

The Fall 775

Chapter 775: Overextended

“Stop!” Uona screamed again, but Zac ignored her as he unleashed a storm of Creation into the sphere.

At the same time, he threw out dozens of [Void Balls] with his free hand, turning the whole area around him into a veritable minefield to hamper the vampire’s advancement. It looked like the whole mystic realm was about to break apart as a wall of spatial tears covered the whole area, but even such a dangerous scene didn’t stop Uona in her tracks.

She unleashed an unhinged cascade of blood that rippled forward, and one tear after another was destabilized and crushed by the torrential amounts of energy. Zac’s looked on at the scene with shock, swearing at the shard to work quicker as he secured his position with the chains of [Love’s Bond].

The pygmies had appeared once more, and the two defensive pygmies were immediately forced to work overtime. While the wave of blood crushed the nigh-impassable shroud of spatial tears, some blood bullets managed to pierce through, heading straight toward Zac with enough force to blast a hole straight through solid steel.

The black shroud of the third pygmy shot back and forth, constantly losing some of its mass to slightly redirect the projectiles. They were filled with some sanguine Dao, but Zac thankfully didn’t need to adjust their trajectory overly much. Just a little bit was enough to have them shoot into the sphere instead of him, and the ones who couldn’t be diverted were blocked by a coffin barrier that just covered his front.

There was some sort of inner barrier that shielded the core of the blood sphere. It heroically resisted the corruption while the outer layer of supercondensed blood started to morph into everything from base elements to soulless creations that almost felt like a mockery of life. Most shockingly, over thirty bodies were formed, and they fell down and smashed into the roof below.

Zac didn’t recognize a single one of them, but he didn’t believe they were random faces wrought from nowhere. More likely, they were soulless clones of people who had fallen in the City of Ancients. Some of their lingering spirituality had been dragged here along with their blood, becoming a source of inspiration to the torrent of Creation.

A few of them shuddered and moved, but Zac felt a deep sense of wrongness when he looked at them flop about on the ceiling below. They were alive, yet they weren’t. It was just like what that old man in the shard-vision had come to realize. The life created by the Shards of Creation was hollow, soulless.

It was perhaps possible for the Dao of Creation could create true life, but it wasn’t possible for some remnant shards at least. Perhaps, that was the domain of the Heavens alone. Of course, unraveling the truth of Creation wasn’t a priority right now. He struggled to control the ebullient Creation Energy to break apart the inner restrictions of the sphere, and a wave of relief filled Zac’s heart when he sensed the barrier finally give way.

Most likely, that barrier would have been able to take an all-out strike of either him or Aia Ouro. Uona might even have somehow infused it with the ability to withstand an Annihilation Sphere. But Creation

didn't destroy, it changed, and there was no way for Uona to have known he had this ability when setting up the defensive restrictions around the effigy.

A small breach had been formed when the base nature of the core was forced to transform, and Zac didn't need to exert any effort to usher the Creation Energy as it stormed into the heart. It was already attracted by the extremely powerful energy signature that had started to leak, and it rushed into the opening like a starving beast.

"No!" Uona screeched, but it was too late.

A shockwave erupted and threw Zac hundreds of meters away, and he groaned in pain when he flew straight through the gauntlet of bloody attacks. Even activating [Void Zone] wasn't enough because of his momentum, and new wounds accumulated as he was hit by one bloody bullet after another.

Next came the spatial storm, but his Bloodline Talent was thankfully able to rapidly weaken the spatial turbulence as he shot through it and into the storm of blood. Fear filled his heart as he essentially was inside one of Uona's skills, and he kept expelling creation energy even at the cost of his life. The vampire didn't actually counter, and he shot out through the other end of the bloody tide, leaving a scene of utter chaos behind.

His ears were ringing sound from the impact of the shockwave, but he could still hear the pained screams from the Heaven's Chosen, which explained why Uona seemed incapable to retaliate at the moment. Zac slammed down on the ground, and the churning heat from the [Rageroot Oak Seed] was the only thing that allowed him to stay conscious and crawl back on his feet once more.

