

The Fall 677

Chapter 677: Big Axe Coliseum

It took Zac another hour of walking before he finally spotted the Coliseum. In fact, he had seen it long ago, but he had assumed it was a mountain range judging by its size. He didn't immediately head over, but first looked at the building in awe. It was simply massive, far eclipsing the enormous containment building that held the Dimensional Seed.

It continued for tens of kilometers, a fortress of epic proportions. The majority of the structure was no doubt private sections meant for the inner members of the Coliseum and their families, though any stage meant to have Hegemons fighting would have to be pretty huge.

The main gates were not far from where Zac arrived, a hundred-meter-tall entrance with two massive axes forming an arch. Zac started walking toward it, but he soon stopped again as the world shifted. The desolate surroundings were suddenly replaced with a scene even more bustling than the Havenfort Town.

He realized that he was standing on a street over a hundred meters wide, and thousands of warriors were streaming back and forth toward the coliseum. Furthermore, Zac spotted more streets and entrances just like this one further away, making him realize that the traffic in this place was just insane. It wasn't surprising though.

The Bloodwind Planet was simply enormous, and tens of billions of people lived here even with the harsh environment. Furthermore, it was no doubt the most prosperous planet in its local cluster thanks to the Big Axe Coliseum and a few other notable factions, and the planet was definitely the main hub for all stellar lines traveling the local cluster.

Zac turned around curiously, but the only thing he saw was a blurry desert, though warriors kept appearing one by one. Some passed him by and walked into the main building, whereas others headed for a series of side-structures that emitted strong spatial fluctuations. Those were probably the local portals that took the members to various hunting grounds of the planet.

Part of Zac wanted to jump into one of the teleporters and start a slaughter of his own, but he ultimately held himself back. First of all, you needed to buy access or become a member of the coliseum before you could use the local teleporters. Secondly, he wasn't in a position where he could freely gain a bunch of levels.

There wasn't even any money to be made from heading out, not that he needed it. It had been a big shock to realize that a vast majority of all beast carcasses were mostly worthless. Zac had always equalized hunting beasts with big money after his grind-fests back on Earth, but you could easily buy an early D-grade carcass for 50 million F-grade nexus coins or so.

Only a few extremely rare beasts were worth any real money, for example beasts who had extremely pure bloodlines that made them far stronger than normal beasts of their grade. However, those kinds of beasts were as rare as valuable herbs, and fighting them was like fighting a peak genius cultivator.

It was no wonder the prices were so low though; the Multiverse definitely didn't lack high-grade beasts. There were reportedly millions and millions of D-grade beasts on this planet alone, all of them more

powerful than normal because of the unique environment. Perhaps he'd test his mettle against the wilds of this world another time. But for now, he had a trial to take.

Zac entered the coliseum, and he saw that there were three paths to take, one for each purpose of visiting. The largest gate was for spectators who had come to witness the matches and perhaps do some betting, with the second biggest being for warriors who came to enter the ring. Fighting against other cultivators or ferocious beasts was a dangerous but effective way to cultivate.

There was never any lack of warriors willing to risk their lives for breakthroughs, especially when it could also mean wealth and fame.

The third corridor was for actual members of the Big Axe Coliseum, and that was where Zac headed. He was curious about the place, but he figured he could look around after he became an outer member. Zac only got fifty meters in before he was stopped by a guard though.

"Members only, buddy," a gruff devil-humanoid with a bulky build said as he glanced at the lapel of Zac's robes.

"I've come to apply," Zac said.

"Oh? Outer or inner member?" the attendant asked.

"Outer," Zac said and released some of his aura.

"High E-grade? Could be a good fight..." the man thoughtfully muttered and took out a token. "Here. The fee is 10,000 E-grade Nexus Coins. You'll get the money back if you pass."

"And if I fail?" Zac smiled as he transferred the money, surprised at how generous the Coliseum was compared to the two previous spots.

"Then you're dead and we keep the money," the man grinned. "Fourth door to the right. Don't worry, the Heavens will arrange your enemies, it will be absolutely fair."

Zac soon found himself in a resting room as he waited for the coliseum to set things up. If one fought in the Big Axe Coliseum the normal way, you'd have to expose some of your strength to get paired with the right level of opponents, but it was different for the Limited Trial. The System wouldn't allow any cheating since it was handing out Limited Titles, so it teleported beasts into the arena from what Zac had heard.

The Big Axe Coliseum only needed to pay for the activation of the trial and transportation fees.

