

## The Fall 750

### Chapter 750: Seal

Zac would have preferred to enter seclusion for a few days to consolidate his gains, but he was running against the clock here. Alvod had given him one month to unblock at least one jammer, and he had already spent a good chunk of that time climbing the chasm and heading to the valley. He would have to get used to his newfound power on the go.

He soon left the cave, swimming even further toward the heart of the Twilight Chasm. Zac didn't want to head back where he came from since that way would take him toward the Living Pulse once more, which was the opposite of what he wanted. If he had entered the Twilight Chasm from the South, then he instead set a rough course heading northeast.

The Death Pulse should be somewhere in the opposite direction of the Living Pulse, and cutting straight through the surface layer of the Twilight Chasm would save a few weeks of travel time. Hopefully, that would also lessen the chance of encountering elites, since even they usually stayed at the periphery of the chasm.

It wasn't that he was afraid. This deep in the trial he was nigh-invulnerable thanks to his resistance to Twilight Energy. But the moment his location was leaked, it would lead to all kinds of trouble. And the top combatants had all kinds of methods to stay alive, making it almost impossible to guarantee his secret being kept.

Of course, not even Zac dared to enter the most central area of the Twilight Chasm even in his current state, which was purported to be a towering mountain tens of times larger than the ones he climbed here. According to rumors, it stretched tens of thousands of meters above the surface, and it held just as great treasures as the deepest depths of the chasm.

But it was also crawling with Beast Kings, and not something Zac wanted to entangle himself with right now. There was too much to do, and too little time. The days passed as he crossed from mountain to mountain, occasionally snatching a herb or mineral that seemed valuable. His senses were constantly stretched to their limits in search of other trial-takers, but he hadn't spotted a single one.

Had he overestimated the elites of this opening, or were the rankers busy with something else?

He was however constantly targeted by large packs of beasts every time he reached a new mountain. But Curiously enough, not a single one of the Beast Kings made their appearance to lead their subordinates, even when Zac could sense their auras hiding deep in the mountains. That only increased the unease Zac felt, and his mind was starting to get frayed after a week's travel.

He knew that he wasn't scary enough to subdue all the Beast Kings in the chasm, so just what was going on? These behemoths were the most common source of deaths in the chasm, yet he was swimming through their territories unchallenged. Were they laying low because of what transpired in the valley? Or had a certain apex predator lurking in the depths made an appearance recently?

Zac didn't know what was the case, and the mystery prompted Zac to push himself to his limit to cross the chasm in record time. With his improved attributes and experience with far deadlier currents in the

depths, Zac found himself able to almost effortlessly cover ground. Sometimes, he was even able to hitch a ride with one of the currents, saving hours in one go.

Unfortunately, he did feel that the Twilight Energy was starting to enter his body at a greater and greater rate, meaning the immunity he enjoyed wasn't permanent. Zac wasn't too bothered by that fact though. It would last over a month by the looks of it, and by that time he would be far from the chasm. Another week passed, and Zac eventually reached the other edge of the chasm, with less than a week to spare before the deadline.

It looked pretty much the same as there he first arrived, a massive wall stretching down into the darkness, with enormous currents rushing into the chasm to turn into submerged waterfalls. He didn't immediately approach, but instead stayed hidden on a nearby mountain for almost an hour without making a move.

No matter if it was his Draugr-sense or [Cosmic Gaze], he still couldn't spot any cultivators staying by the edge, and it was starting to get to him. There were millions of cultivators participating in the trial, and normally, there should at least be a few thousand who venture into the chasm every round.

He gave it some thought, but he eventually decided to stay in his Draugr form as he set off toward the edge. His Draugr identity was definitely exposed because of the ladder, making his human identity a lot safer in comparison. Of course, it wasn't a very good disguise considering the bounty on his head, but he knew that the prompt required a few seconds to appear.

A few seconds might not sound like a lot, but it was enough to either ambush an unsuspecting party or escape with a talisman. That had been his original idea, but he didn't dare break the array hiding his Duplicity Core unless necessary now.

Zac reached the edge soon enough and was greeted with a barren landscape that stretched for miles. Still, the scene was filled with a sense of beauty to Zac, who was more than done with the subdued darkness of the Twilight Chasm. Besides, he knew that the environment should soon gain some more greenery. It was simply that the currents made it impossible for anything to grow around the edge.

Sure enough, the desolate rocks were soon replaced by a thick bed of moss and swaying seaweed. Ten minutes later, the grass had grown to over five meters in height, turning the area into a veritable forest. Zac was forced to slow down his pace somewhat since this area had to be a prime location for an ambush.

