

## The Fall 998

### [Chapter 998 - The Calamity](#)

The Calamity was the same place where Zac had an opportunity to build his manor. But 'The Storm' he'd seen the first time was a special zone at the outer edges of the ancient chaotic anomaly, and it only cost 25 Mana a day to keep your manor there.

Meanwhile, the Calamity was a Red Zone, where the teleporter took you further inside. It cost a whopping 250 Mana a day to visit, making it one of the most expensive regular zones in the whole Perennial Vastness. Even then, it was still at the very utmost perimeter of the storm, which was almost unfathomably big. Some estimates even put it at a size comparable to a smaller C-grade continent.

The inner regions weren't available to the guests of the Perennial Vastness, though. That place could most likely threaten even Monarchs, and it was sealed off by the Perennial Vastness. Perhaps it was running some more high-tiered experiments there, or it could even be a cultivation zone for one of its disciples like Lord Engo. With such a huge realm, there could be whole civilizations living inside the Perennial Vastness without the guests knowing.

Zac wasn't going to the Calamity to sightsee but to continue his cultivation. Having gained a surprising breakthrough in his heart, providing him access to his manor, Zac was faced with a choice. Breaking through his soul was no longer as critical as before. He could spend the next few days touring the trial zones to get better acquainted with them, such as visiting the Quarry as Lord Engo suggested.

However, Zac ultimately chose to continue with his pre-arranged plan. Three weeks in Sinner's Lament had proven just how dangerous the Perennial Vastness could be. This was no place to save breakthroughs for later. Better be safe rather than sorry. And that was what led him to The Calamity.

There were more places like the Keys of Ascension in the Perennial Vastness, but none perfectly suited his unusual requirements of needing pure life and Death. As he'd realized during his years of bitter cultivation, it was a paradoxical path that was a dead end for anyone with actual affinities. As such, there were not many environments that were suited for his breakthrough.

Keys of Ascension and a few similar places would do the trick, but it would cost most of his Mana. He had already made almost 10,000 in one month, but he knew the lion's share of that windfall came from a situation he couldn't easily replicate. Seeing how hard he'd been forced to work for a profit of one thousand from hunting Sinner Mounds, Zac knew he had to be careful with his spending.

Most of the remaining options were zones like Mount Illumination. Life and Death might be present, but it was in a different state than what he needed. Using a mixed-meaning region didn't seem like an optimal idea. His breakthroughs always drew huge amounts of energy from his surroundings, and he didn't want foreign Daos messing anything up.

The easiest solution was waiting until he had enough Mana that his manor's environment mirrored his path. But since that could take over a year, he was left with The Calamity, which had exactly the environment he required and more than enough energy.

Unfortunately, Zac didn't even get the chance to get his bearings upon stepping through. A pang of danger was all the warning he got before he was whisked away, dragging him far from the teleportation

pillar. A deafening roar sounding like millions of firecrackers filled his head, and his surroundings became a confusing blur.

Incredible amounts of Life-attuned energies raged around him, almost reaching the central circle of the temple where he broke through just hours ago. However, this place was no cultivation haven. It was a warzone, where the energies were incredibly agitated, partly because Zac could actually sense a hint of Creation in its depths.

Similarly, some Death was thrown into the mix, which was probably the cause of the agitation. Furthermore, the interaction between Life and Death was far more visceral than Zac was used to. It almost felt like the Dao had gone insane. For some reason, the vastly more abundant Divine Energy was willing to destroy itself as long as it annihilated those snippets of Death in its midst.

Conflagrations of life erupted all around him, swirling whirls of madness creating small hurricanes in their wake. And Zac was caught and helplessly flying around in the middle of it all, utterly incapable of getting control over his body.

If nothing changed, who knew where he'd end up?

Cursing at his bad luck, Zac knew he couldn't hold back at this moment, and he activated [Void Zone] to quell the hurricane of Life-attuned energies that had kidnapped him. But the moment he did, it was like he'd become enemy number one to the storm. Instead of targeting the snippets of Death, the abundant Divine Energy stormed into his nullification Zone, overwhelming its defenses.

Dozens of muted explosions erupted around him, and Zac felt his Void Energy being expended at an alarming rate. It looked like the bloodline talent had made things worse rather than better, and Zac urgently canceled the domain. With Void Zone gone, he had to endure the crazed energies with his body. But the Dao stopped targeting him, at least.

Until he tried using his Dao Fields.

