

## The Fall 911

### Chapter 911: Crooked Schemes

Nothing was ever easy in the Multiverse, at least not for those without strength or backing. And in a chaotic scene like the one they found themselves in, Zac wasn't surprised to hear there were some roadblocks to Billy's ambitious plan.

"What will happen when this array is turned on?" Zac asked Billy, who clearly wasn't keeping up with the conversation.

"Ah," Billy hesitated. "Gemmy will come with Billy and leave?"

"It's not quite that easy," Leyara added from the side. "This array will break off most of the mass of this Mystic Realm before forming a true subspace that will be stored inside the Realm Spirit's avatar. We would stay inside, but the controller could simply take us out like it was a Spatial Treasure."

"What!" Vai exclaimed as she looked down at the array. "How is that possible? The energy consumption alone..."

"It normally wouldn't be possible without an extremely powerful energy source, but we have a unique advantage; a sapient World Spirit who is willing to fuel the process. I doubt even my master could accomplish this without Gemmy's aid," Leyara said as she nodded at Billy. "Of course, I can neither confirm nor deny any of this – this array is far beyond my understanding. We are only drawing it according to King Billy's specifications."

"So, what's the problem?"

"First of all, we're cutting it extremely close," Pretty said. "Those people outside have figured out we can't replenish our energy, so they are content with gradually whittling us down. Now, it looks even worse, unless the two of you are skilled at formations and energy control?"

"Uh," Zac said while Ogras studiously looked away.

"Thought as much," Pretty snorted.

"Can't we just go out and slow them down?" Zac asked.

"That was our plan in case things started to go south," Pretty nodded. "We have simply waited since the Templar Hegemons are needed to draw the most complicated pathways. Apart from them, only Leyara can do it. But with Senior Lioress and you two here, we finally have the opportunity to strike back."

Zac blanked out for a second, wondering if the Void Priestess had appeared as well. A second later, Zac realized Pretty was talking about Vai when she said Senior Lioress. It was easy to forget she was over a thousand years old when she almost looked like a teenager. The little researcher was studying the vast array with almost burning eyes, muttering to herself and scribbling down notes.

It looked like she only needed an exciting topic of study to forget all about the matter of the Deviant Asura.

"A few successful raids will give us more time to draw the array," Leyara agreed. "But that doesn't solve the real issue."

"What's that?" Zac asked with a sinking feeling that trouble was about to come knocking at his door.

"The Kan'Tanu infiltrators are extracting too much energy from these ruins you mentioned," Leyara said. "When this array is activated, it will turn into a black hole as it swallows all the energy in this world."

"Including all that tainted energy," Ogras grimaced.

"Exactly," Leyara nodded. "We fear that activating while the source of corruption remains will not only drag all that corruption into the core of this world. It might even swallow the origin of all that tainted energy, which will be disastrous. This whole realm would likely explode, killing the Realm Spirit and us alike."

Zac took a deep breath before calmly looking at Leyara. "Let me guess. Someone has to go there and turn off the faucet, so to speak?"

"Preferably while conjuring another pillar, if possible," Leyara nodded. "The more tainted energy we excise, the more likely it is for Gemmy to survive this transformation."

"So, what's your plan?" Ogras asked with a raised brow. "That place is months away."

"To kill enough enemies for Gemmy to hurl a few people in the right direction," Leyara said with a weak smile. "And hope they survive the journey."

"That's it? Hurl them across half the domain? That's the plan?" Ogras asked incredulously as he stared at Leyara and Pretty. "Billy and that fool of a gem, I understand, but how can you just go along with it?"

"Well, we didn't have much of a choice," Pretty said with a roll of her eyes. "We are essentially prison labor stuck inside this place. It was either this or stay in the dungeons while that brute and his pet realm tried to solve this mess themselves. Besides, what are we supposed to do? Let these invaders run about unchecked? Better we blow up this whole place and us along with it than let them succeed in taking this place over."

