

## The Fall 568

### Chapter 568: First Entry

Not being welcomed like a long-lost son by the Technocrat console felt surprisingly distressing, but Zac pushed all errant thoughts to the back of his head. There was no way for him to get to the truth of the matter as things stood, and it wasn't like his biological heritage was all that important to him.

Besides, Zac wasn't actually worried about not getting any access even if the implications of his failure were troubling. He took out Leandra's talisman, and he jumped up to the console once more. He might not have got the reception he wanted, but he still held the key to the kingdom.

[Council Inspector identity confirmed. Tier-4 Access Added.]

"What was that?" Thea asked with raised brows, looking up from the detritus she was studying.

"I got it in the Tower of Eternity," Zac lied, and he was relieved to see that the demon played along without causing trouble this time. "The enemies on one of the levels were technocrats. I snatched this thing, and I just figured it might work here as well."

"What's a council inspector?" Ibtep asked curiously.

"No idea," Zac shrugged, and this time he didn't need to know. He really had no idea. "But this thing gave the same type of clearance at the technocrat level in the tower. Maybe they're Technocrat law enforcement, and this is their badge?"

"Can I try?" Thea asked, and Zac agreed after some thought.

She jumped up just like Zac did, but a scowl appeared on her face when nothing happened, and the scowl worsened into a glare when Ogras snickered to the side. Zac didn't know why, but he actually felt relieved to see nothing happen, and that feeling only increased when Ibtep similarly failed to gain any credentials with help of the token.

"Perhaps it is bound to me because I was the first one to use it," Zac ventured. "It would be weird if multiple people could use the same identity."

"Well, let's just go," Thea said with a scowl as she entered the base, with the others quickly following.

However, Zac held Kenzie back as he erected an isolation array. The others looked back at them curiously, but they soon walked further inside to not look like they were prying.

"Your clearance, was that by itself or something Jeeves did?" Zac asked when they were alone.

"It was Jeeves," Kenzie said, disappointment evident in her eyes. "I was supposed to get the same credentials as Ogras, but Jeeves made the system give me the highest clearance available to this terminal."

She still didn't look happy with the fact that she at least got a normal clearance, and Zac understood what she was thinking. This realm was supposed to be some sort of bridge between her and their mother, but she was only given the same treatment as an outsider. And even that was better than what Zac got.

It wasn't a good start.

"Don't worry about it," Zac said. "Just look at me. I was the same until I used mom's token. The technocrats are advanced but they can't plan for every eventuality. The place was abandoned by mom's family an incredibly long time ago from the sounds of it, to the point that mom planned on hiding out in this long-forgotten place. She was probably not even born when this place was created. It would rather be odd if we were suddenly given access."

"You're right," Kenzie nodded, her features easing up a bit.

"Besides, this is just some random terminal at the edge of the compound. The good stuff should be further inside. Or could Jeeves connect to some bigger system?" Zac asked.

"There wasn't anything interesting. Just thousands of years or automated reports on readings of the biosphere where we're staying inside. It seems that the terminal was mostly made for access and climate control. I can make it rain I think, but that's about it," Kenzie said.

"Well, put a hold on that," Zac said with a small smile. "At least it's a good start that Jeeves can connect with these things. I doubt any of the other factions can get that much out of the systems in this place."

The two soon rejoined the rest of the expedition, and Ogras led them down the same paths as he had explored before. Zac had already read the reports, but he was still shocked at how massive the place was. Some of it was probably due to the spatial expansion, but it was undeniable that this base was most likely bigger than his whole island even before it started to grow.

It was hard to grasp how a structure could be so massive. Port Atwood was roughly the size of Hawaii according to measurements taken by some geologists, and his mind had trouble computing such an undertaking. Then again, for the Technocrats building something like might be as easy as turning a page. They just needed to send out a few million robots to work around the clock for a couple of years.

They kept moving further and further inside, with Kenzie and Thea being responsible for most of the conversation. Zac and Ogras talked a bit as well, but Ibtep mostly walked in silence.

"You've been pretty quiet for a while," Kenzie finally said. "You don't think this is interesting?"

"A Hive made of metal, large beyond comprehension. It makes one wonder of all the marvels out there in the universe," Ibtep said after some thought.

"You'll be able to see them sooner or later," Kenzie said with a smile.

"Perhaps..." Ibtep said with a sigh. "But Nonet will never get the chance, and neither will the rest of the Anointed. A lifetime of service to the Zhix, and only death is their reward. This is not cutting off weakness, it is cutting off our roots."

The Zhix suddenly turned to Zac, its eyes almost burning.

"Can you do something?"

"Save the Anointed?" Zac asked with surprise. "I have no idea how to do something like that?"

"Here," Ibtep said as he took out a stone gourd from his massive backpack. "Please don't tell anyone I gave you this. Especially not Nonet."

"What's this?" Zac asked with a frown as he held the gourd. He could feel that there was some liquid inside, and he guessed that it wasn't something simple.

"It's the Elixir of Anointment," Ibtep said. "I figured you humans have all kinds of ideas and methods, so I... borrowed it from Rhubat's Hive. Perhaps you can find a way to improve it, to cure the bad side-effects of taking it. Perhaps even reverse the effect and allow the Anointed to cultivate as normal."

Zac looked at the odd Zhix with interest. It appeared as though this wasn't something he had come up with at the spur of the moment. The Elixir of Anointment was no doubt a highly controlled substance, and Zac had no idea of how Ibtep managed to abscond with it from one of the greatest Hives in the world. Perhaps he had gained some unique advantages from his class?

Furthermore, it looked like his actions were highly sacrilegious among the Zhix, but he still went through with it to save the Anointed. It was a reminder that Ibtep's thoughts and actions were much more flexible compared to most Zhix, who were strictly bound by their precepts and conventions.

