

## The Fall 374

### Chapter 374: Dao of the Axe

Seeing the horrifying display of his skill Zac's resolve started to waver, but he soon steeled his heart. He had already confirmed with the Marshall Clan that this particular Incursion hadn't shown any mercy, and quite a large number of people had been enslaved and killed by them. Besides, getting killed by a swing of an axe was only marginally better than getting hollowed out by the spectral chains.

The birdman leader screeched in rage as he saw his underlings getting culled one by one, and he desperately tried to take Zac down. He had some sort of wind-related class, and he moved with tremendous speed to attack Zac from various angles like flashes of lightning. One wound after another started to appear on Zac's body as though they came from nowhere, but Zac didn't mind in the slightest.

Undying Bulwark was truly the nemesis of Dexterity-based warriors. He wasn't able to block out the skills, but why should he even try? In less than thirty seconds the birdman general was drenched in blood from his own attacks. The ghosts from [Deathwish] had dragged him into a dance of death, and there was no way that Zac wouldn't be the last one standing in such a struggle. Zac himself had quite a few flesh wounds, but it was nothing a normal healing pill wouldn't fix in a couple of hours.

Soon enough the birdman leader gave up on the assault and caused a rain of blood when he shot toward the wall of [Profane Seal]. But he couldn't even escape the ghosts over on the other side of the cage, and he finally fell with an anguished wail when he unleashed a flurry of wind blades against one of the towers.

The battle was pretty much over by that point, as almost all of the trapped warriors had already fallen to the onslaught of the combination of the chains and the corrosive mists from [Winds of Decay]. The remaining warriors outside had long given up, and they frantically fled toward the Nexus Hub along with the non-combat invaders. They were all essentially walking Nexus Crystals, but Zac allowed the survivors to leave through the Hub even though he desperately needed to gain levels.

This was something he had already decided on earlier. He wouldn't start slaughtering people indiscriminately in pursuit of power, and he would stop the moment the fight was over. Besides, he had already killed the leader and his two generals, and those three alone were worth far more Cosmic Energy compared to the remaining army combined.

The whole town was completely desolate in less than ten minutes, and the usual process of integrating the area into a part of Port Atwood began. A group of professionals from Port Atwood immediately streamed out of the Teleportation Array less than 30 minutes after it was built. His people had become experts at quickly and efficiently integrating conquered incursions, from emancipating slaves to sniffing out all valuables in the area.

Zac sat down, as usual, to go over the battle and recuperate. He didn't have any major gains from the battle just as he expected, but it did allow him to become slightly more accustomed to his improved Dao and skills, including the Dao of Sharpness he didn't really get to showcase against the Golems.

The power of his Seed of Sharpness was amazing by this point, and his very presence was dangerous to people who had yet Evolved. Small cuts would appear on their bodies, quickly accumulating to the point that they started to get seriously hurt. Even the weaker of the evolved were slightly affected by the Dao

Field, and while he wasn't able to draw blood it looked like their concentration was impacted by the constant scratching of invisible blades.

Zac himself only waited out the 8-hour time limit while resting, and pondering on the results of the battle. The most interesting thing was the upgraded version of [Profane Seal]. The additional structures made him look forward to how the skill would look when he reached the peak. Would it create a whole fortress with an impenetrable wall?

The only unfortunate aspect of the skill was that he wasn't able to infuse it with a Dao, which caused the chain's effect on strong opponents to be pretty limited. The Demon Lord had directly rebuffed them with a fiery aura, and the Cyborg simply disintegrated them with its aura. Perhaps the chains would have lasted longer if he could have infused them with the Dao of Hardness.

Perhaps the skill was the same as [Deforestation]. It was a skill given by an Epic class, and maybe those had higher requirements on the Dao to be used, and perhaps he was even expected to have formed a Fragment from Sanctuary and Hardness by this point if going by the class archetype. But he was dragged out of his musings before reaching a conclusion as Verana walked toward him.

"Your strength is getting pretty shocking," Verana said as she sat down next to him. "I am starting to wonder if our presence is even needed when you take down these Incursions. You are becoming an army unto your own."

"I still need people to stabilize the situation outside the cage," Zac said with a shake of his head. "It seems the seal is far weaker from the outside. Besides, it's good training for the future elites of Port Atwood."

"Still, it makes me expectant for the future. It is not often you get to see the ascent of a true powerhouse," Verana sighed.

Zac's initially smiled, but suddenly looked over at the Beast Master with suspicion.

"Okay, what do you want?" Zac asked.

"Tylia told me about the Beast Crystals after we closed the Golem Incursion," Verana said with a roll of her eyes as she sat down in front of him.

"I'm sorry, there's only so many in my hands," Zac said. "And we have quite a few beasts in Port Atwood as well."

"I am guessing you have gotten your hands on a mine though," Verana said. "More crystals will grow."

Zac didn't deny that, as it was pretty obvious he wouldn't just find one high-grade Beast Crystal randomly lying in a corner of the Underworld.

"You should know that we never planned on staying on your planet for a hundred years, but here we are. Our reserves will not last that long. We'd like to buy a share in the mine itself to secure supply," the Tal-Eladar said, finally putting the cards on the table.

