

The Fall 580

Chapter 580: Gate

It wasn't such a stretch to think that a faction that all seemed centered around the 'Void' was related to his constitution. Someone called the Void Priestess living by the Void Star lording over a faction called the Void Monastery was a bit too on the nose for it all to be a complete coincidence.

Then again, there were no doubt quite a few heritages containing the word 'Void', just like there was an endless number of ones having the name Heavenly, Primordial, Divine, or Origin. These words conveyed a sense of profundity and vastness, a sense that was rarely justified. The only reason he had held back researching Leyara's heritage until now was the shocking cost of buying intelligence on a powerful C-Grade faction.

But looking into it was worth the expense now, especially considering the [Ferric Worldeaters].

"I can certainly buy the missive..." the Sky Gnome said, though he looked a bit troubled. "But... Ah... Our operational funds are currently a bit..."

"How much?" Zac asked, understanding what the Sky Gnome was getting at.

"Two point five billion," Calrin coughed, looking disgusted even if it wasn't his own money.

"Just send the report to the Mystic Realm before it closes. I'm especially curious whether they have a Void-related bloodline," Zac sighed as he transferred the funds. "Also, see if you can find out anything about abnormal bloodlines. Mutated, corrupted, and unique bloodlines."

"Mutated..?" Calrin muttered before he quickly nodded. "I haven't heard of anything like it, but I will make some discreet inquiries."

"Great. Also, prepare for a flash sale of our stockpile of resources in case we need to flee in the future. I'm running a bit low on money," Zac added after some thought.

"Not to make Young Master's day worse, but the box came at a certain premium as well," the Sky Gnome said with a weak smile.

The box in question wasn't a treasure, but rather a treasure box that would hopefully house and isolate the Dimensional Seed when he managed to snag it.

It cost 775 million nexus coins even though it wasn't even a Spirit Tool, and Zac felt almost physically ill when he had to fork out such an exorbitant sum for an empty box. The reason for the price was the same as with [Everlasting], the shield that had become a component of [Love's Bond]. The locker was almost exclusively made from some sort of Treasure Jade that was one of the best materials around for storing treasures.

Part of the cost also came from the meticulous arrays that covered both its inner and outer surfaces, inscriptions meant to boost the effectiveness of the materials even further. It might be a bit overkill, but Zac wouldn't take any chances with an item that was so valuable that both the Dominators and the cultists would stop at nothing to get it.

"Thank you," Zac said as he put away the box in his Spatial Ring. "If you manage to get your hands on anything else, send it directly into the Mystic Realm. I doubt I will exit again before the Mystic Realm closes."

"Certainly... And good luck," Calrin said. "Remember, wealth is important, but surviving even more-so. My instincts are telling me that this treasure might cause more harm than good."

"I actually feel the same way," Zac grunted. "But someone is going to get it, and that someone might as well be me."

Zac made his way to the teleporter, and he could breathe out in relief when he passed through the tunnel to the Mystic Realm. Everything pointed toward the pathway lasting a few more days, but it had still been in the back of Zac's head the whole time he spent outside. He didn't know what he'd do if he actually was closed out early by some freak accident.

Zac immediately made his way toward his temporary compound, as the exhaustion from using the [Rageroot Oak Seed] was only growing in severity. His surroundings were soon just a blur, and he simply fell down on the grass the moment he had entered his protective arrays, immediately entering a dreamless slumber. He had no idea how long he had slept when he finally roused himself, but the realization that he wasn't alone shocked him wide awake.

"I wish I had one of my cameras with me," a leering voice reached Zac's ears just as [Verun's Bite] appeared in his hands, causing him to sigh in exasperation and turn to Ogras who was sitting by a table not far away.

"Wasn't it you who told me that entering others' arrays was the height of rudeness?" Zac muttered as he took out a bottle of water from his spatial ring.

He still felt drained even after having slept, but he didn't really feel weakened any longer. It felt like he would be ready to go again as long as he got something to eat.

"Well, that rule's for strangers, not good comrades. So, care to tell me what you've been up to? You look like you've been swallowed and spat out by a Govidar Mawbeast," Ogras asked as he took a swig of wine.

"Your home planet sounds like a real nightmare going by all these monsters you've described," Zac snorted. "If you must know, I broke open the second floor of the Dao Repository, unlocking the skills within."

"WHAT?" Ogras exclaimed, immediately jumping to his feet.

"How is that possible?! You shouldn't be that powerful!" the demon said, his eyes a chaotic mix of confusion, glee, and jealousy.

"I have my ways," Zac said with a smile as he took out a massive slab of meat.

Zac rarely felt hungry any longer, but he felt like his stomach was about to implode right now. He tore into the meat like a ravenous beast, and he only stopped when he had eaten over ten kilos of E-Grade beast meat. He didn't understand the physics of it, but he didn't question it either as every bite felt like quenching rain in the parched desert that was his body.

"So?" Ogras eventually asked, posture leaning forward.

"How about a pretty please?" Zac smiled.

"I'd rather get cut apart by those spatial storms," Ogras spat.

"I'm kidding," Zac snorted. "You can bring up to five of the evolved Demons. Oh, and bring Verana."

"Why bother with her?" Ogras asked with confusion.

"The charges in the crystals are limited, but not to the point that we can't spare a couple of slots. It's all to improve our upcoming odds," Zac shrugged.