It was a win-win for the coliseum. If the contender won, they'd gain a new member. If he or she lost, they'd still make money on the down payment, tickets, betting, and perhaps salvaging rare beast carcasses. The Trials were especially popular as the beasts teleported here were often ones they'd rarely see. Furthermore, the System essentially guaranteed a satisfying fight.

Normally, Zac would have a huge advantage in this type of trial thanks to his massive pool of Efficiency, but he had read that the System actually based the opponents on true strength in this particular trial since it wanted to test for skills with the axe. That wasn't a detriment in Zac's book though, but rather a boon. After all, it wasn't easy to find opponents matching your strength exactly.

However, Zac immediately found himself in a conundrum as he pressed his hand against a crystal hovering in the middle of the room. He needed to leave his Spatial Ring behind, along with any hidden weapons. He could only keep his robes and main weapon. Zac hesitated for a bit, but he eventually took out [Verun's Bite] instead of [Rakan's Roar]. Staying undercover was important, but completing the trial even more so.

His main axe looked pretty different from the time he visited the Tower of Eternity, and he didn't even have his more defining skills like [Nature's Punishment] or [Chop] any longer. It should be enough.

He also needed to choose a name or moniker. He didn't want to use his real name for obvious reasons, but neither was he comfortable giving himself a Dao Name like "The Life-Death Primarch" or "Arcadian Master". He eventually settled on Arcaz, a handle he had used in some online games back before the integration.

Zac thankfully didn't need to wait for long for his trial to start. The platform flashed to life after just an hour, and Zac found himself standing in the middle of a massive arena a moment later. The roars of tens of thousands of people made the atmosphere rife with bloodlust. Zac couldn't see any specific faces when he looked up at the stands though; it was all a bit of a haze.

He guessed the coliseum used some sort of array to obscure the features for some reason.

"Give a warm welcome to Arcaz, our latest trial taker. The Heavens tells us his power is at the peak of the E-grade, so we will hopefully have five exciting battles to look forward to!" a gruff voice echoed out across the arena, which was met by another wave of roars.

There was no time for Zac to ponder about the construction of the arena as hundreds of flashing lights illuminated his surroundings. He immediately realized his first fight was a horde battle, which suited his class perfectly. A moment later the enemy combatants had been teleported in, and Zac saw they were some sort of two-headed devil-rabbits with long rakish claws on their front legs.

"Oh! Our prospective member finds himself faced against 108 [Twinruin Hoppers]. Anyone who has spent some time in the Twinruin Gorge no doubt has some fond memories of these aggressive bastards! Hard Carapaces, nimble legs, and endless aggression. Will our trial-taker fall at the entrance test like a fool? Will he emerge victorious, and if so how quickly?! Place your bets!"

Zac wryly smiled at being used to make money this blatantly, but the commentator at least provided some clues. This was just the first trial of five though, and Zac didn't plan on forming some sort of special strategy. If he couldn't simply crush this trial, then he could forget about completing all five battles.

A storm of Cosmic Energy streamed into an intricate fractal on his hand, but no fractal edge formed after activating the skill that took the spot where [Chop] once was housed. Instead, a large swirl of emerald energies suddenly surrounded [Verun's Bite], and Zac unleashed a swing in the direction of the most concentrated clump of [Twinruin Hoppers].

It was like he unleashed a storm with his swing, but that storm quickly congealed into a dozen two-meter wide leaves that radiated not only an immense amount of life force, but also an overbearing sharpness. The leaves were long, thin, and slightly curved like the blades of a scimitar, and they swirled around as they shot into the pack of beasts.

A few of the hoppers jumped forward with their sharp legs, both their heads trying to bite into the leaves and rip them apart. Others used the large claws on their front legs to swipe back at them with enough force to make the air scream.

But it was all futile.

Those who bit into the leaves were instantly killed as the upper halves of their heads were lobbed clean off, their bodies crashing down onto the arena floor with wet thuds. One storm of leaves after another shot out, and only a gorefest was left behind a moment later. The so-called hard carapaces couldn't survive a second against Zac's new E-grade skill, though he did empower the leaves with the Fragment of the Bodhi.

A small pang of danger warned him of an imminent attack from behind, but Zac wasn't worried in the slightest. His free hand shot out as he rapidly turned around, and he caught the last hopper by one of its throats. Zac instantly crushed its throat before he slammed down the stocky beast onto the ground.

The second head yowled in pain and rage, and it desperately clawed at Zac as it tried to get up. But the emerald swirl around [Verun's Bite] moved to the front of the axe edge and instantly congealed into a singular thin leaf that looked as real as a physical one. A moment later the whole hopper was sliced in two, its blood disappearing into a deep scar in the ground.

