

## The Fall 675

### Chapter 675: Bloodwind

The second trial went without any surprises, and Zac added another title to his growing repertoire after suffering inside a volcano for three weeks. Zac would probably have been able to reach the core of the volcano in two, but he had decided to move slowly as he digested what he had gone through in the chasm.

The second title only gave Strength, Vitality, and Endurance, but it did provide 4% to all three, which was even more valuable compared to the previous title in Zac's book. He had considered swapping out his Weight of Sin-title as well, but he eventually decided to skip it.

Getting a marginally better title wouldn't make much difference, and Zac felt it more worthwhile to move on to the next step of his plan. That meant there was just one final slot to fill, and Zac had saved the hardest one for last. He was currently in the darkness of mid-teleportation, but he soon found himself on top of a teleportation array in the middle of a desolate wasteland.

Zac looked around with wonder, feeling his heartbeat speed up while adrenaline coursed through his body. It almost felt like he was standing on the middle of a battlefield since the air was rife with killing intent. However, Zac knew it wasn't someone targeting him, but rather a result of endless battles.

The planet he had decided to visit was called the Bloodwind World, and it was one of the greatest worlds made available to him by the System. The planet itself was at the very peak of D-Grade, and it was apparently hundreds of times larger than Earth even after the integration. The history of the planet was extremely rough though.

The Bloodwind Planet was once considered a cultivator's haven, and a lot of factions wanted to make it their own. One bloody war after another erupted on its surface, an endless slaughter that lasted for tens of thousands of years. It was just like the vision Zac saw for that bloody lotus, but here there was no supreme treasure to swallow all killing intent and foul air.

It eventually got to the point that the very attunement of the planet changed, and the Cosmic Energy was now suffused with bloodlust. Cultivators with weaker mental strength would slowly go mad in an environment like this, turning into bloodthirsty maniacs. It was almost like the effect of the Miasma has on people living at the edge of the Dead Zone, but there was no escape here.

The change to the planet made most factions lose interest, as it was impossible to house a clan in a world like this. It was no problem to the upper echelons to a clan to survive here, but the younger generations would all turn insane. But one man's trash is another man's treasure, and some factions and organizations jumped at the opportunity to set up shop in this corrupted world.

And Zac's purpose of coming to this place was to visit one of these factions; the Big Axe Coliseum. In fact, this world was his absolute first choice when it came to Limited Titles, but he had left it for last to improve his attributes first.

The Big Axe Coliseum was both a battle-arena where cultivators could pit themselves against other cultivators or ruthless beasts collected across the sector, and a loose organization for Axe cultivators. Loose Organizations were different than Sects or Clans in the sense that there very few restrictions

when joining such a faction. In return, they didn't nurture their members or provide any benefits without payment.

Still, there were a lot of benefits to joining this kind of organization. Most of these organizations had merit systems just like Port Atwood and they held all kinds of items, some of which very hard to get your hands on through normal channels.

The treasure vault wasn't that big a deal to Zac though since he had the benefits of hundreds of thousands of Teleportation connections. What was scarce in one part of the Zecia sector, might be attainable in other parts. That was how he and Kenzie managed to collect so many rare treasures in just three years. For most cultivators that would be simply impossible.

Zac was more interested in the information that this organization held. The Big Axe Coliseum was reportedly founded by a proper C-grade Axe Warrior, and while the founder was long dead it was still a proper C-grade faction with at least one Monarch ruling from the shadows. There were also thousands of D-grade Hegemons who were members of the organization, and Zac felt he might be able to make some unexpected gains if he joined the organization.

The Big Axe Coliseum probably had one of the most complete heritages when it came to cultivating with the axe, be it classes, skills, or upgrade methods for Spirit Tools. Even better, the test to become an outer member of the Big Axe Coliseum was a Limited Title-Trial which gave both fixed and increased Strength and Dexterity if you passed.

It was among the best of what an E-Grade open trial could provide, though it only provided it in two of the attributes. Zac immediately set out, a bit surprised at the fact there were no people around him in an extremely popular place like this. Millions of people in the sector reportedly came to the Coliseum, and not just Axe Cultivators. Yet, the teleporter took him to an empty tundra, with only a sign pointing the direction of the Coliseum.

