

The Fall 367

Chapter 367: Playing the Part

Zac was just planning to stretch his legs before sitting down to continue his meditation, but his first session lasted much longer than he expected. So he could only give up on trying to improve his other Dao Seeds for now and headed toward the town proper. As he walked through the woods of his private domain he took the opportunity to take a gander at the attribute gains from the evolved seed.

Sharpness (Peak): Strength +15, Dexterity +90, Intelligence +10, Wisdom +5

A smile crept across his face when he saw the stats he gained. It was just as he hoped, where he got 10 points to Strength and another 50 to Dexterity. He had counted on that Dexterity boost to keep up with his increasing Strength, and it would allow him to keep focusing all his free points into his main attribute for a while longer.

There was still some time before he had agreed to reconvene with Verana and the others in the Underworld, so he walked over to the government building to meet with Abby and Adran. He had been so focused on the Incursions lately so he wanted to get a report on Port Atwood's situation. Luckily everything was going smoothly, especially the agricultural initiative that Zac infused with extra cash. It would start to yield a harvest for F-Grade Herbs in just a few months, though the E-Grade Spirit Herbs would take a while longer.

The only issue was that the sea creatures were quickly becoming more and more ferocious, and there had been a couple of incidents lately. This wasn't anything too surprising, as attacks from sea creatures was a problem that most coastal cities in the multiverse would encounter. Little Bau, Mr. Trang's terrifying pet, was helping a lot, but it couldn't be everywhere.

Luckily there were a plethora of defensive structures in the town shop, so Zac agreed to let Abby take 200 million from the town funds to upgrade the shoreline defenses for the islands he controlled. With that in hand he visited Calrin next to get an update on the situation with the Beast Crystals.

"The extraction is finished, but there's also the need to refine the gems from their raw state. But I've made an estimate and I would say you'd get around 1.8 Billion if you sold 80% of your stock," the sky gnome said with some obvious avarice in his eyes. "You also have your 1.64 billion in dividends waiting."

"How much do you think a soul-mending treasure or pill would cost?" Zac asked.

"If it was on a proper market I would say that a pill or treasure that could mend a fractured soul would cost around 500 million to a Billion Nexus Coins depending on success rate and strength of the item," the Sky Gnome said after some hesitation. "Any natural treasure will likely be on the more expensive side of the spectrum."

"That much?" Zac groaned. "It's just to heal someone in F-Grade."

"Souls are complicated and require high-quality items to fix without leaving lasting damage," Calrin sighed. "But you should know that such a treasure might become significantly more expensive in a place like the Tower of Eternity. There is a huge demand for life-saving treasures at a place like that. The price might become double, or even higher."

"Still, that means I should be fine unless something unexpected happens?" Zac sighed in relief.

"You should still gather as much Nexus Coins as possible before going," the sky gnome said. "There are bound to be a lot of great opportunities waiting for those with money at such a place!"

"Like what?" Zac asked.

"People exiting with grave wounds, forced to sell precious items at a discount to pay for healing. People desperate to gather enough funds to buy a piece of treasure that would allow them to reach higher in the tower. There are all kinds of scenarios to exploit," Calrin said, getting more and more excited as he spoke. "A closed market like that always leads to opportunities for arbitrage."

"I'll do what I can," Zac smiled as he left.

It was a good plan, but he needed money for other things as well. Finding a proper shield, for example. He was also interested in finding pills that would allow him to immediately break open nodes the moment he evolved. He already had the [Four Gates Pill], but many other pills had similar effects. His goal was to eat all his prepared treasures the moment he evolved before bursting forth against the Undead with unparalleled power.

He soon arrived in New London in his Human form, and his arrival caused some commotion when people of the Union realized who he was. He didn't hide his movements since he wanted people to know about his contribution in the fight against the Fire Golems. People gazed at him with fear or admiration as he walked through the halls with a few Valkyries following behind.

The reason for fighting against the golems in his human form, even though he still needed two levels to reach peak F-Grade in his Draugr-form, was that he felt the risks of using his undead form were too great. Undying Bulwark relied on slowly grinding his enemies to dust, whereas Hatchetman could end the fight in seconds.

The Golems were the strongest invaders in the Underworld, and he was afraid that something unexpected would happen, allowing them to turn the situation around or cause massive casualties amongst his people. It was a bit of a shame that any Cosmic Energy he gained from the kills would be lost, but he felt it was worth it.

Verana and Harvath were already waiting in a large meeting room when he arrived, and they seemed to have recovered from their slightly haggard expressions after they close down the third Incursion together a few days ago.

"Is everything ready?" Zac asked.

"Everything is ready from this side," Verana and Havath immediately confirmed. "Will the others from Port Atwood Join us?"

"A small group of elites will join me, but most are still focusing on the undead threat," Zac said. "I don't think a large army will help against a force like the Golems. They'll just spew lava over everything and it will be hard to defend against."

"It sounds reasonable, though I believe our army should be slightly larger this time. Perhaps a hundred people, with another 50 for support," Verana said. "The golems are strong, and we will need more than

one unit to create defensively layers. Oh, and it would be best if you headed to Glimthain to coordinate a joint assault."