He suddenly spotted something amiss, though it wasn't a cultivator lying in wait. It was rather a massive rune that shimmered in the waters at the edge of his visibility. It only lasted a second before it disappeared, making it almost seem like the water refractions were playing with his mind. However, after the first one came another, and two turned into innumerable runes that stretched across the horizon.

It was like the whole Twilight Chasm had been cordoned off by some sort of array, and Zac immediately took out the array disk for his quest. For the second time, the tracker indicated a spot not too far away. The first time was when he had almost finished his climb on the opposite side of the chasm.

By the looks of it, the location was situated right beneath the line demarcated by the gargantuan array. These runes were connected to whatever jammers the Twilight Lord wanted removed, and they

probably stretched all around the Twilight Chasm. The question was what kind of array had been set up, and who was behind it.

The native clans being behind this felt like a distinct possibility, considering they should be the factions with the most reason to stop the Eveningtide Asura's plans. Exactly what the Eveningtide Asura was planning wasn't clear, but the words of Yod echoed in the back of his mind.

The Corpselord had been convinced that someone wanted to blow up the whole Mystic Realm to drain it of its resources, but he had rather been convinced that the culprit was the foreign empires rather than the Twilight Lord himself. And knowing the ruthless method of cultivation the Eveningtide Asura employed, Zac figured this Mystic Realm wasn't long for the world if he had his way.

The empires were clearly embroiled in this matter as well, and the more Zac learned the more he understood he had no business getting himself involved with something like this. Yet he found himself swimming toward the spot marked on the tracker, using the lush plantlife as a means to cover his approach.

Soon enough he got within a few kilometers of the mark on his tracker, but he still hadn't spotted anything amiss. He got closer and closer, moving back and forth to get a better vantage. And eventually, he saw it. There was just a large pillar embedded in the ground, covered in markings. It was the same color as the ocean itself, and the engravings made it blend in almost perfectly with the seaweed around it, forming a nigh-perfect camouflage.

That wasn't only true for his mundane senses. The energy it emitted was wholly unimpressive, not standing out from the plants in the area at all.

If Zac was just passing by, he could probably have swum a few hundred meters from it without noticing its existence at all. It had to be a disguise. The Eveningtide Asura had risked the wrath of the Heavens to enter the Trial and find someone to shut that thing off. Perhaps the pillar had arrays hiding the energy it emitted.

The scene was a bit odd, making Zac feel something was amiss. He could simply take out a projectile from his spatial ring and destroy that thing with a lazy throw. Why were there no defenses to the thing?

As far as he could tell, the pillar wasn't even protected by a weak barrier, and there were no warriors or defensive golems stationed there either. If this was an integral piece supposed to thwart the Eveningtide Asura, why had it simply been planted and forgotten like this?

Zac scanned the area over and over, using every method available in his repertoire to look for any sort of trap. But there was nothing. Zac hesitated for a second before he swam upward, heading for the surface of the ocean. He risked getting exposed this way, but he needed to figure out what the hell was going on.

This odd setup looked harmless enough, yet it looked like it managed to keep the whole Twilight Chasm depopulated. There had to be some trick to it. But there was nothing to see on the surface either, except torrential storms and a humongous flying Beast King howling in the distance.

He quickly swam back to the depths before he was spotted, and he soon enough found himself just fifty meters from the Array Pillar. Part of him wanted to just ignore this thing and keep going, but the thinly veiled threat of the Eveningtide Asura made him grit his teeth and take out [Verun's Bite].

A deep growl made the waters vibrate as Zac shot forward, the large jagged edge of [Gorehew] forming in front of the axe. Thankfully, the Spirit Tool hadn't suddenly become incapable of channeling his undead skills after gaining the golden patterns. If anything, it felt like energy coursed through the weapon smoother compared to before.

Zac was in front of the pillar in no time, but his eyes widened when the seemingly engraved runes across the pillar rearranged themselves with dizzying speed, releasing a tremendous blast that rebuffed his strike and pushed Zac back over twenty meters. The strike had come from what looked like a gate made from the runes, and out of it, a densely tattooed man stepped out.

The attacker seemed to be a member of the Havarok Empire judging by the tattoos that covered his body, but Zac was filled with a sense of wrongness as he looked into the man's empty eyes. There was no spark of sapience in those eyes, and the man in front of him reminded Zac of the silver guards of Salvation more than an elite cultivator.