"Well, let's avoid blowing ourselves up if we can avoid it," Zac grimaced. "Why are there no powerhouses here? They'd be able to solve this issue with a wave of their sleeve. Why have you guys only brought Early D-grade Hegemons?"

"We had to send back a few of our powerhouses on the way. The inner reaches have become too fragile after the sabotage," Leyara sighed. "If anything, the infiltrators want us to send Monarchs into the Void Star. Their mere presence would most likely cause a chain reaction that would splinter the Void Star, sending the realms to all corners of Zecia. If we're unlucky, the Stellar Ladder will remain intact, giving the invaders free rein. We have already been forced to detach our most valuable realms to avoid that kind of energy overload."

"Weaker Middle Hegemons can technically enter these depths, but it's not worth it. An elite Early Hegemon will give off roughly the same energy, but their effective combat strength is higher. You're a prime example of that. You're an E-grade cultivator with an aura of an Early Hegemon, yet I bet few

early Hegemons are your match,” Pretty Peak added. “I would really have loved to spar with you a bit if the world wasn’t ending.”

“Another time,” Zac smiled.

Zac had expected as much from the lack of Monarchs, but it was still a kick to the groin that the Void Priestess or someone like the Starfall Monarch simply couldn’t swing by and solve this mess. At least that explained why he and Vai hadn’t encountered any too dangerous realms until now. Even the most savage places they crossed had Late Beast Kings at worst, with not a single one sporting the Beast Emperors who supposedly lived in the depths of the Void Star.

“Still, you were just going to let Gemmy throw you into a spatial tear and hope for the best?” Zac hesitated

“We don’t have any other means to reach the eastern reaches in time, and Gemmy can only do so much in her current state,” Leyara explained. “And if we sent out a squad earlier, then we would never be able to finish the array on time.”

“Let’s say the plan worked out. What would happen next?” Zac asked.

“Most of this realm would collapse while the core region was reforged,” Leyara said. “I have a few anchor treasures that should be able to drag people out of the Void Star even if the Spatial Nexuses are in flux.”

“So let’s just use those things and get the hell out of here?” Ogras urged.

“Well, for one, Gemmy is blocking us,” Leyara said. “But even if she allowed us to leave, they need to be used outside a localized space.”

“In the Void?” Zac frowned.

“Exactly,” Leyara nodded. “We need to let the world collapse and dispel its spatial field. That will place us in a localized Void of the Void Star, and we’ll teleport out from there.”

“What a shitty escape treasure,” Ogras muttered from the side. “Need to survive the apocalypse to use it.”

“They’re not meant to be used this deep inside the Void Star, and not when the whole system is collapsing. Its standard function utilizes the Spatial Nexuses that have been destroyed,” Leyara sighed.

“Aren’t you supposed to be a big shot with a wealthy master? Surely you have something better?” Ogras asked.

“Even if my master had better items, what good does it do me?” Leyara said with a roll of her eyes. “I’m just Peak E-grade; how am I supposed to activate a treasure that can blast us straight through dozens of spatial layers? These anchors are as good as they get for an E-grade cultivator.”

Zac nodded in agreement. Even his [Flashfire Flourish] wouldn’t manage to cross such a vast distance. But thinking of his escape item, a plan slowly started to form in Zac’s mind.

“One of the anchors would go to the assault group who dealt with the tainted energy,” Leyara continued. “The moment this realm collapsed, they would use the anchor to get dragged back outside. The other would go to Billy.”

“To Billy?” Zac said curiously.

“If everything worked out, Gemmy should be able to send Billy outside into the Void as well, where he could activate the treasure and take Gemmy with him. Once outside the Void Star, he could extract us and send in our armies to deal with any remnant infiltrators.”

“This is not just about us either,” Pretty added with determination. “We cannot just flee and leave these people to their own devices. Even if we fail, we must drag them with us down to the underworld. We cannot let them seize the Stellar Ladder.”

“Are you crazy?” Ogras said with raised brows.

