

The Fall 774

Chapter 774: Overwhelmed

Pain ravaged Zac's body as he soared through the air, and the armor of [Vanguard of Undeath] had almost completely been blown apart, prompting the skill to deactivate. A wave of despair filled him as he tried to reorient himself. His trick with the supersized [Void Zone] was his best idea to take out Uona.

It should have worked.

Just what was that primal anger? Was there something inside the blood mistress' bloodline that had been triggered by his own Bloodline Talent? Or by the threat of death? It had unleashed a terrifying wave of energy, overpowering his nullification zone for an instant and setting his veins on fire.

Zac didn't even have time to make sense of the situation before he felt a surge of primal danger again, and he hurriedly swung his axe toward his left. It was just in time as well, as Uona had appeared out of nowhere with a spear of blood in her hand. That wasn't the only thing different thing about her either.

Until now, she had fought steadily and methodically, carefully dismantling his defenses and seizing the momentum while mostly avoiding the extreme dangers of his Creation energy. If he hadn't managed to turn the tables with [Void Zone], she would have had a good chance to bleed him of his longevity before he managed to catch her.

She was like a spider in the web, turning Zac's style against him, a seasoned warrior with experience in fighting powerful foes. But now, that image of a steady warrior was gone, replaced by something... demonic.

Swirls of tainted blood surrounded the blood mistress as she had appeared in the air next to him. Her eyes were like beacons, radiating waves of sanguine light. They were filled with an unquenchable hunger and bloodlust, and her aura was one of utter ruthlessness. There was no doubt about it; Uona had entered some sort of berserking state at the threshold of true death.

The grievous wound by her shoulder was still there, but it looked like her torso was held together by a million small tendrils of blood that closed the wound with a speed visible to the naked eye. Her left arm still hung limply to the side though, but she had no problem wielding her spear solely in her left, and it drew a vigorous arc through the air straight toward him.

The two weapons clashed, and Zac was shocked at the power her attack contained. He was in an awkward position, unable to properly bring out all of his strength, but he was still shocked to find himself almost getting overwhelmed by brute force. Worse yet, Uona didn't just display shocking strength, but she had also turned into a speed demon.

Her whole body turned into a blur the moment her first attack had failed, and Zac only had time to angle his axe before a ferocious swipe struck him from above. A wave of pain radiated through Zac's arm as he was slammed into the ground below.

Zac's body screamed in protest as he scrambled up on his feet. He had ample experience of getting flung like this, but it was a uniquely awful experience when the cobblestones were made from high-grade material. Normally, his body would win out in a clash between the ground and himself, but this time it

was like getting punched a second time as he was forced to an abrupt stop when the stone refused to give way.

A primal sense of danger warned him that things had just begun, and a ruthless jagged edge shimmering in opalescence ripped the air in two as Zac activated [Gorehew] and instilled it with the Branch of the War Axe. The shard was happily releasing more and more energy, and Creation had entered the blade as well. It might look like the remnant was helping him cope with a powerful foe, but Zac knew the truth wasn't quite so benign.

This was what the remnants did.

Unfettered creation and change, no matter the cost. The shard had been locked down for months, but now it found a continuous outlet of creation. Zac could feel how the corruption was burrowing deeper into his body with every expenditure. The remnant probably wanted Zac to keep fighting until he was just a husk without a shred of remaining life span. At that point, it would find the next power source to continue to fuel its work.

A bloody spear clashed with the jagged edge of [Gorehew], unleashing a shockwave that swept clean any lingering remnants of the domain skills of the two. The blood world had broken apart when Uona lost connection to her Miasma, and Zac's domains had already been ripped apart by the blood mistress.

He considered unleashing them again, but he ultimately decided against it. They wouldn't do much in a struggle like this, and they might prompt Uona to unleash her own skills again. Even if her power was scary, it was preferable that she had decided to come into melee range like this. This way he could whittle her down like always, so he was better off saving his energy for where it could make a difference.

