

The Fall 647

Chapter 647: Weight of Sin

"This isn't a game, you know," Zac sighed as he turned to his sister.

"Just look," Kenzie said as she tapped a button on her tablet.

Zac frowned with confusion, but his eyes widened in shock when a meter-thick Memorysteel wall suddenly sprung up in front of Kenzie, completely shielding her. Even he would have some trouble getting through a wall that thick provided it had a constant source of Base Power.

"It took some time, but I managed to figure out a way to activate both a protective algorithm and to trigger the attacks. The sphere up there is overflowing it Memorysteel too, I might actually be stronger than you when we get there," Kenzie said with a triumphant smile. "Add to that my ability to deal with all kinds of tech-related issues... You can't leave me here."

"Alright, fine," Zac sighed. "But the moment we encounter people, you run away and hide within the Memorysteel, okay? I'll deal with the people, you deal with the machines."

"Fine," Kenzie said with a roll of her eyes before she ran away, perhaps afraid that Zac would change his mind.

Thea wryly smiled as she looked at the encounter. Zac could only shrug as he sat down and started working on refilling his Void Energy. He had an idea since a while ago, and he took out one of his two Beast Cores from the Void Beasts. A torrent of energy once more entered his body, prompting his [Void Heart] to wake up. Beat after beat echoed out, and Zac's eyes lit up as he felt the sense of hollowness quickly dissipate.

But there was something that didn't make sense. Either his [Void Heart] had an atrocious efficiency, losing most of the energy it swallowed, or only a small part of the energy went into restoring his reserves.

The hidden node refused to continue running after just a few minutes, and prodding it with his Bloodline Method did nothing to help. Zac wasn't surprised, since that basic manual never mentioned anything about controlling Bloodline Nodes at all. He would have to find another way to do that.

His Void Energy didn't feel completely restored even after having absorbed energy from a half-step D-Grade beast. That pointed toward the fact that restoring energy for [Force of the Void] wasn't the main purpose for [Void Heart], at least not when absorbing energy from Beast Cores. It was likely that the rest of the energy either worked on improving the bloodline or the node itself.

The minutes eventually turned into an hour and Zac got ready to set out. The final group was Zac, Ogras, Billy, Kenzie, and a group of thirty Anointed led by Rhubat. That still left many of the elites down below in case something came up, while also providing Zac with some support.

Zac initially hadn't planned on bringing Billy along, but Kenzie would be able to provide him with backup through her drones and Memorysteel manipulation. Besides, the Titan had formed a very fluent battle cooperation with the Anointed which had even allowed them to restrain the Grand Elder of the Cartava clan. Zac hoped they could do the same to Inevitability while he dealt with Void's Disciple.

Billy was also one of those who had the easiest time dealing with the pressure stemming from the Memorysteel mountain for some reason. He didn't feel a thing at the middle layers from the looks of it, completely ignoring pressure that even impacted Zac. Such an ability would give him a huge advantage in the Sphere as well, since Zac could only assume the suppression would be even stronger up there.

The group didn't waste any time, and they immediately set out toward the peak after saying their goodbyes. The army would remain on the slopes, recuperating and getting their hands on the last sets of Spatial Seals required.

The Anointed weren't really interested in looting the caves on the way, but Zac, Ogras, and Billy worked hard enough for the rest combined as they rushed back and forth along the cliffs. Unfortunately, the caves holding treasures actually grew increasingly sparse after they reached the 13th layer, and Zac only managed to find a scant few even after climbing for hours.

Billy was finally feeling the pressure by this point, but Zac shook his head with a wry smile upon seeing him grow to four meters tall and gain his signature golden hair. Activating his bloodline seemed to weaken the suppressive effect on him even further, and there almost seemed to be some sort of resonance between him and the mountain itself.

One person who was weirdly unbothered was Kenzie. She tried to explain how she used her four Dao Seeds to form alternating ripples and interlocking layers that negated the pressure, creating some sort of void chamber around herself. Zac tried to follow her explanation a few times, but there was simply no way that he could control his energy emission with the kind of precision that she mentioned.

At least it looked like Ogras wasn't faring any better judging by the disgusted look the demon shot Kenzie before he started forcibly hunting for treasures again with grit teeth and blood-tinted eyes.

The value of every single cave was quite extraordinary though, and one impressive item after another entered Zac's Spatial Ring. He was currently standing in a cave on the 16th layer, looking down at a dozen unknown plants that emitted an extremely dense and bloody fragrance. Zac's body clearly wanted to eat the tomato-like fruits, but he wasn't the only one.

Even [Verun's Bite] woke up and growled with desire in his mind, prompting Zac to cut up a few and have the axe drink the juices.

The fruits weren't enough to evolve the axe in one go, but they did seem to help the axe push forward toward the next stage a bit while also filling the runes on the handle to the brim. Zac had planned on feeding some of his left-over dragon blood to Verun before they reached the peak, but it looked like he had saved on that expenditure.

Zac quickly left the cave and kept climbing, but the search for treasures rapidly lost steam. The pressure kept getting worse, and by the time the group reached the 17th layer, Ogras didn't have the energy to look at all. Zac was losing Cosmic Energy with every step as well, and he tried to avoid any large detours. It felt like someone had reached inside his body and was squeezing his organs by this point, which has a wholly godawful feeling.

Each step forward was getting as taxing as a harsh duel, and he didn't want to arrive at the peak completely exhausted from searching for some random valuables. The weaker of the Anointed were

almost forced to almost crawl as they arduously pushed forward, but they ascending without a word of complaint. Zac knew that they would rather burn their life force than turn back at this point.

