

## The Fall 362

### Chapter 362: Time Pressure

“What?” Zac couldn’t help but blurt out. “Impossible, the array is far from finished.”

“It doesn’t need to be finished to work, but it will charge much faster if it is,” Void’s Disciple said.

“Changing the alignment of a whole planet is an enormous undertaking for people at our level, so all hope is not yet lost,” Void continued, throwing over a crystal. “The information is there. I guess that you have between one month and two to take the undead down. When the process starts you have a week at best to stop it before the damage becomes irrevocable.”

“And you expect me to believe you will stand down and let the Undead go through with the transformation?” Zac asked. “That would ruin your lord’s plans as well.”

“If the undead succeed we will stay as long as possible, and hopefully our Lord will take mercy on us and pick us up. If not, then that’s our fate,” Void said with equanimity as he stood up. “We will not be the source of causing new enmities for our Lord, especially not with a force like the Undead Empire. We are not the only seeds as you are no doubt aware of.”

Zac’s thoughts flashed to the Medhin Royals, immediately understanding what he was referring to. There were at least two worlds that The Great Redeemer had planted his seeds of Karma on, and perhaps there were many more of them. It was both a relief and troubling that The Great Redeemer didn’t place all his bets on this planet alone, because that meant that he might still manage to evolve to C-Grade even if Zac saved Earth. Forming a grudge with a C-Grade Hegemon would result in all kinds of trouble.

“And when do you expect your boss to come and pick you up?” Zac asked though he wasn’t really expecting a truthful answer.

“Some mysteries are best left unanswered,” the Zhix smiled, confirming Zac’s guess.

Zac tried to figure out what other information he could try to weasel out of the insectoid now that they stood face to face, but he was dragged out of his musings to once again get ready for battle when he saw the Zhix move. Energy churned around Zac’s body and he was ready to unleash everything he got at moment’s notice.

“I’ve said what needed to be said. The rest will depend on you,” Void’s Disciple said as he calmly looked at Zac. “Of course, if you want you’re welcome to try your hand against me. Killing me will solve one threat to your planet instantly. My children are strong, but they are not able to rein in their bloodthirst. Their carnage would sooner or later result in their demise.”

“So how about it?” Void’s Disciple his eyes even showing some anticipation as the space behind him shuddered.

The next moment it looked like a window to the cosmos appeared behind the Zhix.

Zac squeezed the handle of his axe, a pearl of sweat running down his forehead. This truly was an opportunity that was hard to come by. They still had no idea where Void’s Disciple hid, and they didn’t

have any special sight like Abbot Everlasting Peace to track him down again if he disappeared now. The Dominators had been elusive since the integration, only appearing when they wanted.

But as much as he hated to admit it, Zac was afraid. The fight with the Cyborg had utterly crushed his sense of invulnerability, and he wasn't ready to take on the Dominators. Especially not Void's Disciple, who felt like a far larger threat than Inevitability and Harbinger, even if those two had passed Void's Disciple in levels after the hunt.

Zac eventually he lowered his axe, and silently shook his head slightly.

"Another time then," the Zhix laughed as he threw something at Zac. "I will not assist you directly, but you emerging victorious against the Lich King would be in my best interest, so I will help out a bit. This array is specifically designed to interrupt the arrays in the Lich King's castle, though the effect will only last for a second or two. Perhaps it will create an opportunity."

"Is this why you visited him earlier?" Zac asked with a frown as he looked down at the black crystal in his hand.

He was unsure whether to trust the Zhix, but he couldn't find any reason he would lie at this juncture. The best thing for Void would truly be if Zac won, at which point the Dominator could simply stay hidden until his boss arrived and culled the planet. The Zhix didn't answer the question, and he only smiled as he turned around to walk into the cosmos he had opened a door into.

But Zac wasn't ready to just let him go. The whole meeting had been on the Dominator's terms, and Zac only knew what Void's Disciple wanted him to know. He needed to get something more out of him, and his mind immediately turned to one matter that so far eluded them.

"I thought you wanted to talk about the Mystic Realm since you came all this way," Zac said, throwing out a hook open for interpretation.

The Zhix immediately stopped in its tracks, and a monstrous aura rife with killing intent blanketed the whole area in an instant. It was far beyond what he encountered when fighting Inevitability, and Zac unhesitantly activated [Hatchetman's Rage] since he was afraid he would get instantly killed if he didn't go all-out from the start.

But the aura disappeared as quickly as it came, and the Zhix took a deep breath before looking into Zac's eyes.

"The item that is being birthed has no fate with you. Only death awaits if you enter the battle for that thing, even if you are our fated fulcrum. The same goes for the Church and even the Undead Empire. That thing can only go to our Lord," he tersely said, before entering the cosmos and disappearing.

Zac stared at the spot where Zoid's Disciple disappeared for a few seconds before he took a deep breath to steady himself. The aura Void's Disciple released was shocking, but Zac was ecstatic with the result of dangling that bait.