"It's not impossible," Zac slowly said. "But do you even have the Nexus Coins for such a transaction?"

"Not yet, but I hope you'll remember your words in a year or two," Verana smiled as she stood up.

Zac sighed when he realized that she wasn't interested in paying up now, but rather only wanted to sound out the possibility. It was the better option of her, of course, since it wouldn't do her much good to spend all her current wealth on a completely stripped mine.

He didn't know how quickly Beast Crystals grew, but he couldn't imagine it was too fast. It would probably take years before new low-grade crystals sprouted. But he needed the money now, so he had no choice but to be a bit shameless.

"A few years is so long, and my memory isn't what it once was," Zac coughed as he stood up.

Verana stopped in her tracks and looked back at him with an even stare.

"I guess you have some means to strengthen your memory, no? Perhaps if I paid a bit up-front?" she said with a flat tone, and Zac could feel his ears heating up a bit. "How much?"

"Oh, not much. One billion would do," Zac said with a smile.

"A BILLION?!" Verana roared, making Lulu who was sleeping in her arms jump up in fright. "ARE YOU CRAZY?"

The two entered a fierce negotiation from there, but it was clear that Verana really needed the crystals. Unfortunately, she was truly unable to fork out so much money, but Zac walked away with another 500 million Nexus Coins in the end, with the additional promise that the Tal-Eladar would assist in teaching Beast Mastery at the Atwood Academy.

Those nexus coins were likely a large part of the combined wealth the Tal-Eladar had scrounged up in the Underworld, but they fell into the hands of Zac in the end. It wasn't as much as his other sources of Nexus Coins, but it would give him a bit more breathing room when he visited the Tower of Eternity.

Zac returned to Port Atwood after having completed his mission and changed back to his human form after he arrived at his compound. He didn't reach level 74, but he felt he was over half-way there. He would likely just need to close two or three more Incursions to reach level 75.

Kenzie was actually in her courtyard when Zac looked for her, and her eyes were peeled at an extremely intricate blueprint.

"What are you doing?" Zac asked with interest as he walked over.

He immediately saw the blueprint was of the house she was building in the academy, but there were a ton of fractals and lines that Zac couldn't understand at all.

"Jeeves and I are looking over the schematic, to make sure we don't miss anything," Kenzie said, her eyes a bit bloodshot.

"Are you ok?" Zac asked with some worry. "It's okay to take a breather and rest. It will help you avoid mistakes as well."

"Jeeves doesn't make mistakes even when I'm tired," Kenzie smiled. "Besides, everyone is pushing themselves to save our planet. I can't laze about."

"So how's it going?" Zac asked, knowing he wouldn't be able to get her to rest.

"It's pretty much done," Kenzie said. "I will just need a day of testing the arrays and the energy flows to make sure no one made a mistake while setting everything up."

"One day?" Zac said, his eyes lighting up. "That's great."

"Have you decided on who will join us?"

"Not completely," Zac admitted. "Only the inner layer. How many do you think would be able to sit in the outer layers?"

"I think we could fit 30 people or so? If I make the area any larger I can't reliably contain the energies," Kenzie said after thinking it over.

"Can you ask Alyn, Joanna, and Ilvere to nominate 9 people each? I also want to offer spots to Ryan, Lyla, and Ibtep if we can reach him."

The insectoid had joined Nonet and was currently fighting the Undead Empire along with the Zhix hordes. The communications were sporadic, but he knew that they were still alive two weeks ago at least, and that hive Kundevis was part of a roving squad that had split off from the main Zhix army to hunt the smaller hordes.

That, unfortunately, meant that Zac currently had no means to contact him, and he also couldn't hold up the activation of the funnel for them. It would be up to fate if they could join.

"What about Thea and the others?" Kenzie asked. "Shouldn't we invite them too?"

"...No," Zac finally said. "I want to use this opportunity solely for people of Port Atwood. That means that Verana and the Tal-Eladar won't join either."

It took a lot of deliberation, but Zac had eventually arrived at the conscious decision to not invite anyone that wasn't part of his force. That included both Billy and Thea who he trusted, but who were ultimately allies in charge of their own forces. The same went for Verana. She was a trading partner, not an actual member of Port Atwood. The Tal-Eladar had been helpful lately, but it was essentially a business transaction since they gained something every time they joined him in battle.

Keeping it all for themselves might be selfish, but Zac and Ogras had risked their lives for the opportunity and they wanted to keep all the benefits for themselves. Truthfully, if they could keep all the Origin Dao for just the two of them, they would probably have done so since that would have the greatest impact in the fight against the invaders and the Dominators.

But since that was impossible they could only use the spillover to create more powerhouses in Port Atwood. Kenzie didn't look too pleased about his decision, but she didn't contradict him in the end.

"I will enter meditation for a day to solidify my Dao," Zac said as he stood up to leave. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Zac did just what he said he would do and entered his courtyard. His goal for tomorrow was to finally form a Dao Fragment, and he hoped to increase his chances of succeeding if he could find a direction to take the first step. He closed off all outside interference before he took out [Verun's Bite]. His eyes wandered over the axe over and over, trying to glean any type of truth or inspiration from its form or by how it felt in his hands.

Just what was the Dao of the Axe?