

## The Fall 630

### Chapter 630: Foothold

Zac was ready for war, but the cultists were perhaps even more so. Not a single zealot had moved on toward the next bridge by the looks of it. They had instead taken defensive positions while one sun after another ignited and rose into the air like a fiery sentry. Not only that, the whole edge of the mountain was lit on fire, with flames reaching over twenty meters into the sky.

It looked like the Church of Everlasting Dao had figured out their plan, or at least didn't want to take any risks.

"Have anyone seen Ogras or Thea?" Zac asked as he surveyed the army.

He couldn't be certain about Thea, but Zac knew that Ogras was somewhere on the mountain. They had seen a huge eruption of shadows around twenty minutes ago, but it was swallowed by an even larger fire. The demon was probably trying to help them out, but Zac hadn't seen a hint of either him or Thea since they reached the square.

"I've looked, but I haven't spotted them. But I'm sure they're fine," Joanna said. "They might be waiting for an opportunity to strike."

Zac solemnly nodded as he imprinted the defensive measures in his mind. Whoever entered first would find themselves right in the crosshairs of over a hundred attacks. Not only that, he could clearly sense that there was some sort of array at the edge of the mountain, but neither [Cosmic Gaze] nor [Primal Polyglot] could tell what it was.

That wasn't because the skills were too weak, but rather that he couldn't see the situation too clearly. The surface of Taboo Mountain was roughly 20 meters above their current platform, so he could only see the thick crust beneath. The only reason they could spot the army at all was thanks to the incline and the fact that the mountain was far enough.

"Can you change where the other portal appears? Like on the other side of the mountain?" Zac hesitantly asked.

Even if he couldn't see everything, he could see enough. Even he wasn't certain he'd walk out unscathed from an all-out attack that the whole cultist army had prepared for almost five minutes.

"No," Kenzie sighed. "I can only drill a straight line. That's why the Cartava Clan needed to get to a specific spot to escape this place."

"Alright," Zac nodded with a somber expression. "I'll go all-out from the start and try to create a safe zone right next to the exit."

"We will be right behind you, Warmaster," Rhubat said. "We'll secure this lifeline for our warriors no matter what. Here, take this."

The enormous Anointed took out a small spike, though in the hands of Zac it would look like a proper spear. Zac took it in his free hand and turned it over curiously. It didn't look like something from the System, but rather an ancient weapon from the Zhix homeworld. It was exceedingly beautifully crafted

with dense scripts covering the long metal shaft, and its bladed spearpoint was made from some purple metal he had never seen before.

"What's this?" Zac asked with confusion.

"It is [Judgement], the symbol of the crusade. Stab it into the ground, and we'll do the rest. The ancestors will protect us. I hoped to save it for the final battle, but we'll have to make do without it."

"This..." Zac hesitantly said as he looked at the spear in his hand.

It seemed like an artifact of extraordinary value. But that value, unfortunately, seemed to be largely cultural. There was something mysterious about the runes, but he couldn't sense any spiritual fluctuations from it. This was a battle of life and death, and he wasn't sure he could trust some pre-integration weapon to save their hides.

"Do not worry, Warmaster. I know what you are thinking, but the energy gathered in this weapon would easily kill those miscreations we've fought on the way here. It is simply sealed. It will take a second for it to awaken, which is why you need to activate it immediately. We'll follow right behind you and take charge of the activation," Rhubat explained.

"Okay," Zac slowly nodded as he looked at the spear.

He still couldn't figure it out, but Zac guessed it was like the Sanskrit on the Mountain Everlasting Peace. It had been consecrated with Zhix conviction for over a thousand years, which might have created something magical. In either case, stabbing it into the ground wouldn't take any time, and if it didn't work he would simply have to figure something else out.

"Is it offensive or defensive in nature?" Zac asked.

"We do not know," Vanexis said with a shrug next to Rhubat. "It has never been activated before."

"Great," Zac wryly smiled as he looked at the elite soldiers standing behind him.

Billy stood with the group of elite Anointed that would enter right behind himself, and he had an unusually somber expression. The demons and Tal-Eladar were right behind them, and Emily stood in their ranks. Zac felt bad about pushing a teenager to the frontlines, but her totemic ability was just too useful. Thankfully she knew enough to not actually enter battle, but rather focus on buffing

This small elite squad would be responsible to take control of the edge of the mountain, after which the rest of Port Atwood's forces would enter.

"Any second now, get ready," Kenzie said, dragging Zac's eyes back to the portal. "And stay safe."

"I've defeated these guys so many times by now," Zac smiled. "Nothing will go wrong."

Everyone soon turned to the portal. Zac's heart hammered as adrenaline coursed through his body, and the muscles in his legs were taut with tension.

"NOW!" Kenzie shouted and Zac shot forward like a bullet straight toward the portal.

The four-meter tall vortex had looked like a window into the void before, but just after Kenzie exclaimed it transformed to instead show a fiery hellscape with hundreds of suns hovering in the sky. The Spatial

Drill had directly connected two positions in contrast to teleportation arrays, and Zac found himself inside the inferno the moment he stepped through.

Scorching heat licked his face but Zac roared as he blasted his Dao Field based on Fragment of the Coffin and empowered it with his [Spiritual Void]. It was like a concussion grenade had erupted right where he stood, pushing the golden flames away for over thirty meters around him.

