

The Fall 517

Chapter 517: Jammers

Volume was not the only thing extraordinary with Verun's roar as dozens of trees suddenly exploded, utterly ripped to shreds. It almost looked like Verun had torn them apart with its mouth, but Zac guessed it should have been the soundwaves.

The Tool Spirit leaped over the now-emptied pond and buffed Zac's chest once before it dissipated into a stream of energy that entered the axe that now was embedded in the ground of the dried-out pool. Zac jumped down and ripped it out, but he almost lost his balance from how heavy it was.

The axe had always been on the heavier side, and he would never have been able to [Verun's Bite] before the integration. But its weight had increased by over ten times from absorbing the Dragon Core and evolving, and that wasn't the only thing that had changed. Its overall design was the same as before, but the handle was now pitch-black to match Verun's fur.

But more importantly; a third rune had lit up, meaning another skill or function should have been unlocked from the upgrade.

The axehead itself had slightly changed as well. It had turned even bigger, with its edge gaining over five centimeters in length. The bone it was made from felt sturdier as well, and the edge was sharp enough to easily draw blood on even his durable skin. There were also thin red lines running across the bone, almost looking like cracks in the material.

However, Zac didn't feel any weakness or damage when holding the weapon, and he guessed the new pattern was just mirroring the red streaks in Verun's fur. He jumped up from the pond and swung it around a bit, and deep growls echoed out as it split the air apart.

He had initially worried that the increased weight would make it feel unwieldy, but it was actually the opposite. The weapon felt far sturdier, and it resonated better with his Dao. It felt like every swing contained a gigantic and undeniable force, like a mountain was crashing down where he swung his weapon. But he put away the weapon after a while and started to walk back toward his courtyard.

Between his Dao Epiphany and working on his race morning had already come, so just Zac planned on resting for an hour or two before starting his next day. However, he noticed a drone zooming about outside the entrance to his Courtyard as he returned. Kenzie had painted it red to be more easily spotted as well.

It was no longer a surveillance drone, but more of a flying butler to his sister who sent it on all kinds of errands. She, or rather Jeeves, had even equipped it with speaking capabilities, though Zac had made sure that it wasn't an actual AI.

[Julia has returned] the consciously mechanical voice of the drone spoke up.

"Is Kenzie home?" Zac asked.

[Yes. The mistress is working on her arrays.]

"I'm coming over, there's something we need to talk about," Zac sighed.

Seeing how his sister was becoming increasingly comfortable with using Technocrat tech, he knew he couldn't hold off any longer. He needed to tell his sister about his visions of his mother. What if she kept going like this, and one day connected to the Digital World of the Machine God Faction? Who knew what kinds of alarms that would trigger?

Earth already had enough to deal with without dragging a full-blown Technocrat Armada to the Zecia sector.

Zac soon arrived at her mansion, or rather series of towering structures that his sister had let erect. Only the smallest of the houses, a rusting one-story house with a large garden, was her residence though. The other buildings were rather workshops for her experiments, Technocrat Technology and Arrays alike.

He found her tinkering with a massive onyx stone in the middle of one of the workshops, surrounded by protective arrays. Zac's brows rose in alarm when he saw the series of formations, as it felt like her experiments were far more dangerous than she had let on. Kenzie looked over when he entered the workroom, and she finished up whatever inscriptions she was adding to the block with the tool she got from the quest last week.

"Good timing, I've made a breakthrough with these jamming arrays. I think we can actually use them when we're finished. They should work as long as you activate it in your Draugr form." Kenzie said but frowned when she saw Zac's expression. "What's wrong, you look so serious? Didn't the soul boosting array work?"

"The array worked great, I just need to figure out some way to make my Soul Cultivation faster. Zac said as he walked over and poked a defensive shield. "What's with these shields? You're not risking your life for this are you?"

"It's a precaution so I don't blow up his building, but I'm not in any danger. Jeeves will notice if it starts destabilizing so I can run away with time to spare," Kenzie said. "By the way, what was that roar earlier? It almost made me ruin this thing."

"Just remember to be careful. These things come from pretty damn dangerous factions," Zac sighed. "The roar was Verun, it finally finished absorbing all the materials."

"It sounded pretty powerful," Kenzie smiled.

"Let's hope it will be enough to deal with the Dominators," Zac said as he looked closer at the Jamming array. "Will these things be as effective as when the undead used them?"

"They should work the same," Kenzie nodded. "Just put Miasma Crystals into the sockets and everything within a day's march will be blocked out. But we still need to finish some modifications to circumvent restrictions on these things, and that will turn them into consumable items. They'll only work for a handful of times before they break down."

"How many?" Zac asked.

"Probably more than ten, but no more than twenty," Kenzie hesitantly said.

"That's plenty," Zac said with a sigh of relief.

These things would come in handy over the following month, and it was something his force sorely lacked. Because Earth was about to be plunged into a civil war, and this would give them the advantage they needed. The war wasn't against the New World Government, but against a far more dangerous enemy; The Dominators.

The Zhix hordes had cleanly split into two camps by now, either gathering behind the Anointed or the Dominators. Now that the undead threat was dealt with the tensions had risen to an unprecedented degree. The followers of the Dominators needed to be rooted out, but the efforts of the other Zhix had proven futile since the integration took place.