His left arm was broken, along with a couple of ribs, but he had already expended all his charges of [Undying Mark]. He grimaced as he used some more Creation Energy, and he was beset by that deathly sense of hollowness. Most people would be able to increase their lifespan after finding a rare treasure like the Longevity Gem, yet he had lost at least a century since picking up the shard.

He briefly wondered if he would even be able to enter the Radiant Temple any longer. They probably had some arrays to measure age over there. Would such an array call him a centennial by now? After all, this wasn't the first time he had been forced to use up some of his lifespan. Altogether, it had to be close to two hundred years lost, just below a tenth of his expected lifespan.

Zac would get another burst of longevity after forming his core, and another one every time he improved it to the next stage. But he had entered a somewhat hopeless spiral where he encountered situations where he was forced to give up more and more of his life to cinch a path to survive. The sacrifice had at least allowed him to keep going a bit longer, and he rushed toward the blood mistress who had fallen down on the ground.

A huge pool of blood had formed around her, but it didn't look like a skill this time around. She was bleeding from both her ears and her nose, and her aura had become not only a lot weaker but also extremely unstable. The splinter was left in the building far behind him, but Zac still rushed toward Uona.

Killing the scion wasn't his ultimate goal, but there was no telling if trying to seize the remnant would work even if it might seem like an opportunity had presented itself. If Zac didn't seize this opening to

finish her off, he might never get the chance again. What if she was still able to transport the remnant away in a puff of blood? Killing her was the only real option for accomplishing his goal.

However, Uona wasn't completely out of the count, and she struggled back to her feet and started running. She didn't run toward Zac in an effort to strike back at the one who had foiled her plans. She was rather running toward the rapidly distorting Blood Effigy.

The huge egg of blood had grown to over fifteen meters across after Zac had infused the storm of Creation, and it was undergoing rapid upheavals. It wasn't just in shape, though it did twist and distort like something was trying to break out. Its aura kept changing as well. It could release a wave of scorching heat for a second, only for the deep sanguine aura to return the next moment.

There was a clear struggle between the Path of Blood and the everchanging nature of Creation, and Zac knew that every transformation would rob the effigy of some of its original purpose and energy. It was probably this that Uona was trying to stop, and Zac inwardly cursed after not being able to catch up to her, even after activating [Abyssal Phase] with [Force of the Void].

She had risked everything to unleash some sort of blood-based escape art, turning into a stream that shot straight into the huge blood egg with almost impossible speed. Even worse, Zac suddenly sensed two bursts of blood energy; one from within the sphere, and another one from behind where the splinter resided.

His suspicions were immediately confirmed when he sensed that the splinter's presence was inside the blood orb now, instead of behind him. She had been able to transport the splinter all along, which meant he had made the right decision in ignoring it. Unfortunately, it didn't help him much at the moment, considering he knew that Uona wasn't up to any good.

Zac didn't need to wait long to find out what the blood mistress was planning. The huge egg suddenly exploded, and chaotic currents of sanguine energy ripped into Zac and forced him out of his intangible form. A wave of pain threatened to knock him clean out even if a storm of liquid fire churned through his veins, but Zac barely held on as he grimly looked at what had appeared in the bloody sphere's stead.

It was a grotesque miscreation that looked more like a demonic effigy than an avatar of the Eternal Clan. Its face was completely distorted with seven eyes and three mouths, each of them having pocked tongues reaching almost all the way to the ground. The thing had no legs as it hovered in the air. Instead, there was just a fleshy mess that dangled down like a cursed dress.

Its torso was unnaturally wide as well, making its form resemble a downward-pointing triangle. Instead of arms, the creature had hundreds of long tentacles. It was impossible to tell the thing was corporeal or blood taken shape just by observing the thing, and Zac had no idea if this was the intended look of the Blood Effigy or the result of his interference. But the undeniable truth was that his attempt to destroy it had failed.

