

## The Fall 524

### Chapter 524: Fanaticism

The zealots seemed enraged rather than wounded after being drenched in the darkness of [Rapturous Divide]. It was like they took it as a personal affront that he had shrouded their temple and part of the massive rune in darkness.

They all started emitting flames that actually seemed to counteract the darkness, and Zac's eyes widened in surprise when he saw that even the temple itself seemed capable to resist the effect of his skill. Nothing like this had happened when he fought the massive eagles before, but they were just dumb birds after all.

It was naïve to think that there was no way to counteract his newly acquired skill, and Zac knew he couldn't waste any time. He had already tested this before. The separate clouds didn't hold any individual power, they were only useful if they worked together. If the cultists managed to destroy the first wave before he managed to release the second one, the skill would have been wasted.

He hurriedly swung his golden blade in a second arc, the fractal edge crumbling into motes of light as a second wave shot out, this one reinforced by the Fragment of the Bodhi.

A few cultists welcomed the golden wave as they peppered Zac with a barrage of flame-based attacks, but most seemed to understand that something was wrong. They immediately used movement skills to get out of the way, clearly treasuring their lives higher than the well-being of their temple. Zac didn't care about that though, as his main goal wasn't some weak footsoldiers.

Zac looked at the golden wave flying toward the mountain with anticipation as he conjured another set of leaves [Nature's Barrier] to block out the attacks that still tried to bring him out of the sky. However, there was still a sense of unease lingering in the back of his mind. The problem wasn't that he felt pressure from the large number of attacks, but rather that it all felt extremely haphazard for such a powerful force.

A few simple fireball arrays and a hundred soldiers from a force that was a scourge known across the whole Multiverse? He had taken out far more than that during the invasion of Port Atwood, and everything indicated that there should be thousands of cultists remaining on Earth. What was going on?

Zac's first instinct when he saw how empty the emptiness of the town was that this place actually wasn't the incursion, but rather one of their bases. But it was hard to argue with the massive pillar in red and gold that rose into the sky behind him.

Did the cultists perhaps conduct multiple simultaneous invasions on Earth, allowing them to discard all pillars but one? Their go-to method was to simply snatch the Incursion opportunity from other forces as far as he could tell, and perhaps they sometimes doubled up by mistake.

However, all that would have to wait as the golden wave pushed into the temple shrouded in darkness, causing the whole mountain to rumble. Screams of fury and grief echoed across the mountainside as the whole temple was cleanly split into two, and the opposing shockwaves toppled the four spires in one go.

Zac only managed to glimpse the opulent decor of the temple before it was utterly reduced to rubble, and a cascading wave of destruction followed in its wake as massive pieces of white boulders and raw

rocks started falling down the side of the volcano, smashing everything in its path. It started to look like a mountain slide that kept growing in severity, and even Zac was a bit shocked by how effective his attack was.

Of course, his success was aided by the fact that the temple itself was unaided by any defensive arrays, apart from the natural aura that seemed to resist the darkness of his first wave. Zac figured that the swing wouldn't have been anywhere near as effective against the undead fortress and its sturdy formations.

The large rune remained though, and Zac started to launch a series of Fractal edges at it, all infused with the Fragment of the Axe. A few zealots tried everything within their power to stop him, but they were like flies to Zac who stood far up in the air, launching his punishment upon the lands like a god of death.

His hunch about the rune was quickly proven right as it was far better protected against strikes compared to the rest of the buildings. A fiery aura burst out from the three wavy lines and rebuffed the fractal blades, turning them into cinders before they could bite into the engraving itself.

However, Zac wasn't discouraged, and his arm turned into a blur that rapidly launched blade after blade without exhaustion. What he was doing was high sacrilege judging by how pissed-off the zealots down on the ground appeared. One had actually burst into flames and exploded out of sheer anger, and Zac figured that if this couldn't draw out the Head Priest, then nothing would.

He still moved about in random patterns in the sky as he whittled down the energy of the rune, afraid that the Zealots were setting up a death beam or something similar. However, he was completely left to his own devices, apart from the occasional fireball coming from the few still-standing houses of the mountainside.

Blind faith ultimately wasn't an opponent to a sharp edge, and the three runes finally ran out of its mysterious energy, allowing Zac to turn the whole section of the volcano into a broken mess full of jagged scars. The three runes were replaced with a hundred cracks in less than thirty seconds, and part of the wall even collapsed into the center of the volcano, allowing a stream of magma to escape the volcano and crawl down toward the Incursion Pillar.

The scene made Zac's brows furrow as he had no idea what would happen if the Nexus Hub was swallowed by magma. Would the Incursion end, or would he become unable to claim the crystal? He looked around to get an indication of what was going on from the remaining invaders, but they weren't much of any help. Most of them had simply slumped down on the ground with tears running down their eyes, looking at the destruction with despair.

Zac felt a small sense of relief, as they looked utterly incapable of mounting any sort of trap. Had they really given up on this place? Didn't they care about going back home, instead focusing all their resources on the Mystic Realm? However, he suddenly noticed something off; a group of nine cultists in high-quality robes that shot toward the incursion pillar with impressive speed.

