

The Fall 834

Chapter 834: Ripples in his Wake

The air rippled, finally exposing the two warriors who had been standing at the shores of the small lake, just as the young man entered the twisting sphere of Chaos.

"Amitabha, Amitabha. How marvelous," Three Virtues smiled, though there was clearly a sense of helplessness on his face as he saw the anomaly drift toward his domain.

"That's what you get for being too greedy. Virtue through indulgence – the hubris required to attempt something like that," Kaldor laughed. "Couldn't help yourself seeing all that fate accumulating, could you?"

"There is no limit to the number of paths Buddha's boundless heart can contain," the monk answered before turning to the sphere, putting his two hands together in prayer.

A thousand-meter-tall deva appeared behind his back as waves of unfettered divinity streamed toward the anomaly. Thousands of lotus flowers bloomed in an instant, yet they were ripped apart one by one by Chaos. However, the monk was undeterred, chanting one mantra after another until a golden vase formed around the anomaly.

The surroundings grew lush in an instant as dharmic prosperity radiated through the world. More importantly, the greyish sphere finally stopped in place, its momentum exhausted. Three Virtues nodded in satisfaction and dispelled his skill, but Kaldor could see how the flowers in the sky had waned, and the chants had lost some of their mystery.

Kaldor inwardly snorted, knowing that the monk had been forced to sacrifice quite a bit of his stockpiled merit to prevent chaos from ruining his plans. Ultimately, any bad news for the Buddhist Sangha was good news to them, even if the two had become allies by necessity inside the Orom World.

However, Kaldor was more satisfied with what the brat's final act signified. He had taken a stance, and it was clearly in favor of the Undead Empire.

"I've never heard of anything like this thing," Kaldor eventually muttered. "One moment it feels like I can see through it, the next it is utterly foreign. Do you know how it works?"

"All is connected," the monk smiled. "A gate of Chaos is a doorway without limits. Alas, the details elude this poor monk as well."

"Whatever, don't tell me," Kaldor snorted. "Doesn't matter."

"The window has not yet closed, old friend," Three Virtues smiled as he looked over at the reaver. "One step for liberation. One thought for transformation."

"Trying to tempt me?" Kaldor said with a raised brow. "I am not done with this place. What about you? You've been here a lot longer than me. Even someone cultivating the heart must grow weary of this place by now."

"Amitabha, all is one. As long as my heart remains pure, my path is satisfied. Alas, the fate between this poor monk and Lord Orom is approaching its conclusion," the monk said.

“So, will you tell me now why you were so adamant about altering events?” Kaldor asked, unable to contain his curiosity. “Those on the outside are definitely here for the kid, and fate would have reached a tipping point as long as the brat stayed trapped. You had me waste five million Purchase Points to hasten his escape by a few minutes?”

“The young Almsgiver having the remnants is important, though I cannot delve deeper when that place is involved,” Three Virtues explained.

Kaldor frowned thoughtfully. He had already guessed the mysterious Edgewalker had some connections to that place since this scheming monk approached him, but he still couldn’t figure out how. And why involve him and the Undead Empire? Was the Sangha that confident?

“Even if you wanted him to have the Remnants, you could have just bought them yourself and gifted them instead of arranging this scheme of yours. In the end, your plans only seemed to have driven a promising Edgewalker toward the Undead Empire while driving a wedge between him and the Buddhist Sangha,” Kaldor said with a shake of his head.

“Children will often not realize the purpose of the teachings of their elders. Yet one day, it will crystallize into something that will bear fruit and positive Karma,” the monk smiled.

“I guess we’ll see,” Kaldor said. “You’re playing a dangerous game involving the empire in your schemes. Grasp all, lose all.”

“Can it not be a parting gift from this poor monk?” the monk laughed as he looked up at the reaver’s expressionless face. “Lighting a lamp-”

“I know, I know,” Kaldor groaned. “No need for your diatribes. You wanted a karmic debt, right? Well, I guess I’ll take the gamble the brat’s that important.”