But could Zac do something, even if he had the elixir? Perhaps Jeeves could help once more?

"I'll be honest, Alchemy is one of the areas where our planet is especially lacking," Zac eventually said after he saw Kenzie surreptitiously shake her head. "We can't even make basic pills right now, let alone improving these types of formulae."

Ibtep only sighed and nodded its head, clearly not too surprised with the outcome.

"However... There might be a way," Zac said after some hesitation. "I made a connection with a very powerful faction while undertaking a trial. They are called the Zethaya Clan, and they specialize in Alchemy. If there is anyone who can help fix the Anointed's situation and these Elixirs, it would be them," Zac said.

"Really?!" Ibtep said with shock.

"However, visiting them is extremely dangerous. They have not only D-grade Hegemons, but even C-Grade Monarchs under their employ. They could destroy this whole planet without breaking a sweat," Zac said.

"Are you not friends? Did you not provide a proper gift?" Ibtep asked.

Zac blanched a bit before his face returned to normal. Blowing up their store and almost killing their direct descendant was more an act of war than a gift. However, that wasn't the only trouble with using the Teleportation Token.

"Well, my identity is a bit complicated for a number of reasons. I might be a wanted man in the whole sector, or I might be considered a promising youth worth nurturing,"

The others were listening in on the conversation, and Thea's eyes were practically burning as she stared at him.

"Just what did you do in the Tower of Eternity?" Kenzie said. "Ogras said that you made a splash, but that's not it, is it?"

"I had a bit of a cultivation deviation," Zac said after some thought. "This got a bit out of hand, and I had to kill a few hundred people."

"A few hundred scions of the most powerful clans around, including a prince of the most powerful Empire of the whole Zecia sector," Ogras said, almost looking like he had finally gotten rid of a huge burden, his smile growing wider and wider. "Your brother is probably a living legend by now, a bogeyman used to scare children."

"Won't this drag even more enemies to our planet?" Thea asked with anger. "Don't we have enough to deal with?"

"Like you've contributed so much until now," Ogras snorted from the side, which almost made the Marshall heiress flinch.

"That's enough," Zac sighed. "I didn't plan for things to get out of hand like that. The System was manipulating things from the shadows. It released something that made everyone lose their minds, and it was kill or be killed."

"Why would it do something like that?" Kenzie asked with confusion.

"To make the strong even stronger," Thea muttered as her fist clenched.

"Anyway," Zac said as he turned back to the eager Zhix. "I could send you or someone else to the Zethaya with this mixture, but they would still know you were related to me. They might catch you to get to me. And I won't be able to save you, no matter how much I would want to. They are simply too powerful."

"I would still be willing to go," Ibtep said without hesitation. "As would any number of Zhix, no doubt."

"The cost to activate this token is two Billion Nexus Coins," Zac slowly said after having made his decision. "I can't fork out that much money right now. If you can cover half, I'll give you the token."

The main use of that particular token was to concoct a pill for Alea as a last resort. Now that things turned out as they did, it didn't hold as much value to Zac. Certainly, having access to a D-Grade Alchemist from a top-tier force would always be extremely convenient, but he wasn't in direct need of getting some item or pill completed.

Still, you never knew what would happen in the future, and he wasn't certain that giving it away would be the best move. They were one-time tokens, after all. So he decided to give a test of sorts to the Zhix. If he couldn't even scrounge up the money for transportation, how would he survive being sent to a C-grade continent?

Of course, Zac had to admit that he had a selfish reason for relenting as well. He was extremely anxious to know about what people were saying about him in the multiverse. He needed to make some adjustments to his plans if it turned out that he had become a wanted man, and they would need to make preparations for Earth as well.

"I will do it! I am going right now," Ibtep said as he started running back toward the base, no longer caring the slightest about the Technocrat base, nor apparently about the fact that he never got any clearance to return through the security door.

The insectoid would have to wait a bit in the break room as others kept going though, since there still were sections to explore. They finally reached the door leading to the "outer section" that Ogras had mentioned, but they didn't immediately open it. For all they knew, there might be an army lying in wait on the other side.

"Do we keep going, or head back?" Kenzie asked as she turned to Zac for a decision.

"You go back for now. Let me and Ogras sound things out first," Zac said.

"I'm coming as well," Thea said without hesitation.

"Like glue, this one," Ogras muttered from the side, drawing another glare from Thea.

"It's just a preliminary scouting mission to see if there are any threats nearby. Ogras and I'll go because we're already in the E-Grade. You'll have plenty of time to get tired of this place over the coming weeks," Zac smiled. "We'll be back in a few hours."

"... Fine," Thea eventually relented. "But I won't be left behind when the real missions start. Try to find a hunting ground like the ones you mentioned. If we just spend our days searching without cultivating we might fall behind the other factions."

"I hear you looked like you just underwent a thousand-cut torture a few days ago, and you're already rearing to get beaten up again?" Ogras snorted. "Did the inheritance turn you into a simpleton?"

"None of your business," Thea spat and walked away in the direction of the garden.

"Don't be like that to my sister-in-law," Kenzie admonished before she turned to Zac. "And you, blockhead. How hard would it be to take her with you? Just send that demon away on some mission and you're suddenly on a date. What a missed opportunity."

Ogras only snickered in response, clearly taking some pleasure in Zac's helpless expression. Kenzie gave a reminder to be careful before she left as well.

"You know. The two of you might be a pretty good match. She seems to have picked up a masochistic streak just like you. You can play around in beast tides for fun," Ogras laughed as he walked toward the console of the security door.

"Let's just go," Zac sighed as he readied himself in case of battle.