The environment in the Calamity was dead-set on creating trouble. His Branch of the Kalpataru acted as fuel for the eruptions around him, while Pale Seal made him an even more obvious target than [Void Zone]. And unsurprisingly, his Branch of the War Axe stirred the flames of conflict around him, making his situation worse.

Zac was completely lost by this point. The low gravity of the Calamity prevented him from falling back to the ground. And activating [Earthstrider] only made things worse. The chaotic energies were messing with the skill, and he sensed he hadn't moved in the direction he intended. With his movement skill on the fritz, Zac could only move to another backup plan, having Vivi's sturdy vines shot out in every direction like feelers.

He wanted to find something to grab onto, but Vivi's vines were all destroyed long before they found solid ground.

The situation was bad, and the energy only kept rising, breaking apart and reforming in a deadly cycle that would instantly rip any F-grade cultivators to shreds. Even Zac's Life-attuned constitution only provided a limited reprieve from the chaos around him. Worse, it felt like the storm was building toward something. Something terrifying.

Zac suddenly felt a pang of danger, but he had no chance to react before a small swirl ripped a chunk of his leg. Golden blood and flesh were dragged into the haze, but Zac's eyes gleamed with interest as he stuffed a couple of healing pills into his mouth. In contrast to [Void Zone] or his Dao Fields, his blood was actually having a cooling effect on the storm.

Thanks to the calming effect of the bloody mist, Zac could see further than a few arm's lengths. The franticness died down around him, and the haze cleared up. But Zac almost wished it hadn't. The Dao itself wasn't the only danger in these parts.

An undulating shriek pierced through the storm's roar as a twenty-meter-long creature flew right toward him. It looked a lot like a golden manta, its body covered in what looked like naturally-formed runes. Its body was not only able to withstand the storm but even harness its force to some extent.

A Divine Stormglider.

If not for the chaotic situation, Zac would have been happy. The hides of Stormgliders were quite valuable because their hides made great armor. An undead cultivator incorporating those hides into their regalia would drastically improve their defenses, particularly against life. Zac already learned the Undead Coalition had a standing order on those things.

It was one of the native creatures of the Calamity, having found an amazing cultivation environment where most only saw danger.

The Stormglider seemed attracted by his Life-attuned blood, its shrieks sounding incredibly excited as it somehow pulled a drop into its mouth. Zac wasn't surprised at the reaction. Thanks to his Dao and pure constitution, his body had become something like a natural treasure to beasts. He was more worried about the fact Stormgliders seldom traveled alone.

A storm of fractal leaves shot forth, aiming to kill the Stormglider in two before it could call over the rest of its squadron. But the runes on the early Beast King lit up, and Zac swore with surprise when the storm increased in ferocity. A gust pushed through the temporarily calm surroundings and ripped apart the blades while creating a curtain between Zac and the beast.

The division didn't last long. A beam of pure light pierced through, aimed straight at Zac. Around it, streamers containing the condensed essence of the chaotic environment tagged along, creating a deadly combination attack. But Zac hadn't just been sitting around since his opening salvo. Two shrouds pushed forward, forming an invisible divide.

The divinity beam was utterly incapable of contending against [Rapturous Divide] and was swiftly cut apart. The Stormglider had the home-field advantage, but Zac had the advantage in absolute strength.

The boundary between life and Death was under attack by the environment, but its intangible blade still cut everything for over two hundred meters before the skill collapsed. The skill broke apart quickly, but it contained a huge amount of Cosmic Energy and force, allowing a temporary corridor of absolute calm to form.

Zac activated [Earthstrider] to appear right next to the bisected Beast King, and he stowed away the huge meter corpse before flashing away again. It had only been for a fraction of a second, but

[Rapturous Divide] had not only helped Zac kill his target. It had given a glimpse of land not that far away.

He needed to act quickly. First and foremost, the small Beast King he'd killed was probably just one of the outer scouts of its squadron. He could already hear dozens of piercing shrieks through the storm, probably answering their fallen companion's earlier call. Dealing with one or two was easy, but Zac didn't want to tangle with the whole pack.

There was no lack of Middle Stage Beast Kings in most Red Zones, and reports mentioned there could even be Late Stage Beast Kings lurking in the shadows. Zac wasn't even confident in dealing with the former. The Beast Kings you encountered in the Perennial Vastness had far purer bloodlines than the ones you encountered on the Frontier, and creatures that could thrive in the Calamity were doubly fearsome.

And against Late Stage Beast Kings? His only chance at survival was to escape and hope the beasts didn't notice him. It was possible the stronger coalitions in Perennial Vastness could hunt Late Stage Beast Kings. But that was provided they gathered enough people and made thorough preparations.