"Well, those beasts have been proven useful lately," Ogras thoughtfully nodded. "Might not hurt to keep them happy."

"What do you mean?" Zac asked as he looked at his watch, and he was shocked to find out that he had slept for 30 straight hours.

"Now you realize?" Ogras laughed. "The beastmasters were getting anxious that no one really was overly interested in cooperating with them, so they volunteered to expand our maps. It turns out that their beasts can actually smell or somehow sense the spatial traps. Guess that's another thing you have in common with them."

Zac ignored the jab, but he understood what the demon was getting at. He was able to easily identify the hidden traps thanks to his Danger Sense, but others weren't as lucky. They had to tread carefully all the time, as moving too quickly could result in suddenly getting bisected by a hidden spatial tear. The scientists were working on some means to identify the tears ahead of time, but progress was slow for now.

However, these beastmasters actually could keep a decent pace thanks to their companions. That would not only decrease the risk of getting hurt but also rapidly speed up the progress they were making. They might prove integral to dealing with the inner parts of the Mystic Realm, as Zac could only imagine that the spatial anomalies would get even worse in there.

"Have a beastmaster join every scouting unit. Take three Tal-Eladar to the repository instead," Zac eventually said. "Up to 3 skills per person."

"How about five for your good buddy?" Ogras asked. "I did just die helping you."

"Fine, but I honestly doubt that you can even benefit from that many. I only took six different skills myself, and that's for two classes," Zac said with a roll of his eyes. "So, what else happened while I slept?"

"Nothin spec- oh, speak of the devil. Your little spear maiden is waiting outside. She might know more," Ogras said before he was swallowed by the shadows.

"Deal with the scouting parties before you leave!" Zac shouted with a roll of his eyes before he walked out to get Joanna.

Joanna understood what he was looking for, so she immediately started updating Zac of what had transpired while he was out of commission. Nothing urgent had happened, apart from their people learning new things by the hour. Their internal map had rapidly expanded, but the most important realization might be that the Cosmic Energy seemed to grow denser the further inside the Mystic Realm you moved.

There were already murmurs of people wanting to move further into the base, to turn some of the massive warehouses into advance camps. Zac wasn't too surprised, as the ambient Cosmic Energy in the biospheres was pretty dismal, especially for the people of Port Atwood who were accustomed to living on top of a Nexus Vein.

This area right here was the safest thanks to the meter-thick door that only Tier-3 access could open, but every cultivator felt as though they were being stifled by the lacking ambient energy.

The difference was already measurable in the abandoned halls, and people believed that the inner sections of the Mystic Realm to be even better. However, moving to the core of the Mystic Realm was easier said than done, as they had discovered a troubling phenomenon. There didn't seem to be pathways leading further inside the Mystic Realm.

After they exited the massive door they could walk for roughly an hour toward the center of the Mystic Realm. But at that point one could only turn left or right, forgoing exploring the inner reaches. This was partly because most of the corridors simply stopped, while the few remaining ones were all guarded by endless spatial barriers.

They had already termed the sector they explored the 'Outer Band', endless corridors, and Service Tunnels, and their current goal was to find a way to reach further inside.

"Are you really okay?" Joanna asked with worry after having delivered the status update. "No one has seen you for almost two days, some people even believed you to have getting hurt by a spatial storm."

"I'm just a bit exhausted. I had to go all out to upgrade the Dao Repository," Zac said with a tired sigh. "What about your mission? Did you make it?"

"Yes! We reached the end of the map," Joanna nodded.

Most of the activities had been focused on dealing expanding their map while improving their understanding of this place. However, Joanna had put together a small squad of elites where she had teamed up with Thea and Billy to follow the map to see where the Cartava Clan wanted to lead them. It was a test for his group of closest allies. It was a test for himself of sorts as well, to see if he could let go and let others handle important tasks.

The fact that Joanna seemed fine was ample proof that he hadn't misplaced his trust.

"We mostly followed the path, while also making sure we had a back-up route in case of ambush. But there was nothing untoward through the path. At the end, there was an enormous gate, a lot bigger than the one leading into this biosphere. We, unfortunately, couldn't open it, which is why we returned. We figured that one of you two siblings might be able to open it with Tier-4 clearance?" Joanna explained.

"A gate?" Zac mused. "Did you knock?"

"Well... Billy tried to break it open," Joanna said with a grimace. "We almost got ourselves killed then and there. The corridor came alive and tried to stab us."

"Sounds like Billy, alright," Zac snorted. "It's good that you're okay. Guess it's good to know what happens when you try to force these things open. Did you find out anything else?"

"No," Joanna sighed. "But the door is in the inner edge of the Outer Band. I think it's your best bet at reaching further inside of the base."

"Good," Zac said with some excitement as he stood up. "I'll check it out myself."

"What credentials did Billy get?" Zac asked as he suddenly thought of something.

"Nothing," Joanna said with a shake of her head. "I did manage to get a Tier 3 Clearance though."

"Could it be..." Zac mused. "Bloodlines?"

"Excuse me?" Joanna asked with confusion.

"Nothing," Zac said as he passed through his arrays. "Are you rested enough to set out again? It would be best to bring someone who has already traveled that path."

"We're coming with," a familiar voice reached Zac's ears just as he exited his compound, and Zac looked over at Billy and Thea who seemed to have been standing in wait for some time.