

## The Fall 242

### Chapter 242: Chains of Fate

Zac sat completely immobile for hours even after the vision ended. He thought that he had gotten accustomed to the new reality by now, but he was once again completely awed by the power some individuals held. Seeing the death of a universe was also something that he would never forget.

The prowess in that golden shield was mind-bending, to the point that Zac felt the Grand Protector was a being that was a notch above both the unnamed ax-man and The Lifebringer. The ax-man held monstrous power and was able to kill a whole planet with a swing, but that was still a lesser feat compared to what the Grand Protector did.

The old man managed to shield a land-mass of unfathomable size against the very fabric of reality ripping to shreds. Furthermore, the shield he erected stood strong for who knows how long, protecting the continent from the void outside.

The power of the protagonist wasn't the only superior thing from the vision, making Zac wonder if it was the benefit of having an Epic Class. When he occupied the ax-man he was only a spectator, but he became the Grand Protector for a bit. He still remembered scenes from the ancient man's earlier life, though there were only small snippets.

He had felt how the old man's very body was tempered with the Dao itself, impregnable and immutable. While Zac was grasping at thin strands of a larger fabric the old man forced the Dao to follow his will.

Zac could only imagine that such a being was at least A-rank, perhaps even higher. The demons believed there were cultivators higher than A-Grade, but they barely had any information about C-Grade warriors, let alone lofty beings above that. If those beings existed or not was shrouded in mystery.

The extremely clear vision he had also given him an unprecedented harvest, and he was elated as he looked at the Dao Screen in front of him.

Hardness (Middle): Endurance +25, Wisdom +5.

Sanctuary (Early): Endurance +5, Wisdom +10.

He had not gained one new seed, but two of them, from the vision. Even more impressively he had even gained two stages to the first of them, Hardness. This time he wasn't disappointed that he didn't attain the same Dao as the old man since he understood that he was millennia away from grasping those concepts.

He guessed that the Grand Protector possessed something that could be called the Dao of Immutability. The vision ended after he had integrated with the golden shield, but Zac had some time to feel its marvelous effects, and it truly contained myriad concepts.

Two notable additions were the Daos of both Time and Space, two extremely high-tiered concepts that were out of reach for warriors at his class as far as he knew. The Dao of Immutability forced space itself to bend to its will, and the protection it provided lasted over the eons.

It was truly a top tier Dao, and the Dao of Hardness was just one small part of it. His insights were based around two things; the massive aura of the shield itself and the hardness the old man's will that forced even the tears in space to be unable to reach his body.

The shield held the weight of a planet which resonated with Zac's earlier insights into heaviness, so gaining a snippet of the Dao of Hardness felt pretty natural. The second piece was a mental component of hardness, and it reminded Zac of the upgrade he got of the Dao of Heaviness back at the auction.

In fact, Zac believed gaining his second Dao Seed, the Dao of Sanctuary, was closely related to that insight back then. He had gained a mental component of heaviness due to the immense weight of responsibilities pressing down on him at that time.

He had been in the middle of the beast hordes and his sister was still unaccounted for. The Dao insight could be seen as a result of being overwhelmed, but by now he had found his bearings in life. Over the past weeks, he had seen just how much his town had grown, from a small dented camper into a flourishing kingdom.

That's why the old man in the vision had resonated with him. The Grand Protector had watched over his continent for countless years, seeing the rise of civilization. With his power he could have easily become a supreme emperor, but he was content to simply watch from the shadows and protect the place from unseen threats.

Zac very well understood that sense of wanting to protect those around him. It was the very reason he desperately tried to get stronger. Initially, it was just for himself and his sister, but the circle of people he wanted to protect had slowly expanded as he saw his island come to life.

Both of the Dao Seeds he gained were on the defensive side, but Zac knew that they were meant for different things. The Dao of Hardness was mostly for personal defense. He could imbue himself or his shield with it, and from there endure stronger strikes.

But the Dao of Sanctuary was based on protection. He currently wasn't sure if he had any skills that could benefit from it, but he felt its purpose was to help protect others rather than himself. [Nature's Barrier] might be a possible candidate, though that skill already benefitted from infusing it with Dao of Trees.

In any case, he knew his survivability had increased by a notch, both from a huge influx of points into Endurance, but also being able to empower himself further with new Dao Seeds. He had used Dao of Trees as a defensive skill until now, but it wasn't a purely defensive Dao like the Dao of Sharpness was purely offensive.

Besides, the Dao of Trees was inconvenient for him to use for various reasons. First of all, it contained the breath of life, which essentially was poison for him in his Draugr-form. It also wasn't possible to infuse non-living things with that Dao, so strengthening his metallic shield was impossible.

However, the happy surprises didn't end there. He actually had gained another title.

[Scion of Dao: Attain five different Dao Seeds while still at F-Grade Reward: All stats +5]

This title wasn't listed in the booklet he got from Brazla, meaning it was likely pretty rare, and Zac could understand why. Most people had tremendous trouble attaining Dao Seeds on their own, and no classes gave five Dao Seeds as far as he knew.

It was the same with Zac himself, all five of his seeds could be linked to the three visions he had seen. The Dao of Sharpness might have come later, but it was only due to forming the foundation after seeing the Dao of Axe that he managed to attain it.

