

## The Fall 694

### Chapter 694: Oppressive Might

Ruthlessly ripping apart the group of opportunists had given Zac a breather. But it would take over four hours to return, even when using the Twilight River for a speed boost and spatial manipulation. There were also multiple plateaus he needed to pass, and each one might have cultivators lying in wait.

Nothing happened for fifteen minutes after the initial attack, but a sudden and massive explosion in the distance drew everyone's attention. It was far into the void between the platforms, and it looked like a tremendous eruption of a mix of death and fire. Judging by the force contained in the explosion, it definitely wasn't a struggle between E-grade cultivators, but rather proper Hegemons. Even if it was just an array or talisman going off, something of that magnitude would have to have been powered by a D-grade cultivator's core.

A sudden scream of danger made Zac's hair stand on end, and he barely had a chance to send an activation to a defensive talisman and turn [Love's Bond] into a shield. A thick barrier sprung up around him, but it immediately dimmed as some sort of black haze glommed onto it. Zac realized that someone had used an array breaker to counter his talisman, but the slight delay had allowed him to maneuver his shield just enough to block out an extremely penetrative spear stab that crashed through the weakened shield.

Zac was thrown off from his vessel by the condensed force, and he soared almost a hundred meters into the void. He was completely fine from the strike, but others weren't quite as lucky. The enormous explosion had grabbed everyone's attention to some degree, and over twenty parties had taken the chance to launch attacks on neighboring vessels at that moment.

Battles were raging for a stretch of thousands of meters on the Twilight River, with all kinds of powerful energy outbursts. However, apart from the enormous battle that raged in the void, it looked like all the combats were between E-grade cultivators. He hadn't heard anything, but it was possible that Hegemons were hesitant to fight close to the rivers?

A battle between D-grade cultivators might damage the rivers themselves, which could have huge implications since they essentially were the lifeblood of the whole Twilight Harbor. But if that was the case, then Zac definitely didn't want to stay too far away from the river. He quickly started to expel some miasma to counteract the slight gravitational pull from the closest plateau as his eyes swept back and forth in every direction, trying to any hints of his attacker.

However, the man was simply gone.

Had he realized that Zac was too hard a nut to crack and targeted someone else? Or was he still lying in wait? Zac couldn't tell for sure, but he activated another defensive talisman as he made his way back to his boat before it was dragged away by the Twilight River.

Zac's nerves were taut as he stepped back the vessel, but he somewhat relaxed when he sensed the familiar aura of the spearman a few boats over, locked in battle with what looked to be a poison master. He briefly considered joining the fray to get some revenge, but he didn't want to bring any trouble down on his head.

Instead, he threw out a couple of Peak E-grade Talismans, turning his flying treasure into a small fortress. He had avoided doing so until now out of fear that it would cause more harm than good by drawing attention to himself, but a number of vessels had already done the same after seeing how chaotic the river had become.

Another enormous explosion erupted in the distance, and Zac vaguely saw an obscured figure fly toward the closest plateau with a speed that far surpassed anything that was possible in the E-grade. As expected, the chaos had caused another wave of carnage, but Zac and his layers of defenses weren't one of the targets this time. Hopefully, that meant his identity was safe.

Things calmed down over the next two hours, though Zac did have to fend off two more attacks before he was left alone, though none of them managed to push Zac to the point he had to display any of his hidden cards. The battle left the flying vessel somewhat in tatters though, but Zac didn't really care.

He had a feeling that Catheya gave him this opulent thing just to cause some trouble, and he was more than happy to see it fall apart as a small act of revenge. In fact, the more he thought about it, the more he felt that Catheya had orchestrated this whole situation to some degree, probably in an attempt to extract some more secrets from him. Perhaps she was somewhere close, observing him while laughing at his struggles.

Zac and the surviving members eventually reached a hub where six different rivers converged, and the traffic essentially returned to normal as the auction goes split up and took whatever river led to their own platform. Over ninety percent took two rivers that would pass by one of the largest plateaus; Hanging Twilight.

It was one of the world disks that was controlled by a number of local clans, and it was also one of the most popular places to stay for wandering cultivators and guests. Since over fifty of the strongest clans also lived on the island, it wasn't really surprising that so many were going that way. Zac was not one of them though as he continued toward the plateau controlled by clan Sharva'Zi and a few other factions.

Suddenly he found himself traversing the Twilight River all alone after hours of being surrounded by others, but that actually didn't let him relax at all. If anything, his unease only grew as he sailed further and further away from the group of people. His flying vessel flew as quickly as possible as he scanned back and forth, and there was nothing. There was no way an E-grade assassin in hiding would be able to keep up with his speed for so long.