With his two feet firmly on the ground, Zac managed to unleash a lot more power in his swing. Furthermore, the miasmic edge of [Gorehew] was essentially cursed with Creation, prompting every strike to leave some taint behind.

However, Uona was clearly holding nothing back. Her weapon had been protected by a churning swirl of mottled blood, and the moment the taint of the remnant entered it, she had unhesitantly discarded it. The blood was flung tens of meters away, where it was free to morph and distort without affecting Uona at all.

The spear she used in the exchange remained unsullied that way, and Zac could see that it was a true high-quality item this time around, rather than another of her expendable spears. It put him under greater pressure, but Zac could only keep going, struggling along until the vampire ran out of blood.

Uona didn't seem intent on backing away at all any longer. She had already begun her second attack as she rid herself of the tainted blood, and the spear was just a blur by this point as a bladed spearpoint rushed toward Zac's throat. Zac felt like he was dancing right at the precipice of disaster, but he forewent blocking the attack, instead only slightly tilting his head.

A flash of heat erupted as the spear barely managed to tear a small wound in Zac's throat, and he growled with pain as he pushed past the spear toward the exposed belly of the blood mistress. However, her armored form was like a blur, and Zac was forced to stop his lunge to avoid a kick that contained enough power to kick his head clean off.

A bone spear suddenly shot out from Zac's elbow as he dodged the spear, heading straight toward Uona's gut. It was filled with Creation, like a poisoned needle aimed to debilitate. The vampire didn't actually seem surprised though, and the butt of the spear was somehow already crashing down at the bone spur, breaking it apart.

Zac's furiously swung his axe in an upward arc, hoping to at least maim the leg of hers that still retained all of its energy. But Uona overcame that as well by actually releasing the grip of her weapon and using Zac's own momentum to push herself to the side, narrowly avoiding the bladed edge.

He had somewhat hoped she'd use some sort of blood skill to block his attack, which would have allowed him to once more make use of [Void Zone], but she wasn't using any skills at all, probably for that very reason. Zac could still use skills though, and the three pygmies suddenly appeared behind his back.

The teeth at the back of [Verun's Bite] ripped toward Uona's arm as a coffin barrier appeared to block her swing. However, Zac's eyes widened in horror when the whole area changed at the exact moment the barrier appeared. It was he had been transported to hell as dozens of tendrils of condensed blood shot toward him.

There was no way for him to avoid all those attacks, and he hurriedly activated [Void Zone] again. The spears lost their vigor as they lost the connection to Uona, but his own skill didn't fare any better. The skeletons turned faded, and even an offhand swing of uona would be able to pierce right through it.

She had been waiting for him to activate skills of his own, just to counter him this way. Unfortunately for her, she didn't know that he wasn't as restrained as she was. The weakened barrier broke as Uona's spear pushed down toward Zac's throat, but another barrier appeared immediately after, this full of vigor and emitting an ancient aura.

Zac had resummoned [Profane Exponents] with the help of [Force of the Void], just like he had when he first figured out the talent, allowing him to retain its strength even while [Void Zone] was running. Meanwhile, four chains pushed forward, each of them dripping with corrosion and Creation.

The blood mistress' armor managed to block two of the chains, but one managed to puncture it through at a seam, while the final one entered the previously damaged part to unleash its unstable payload. Meanwhile, Zac continued his own swing, punching two deep holes straight in her chest with the teeth that served as Verun's counterweight.

The vampire screamed in pain, but she ferociously swung her spear with such vigor that Zac was forced back while the two chains that had embedded themselves in her were broken apart. Uona hurriedly backed away the moment Zac was pushed back, and Zac's eyes widened as two fountains of blood gushed out from where the links of [Love's Bond] had attacked her.

It was not just a trickle, but rather hundreds of liters that were somehow being expelled from her body. Unfortunately, the scene managed to extract all of his Dao and Creation Energy he had managed to infuse into her body as well.

"I don't know what allows you to shield the area from the Heavens themselves," an emotionless voice emerged from within Uona's helmet. "But it will not save you. Nothing is infallible."

