

The Fall 785

Chapter 785: Fertilizer for One's Path

Rhodium burned with anxiety as he saw Artolo fall, unable to withstand even the opening salvo of the Eveningtide Asura. Ovo was still standing, but the Godslayer Spike the Rox'At Elemental controlled had been damaged to the point it might as well be considered an ornament by this point. It was already leaking its energies, forming a zone of destruction stretching a dozen kilometers in each direction.

Things had gone out of control too quickly. They had all been in meditation to reach a sublime mental state before the battle, but they had been forced to wake early and immediately set out. Why had the realm crumbled early, and why had the System involved itself? They had no choice but to make their move before the Godslayer Array had properly charged up, and they had decided to control the spikes themselves instead.

That cut the might of the spikes in half, but Rhodium knew that was only part of the problem. How could someone native to the frontier be this powerful?

Especially someone who had spent almost half of his lifespan in secluded cultivation, unable to gather rare treasures and honing his skills in battle. According to their estimates, Alvod Jondir had been severely wounded when usurping the throne, to the point his cultivation had regressed to Middle C-grade. They had figured the false lord to be powerful thanks to having forcibly increased his cultivation to Divine Monarchy, but he actually surpassed his grade in strength.

It made their mission almost insurmountable, and Rhodium was filled with regrets. If they only found out about these plans earlier they would have been able to enact more airtight plans. They had barely managed to construct these spikes, yet they didn't even have a proper delivery system. But Rhodium knew they couldn't stop here.

The spikes had been activated, and they would only last for a few more minutes before their pathways would crack from the rampant energies contained within.

"Alvod Jondir shouldn't be able to unleash more attacks in the short run," Heryes's voice echoed out in his mind. "I will try to deal with one of the bloodsuckers."

"I will assist you," Rhodium frowned as an azure river appeared around him. "We need to restrain them at least, allowing the others to finish the objective. The Faebloom Monarch will restrain the ghosts with Ovo and Ubulo."

"Alright," Heryes agreed.

Rhodium sent a command to his spike and it changed course, now heading straight for the two sanguine avatars instead of the anomaly. The necromancer followed suit, and a towering skeleton appeared behind her. The skeleton grabbed the Godslayer Spike, intent on using it as a weapon.

The two bloody avatars got ready to meet their attack, the mage choosing to deal with the skeleton. The rivers that had surrounded her shot forward, each one of them containing boundless amounts of Essence Blood, making it wildly powerful.

The skeleton responded in kind as it spat out a shroud of condensed putrefaction. Heryes had no doubt implanted the ancient skull of her prime servant with terrifying toxins, and Rhodium prayed it would be enough to putrefy the blood of the Eternal Clan. Rhodium had no time to worry about his ally though, and he rather focused his attentions on the other avatar.

Tens of thousands of runes were appearing around the vampire's spear as he had retracted his weapon. He was building momentum, and Rhodium knew he couldn't tarry. He infused his Dao into the azure river, prompting it to shudder as it grew massive scales. An earth-shattering roar caused space itself to crack as the river turned into the simile of a primordial flood dragon.

It shot forward, its advance causing space itself to freeze before cracking.

However, the vampire had finished his preparations, and he stabbed forward with furious momentum. Rhodium thought to block, but he suddenly felt the shadow of death loom over him, and he quickly formed a few incantations, prompting himself and the spike to shift ten kilometers away.

It was a wise decision, as the space where he had previously occupied simply disintegrated, forming an almost endless scar in space. The dragon was badly maimed as well, but its core runes were still intact, allowing Rhodium to reform it.

The stab had carried a shocking amount of force, far beyond what Rhodium had expected. He looked over with worry, just in time to see the three rivers break out from the restrictive haze of Heryes. The streams had darkened considerably, but they still maintained more than half of their essence. They shot forward with almost untouched momentum, and Rhodium's face sunk when he saw Heryes' prized possession get ripped apart by the three frothing rivers.