It was completely different compared to the bustling scene outside the Havenfort Chasm, but it didn't matter to Zac as he started to make his way toward the coliseum. Part of him wanted to take out his Flying Treasure, but he ultimately decided against it since a lot of worlds had restrictions regarding things like that. Flying was usually considered a privilege of Hegemons, and not something that piddling E-grade cultivators should do.

The surroundings were pretty desolate, with rock formations and the occasional twisted tree the only break in the dour surroundings. The lack of people was starting to get to him a bit, but he kept moving forward until he suddenly sensed a presence not far away.

"Ah, a human?" a deep guttural voice exclaimed with surprise. "It's not often we get your kind in this part of the Sector. Haha, like the taste of the air?"

Zac turned around and spotted a huge ogre reaching over twelve meters into the air. He was sitting with his back against a large rock a few dozen meters away, and there was a smell of blood and alcohol around him. His head was adorned with six short horns, and his bare round chest was covered in fractal tattoos. His legs seemed pretty stocky, and his arms were of such grotesque proportions that he would make Billy look scrawny in comparison.

Where had this guy come from? Zac was certain that he had looked at that rock just a moment ago, but at that time there hadn't been anyone there. Still, Zac didn't worry too much since he clearly wore the token of a member of the Big Axe Coliseum attached to his belt.

More importantly, while his appearance was pretty scary, his aura was not. Zac estimated his strength to be somewhere in the early E-grade, a common level of greeters.

"It's not bad. It feels like I'm standing on a battlefield," Zac smiled. "Is this really the Bloodwind World? How come there are no people?"

"Not bad? Haha, good!" the Ogre laughed. "Some feel pressured and fearful. They are no warriors. Others lose themselves in the fervor. They are nothing but animals. As for why there are no people, you're standing inside an array."

"I am?" Zac blurted as he looked around without spotting anything amiss.

"You're too weak to notice it. Don't worry, it's just an illusion array. Some weaklings who come to this planet lose their minds from the atmosphere, and immediately attack anyone in the vicinity. This way we avoid a mess at the teleporters. Of course, I can tell that you're barely affected at all. You have potential. Do you use the axe?" the Ogre asked curiously.

Zac thought it over for a second before he took out [Rakan's Roar], a brutal axe which was made from a singular serrated tooth. The handle was made from a pristine white bone as well, except for a red gemstone that was embedded at the bottom along with some leather for a grip. He immediately infused the axe Fragment of the Axe as he showcased it to the ogre.

He had come here to take the test, so there was no point in hiding.

"High Fragment Axe, not bad," the gigantic cultivator nodded. "Primal series axe, and it seems to have been fed well. It's emitting a pretty fierce aura."

"You're familiar with the Primal series?" Zac asked with some interest.

The Primal Series was the name for the equipment group that [Verun's Bite], Billy's [Bonker], and [Rakan's Roar] belonged to. It wasn't that uncommon thanks to the System often rewarding low- and medium-quality Spirit Tools of the Primal Series upon completion of quests.

Zac was honestly a bit unsure whether [Verun's Bite] could still be considered a part of the Primal Series though. It had undergone multiple transformations since he got it, from the mysterious stone that he still couldn't identify after three years, to swallowing all that dragon's blood. Both its aura and appearances were very different from before.

However, Zac was worried that his main axe might still be recognized if scrutinized while traveling outside. Thankfully he had already acquired a similar but visually different spare long ago. [Rakan's Roar] was a far cry from [Verun's Bite], and it didn't even have its spirit awakened. But it felt familiar to use, and it worked well enough for a simple showcase such as this.

"Well, it is a pretty common reward from the Boundless Heavens, but I might not have been able to tell if I didn't use one myself," the Ogre grinned, and Zac's eyes widened when the huge humanoid

produced a somewhat similar axe as his own, though his was a double-edged war axe. "I got this one a long time ago after performing well in a sanctioned war."

Zac nodded in understanding. The System thrived on conflict, and very seldom limited it. Most of the time it didn't involve itself at all. Two sides would fight and one side would fall, and to the victors went the spoils. However, sometimes the System provided extra incentives, which usually blew up the conflict to the next level.