Zac only sneered in return, but her proclamation was quickly proven somewhat prophetic. He tried similar combo attacks again, but Uona had figured out that nullification zone was only so big. The moment Zac activated the Bloodline Talent, she forcibly stepped back and unleashed a barrage of blood at him in return.

He simply couldn't restrain her while she was inside the field, the power gap was just too big. The combination of [Force of the Void] and [Void Zone] did at least allow him to fight somewhat evenly against the otherwise superior Heaven's Chosen.

Even then, Zac found himself desperately fighting just to hang on. Uona was fighting like she was possessed, holding nothing back as she pushed and pushed to rip him apart. Zac tried to fight back with the inexorable stance he had formed over the past years, but how could he start restraining Uona when she both outmatched him in skill and attributes?

It felt like she had six arms as she weaved her spear in an everchanging arc of death, and even if he managed to restrict her weapon, a terrifyingly powerful punch or kick with a bladed boot would put him in his place. Zac was getting overwhelmed even if he fought with everything in his arsenal.

The chains of [Love's Bond] were ripping through the air in deadly arcs to restrain and strike the vampire from behind, but it was like Uona had eyes in the back of her head. Small condensed spears appeared out of nowhere slammed into the chains just as they were about to hit her, and they contained such power that Zac felt his Spirit Tool taking continuous damage.

Zac even started to wonder if she had even higher luck than himself going by her reaction time. He kept activating [Void Zone] to catch her off-guard, but after the first time, she reacted immediately. He also unleashed sudden bursts of creation in all sorts of ways, even turning a chunk of his flesh into a cannonball to shoot into her, trying to counter skill with chaos.

But nothing worked.

Any time he managed to infuse some Creation into her body, she immediately expelled ten people's worth of blood. At the same time, the blood she had thrown away after clashing with his Creation-infused axe swings was enough to fill an Olympic pool.

Zac didn't understand how this was possible. Was there no limit to how much energy and blood she was able to expend? He pushed [Cosmic Gaze] to the limit and he found a clue mid-clash. There were two surges of Blood Energy every time she discarded a fountain of blood. One came from within her heart, making it look like she expended her Essence Blood to keep fighting.

But the second energy burst indicated that might not be the whole story. It was minute to the point that Zac wouldn't have sensed it at all if not specifically looking for it, and it came from quite far away. It came from the direction of the blood sphere.

Was Uona somehow using the collected blood of the Blood Effigy to keep fighting? How was that possible? His thought swirled as he kept his pitched battle going, and he suddenly came to a realization. The purpose of the blood effigy was to link the Divine Monarch outside with the Mystic Realm, and what better way than to link a Blood Effigy and a blood cultivator than with the Bloodline of the Eternal Clan?

Uona had probably activated whatever link would be used during the ascension, siphoning blood just as it would siphon a whole realm in the future.

The more he thought about it, the more sense it made, but that also meant he was in deep trouble. He had seen how much energy that sanguine egg hovering in the air contained. He would be long dead before he managed to exhaust it all. He needed to change tactics.

Zac suddenly roared as a burst of unfettered creation was expelled from his body, ripping apart the surroundings. Uona was rampaging, but she still had enough state of mind to not needlessly take such a chaotic burst straight in the face. She flashed away to avoid the shockwave, giving Zac time to follow up on his plan.

He fled.

For the first time since kicking the large door open, Zac once more found himself outside the huge chamber after having turned tail the moment he unleashed a barrage of Creation. The square was empty, and who knew where the Eidolon had fled after getting themselves almost killed. That meant Zac wouldn't get overrun by another angry Heaven's Chosen, but that didn't improve his situation much.

Getting out of the building only changed his surroundings.

"It's futile," the demonic voice of Uona echoed out from behind, but she didn't get the chance to continue before a primordial roar echoed out across the massive square.