Zac should be safe, but he felt a threat to his life.

It was extremely mute, but Zac had long learned to trust his instincts. He let Miasma churn through his body for a few seconds before he took out one of his common Escape Talismans. The action confirmed his suspicions as a figure radiating an immense killing intent appeared just a few hundred meters away, and Zac wasn't surprised to find his talisman blocked from activating.

There was no hesitation as Zac instantly activated his new movement skill with the help of [Force of the Void], as anyone who could seal space was far more powerful than he. For a moment, there was only endless darkness that contained a very familiar feeling. It was the very same ancient aura that marred any skill he activated with his bloodline talent.

He was only stuck in that endless Void for an instant before he was returned to reality, though everything looked very different from his normal sight. His vision was monochrome, and it felt like time had slowed to a crawl. The river almost looked frozen in time, but Zac was more worried about the radiant beacon of intense deathly energies making its way toward the vessel he floated on in his intangible form.

It was obviously not some source of light, but rather an immensely powerful cultivator who lit up his surroundings with the immense powers hidden in his body. Zac was still unable to properly gauge Hegemons, but he guessed that the attacker was a Middle Hegemon at the least. There were no two ways about it; he had been exposed by this person. Why else would someone like this target an E-grade cultivator?

Zac hadn't seen the attacker at all until he forced him to make a move, but it was now impossible to miss him. Zac guessed it was another advantage of his new skill, but he was more worried about escaping. He immediately flew off from his vessel, making a beeline toward the closest continental disk. Reaching that place wouldn't guarantee his safety, but it was a lot better than being in the middle of the void.

He was like a gust of smoke as he shot through the Void, neither bound by gravity nor the lack thereof. He was propelled by an immense expenditure of Miasma, like an invisible comet rippling through space.

The Hegemon maintained his course, and his hand turned into a hundred-meter wide claw that snatched up the whole vessel. The defensive talismans Zac had left behind were instantly crushed along with the ship itself. The attack seemed somewhat slow from Zac's vantage, but he knew that it was an illusion of sorts. His perception of time was completely off in his current form, and he knew that less than half a second had passed since the Hegemon appeared, even though it felt like 10 seconds.

If he hadn't used his Bloodline Talent to activate the skill, he would have been turned to mush. But thanks to his cheat he was alive, and Zac desperately flew further and further away from the attacker. However, his heart sunk when he felt a ripple pass through his intangible form. Zac immediately turned his "eyes", or whatever he was currently using to see, toward the Twilight River, and he saw the Hegemon looking right in his direction.

A moment later the assailant set out, aiming straight for Zac who kept moving as quickly as his new movement skill would allow. He had already moved thousands of meters at the expenditure of a huge amount of Miasma, but it wasn't enough against someone a whole grade above him. The cultivator was shortening the distance between them without breaking a sweat, and Zac eventually saw no recourse to give up on his form.

He suddenly turned back into his "real form", and he desperately activated one of the ace talismans he had prepared, forcibly moving him a thousand meters even though the spatial lock was in place. That was only delaying the inevitable though, and Zac desperately ripped off his mask as he turned back into the form of Arcaz Black.

"Halt! I'm Draugr of the Empire!" Zac roared as the force of Annihilation gathered in his body.

Part of him still hoped that Catheya's master would come to his rescue, but he ultimately couldn't rely on something like that for his survival. No matter some truths about him were exposed he would have to go all out here.

The attacker was clearly undead, and his race would hopefully give him pause for long enough to charge an Annihilation Sphere. That was the only thing that would get him out of this situation, and Zac saw his opportunity when the undead really did pause for a second. Zac finally got a clear look at him; a Corpse-lord mainly consisting of bestial parts.

Zac didn't recognize him at all from the auction, and he even guessed that he had visited with the explicit purpose of robbing bidders. Perhaps, he hadn't even realized that Zac was a Draugr. Most people should know it since the balcony belonged to Clan Sharva'Zi, but there were quite a few temporary visitors in the area.

In either case, the truth was unclear, but his short hesitation did give him some breathing room. Unfortunately, not enough as the Corpse-lord clearly made his decision as he shot forward once again, using a speed so fast that Zac could barely see him.

The world suddenly froze as a spear of ice vertically split the universe in half.

One moment there was nothing, but the next a frigid lance stretched for hundreds of thousands of meters in front of Zac. It really looked like a bolt of lightning frozen into ice. It was unfathomably long, but only a few dozen meters thick. The size of the attack was not the only shocking thing about it, but Zac was more mesmerized by the runes that covered its surface.

