

The Fall 381

Chapter 381: Options

Zac's confusion only grew when he couldn't find the Nexus Hub even after entering the town, and he realized he needed some answers. Zac quickly ran after the fleeing frogman and jumped into the ocean himself, but even with his superior attributes he had a hard time catching up with them. They were simply better suited to move quickly underwater with the help of their four arms and huge webbed feet.

The hunt went on for almost twenty minutes, and the frogmen fled in a straight line while harassing Zac with various attacks to keep him at bay. He tried to respond in kind, but he wasn't really used to fighting underwater. It added a whole new dimension to the battle, as the targets were not only noticeably faster, but they could freely move in essentially any direction.

His undead class was also extremely bad at this type of fighting as it both lacked movement skills and ranged attacks. His acquired skill [Winds of Decay] could reluctantly be classified as ranged, but he was unable to use it underwater. The only thing he had going for him was that he didn't need to breathe, so he could keep paddling forward as to not let his prey out of his sight.

Zac considered swapping to his other class to start launching fractal blades at the frogmen, but he soon stopped in his tracks when he realized what was going on. Not far ahead a sprawling underwater town stretched out, and the frogmen fled toward a square in the middle. There were still some frogmen in the square, cramming toward the center to touch the enormous crystal placed there.

A cursory glance proved that the place was already mostly evacuated though, probably since the frogmen had plenty of time to leave. Zac had to admit it was a pretty ingenious way to protect their people. The town on the shore was just a decoy or an outpost, while their real base was far out to sea.

The Nexus Hub was actually underwater, which probably explained why there was no pillar to be seen at the surface. The pillar had already been deactivated by now since he had defeated the leader of the incursion, but he noticed that there was an uncharacteristic haze above the water. Perhaps the mist was created by an array in a bid by the frogmen to hide the true seat of their power.

The frogmen that he had followed were actually streaming toward the Nexus Hub rather than some hideout in the ocean, and Zac allowed them to exit now that he knew that they didn't plan on staying on earth. He was more interested in checking out the underwater town, since it was the first time seeing something like this.

Some of the structures were completely submerged in water, but other sections of the town were enveloped by enormous water bubbles, making them habitable by humans as well. Zac felt a place like this would make a decent hidden base, as long as they could figure out how to actually make sure that the pockets of water didn't disappear.

He was also extremely eager to get a hold of this kind of technology, as it might allow him to expand his kingdom to the waters as well. He was sure there were all kinds of valuables hiding in the depths around his islands, but he didn't have a way to properly extract them until now. If he could create mobile air bubbles he'd be able to send people to scout the ocean floor from everything from mines to rare Spirit Herbs.

Things progressed the usual manner from there on out as a troop of people emerged from the Teleportation Array Zac set up within one of the larger air bubbles. Exploring an underwater town would bring its own set of difficulties, but Zac would let others figure that out as he left through the teleportation array to pick up Jonas, the guide from the Marshall Clan.

The following days were just a storm of blood and steel as Zac moved through the continent of Pangea like a walking calamity. Between his unbreakable defense and the terrifying might of his Dao Fragment, nothing could hinder his path. One incursion after another was shut down as Zac wasted no time. He would have plenty of time to rest in the tower, so now was the time for action.

Jonas Marshall who was forced to guide 'Mr. Black' looked more and more horrified as the days passed, and he didn't even dare to speak up or look in Zac's direction after he had closed three Incursions in less than two days.

Zac didn't care though, as the only thing on his mind was to crush all lingering threats to Earth before he left, or at least those he could handle now. He only returned to Port Atwood after four days of relentless battle, but his hard work had paid off. He had closed every single Incursion on his list.

As far as Zac and the Marshall Clan could tell there were currently only 5 Incursions left on Earth after Zac's rampage, or 7 if you included the Demons and Tal-Eladar. One was the Church of Everlasting Dao, and another was the Undead Empire.

The final three incursions were invaders who had been unlucky enough to be placed next to the Undead Empire itself, and they were all currently embroiled in battle with the undead hordes. They probably didn't fight to help Earth, but rather to prolong their stay so that they could extract more resources from Earth.

No matter their reasons they could still be counted as reluctant allies against the Lich King, so Zac left them alone even though he had the ability to close them down as well. Shutting down all those Incursions had given him a tremendous boost to his confidence, something that he had slightly lacked since encountering the Cyborg. A Dao Fragment provided a far larger boost to his fighting power than upgrading his skills ever could.

But most importantly he had reached his goal; he had finally reached level 75 with his Undying Bulwark Class. He had been forced to head over to Mystic Island and grind the final stretch for a few hours after closing the last Incursion on his list, but he actually made it. He sat down to catch his breath the moment he entered his courtyard, and he opened up his menu before changing back to his human form.

Name

Zachary Atwood

Level

75

Class

[F-Epic] Undying Bulwark

Race

[E] Draugr

Alignment

[Earth] Port Atwood - Lord

Titles

Born for Carnage, Ultimate Reaper, Luck of the Draw, Giantsbane, Disciple of David, Overpowered, Slayer of Leviathans, Adventurer, Demon Slayer I, Full of Class, Rarified Being, Trailblazer, Child of Dao, The Big 500, Planetary Aegis, One Against Many, Butcher, Progenitor Noblesse, Duplicity Core, Apex Hunter, Heaven's Chosen, Scion of Dao, Omnidextrous, Eastern Trigram Hunt - 1st, Tyrannic Force, Achievement Hunter, The First Step, Promising Specialist