The Necromancer paled in response, and her mind was no doubt wounded after the destruction of her puppet. She wasn't ready to give in though, and a storm of millions of bones poured out of her sleeves, forming a dense cloud that spread over five kilometers. The bones swirled and crashed into each other, causing a deafening cacophony that rippled toward the rivers.

They were forming an ancestral curse, and Rhodium shuddered as he unwittingly moved a bit closer to Heryes. Space around her was bound to be excluded from the cursed field, which was important to know considering the crazy Necromancer's proclivity for wanton destruction when going all out.

Meanwhile, a huge explosion behind Rhodium confirmed what he had been worried about. The monstrous jab had continued until it slammed into a world disk. The disks were covered in extremely mighty arrays, but Rhodium could feel that most of the restrictions had broken down already. He needed to make a move. If things continued this way, there wouldn't be anything left to salvage even if they won.

His heart bled, but he still took out the small blue gemstone he had saved for over two hundred thousand years. It was supposed to be one of the core components the next time he expanded his inner world, yet he was forced to use it in a situation like this. He absorbed the primordial force within, and another roar echoed through the cosmos as the azure dragon doubled in size and shot toward the avatar with newfound vigor.

Meanwhile, Rhodium formed a series of seals, and tens of thousands of lances appeared behind him, each one a hundred meters long. a series of azure halos lit up around each one of them, filling the spear

with energy until they suddenly shot forward with enough speed to cleave the void itself. They fell like deadly rain, heading straight toward the three Monarchs below.

He hoped that a direct attack would lessen the pressure on his companion, and hopefully provide an opening for someone to launch their spike at the spatial anomaly. But a deep heartbeat echoed out through the area, and Rhodium was shocked to find cracks appear on his own heart. The damage quickly healed though, and he instilled more and more energy into his spear array.

In response, a huge tidal wave of blood rose behind the three Eternal Clan members, and it pushed forward to swallow the azure spears within. Rhodium grimaced when he felt the connection to his skill break long before they managed to pierce to where his targets were sitting.

He hadn't even managed to make them move out of the way.

Meanwhile, the whole area was crying as almost two dozen Monarchs unleashed one mighty attack after another. Rhodium knew this place would be tainted for tens of thousands of years as a result, but there was nothing to be done about it. Both he and the other councilors fought desperately to reach the Spatial Anomaly, but the imperials were far more powerful than they expected.

They managed to occupy five of the spikes, with only two managing to enter the Spatial Anomaly. That was far below what they had hoped for, but it was better than nothing. Even that was only thanks to the Radiant Temple staying out of the way, for some reason content with circulating at the edge of the battlefield.

Just two wouldn't do it. They had estimated that they needed at least four to strike to collapse the realm entirely. Now, they would just become a small thorn in the Eveningtide Asura's side, unless they managed to force two more inside.

Suddenly, a deep gong echoed out from above, and Rhodium's eyes widened when he saw the churning clouds open up. First, it was just a small hole in the middle, a small weakness that leaked a marvelous shimmer. At the same time, the Spatial Anomaly was twisting, almost beating like a heartbeat as it started turning.

Another gong, and innumerable shimmering lights simultaneously flashed into being, almost forming a belt around the battlefield. The golden light had the mark of the System, and Rhodium spotted cultivators emitting weak auras within. It was no doubt the trial takers being taken out of the crumbling realm, but he had no time to worry about them as he knew what was about to happen.

The clanking sound of a wheel turning could be heard from within the anomaly, and a third gong echoed out, harkening the arrival of the Heavens. The small hole in the thunderous cloud suddenly enlarged, growing to a fifty-kilometer-wide hollow in an instant. From within, an endless amount of light poured down upon them all, drenching them in the chorus of the Boundless Dao.

"The eye of the Heavens," Rhodium whispered with a mix of marvel and horror as the energy inside his body went haywire from being exposed to the Heavenly Law.

They were too late.

The destruction had come too quickly, and the Eveningtide Asura had already seized the opportunity while their plans had fallen apart. The fact that the Heavens had descended meant the Realm Core had been seized and repurposed, used to conjure a Heavenly Descent.