It felt like the runes held all the secrets to the chill of the night, of the frozen tundra and the cold of the Void itself. It was endless and unfathomable, and Zac realized too late that he was in trouble. The runes had completely mesmerized him, and it was now too late to leave. His whole body was immobilized by the endless chill.

Even a massive section of the Twilight River in the distance had turned to ice, and space itself seemed frozen in place around the enormous bolt. Zac felt a pervasive, bone-chilling cold rapidly seep into his bones, and nothing he did had the slightest effect at curtailing the creeping death. He found himself locked in place, helplessly staring into the horrified face of the Corpse-lord.

If Zac was in a bad situation, then it was obviously worse for his attacker. He had been swallowed whole by the ice spear, and his body was rapidly disappearing, freezing to the point that he became purified ice. Soon enough it was just a head stuck in a visage of fear and pain. And then he was gone.

Zac felt his vision cloud over a second later, but the cold left on its own accord even when he suddenly found himself surrounded by a blizzard that completely blocked his sight of the surroundings. A gust of wind caused the snowfall to congeal into what looked like a five-meter avatar, and Zac heard a voice in his head.

"This one acted in hopes of pleasing the Veilplume Monarch, and he was adequately punished," the voice said. "As for your part of the bargain..."

A yellow sphere as large as a basketball appeared in front of him the next moment, and Zac immediately felt his scalp prickle. He had no idea what it was, but it felt even more terrifying than an atomic bomb.

"Put it into your Spatial Ring," the avatar said, and Zac reluctantly complied.

The moment he touched the thing to stow it away, a small brand appeared on his hand.

"Drop this egg into the Twilight Chasm. Never take it out before you reach that place, or the brand will kill you. Take off your Spatial Ring, and it will kill you as well. Ignore the mission, and you will die in three years," the voice continued, and the next moment the surroundings returned to normal.

Only a final warning echoed out in his mind as Zac looked around in fear. "Do not tell my disciple about the details of this mission, or the brand will kill you."

Zac looked down at the blue mark on his hand as it faded away, knowing he was deep in it now. The Twilight Chasm was in the absolute deepest part of the Twilight Ocean, the place where only the most powerful people could reach. The pressure from the immense Twilight Energy at that place would kill most men in a heartbeat.

However, he didn't even get a chance to react to the shocking events before a large rune appeared a few hundred meters away, after which a dozen warriors stepped out. Zac's first reaction was to flee, but he quickly calmed down when he saw the robes the warriors were wearing. It was an enforcement squad directly under the Twilight Lord, which explained why they could appear in this remote sector so easily.

"Young master, may I ask what transpired here...?" the Revenant captain asked as the Human fearfully looked around.

"I was attacked by a Hegemon on my way back from the auction," Zac sighed. "My Dao Guard had to step forward."

That was obviously bullshit, but it was simpler this way than telling the truth. As for the guards, there was no way to tell. They had probably been sent here to see which Monarch had made a move, and when they saw he was a pureblood Draugr they wouldn't want to get too involved.

"I see," the Guard Captain nodded. "Do young master require any assistance?"

"He's dead now," Zac shrugged. "But he destroyed my vessel and I don't have a spare. Can you send me to my residence?"

"Certainly," the Revenant quickly nodded as he took out a large flying treasure.

Zac jumped onto the vessel he used as the living members of the City Guard flew away. The Revenant captain wasted no time as he set out toward the hotel, with his soldiers acting as private guards to Zac as they formed a War Array around him. This was obviously just some grandstanding considering there was a hidden Monarch guarding Zac for all they knew, but Zac believed they definitely couldn't let a Pureblood Draugr get attacked twice in short order without getting in trouble.

As they closed in on the hotel, Zac went over the series of events, trying to discern whether he had exposed any large secrets. Thankfully, he believed he hadn't made any big mistakes. There were no special hints from using [Force of the Void], but he had rotated his Miasma for a while to hide the truth of his Bloodline Talent.

He might have leaked out some aura of Annihilation, but Catheya's master shouldn't be too surprised even if he had sensed it. Vilari clearly bore those marks on her face, and he had released terrifying amounts of Annihilation during his rampage in Base Town. For all Catheya knew, all of them were connected to the Dao of Oblivion through Be'Zi.

As for everything else, Zac would have to slowly go over it later. First and foremost, how was he supposed to survive going to the most dangerous place in the Twilight Ocean?