

## The Fall 422

### Chapter 422: Road to 1000

From one of the cracks in the ground Zac could see a flickering light, but when he peered into it he couldn't see what the source was. It did however reignite Zac's hope, and he started to cut his way into the mountain with the help of his axe.

The light steadily grew brighter as he made his way down, and he suddenly found himself in a passageway that was clearly not naturally formed. There was a tunnel hiding 50 meters down from the summit, and as Zac followed it even further down into the heart of the mountain found that it led to an opulent cultivation cave.

Thick rugs from unknown animals covered the ground, and all kinds of ornaments and treasures were strewn around the floor. There were even small mountains of Nexus Crystals almost touching the ceiling, no doubt a vast wealth for anyone in the F-Grade.

The exorbitant interiors were diametrically opposite from the image of an erudite master, and Zac thanked the heavens for sending the paranoid demon to his side. If Ogras' distrust hadn't rubbed off on him he would have been completely immersed in the training session, taking the behavior of the old demon as the desire of a dying warrior to leave behind something for the world.

Even if he had survived the encounter he would have simply entered the teleporter as it appeared.

But not everyone cared about leaving an inheritance. In fact, most wandering cultivators had no intention of doing so unless they settled down. Even in established factions it wasn't uncommon for an old master to barely leave anything behind. All the wealth they had gathered over the years would already have been used to prolong their own lifespans and to desperately try to breakthrough.

Zac didn't know why the old goat didn't keep all of his wealth inside a cosmos sack, but it made things easier for him as he swept through the Cultivation Cave, leaving nothing behind. But he wasn't content even after that, and he kept cutting through the mountain walls for over an hour until he found a small hidden pocket with a Cosmos Sack inside.

This was what he had looked for, as there was a rough crystal lying inside. It did look a bit worn though, meaning it had already been used. It started to feel a bit likely that the skill wasn't even something that the demon had come up with, but rather something he had found through a fortuitous encounter.

The Cosmos Sack was also filled with various high-grade treasures, at least for a wandering F-Grade cultivator. There were only a dozen or so crystals, but all of them were E-Grade and Life-attuned, perhaps used to help prolong life. There were also a couple of pills and a few manuals, but Zac didn't go through them one by one, but rather threw them all in his Cosmos Sack.

He wouldn't mess with pills or natural treasures he found while climbing unless he could be sure what they were, and if the items stayed on after the climb he could have Galau or Calrin identify them.

He did immediately teach himself the skill though, and a new fractal appeared right above his navel. It was a disappointing placement, as he knew that it was a pretty common position for class skills. It was close to where the cultivation core would be placed, or rather close to where his Specialty Core was currently nestled.

It was no problem right now, but it was extremely likely that his Class would provide a skill for that location sooner or later, meaning that he would get limited usage of [True Strike]. But that was a problem for the future.

Who knew, it was possible he wouldn't get a skill for that slot until he became D-Grade. And this was an issue that all warriors eventually encountered. Zac was pretty lucky that he hadn't encountered any clashes between his skills so far, even though he had used up more than half of his Skill Sockets.

But sooner or later he would have to start discarding skills to make room for stronger ones, or skills that better suited his cultivation path.

Zac quickly returned to the summit after having found what he looked for, and to his surprise he saw a dozen of the little beings he encountered earlier. They all silently stood in the distance, a couple of them swaddled in bandages, no doubt a result of Zac manhandling them during the climb.

Thankfully there was no animosity in their eyes when Zac appeared, and they bowed in respect when they saw him arrive. Zac nodded in response, realizing that the demon might have been a scourge to the area. The 'erudite master' still had taught Zac a few valuable lessons though. It might just have been a ruse designed to let his guard down, but he could still be considered one of his teachers.

So Zac also gave the unmoving body of the old demon a small bow before he stepped through the teleporter.

[Fourth Floor Complete. Upgrading Title.]

[Choose Reward: High-Grade Strength Fruit, High-Grade Dexterity Fruit, High-Grade Intelligence Fruit]

Zac's eyes lit up when he saw the rewards, but he held off on choosing and instead opted to first check out his Title.

[Tower of Eternity - 4th Floor: Reach the 37th level of the Tower of Eternity. Reward: All stats +10. Strength +5%, Endurance +5%, Vitality +5%]

Zac nodded in satisfaction. The bonuses followed the same patterns as the first three floors of the towers, where he first got a bonus that improved his three "main" attributes. This pattern would continue for the following two floors as well.

As for the final three floors, Zac had no idea. He assumed that he would gain Efficiency in the same manner as the earlier floors, but he couldn't be certain. Not even Galau could confidently answer what was the case as too few people in their sector reached those floors. However, Galau did mention a rumor that the top climbers were more interested in the floor rewards than the titles.

The quality of the items that the System Rewarded had steadily risen, and now it presented something that Zac hadn't even encountered in the Base Town. Attribute Fruits, and High-grade ones at that. Even the best fruits he got his hands on in the hunt were only mid-grade.

Unfortunately there were no Luck fruits or All Attribute fruits, but Zac figured that those kinds of fruits still might appear on a higher floor. His eyes went back and forth between his options as he tried to decide what to get. He could immediately discard the Intelligence fruit since it was the most useless Attribute for him, but he wasn't sure which to pick among the other two.

