

The Fall 622

Chapter 622: Upheavals

It looked like the structural integrity of the Mystic Realm was starting to unravel because of the mysterious ripples. Zac tried to discern what the ethereal waves were doing as they passed through the area, but his [Cosmic Gaze] simply couldn't pick up anything at all. Zac could only guess that the Dao or energy inside those ripples was simply too high-tiered for his skill to catch them, which wasn't surprising considering the grade of the Dimensional Seed.

Zac had a strong feeling that things would only get worse before they got better though, and he started running back toward his people.

Short was long and long was short as one pulse after another started hitting him with increasing velocity. The weird spatial expansion and contraction started to leave a mark on his body, as an odd sense of hollowness spread through his limbs, like his energy had been exhausted from being stretched and molded like a ball.

The same seemed to be true of Zac's surroundings. He could see trees falling apart for seemingly no reason in the distance, and hairline cracks spread across the Memorysteel wall and on the ground. Zac's worries that the whole base would fall apart as the Dimensional Seed matured only intensified, and he needed to confer with Kenzie who should have some readings by now.

The army had already retreated toward the fort by the time Zac managed to cross the battlefield where hundreds of mangled bodies still lay unmoving. It should just have taken a second or two with the help of [Loamwalker], but he repeatedly found himself running in the wrong direction or repositioned.

Verana, Billy, and the Anointed had stayed behind to rest up while waiting for Zac, but they immediately started running as well when they saw how quickly things were deteriorating. Verana was carrying her wounded beasts in her arms as she ran for her life, and Rhubat carried one of his brethren over his shoulders as he rushed toward the shield, each step causing tremors in the ground.

"Warmaster! What's happening?!" the Anointed shouted when Zac finally caught up to them, prompting Verana to look over with the gaze of a drowning sailor seeing a life raft.

"I'm not sure why, but the Dimensional Treasure is awakening early! We need to gather up our people to not get separated!" Zac shouted back without stopping.

Zac had no idea what he was talking about, but this wasn't the time to let that on. Gathering together felt as good an idea as any, and he hoped that whatever was going on would at least somewhat follow the rules of teleportation. That if people touched each other they would stay together.

The pulses kept increasing in intensity, but Zac somewhat breathed out in relief as they managed to make their way back to the base. The shield had already collapsed, and thousands of eyes turned toward him with worry and questions. A glance indicated that most of the wounded had already returned, gathering together with the others within the wall.

He wanted to assure them all that everything would be fine, but his eyes darted toward the core of the Mystic Realm with hesitation. Should he try to get everyone out of here? He was about to speak to his

people, but he suddenly found himself unable to speak as monstrous energy suffused everything around him.

The world twisted, and Zac couldn't maintain even a semblance of control. He was as large as a moon, a single thought taking days to reach his extremities. He was just a speck of stardust, where just a drop of water would be enough to drown him a million times over. Space had collapsed, where distances and dimensions held no sway.

All was chaos.

It was only possible to make sense of his surroundings for an instant before the universe turned mad again. The world turned flat before it became... less. He saw a vast infinity where space even stretched toward the future and the past, a dimension where space and time had melded into one.

He saw a world sailing in the shadows of reality, he saw life and death collapsing into themselves. An eye stared back at him, seemingly surprised to be seen. A pair of hands ripping apart the sky. He saw a splinter hidden at the bottom of a sea, a shard in the heart of a volcano. Weird visions assailed him one as the fundamental laws of space collapsed around him.

The world finally returned to normal, or at least not as insane. Zac wasn't sure how he felt. It was as though he had caught a glimpse of destiny, or heaven's secrets themselves. Now he was back in his mortal flesh like he was blinded from the truth. But this was no time for introspection as the cataclysmic changes clearly had just begun.

His eyes widened in shock as the towering Memorysteel wall started to fall apart, turning into streams of liquid that rushed toward the core of the Mystic Realm like a river in the sky. And it wasn't the only one. Thousands more just like it appeared in all directions, and Zac was only able to see it since the whole dimension kept bending and twisting.

A terrifying explosion erupted to his left as one of the moons crashed into the ground. It was like a flashbang of unprecedented proportions had been set off, and Zac felt a terrifying force throw him into the air.

One moment he saw a forest in ruins, the next moment he found himself in a vast darkness with a thin line of light. He didn't even have time to panic at being thrown out into the Void before he was back inside the base, and he slammed into the crumbling wall they had built as a defensive line. It was pretty odd that the shockwave had pushed him toward the point of impact, but Zac was more confused as to why the walls remained unscathed.

The wall was made from massive blocks they had harvested from a nearby island outside the Mystic Realm, and they stood completely unphased as everything else seemed to fall apart. Was it because the material wasn't native to the Mystic Realm?

Others had realized the same oddity as well, and more and more huddle against the battlements and their false sense of safety. Zac made his way over to his sister who hid next to the wall, desperately typing away at a tablet.

"Are you okay?" Zac said.

“I’m fine. I’m trying to understand what’s go-“ Kenzie said, her words cut short as she suddenly disappeared, only appearing a second later. —“ing on here. But it’s chaos. There’s not much we can do but wait.”

