

The Fall 543

Chapter 543: Battleplans

Zac sighed when he heard Nonet's declaration, but he could understand the sentiment. The Anointed were terrifyingly powerful beings who could act as spiritual leaders and protectors of the Zhix, but that could only continue for so long. The world would soon pass them by as they were stuck at the F-Grade. A random warrior would be able to kill them with a simple swing in a decade or two.

Such a transference in power would undoubtedly affect their positions as leaders as well, especially as their purpose of existence would fade into memory with the fall of the Dominators. They rather wanted to go out on their own terms, fulfilling the mission they had carried for over a thousand years.

"What about Hive Kundevi?" Zac asked.

"We have made arrangements for our elders and strongest warriors to take over after we've fulfilled our purpose," another Zhix explained, and one Anointed after another added a snippet of information.

Zac listened to their explanation, and it sounded like the Zhix would set up governance with two major pillars; the clergy and the army. One would provide spiritual guidance and be in charge of running the non-combat side of things, while the Army would nurture the next generation of warriors and protect the hives.

The true elites would still be interred into some sort of templar order, making sure there was a balance in power between the two factions.

As for their reproduction, it turned out that Anointed weren't actually needed for that. From how Ibtep explained it back then it sounded like the anointed were like hive queens that made it possible for Zhix eggs to be fertilized, but it wasn't the whole story. They were simply the 'alphas' of the hive, but the alpha didn't necessarily need to be Anointed.

It had always simply been like that until now as they were so much more powerful than anyone else in the hives.

"We hope you will be able to watch over the children in the future. This new world is hectic and confusing, but you humans seem quite able to adapt," Nonet added after the group had explained the future path of the Zhix.

Zac finally understood why the large Zhix had taken the time to explain things in such detail. They would be gone in a year, and he was the greatest threat to their population apart from the Dominators. He could definitely eradicate the Zhix if he put his mind to it.

"I'll do my best," Zac said with a nod, and after some thought added some more reassurance. "I believe my force has become so successful because I welcomed people from all the races. It has allowed me to advance much further than other factions. I will make sure that none of the races will get pushed out in the future as we're stronger together."

Of course, both Zac and the Zhix understood that promise was provided that no one stepped out of line. Zac didn't really have an active interest in the governance of the new planet, but he definitely wasn't

some sort of pacifist. He wouldn't make making examples out of some factions if people started causing trouble for him.

"That's all we ask," Rhubat said.

With that out of the way they immediately dove into discussing the details of the crusade. Zac immediately took out one of the Jammers from his cosmos sack and briefly explained how it worked. He was a bit fuzzy on the limitations of the array though to give himself some leeway. He didn't believe anyone here was a traitor, but better safe than sorry.

"My army can set out at any time," Zac said. "And I am sure the Human Council would join if I ask as well. We just need to leave some to keep whittling down the zombies."

"Thank you, but there is no need. It is the Zhix who have brought this threat onto this world, so it will fall onto the Zhix to solve it," another one of the three enormous Anointed said with a shake of its head. "It is better your kind deal with the remaining unliving before they spread across the planet like the corruption they are."

"With your ability to stop the traitors from fleeing, there will be no need for massive armies," another Anointed added. "Just enough to take out one hive at a time. An army assisted by a coalition of us Anointed will be more than enough."

"Fine," Zac slowly nodded.

Zac was honestly somewhat relieved that his army wouldn't have to get their hands dirtied once again. The war was a good opportunity for them to gain battle experience against a strong opponent that wasn't braindead like the zombies, but it would definitely lead to casualties. The Zhix were more like the demons than humans in one regard.

Their culture was steeped in battle, and the integration only added to their power. And there were a lot of them. His army had many elites, but there were too few of them, and the Zhix warfare doctrine was essentially based around taking down more powerful warriors by grinding them down with a ceaseless wave of violence.

"But I still need to come with. The items that can block out teleporters and communication must be activated by the unliving, so I need to bring my undead servant," Zac said, and added a short explanation after seeing the odd stares. "I captured it from the Incursion for information."

Zac also felt that he needed to be present in case the real Dominators showed up. That way he might be able to avoid a wholesale slaughter of his allies. Zac might not be fully confident in killing them without sounding them out first, but he was confident in both being able to slow them down and getting away in one piece.

After all, there would be a need for manpower in the Mystic Realm, and this group of Anointed might be the best allies he could get his hands on. They were as powerful as early E-Grade warriors and they had ample combat experience. Bringing these guys would help him even out the odds against the other factions.

Besides, Zac guessed that they would have to enter the Mystic Realm anyway if they wanted to finish their crusade. Void's Disciple had no doubt already brought in some hives to help him look for the

dimensional treasure. He couldn't do everything himself. And there were only so many Hives that this group could ambush before the Dominators realized something was wrong.

"That is fine. We need the assistance of humans for another matter," the Rhubat added. "Teleportation. Our hives were not placed too close together in this new world, and many hives have been destroyed already from the war. If we would use our own network then we would have to spend months on foot."

The enormous table lit up the next moment, and Zac's eyes widened when he saw it was a surprisingly detailed map of Pangea. There were a lot of indistinct sections, including most of the unmapped zones on his own tablet. But a lot of it was properly filled in with what seemed to be even greater detail than the maps produced by the Marshal Clan.

