

The Fall 788

Chapter 788: Trapped

An obscuring shroud from a Haze Talisman spread around Zac as he hurriedly took out [Verun's Bite], immediately conjuring a fractal leaf. He knew himself well enough to know that he didn't have the strength to force open a spatial tear himself, at least not one large and stable enough for him to escape through. But hopefully, the dimensional wall around him would still be weakened enough for him to reopen a pathway.

At the same time, he didn't dare to immediately cut open a path in case the terrifying energy shockwaves were still raging outside. The long scars in the Void were a poignant reminder of just how ferocious the struggle for ascension was. But no new scars were opening around him at the moment, so he ultimately infused his Daos into the blade one after another as he activated [Rapturous Divide], ignoring the throbbing pain in his head.

The two waves melded, prompting a two-colored sun to erupt a few meters ahead of him. But Zac frowned when he saw that the divide between the Abyss and Arcadia had failed to open up a path out of this place. There was a spatial rupture, but it was as thin as a strand of hair, making it sharp enough to kill someone, but absolutely useless for escape.

Zac sighed as he started looking around. Sticking around in the Void for too long was out of the question. The environment itself was harmful, and Zac didn't want to find out if the Collector had brethren living in this area. So he needed to find another exit, and fast. The good news was that far from all the Spatial Tears that led back to the Twilight Harbor had collapsed, but getting to them quickly proved difficult.

First of all, he was forced to turn off [Void Zone] if he wanted to traverse the Void, which immediately exposed him to the darkness. It felt like he was being constantly cut by thousands of small knives, and his skin was slowly drying out like it was sapped of its vitality.

Secondly, he found himself utterly incapable of actually making any progress even if he moved. His surroundings turned into a confusing blur as he propelled himself forward by expelling Cosmic Energy, with his relative position to the surroundings continuously changing. The experience was so nauseating he was repeatedly forced to stop in order to fight an onset of vertigo.

Zac quickly realized that the spatial tear had served as an anchor, infusing its surroundings with the Dao of Space. With the spatial tear gone, the normal rules didn't apply any longer. His eyes had become useless, with directions and common logic no longer holding any sway. It became more apparent why the Hegemons had so desperately struggled to jump back through the tears, to the point some even braved the rampant energies.

They were probably afraid of getting stuck like he was.

At the same time, it was clear that not everyone had this kind of problem. There were dozens of people flickering about, somehow moving through the area to loot one Spatial Ring or Cosmos Sack after another from the innumerable corpses. They lacked the franticness of the other cultivators, clearly considering the situation an opportunity rather than calamity.

Was it Spatial Energy? Did they have some sort of Spatial Treasures that could instill the Dao of Space into their surroundings, allowing them to move freely in the Void? Or were their Daos simply powerful enough to affect vast areas of space? Zac took out two Soul Crystals and started absorbing the energy as he increased the radius of his Dao Field.

Suddenly, he noticed something, prompting him to change course. A moment later, a body appeared in front of him as though it had teleported. Or at least half of one. Of course, it wasn't teleportation. Zac had sensed the body's spirituality with his Dao field, and it was like their locations became connected through his Dao.

The moment he reached the body, Zac hurriedly activated [Void Zone] once more, giving his body a reprieve as he checked the lower half of the fallen Hegemon for treasure. He was still as stuck as can be, so Zac figured he might as well stuff his pockets while waiting for his body to recover. Unfortunately, it looked like the warrior had carried his Spatial Tool on the hand that was missing, leaving Zac empty-handed.

Zac didn't immediately leave, but rather kept his Bloodline Talent going for a while longer. Budding Void Emperor or not, the Void was clearly not a domain he could withstand at his current level. The damage wasn't as bad as when he had experimented in the research base Mystic Realm, but Zac doubted he would last more than a couple of hours without his nullification zone.

Luckily, the environment did contain some of the force that Zac could refine into Void Energy, and his [Void Heart] had been hard at work since he had fled into this place. Unfortunately, the pace his Void Energy was being replaced didn't match his consumption. Even then, Zac figured he would be able to survive around half a day in this space if he alternated properly as he had down in the chasm.

Hopefully, that would be enough time for him to leave this place and for the battle outside to abate.

As if conjured by his thoughts, the Void was suddenly lit up again as hundreds of new tears appeared, each one of them spewing torrential amounts of energy into the surroundings. Zac froze in place as his eyes widened with terror, but he breathed out in relief upon realizing that none of the deadly rivers were bearing down on him.

He hadn't completely recovered from his previous spacewalk, but he still deactivated his nullification zone to spread out his Dao Field once more, hoping that one of the new tears had appeared near him. Unfortunately, he didn't sense anything, but he still set out, pushing his way in a random direction for a minute.

