

The Fall 510

Chapter 510: Eveningtide

Zac only rolled his eyes at the demon's slightly ominous comment, but he did somewhat agree. The two of them were playing a dangerous game, him with the remnant and Kenzie with Jeeves. Such powerful items really shouldn't be in the hands of piddling low-grade cultivators, and it would only drag them into trouble with the System.

But there wasn't much he could do about it right now, apart from growing stronger to tackle whatever came their way.

"Are you done here?" Zac asked instead.

"I managed to dig out some of the intelligence crystals from the place you indicated, but most of them were ruined. Also, I can't read them," the demon said as he threw it over to Zac.

He tried to activate it as well, but his Cosmic Energy was immediately rebuffed. Even worse, some cracks spread across its surface, prompting Zac to hurriedly retract his energy.

"I'll try as an undead later," Zac said as he placed Triv's tower in a pocket. "If we're done here, then you can call over our people. I'll leave as soon as we can confirm the situation on the other side. Send this to Port Atwood please."

He quickly imprinted a few instructions onto a crystal and handed it to his sister. Kenzie grabbed it before she poured hundreds of Nexus Crystals out on the ground in a circle around the Teleportation Array. She looked a bit hesitant about what to do next though, but Ogras seemed to understand her thoughts.

"Here," Ogras said and threw a massive leg from some unknown beast onto the array. "Harvested it during the climb. It tasted like wet fur anyway."

Kenzie nodded and placed the crystal on top of the leg, and the next moment the two items flashed away.

"We're returning to Port Atwood?" Joanna asked as they waited for a response on the other side.

"I want that tree, but I need to see what's happened with the ship heading for Mystic Island. I'll go back if there's still a chance to protect our teleporter," Zac said after some consideration. "If not, I'll simply fly and get the tree. I'll be able to observe the Dead Zone that way as well."

Ten minutes later a group of soldiers emerged from the teleporter, including a sun-tanned Ilvere.

"You did it," Ilvere said with a grin as he looked around at the ruins. "Must have been some battle. I wish I was here to kick these damn zombies off the planet as well. What about Alea's...?"

Zac sighed as he saw the demon general's downcast expression. Zac had made sure that only a few core members could know about Alea's situation, but the two remaining demon Generals were among the group of people he felt should be aware of what was going on. The normal demons would only think that she had been killed by the invaders when they assaulted the island.

"I ripped him apart with her chains," Zac simply said.

"Good!" Ilvere roared. "Then her soul can be at peace no matter what happens next."

"What's going on with the boat?" Zac asked, eager to change the subject.

"We failed," Ilvere sighed. "Those ships are so slow, but it suddenly spat out a small vessel that shot toward the Mystic Island with a speed that eclipsed our ships. Worse yet, they managed to break the tunnel just by detonating something on the shore. We currently have around 100 people trapped inside the mystic realm. We managed to sink the large warship in retaliation"

"At least our people safe," Zac said as he turned to his sister. "Can you see what you can do?"

"Sure," Kenzie nodded.

Since there wasn't much he could do now that the spatial tunnel was already broken, he decided to go fetch the mutated tree instead. Ilvere would lead the squad of soldiers to search out the core of the Dead Zone instead, while simultaneously taking away all the Unholy Beacons that were still standing.

After all, they still hadn't found any natural resources in the area. All the other Incursions had been placed near some valuable resources of Earth, so it stood to reason that it should be the same here. Of course, there was the possibility that the perk of the Undead Empire was getting placed in an extremely population-dense area, as corpses were the most valuable resource to them.

Seeing his army get to work with practiced ease let him bring out his Flying Treasure without worry, but he was surprised to see Ogras jumping on top as well.

"I have nothing to do, so I figure I'd come with you," the demon shrugged with a grin. "What if you suddenly pass out again and fall into a horde of zombies?"

"Well, the company is always welcome," Zac slowly said.

"I'm curious if you can actually gain something from the tree. You're a mortal but you keep getting insights left and right. I want to figure out if there's something I've missed. Just look at that giant. Sometimes there's genius hidden within a haze of stupidity," the demon smiled.

"Well, thank you," Zac snorted as he turned to Joanna who had also joined him on the leaf.

"I'm just here to help you steer in case you need to relax," Joanna explained.