Rhodium's thoughts were a mess, with part of him wanting to furiously fight, to confirm his path by destroying another's. Part of him simply wanted to run away. But he was locked in place as his eyes were glued to the spectacle above. From how the battlefield had grown quiet, the same was true for the others.

The Heavens itself had descended, bringing the true Dao to bear. Inside the radiant lights, the answers to all questions that had plagued him for the past eons were hidden. If Rhodium could simply find the right stream, he could finally break past the bottleneck that had locked him in place since he lost his momentum.

But a shocked shriek ripped Rhodium out of his reverie, and he looked over with confusion to see his fellow councilors attacking each other. The Faebloom Monarch had actually ambushed Ovo, who was already wounded after withstanding the attack of the Eveningtide Asura. A similar scene took place on the other side of the anomaly.

A wave of dizziness suddenly hid him, and his eyes widened in alarm as he furiously looked over at Heryes, who sighed as the storm of bones headed his way.

"You?!" Rhodium roared, knowing he had been poisoned.

"I'm sorry, old friend," Heryes smiled, though there was no mirth in her eyes. "Death is inevitable. With the Heavenly Descent a fact, the harbor has reached its end. The guild needed to plan for all contingencies. You forget, our situation is far worse than yours, considering our leanings."

"So you should have fought twice as hard to protect your sanctuary," Rhodium growled as he desperately tried to recoup his energy.

But it was like his Cosmic Energy had turned into a gas that steamed out from his pores, and he felt his inner world become shrouded in darkness. Meanwhile, the gargantuan bones of the broken skeleton scattered across the area started to regroup, once more forming an undamaged warrior that shot toward Rhodium instead of the imperials.

Two of the vampire Monarchs didn't sit idly by, and they added insult to injury as they both had their avatars restrain and target him. However, the leader of the three ignored him, instead swallowing some small bead as thousands of tendrils emerged from his back, shooting down toward the anomaly below.

Six golden rings above his head swirled, forming a celestial song that sang of the cycle of life and death, of blood and war. The chimes fused with the Heavenly song from above, trying to harmonize. Rhodium knew the man was trying to supplant the Heavenly Descent, but he wasn't in a position to care about that at the moment.

He saw the crashing waves of blood surge toward him, yet he was barely able to move between the poison and the pressure from above. He knew there was no point in lingering, and he activated his Spatial Displacement Treasure. But despair filled his heart as he felt how space itself was sealed.

Would he really fall here?

“The Heavens might accept your offering, but we do not abide!” a snort suddenly echoed in his ears.

The voice wasn't loud, but it contained a tremendous force as it echoed out through the cosmos. It contained the might and will of the Dao itself, and one avatar after another broke apart, unable to maintain their form in front of a superior truth as an impossible pressure descended on the area. Even the shimmering light from the Dao Ocean above dimmed, temporarily suppressed by an unbreakable will.

The next moment, the universe was split apart by a horizontal scar that stretched as far as his eyes could see. Out from it, a celestial army emerged. Tens of thousands of warriors stepped through the tear, each one reaching hundreds of meters in the air. They exuded a bloodlust that drowned the whole Twilight Harbor in a red haze, but their gazes were thankfully trained at the undead imperials and the Spatial Anomaly, rather than at himself.

Behind them, an impossibly large presence took form, its hands holding apart space itself as he pushed his torso through. He was tens of thousands of meters tall, and Rhodium felt his blood boil when looking at the inscrutable tattoos that covered the giant's face. They spoke of bloodshed and war, of unquestionable might and of victory.

The man's other half was still on the other side of the void, but his shocking aura forcibly kept the spatial tear open. Atop the man's head sat a jade crown, the six red gemstones inlaid on it a clear answer to who had arrived. The Sixth Protector. Rhodium's breath quickened when he realized what was going on, and despair quickly turned into elation. They might just make it after all.

The Havarok Empire had actually managed to send an Autarch through the Tarramak Vault somehow, in the flesh no less.