"This is something Vanexis was gifted by the System," Rhubat said, nodding to the other 5-meter Anointed who had spoken earlier, as he took out a small metal ball from his Cosmos Sack. "As long as a warrior travels with a ball like this in their possession, then everything around them will be recorded and added to the map. We have thousands of these balls."

Zac whistled with surprise as he looked down at the map again. The Zhix had truly been busy going by how much distance they had covered to map out these places.

"There are 28 Hives we have marked," Rhubat said. "All of them are within two hours' travel."

"Only twenty-eight hives?" Zac asked with surprise.

Twenty-eight cities were nothing to the human population, even after the integration, so it sounded like a really low number if the Zhix had actually defected to the Dominators.

"Don't underestimate these hives. The Dominators have gathered their subjects into massive hives far eclipsing any structures from our old world. Their numbers are almost on par with our hundreds of remaining hives," Vanexis rumbled. "Each of them holds over a hundred thousand warriors along with millions of normal Zhix."

Zac nodded in understanding when he heard the explanation, and he tried to understand the motivation for the Dominators to concentrate their followers like this. Was it just out of convenience, or did it have to do with karma? Was the effect of faith more pronounced when one's followers gathered together, rather than having them spread across the planet?

It was undeniably how cults worked, where groups of people secluded themselves from the rest of the world. This closed system shut out any dissenting voices, which lead to a deeper and deeper indoctrination.

"We will need the help of another human force for this," Zac said as he looked at the map. "I don't have access to that many teleporters."

"Do you still have multiple factions within your race? We thought the human towns were all under you?" Rhubat asked with confusion. "I have seen the strength of the other human elites. How can they challenge your rule?"

Zac didn't understand the question at first, but it turned out that the Zhix had already changed their structure so that there were only two forces among their race; The Council of the Anointed and The

Dominators. All Anointed-run hives were accessible for all the Zhix, whereas they were obviously shut out from their enemies' teleporters.

It was extremely different from Humans who not only had a handful of major factions like Port Atwood and New World Government, but also dozens of mid-sized forces, though most of the mid-sized forces were kind of under the umbrella of the Marshall Clan by now. There were even hundreds, perhaps thousands, of towns that weren't really aligned with any of the forces, but rather free bases that had survived some way or another.

"I have been busy throwing out all the invaders of our planet until now," Zac said before he wryly smiled. "I guess humans are a bit more individualistic as well. We didn't really get along before the integration either. I probably won't meddle with the human forces unless necessary. But I can fetch a guide to open the portals for us without a problem."

The group went over the detail for some time, but the idea was quite simple. Zac would enter a human-controlled town ahead of the army together with a squadron of Zhix scouts, and they would rush to the Hive and get ready to activate the jammers. The army would enter after a short interval, and Zac would activate the jammers the moment the last of the Zhix army had passed through the teleporter.

Activating the jammer before the army had actually arrived at the Hive might warn the traitor Zhix, but they were afraid that the elites would immediately flee through the teleporter the moment they spotted an incoming army. The elites might still try to flee by foot, but the scouts would hopefully be able to spot them this way.

As for the battle itself, it sounded straightforward enough. The Anointed would act as wall breakers and crush all resistance, while the normal Zhix warriors would back them up. In case one of the Dominators showed up, they would take them down even if they had to sacrifice tens of thousands of lives.

"How long do you need to prepare, Warmaster?" Rhubat finally asked, surprising Zac a bit.

"I only need to pick up my ghost and a guide," Zac said after some thought. "It's dependent on how quickly you can gather your armies."

"The armies and the other Anointed are standing ready. Our movements are no doubt being watched, so we need to move quickly from this point on. We want to take out as many of these hives as possible before they adapt," Rhubat said as killing intent started to leak from its body. "If we can take down five of the Hives before the rest gather, then we are confident in emerging victorious even if Void's Disciple shows up."

"Remember, not even the humans can know where we are going," Nonet added.

"I know," Zac nodded.

It was already known that there were humans co-operating with the Dominators, and they would have to move randomly to avoid getting exposed and ambushed. There was no point in messing around, so Zac soon exited the secluded chambers. Ibtep was still waiting for him outside, and the scout joined him as they returned to Port Atwood.

However, Zac didn't even have time to call the ghost before he sensed strong fluctuations over at the Dao Repository.

"Wait here," Zac groaned in exasperation as he rushed over.

Thankfully it turned out that it wasn't Brazla who was causing trouble. The square outside the Repository was completely tranquil, and neither lightning bolts nor a massive face was hovering above it. The fluctuations only grew in power though, and Zac felt they came from inside the towers themselves.

Zac quickly entered the Towers of Myriad Dao, and he quickly spotted the source of the commotion; the statue of the Blade Emperor.

"The girl is coming out," Brazla said as he descended from a golden cloud floating around in the ceiling.

"Did she pass?" Zac asked as his eyes returned to the statue.

"She did, if barely," the Tool Spirit snorted as he turned two disdainful eyes toward the array in the same direction. "Though I'm not so sure she will have the guts to take on the following challenge in the E-Grade."