

The Fall 566

Chapter 566: Lunar Tribe

Hevastes rushed through the forest, his sharp nose all the guidance he needed to avoid his distant, and far less enlightened, cousins. A squad of silent killers followed in tow, ruthlessness gleaming in their eyes. They set out five days ago at the behest of Cervantes to find a new path to the weaklings of the Cartava Clan.

A century ago this would have been considered a suicide mission, a way to discard unwanted members of the tribe. They would most likely perish to the environment, and if they somehow survived they'd still have an impossible mission to complete.

However, things had changed. Hevastes looked up at the distant Skythreads, both excitement and trepidation filling his hearts. He remembered running through these woods just three hundred years ago as a fledgling member of his first hunting squad. The sky had been so much closer then, and the distances weren't so insurmountable. But the world had grown, just as Hevastes himself had.

It almost felt like he would leave part of himself behind when they finally left this place.

They finally reached their target location; a seemingly insignificant corner of the forest where the wall made a slight turn. There were no signs of anything special about this place, apart from a small grate in the Memorysteel close to the ceiling.

A century ago this small vent just had a diameter of ten centimeters, but by now it was over a meter across, effortlessly providing a new point of ingress for their kin. Similar weaknesses were appearing all over the base, with new ones being discovered every week. The sanctums of the Core Sector were still unreachable, meaning it still was impossible to reach the bloodline pools freely. But it was just a matter of time by now.

Of course, the dangers had increased just like the opportunities had.

"Isolating steps," Hevastes muttered and one of his subordinates produced a series of spikes, each of them connected to a small dangle.

Hevastes took out his charger and poured some of the harvested Base Power into each spike. He couldn't help but grimace at the expenditure, especially now that it was so hard to harvest. But times had changed, and there was no point in hoarding things that would be useless in the outer world.

Seeing that the spikes had activated properly he threw them into the wall with pinpoint precision, each of them hitting the wall with half a meter's distance, all the way up to the grate. The spikes embedded themselves in the Memorysteel as though the wall was made of mud, and a few seconds later the fusion was complete.

The arrays on the had completely dimmed by the time that the spikes had become part of the wall, and Kato didn't need any prompting as he climbed up along the spikes. He took out a tablet from his backpack as he carved a small groove with his special tool, allowing him to connect to the local systems through a cable.

Hevastes saw the screen light up a second later, and the whole group tensed as they prepared themselves for retaliation. However, the seconds passed without either the wall awakening or the corruption appearing, allowing them to breathe out in relief. It wasn't that they didn't trust Kato, he was one of the most skilled Datamancers in the tribe after all. But things had become too unpredictable as of late.

The grate swung up a few seconds later, and Kato jumped down to the others with a relieved look on his eyes. After all, it was usually the Datamancers who got the worst of it in case they were discovered.

"Excellent job. How long?" Hevastes asked.

"Sixteen hours under normal operations," Kato said before he hesitantly added. "But the risk of anomalies is high."

"Ten hours. Everyone needs to be back here by that time in case we get split up. Any latecomers will have to return by themselves," Hevastes eventually decided.

The rest of the squad nodded without hesitation, even though the implication was clear. Returning to the tribe without Hevastes' source of Base Power was a suicide mission, and they were better off staying in the forest, praying that some other squad would pass by before they were discovered by the beasts.

"Remember the goal. First of all, find a path to the Cartava Clan. Secondly, if an opportunity arises, capture the Grand Elder's granddaughter. Finding information about the interlopers would be a bonus, but other squads are working on that," Hevastes said as he looked across the group.

The group of veterans nodded, though they couldn't hide the confusion from their captain. After all, most of them had worked together for almost two centuries. But they were elite warriors that were content in following orders, which couldn't be said about the ever-curious Datamancer.

"Is that brat really worth the risk?" Kato hesitantly asked when no one else would speak up. "We have already spent such a large amount of our resources on this one objective."

"Are you questioning Cervantes' orders?" Hevastes asked coolly.

"N-No, absolutely not," Kato hurriedly said with a shake of his head, quickly realizing the folly of questioning the Alpha's grand nephew. "I just hoped to understand the goal to better complete my mission."

"Very well. I don't know all the details either, but my uncle said one thing that might interest you. Leviala Cartava is the key to prolonging our lifespans by many times over. Now tell me, is it worth snatching her?" Hevastes said with a cruel smile.

The eyes of even the veterans in the group widened in shock, before a red tint spread in their eyes. Hevastes knew all too well what they were thinking. The bloodline of their tribe was unmatched, and the only one in this realm solely focused on combat. Those gemlings far on the other side were only useful for creating living treasures, and the True Sky Faction had long lost their way by interbreeding.

Only the Titans and unique specimens were a match to their prowess, but the specimens were long gone while the Titans all perished when the cataclysm turned their sector into the wastelands. If it

wasn't for the unique environment, the werewolves would long have been able to dominate this whole realm.

