

## The Fall 624

### Chapter 624: Island Hopping

"The Cartava Clan?" Zac muttered with a frown. "What kind of group?"

"Thousands of people. Some of them are E-Grade, but most emit very weak energy signatures," Kenzie said as he read the report on her tablet.

Zac slowly nodded, not surprised to hear the Cartava Clan had left some of their elites with the civilians just in case.

"Where are they going?" Zac asked, his vision blocked by the trees.

"They're cutting through the forest. It looks like they're already moving toward the core," Kenzie said, opening a map. "You don't think they'll try to destroy the bridges to trap us here? Less competition for those seals."

Zac frowned as he looked at the tablet before looking down at his people. Everyone was hustling and bustling to prepare for the move, dressing wounds and desperately absorbing Cosmic Energy from Nexus Crystals. They knew that falling behind in this place would mean death. But it still looked like it would take a minute or two before they were ready to set out.

"It looks like they are heading for a plateau far away from us, but it doesn't hurt to be safe. I'll go ahead to protect our route, meet up with me as quickly as humanly possible. The Cartava Clan isn't the only faction we need to worry about. Others are already closer to the core, and they might try to dislodge all the platforms," Zac said.

Kenzie nodded before she pointed at a bridge in the distance. "That's our best option for now. We have multiple possible routes from there. The only issue is that we might be blocked by the base security."

Zac's eyes followed where she pointed and nodded when he saw it was the closest bridge apart from one behind them. It seemed like a safe bet, and it wasn't the same as the one that the Cartava Clan was running toward.

"You're not going to... you know? Right?" Kenzie hesitated. "That group is mostly made up of mortals and children."

"No, I won't go after them," Zac sighed as he took out the Spatial Drill from his ring and handed it to his sister. "They have paid their price, they're just a shadow of their former strength. I won't move against them as long as they don't try anything again. Try to learn how this thing works, we might need to use it before this is over."

With that he set off, running toward the bridge Kenzie indicated. However, he did perform some looting while he waited. He ran straight through the battlebot swarm and swept up a few of the more powerful-looking machines without losing any speed. Next was the battlefield where he looted a Cosmos Sack from the Second Elder and his grandson.

He did take a small detour to the craters left by the Grand Elder and the third elder. He did manage to find a slightly damaged sack from the third elder, but not as much as a scrap remained after the Grand Elder's final attack.

Zac quickly realized something was wrong with the situation though.

He didn't have time to properly look for clues, but he had seen quite a few people exploding in a final act of defiance, from the demons just after the integration to the crazed cultists. In all these cases there were always some remains, like a foot or a piece of a skull. But the hundreds of craters on the battlefield were simply empty, like someone had thrown out an offensive talisman.

Had they been tricked?

The possibility only increased Zac's vigilance. It was one thing if the Cartava Clan were led by a small number of guards, but it might be trouble if the Grand Elder was still alive. They definitely couldn't be too friendly to his people at the moment, and they might use this opportunity to launch a counter-strike. With that in mind, he only spent a minute at the battlefield before rushing off, only taking a moment to put the body of Leviala in his Corpse Sack.

The bridge was somewhat close to the gate clan Cartava had attacked from, but it wasn't hours away any longer now that the base had shrunk down. Zac guessed that it would take his people around an hour to get there, and for himself, it shouldn't take more than twenty minutes if he pushed himself.

The Memorysteel wall along the way looked like it was on its last legs. Most of the fractals had gone out, and the cracks were even worse than those at the outskirts of the Wasteland. These cracks were sometimes tens of meters wide, and they seemed to differ from the ominous scars from before. These were completely dead sections of the wall, clearly displaying the void or small sections of corridors on the other side.

Zac's best guess was that the walls and everything else in this place had lost its energy source but that they still worked independently as long as the components were fine.

Thankfully there were no traps along the way, and the bridge remained intact when he arrived less than ten minutes later. The bridge was actually a Memorysteel corridor that stretched straight through the Void over to the next island. It would probably lead toward an area formerly under the control of the Cartava Clan, though it was hard to tell how much of its original functionality the base maintained in its current state.

The section with the bridge was in even worse a state than the wall section Zac had passed, where the wall had been twisted and turned many times after the ground had been split apart. The bridge looked serviceable at least, with a distinct protective film around it. They would have to walk on top of the crushed and bent Memorysteel corridor, but something like that was easy enough for the cultivators who had been brought into the Mystic Realm.

After confirming that the bridge worked he took up a guarding position from on top of a piece of the wall, keeping watch of both his surroundings and the situation on the other platform. There were no movements, but Zac heard one clap of thunder after another as he waited, each second feeling like minutes as he watched how the edge of the mystic realm crumbled piece by piece.

The crumbling islands at the edge of the Mystic Realm were troubling enough, but Zac soon noticed something else. The Cosmic Energy in the atmosphere was slowly decreasing. It would take a while for it to become an issue, but he couldn't help but wonder how things would be in a few hours. It wasn't

completely impossible that they would have to finish the sprint toward the mountain without any ambient energy to assist them.

That alone was a huge issue as Cosmic Energy was required to use not only skills, but also to take advantage of the superhuman attributes that they had gained from the integration. The quicker they could get going the better. His wait was thankfully over after just over forty minutes as he saw his army rushing toward him with great speed. Billy was in the forefront, his head swiveling back and forth with wide eyes.