Emily and the rest of the Valkyries would return to Port Atwood with Kenzie though. They weren't as high-leveled, and they had stayed long enough in such a Miasma-dense area. Any longer and they might have adverse effects.

The trio soon set off, and the atmosphere was a lot more relaxed as they returned toward the outer reaches of the Dead Zone. Zac took Joanna up on the offer to steer so that he could focus on recuperation, whereas Ogras took out a jug of some liquor and drank as he gazed out across the horizon.

Zac got a bit bored after an hour though and joined Ogras for a drink instead.

"By the way, I found out some more about the Eveningtide Asura after you left the Base Town," Ogras said as he handed Zac a jug. "Figured it might be useful as some see you as the second coming of that guy after your display with erecting a netherblasted Corpse Tree right in front of the Tower entrance."

"A what?" Joanna asked from the side.

"And?" Zac coughed with some embarrassment, ignoring the question. "Is that good news or bad news?"

"Hard to say. Unattached elites cropping out of nowhere is always a cause for concern. It will usually result in multiple forces getting destroyed before a balance is restored," the demon said.

"But that rarely happens to the peak forces because of their hidden reserves. The attacker would have to overpower an ancient Empire, and that's easier said than done. So they have grown complacent," Ogras continued.

Zac nodded in agreement. If it was before he visited the Base Town he would have believed it wasn't too hard for a powerhouse to take out a slightly weaker force, but he had seen just how desperate things had become upon him exiting the tower. And that was only a few hundred warriors with limitations on what sort of items they could bring to the special dimensions.

What about the biggest forces? They would be able to bring out billions of warriors and an almost inexhaustible number of treasures to defend themselves. Taking them out as a lone powerhouse would be almost impossible.

"But then the Eveningtide Asura came along," Ogras smiled "And now there's you."

"Just who is that guy, and what did he do?" Zac asked.

Zac had been repeatedly compared to that man since he had conquered the 8th floor, so it was a bit interesting to hear what kind of man the so-called Asura was.

"He utterly annihilated a fifth of the peak forces in this sector," Ogras said with gleaming eyes. "Killed them to the last man. Trillions of lives lost, even a C-Grade continent was grievously wounded to the point it decreased in grade. A murderous lunatic, it sounds like."

"Why would he do something like that?" Zac said with shock.

No wonder so many seemed so leery about him after the fight outside the Tower. The problem was whether the forces of the multiverse would want to stomp him out before he grew powerful, or whether they would instead try to nurture a good relationship. Some obviously tried the latter, such as Boje and Pretty, but that didn't necessarily represent the intentions of their ancestors.

"To resolve grudges. Those who died had tried to hunt him down to get their hands on his treasures before he grew powerful, and he was almost killed dozens of times. But he barely managed to slip away each time, until he finally disappeared for 100 000 years," Ogras said. "But then he finally came back, as a Peak C-Grade Monarch. Blood flowed like rivers for 500 years before he was satisfied and left our sector for good."

"Wait, just Peak C-Grade? Did he manage to do all that without even breaking into the B-Grade? How is that possible, don't all the peak forces have Peak C-Grade Monarchs hidden in seclusion?" Zac asked

incredulously. "With the help of their arrays, they should be able to defend even against someone like that."

"I actually learned something interesting regarding that," Ogras snorted. "Our sector is a bit generous, or rather boastful, when it comes to assigning grades to forces."

"What?" Zac asked with confusion.

"There are probably less than 10 High C-Grade Monarchs in the whole sector," Ogras said, drawing a surprised exclamation from both Joanna and Zac. "Some say even less than five. And not a single Peak C-Grade warrior unless they are hiding their strength for some reason. The reason that Dravorak Dynasty is so famous right now is that they have one of the few confirmed High C-Grade Monarchs."

"What?" Zac said. "Are you messing with me? What about all the peak C-Grade forces?"

"Having a Pseudo C-Grade Monarch makes a force C-Grade. Having a true C-Grade Monarch, no matter how weak, makes the force Middle C-Grade. Having an Elite Early C-Grade or a weak Mid C-Grade makes the force a High C-Grade force. Finally, Forces with at least Mid-Grade C-Grade warriors and strong foundations are called the Peak C-Grade forces of the Zecia Sector," Ogras snorted.

