

The Fall 434

Chapter 434: Repurpose

The departure of the spectral warriors left only Zac and the remaining inside the cage, along with a hundred decaying bodies that slowly replenished his reserves with miasma. He was still uncomfortably low on energy though, so he bit down on a pitch-black pill that turned into a thick sludge that ran down his throat. A surge of miasma spread through his body, almost instantly restoring a fifth of his miasma reserves.

Zac tried to not to think of the foul taste of the [Warrior Pill] he just ate as he swapped out [Verun's Bite] for one of his disposable axes. It was a pill that had a similar effect as Cosmic Water but without the downsides as long as you used them in moderation. The [Warrior Pill] was a lot weaker than the water though, and you could only eat one a day before side effects started to crop up.

Next he dispelled [Vanguard of Undeath] and shrunk back to his original size. He wanted to experiment with his Daos, and he had found that his control got even worse in his transformed body. Miasma kept churning around in his body to keep the miasmatic armor and weaponry active, which might cause some interference.

Or it was just the fact that the spiritual energy needed to travel further when his body was bigger.

The air around Zac started to shudder as he unleashed his Dao field for his Axe Fragment to the utmost. The ant seemed to sense the threat and attempted to ambush him, but Zac kept dodging as he tried to regain the feeling he had during the Dao Discourse.

It was obviously harder to concentrate with a massive beast trying to skewer you, but Zac felt that it was far easier to make breakthroughs mid-battle compared to sitting alone in a courtyard meditating. The pressure and risk of death would stimulate his potential, and something new would hopefully be born from his struggle.

The atmosphere inside the cage kept changing as Zac switched back and forth between the Dao Fields for his two fragments, one moment containing invisible blades and the next second corrosive winds. He had kept trying to recreate the Dao Storm with the help of his aura over the past days, but he was simply not making any progress.

He did at least manage to superimpose the two Dao fields for a second by force. When he wanted to release a second Dao Field the other automatically receded into his body, but he was able to stop it by simply blocking it out. However, that caused a pretty hefty loss in spiritual energy as the energy simply dissipated instead of returning.

There were also no bronze flashes appearing in the brief seconds he managed to keep the two Dao Fields going simultaneously. Zac figured that the density of energies wasn't enough to force a reaction when it came to Dao Fields. He could only sigh in disappointment at yet another failed experiment and move on.

If Dao Fields could be considered the gaseous form of the Dao, then directly infusing it into a weapon or skill would be the liquid equivalent, and allowed for a larger amount of spiritual energy.

The Dao Storm had contained most of his spiritual energy, and perhaps that kind of density is what was needed to summon the bronze flashes. But he couldn't just crank out half his soul in one attack, but rather recreate that amount of energy in a single point to force a fusion like before.

The problem was that Dao Infusion wasn't like a water faucet. He couldn't just increase the lever and have more Dao Energy flow out of his head. Until now things had been binary where he either chose to infuse something or not. The amount of energy it cost would depend on the skill or item getting infused, and it would regulate itself automatically.

This was the problem that he had struggled with over the past three days. Trying to control the amount of mental energy that ran down his arm into his axe was like trying to push more air into a bag with his bare hands. Zac kept trying various approaches he had thought up while resting as he ran between the ant's legs, but nothing worked.

Since he still couldn't figure out any way for him to control the amount of energy he could only try to fuse the two Daos once again. It felt like Zac's mind would split apart as he forcibly pushed his two Dao Fragments along his arms before they streamed into the axe at the same time.

It was yesterday he had finally found a way to force both his Daos to converge. He used each of his arms like a conductor for one Fragment, only trying to push them together when they reached his axe. He only needed to use some Miasma as the method of delivery. However, there were still many problems to solve, and the first trial was the reason that he was using a temporary axe at the moment.

Verun had roared in Zac's mind the moment the two streams had entered the axe before it immediately rebuffed the two Dao Fragments. Zac first thought it was because it wasn't able to properly utilize both fragments at the same time due to its lacking materials, but his next experiment showed that there were other issues at play.

When Zac tried the same thing with a spare axe the two fragments had entered without a problem, but the whole axe exploded into scrap metals in an instant, maiming his hands and almost blinding him. Zac had first thought he managed a fusion at the first try, but he quickly realized he had overestimated himself.

The explosion came from the two untamed energies along with the miasma causing strain on the weapon rather than a fusion of the two. It was still an impressive outburst of energy though as the axe scraps had either been infused with the Fragment of the Axe or Fragment of the Coffin as they shot out like projectiles in every direction.

Zac figured there was an issue of speed. He would never be able to squeeze out half his mental energy for a single strike, as he had done during the Dao Discourse. He instead wanted to rely on smaller amounts of energies colliding at higher velocities. It was like the experiments on old earth where scientists shot electrons at each other with extremely high momentum to see what kind of energies were released by the collision.

He needed to turn himself into a particle collider.

Having a plan was one thing, but finding a solution was something else entirely. A minute later his axe couldn't take it any longer and turned into a bomb as well. Zac had learned to see the signs by this point though and threw it away in time, but he froze a second later.

What about [Cyclic Strike]? He had given up on the skill for his new path, but perhaps some parts could be repurposed. The two fractals from the skill were perfectly placed on his shoulders, and he would easily be able to push his two Dao Fragments there before they continued down his arms.