His only gain was finding two more two bodies, one of which was a Hegemon with his Spatial Ring intact. Zac spent the next hour shuttling back and forth with increasing urgency, but while his pockets were filling up with Spatial Rings and Cosmos Sacks, he didn't have as much luck with finding any exits.

Everyone else in the area was struggling in a similar manner, yet few were successful. If anything, there seemed to be more people being forced into the void than leaving it.

The distances were far greater than Zac had anticipated. Even after moving for so long, he hadn't run into a single living cultivator, even if there were thousands of them around scuttling about within his small section alone. For all he knew, there might be thousands of kilometers between him and the closest cultivator, or closest spatial tear for that matter.

To make matters worse, the spatial tears closed one by one as the minutes passed, and fewer and fewer new ones were carved open.

Zac couldn't be certain, but he believed that the Eternal Clan Monarch had either been killed or forced out of contention around fifteen minutes after he entered the Void. From that point on, the energy that crashed through the dimensional barriers lacked the Dao of Blood, meaning that the clashes were only between the Eveningtide Asura and the Havarok Autarch.

And now, not a single tear had been opened over the past five minutes. Conversely, only the largest spatial tears remained.

No one bothered actively looking for loot any longer. Even those who moved freely had made their way to a Spatial Tear and snuck out, mostly ignoring the pleading gestures from the surviving cultivators left behind. Zac still flew toward any corpse he sensed in hopes their body would be floating next to one of the still-remaining tears, but so far there was no such luck.

It was starting to become more and more apparent that his original solution was bound to fail, and he eventually decided to try his backup plan. There was still an endless repository of unclaimed wealth left floating in the endless void, but Zac had started feeling a sense of urgency since new tears stopped opening.

He needed to get away from this area. If the battle for ascension had ended, the old monsters outside might turn their attention toward the next order of business: punishing the person who had caused so much trouble in the E-grade trial. He had done as much as possible to avoid being exposed, but who knew what kind of means and methods Monarchs possessed.

Zac finished looting a relatively intact body of a Hegemon and stowed away the body before activating another Shroud Talisman to obscure his actions again. Next, he took out a large stone disk. It was five meters across and one meter deep, looking like a massive coin made out of rock and embedded with hundreds of Nexus Crystals.

It was covered with inscriptions as well, inscriptions that should be familiar to any cultivator who had ever left their home; a Teleportation Array, though a somewhat modified version.

It only lacked a few easily added strokes, and Zac urgently completed them as he inserted a series of High-grade Nexus Crystals to power the array. This was a last-ditch measure he and Kenzie had come up with before he started traveling the sector in search of materials.

The second function of his escape bracelet was that it could authorize a Teleportation Array pretty much anywhere, with some caveats. One of those limitations was that it couldn't be used inside another array's sphere of influence, which was what stopped him from taking it out in the middle of the Twilight Harbor.

Another downside was that using this temporary array cost five times as much as using a normal one, but that didn't matter to Zac. Not only did he have the fortune left by his mother, but he had received an even greater windfall between looting Qi'Sar's treasury and dozens of fallen warriors in the Void.

However, Zac and his sister discovered another unadvertized obstacle to using the bangle. As a Teleportation Array neared completion, it automatically started generating Spatial Fluctuations, making

it impossible to store in a Spatial Ring. It had taken them some trial and error, but Kenzie had ultimately created five identical platforms which were 98% finished, with just a few simple additions remaining.

From there, Zac could finish the preparations in just a few minutes, far quicker than the days it would have taken to set the thing up from scratch. After that, he just needed to connect the Array with his bangle, and he should be good to go. It was this lifeline that had given him some confidence he'd make it out in one piece even if the Teleportation Arrays of Twilight Harbor had been turned off.

With this thing prepared, he would simply need to keep flying until he exited the harbor's sphere of influence, perhaps hidden in a convoy of refugees, before he took this thing out and zapped back home.

The preparations were finished, and Zac's eyes lit up when he saw the array light up. But, relief was quickly replaced by dismay when the flickering lights soon dimmed again. He looked over the disk to make sure it wasn't damaged, but there was nothing amiss. Zac took out an information crystal Kenzie had prepared, but no matter how many times he looked it over, there were no discrepancies.

The array was identical to the schematic. Was it the location? A Teleportation Array utilized the Void for travel, but perhaps it was impossible to actually set one up inside it, at least without Spatial Crystals to provide Spatial Energy. Zac scratched his head in search of solutions, but he couldn't come up with anything.

He had already deactivated [Void Zone] when starting up the array, and a few minutes later the second Teleportation Array fizzled out in an identical manner. Zac stowed away the two arrays, filled with a sense of impending doom as he looked at the slowly dimming Void around him.