No one else really had the energy to hunt for treasures any longer either, but the group did stumble into a cave at the peak of the 17th layer. The one who made a killing that time was Kenzie. It was a lab, and considering how high up the mountain it was, it must have been right at the edge of the Core Layer before the world changed. It housed just four black cubes that didn't look all-too-impressive, but Kenzie's eyes lit up in excitement after connecting her tablet to the machines.

It turned out that they were some sort of Technocrat super-computers. They didn't contain any data, but one could use them to run calculations and simulations, pushing the power of Jeeves to even greater heights. Kenzie quickly stowed them away with a burning look in her eyes, and Zac could only helplessly look on as his sister fell deeper and deeper into taboo territory.

Should he take the computers and smash them?

He eventually shook his head and refocused on the task at hand. He had bigger fish to worry about right now. They exited the cave and passed the last milestone, finally experiencing the full extent of the suppression that the System had arranged. The progression slowed to a crawl, and the last layer took as much time as the last three did together even if they didn't spend any time looking for treasure.

Even Zac's legs were shaking by the end, though he was probably the one who mainly relied on his physical body to withstand the pressure. But they were all powerhouses, and they moved quickly even when it felt like a mountain was weighing down on their shoulders. Finally, they reached the peak, but they all froze at the same moment as a screen appeared in front of Zac.

[Weight of Sin: Ascend Taboo Mountain and feel the weight of sin. Reward: Base Attributes +2%.]

Zac was extremely shocked to see a title appear in front of him, and by the looks of it, everyone had got it. A quick check proved it was a Limited Title, and Zac didn't complain even if the reward was pretty low. After all, it was a lot better than his slots being empty.

"Did you guys get the title as well?" Zac asked.

"Four percent Base Attributes," Rhubat said, whereas Kenzie said she got five.

Zac looked over at Ogras, who once more looked nauseated.

"Two," the demon sighed, and Zac nodded in understanding.

It turned out that the title was different depending on your level. It was not too surprising, considering that it was a lot more impressive for his sister to make her way up here compared to him doing it. He could only lament at the fact that the golden window of collecting titles had passed for him, and instead turn his attention to the mountain top.

Zac didn't know exactly what to expect when they finally reached the peak, but he suddenly felt a bit dizzy the moment they stepped onto the summit. The peak looked extremely sharp when they gazed at it from below or back when he still was on top of the islands, but when they actually top there it was massive.

“Space is going haywire in this place,” Ogras muttered, his face barely visible beneath of layers of shadows he had clad himself in to deal with the enormous suppression.

“Let’s go,” Zac said, and everyone understood what he was thinking.

The distance to the sphere in the sky was well over a thousand meters, and getting there was impossible by shooting out chains or jumping. There had to be another way there. However, the whole plateau was empty, except for a small mound in the middle that radiated a weak light. If the answer was anywhere, it was there.

However, the pressure kept increasing as they got closer, and by the time they reached the halfway point a few of the Anointed couldn’t take it any longer and were forced to start burning life-force. Billy and Kenzie could barely take it as well, and judging from the deafening silence coming from Ogras, he was desperately fighting against the pressure as well.

“Should we turn back?” Zac hesitated as he felt his body creak under the shocking pressure.

“No way... this pressure... up there,” Ogras said with a hoarse voice through grit teeth. “Get up there... we’re fine.”

Zac nodded, understanding what the demon was trying to say. Zac was fine for now, but after an hour under this pressure and he would be completely drained. A few hours and he would probably die. He wasn’t necessarily the strongest person in the mystic realm, but he believed he had the most resilience. If he couldn’t take the pressure, then neither should Void’s Disciple and Inevitability.

Considering they probably reached this place half a day ago, then they would be long dead if the pressure was this bad at the heart of the Mystic Realm. So provided the beam held the means to get to the sphere in the sky, then they were fine. They just needed to get to the center.

Each step like a herculean tribulation as the group made their way further and further toward the center of the plateau. Billy’s face was beet-red by the end, and Zac had been forced to help him and Kenzie by dragging them forward with his chains.

The distance from the edge to the shining mound in the center was just a few hundred meters from the edge, but it felt even further than the whole climb until this point. Even the Memorysteel beneath their feet couldn’t take the pressure, and deep indents were left after every step they took.

But finally they made it, and they saw that a mysterious rune was imprinted in the middle of the mound. The source of the light was the rune itself, and Zac guessed it contained the Dao of Space. However, he couldn’t be sure because while the rune emitted fierce energy and visible light, his [Cosmic Gaze] couldn’t actually see anything. The energy was probably too high-grade for an F-Grade ocular skill, even if it was a top-tiered one.

There was no time to waste as the pressure was almost lethal even to Zac this close to the rune, but he still threw a cultist corpse onto the middle of the rune, only to see it turn into a stream of light that shot up toward the planet above.

“Alright, I’m going,” Zac grunted as he took out [Verun’s Bite] and jumped on top of the rune.

A white flash filled his vision and he stumbled forward as the extreme pressure disappeared in an instant. The blinding light pervaded a few seconds longer, but Zac had already regained his sense of the surroundings thanks to the energy forest that had sprung up around him.

Activating [Hatchetman's Spirit] along with one of the defensive charges provided by the golden-leafed tree was the first thing Zac did upon appearing wherever the rune took him. The risk of ambush probably was the highest the moment he appeared, after all. There was not only the Dominators to worry about, but also god knows what else lurked in the heart of the Mystic Realm.

But even Zac wasn't expecting what met his gaze the moment the blinding light subsided. It was a vast grassland, with forests, rivers, and mountains in the distance. A sense of beauty and grandeur permeated the surroundings, and Zac looked around with incomprehension.

What was going on? Why did the rune on top of the Memorysteel mountain lead to Paradise?