The correct usage of the skill was to infuse his Daos into the two fractals, and sort of braid the energies in a way that allowed the two Daos to mesh together and combine. After that had been accomplished you could infuse whatever you wanted with this new combined energy.

Zac had never really gotten much further than infusing both fractals with their respective Daos. He hadn't even been close to finishing the type of mesh required, but that wasn't his goal at the moment. He felt like he was so close to the answer that he could taste it, and he gave the ant a quick punch to throw it away before he prepared to test his newest theory.

Zac immediately took out two daggers and stabbed one into each shoulder without as much as a grunt. Ichor started to drip down his arms and back, but he didn't care as he hurriedly activated the two maimed fractals with a smile that would no doubt look a bit deranged to an outsider.

The Dao Fragments entered the two fractals of [Cyclic Strike], but Zac didn't care at all about balance this time as he tried to force the energies to the center of the fractals as quickly as possible. Normally it wouldn't have been possible without properly following the winding pathways, but he had carved a new path for himself.

The two daggers acted as conductors and allowed him to skip all intricacies of the skill fractal, leaving just the part that acted as an entrance funnel, along with the core of the skill that Zac guessed was responsible for the fusion. The weapon blade allowed him to pass by over 70% of the fractal by just pushing the energy right through the metal itself.

Adrenaline started to course through his body when he realized that it was actually working, and blobs formed from his two Dao Fragments shot toward each other in his chest.

But happiness quickly turned to panic as Zac felt a terrifying buildup taking place when the two blobs merged, and he desperately tried to push it out of his body. He wasn't sure if he'd even survive if the blob exploded like his axes, taking half his torso with it.

The energy only got halfway down his arm before the ball of energy collapsed in a soundless implosion, annihilating a good chunk of his bicep as it disappeared. The pain was excruciating, but Zac was still delighted with the result as his eyes were trained on the wound.

The implosion had contained a bronze-colored spark.

Zac was in no mood to stay at the battlefield any longer, and Zac ordered the ten chains of [Profane Seal] to kill the ant who was already on its last legs from the sparring session. The battle outside had already ended as well, with liches going through the battlefield to find salvageable bodies.

The corpses were placed in two piles. The second pile was the fallen Revenants and the insectoids who weren't salvageable, and these bodies were slated to be incinerated. He was still curious as to why it was impossible to re-animate a Revant, but he put the matter and instead hurried back to the outpost to go over the results.

"You're back, Lord Piker," Uro, a steward that the Zervadar kingdom had provided for him, said with a bow as Zac barged through the door.

"Is there any news from the Guild?" Zac asked he sat down with a grimace as the wound in his arm made itself remembered.

"I will enquire," Uro said and left the courtyard, allowing Zac to go over his findings.

His arm was a mess, but his short experiment with [Cyclic Strike] as a base was a huge step forward. There was a lot of work left to do though. First of all, he couldn't keep stabbing himself with knives to create shortcuts in the pathways. It was both time-consuming and inefficient compared to using real pathways, not to mention that it hurt like hell.

Right now Zac had only an extremely crude proof-of-concept that needed huge improvements to be considered passable. He would somehow need to redraw the skill fractals of [Cyclic Strike] to better fit his purpose, but he had no idea how to go about doing such a thing.

The next step was to control the fused energies long enough for him to hurt his enemy rather than himself. Right now it couldn't be considered a weapon as much as a creative way to kill yourself, akin to creating a bomb right next to your heart. If the spark had gone off just half a second earlier he might have lost the whole arm instead of just some muscle tissue and ichor.

The question was whether he really needed to stay on any longer on this level, as these kinds of experiments could be performed while climbing.

He still had many skill upgrades waiting for his Draugr-Class, but he wasn't sure how long it would take to grind them out with his army. Zac guessed he would have to hear what the Guild had to say before deciding whether to stay or not, and he looked up with anticipation as his steward soundlessly entered his courtyard twenty minutes later.

"A representative from the Inscrubber Guild is here," Uro said with another bow.

"Let her in," Zac said, knowing that they would no doubt send Ildera again.

"Lord Piker," the beautiful Vice Guild Master said with a curtsy the moment she entered the courtyard. "Ah! You're wounded! Let me-"

"It's fine," Zac cut her off before she used his wound as an excuse to fondle him again.

If Zac hadn't known she was a Revenant he would have thought she was a pale human. Ildera had one of the highest levels in the whole kingdom, and she had become remarkably close to a living being as far as Zac could tell. With the notable exception of running on miasma rather than Cosmic Energy and food.

"How did it go?" Zac asked as he took another healing pill, one special-made for his undead constitution and provided by the woman in front of him.

The formation master looked a bit unhappy about being rebuffed, but seeing Zac using the pills she had gifted him lessened her displeasure noticeably.

"I'm afraid we failed you," Ildera said with a pout as she sat down next to him. "Feel free to punish me as you see fit."

"What went wrong?" Zac asked with disappointment, ignoring the innuendo.

That Ildera failed to create the Array Disks for [Nine Reincarnations Manual] was a bit of a blow, and he started to wonder if even his sister would be up to the task.