The streams of unbridled power were being whittled away, as were the cultivators stuck in the void. Some desperately attacked their surroundings, displaying marvelous feats of strength. A few actually succeeded and slipped away, but most were like him. The darkness grew more oppressive by the second, almost suffocatingly so.

But Zac refused to give in, and a manic gleam shimmered in his eyes as he took out one stack of offensive talisman after another, tying them together with a chaotic mix of various Attuned Crystals and energy-rich Beast Cores. Finally, he took out his last five [Void Balls], hoping to use them as a catalyst to tear a hole in space.

He knew he couldn't hold back, seeing as his [Raptururous Divide] had failed before. Even Hegemons found it hard to escape. He would have to go all out, and he reluctantly prepared his exhausted body one final time. He had one last chance to get out of here. He would weaken space with a chaotic bomb made from his energy-dense materials, and then seal the deal with an attack from [Arcadia's Judgement] empowered by [Arcadian Crusade].

If even that failed, he'd have to unleash an Annihilation Sphere. He had used his small reserve of Creation Energy to destroy the array cage around the nascent Realm Spirits, but he still retained some Oblivion in his soul. Hopefully, it wouldn't come to that, considering how bad the damage to his foundations was already. There was still some time before he had reached his limit though, so Zac kept growing his unstable payload as he tried stumbling onto one of the few remaining spatial tears.

Suddenly, a weird crooning noise echoed through the Void, which was a shock considering the odd dimension had been completely silent since the Spatial Tear next to him closed. Zac felt an immense

sense of dread, remembering the bloodthirsty Void Creatures all-too-well, and he unhesitantly threw out his bomb after infusing it with energy.

Space shuddered above his head as he activated [Arcadia's Judgement]. But before space had a chance to crack and unleash the huge wooden hand, he felt his connection to the skill get cut, prompting a sharp pain in his head like his mind had been stabbed. His vision swam from the backlash, but he desperately tried to focus his vision to try again.

But it was too late.

A shimmering sphere had appeared out of nowhere, sealing him inside and blocking his path to the churning ball of destruction. A moment later it went off, turning into a terrifying inferno of clashing elements. The destruction was beyond what even he had expected, and he hurriedly activated a few defensive talismans with wide eyes.

The measure was quickly proven unnecessary though, and Zac was filled with a mix of horror and relief when he saw that the bubble that had enclosed him didn't as much as ripple when it was swallowed by the chaotic energies. Even a few small spatial tears slammed into the barrier, but the tears broke apart in an instant.

The sphere was unbelievably durable, and fear quickly overwhelmed his relief. Zac felt like a caged animal he furiously swung his axe into the barrier with all force he could muster, but it was futile. The sphere was just as tough from the inside, and no matter what Dao he infused into his strikes, the result was the same.

There was no way a low-grade cultivator was responsible for something like this, and Zac urgently looked around to see what the hell was going on.

He made two quick discoveries which helped him stem the budding panic somewhat. First of all, the harmful environment of the Void was held at bay by the white shimmering bubble. Secondly, it didn't look like he specifically had been targeted. The whole Void was suddenly littered with bubbles, tens upon tens of thousands of them.

Even the corpses had been encapsulated along with the still-living cultivators, and Zac saw how innumerable warriors struggled to break out. But if the success rate of escaping the Void had been bad, then this was just abysmal. He didn't spot a single bubble breaking, which could only mean one thing; this had to be the work of a Monarch, and not a low-grade one by the looks of it.

Things suddenly took a turn for the worse as Zac felt a wave of weakness, and he spotted a few runes that had appeared on the outside of the sphere. His prison was draining him, just like how Yod's array had almost managed to kill Catheya before. Zac threw out a small hill of crystals to counteract the drain, but it was futile.

It was almost like the sphere had created a [Void Zone] to rival his own, and nothing he tried worked. Just what was going on? His first thought was that some of the powerhouses outside had taken pity on them and decided to enter the void and fish everyone out, no doubt expecting something in return.

There was no way that it was a purely benevolent act considering the restrictive array, after all. Zac even considered swallowing his main Spatial Ring in case of being demanded an exorbitant ransom, but those thoughts suddenly flew out of his mind as a huge vortex in the Void suddenly opened up.

It wasn't a Monarch who emerged through the mysterious spatial gate. Neither was it one of the grotesque-looking Void Beasts as far as he could tell. In fact, Zac had never seen or read any missives on the kind of creature that had effortlessly captured so many warriors. But from its appearance and size, only one description seemed apt.

A monstrous fish best described as a leviathan had appeared.