

## The Fall 299

### Chapter 299: Little Bau

Zac quickly taught himself the skill, and a fractal was formed above his navel. It only took him a few seconds to realize how it worked since it was exceedingly simple. He only needed to push miasma into the fractal, and the fractal would in turn push concentrated power into the limbs of his choice.

Zac tried pushing miasma into the arm that was holding his axe, and he quickly felt the strength in his limb increase. There was no discomfort whatsoever either, so Zac kept pushing more and more energy through the fractal. In the beginning the arm simply felt pumped up like he was in the middle of a workout, but soon it started to grow.

By the time he started to feel some pain in his arm the circumference of his bicep had almost doubled, and it radiated extreme power. Zac remembered the strength the Corpse Lord emitted when he used this skill, and that was nowhere near the monstrous energy that was stored in his own arm at the moment. It was likely either his extremely durable constitution or his high Endurance that allowed him to push far more miasma into his attacks than was the norm.

He had lost some of the arm's dexterity due to the new bulk, but it felt as though he could punch a hole in the sky. He quickly found a small hill and slammed the axe down with ferocious force, and the explosion almost matched the power of [Nature's Punishment].

The hill was completely gone after the swing, replaced by a huge scar in the ground that reached almost a hundred meters in the distance.

The skill worked even above expectations, and it was almost perfect for the upcoming battles. It didn't provide great utility for fighting against hordes of enemies, but that also wasn't his job in this war. His enemies would be the Incursion leaders, and he had a feeling that very few of them would be able to walk away from a swing empowered by [Unholy Strike].

Zac was forced to give up on [Cyclic Strike] for the moment, but he was still satisfied with the results of his experiments. He decisively headed back to Port Atwood after returning to his human form and walked toward the Academy. Perhaps Alyn knew of some method to improve the control of his Daos.

But who would have known that when he walked through the gates to the Atwood Institute he would be met by pandemonium? A few hundred people had gathered in front of a large structure Zac didn't recognize, scuffling to get inside.

It was an all-out brawl, though luckily no one used Cosmic Energy or skills. It wasn't only students either, as Zac spotted a few Valkyries and demons in the mix. They were the closest to the doors and were ferociously attacking each other to be the ones to step inside.

A few people sat some distance from the angry mob nursing their wounds while glaring at the people still struggling to enter. They were likely the first casualties of the curfuffle. Zac only gaped at the mayhem, wondering what was happening inside that made people so desperate to enter.

Suddenly he spotted a familiar form speeding toward him. It was Alyn, and Zac froze when he saw her facial expression.

"Are you trying to tear my poor school to the ground?" the irate school mistress asked in an accusatory tone as she stopped just in front of him.

It was the first time Zac could see the annoyance on the Alyn's face, and something about her expression made Zac's hair stand on end. She was usually the personification of grace, but Zac was once again reminded that she was meant to be a slave driver rather than an educator on earth due to her ruthlessness.

"What's going on?" Zac hesitantly asked as he secretly imbued himself with the Dao of Hardness just in case.

"Between the call to war and the magical painting things have gone out of control," Alyn said as she took out a few familiar balls and threw them at the congested areas. "You really planned this one out exquisitely, didn't you?"

Explosions erupted one by one, and dozens of people were blasted into the air by each of the bombs. Only the Valkyries and the demon guards fared a bit better from the bombardment, but Alyn only snorted and took out a handful of them and threw them all over at the same time.

A cascade of explosions finally put an end to the melee in the academy, with Alyn singlehandedly destroying everyone's fighting spirit. Zac could only wryly shake his head at her antics, and breathe in relief that the buildings seemed to be reinforced by arrays.

"Can you tell me what's going on now?" Zac said, deciding not to comment on the fact that Alyn maimed the people who would soon be on the battlefield.

He knew that she was a master at using those small energy bombs, and while it looked random no one was seriously hurt. They would be fine after taking a healing pill and resting for a day.

"It was that painting you had Emily bring," Alyn said with a shake of her head. "I couldn't see what was so special about it, so I simply placed it in the public meditation room since you said it would improve one's Dao comprehension."

"Two elemental mages sat down in front of it, and it just took them a few minutes to gain their first Dao Seeds. The news quickly spread like a wildfire and people are doing anything to get a chance to meditate in front of it before they are sent to the front lines," Alyn continued, some wonder creeping into her eyes.

"What? The painting was that effective?" Zac said with some shock.

He was just as confused as Alyn. He had looked it over when he got it, but he sensed nothing special from it. It was an exquisite painting, but that was about it.

"I believe that some special energy was left behind by the painter or the previous owner that helped the first couple of people to attain the Seed. After a while most of the effects wore off," Alyn explained. "It is still far more effective to meditate in front of it compared to without it though."

"You know how much getting a Dao seed improves one's combat power," Alyn said with a sigh as she kicked a few students who didn't get up fast enough after getting blasted as they walked toward the

meditation building. "I will place it in a restricted chamber instead, and one will only be able to meditate in front of it in exchange for contribution points."

"Well, I'm good it is coming to some use at least," Zac said with a smile. "I am here for something else though."

He proceeded to explain his problem with [Cyclic Strike], though he didn't mention his horrible affinity.