Zac had managed to clear the area of flames the moment he appeared, but his Danger Sense was still going haywire. There was a dense script covering the ground, and the fractals had actually started to climb up his legs, the inscriptions looking like fiery snakes. The fractals felt like molten steel against his skin, and Zac found himself encumbered by greater and greater weight pressing him down.

It reminded him of the bindings Brazla used on him in the lava bath, and while it wasn't too bad for him just yet, it would be devastating for the normal soldiers. They would turn into sitting ducks unable to move by this level of restraints. Worse, those were just one of the preparations of the cultists. There were already hundreds of attacks soaring toward him, and cascading waterfalls of golden flames were descending from the suns in the sky.

Some of the suns were even falling toward him, the air itself incinerating from their descent.

Even Zac felt some fear at the shocking display, but he could only put his trust in the Anointed as he stabbed the spearhead into the ground before he took two rapid steps forward. A fractal blade attached to [Verun's Bite] grew fifty meters with each step, and it was like he was an apostle of nature as a storm of verdure erupted around him, from the leaves of [Nature's Barrier] to the forest of [Hatchetman's Spirit].

By the time Zac had taken his two steps to create some distance from the portal, the edge of [Chop] had gained the mysterious sets of fractals of life and death. A wave of darkness swept out, swallowing the first wave of attacks.

However, these were the elites of the incursion, and Zac frowned when he saw how quickly the energy of [Rapturous Divide] was being expended. But it thankfully only needed to last for a fraction of a second before the opposing wave of energy rushed forward, causing the familiar friction of life and death.

Dozens of attacks, most of them based on the holy fire-heritage of the Church of Everlasting Dao, were ripped to shreds as the spatial delimitation appeared. It was quickly being whittled down, but Zac desperately pushed back by steadily infusing both the half-circles with their respective Daos. Infusing two Daos at once was usually impossible for him with his awful control, but he managed to force it for a second as he channeled Cosmic Energy into his next skill.

A loud thunder-like clap from behind almost made Zac lose his footing, but the omniscience of [Hatchetman's Spirit] let him proceed without worry. It was the advance group of Anointed who had surrounded [Judgement]. They were led by Rhubat and Vanexis and all of them slapping their enormous hands against their chests in what somewhat looked like a haka.

Zac was worried for a second that their actions would prove fruitless, but he was thankfully proven wrong almost immediately. A wave rippled out from the spear embedded in the ground before it exploded with mysterious white light that spread like a wildfire. The golden fractals around it cracked and dimmed down as one spectral monolith after another rose from the ground.

Even the golden inscriptions that had reached all the way up to Zac's knees were subdued by the radiant glow of the Zhix heirloom, and it felt like a huge weight was literally lifted from his shoulders which allowed him to move freely. It didn't look like it was the Anointed who personally helped him, but rather that the spear itself was intelligent. For example, Zac's fractal forest was completely unaffected as well, and Billy was completely drenched in the light as he rapidly grew into his Titanic form.

It was the monoliths rather than the light that was the source of a shocking pressure though, a pressure that exceeded anything Zac could have imagined from such an unassuming weapon. The pillars radiated an aura that even eclipsed the peak-grade talismans he had used when fighting for his life outside the Tower of Eternity. It proved that the spear was a real treasure, and most likely the most powerful item of the old Zhix world.

He still didn't know exactly what the Anointed's ace would do, but it did lessen the pressure Zac felt a bit as he started summoning the first axe of [Deforestation]. The divide of [Rapturous Divide] had only lasted for a few seconds before it was finally overpowered by the frenzied assault of the army.

"Destroy the gate!" an infuriated roar echoed out from a soldier in the core of the cultist army, but how could Zac let that happen?

The source of the shout was definitely one of the leaders of the army judging by his outfit, but Zac could immediately tell that it wasn't the people he had fought back at the Undead Incursion. It wasn't the true leader, but Zac still sensed that he was at least at the same level as himself. That by itself usually meant a free kill for someone like Zac, but the bishop was clearly empowered by a War Array that far eclipsed what his Valkyries were able to conjure.

A huge sun shone above the bishop's head, and it was like the other suns empowered it, which in turn empowered the bishop himself. He radiated a fierce holy aura, and he had hundreds of soldiers backing him up. It was vastly different from fighting him in a one-on-one.

Whatever the Anointed were conjuring wasn't ready, but it wasn't like the cultists were going to wait around for them to finish. The huge glowing orbs were almost about upon him, and Zac couldn't let them get any closer. They were crammed full of chaotic energies by the looks of it, and if they slammed into the ground they might even be able to break off the edge of the mountain.

Thankfully his skill had already been fully infused by this point, and Zac immediately swung his arm as the enormous hatchet above his head mirrored his movement. He didn't target the leader, but rather a dense cluster of incoming attacks. It felt a bit of a waste to waste the first swing of [Deforestation] on blowing up attacks instead of taking out a part of the army, but he didn't have a lot of options.

A wave of unmatched sharpness rippled out, and a series of coruscating explosions almost blinded him as a large number of the glowing suns were ripped apart. It almost looked like a meteor shower as burning pieces of molten stone rained down on the ground but the leaves of [Nature's Barrier] were powerful enough to divert the fallout before they incinerated from the heat.

The sky was unfortunately still littered with incoming attacks. Zac felt a bit unwilling, but he could only prepare to activate his second swing in order to clean out another set of suns.

However, he quickly stopped when he realized that his backup was already on the move.