Dexterity would help him maintain the balance, which would get especially skewed as he kept improving his Dao of the Axe. But he still chose Strength in the end, for a simple reason. He still hadn't given up his desire to reach 1000 Strength before he evolved. He hoped that would not only provide him with better Class options, but also counteract the effect of his massive Endurance pool.

He didn't want to get stuck with two tank classes because he had enough Endurance for three men.

The darkness started to scatter as he'd made his choice, and he found himself facing a hulking warrior clad in spiked armor. He held a sword in each hand and radiated dense killing intent as he took a step toward Zac. Zac put away his attribute fruit while jumping away a few meters to get a better understanding of what was going on, and the quest prompt appeared just as he landed.

[End the tradition of slave deathmatches to settle disputes.]

A quest to enact social reform? How was he supposed to do that without wasting a lot of time? Was the system expecting him to make a grand speech or something? Zac shuddered at the thought as he looked around the packed masses.

His eyes instead found a likely target for a guardian, immediately discarding any thought of completing the level the proper way. It was an extremely obese man who sat at a seat of honor, overlooking the fight while he was fed some sort of fruits by what was obviously slaves.

"Hey, I want to kill that fat guy. Will you help me?" Zac said to the gladiator. "Do you know anything about the arrays in this place?"

But the other gladiator didn't as much as react to his words, and he once again tried to kill him. Zac could only sigh as he flashed forward and punched the gladiator with enough force to throw him like a ragdoll. The man soared like a projectile straight toward the corpulent man who looked on with interest.

A blue shimmering wall lit up just as the gladiator was about to leave the arena, and Zac noticed a small surge of energy to his left. It was a pillar just a few meters away from him, and there were a couple of more just like them.

Zac didn't delay a second, and he immediately shot out toward the fat despot while he shot out huge fractal blades imbued with the Fragment of the Axe in rapid succession. Each of them slammed into one of the pillars almost at the same time, and the barrier protecting the array flags wasn't strong enough to withstand strikes at multiple of its weak spots at once.

A snap echoed out across the arena as the shields failed, and a resounding crash followed when the pillars were turned into rubble. Seeing that over half the array flags were broken, Zac immediately jumped toward the luxurious seats.

The fat leader's cheeks jiggled in fear, and he screamed as he frantically took out a token hanging around his chest. It immediately lit up, and Zac found himself slamming into the ground like a comet. It was a gravity array that had been erected, and it was the strongest one Zac had encountered since he waked through the Zethaya Pill House entrance.

To more precise, it was exactly the same as what he had encountered, which made Zac ponder while he got back to his feet. Was this intentional? Had the Zethaya set it up so that those with enough power to

reach the 5th floor would be able to enter their store? It wouldn't be too hard for them to set something like that up.

There was one difference compared to the previous time he was inside an array like this. Zac wasn't trying to impress anyone by toughing it out with only his body. He immediately released his Dao Field for the axe, causing one shallow cut after another to appear on the ground around him.

The Dao Field helped him counteract the suppressive force to a pretty large degree, and Zac didn't have any trouble moving about any longer. One swing was all it took to destroy a hastily erected back-up shield that the fat man's bodyguards set up, and with two quick steps he found himself in front of his target.

"Wait, I can pay you!" the man trembled.

"Is this arena yours?" Zac simply asked.

"Yes, yes!" the man fervently nodded. "I'll gift it to you, it's yours. The slaves as well!"

Zac only answered with a swing of [Verun's Bite]. However, a ruthless gleam appeared in the man's eyes and he launched a massive burst of flames that drowned Zac before it continued to cover half the arena.

A snort could be heard from inside the inferno and a bestial roar followed as the flames were forcibly ripped apart by a swing of Zac's axe. The merchant could only helplessly look on as his torso separated from his legs before he succumbed to death.

Zac bent over the corpse to look for anything of value, but the man didn't even carry a Cosmos Sack.

At least the encounter gave him a decent hint of the strength required for the 5th floor, and he was pleasantly surprised to realize that the strength of the arena master was roughly the same power as the bandit lord on the floor where he left off Galau.

It meant that the 5th floor would barely be any harder than the 4th, except that the quests would likely turn more complicated or require more advanced knowledge. Not having to deal with the 40% bonus of his enemies was pretty nice, and Zac immediately felt that reaching the sixth floor was a given.

As for the 7th and higher, he would have to wait and see.

It was also good news for Ogras. Unless the demon encountered some sort of situation that directly countered his skillset, then conquering the fifth floor was a distinct possibility. Getting two top tier rewards and a boost in attributes would come in handy for the upcoming fights.

The silence was deafening in the arena as Zac stood over the bisected corpse of the arena master, no one dared to either flee or speak up in fear that they would be targeted by the crazed gladiator. Zac didn't care about their reaction as he surveyed his surroundings, but his eyes lit up when he saw that the teleporter had already appeared in the middle of the arena, and he flashed over.

He had been afraid that killing the arena master wouldn't be enough, and that the real guardian was the Lord of the town or something like that. Luckily, the System had thrown him a bone, handing out an easy one on the first level.

Zac stepped onto the teleporter without bothering to explain himself to the still reeling spectators of the arena. He had started to become a bit numb to the various people he encountered, and he couldn't really be bothered to treat them differently than if they were puppets.

His mind was only focused on climbing higher.