Glimthain was the main town that the Council controlled. It was an Ishiate town and was once upon a time the capital of the technology-leaning faction among the beastmen. It was placed in the open Underworld, but it was a true stronghold even before the integration, making it a natural choice of headquarter for a faction that fought the Fire Golems.

"I was planning on heading there anyway," Zac nodded. "I have some things to discuss with the Council."

Meeting the council was another reason he wanted to come to the underworld in his human form this time. He needed to enlist the strongest warriors around in the fight against the Undead Empire. Even if he managed to get stronger he was still just one man, and there were so many zombies by now.

"We should make our sortie spectacular," Joanna suddenly spoke up from the side. "They need to know that the Super Brother-Man has arrived and that he will end the threat of the invaders."

With that she excitedly took out what initially looked like a pike, but Zac realized that it was actually a banner when she fastened a large cloth to it. Zac shot a bemused look at Joanna before he took a gander at the banner's design. It was emerald green with black and gold details, and the motif was the four mountain peaks of his island. Beneath the summits there was a shield with an axe as a motif, looking like a nobleman's family crest. It looked quite domineering. It almost felt like something that could have belonged to an old European family.

"What's this?" Zac asked with confusion.

"It's the banner for Port Atwood," Joanna said with glee in her eyes. "I learned from Ms. Tir'Emarel that it's a common practice in the Multiverse as well, and we needed something to display who we were."

"Please, Verana is fine," the Beast Master smiled.

"The black and green are representative of your two, ahem, identities, and the gold is there to make it look regal. The mountains are the largest landmark on your island and the axe and shield represent your authority. Do you like it?" Verana smiled.

"It's pretty cool," Zac willingly admitted. "But I'd feel a bit embarrassed if I would parade such a thing around."

"You don't carry this thing, leave that to us. You only need to walk in the front, preferably releasing some of your aura," Joanna said.

"... Fine," Zac sighed. "If this will get people to willingly follow me into the war against the undead."

"One thing?" Joanna hesitantly added. "Do you think you could put on a pair of shoes?"

Zac blankly looked at the Valkyrie for a few seconds before he looked down on his feet. He never even reflected on the fact that he never wore shoes any longer while in his human form. He had already figured out a way to passively utilize a small amount of cosmic energy to keep his feet clean and not let any grime stick. But it would perhaps look a bit odd if he walked around barefoot.

“You can ride Grub as well,” Verana smiled. “He liked fighting with you, he felt very mighty ramming into the enemies’ line with your shield as protection.”

The two kept coaching Zac on how to make a proper impression on the underworld as the army prepared to sortie. Only a few of the warriors would stay in the underworld, whereas the rest would join the main army in the fight against the zombies. It only took less than ten minutes before everything was dealt with, and the gates of the Union headquarters opened up to let out the forces of Port Atwood.

A few people started running for their lives as the intimidating procession made its way through New London, but even more people stayed to watch in the excitement. Almost everyone in the area had already learned that people from the surface had arrived to New London and that they were led by the Super Brother-Man, but only a few had seen them since they stayed holed up inside the Union headquarters most of the time.

People had been gathering outside the gates since the news spread, either hoping to see the aliens under Zac's command or try to buy a ticket out of the Underworld. But now they didn't need to strain to see a glimpse of them as they marched through the main street full of vigor.

Zac knew of the people's desire to return to the surface, but Port Atwood hadn't let anyone leave just yet. He wanted to finish up everything before he led an exodus out of this area. And he couldn't let everyone just leave. There was a huge amount of wealth down here that needed to be extracted to strengthen Earth's forces. All these things would be needed not only in the fight against the invaders but also to turn Earth into a powerful planet before the System's protection ended.

Zac rode in the front, sitting on Grub's head as the enormous beast trudged forward, each step causing a small earthquake. The only people walking in front of him were two Valkyries, each one holding one of the newly created banners. The air around him twisted and bent as he let his aura spread out to a certain degree. Behind him his armies walked in orderly lines, each soldier radiating a tremendous pressure that made the spectators gasp in awe.

It looked like the Demons and Tal-Eladar had gotten caught up in who could shock the spectators more, and each of the demonkin soldiers radiated a massive battle intent with most of them even having released weak Dao Fields. Zac didn't stop him since he knew that such weak Fields wouldn't be able to harm anyone in the area apart from putting people under some pressure.

But unfortunately for the demons it was hard for them to match the glory of the Tal-Eladar, who were assisted by their massive beasts. One tremendous roar after another made the whole area shake as the Tir'Emarel rode their battle beasts behind Zac. Most impressive was of course Verana, who rode on Slither's head, the snake alone taking up the whole road due to its massive size.

The whole thing felt a bit excessive and embarrassing, but Zac followed Joanna's instructions and only sat unmoving with a neutral face. Joanna, who essentially had turned into his PR Director at this point, said it was not only about prestige but also about giving the people of the Underworld hope. They had been suppressed by the Fire Golems for almost a year, and almost everyone had lost a family member or friend to their actions.

This procession would show them that Earth hadn't given up, that a resurgence was coming.