But there was a downside to their power; it took them too long to cultivate. They were part-beast, which had provided them with superior bodies and power. But they still had the much shorter lifespan of humans, making it almost impossible to unleash their full potential before they grew old. But what if their lifespans could be improved upon?

Hevastes could feel it. This was the era of the Lunar Tribe.

"Exactly! This world is expanding!" Tina nodded with an odd face as she looked at Ogras. "It seems impossible, but this whole base seems to be growing like it was a living creature or something. It's already grown around ten percent since we were trapped here."

"Growing how?" Zac said with confusion.

The rest of the leaders had already arrived through the teleporter by this point, and they all looked at Ogras and Tina like they were crazy. How could a base grow by itself?

"We first noticed it with the keypad that allows us to enter the real base. It was rising higher and higher up in the air, and now it's 30 centimeters further up than before," Tina said.

"Is it some sort of liquid metal?" Thea asked from the side, but the Valkyries shook their heads in response.

"I honestly feel like it's some sort of magic rather than something that can be explained rationally. We first assumed that the wall was rising from the ground, but we soon realized that this affects everything except for living things," Tina explained.

"I thought this place was made for giants, but what if the whole realm started growing around the same time the Integration took place?" Ogras muttered as his eyes scanned the surroundings. "Or perhaps even sooner."

Zac looked over with confusion before he understood what Ogras was getting at. The demon was the first one to explore the mystic realm, and he had already noted that he believed that this section was built to accommodate some sort of golem or giant species reaching 5-6 meters in height. But what if that wasn't the case, but rather the result of the place growing?

"A bunch of Cosmic Energy flooded Earth, and some of it was passed into this place?" Zac asked.

"Or that the shock of integration kicked the Dimensional Seed alive," Ogras shrugged.

"We found out some of the rules by studying the trees," another Valkyrie interjected. "They are the same as before, but they are now spaced further apart like the ground between them is expanding."

"Spatial expansion," Thea said with wonder as she looked around.

"But our people have only been trapped here for a few weeks and it's grown by ten percent? This base should be thousands of years old, it doesn't add up," Joanna countered with a frown as she looked at the valkyries.

"The treasure is awakening," Zac said. "That is probably speeding up the process if it's the source."

"It's the most likely scenario," Ogras agreed. "But that means two things if true. First, these changes will probably only increase in severity as the treasure awakens. Second, we are just at the edge of the Mystic realm. The effect might be far worse in the core, the closer we get to the treasure itself. We already knew this place is huge, but it might have turned into a continent overnight."

"We have tried mapping the growth rate and it seems as though-," Tina said, but he forgot herself upon seeing the form of Rhubat breaking through the roof of the teleportation house like some sort of insectoid Godzilla.

"I forgot about those giants in all the excitement," Ogras looked over with a snort.

Zac sighed and flashed over, and threw away the rubble of the teleportation house, the pieces of the building flying far out into the grassland.

"Amazing. Worlds within worlds," Rhubat said as it looked around, ignoring the mayhem its appearance had caused.

"This place is extremely ancient, older than both your and our civilizations combined," Zac said. "There will be a lot of dangers inside, I'll be counting on you guys."

"The chief corruptor is still standing, so we will not stop either," Rhubat agreed and moved out of the way to make room for more Anointed to enter.

"Start setting everything up," Zac instructed the logistics crew before he flashed back to the core group. "I need some more details from the scientists who have stayed here."

The Valkyries who had been marooned in the Mystic Realm was not the only citizens caught inside when the cultists attacked. There were also a group of professors that were studying the mystic realm while Zac was busy dealing with other things.

The logistics officers got to work while Zac entered a warehouse to go over things in detail. There were proper meeting rooms as well, but they were too small to house the Anointed, and he wanted them represented.

The scientists seemed extremely uncomfortable by being stuck in a building with not only 5-meter tall giants that stared down at them as though they were snacks, but also with the most powerful people on the former Ladder. But they quickly gathered their wits and started going over the measurements they had taken since they were stuck.

The biosphere had grown just like Tina and Ogras said, by 12% to be exact. This included everything that could be considered dead, such as stones, the metal walls, and the ground itself. The odd growth also affected organic materials that weren't alive, such as pieces of lumber. The people and the plants were completely unaffected though.

Most of that growth had happened over the last 16 days, and it seemed to be accelerating. As for the process of expansion, it couldn't be explained by science. The first guess of the scientists was that the spatial expansion acted on an atomic level, increasing the distance between molecules in materials. But it was quickly proven to be wrong.

Matter was literally appearing out of nowhere. A piece of lumber would keep growing in volume in this realm but its density would remain constant, meaning that its weight increased. As for where the additional matter came from, the Scientist had no idea. One conjecture was that it was being absorbed from subspace or neighboring dimensions, while some simply believed it to be magic no matter how unscientific that sounded.

"Isn't this a huge opportunity?" Ogras said from the side when he heard the explanation. "Can't we throw out everything of value and it will keep multiplying? What if we get a bunch of extremely valuable materials? Wouldn't we literally be growing money?"