sector? His plan no longer seemed like a long-shot, but almost a foregone conclusion.

It felt like his worn body was injected with stimulants as his mind ran thousands of simulations to make sure that his original design for his Fulcrum Array would still work. He might need to make some alterations to capitalize on the external Karmic Links, but it was definitely possible.

As for any repercussions, he didn't care. That brat would disappear long before the Shroud of the Ruthless Heavens dissipated, turning him into an interesting but forgettable side-note of the Zecia Sector's history. No-one would mourn or avenge the death of an unattached F-Grade brat.

The question now was how to locate which of the seed worlds held the key to his ascension.

"What is your impression of the situation?" Theos asked.

"It's tricky. Voridis is extremely crafty, but Zac Piker is no doubt in possession of multiple Teleportation Tokens. If Voridis makes a mistake a lingering threat might be created, one that would lead to the demise of our clan," Reolus sighed as his milky-white eyes gazed toward the stars. "I can't see it..."

"I know," Theos Heliophos sighed. "Voridis will never back away from such a convergence of Karma, even if I send out Geros in person. I should have followed the whispers of fate and killed that boy. I became too greedy."

"We all did," Reolus muttered from the side. "So what do you want to do?"

"Spread the news. I will perform a Fate Augmentation to the person who brings Voridis to us, dead or alive," Theos said after a while. "Make a show of looking for him as well, but no need to draw upon the Eyes of Heaven. We'll show our stance, and let the chips fall where they may. We are not yet facing a choice between calamity and fortune."

"Voridis will either find him, or he won't," Reolus nodded. "It has nothing to do with us. But what about those people from the higher planes?"

"They won't cause any storms in this remote place over a single child, at least not until someone claims him. There's no lack of talents in the higher planes, and even if they miss out on this seedling, another one will come along in a millennium or two from another sector," Theos said.

"They failed," the sturdy man growled as the golden flames in the brazier died out, ending the telepathic communication.

"Perhaps this was the Boundless Heavens punishing us for consorting with the cursed races," Vicar Uld sighed as his hand created the sigil for a blessing. "Bishop Kyhv-Elerad and our brothers have joined the embrace of the Heavens, it is a small consolation at least."

Uld had honestly been skeptical about the excursion from the beginning, which is why he sent Kyhv-Elerad and kept his trusted subordinate Trovad next to him. Both of them were zealots and fools, but Kyhv-Elerad had already cozied up to Arkensau. And he couldn't have that.

He really missed Bishop Orsiccas, the only other leader of the mission team that knew of the true purpose of these Invasions. Sending his confidante over to secure the body of the Monarch-Select had been a massive miscalculation, one that had left him alone dealing with these maniacs for months.

"Did we manage to retrieve any of the bodies?" Uld still had to ask. "I would like to send them back to be interred among the other martyrs."

“None made it back after stepping foot on the island,” Trovad sighed. “Only the vessel aiming for the spatial tunnel survived.”

“Shame,” Uld muttered, feeling the pinch of missing an opportunity to make some money.

“Some good news has emerged from the Incubator Realm though,” Trovad added. “We have managed to seize and purify one of the towns on the second layer. Our scribes are already working at gaining control of the systems. Inquisitor Arkensau has entered the depths.”

Uld nodded with equanimity, but a pang of annoyance flared up in his chest upon hearing that name. This was supposed to be his opportunity, his chance to garner massive amounts of credit with the Zecia Chapter. But who would have expected the Grand Cardinal to send his own disciple to this remote planet to take charge of the invasion?

He had thought that this would be his chance to get transferred out of the Zecia sector to one of the real Cathedrals of the Everlasting Dao. To be anointed in the holy flames and born anew as a true elite of unlimited potential. But that bastard was stealing it under his nose, and he was unable to do anything about it.

“Have we located the inception point of the Dimensional Seed yet?” Uld asked. “We’re only a few months away from its completion.”

He still couldn’t believe that a treasure like a Dimensional Seed could be found in a remote sector like the Zecia. He had never even heard of such a thing before the Grand Cardinal himself explained what it was and the importance of acquiring it. There shouldn’t be enough energy in this area of space. Just which of the heretic factions was it that had created this mystic realm?

That seed held the promise of endless possibilities. It could be the core to create a Hidden Realm of almost unimaginable size. Imagine, controlling a Hidden Realm that would slowly grow to the size of an Empire. But in contrast to a normal Empire that was beset by threats in all directions, you would be a true hegemon as long as you controlled who could enter through the spatial tunnel.

A hidden Realm of that quality was unheard of in a small place like Zecia.

But that wasn’t the reason the Grand Cardinal wanted it. There was one more usage for the Seed from what Uld understood. It could be used as a foundation upon creating the Inner Sanctum of a C-Grade Monarch. It would help create a world so powerful that it might even have enough potential to take that mythical next step.

The vaunted B-Grade.

The Grand Cardinal couldn’t use it for himself since he had already formed his inner world, but Uld was willing to bet that he planned on trading it for some opportunity to break through his current bottleneck, or to be transferred to the Embrace of the Boundless Heavens. Even Uld himself was tempted to take the treasure and run, but he knew that was impossible with the Martyr Array engraved into his soul.

There was no escape, only obedience.

"We haven't found it yet, the spatial anomalies are too numerous, rendering our arrays useless. We have been forced to search manually, but those natives know the depths far better than us, leading to setbacks," Trovad said.

"Well, Inquisitor Arkensau is the best suited for handling the Natives," Uld said.

"What about the last vessel and the Monarch-Select?"

"Have them investigate whether they can destroy the entrance," Uld said. "We will not be able to hold that place it seems, but we might at least be able to stop the Monarch-Select from entering."

"What about the Super-Brother Man?" Trovad asked with a smoldering anger. "With all due respect, are we leaving him after what he's done?"

"The Monarch-Select has no choice but to assault the cursed races if he wants to protect this planet," Uld said with a small smile. "We will find our opportunity there, we will be able to end both the Natives and the Unliving in one fell swoop if the Heavens provide. Inform Inquisitor Arkensau about the return of the Monarch-Select. He will no doubt be interested in joining the Holy War."

Trovad's eyes lit up with fervor upon hearing the term Holy War, and quickly left the chapel after saluting. Uld looked at the receding back of the Bishop with some disdain, before he started to plan his next move.

If he played his cards right he might be able to realize all his goals in one fell swoop. If all three of those powerful bastards died he would be half-done. Only those monstrous Insectoids and the slippery bastards inside the Mystic Realm would stand between him and the Dimensional Seed.

Those were odds he was willing to take.