“His fate is beyond what I can estimate. It leaves ripples in his wake. One day, those ripples will turn into a storm. Some will drown while others will be raised to the Heavens,” Three Virtues smiled. “This is as far as I can go.”

“Well, he certainly smelled like trouble. This big bastard is already suffering from his appearance,” Kaldor laughed. “Well, that’s the Abyssal Shore’s problems now. He is destined to join the empire.”

“Destiny is a tricky thing,” the monk laughed before he turned away. “This is the second to last time we meet.”

The Izh’Rak Reaver temporarily froze in surprise agreement. “On the outside...”

“Such is fate,” the monk nodded as he disappeared. “Good luck finding what you’re searching for.”

“Goodbye, old friend,” Kaldor sighed as his gaze turned to a spot beneath the waters.

A bone spur shot out from his finger, and a huge eruption ripped space and time apart, utterly annihilating any lingering karmic threads or other clues of the one called Zac Piker. A second spur shot out a moment later, entering the swirling anomaly. Hopefully, the beacon would work even with a gate as weird as this.

A moment later he was gone as well, leaving just a broken world and a burning sky.

Unless the whispers of Chaos had lied to him, the ball of Chaos should have been able to take him almost anywhere. So why did he find himself in front of a face so big that he first mistook it for a burning mountain? A face whose flames were all-too-familiar. It was amplified a hundredfold out here in the emptiness of space, but there was no doubt in Zac's mind.

The flames released by this monstrosity were the very same as the flames in the Orom World.

Zac desperately backed away after confirming he could still control the shuddering Glimpse of Chaos. Holding onto that thing was his only source of safety in this situation. This small change in distance was nothing to a supreme being like this, but it at least gave him a chance to understand what he was dealing with; a gargantuan golem floating in an endless expanse of flames.

Behind its back were five sets of burning wings, each one longer than the golem itself. As they lazily beat, the Dao rippled and space shuddered. Zac's felt his soul almost combusting upon looking at the patterns the wings drew, unable to contain even a corner of their might. More shocking, the three sets of remnants retreated into their prison on their own accord, fleeing from the terrifying pressure the golem exuded. The prison still lacked a gate, but they made no attempt to escape. They even gathered together for support, seemingly unable to withstand the flames on their own.

Zac had never encountered a being as powerful as this – neither the Orom nor the Havarok Autarch could compare at all. The only ones who might come close were A'Zu and Be'Zi, but Zac honestly doubted those two were a match to this golem even if they teamed up. Was this a peak Autarch? Or was this an actual Supremacy in the flesh? It was too far beyond him, he had no frame of reference

The good news was that the golem didn't seem to have any intention of killing him. At this kind of proximity, it would have to actively restrain its aura to not blast Zac into nothingness, and Zac doubted even a Glimpse of Chaos could save him from that kind of ending.

However, there was someone in the area that was even more powerful.

Zac arduously turned his head, and he wasn't surprised to see Orom thrashing in the distance. The Primordial Beast dwarfed the golem in size, yet it felt like a flea in front of its Dao. It had already lost a good chunk of its innumerable tentacles, and grotesque scorch marks covered its body. It was releasing awe-inspiring bursts of Spatial energy, but it was futile. Sixteen pillars of ultimate fire just incinerated the Orom's attacks and attempts to form spatial tears the moment they appeared, before carrying on with scorching the beast like it was just a dish to be prepared.

The Orom's predicament was a source of no small amount of joy. Zac had been trapped for over 4 years in this bastard. It wasn't much for most people in the Multiverse, but it was over a tenth of his whole life until now. And he was one of the lucky ones, where most simply got swallowed and chewed up.

But the Orom's plight was ultimately a small comfort in the face of the predicament he found himself in. His plan would have worked pretty much no matter where he appeared from the Chaos Gate, so why did he have to end up here? Even if the System's bolt of lightning had gotten him thrown out, shouldn't he still have been transported more than a few hundred kilometers?

