

The Fall 582

Chapter 582: Conformation of Supremacy

The group released a collective sigh of relief when the gates slid open without issue, giving them a first look at what waited for them on the other side. It was definitely a change of pace, and the group walked inside curiously. It looked like they had entered actually a glasshouse in the middle of a forest.

The gate led them into a room over one hundred meters across, and it appeared to be some sort of holding room or stable for beasts, with metallic troughs and dozens of reinforced stalls. They could also spot all sorts of advanced equipment in a series of adjoining rooms, which was only possible because both the inner and outer walls were made from some transparent material.

Outside the building was an enormous forest completely different from the artificial biospheres they had arrived in. It felt wild and genuine, like something they might find on Earth if you discounted the fact that most of the foliage was either white, silver, or purple. The place was huge as well, and Zac could even spot a few mountains in the distance. Zac couldn't be sure from where he stood, but he guessed that it would take hours to traverse the whole thing even if he kept a high pace.

However, it didn't take long to realize that this massive forest was still just another part of the research base as the familiar lines ran across the sky as the enormous alloy wall stretched into the distance. There was one odd addition though; nine orbs in the sky that reminded Zac of the moon. Four of them seemed broken, but the other five radiated a silver glow.

The transparent building they found themselves in was installed like an extension of the wall, with the gate they passed through on one side and a large barn door at the opposite.

The glasshouse was just enormous, but Zac figured it probably that it was only a few hundred square meters before the spatial expansion began. Furthermore, going by the current size of the stalls, the animals that were housed here should be around the size of a rhinoceros, which wasn't that big for a multiverse-beast.

"I think it's a satellite base to perform field experiments," Thea eventually said as she looked across the building. "The original owners of this place were studying something inside this forest, and this place was used to take measurements."

Zac slowly nodded in agreement, feeling there was a lot of merit to that theory. It looked like there was room for about a dozen animals at a time going by the number of stalls, whereas the forest outside was large enough to sustain a whole ecosystem.

"Ah!" Billy suddenly exclaimed from another room, and Zac's swirled toward him with wide eyes, fearing that the giant had triggered another trap.

Zac breathed out in relief though when he saw that Billy had actually managed to open the gates by pressing a large button on one of the closest consoles.

"Be careful," Zac quickly exhorted. "We have no idea what these things do. One of them might trigger an alarm and make the building attack us."

Billy quickly nodded and stepped away.

Still, it was good news to know that even someone without any clearance could open the door without assistance. As long as Zac placed a squad at this place in the future they would be able to come and go as they pleased without having to rely on himself or Kenzie.

"Why would the Cartava Clan lead us here?" Zac muttered as he looked over the consoles.

Most of them seemed to be out of order or at least turned off. There were no new messages like another signpost either, leaving Zac a bit confused.

"This place definitely leads further inside the Mystic Realm than what we have accessed until now," Thea answered as she nodded to their left. "Look, we're right at the edge of the Outer Band, but the forest continues for god knows how further in."

"Let's check it out," Zac said after some thought. "Not much anyone of us can gain from these machines anyway."

"Might have been a good idea to bring something more than a bunch of muscleheads," Joanna muttered from the side, and Zac could only wryly smile.

True, his expedition squad was a bit lopsided, with the three strongest humans along with a teenage shaman and a Valkyrie guide. Billy's disposition spoke for itself, and both Zac and Thea were only focused on getting stronger, to put it nicely. More accurately, they were both fighting idiots.

Billy was more than willing to get out of the boring stables and he pushed open the barn doors with a grunt. The group walked outside, but they stopped after only a few meters, realizing the glasshouse had disappeared. More importantly, Zac felt a sense of impending doom, like he would die if he didn't get out of the way.

The only reason that he didn't start running was that the feeling was distinctly different from his Danger Sense, like it was a cheap mimicry of the real thing.

"Illusion array," Thea muttered as she looked around with some trepidation. "Do you feel the weird sensation of dread as well?"