"Oh my god! Six seconds to clear the first wave! Haha! A big thank you to our friend Arcaz, you just made us a lot of money! But will he be able to clear the second trial? Let's find out!"

Zac sat down and took a breath as the hundred corpses were teleported away. He wasn't exhausted in the slightest, but he rather wanted to go over the result of his new skill [Nature's Edge]. He had already tested the skill back on Earth, but these [Twinruin Hoppers] were a lot stronger than the animal packs back home.

They had all been at upper-middle E-grade in power, yet they were cut apart without providing much resistance at all. This was exactly what Zac had wanted to see, and he was extremely relieved to see that his fusion of [Chop] and [Nature's Barrier] to have worked out just as he hoped.

Part of him had hesitated about fusing two of his "basic" skills, wasting the opportunity. For example, he had considered fusing [Hatchetman's Spirit] with [Forester's Constitution] to form an amazing domain skill, but he ultimately didn't feel that would bring much to the table. [Loamwalker] was a skill he was keen on bringing into the E-grade as well, but he decided that an E-Grade equivalent of [Chop] was of the highest priority.

It was the bread and butter of his class, the very foundation of his fighting style.

He did have [Conformation of Supremacy], but that was ultimately a skill that didn't really conform to his path, and it also worked better as a medium-power attack aimed at singular enemies or small packs. Meanwhile, [Nature's Edge] was a perfect fusion between Nature and Axe, using the form of [Nature's Barrier] and the function of [Chop].

Losing his only real defensive skill was a bit of a shame, but [Nature's Barrier] had long lost its ability to protect him. Besides, the reason he dared to complete this fusion was thanks to creating [Arcadia's

Judgement]. It had freed up the Skill Slot where [Deforestation] formerly was, which allowed him to learn the defensive skill he had waiting for him in the Dao Repository.

Unfortunately, the battle had been too short to gain any new insight into his skill, but he saw that he would get more opportunities as new golden lights appeared around him.

“Oh? 36 [Twinruin Rocklings] this time? Will all the fights set our challenger against the beasts of the gorge? Would that mean we might have a chance to see a fight between a cultivator and a [Twinruin Tyrant] today? And perhaps the true terror of the Twinruin gorge?” the announcer mused, which caused a huge ruckus to erupt. “Who knows? In either case, place your bets!”

The rocklings looked like mottled eight-legged boulders, and he felt they reminded him of those spiderling bots he fought in the Mystic Realm. These guys were a lot stubbier though, and Zac wondered if they were even mobile.

The ground suddenly started to shake as one sharp stalagmite after another sprung up with amazing power, which forced Zac to dance around in an ungraceful manner. Zac considered activating [Hatchetman's Spirit] for a moment, but he eventually decided against it. He wanted to take this opportunity to get acquainted with his new skill. Besides, he didn't want to show too many of his cards in a public setting like this in case someone figured out his identity.

Zac once more activated [Nature's Edge] and a cascade of leaves shot out toward the slow-moving targets. However, Zac frowned when the attacks only resulted in shallow scars appearing across the bodies of the golemoid beasts. They had clearly activated some sort of bloodline talent that boosted their defenses tremendously, and the skill by itself simply wasn't strong enough to get through.

Another gust of leaves shot out a moment later, but this time the leaves almost looked like they were made of metal as they had gained a slight silvery sheen. Zac looked on with interest as the leaves cut into the rocklings with their incredible sharpness, and the ground rumbled as the beast collapsed one by one.

Only three of the rocklings managed to survive the onslaught, but Zac flashed forward with [Loamwalker] and cut them to pieces in short order. One of them forcibly exploded upon its death, turning itself into a shrapnel bomb, but Zac had plenty of kill energy to use [Surging Vitality] with, and the shallow wounds started wriggling as they rapidly healed up.

He hadn't had much use for his healing skill over the past years, but it had still moved to Late Mastery thanks to his increased understanding of skills in general. The upgrade mostly improved the skill's ability to heal tougher wounds, such as injuries caused by Dao-empowered attacks.

Of course, the healing capabilities of such wounds were still pretty limited and cost a huge amount of energy, but it was still pretty impressive for a skill that someone like Brazla had managed to get his hands on.

“Two rounds down, and we haven't been able to see the depths of our challenger's prowess!” the announcer exclaimed. “But the Heavens never gives out anything for free, especially not Titles! Let's see what it has planned for our friend Arcaz next!”