It turned the war into a sanctioned event where participants could gain war credits. It made the war doubly profitable, and even outsiders flocked to join in on the carnage. In fact, that was exactly what happened in Zac's case during the beast waves with the contribution store.

"I used this guy for a few years," the massive Ogre grinned. "But nurturing these guys is a pain in the ass. They just get pickier and pickier. I eventually gave it up and entered the path of Blood and Steel."

He took out another massive axe the next moment, and Zac immediately found himself under an immense pressure. It was like the air itself bent around the weapon, and Zac felt like he was drowning in a sea of blood the moment the weapon's aura was unleashed. Even Verun was startled awake inside his Spatial Ring, but the roars in Zac's mind were those of a prey trying to scare off a much-greater predator.

Zac immediately realized that he had severely underestimated the power of the ogre in front of him. He was using some sort of skill to mask his true power. Zac himself wasn't confident he'd be able to wield such a powerful weapon, and it was definitely impossible for an early E-grade cultivator.

Still, he wasn't too worried about being attacked. It felt more likely that this was a test, and Zac soon straightened his back as he calmed the churning waves in his soul ocean. It was like the axe amplified the murderous atmosphere many times over, making it feel like Zac had eaten a berserking treasure. If this was before stabilizing his evolved soul he might have lost himself for a moment, but now he only felt some mental oppression.

"Not bad, most E-grade brats fall on their asses after I take out [Bloodforge]. Are we walking the same path, human?" the Ogre asked with interest.

Anyone coming to join the Big Axe Coliseum was an axe-warrior, but there were thousands of different paths related to the axe. Zac wasn't exactly sure what Blood and Steel entailed, but the aura of the weapon made Zac think of a gladiator reveling in battle. It also wasn't impossible that the Ogre in front of him had forged the weapon himself, considering he walked the path of Steel.

Zac looked at the huge warrior deep in thought. Zac still wasn't able to tell his exact strength, but it definitely was in the D-grade or higher since he could wield such a powerful weapon. If Zac had to guess, then this big brute was probably part of the upper echelons of the Big Axe Coliseum. Was this axe master actually looking for a disciple?

It would explain why such a powerful guy was lazing about this close to the teleporter; he was looking for potential candidates. Zac's thoughts whirred for a moment. Should he give it a try? As Yrial had said, there was nothing unusual about taking multiple masters, and this guy definitely knew all kinds of helpful tricks.

This was just a chance encounter so Zac wouldn't expect anything more than an in-name discipleship where the cultivator in front of him gave some small pointers to clear his confusions. In fact, if the Ogre was too enthusiastic, then it would probably be cause for suspicion.

As for himself, Zac believed he was an unmatched candidate when it came to potential. But their paths were ultimately different, and that was sometimes even more important to cultivators when searching for disciples. So Zac decided to just be upfront and see what the Ogre thought.

"No," Zac said with a shake of his head. "I follow the Path of Conflict."

"Hm, a shame," the Ogre sighed with some disappointment in his eyes, and Zac immediately understood he had lost his chance for some tutelage. "Conflict is a difficult path, but it is not a bad decision for your generation."

"For my generation?" Zac asked with confusion.

The Multiverse was beyond ancient and essentially unchanging. There wasn't really any difference between generations in the path of cultivation. It was simply some that started out earlier than others. So, it was a bit odd to hear that his direction of Axe-cultivation was especially suited for a certain generation.

"War is coming to Zecia," the Ogre grinned. "You will get ample opportunities to hone your path over the next centuries."

"What?" Zac blurted, but the Ogre was suddenly gone like he had never been there to begin with.

Zac looked back and forth, but there was no sign of the cultivator anywhere. The Ogre had probably nudged the array to hide him after talking with Zac for a bit, so Zac could only shrug his shoulders and continue on.

However, Zac made mental note to look into what the Ogre talked about. It sounded like he was talking about the whole Sector, which had to mean something extremely big was brewing beneath the surface. Was one of the peak factions planning on conquering the whole Sector? Things like that sometimes happened when a faction gained a leader at the level of the Eveningtide Asura. Or was it an even rarer event; a war between Sectors?

In either case, it was a huge deal that would impact everyone, from the cultivators on Earth to the bigshots in the established factions.