"It might be something to keep beasts away," Emily ventured. "Like bug repellant."

"Probably," Thea nodded before she looked into the sky with a slight frown. "The ambient energy is so dense in here, and there is some attunement in it as well."

Zac needed a bit longer to properly sense the Cosmic Energy, but he could immediately see what she was meaning with the help of [Cosmic Gaze]. The whole forest was shrouded in a silvery haze after he activated his ocular skill, and it seemed to radiate down from the moons like light summer rain.

"Should we head toward the closest mountain? The closest one isn't too far, and we might be able to spot other exits that way," Thea ventured. "It's either that or keep to the wall."

"Let's go to the mountain," Zac eventually said. "The wall looks the same far into the horizon. We will probably learn more if we head a bit further in."

They immediately set out, this time led by Zac who was using his natural affinity with the forest that came from [Forester's Constitution]. There were occasional calls of beasts that reverberated through the

forest, and Zac tried to keep them away from any potentially dangerous spot. It was worth remembering that this place wasn't like Earth or the Tower of Eternity, and Zac couldn't help but feel some pressure as he walked through the woods.

There were no limits here, so the beasts could even be D-Grade for all they knew.

The fact that the strongest cultivators were just High E-Grade indicated that the beasts weren't that powerful, and neither did the howls contain that kind of power. But they couldn't be certain. So Zac's senses were pushed to their limits as he kept a vigil of the surroundings, and the others looked back and forth as they snuck through dense parts of the undergrowth.

However, they only had time to advance for fifteen minutes before Zac sensed a hint of killing intent to their left. He looked over with a frown as he hadn't seen any actual threat, but Thea reacted even quicker as her sword both left and entered its sheath before Zac even had time to summon [Verun's Bite]. A thin sapphire blade shot out from her weapon, appearing to be a wind blade infused with some Dao.

The wind blade contained extremely sharp energy along with a hint of that mysterious force that Brazla called Sword Intent. A muffled thud sounded out the next moment, and the group hurried over to see what had been the source of the killing intent.

It turned out to be a wolf with luxuriant white fur, with a grey marking in its forehead the only exception. It was about as large as a cow, and seemingly just at the bottleneck of the E-Grade judging by the pressure the carcass emitted.

"Won't be too bad if the beasts are just at this level," Zac muttered. "But there could be stronger ones out there as well. Maybe we should-"

"We can't back down from seeing just one F-grade beast," Thea interjected. "We'll never reach the core of this Mystic Realm then. But we need to be careful, if there is one wolf there are definitely more."

"Billy isn't afraid of any stupid dogs," Billy muttered as he gripped his club even tighter.

"Let's keep going then," Zac said as stowed away the carcass before spreading some corpse-removing powder across the grass to remove the scent of blood.

The group kept going, moving in a circuitous path toward the mountain ahead. Zac kept his eyes peeled for more wolves, but there were no odd energy movements in the air, nor were there any bloodthirsty howls of a pack on the prowl. A couple of minutes later they started to relax again as they closed in on the mountain.

However, Zac's eyes widened in shock when hundreds of wolves materialized out of what looked like moonlight, each of them emitting an aura of an E-Grade beast. Not only that, but Zac could tell with one glance that they weren't some average mutts. They should come from some powerful bloodline, as even the weakest E-Grade wolves easily eclipsed the pressure that the Fiend Wolf of the Beast Tides emitted.

He even sensed a few auras that were a match to his own.

"Run!" Zac unhesitantly shouted, but he froze upon turning around.

They were surrounded.

More and more wolves kept appearing out of thin air and there were thousands of them encircling their small group before they had a chance to react. Zac didn't know if there were even more of them on the way, but he knew that dealing with just these ones would be difficult enough. They needed to get back to the glasshouse before they were overrun.