His latest gains had also pushed not only Wisdom but even Luck past one hundred points. That only left Intelligence that was still below that level, currently sitting at 97. But Zac chose to not put any of his free points into Intelligence even though he was so close.

He hadn't heard of any benefits of having all attributes over one hundred, and besides, he would likely gain a couple of more titles before reaching level 75. He didn't want to waste his precious free points into an attribute with limited benefits to his classes.

In the end, he put all his six points into Strength, pushing it 429. He was mostly done, but there was one final thing he wanted to do before checking in on his axe. It was with some anticipation he opened the Dao Ladder, but he could only wryly smile after seeing Abbot Everlasting Peace still sitting on top.

By now Zac felt pretty much certain that the old man had actually attained the Dao of Karma rather than some lower component. He had asked Alyn about it when he visited the Academy, but she knew nothing about it, apart from some rumors.

It was an extremely rare Dao, and those who grasped it were revered as great sages. It was supremely powerful since it was said that a person with a high command of the Dao of Karma could not only see into the future, but he could even tamper with fate itself. He could bring calamity onto his enemies from the other side of the universe if he wanted.

Zac felt a bit helpless, and he had a feeling that passing that old man on the Dao Ladder would be even harder than clearing out the incursions. But Zac didn't begrudge the old man his opportunities and instead focused on the things at hand.

It was time to check on his axe.

The last of the cursed rats fell, and the abyssal shriek from the escaping specter barely registered as Thea sat down with a groan. She was hurting all over, but she was determined to last the final ten days. So many were counting on her, and the very fate of her planet still hung in the balance.

Meeting that Dominator had been a true wake-up call. Her grandpa had always told her to never get complacent, there were always bigger fish to fry, and she wished that he wasn't correct for once. They couldn't even escape that monster, forcing her to use her final measures.

The side-effects of using her ultimate retreat were even worse than she had imagined, and she internally swore for the hundredth time at the Tutorial Pixies. She already knew that using that skill meant losing levels, but the pixies never said anything about losing even more levels from consecutive uses.

When she used it the first time in the mountains back home she lost a level, and while it was regrettable it was better than dying. But this time she actually lost three levels, making her wonder just how many levels she would lose the next time she was forced to activate it.

Then again, the cost of using [Heaven's Ward] might rather be related to the damage that was blocked than the number of uses. She had been forced to block over a dozen of those chains after Zac was knocked unconscious after all, and that should have required immense energies. Even that man was barely able to block a handful of them.

The thought of him made her once again open up the hunter ladder, and she was happy to notice that she had finally broken into the top ten of the ladder. The unceasing beast waves that had been ravaging across the mountains the past days had been a perfect opportunity for her since her [Petal Storm] was extremely suited for large numbers of weaker enemies.

In fact, she had even gained a full two levels the past days, a feat that would have been impossible back home. After a brief stop at her own rank, she quickly moved down to the 400-rankings to check Zac's status, but her heart tightened when his name was nowhere to be found.

She kept moving further and further down the list but he was nowhere to be seen, so she quickly opened up the Power ladder from back home. Thea breathed out in relief when she saw that Zac still held a commanding lead in the front, but she quickly returned to the hunter ladder.

Finally, she found out what was going on. He had moved all the way up to the 46th position in a few hours, once again showcasing his power. Her mouth curved upwards as she gazed up at the skies.

Nothing would stop that man.

Screams echoed across the cliffs as she slowly ripped the limbs from the human, one by one. Anytime she saw the sigil of the Medhin Empire resentment rose in her heart, and she couldn't stop herself from tormenting those people a bit.

She knew that the real family members were off-limits, even though she wasn't thrilled about it. But those rules didn't exist for their subjects. They were just fated to become fuel anyway, and a cruel smile adorned Inevitability's face as she ripped off another arm of the Medhin General.

Finally the screams abated, and the whole mountain became deathly silent. Everything in the surroundings had already been purged by her [Chains of Fate], leaving just herself on this mountain.

This small distraction, unfortunately, didn't lessen the frustration that had been building in Inevitability's heart over the months. This wasn't how it was supposed to go. The world had finally changed, allowing them to move into the sunlight. But it came too soon, and they weren't ready. The world welcomed the Incursions, forcing them on the passive.

Not only that, but some insane human somehow managed to go and become an in-name disciple of their master. Forget about becoming official disciples themselves, by now they could consider themselves lucky if their souls weren't ripped out from their bodies when he arrived.

Their ancestors had already failed their tasks, and they had failed as well when the integration finally arrived. Their very existences were hanging by the barest of threads, and her actions the last week had almost closed the last door of salvation.

That beastman was also a decent candidate, but he was below that human that almost managed to kill her in the end. They truly needed this Zachary Atwood to fulfill their goal. But finally, there was some good news. The human was fine, and steadily climbing the kill-ladder.

Void's plan might work out after all. She was sure he had already finished his tasks back in the real world. He never messed around, and he likely set out the minute the trial started. Inevitably once again looked up at the skies, and they didn't seem as bleary this time.

They might just survive the arrival of The Great Redeemer after all.