Was it the domain of flames that had impacted his escape? No, if that was the case, why was Heda nowhere to be seen? Did the golem actually target him? Was it here for the chaos as well? There was no time for him to get to the bottom of things as the roiling clouds of thunder had caught up, seemingly appearing out of nowhere right above him.

“Take it, you asshole!” Zac roared as he pushed the Glimpse of Chaos away from him. “But remember, if I don’t get out of here, no more glimpses for you!”

A clap of thunder was all the response he got. The next moment, a pillar of lightning slammed into the pattern, draining the universe of all color. The final sliver of chaos left in his body wasn’t enough to resist the Heavenly pressure any longer, and Zac found himself locked in place as he gazed upon the Terminus.

With the System somehow restraining the chaotic pattern, Zac finally got a true glimpse of the truths within, yet Zac didn’t know whether it was a blessing or a curse being shown this thing. His soul was so much more powerful compared to before, but he still felt utterly insignificant compared to what hid inside the Glimpse of Chaos.

His mind was overwhelmed by a torrent of insights, and trying to turn the flood of concepts into an epiphany was a fool’s errand. As long as he didn’t go insane or break his soul he’d come out ahead. So Zac could only hold onto his sanity until the System finally dragged that cursed thing out of this place.

Even the fantastical golem was unable, or at least unwilling, to contend with the System’s pressure, and it looked like the world was frozen for what felt like an eternity until the bolt of lightning dispersed. A moment later, the System left, though Zac felt a new rune appear in the prison of his mind, once more sealing the drained remnants inside.

Zac released a pent-up sigh of relief, but the sigh turned into a pained grunt as the slightest movement filled him with agony. The glimpse was gone and the remnants were dealt with, but the havoc they had caused in those few short minutes had left him in almost as bad a state as after his fight with Uona.

The only difference this time was that his soul was in a much better state, and he didn’t have any wounds on his body except for those left by Creation, Oblivion, and Chaos. Unfortunately, it was those wounds that were the hardest to deal with, though Zac had prepared for this day. In his ring, he had a slightly inferior but portable version of the type of healing array he used in the Orom World – his largest purchase when he made his preparations before making his first attempt at escape with an Annihilation sphere.

Of course, that thing wouldn’t help him with his current situation, something Zac was immediately reminded of as he felt a new presence lock onto him the moment the System was gone. It was the golem.

“Uh, don’t mind me, senior. I’ll just get out of your way,” Zac said as he started pushing himself through space with Cosmic Energy, away from that terrifying golem and the Orom itself. After some hesitation, he added another sentence. “There are people inside that fish’s body, prisoners. I hope senior can be gracious and spare them.”

The golem didn’t seem to have come to kill indiscriminately. Otherwise, he would already be dead, no matter if you considered the flames in the Orom World or the fires that surrounded the Orom without

harming a hair on his body. So that small reminder might save those within, though that was as far as Zac could go.

So he flew away as quickly as he could while maintaining control of the final wisp of chaos left behind. What he could use it for, Zac had no idea, but it was better than being unarmed. He would only be able to hold onto it for a minute or so, but that should be long enough for him to move quite some distance away.

Perhaps far enough to leave the golem's fiery domain unless it extended its breadth.

"Mr. Bug, do you think it's so easy to leave after I've come all this way?" a crystalline voice echoed through the void, dashing Zac's hopes in an instant.

The massive burning mountain was a woman? No, there was no way the hulking golem was the source of the voice. More importantly, he recognized it, though he couldn't quite remember from where. Then it came to him, and the hair on his body stood on end when he realized who had just spoken. It couldn't be, right? What were the odds?

Then in a burst of flames, she was there – Iz Tayn.

Zac looked with horror at the incoming figure. Just like him, she was just a small speck in front of the apocalyptic golem. Yet he remembered that orange-golden hair that danced behind her as she approached, those sapphire eyes whose pupils were slightly vertical – full of indifference like she was a goddess looking down at the mortal realm.