He hadn't seen them before as far as he could tell, meaning they perhaps had been waiting for some opportunity to strike. Zac hesitated what to do as he saw their escape, but he felt he finally couldn't wait any longer as he saw the cultists take out nine massive fiery crystals. They looked a lot like the Nexus

Hub itself, except for the weak fire-attuned energies they emitted. The cultists wasted no time before they started inserting them into a set of grooves in the open-aired temple that encircled the Incursion.

Were they summoning someone? Or something?

Nothing good would come from letting the leaders complete their ritual, and Zac shot forward in an instant, putting away the leaf midair as he soared toward the pillar. A few of the cultists tried to impede his trajectory, some even sacrificing themselves by blowing up. But Zac was unstoppable as he slammed into the ground right next to the pillar. He immediately destroyed the closest fire crystal with a swing of his axe, simultaneously killing the priest who fiddled with it.

He quickly transformed [Love's Bond] into its shield form before the swing even finished its trajectory, expecting a massive eruption of flames to swallow him when the crystal cracked. However, nothing of the sort happened. A bunch of shards flew in all directions, accompanied by some fiery dust that spread out like a small cloud. Zac made sure not to inhale it even though he didn't sense any danger from the stuff.

However, a sense of unease grew as the remaining eight priests seemed to work on inscribing the crystals even faster. Zac pushed his speed to the limit, moving like a tornado in a circle around the incursion. The eight priests and their pillars were destroyed in short order, allowing Zac to finally breathe out in relief.

But the creeping sense of danger only increased rather than subsided, and Zac quickly jumped up on the roof of the temple to get a better vantage.

A second group of cultists he hadn't sensed at all until now had somehow emerged among the rubble, but none of them cared about Zac in the slightest. They instead knelt toward the mountain peak, or perhaps toward the rune that Zac had destroyed. Zac didn't understand what they were doing, but he couldn't help but get a sinking feeling.

This was all too shady, and he would rather retreat for a bit and reassess the situation than stay for whatever these guys had planned. He ignored the Nexus Hub that hovered just fifty meters away, afraid that touching it was the key to their trap. Zac instead took out his flying treasure once more. However, his eyes widened in alarm when he infused it with his mental command as the emerald leaf was utterly unresponsive.

It felt like he was standing on some random palm leaf snatched from the jungle rather than a treasure inscribed and empowered by some unknown master from a greater sector than Zecia. He tried swapping the crystals that were already provided as a power source, but it didn't improve the situation at all.

Zac could pretty much confirm that something was wrong now, and he immediately started running for his life. But he only managed to activate [Loamwalker] once, barely getting a hundred meters away from the Incursion toward the jungle, before the ground started heaving to the point that he was thrown off his feet and unable to regain his footing.

Some fear finally started to set in and he tried to scramble toward the comparable safety of the jungle. But an apocalyptic explosion erupted behind him, forcing him to look back. The whole sky had been replaced by fire and molten rock as the volcano exploded. Not erupted, but literally exploded.

Pieces of the volcano as large as skyscrapers flew through the air as though they were weightless, soaring toward the distant edges of the basin. Only the foot of the mountain remained, releasing an endless amount of lava. A massive shockwave slammed into him before he even had a chance to erect any defenses, and Zac coughed out a mouthful of blood as he felt some of his bones were broken.

If he was in such a bad shape this far away from the epicenter, then there was no need to talk about the cultists who had knelt in prayer. They were either ashes or meat paste by now, swallowed by the blast.

Zac didn't know whether he should feel lucky that the eruption had contained such force that no rocks were falling anywhere near the volcano, but he quickly understood that he had bigger problems as the rumbles beneath him just kept increasing in intensity. Just the vibrations alone would probably have killed a weaker cultivator, and even Zac felt his wounds worsen by the second.

But even that wasn't the scariest thing going on right now. It was rather the three golden waves that slowly rose from within the lava, carried upward by a pillar of golden flames. An intense wave of divinity, far eclipsing that of the simple inscription on the wall, radiated from the enormous insignia, and Zac felt tears running down his face from just gazing at it. Looking at the three lines truly felt like gazing upon God himself.

If God was an entity of endless fury and destruction.

Zac's mind shook as his danger-sense screamed bloody murder. Just a minute ago he had felt like a god of slaughter as he dismantled the rune and half the town from the safety of his leaf, but he realized how valuable that feeling had been. He was not a god, he could barely be considered an ant compared to the real powers of the universe.

The golden insignia finally stabilized up in the sky, drowning the whole basin in its golden splendor. At least the rumblings had subsided somewhat, allowing Zac to get back on his feet. There was no hesitation in his mind as he activated [Loamwalker] to get the hell away from there.

However, he only managed to flee less than a hundred meters before a scorching pain enveloped him, prompting him to fall over once more. He shot out a series of fractal edges in each direction while his eyes wildly looked for the source of the threat, but he only cut through empty air. His harried mind scrambled to figure out what was going on, and he quickly figured out the reason for the pain.

It was that dust he had been covered in earlier, the innocuous substance that had been released from the crystals. A moment ago they felt like just some golden sand that had covered him as he destroyed the array crystals, but they weren't so innocuous any longer. They now radiated a restrictive force that made it look like he was on fire.

Even worse, the flames also formed an intangible bond that ran between his body and the temple behind him, like a leash made of energy. It connected him to the cloud of golden sand that was still spread around the broken crystals like a fetter. Or perhaps it was more apt to say that the light was connected to the Incursion itself, as he saw that the flames had merged with the energy pillar itself.

He had been tricked.