Furthermore, Zac didn't have much time. Even if the storm around him had momentarily calmed down, it was only in a relative sense. The Dao was weakened thanks to his blood, but the wind was still very much there. He'd soon be swept away if he didn't quickly reach land. Zac could also sense a growing sense of unease.

Something was happening in the heart of the storm, not too far off in the distance. He couldn't see anything because of the golden haze, but just sensing it was enough to make his hair stand on end. It seemed like the mother of all explosions was gathering momentum, and Zac wanted to take cover before it erupted.

Vivi could not reach the distant patch of land without being ripped apart, but Zac had an idea. He let the vines pass by the still-bleeding wound in his leg as he activated [Earthstrider] again. His surroundings shifted and he was instantly disoriented, but five vines shot out in different directions, each glinting with a hint of gold.

The storm weakened all around him, and Zac once more spotted land, this time much closer. Another jump and Zac found himself just fifty meters away. It was enough. Vivi was prepared, and two of her vines managed to latch onto a few rocks on the ground before the wind dragged Zac away. The storm raged even harder on the surface, but Zac staunchly withstood it as he pulled himself down.

Just as Zac thought himself safe, Zac felt a pang of danger as an incredible tremor rippled through the ground. If not for Vivi, he'd instantly have been launched into the air again, but he still got some scrapes and bruises from slamming right into the sharp ground. Zac was about to crawl up, but he realized his point of gravity was rapidly being shifted. The patch of land had started shifting, and Zac soon found himself hanging onto the ground rather than lying on it.

Zac was about to stand up to get his bearing, but a scream of danger made him throw himself on the ground as quickly as he humanly could. A stone shard as large as a head whizzed past right above, effortlessly breaking through the shields of two defensive treasures before ripping up a wound across

Zac's back. It would have punched a hole right through his body if he hadn't pushed back against the ground quickly enough.

A moment later, the stone was gone, flying with almost impossible speed. Hundreds of similar stones followed in its wake, though most were dozens of meters in the air. The fact that the floating island was suddenly spinning saved his bacon, as it spun away from the trajectory of the meteor shower that hurtled by.

Just as Zac thought he was safe, the sound reached him. The explosion was so loud Zac was knocked out for a moment, and his vision was swimming even after waking up. Zac was scared, bleeding, and disoriented, but he couldn't stop now. He needed to get out of the wind.

Zac channeled the Kill Energy from the Stormglider into [Surging Vitality] while [Verun's Bite] reappeared in his hand. His blood did sort of act like a shield against the environment, but he didn't want to attract any more Stormgliders while looking for shelter. The gleaming edge of Verun crashed into the ground, but a painful rebound in his wrist was the only result.

He'd used quite a bit of force, but the only proof of his attack was a shallow line on the rocky surface. As expected—anything that could survive inside the Calamity was incredibly sturdy. But that also proved just how powerful the previous eruption was. That distant explosion had contained enough force to rip up the ground and launch shrapnel in every direction. It'd be game over if he took one of those to the face.

There was no way he could carve out a cave in this kind of bedrock, and Zac could only start moving in search of a natural shelter. One moment he was climbing. The next, he was running, all while the island kept spinning. Soon, Zac felt like he'd hit the jackpot as he saw a mouth of a cave not far off. He jumped inside, ready to fight any beast that tried to push him out.

There was none.

Zac breathed in relief, both from the cave being over fifty meters deep and that it wasn't occupied by any beast. He quickly set up a series of arrays to hide his presence from the Stormgliders and any other beasts before moving into the depths of the cave. Zac figured he'd be mostly safe even from such powerful eruptions this far into the incredibly hard rock, and he couldn't feel another one of those blasts building up.

Those kinds of explosions couldn't be too common even in the Calamity, or it would have been to dangerous even for a Red Zone. Zac grunted as he sat down on the ground but soon found the cave started to spin. With an annoyed sigh, Zac opted to suspend himself in the air with Vivi's help, where he found himself rotating along with the island.

And outside, the storm kept raging. Distant calls of Stormgliders and other beasts could barely be heard through the incessant roar of the unrelenting storm. Even after the shocking discharge before, the Calamity had plenty of energy to spare. Going back out now would be asking for trouble, Void Vajra Constitution or not.

Zac wryly smiled as he remembered his thoughts upon reading the reports on the Calamity. He'd thought he'd be like a lost scion finding his way back home, where his unique duality provided him benefits akin to the Twilight Ocean.

Reality was often a harsh mistress.