Apart from the three odd lines drawing graceful arcs across her cheeks and down her forehead, she looked completely human – and was no doubt the most beautiful woman Zac had seen in his life. It was just not about pristine features, it was like her very being was in tune with the Dao itself, with every feature containing the truths of the Heavens.

However, her mesmerizing appearance wasn't enough to calm the burgeoning panic over the situation. He remembered those terrifying flames of hers, of how he had been utterly humbled the last time they met. The worst thing was that he could feel that nothing had really changed, even after all he had been through.

His mind screamed of danger as she approached, and the aura she radiated made his hair stand on end. He couldn't be certain, but judging by the regal Dao that exuded from her as she sailed through space, she most likely had multiple Middle Stage Dao Branches. Perhaps even Late Stage. Zac had no confidence at all dealing with this kind of peak genius, especially not in his wretched state.

And even if Zac did, dared he actually attack her? She was clearly connected with the monstrous golem, their Daos almost perfectly aligned. They shouldn't be family, but perhaps they came from the same sect. Perhaps the golem was even her master. He had a strong suspicion he would be reduced to ash the moment he even thought of using his last wisp of chaos to deal with this girl.

Zac's exhausted mind railed at the unfairness of the situation. He had planned for years and risked everything to escape through the Chaos Gate. So why the hell had this crazy woman appeared here?! Was it bad luck? Or worse, had she actually hunted him down? Had she instructed the golem to ruin his escape somehow?

He was too dog-tired already, and this wasn't a variable he was prepared for. He was drawing a blank on what he should do.

"Crazy stalker," Zac muttered as he tried to rouse himself for a fight, but he immediately regretted airing the subconscious sentiment.

"What was that?!" Iz exclaimed as three sets of wings burst out from behind her back.

They were nowhere near as grand as the ones the golem used to cover half the sky, and neither did they contain even a fraction of their concepts. Still, they contained some sort of purity that Zac could only remember seeing once before – the white light he had tried ingesting back in the Twilight Chasm.

Seeing the wings of untainted flames, and remembering her shocking display while still at F-grade, Zac wondered just what kind of heritage this woman had. Seeing how her master or Dao Guardian was such a terrifying being, Zac knew he shouldn't be too surprised by anything she displayed.

His mother should be the equivalent of an Autarch, and she had thrown more wealth in his direction than Earth would be able to generate on its own in centuries. And that was just to sever karma with him.

What if a faction with actual Supremacies wholeheartedly wanted to nurture someone? Zac didn't even dare imagine what kind of treasures this annoying woman had come in contact with. Yet one more reason he regretted blurting those words before, but his mind was simply too exhausted by the glimpse and overwhelmed by the situation to filter himself.

There was only one entity he could turn to for help right now.

"You better help me!" Zac roared at the sky, which prompted Iz Tayn to stop and look at him with confusion. "You left like a bandit, you bastard! What about your Law of Balance?! You got the glimpse, I got screwed over! Is that balance?!"

"What are you-" Iz is exclaimed. "I've come here to show-"

Zac just waved at the girl to stay quiet, forgoing courtesy out of necessity. His soul was utterly drained, yet it was suddenly crammed full by a burst of information. It was the fifth Layer of the [Nine Reincarnations Manual], and that one tome contained as much information as the previous four combined.

That Wasn't the only gift, as Zac felt his wrist heat up. His mind was in chaos, but he still spotted the golden runes dancing around his escape bangle, and he knew what he had to do. Zac was hesitant, but what choices did he have? He moved the final wisp of chaos and pushed it into his bracelet.

Space and Chaos converged in an instant, and the terrifying surroundings were replaced with darkness as he was whisked away by teleportation. A few minutes passed without change, and only then did Zac dare relax. By now he should have moved millions of miles already. The System's idea had worked.

He was going home.