Their previous methods at dealing with the Dominators and their followers had been crude but effective. They had sent wave after wave of soldiers after their target, drowning them in a sea of relentless violence. The Dominators ran out of Cosmic Energy sooner or later, at which point they were slaughtered.

The Zhix were still more than willing to sacrifice themselves to root out the final vestiges of corruption in their bloodline, especially now that they knew of the source. But the emergence of Teleportation Arrays had turned their efforts useless. The War Council of the Zhix had already contacted Port Atwood in search of a solution, and he would meet up with them in a week, provided he didn't need to change his plans due to Julia.

These jamming devices would allow him to trap the Zhix hives who had defected, and with the help of the Zhix hordes take out anyone that might have formed a Karmic Link with the Great Redeemer.

Zac didn't feel it was enough to locate the leading Dominators to secure Earth. His instincts told him the Dominators were using these traitors as a back-up. Void's Disciple had been slowly converting hives to join their side over the past year, and mercilessly slaughtering some of the staunchest detractors.

There had to be a purpose to this, and the most likely reason Zac and Ogras could fathom was to form a karmic link. The Great Redeemer would perhaps be able to find Earth as long as there were enough followers spread across the planet, even if the main perpetrators were already killed.

Or perhaps it wasn't about back-up plans, but about boosting the signal. The Karmic Link between the Great Redeemer and the Dominators couldn't be too strong, as they hadn't even met in person. Voridis had visited the Zhix planet thousands of years ago, and the link should have weakened by now. But what if there were tens of millions of insectoids praising his name? It might give him all the clues he needed to find Earth.

It would also explain why both the Dominators and the Medhin Clan were so intent on taking over the planet, apart from avoiding the Incursions spawning. The more who were under his banner, the easier the planet would be to find.

So he needed to deal with the traitors as soon as possible, and these jammers were the key to fighting them.

"So what's up?" Kenzie said, dragging him out of his thoughts. "Scarlet said you needed to talk?"

"It's about mom. There's something I haven't told you," Zac sighed before he started recounting his visions.

This time he held nothing back, retelling both his visions of their mother and the words Leandra spoke. He connected that with what he had learned so far about Firmament's Edge and added his own analysis of the situation. He knew it would probably upset his sister, but she needed to know that their mom might be an extremely dangerous character and as large a threat to them as The Great Redeemer.

"You really met mom?" Kenzie said with a low voice. "Why didn't you get me? Then I would at least have been able to hear her voice, even if it was just a projection."

"I didn't dare let Jeeves close to her, even if it was just an AI," Zac explained. "Something about the way she talked felt unsettling."

"Jeeves said that no one but me can access him," Kenzie said with a downcast voice.

"Would he really know if that was true?" Zac countered. "Can he really know more about any hidden functions than his creator?"

The two kept going back and forth for a while longer. Kenzie initially refused to believe that their mother might wish them harm. The fact that she might even have been used as a test subject seemed to be too much to even consider, and from the rapidly changing expressions on her face she didn't seem to hear the answers she was looking for from Jeeves either.

"In any case, we don't know which version was the true one. Perhaps both were false. But if Leandra really is a top tier warrior of the technocrat faction, just her appearance might plunge the whole planet into a storm of blood. Just getting close to the technocrat incursion gave me a quest to kill them all," Zac said. "We can't deal with the battle between the System and the Technocrats for the time being, and Jeeves seems to be right at the heart of the conflict."

"I know," Kenzie sighed. "You might be right. It's definitely suspicious she only called Jeeves an assistant. Jeeves definitely isn't like other Technocrat technology. He doesn't follow any rules these things do. He's alive, which shouldn't be possible to technology under the rule of the System."

"For now, see if you can figure out a way to hide Jeeves' location. The stronger he grows the easier he might be to find. I doubt Technocrats would use Karma to find him, but rather some sort of hidden bug or connection through the Soul World," Zac said.

"I'll see what I can do," Kenzie said with a slightly hollow voice.

"I'm sorry I didn't have any better news to give you," Zac sighed.

"That's okay. We're still better off than most people on Earth," Kenzie said. "Besides, we might find the truth when we start looking into the Mystic Realm in earnest. Who knows, it might even one of the labs where they researched Jeeves. Even if some other force took it over later, they still left a lot of the infrastructure intact according to Ogras. There might be records that only Jeeves can access."

"That's what I'm thinking as well. There is no rush to find Leandra. We will both be able to live thousands of years. We can slowly figure out the truth without risking our lives or the lives of everyone on Earth," Zac nodded. "Perhaps Julia will have some good news as well."

"That's true," Kenzie said, her eyes lighting up a bit again. "I told her that you'd meet her at 7 am in the government building."

“Thank you,” Zac said as he stood up. “Will you be okay?”

“I’ll be fine,” Kenzie said.

Zac felt a sense of heaviness as he walked back to his courtyard. Things had gone pretty much as expected, and he could only pray that would be the end of his sister’s attempts at looking for their mother in the short run. But he honestly didn’t feel completely secure, and he made a note to look into whether it was possible to block out the Technocrat’s Soul World, like a multiversal wifi-blocker.

There was still a few hours before the arranged time, so he just took a short nap before he started consolidating his latest gains, getting a feel of his upgraded Dao Fragment. The insight mostly felt defensive in nature, which Zac was pretty happy with. His defensive capabilities were starting to slip now that he got so little Endurance, but this would push him a step further.

He was also surprised to find out that the insight actually had changed his Dao Field by quite a bit.