“War will always have sacrifices,” Pretty shrugged. “If they seize this springboard into Zecia, we’re done for when the real powerhouses arrive. Trading a few juniors, even talented ones, for the safety of the whole sector is a no-brainer. We cannot let them get their hands on this realm.”

“That’s not the only thing we can’t let them get their hands on,” Ogras added with a low voice to Zac.

Zac slowly nodded in agreement as he looked down at the huge array. After reading the lipless Hegemon’s reports, they had initially thought there were more pieces of rubble hidden in the ruins of the Ra’Lashar Kingdom. But what if that wasn’t it? What if the Kan’Tanu were actually aiming for the source – the Lost Plane?

The Lipless Cultivator had mentioned selling him off to some powerful faction. Was this their plan? To mine and extract opportunities and sell to powerful bidders. And with a prize like Ultom and the Left Imperial Palace, there would be no shortage of powerful factions willing to buy in. The whole sector might be crawling with powerful forces from the Multiverse Heartlands if the pathway to the Lost Plane wasn’t closed.

The demon had evidently arrived at the same conclusion, and there was genuine fear on his face.

“We cannot let them continue,” Zac agreed. “Otherwise, the invasion will become the least of our worries.”

“Fate is gathering,” Leyara sighed.

“I hate this,” Pretty spat to the side. “You two clearly know something, and so does the Void Gate. Even the invaders know, while Zecia fumbles in the dark. What the hell is going on? It’s related to these, isn’t it?”

Zac looked on as Pretty took out a familiar piece of cloth next – the ones all the infiltrators carried around. Zac glanced at Leyara, who looked a bit conflicted. The scene was a bit odd. Leyara knew, but Pretty didn’t? Ogras looked inquisitively at Zac, who didn’t know what to say either.

He didn’t have any reason to distrust Pretty Peak, but he adamantly believed that the fewer people knew the truth, the better. What if she reported back to her elders, who then forwarded it to the leaders of the Allbright Empire?

Only one person with loose lips was needed to create a disaster. The Kan'Tanu seemed to be the same. The lowest members only knew to look for the sigils, while a few others, like the Lipless Hegemon, knew a few more details. But Zac doubted that Aural Cultivator knew anything concrete except that his mission was related to an opportunity the Kan'Tanu were planning to sell.

Even then, they were playing a dangerous game, to the point Zac suspected they had something to rely on. Otherwise, why wouldn't the powerful factions just annihilate the Kan'Tanu instead of bartering with them?

"I don't know all the details either," Zac eventually said, which got him an exaggerated eye-roll from Pretty Peak. "Suffice to say, the Kan'Tanu are looking for something, and it'll be bad if they find it."

"Whatever," Pretty shrugged. "Keep it to yourselves. The truth will come out sooner or later with so many people involved. And you better pray that your secrecy won't harm the war efforts."

"Since when were cultivators required to share their secrets? Hoarding resources and intelligence is Heaven's Path," Ogras grinned. "I doubt your esteemed factions are handing out cultivation resources and manuals left and right even when barbarians are knocking at the gate."

"Alright, that's enough," Zac sighed. "I have an escape treasure that can probably send me all the way to the Ra'Lashar Kingdom in one go, but I'm not sure how well I can steer it. I should manage to land within a few days' travel, though, and it won't waste any of Gemmy's energy."

This was the idea Zac had come up with when discussing the escape anchors. He didn't relish the thought of storming an infiltrator base to blow up a dimensional portal somehow, but it definitely beat their original scheme. The less energy Gemmy was forced to use, the longer they would be able to maintain the shields and work on the array. And while it was dangerous, it beat sitting around in this failing barrier, hoping for the best.

"Really?" Leyara said as her eyes lit up. "It should work. You'd have to teleport from outside the barrier, though. Maybe use it during a raid?"

"The Kan'Tanu have locked down space as well," Pretty said from the side. "You would have to properly break out of the encirclement to avoid any mishaps."

"We'll figure something out," Zac nodded as he glanced at Ogras.

"Good luck," the demon said while giving a thumbs up. "I'll be rooting for you."