"Haha, Billy did it!" the giant shouted before a massive yawn escaped his lips. "Billy led the people here. Ah, so tired."

His eyes rolled into his eyes the next moment as he fell on the ground, but Zac breathed out in relief when the signature thunderous snores assaulted the surroundings.

"Wallbreaker fought desperately in the battle before," Rhubat said as one of his brethren picked Billy up, carrying him on its shoulder. "His reserves are depleted. We'll tend for him."

"This platform will fall apart in less than an hour going by how quickly the defensive membrane is losing energy density," Kenzie said breathlessly as she walked up next to Zac. "There is no time to waste."

"Start moving, follow me!" Zac shouted. "Across the corridor. Keep a high pace but keep the order."

Zac himself took the lead, with a swirl of leaves flying around him as he had his axe at the ready. He felt extremely exposed as he ran across the jagged pieces of metal, his eyes constantly trying to see any signs of danger in the void that was all around him.

He could only breathe out in relief when he stepped down on land again, proving that the trip was possible. But he still couldn't help but worry after seeing just how close the protective film was to the exposed tunnel.

More and more people moved across, and no one needed any urging to pass as quickly as possible. Walking across that bridge had felt even scarier than when he was lost in outer space, especially considering he didn't have any token this time that could teleport him outside if need be. Besides, he knew all-too-well what kind of creatures lurked in the darkness.

Kenzie was one of the first to get across, and she immediately opened her tablet as he looked at the corridors that covered this place. A group of scouts was quickly called over, and Kenzie showed them where the army needed to go.

"Scout close-by corridors, decide on a path for us," Zac said, and the scouts nodded and immediately set out.

One of them actually started climbing up along the broken walls in an attempt to get up on the roof but he was immediately forced down again as half his body suddenly disappeared into the void the moment he reached the top. He looked half-dead when he fell onto the ground, but he slowly crawled back on his feet with a pallid face.

"Rest up instead," Zac sighed in disappointment after seeing that his first choice of path was a no-go.

Why go through a maze when you could go above it? But it looked like the roof itself acted as the separator between Void and Mystic Realm on this platform.

More and more people streamed across the bridge and the broken square was almost filled to capacity after a few minutes. However, a sudden shudder made Zac look down toward the other platform with worry, just in time to see a mass of something rip the whole bridge apart while snatching up almost fifty people.

A few people desperately managed to hang on the ruined bridge as they crawled to safety, but roughly a hundred people were stranded on the other side, shock written all over their faces as they saw their road to survival being lost to the darkness.

Worse yet, with the connection lost, the islands slowly started drifting further and further away from each other. Zac immediately tried to throw a rope across, but it simply disappeared the moment it entered the darkness, never to reappear on the other side.

"The Void isn't a proper 3-dimensional space I think," Kenzie said with sorrow. "We can't really exist in it properly, and directions hold no sway. Even if you get a rope across... I'm afraid..."

"I understand," Zac sighed as he walked to the edge of the platform.

A hundred desperate sets of eyes looked back at him, but some of them fell to their knees when they saw Zac shake his head. Others were infuriated screaming and pointing in his direction. No sound could make it across the chasm, but Zac had a good idea of what they were saying.

Cursing him for bringing them to this place.

He sighed and shook his head, but he suddenly had an idea as [Love's Bond] turned into its offensive form and two chains rose into the sky.

"It's not-" Kenzie said, but she stopped when she saw what Zac was doing.

The chains didn't try to pass through the void, but they instead formed a shape, an arrow pointing in the direction of the next bridge, the one that the Cartava Clan probably had used. He could see that it was still in one piece, and it was the only option if they wanted to have a shot at survival.

The people on the other side immediately understood what he was talking about, and they started running as quickly as their legs could carry them.

"Its shield is depleting much faster now," Kenzie said with a frown. "But the shield on this island became stronger. I think the bridges act as power conduits as well for whatever protects these floating plots of land. We might want to break any pathways behind us."

"Agreed. We keep going," Zac sighed.

The squad set out, following the preliminary path the scouts had staked out. Zac and Kenzie walked in the front, with Zac on the look-out for Spatial Tears and Void Beasts, and Kenzie keeping track of the paths.

The first minutes were a bit slow, but Zac gradually increased the pace as they realized something; they hadn't encountered a single spatial tear since the cataclysm. It looked more and more likely that they

had been sucked into the mountain or the Dimensional Seed along with all that Memorysteel, and Zac was soon running at as high a pace that the army could withstand, the walls almost turning into a blur.

They did encounter a few closed gates along the way, but they were easily solved by Kenzie. Her Grade-4 clearance didn't actually work everywhere, but that was easily fixed within a minute by her hacking the terminal.

One small relief about the situation was that the base had completely lost any central control functions. The corridors on the floating islands were like the limbs of a corpse without the Core computers taking charge; They had no brain to control them, but you could still trick them to move with some electricity. That allowed Kenzie to fully activate Jeeves to force its way through the protections without worrying about any repercussions.

However, alarmed shouts and sounds of battle erupted at the back of the army, and Zac swore in exasperation as he rushed over. Nothing good ever lasts.