"There are trinkets that can help train one's spirit," Alyn said after a bit. "I don't have any, but they should be pretty simple for Calrin to purchase. They are slightly expensive, but that shouldn't be a problem for you by this point. Now go away, I have so much to do."

Zac was afterward unceremoniously thrown out of the Academy, and he walked over to Calrin's. Thirty minutes later he left with a tool that could train one's mental dexterity. It was almost like a toy, where one needed to utilize mental energy to activate the contraption in certain patterns, but the amount of energy and the direction was extremely strict.

It was just what Zac needed at the moment, and he kept trying to complete the little puzzle as he walked through the town. Finally, he gave up in frustration, and when he looked up he found himself in front of the tavern.

"Our fearless leader," Ryan smiled when Zac walked in and sat down at the same spot as last time.

There were a few people inside the bar, but it was uncharacteristically empty at the moment. A few people were sitting alone or in small groups, but they all hurriedly looked down into their drinks when Zac's eyes landed on them.

"How are things here?" Zac asked as Ryan placed one of the homebrewed meads in front of him.

"It was pretty calm until your people declared that Port Atwood was going to go fight a sea of Zombies," Ryan said with a wry smile. "You know, even I have been drafted?"

"You?" Zac said with surprise. "No offense, but what good are you in this war?"

"Thank you for the vote of confidence," Ryan snorted. "But it turns out I got a pretty good class, Barkeep. I can instill the drinks I serve to give small bonuses to things such as energy restoration and endurance."

"A support class?" Zac exclaimed. "That's pretty cool. Do you get experience from serving drinks?"

"I haven't figured everything out yet, but currently I get most of my experience from tending the bar. The better my business fares, the more energy for me. But perhaps I will get Cosmic Energy for helping in the war as well," Ryan said. "And at least I will be far from the front lines."

"Well, it's good to have you on our team. Have you spoken with that beastmaster lately?" Zac asked.

"That poor girl?" Ryan laughed. "She comes in here every other day full of scratch marks, drinking herself into oblivion while cursing your name. You're lucky she became a beastmaster rather than a hex master."

The two kept talking for a while longer until Zac decided to head back to his courtyard. He would be thrown into constant battle the coming weeks and needed some quiet rest before war engulfed their whole planet.

“SHIT!” the sailor screamed as he almost jumped two meters straight up in the air.

A massive blue tentacle wiggled back and forth a bit behind him before it once again slunk down into the depths.

“Almost scared me to death,” the man muttered as he looked down at the azure waters with some dread. “Mr. Trang, can’t you do something about your... uh... friend?”

“Little Bau is just playing around a bit,” the old fisherman answered with a big toothless grin.

Four more tentacles suddenly appeared as though in response to Sap Trang’s comment, and they latched onto the large Creator Vessel. The ship immediately started to rock back and forth in an alarming manner. However, none of the sailors seemed alarmed after the initial surprise, and they went about their business as though the boat was pushing through still waters.

“Little Bau, that’s enough or no treat for you,” Sap Trang laughed as he walked over and slapped one of the tentacles lightly.

The tentacles quickly released the grip on the ship, but the next moment an enormous head breached the waters, rising until two eyes as large as barn doors looked at the old Vietnamese man.

Sap Trang wasn’t alarmed in the slightest, and he only laughed once more before throwing out a whole barghest carcass with a doting smile. It splashed into the water and the next second it was gone, stuffed into a huge fanged maw beneath the surface.

“That’s a good boy,” Sap Trang said as a tentacle caressed him. “Are there any dangerous beasts in the area?”

Two more tentacles started to wave in the air, and the next moment huge half-eaten shark was lifted above the surface. The shark was almost as large as the Creator vessel, but it was shrunken and withered as though it had lost all of its moisture.

Hundreds of puncture wounds were crisscrossed across its body, created from the vicious stingers that Little Bau had on a few of its tentacles. Sap still wasn’t completely sure what sort of beast he had picked up and nursed back to health.

From its tentacles, one could think that it was an enormous octopus. But it was something else entirely. It had an enormous head with a large round maw, leading to a thick torso that seldom reached above the water.

It did share some features with an octopus. For example, it did not have scales, but instead a rubbery skin that was almost impenetrable to bladed weapons. It also possessed no legs, with the torso instead ending in a dozen or so tentacles that were over twenty meters.

Interestingly enough it also had four special tentacles that grew out from the torso like arms, and those things possessed nasty stingers that could suck a huge beast dry in less than a minute. Odder still was that blood wasn’t the only thing it sucked, but it even absorbed the Cosmic Energy through the suckers.

It had been on its last breath when Sap Trang found it. It had barely won a fight against an enormous crab, but it was barely hanging on. Sap had seen an opportunity and initiated a bond with the animal through his class.

Perhaps Little Bau was unreconciled to die like that and accepted the connection even though it was far stronger than Sap himself. From there the old fisherman had poured hundreds of healing pills into its insatiable maws as he had sewed its wounds shut.

The mysterious animal had quickly healed thanks to Sap's ministrations, and afterward it started to follow along their vessel, much to the dismay of the other sailors. But they all had to admit one thing. Ever since Little Bau joined their crew they never had to worry about what lurked in the depths.

Because whatever was foolish enough to get close to their ship soon ended up in the belly of the beast.

"Just my luck," the fisherman who had initially been spooked muttered under his breath. "I get placed on the god damn ship with a pet Kraken."