"What are you talking about?" Zac smiled. "Obviously, you're coming with me."

Ogras only scoffed in return, but his eyes slowly thinned when he realized Zac was serious. "You're joking."

"Like you said, you've been there for almost a year. And you even have a ghost guide to help us out," Zac shrugged. "You obviously have to come."

"That was why Billy opened the path for Horny guy," Billy nodded as he glared at Ogras. "If Horny Guy doesn't go, Gemmy will throw him out again."

“Bah, fine,” Ogras swore. “I guess the safest place is by your side anyway. If we fall into the Void, perhaps some beauties in a Cosmic Vessel will come to pick us up.”

“Perhaps,” Zac laughed.

Truthfully, it wasn't only because of his need for a guide that he wanted Ogras to come with. Another reason was the ruins. Perhaps the Kan'Tanu had already unearthed another set if they were digging into the Lost Plane. And if either of them managed to get another piece, it might trigger a second pillar and drain this world of more tainted energy.

Secondly, it would be good to have the demon by his side if everything fell apart and they needed to escape. Billy would be safe since the plan required him to have one of the escape anchors, while Leyara would no doubt sort out Vai. That left him and Ogras, who would be taken care of as part of the strike group.

This way, they wouldn't be as reliant on Leyara's generosity when disaster struck. She clearly didn't have enough anchors for everyone since the plan was to leave most people inside Gemmy. And it was unreasonable to expect Leyara to save him and Ogras over her own people. After all, they had only met for two short encounters before.

“How many can your escape treasure take?” Pretty asked.

“Not sure,” Zac said. “But probably not too many. One or two maximum. It's also a bit dangerous to use for non-fire cultivators. It will damage your foundations.”

“Are you trying to get me killed?!” Ogras scowled.

“You're part shadows, so you should be fine,” Zac nodded.

“One or two?” Pretty frowned. “Is that enough? There should be some powerful enemies guarding that place as well.”

“Our goal isn't to take them all out but sabotage,” Zac said. “A smaller group might work even better.”

“What do you think?” Pretty said as she turned to Leyara.

“Well, it's a better plan than we have,” Leyara slowly said. “Besides, we have a few weeks to refine the plan.”

“Alright, I need to rest up a bit after that dash,” Zac said. “We'll talk later.”

With that, everyone went their way. Leyara and Pretty once more brought Vai away, while Zac headed off with Ogras and Billy. Apparently, they didn't need to do anything with Gemmy maintaining the barrier. They couldn't even counter-attack because the barrier was a true spatial divide. Just as the invaders couldn't attack from the outside, they couldn't attack from within like you could with a conventional City Defense Array.

Billy was over the moon from hearing that his actions in the Mystic Realm had helped save Earth. However, he was surprisingly ambivalent about there being quite a few statues of him erected across the planet, including one in Port Atwood.

Billy also told him about what had happened since Ogras left, which wasn't much, really. He had spent most of his time fighting the beast tides or cultivating. Weirdly enough, Billy had occasionally fallen asleep for months at a time while Gemmy guarded his body. Seeing how he cultivated and made breakthroughs in his sleep, Zac guessed his bloodline was related to dreams or dreamworlds.

It wasn't exactly what Zac expected from a Titanic bloodline. Then again, he knew nothing about real Titans.

With only Earthlings around, and Gemmy who was floating inside a brazier, Zac also told them of what had happened to Earth since they were swallowed by the Dimensional Seed. Billy was a great audience, audibly gasping or boisterously laughing as Zac narrated his exploits from the Big Axe Coliseum to the Twilight Ascent.

The three spent a few hours catching up, with Zac providing some of the delicacies he kept inside his Spatial Ring. Unfortunately, the evening was only a brief respite, with Pretty Peak coming to discuss a surprise raid a few hours later. She wanted to strike while the iron was hot and the outsiders were still a bit disorganized from the spatial mayhem.

"Alright, let's get to work," Zac grunted as [Verun's Bite] appeared in his hand.