Limited Titles

Frontrunner

Dao

Fragment of the Axe - Early, Seed of Trees - Peak, Seed of Hardness - Peak , Seed of Sanctuary - Peak, Seed of Rot - Peak

Core

[F] Duplicity

Strength

798 [Increase: 60%. Efficiency: 147%]

Dexterity

400 [Increase: 45%. Efficiency: 140%]

Endurance

1175 [Increase: 65%. Efficiency: 140%]

Vitality

567 [Increase: 50%. Efficiency: 140%]

Intelligence

218 [Increase: 45%. Efficiency: 140%]

Wisdom

313 [Increase: 45%. Efficiency: 140%]

Luck

165 [Increase: 65%. Efficiency: 140%]

Free Points

19

Nexus Coins

[F] 871 111 618

He had once again been given 20 attribute points rather than 2 from reaching peak F-Grade, one of which was taken by his class. Zac only briefly hesitated before he threw everything into Strength, pushing him one step closer to his goal of getting 1 000 in that attribute before he Evolved.

He had also gained a hefty amount of Nexus Coins, even excluding the 500 million he got from Verana earlier. But that wasn't what truly interested him at this moment, and he quickly opened up his quest menu to have a look at his new quests.

Vanguard of Undeath (Class): Obtain a defensive Dao Fragment. Reward: Vanguard of Undeath skill. (0/1)

Undying Legion (Class): Gather the resentment by vanquishing 500 000 foes Reward: Undying Legion skill. (500 000/500 000) COMPLETE.

There were two new class quests as expected, but he felt a surge of elation when he saw that one of them was actually already completed. The moment he focused on the quest it immediately disappeared from the list, forming a fractal around his right wrist.

After the moment of happiness passed Zac started to frown in consternation though. The quest had been to kill 500 000 things, something he had long accomplished between the beast hordes, all the zombies, and his grinding during the Hunt. But what did 'gather the resentment' mean? Was he carrying around a bunch of resentment unknowingly?

He remembered the horrible scenes elicited by the Dao Funnel, and he started to worry that he might be setting himself up for disaster if he didn't cleanse the resentment somehow. Perhaps it was something like Karma. He was bound to kill a lot more beings than most due to not being able to cultivate, and this was potentially a hidden danger that he needed to watch out for.

Dealing with resentment was outside of his expertise, and he made a mental note of having Kenzie ask Brazla about it. The two of them had a far better relationship, and the chance of the annoying Tool Spirit divulging information was a lot higher if she was the one asking.

He held off on activating [Undying Legion] in Port Atwood, and instead focused on [Vanguard of Undeath]. The second class quest wasn't surprising at all, as it essentially mirrored the one for [Hatchetman's Spirit]. Luckily it didn't demand him to reach Middle mastery of a Dao Fragment due to being a quest for an Epic class, but the quest did present another problem.

He had already decided to walk his own path, forgoing fusing Sanctuary with Hardness to instead entering the path of Life and Death. Would his fragments still be considered Defensive? Yrial mentioned Fragment of the Corpse when they spoke, and that didn't sound much like a Defensive Dao. It rather seemed to be on the path of death, or perhaps puppetry or control. But his Seed of Trees was at least considered defensive for his last quest, and hopefully that trend would continue.

In either case, the skill would have to wait since he hadn't gained any inspiration that would allow him to fuse either of his two remaining fragments. He could only put his hopes on some opportunity presenting itself in the Tower or the Base Town.

Since he was done with everything he needed to do he swapped back to his human form, but he didn't immediately leave to find Ogras or his sister. He rather headed over to the Nexus Node once more, hoping to get a better result this time. His heart was pounding in his chest as he touched the large crystal once more.

[E-Rare] Fallen Groveskeeper (The grove fell, but you took on its torment.) // [E-Epic] Undying Warlord (Unstoppable. Undeniable. Unmatched.)

[E-Rare] Mountain's Ward (Defender of the mountain; stout and unyielding.) // [E-Epic] Curse of Nature (All can be corrupted, even life itself.)

It was like a huge weight was lifted from his chest when he saw that there were actual options available for him to pick this time around. It meant that it was the level of his Undying Bulwark-class that had been holding him back, rather than the Duplicity core or something else.

Of course, he still felt he would need to put some priority in upgrading the Specialty core since having an F-grade core when he proceeded to E-Grade might result in unanticipated issues. For example, his Duplicity core was unique, giving him a full set of attributes for his second class. What if he needed to upgrade his Core for that to continue? He could stand to lose a huge amount of attribute points if it worked like that.

Zac carefully read through the classes and their descriptions, before he quickly removed his hand from the Nexus Node to avoid any mishaps or bouts of impulsivity. But he didn't walk away, but he rather stood frozen in place as he looked into the distance with some loss and confusion.

He had to admit that he was extremely disappointed with his options. He had expected there to be at least one Arcane class to pick considering his insane amount of attribute points, titles, and achievements. But he didn't even have two Epic Classes to fall back on, with his human form still being relegated to a Rare class.

Was this some sort of punishment from the System for his heritage? He had already speculated the System had it out for him before, but was it actually true? Or was he still lacking in other departments to the point that he couldn't even get two Epic classes? Only after a few minutes did he manage to steady his mind and go over the facts.

The situation was disappointing, but Zac believed he had gained a few clues as to how the System would handle his dual classes. The most obvious thing was that it didn't let him independently pick his two classes, but they rather came in pairs. It meant that his idea of only evolving one class and returning to the Tower that way was out.

The combined class evolution provided a few more clues as well. The most striking thing was the fact that his Fragment of the Axe could not be used as a prerequisite to evolve both his classes.

His struggles were clearly far from over.