The world kept twisting and shaking for over an hour, at which point most people had fallen unconscious. Even Zac was barely hanging on, and he could eventually just close his eyes and hide against the wall while shielding his sister. But the shakes finally subsided, allowing Zac to breathe out in relief as he popped a Soldier Pill and Fasting Pill to give a quick boost to his exhausted body.

Kenzie had barely been able to stay conscious but she wasn't in any condition to start dealing with this mess. She quickly sat down in a meditative pose to focus on recuperation. Zac wasn't quite as wrung dry and he immediately stood up to start looking for clues. The glasshouse, the walls, and the forest were all still there, but the cataclysmic change had caused large sections to fall apart.

More importantly, it was clear that they had all shrunk significantly, to the point that all or at least most of the spatial expansion had been undone. The walls were only six meters tall now, a far cry from their previous 50-meters height. The same went for the glasshouse, which was now a building of normal proportions.

It almost felt like a good thing, but his heart almost jumped out of his mouth when he looked up.

The metallic lines in the sky were gone, replaced with vast darkness; the Void had suddenly come much closer. There were thankfully no Void Creatures flying about as far as he could see, but it still felt like something was looking back at him from within the darkness. Those terrifying hand-covered tentacles could descend any moment for all he knew, but things were at least quiet for the moment.

Perhaps it was thanks to a shimmering film protecting the atmosphere in the area. It almost looked like he was gazing at an ocean made of soapy water in the sky. The barrier rippled like waves on the water, seemingly expanding and contracting like it was breathing.

Zac sighed in relief and jumped up on the wall to get a better look at the situation, but the scene almost made him fall off again. The whole mystic realm had been completely transformed, to the point that Zac almost felt he must have been unconscious for years.

First of all, it became abundantly clear that the whole Mystic Realm had fallen apart. The Lunar forest simply cut off a few kilometers inland, the ground suddenly giving way to the Void. He could see similar scenes through the cracks of the broken Memorysteel wall, and he immediately realized they had been cut off from their way back home.

A quick survey showed hundreds of platforms drifting in the darkness. Some were completely detached and turned into small spatial islands in the void, but many were still held together by small strips of land.

For Example, Zac could spot a strip of land in the distance, a 50-meter wide natural bridge that connected their island with the next one over. To fall off it would mean falling into the darkness, which would either result in becoming food for the creatures of the void or ripped apart from spatial turbulence.

Most of the islands were covered in either exposed and partly crumbled Memorysteel corridors, or a flat slab of Memorysteel that no doubt held pieces of the research base inside. Others held forests or

grasslands, even large bodies of water. It was no doubt the biomes that were spread across the base, now turned into small pockets of life in the darkness.

But not even this shocking transformation left as great an impression on Zac as what had happened in the heart of the Mystic Realm. With the towering walls back to their normal size and the artificial sky gone, Zac had an almost unimpeded sight all the way to the core of the mystic realm.

Where an impossibly huge mountain peak stood.

It was hard to get a sense of scope in this place, but he could see land platforms hovering around the foot of the mountain. If those platforms were roughly the same size as the one he was currently situated on, then the mountain was over a hundred thousand meters tall. The mountain itself glistened with a metallic luster, and Zac's eyes widened when he realized that it was probably made from all that Memorysteel that had drifted away earlier.

The platforms almost looked like small pieces of debris rather than islands that were kilometers across, and it seemed to Zac that most of them were connected to the foot of the mountain. In fact, most of the platforms were held together in a vast spiderweb, providing Zac and his people multiple paths to the mountain if need be.

The mountain didn't look like a natural formation, but it rather felt like the Memorysteel had been subject to some shocking magnetic forces, like it had been pulled up by immense power. It had created a single conical mountain peak that was slightly twisted but oddly symmetrical in a way that made Zac think of soft-serve ice cream.

As for what had been the source of the magnetic pull, it wasn't hard to guess.

A huge metal sphere hovered right above the peak. Judging by its size it might be as big as a planet, or at least a very large moon. It wasn't an actual planet though, as the sphere didn't seem solid. Massive ravines covered its surface, and mysterious energy fluctuations and lights escaped through the cracks.

There was no doubt in Zac's mind. The Dimensional Seed was most likely inside the heart of that sphere in the sky.

The situation was too sudden, too unexpected. The old plans would have to be scrapped, but he didn't know what his next goal was. Honestly, he had no idea how to even get out of this place, let alone complete the missions he came here to finish. It was chaos, both around him and in his mind.

A sudden clap of thunder drew Zac's attention. He realized that the noise came from a platform far behind him, at the edge of the mystic realm itself. It was one of the solitary platforms that were unconnected to the mesh of islands. Zac looked on with shock as the protective bubble around it flickered a few times before it disappeared, which was followed by a complete and utter collapse.

It was like the piece of land had been subject to the vacuum of space, and it was ripped apart from immense forces of every direction. Zac looked up at the protective film above, a sense of foreboding gripping his heart.

They needed to do something, and quickly.