

The Fall 448

Chapter 448: Nouveau Riche

Brazla had only turned a bit schizophrenic and annoying over time, but he wasn't strictly dangerous. However, it was possible that some Tool Spirits turned sinister as they went insane. Zac knew there had to be some benefit to the sword though as the swordsman used it as an ace. The half-moon attack had contained a shocking sharpness that cut both his mountain and array apart, was it perhaps only possible to conjure such an attack with this sword?

Zac was loath to carry the weird sword around, and he tried putting it back into the Cosmos Sack again. But the sword refused to enter the pouch, and Zac soon realized the Sacks left behind were temporary pouches just like the one he got from the hunt. He threw the sword into his own sack instead as he turned to the next items in the pouch.

The bag contained an assortment of pills along with a small mound of crystals and a couple of manuals. However, Zac refrained from touching those, afraid that they would be protected like Mhal's manual was. They possibly contained skills and cultivation techniques whose quality was unrivaled in his sector, and such things would no doubt come with high-grade theft-protection.

The bag from the masked man was a lot more ominous. It contained over a hundred heads from a dozen different races, each of them placed in their own densely inscribed boxes. Their eyes were sewn shut and a talisman was pushed half-way into their mouths. Why the hell was this man carrying around something like this?

It didn't seem to be part of his Class since he never used any heads to fight. Was this some sort of morbid way to create talismans? And if Zac only got part of their accumulated treasures, just how many heads had Faceless 9 been carrying around in total? Apart from that, there were a bunch of vials and assorted treasures, including five identical spikes that the assassin stabbed himself with during their fight.

Zac hesitated for a second before he transferred two of them to his own spatial ring. He wasn't sure exactly what these things were, but they allowed the assassin to fight beyond his normal capabilities. The spikes probably had even worse side-effects than his [Hatchetman's Rage], but he might be forced to go all out upon exiting the tower in a few days.

Just like with the swordsman's pouch there was another pile full of an assortment of items in one corner, likely things the assassin had picked up inside the tower. However, after seeing the heads he was in no mood to look too closely at what captured the interest of such a lunatic.

Finally, there was the Spatial Ring belonging to the mentalist, the spatial tool that Zac held felt held the most promise. The two sacks were dropped off by the system, but this was the real deal that was taken from her person. And he only needed a glance to realize he had hit jackpot. It looked just like what he expected a wealthy scion's cosmos sack to look. First of all, the space inside the ring was well over ten times the size of Rasuliel's spatial tool.

The dimensions were also extremely clearly defined, compared to the somewhat hazy borders of his own ring. According to Galau that was a sign of high-quality craftsmanship, and proof that its space

would stay stable for a long time. Cosmos Sacks only stayed functional for a decade or two before they needed to be swapped out, and Rasuliels ring was probably an old hand-me-down from the looks of it.

But the ring he had just gotten his hands on was no doubt recently produced, and it would hold together for thousands of years before its subspace deteriorated. Seeing the amazing Spatial ring raised another question in Zac's mind. Were these items protected from the general rules of the tower, or did he risk losing them as well?

Seeing as they were the personal items of trial takers Zac leaned toward the former, but he guessed he would have to exit the tower to make sure. His first instinct was to immediately swap out his sub-par ring, but that might cause him to lose all his possessions. Perhaps he should use as many items as possible before leaving the tower, just in case. But he knew that using up the contents of the Spatial Ring would be nigh-impossible.

There were at least ten thousand E-Grade Nexus Crystals neatly stacked in one corner. However, they were somewhat different from his own, as they all seemed to be covered in some sort of engravings. Zac took out one of them, and he was surprised to see that it didn't leak a smidgeon of energy. He hesitated for a few seconds longer, but he eventually tried to absorb the energy.

It was extremely uncomfortable to absorb energy from a Nexus Crystal in his Draugr form, and it felt akin to drinking tainted water to parch your thirst. Nausea hit him immediately, but he only needed to continue the absorption for a few seconds to confirm his hunch.