Zac was about to refute the man, but he suddenly remembered Anzonil. His force was regarded as a weak D-Grade force simply because he had formed a Pseudo Core. It sounded like the same was possible with whatever was required to move into the C-Grade, and a remote sector like Zecia considered that good enough.

It also explained why Catheya's master seemingly held such a level of esteem in the Undead Kingdom. Perhaps it wasn't only the fact he came from the heartlands, but also that he simply was stronger than anyone else in the whole sector. No wonder that Catheya could decapitate 40 people without anyone lifting a finger to retaliate.

It didn't make a big difference for Zac as things were, but it did actually lessen the pressure he felt somewhat. It meant that if he managed to reach at least Early C-Grade in the future, then there was probably no force in the whole sector that would dare mess with him or Earth. He had thought he would have to reach High C-Grade for that effect.

Of course, the revelation also indicated that there might be something lacking in the Zecia sector as a whole if no one was able to reach Peak C Grade. Perhaps it was resources, or perhaps the cultivation techniques. In either case, it was bad news for him. If not even the most talented cultivators could reach Peak C-Grade, how would he, a talentless mortal do it?

Of course, he was way early in worrying about the C-Grade. But it was worth remembering, as it meant that following the "standard" elite route of Zecia would have an end-point that was even lower than that of his master, Yrial. He would have to go above and beyond somehow. But it was clearly possible if the Eveningtide Asura managed to break through.

"Is he still alive?" Zac asked curiously. "The Asura?"

"No idea," Ogras shrugged. "This happened something like a million years ago. Perhaps not even the ancient bastards from the strongest forces were alive back then. There were rumors that he had offended some terrifying unorthodox force a few hundred thousand years ago, and after that, he hasn't

been heard of. Sounds like someone who loved getting himself in trouble, and perhaps his luck ran out. Also, considering how many mortals he killed in his quest for vengeance he might have been punished by the Ruthless Heavens.”

The atmosphere on the leaf became a bit subdued as they looked out across the landscape. Zac prayed that things wouldn't play out as they did with the Eveningtide Asura. It also confirmed the importance of keeping anything valuable with you hidden, at least until you were strong enough to defend yourself.

However, his mood soon lightened again as they closed in on their target; the mutated tree that was somehow generating life through death. Joanna set them down next to the tree, and Zac walked up to it once more. However, no matter what he did he found himself unable to push his Dao any further, and he couldn't make any inroads on his skill quests either.

He was forced to give up after five hours, but he still felt that the tree held some secrets worth exploring. He took out a large barrel and filled it with dirt before he gingerly cut three branches and placed them inside. He also inserted a couple of miasma crystals into the earth after some consideration.

He hadn't gained much from the last set of saplings he took, but that might be because of him having placed them into his Cosmos Sack. He had long forgotten to replant them, which had turned them into worthless sticks in his back. But now he was planning on building a death-attuned cultivation cave, meaning he would have a proper home ready for them.

They set out a minute later, and they actually reached the edge of the Dead Zone a bit faster than expected. However, they soon realized that it wasn't because of their speed, but rather because the Dead Zone seemed to be shrinking. It was a huge relief to see the world naturally heal itself so quickly, and it felt like a good indicator that hadn't been damaged beyond repair.

But that didn't mean that the undead threat was completely dealt with, as they saw massive swathes of zombies lumbering around as they flew closer to the battlefield he had seen in his crystal. Some of them seemed to be heading toward the core of the Dead Zone, whereas others trailed off toward inhabited lands.

It would take a lot of work to deal with the hundreds of millions of Zombies.

Some were already working on it though, and Zac was surprised to see the battle was still raging. It wasn't an all-out battle though, as the humans mostly seemed to fight in an effort to corral the zombies away from the area with human settlements. However, the horde still looked extremely rowdy. Some drifted back toward the Dead Zone, but most seemed intent on feasting on the living.

Zac looked inward to check the status of his body. The node had mostly stabilized by now, and while the pathways were still a bit messy he had started to work on redrawing them over the past day. He still had a long way to go but he felt he had made enough progress to comfortably dish out a couple of fractal edges.

“I'll help them out a bit,” Zac said as he jumped down from the leaf, hurdling toward the zombies like a human cannonball.