Catheya looked around with wide eyes, horrified at the auras she could vaguely sense through the golden barrier around here.

“Are you two okay?” she asked.

“We're fine,” Qirai wheezed, though Catheya noticed her aura was extremely unstable.

It was no wonder. The Mystic Realm had fallen apart, and their exit had been bereft of the stabilizing arrays you saw on Space Gates and Teleportation Arrays. They had been dragged through the void, their bodies exposed to chaotic Spatial Energies along with the exhaust of the realm itself.

Thankfully, the System had taken mercy on them, erecting the golden barriers after they had withstood half the journey on their own. However, the golden glow around them was slowly dissipating, and she could already smell the cataclysmic danger that waited outside.

“Get ready to teleport away,” she said as she ate a soul-soothing pill, and her two followers followed suit.

Ten seconds later, the shielding dissipated, but they didn't even have time to activate their escape talismans before they were subdued and immobilized by multiple layers of terrifying pressure. If not for the defensive equipment they wore, their bodies might have started crumbling then and there.

Cathey looked at the scene, her eyes wide with horror. She had known it would be bad, but this was beyond even what she could have imagined. Above in the sky, extremely dense clouds stretched on as far as she could see. In its center, a marvelous light shimmered, but she hurriedly looked away when she felt her soul shuddered precipitously.

She had a good idea of what that light was, and she knew that it was not something an E-grade cultivator herself could meddle with. The Heavenly Secrets were not so easily divulged. Besides, this was no time to enter meditation. Over a Dozen monarchs floated around the Spatial Anomaly, and they clearly had been fighting just a moment ago.

But now, they all faced a terrifying army, led by a man of shocking proportions. Cathey had never seen her family's Autarch in the flesh, but she had sensed the aura left behind by him and her ancestor. This aura was weaker, but it was extremely condensed, which wasn't a surprise considering he was here in the flesh.

Cathey didn't understand what was going on. She knew that this sector of the Frontier lacked proper Space Gates to allow a being as powerful as an Autarch to pass through. Had he sailed here across the vast darkness, spending god-knows how much time and even harming his foundations? And if they knew of this event that long ago, they surely should have come up with some better plans?

It didn't make sense, yet he was here, his mere presence causing space to shudder. The implications were terrifying, but not everyone seemed to be as subdued by the arrival.

"Since everyone has gathered, let's get this show on the road," an unfamiliar man laughed, his voice filled with boundless conviction. It was the Eveningtide Asura.

The next moment, the Twilight Ascent exploded, unleashing a surge of rampant energy that seemed without limit. Cathey looked at the almost blinding display with dismay, knowing that even a fraction of that force would be able to extinguish her in body and soul. Thankfully, the energy didn't erupt in a shockwave of unbridled energy and Dao.

Instead, it poured into the dozens of twilight rivers that formed a spider web through the Twilight Harbor, and they lit up with unprecedented might as they started to move, gathering toward the heart of the Harbor. The huge avatar snorted as he spat a ball of destruction toward the core, but the rivers formed an enormous cocoon around it.

The power in the attack contained enough power to kill a Peak Monarch, yet the rivers managed to withstand it. Thankfully, the Autarch had controlled his power as well, and not as much as a ripple spread out toward the lower-grade cultivators.

"Alvod Jondir. I have come to enact judgment on your sins," the Autarch growled, his voice sounding like Heavenly Law.

"Not even the heavens can judge me, protector, let alone you," the Eveningtide Asura laughed from within the cocoon. "You shall all become fertilizer for my path."

The sky rumbled in response, as though enraged by the proclamation. Nine purple tendrils started to descend toward the cocoon, and screams echoed out all around her as their aura covered the Twilight

Harbor. Catheya squeezed her eyes shut, but she felt herself losing control. The Heavens had been pulled down to the frontier, and nothing could withstand its wrath.

Her mind drifted as she lost sensation, and an endless cold gripped her. Darkness crept closer, and the last thing she remembered was the silhouette of a man sitting on a balcony, enjoying the scenery of the Twilight Harbor.