The next moment, a massive hyena slammed into the blood mistress in a bout of unmatched ferocity. It was Verun who finally had made its appearance, and it almost looked like the Tool Spirit had taken a berserking pill. A storm of blood surrounded it, and its body was a mix of chaotic energies as it tried to rip its enemy apart.

Interestingly enough, it had also undergone slight alterations since appearing last. After absorbing that dense bone, the spirit had become more congealed. It felt a lot more like an actual beast now, and there was far greater heft behind its swipe as it stuck Uona's spear with such force that she was pushed back into the building.

Not only that, but the mottled pattern of red streaks that covered its body ever since swallowing the dragon's blood had changed a bit. There were golden spots in the red, and the same was true for the bloody swirls that surrounded its legs. It was almost like the blood inside the beast's body was becoming like Billy's in his titanic state, but Zac knew the sources were different.

The origin of the golden power wasn't a result of swallowing Uona's blood, but it rather came from the experiences in the valley. Zac could sense pure life inside the blood.

Verun pushing back Uona gave Zac the breather he desperately needed, and he stuffed three pills into his mouth as he kept running. Two surges of energy immediately filled him with vigor. The lesser of the two was his highest-quality Soldier Pill, a quasi D-grade pill that would restore over 30% of his maximum reserves over the next minute.

The far more ferocious surge was actually something made from a [Rageroot Oak Seed], and it immediately pushed his strength to the next level. Initially, Zac would have preferred to avoid using a pill

like this in the Twilight Ocean. After all, even if it managed to help him take out Uona, there were still Aia Ouro and thousands of other powerhouses lurking in the area.

He was taking a huge gamble by eating this, that he would be able to hide away while he endured the terrifying backlash after the effect ended. After all, turning the seed into a pill had simply made the thing easier to swallow. It did nothing to reduce the drawbacks of the item. Zac immediately felt a bout of madness gripping his mind, to the point he almost turned around to charge the vampire who shot out through the building again.

Thankfully, the third pill had dissolved by that point, and he felt his mind clearing up again. It was a pill that helped dispel various negative mental states. Together with his empowered soul, it allowed him to endure the mental decay that had turned him into a raging lunatic when fighting the blacksmith golem in Brazla's trial.

A pained yowl echoed out behind him as he felt a good chunk of Verun's energy being expended. The Tool Spirit was extremely ferocious, but it was ultimately not a match to a peak E-grade Heaven's Chosen. It flashed back and forth, but it only managed to slightly impede the vampire as she strove to catch up.

Finally, it couldn't take it any longer and unleashed a cascading wave of bloodlust and blood that slammed into Uona, stopping her in her tracks for an instant. Zac felt the Tool Spirit return into the axe with a mix of exhaustion and reluctance, but it had accomplished the task of giving Zac the headstart he needed.

"Stop!" an enraged scream echoed out, but the pills had been absorbed already, and Zac turned into an abyssal wraith.

A thousand spears shot toward him, but he wasn't as easy to take down as when they fought in the chasm. Now, [Abyssal Phase] had already reached late mastery, and his attributes had been boosted by almost 30% by the berserking treasure. It gave him enough speed to avoid most of the spears, though he still found the edges of his intangible form damaged.

Soon enough, it became untenable to keep the skill going, but by that time he had already reached his target. It wasn't the gate through which he had entered the massive compound, but rather the 10-meter ball of blood hovering above a building very similar to the one he had just emerged from.

Zac had never planned on actually escaping from Uona. But since she kept getting powered by this thing, his best course of action was to cut off her power at the source. As long as he could destroy this thing with a burst of Creation, she'd run out of blood energy soon enough. Besides, there had to be a price to be paid for continuously drawing power as she did.

Hopefully, she'd be hit by a backlash the moment this thing blew up.

"Damage that thing and you will make an enemy of the whole Eternal Clan!" Uona screamed in anger as she closed in on him like a hurricane of blood.

"Since when has Draugr feared a bunch of bloodsuckers?" Zac snorted as he punched his whole arm into the huge sanguine orb.