None of the wolves had made their move yet, but Zac wasn't above drawing first blood as a massive fractal blade appeared, stretching over a hundred meters and cutting dozens of trees apart from its aura alone. It shimmered in gold and black, and Zac launched two series of swings at the wolves who blocked their retreat.

Two wolves, each of them radiating an extremely condensed aura, were ready for the attack though. The marks in their foreheads lit up as the two clouds of [Rapturous Divide] shot toward their rearguard, and the thousands of wolves immediately released a unified howl. A huge moon appeared above them the next instant, and it drenched the whole battlefield in a silver radiance. The light contained an immense pressure as well, and it immediately forced Emily to her knees.

The others were able to stand it, though Joanna was visibly pale from the effort.

More importantly, Zac frowned when he sensed the energies of his strike being continuously whittled down. He tried to counteract the effect by using his recently improved command of his Dao, but it felt like he was trying to hold back the tide with his bare hands. By the time the two energies of [Rapturous Divide] reached the wolves they were all but hollowed-out.

The familiar scene of the paradisial divide still appeared, but it almost felt like an illusion. A few dozen wolves were cut apart in an instant before one of the larger wolves literally bit the image with enough force to rip it apart, but there were more than enough beasts to fill up holes in the ranks.

The two wolves who towered above the others howled again, and the previously orderly encirclement rippled as over a hundred wolves started rushing toward them.

"STAY AWAY FROM BILLY'S FRIENDS!" Billy roared as his body started growing, but the growth actually stopped when he reached just four meters.

His physique had transformed though, his muscles turning inhumanly defined as a golden set of runes spread across his frame like a wildfire. Zac was mostly focused on the incoming wolves, but he could swear that the giant even gained at least twenty additional muscles that humans simply lacked. Even Billy's eyes radiated an immense primordial aura as the air exploded around him, and he was among the E-Grade wolves before Zac had a chance to make his next move.

A coruscating shockwave erupted where Billy appeared, and five wolves were turned into paste before he had even swung his club. What followed was a tremendous horizontal swing that caused sixteen wolves to implode, and the whole area shook and heaved as the titan remolded the area with his fury.

However, these wolves were far from ordinary prey, and a squad led by a grizzled alpha moved to intercept Billy's advance, and a wave of silver light actually managed to stop the giant's attack. It looked like the energy of his attack was whittled down just like Zac's was just a few seconds ago.

Five wolves appeared out of silver light next to Billy the next moment, but it was as though the giant had eyes in his neck as the series of muscles in his shins generated a furious and instantaneous momentum, which allowed him to spin his club in a 360-degree arc, killing three and maiming another two.

"Help him carve a way out. I'll protect our backs," Zac said as he exploded into action as well as a series of fractal blades shot out to hopefully cause some damage to the incoming beasts.

However, the incessant moonlight from above was still causing trouble, and the fractal blades couldn't even guarantee a single kill before they were drained and broke apart. It was like the environment itself was fighting against them, and the animals kept getting closer to the exposed backs of his squad. Thea and Joanna were already desperately pushing forward and Emily's form was in constant motion as she sent out one buff or minor axe strike after another.

Zac frowned as he saw the incoming tide, and his eyes darted at the two leaders who still kept their position on top of a rock in the center of the pack like generals overseeing their army. His wide-scale attacks were restrained by whatever that moon above was doing, so he would need to get closer if he wanted to kill them. But doing so would likely result in the death of at least one person in his squad.

The fighting only started a few seconds ago, but everyone but Emily already sported wounds. If they also had to deal with the wolves coming from behind they would be overrun in seconds. He needed to thin out the herd a bit before he dealt with the leaders. Using [Deforestation] or [Nature's Punishment] felt extremely risky as well as long as the moon remained, so he needed to come up with another solution.

A huge amount of energy surged toward an intricate fractal at the lower end of his spine, and it quickly started to radiate a shocking amount of power.

There hadn't even been a chance to test the skill out, but Zac saw no option but to active [Conformation of Supremacy].