The fact that Void's Disciple would stop at nothing to gain the treasure of the Mystic Realm, but was willing to let the Undead Empire terraform Earth, was an extremely important revelation. He wasn't exactly sure what to do with the information just yet, but it was a great clue on how to proceed in their war against The Great Redeemer.

The Zhix's outburst also gave Zac a decent approximation of the power of Void's Disciple. The aura had dwarfed his own, even after he had activated his boost. That meant his attributes were clearly superior. Furthermore, his killing intent was also extremely dense which meant he was a seasoned warrior rather than someone who had gained his power by hiding in a cave and cultivating.

He needed to become stronger.

"Is everything alright, Lord Atwood?" one of the Valkyries asked when he returned.

"It was nothing after all," Zac said as he forced out a smile, trying to hide the backlash from activating his skill.

The next day Zac kept an extremely vigilant watch of the surroundings, but neither Void's Disciple nor any Zhix horde could be found in the vicinity. He still didn't know what to believe about what Void said, but Zac leaned toward him telling the truth.

The fact that the array was already working was extremely troubling. Zac thought that the Terraforming would be indefinitely put on hold as long as Thea's army kept one of the three main hordes from moving. But it turned out that their sacrifices were only delaying the inevitable.

Zac didn't want to take any chances, so he gave himself a four-week time limit before he would have to assault the core of the Dead Zone. He desperately needed to make himself and his people stronger in that short while.

The simplest solution was for himself and Ogras evolving, but they weren't the only ones who could change the course of the battle. Unfortunately it turned out that neither Janos or Ilvere were able to evolve at the moment, lacking the qualifications to upgrade their classes. Zac could only hope that the merits they gained through the past battles would be enough to change that.

Having to guide this the slow convoy was also starting to get on Zac's nerves, and he even went so far as to change to his undead class to hunt any beasts within wide swathes of the army. He couldn't waste any time and wanted to boost his second class to level 75 as well before trying out for the tower. That way he would get the most out of his only attempt, as he wouldn't be able to go again like Ogras.

Another issue that made Zac worry was the constant anger in his chest since he arrived at the battle to see his people getting cut down. He was still able to control or push it down, but it had become a permanent presence in his mind. Now that Void's Disciple had exposed the looming threat of the massive array it only got worse.

Being angry in of itself wasn't the problem, the real issue was that he was being manipulated. He had been consumed by anger in the fight earlier, which was what allowed his skill to evolve. But his rage seemed to have loosened the restrictions on the Splinter of Oblivion, and its wicked energies were constantly seeping into his mind.

However, the change didn't only come with negatives. He had already learned that the funnel that the Draugr-lady set up in his mind did not only let the energy from the splinter out, but it also refined it somehow. Until now he hadn't really understood the effect of having the mysterious energy enter his mind, but he finally understood what it did.

It was making his soul stronger.

It was hard to pinpoint exactly what that meant, but he knew that his spirit was more substantial compared to before. It felt like he would be able to endure using his Dao Seeds for longer, and even his Dao Fields had become slightly more intense.

But Zac was worried even though the boost was a welcome addition now that he was scrambling for all ways to make himself stronger. His mental resilience was quite strong, but the effect of the Splinter just kept increasing. What would happen within the next few years, how long would it be until he turned into Anzonil's disciple, slowly becoming insane?

He needed to find some solution, hopefully one that would be able to keep the benefits while dealing with the unwanted side effects. He wasn't able to cultivate, but perhaps there were ways to improve one's mind that worked similarly, something like meditation manuals.

Zac soon enough returned to the car to ponder on the Dao, but he couldn't calm his mind down enough to enter a meditative state. He kept twisting back and forth before interrupting the Ogras' meditation to discuss various strategies.

The demon had been shocked to learn about the meeting with Void's Disciple, but his analysis of the information was the same as Zac's. It would be foolish to not operate under the assumption that what the Dominator said was true. But the demon took the situation more in stride, simply saying that the situation didn't change much and that there was not much that they could do while they were stuck in the middle of nowhere.

"You might as well go ahead, you acting like this is stressing me out," the demon finally said in exasperation after being interrupted for the fifth time. "The army will take almost another week until it's back. Use that time to close the incursions in the Underworld or something. I can't help with those anyway, so I will stay behind to protect the convoy."

"They might be waiting for me to leave though," Zac hesitantly said.

"Just go undercover, use your undead form and face changing or something," Ogras said with a shrug. "We'll pretend you're still around. Besides, we haven't seen any undead activity in a week and we're far outside the area of the array they're making. It's a risk, but we need to take some risks at this point."

Zac was hesitant to leave his people at this juncture, but he did feel more confident if the demon stayed behind. Zac had seen the power he was able to unleash, especially after the inheritance. The demon was far stronger today compared to when fighting the Beast waves. Only the appearance of a general would be a match for him if he went all out.

And it was like Ogras said, they were so far away from the Undead Incursion by now. And if Void's Disciple wanted to kill the people here he could have already done so by himself. It was unlikely that Zac would be able to stop him at all as things stood.

"I'll take one last look to make sure no one is trailing us before I leave," Zac finally said. "I'm counting on you to keep our people and my sister safe."