It wasn't strictly a puppet though as Zac could sense that the man in front of him was alive. However, his energy signature was pretty odd. He neither resembled a living cultivator nor carried the mark of undeath. He rather off an aura similar to a creature of the Twilight Abyss, perfectly in tune with the Twilight Energy. Furthermore, even after having observed the odd puppet-man for a few seconds, no contribution points showed up over his head, meaning the System didn't consider the man a trial-taker.

The runes on his body immediately lit up in a dark golden-green, and Zac instantly felt a storm of Twilight Energy gather around him. In an instant, the energy density in the area had reached levels that surpassed the outer chasm, and if not for his unique constitution, he would have been in big trouble.

Zac looked back and forth between the silent man and the pillar behind him, no longer sure just which one of them was the actual target. The puppet reeked of killing intent, and he shot toward Zac as energy built in his body. His runes turned almost blinding and chaotic arcs something surrounded him.

His first instinct was to call it lightning, but it was fully made by Twilight Energy. It made him think of his experience in the valley, where he almost got convinced that life was not life, and death was not death. They were rather receptacles for something else, like how Twilight had somehow become a receptacle for thunder in the puppet in front of him.

It was an interesting contrast to his own path, but Zac didn't have any time to study it as the puppet was almost instantaneously upon him. The warrior didn't have any weapons and instead swiped his hand toward Zac like a beast. Waves of twilight thunder rippled forward, and Zac was shocked at the power the attack contained.

This puppet, had it once been one of the Rankers of the trial? Zac had a hard time imagining too many being able to unleash such a forceful attack, even if he wasn't restrained by the Twilight Energy in his current state. However, Zac quickly realized the truth of the matter as he sensed a familiar source of power in the cascading wave of destruction.

Lifeforce.

The zombified cultivator was burning his longevity to unleash terrifying amounts of energy in the go, and the whole area groaned under the chaotic might of his attacks. Still, it was nowhere near enough to make Zac feel despair, and he stood in place as a thick coffin sprung up in front of him. It was the skeletons of [Profane Exponents] that had made their appearance, for once not being beset by terrifying currents the second Zac brought them out.

The roiling wave of lightning struck the barrier, and the whole area for almost a hundred meters was instantly turned into a void as the water was forcibly evaporated. Of course, the odd scene only lasted for an instant before the ocean collapsed on itself again, causing a storm to erupt in the area.

But the crashing ocean itself was cut in two as Zac swung his weapon, its edge radiating the unquestionable might of the Branch of the War Axe. The lightning storm was unable to last even a moment as the ripping edge of Dao shot forward, its churning chaos nothing in of the madness of war.

The energy whole area itself was suddenly roiling, and not from the outbursts of attacks. It was Zac who had unleashed his Dao Field, which now was powerful enough to almost impact the fundamental laws of the area. Even the usually harmonious Twilight Energy was growing erratic, almost breaking apart in an internal struggle.

For a moment the outline of two massive axe appeared behind Zac's back, but they only lasted for a fraction of a second before they dissipated and joined the more intangible energy of the overpowering Dao Field. Zac wasted no time as he appeared right next to the puppet, the edge of [Gorehew] once more ripping toward him.

The puppet had been pushed off-balance by the Dao Field, and its runes flickered as he hold his head in a silent scream. Zac guessed the zombification process wasn't perfect, and the warrior's original path suddenly found itself in a struggle against the one imposed on his body. Ultimately, it didn't matter, and the black edge ripped him clean in two, prompting a surge of energy to enter Zac's body.

Zac looked at the bisected body of the cultivator thoughtfully for a moment before he swam toward the pillar. No wonder the chasm was so empty. If puppets like these were placed out all around the area, few would dare to make their move. Its combat strength was nothing to scoff at, but more importantly, the amount of Twilight Energy it had gathered was enough to kill most warriors on its own.

A second swing destroyed the array pillar as well, but Zac's brows rose in surprise when the engravings on its surface actually detached from the crumbling rock and turned into glistening sigils hovering in the water itself. The runes quickly reformed themselves, distorting and elongating until eight vortices formed.

From the void, eight more figures stepped out onto the ground, each one of them radiating the same killing intent as their fallen comrade as the energy density area started climbing toward unprecedented levels. Zac's first instinct was to book it, but he swore in surprise when the whole area was suddenly sealed by some sort of Twilight Energy lock.

Zac looked back at the eight warriors with a sigh as torrential amounts of Miasma started to churn in his body. It looked like these guys wanted to lock him down, but two could play that game. It looked like it was time to try out his new skill.