It did however radiate an extremely unstable aura tainted by both the remnants, and going by Zac's experience with Oblivion and Creation, it wouldn't last more than a couple of minutes before collapsing. It was those minutes that would decide whether he lived or died.

A plop was followed by a wet thud as Uona was discarded from the effigy and dropped onto the hard cobblestone below, her body looking extremely drained. If Zac had sensed her aura on the outside at the

moment, he would have guessed she was just a peak F-grade cultivator. Most of her armor was destroyed as well, perhaps the result of meddling with the Splinter of Oblivion.

She weakly looked up at Zac, the hatred in her eyes so powerful that it almost had taken tangible form. Zac hesitantly looked at her for a second, before his gaze shifted to the effigy again. The splinter was inside, and he had made his decision. Going by the unstable aura, the effigy would collapse soon enough. He just needed to keep his distance until that time.

But the ghastly creation was clearly of another mind, and dozens of its tentacles suddenly rose into the air as they started to vibrate like tuning rods. Zac looked on with shock as the whole sky turned red while the Twilight Energy in the area started to change. At the same time, the ground rumbled like an earthquake was about to occur.

Zac's eyes widened as large wounds started to appear across his body, like the air itself was a lethal weapon. He even felt the ichor in his body being dragged out, forcing him to hurriedly heal the wounds with even more Creation energy. He also started rotating the Fragment of the Coffin to strengthen his skin, but the efficacy was subpar at best.

Whatever the Blood Effigy was doing, it was beyond his ability to stop. Zac didn't know if it was a domain skill or if the thing was impacting the Mystic Realm itself. Whichever were the case, he knew he was in deep trouble. Even the rampaging shard seemed to be a bit subdued by the avatar hovering in the distance.

Without hesitation, Zac started to run, this time fleeing for real. He didn't dare to activate his movement skill considering the environment, and he pushed his legs to their limits as he rushed toward the gate in the distance. But Zac only got a hundred meters before huge red fractals appeared, crushing his hopes of escape.

The huge jagged edge of [Gorehew] appeared, infused with panic and Creation as it slammed into the bloody mark. It shuddered a bit, but just like how Uona had dealt with Creation Energy, so did the fractal. It simply shot out a deluge of tainted blood straight in Zac's face, pushing him back tens of meters. When Zac got the blood out of his eyes, he saw that the barrier hadn't weakened at all.

He knew he either had to swap over to his human side and unleash a more powerful strike or use his Annihilation Sphere if he wanted a chance to escape. Unfortunately, there wasn't time to charge up either as his mind screamed of mortal peril. The effigy had somehow closed in on him in an instant, without as much as a ripple of energy.

Dozens of blood tentacles were already shooting toward him, and Zac desperately started to swing his axe to stave off the assault. He fought with everything he had, but the appendages were intangible and regrew faster than Zac could destroy them. At the same time, one of the mouths of the effigy opened and released a huge storm of chaotic blood in his direction.

A black haze of the pygmy skeleton tried to swallow the sanguine tempest, but the skeleton pygmy's attempt to relocate the attack proved fruitless, which wasn't a surprise considering it was imbued with god-knows how much energy. Furthermore, it was instilled with a sublime Dao related to blood, its stage clearly surpassing his own Dao Branch.

Out of options, Zac prepared to unleash another huge wave of Creation at the risk of irrevocably harming his foundations. But suddenly, a shudder rippled through the coffin on his back as he felt the lid open on its own. Zac's eyes widened in alarm as he saw the enormous avatar of Alea make her appearance. She had actually activated [Death's Embrace] on her own, the defensive skill engraved on the lid.

Alea looked a bit different this time around, just like Verun did before. She was bigger for one, containing far more energy compared to before. This wasn't a surprise, considering how he had fed her thousands of Twilight Fruits along with the Life-Death Pearls. She had even absorbed quite a bit of the extremely condensed energy inside the valley back then.

It would be shocking if she hadn't grown stronger, especially now that she was at the precipice of waking up.

That wasn't the only change. Just like with the primordial hyena, hazy markings now covered her skin, markings that resonated with his path. It was Death, pure death as he had envisioned it during the chaotic events inside the valley, where he had denounced Twilight and confirmed his truth. This understanding was mirrored across Alea's body, though it was just in an embryonic state.

However, even if Alea felt a lot more powerful this time around compared to when she protected him against the Lich King, Zac still wasn't elated to see her appear. Normally, a Peak-quality and peak-grade F-grade Tool Spirit would be enough for any battle in the E-grade, especially when activating a powerful spell with a long cooldown like this.

But this battle had far surpassed what could be expected in the E-grade. Even early-stage Hegemons would find themselves unable to contend in a struggle like this unless they had some extremely powerful tools that could make full use of their energy stores.

Yet she held on, trying to take on more and more harm as her arms were held in a wide embrace. She didn't only block the bloody storm, she also attracted the tentacles that now hid within. More and more blood was contained and condensed into a sphere of extremely condensed energy, but Zac saw that it didn't come without a price.

One crack after another appeared on the coffin lid as similar cracks appeared on Alea's avatar, ample proof that this situation was beyond what she could handle. A pained grimace appeared on her face, but she still held on. Fury and helplessness filled Zac's heart as he scrambled for a solution.

He needed power. One final burst to turn the tides. And he knew where to find it. He had held off on it since there was no going back from this, but if he hesitated longer, [Love's Bond] would break apart. From there, he'd just last a few seconds longer, especially if that ball Alea had condensed erupted.

A crack echoed in his mind out as a fractal of the prison in his mind crumbled. A deluge of stocked-up and unfiltered energy stormed into his mind like rain in a parched desert. The two remnants didn't wait for even a second as they escaped the cage that had held them prisoners since forming the first Glimpse of Chaos.

The splinter rushed out with the most urgency, desperately avoiding the other two remnants as they both set off in pursuit. All three of the remnants exuded huge amounts of energy, instilling Zac with a

cursed power. Seeing the cracks on the coffin lid and the pained visage of the avatar had completely infuriated Zac, easily overpowering the mind-calming concoction he swallowed earlier.

He shot forward, passing the avatar as he entered the storm of blood himself. It tried to rip him apart, but he was unstoppable now that he had paid the ultimate price for strength. Either he would seize the splinter, or his body would explode from the situation inside his body. A huge imbalance had already been formed, where the crashing waves of creation were almost about to completely surround the struggling splinter.

The two captive remnants had been continuously drained and restrained over the past years, but the second shard was like a wild bucking horse filled with vigor. Furthermore, the two shards had formed some sort of resonance, where their proximity empowered one another as they drew even more energy from the void.

The splinter wouldn't last long, but it had started to vibrate ominously, clearly intent on going out in a final blaze of glory. Zac couldn't let that happen. He roared as he tried to impose control. His mind felt like it was being stabbed by needles as he forcibly took charge of the bucking energies, but he still managed to throw them out of his body to counter the effigy.

There was no time to form any Marks of Creation or Annihilation Spheres. Every outburst came at the cost of his essence, no matter if it was body or spirit. A wave of unfettered creation ripped the storm of blood apart, and Zac was like a ghastly specter as he obliterated space itself as he moved forward in its wake, removing the distance between himself and the avatar.

The three bloody tongues moved with impossible speed to impale his body, but he didn't even register the pain as he furiously dug into the effigy, willing to sacrifice his body as long as he could reach his goal. He dug deeper and deeper, and finally, his hand seized a bucking gemstone at the effigy's core.

The last time he had been mesmerized, tricked into putting the Splinter of Oblivion against his head. This time, he acted willingly, desperately even. A fourth surge of power joined the previous three, forming a precipitous balance in the chaos.

Zac directed one final hateful glare in Uonas's direction as the world slowed down and his consciousness was whisked away.