The energies inside the crystal were actually released at twice the rate compared to a normal one, as the inscription formed some sort of energy transfer array akin to his Mother-Daughter array that had been put into the Merit Exchange long ago. It was a pretty luxuriant method since it was used on simple unattuned crystals, and the cost of the craftsmanship was no doubt far beyond the value of the crystals themselves.

The inscribed Nexus Crystals weren't the only types of crystals in the ring. Another, far smaller, pile of crystals sat next to the mountain of Nexus Crystals, each of them looking like a block of ice. Zac had never seen such a resource previously and took one out to get a better look. The crystal was cool to the touch and mysterious emanations spread from it, and Zac immediately felt a reaction as he held it in his hand.

The reaction didn't come from his body though, like when he was near a great natural treasure, but it rather was a prickling sensation from his soul. Zac had a pretty good guess what it was after remembering just who had been the owner of the sack, and he could quickly confirm it was some sort of Soul Crystal.

The crystal didn't seem to be attuned, but rather something that contained mental energy. He had never heard of anything like it before, and it had never been on display in any of the shops in the Base Town. A soothing sensation entered his mind the moment he started absorbing it, and he felt his drained soul rapidly regain its vigor.

This would be a great asset in speeding up his climb. Better yet, if these things worked like Nexus Crystals he might even be able to use them to strengthen his mind. If direct absorption didn't work he might still be able to use them together with his Soul Strengthening Manual.

It was also a huge relief to see that there seemed to be no response from the pieces from the Splinter of Oblivion swimming about, meaning that he could use the Soul Crystals without worry that he was harming himself. He didn't want another Cosmic Water situation on his hands, after all.

Apart from the soul crystals there were a plethora of dresses, all of which sported dense sets of inscriptions. It looked like the mentalist actually had a full wardrobe of defensive treasures, and if Zac wasn't wrong then all of them seemed to be Spirit Tools. There were also dozens of rings, earrings, necklaces, and bracelets, each a defensive treasure that looked quite high-tiered.

Using expensive treasures as though they were normal clothes was another level of wealth that Zac hadn't encountered before. Almost everyone he knew pretty much wore the same get-up every day after getting graded clothing. It was the same with himself. The white robes he got from Yrial were the strongest defensive wear he had, and it possessed self-repairing and self-cleaning features. Wearing other clothes seemed silly by this point.

There was also a large number of pills, raw materials, and natural treasures that seemed valuable enough to make him doubt his eyes. There were also a few Soul-Mending treasures, but Zac wasn't too sure whether they would be strong enough to replace the Cherry in regards to helping Alea. Their energy fluctuations were a lot stronger than equivalent pills in his own possession, but they were far weaker compared to the cherry he had eaten.

There were also a bunch of things Zac couldn't understand, such as a large metallic head, what looked like a massive drum that had a diameter of over five meters, and all kinds of odd trinkets. Perhaps they were specialized tools that could assist in specific tasks, but Zac didn't have time to go through them one by one.

He did however spot something he recognized. There was a large leaf with ten luxuriant prayer mats placed on top. Zac was perhaps way off-base with his speculations, but he was pretty sure he was looking at a flying treasure, one of much higher quality than the one he lent his sister. It seemed to have been crafted from a natural treasure, with both natural and inscribed fractals combining into an extremely exquisite pattern.

It was a shame that Flying treasures were disabled in the Tower of Eternity. Perhaps the System considered having one to be too large an advantage and restricted them completely. It would have saved Zac a huge amount of time if he could have used one, as he spent days just traveling on each floor.

Finally, there was the pile of random items that seemed to be just flung into a corner of its own, no doubt the things she had found during her climb. Zac wryly smiled as he looked at the treasure trove, and he almost forgave the woman for destroying his soul.

Zac hesitated for a few seconds on how to deal with the three spatial tools before he poured out all their contents one by one. He had no inspection skills and no knowledge worth mentioning in appraisal, but there were some ways to tell what was good and what was not.

Every time he had encountered a beneficial natural treasure he had been able to feel his whole body itching as it craved the energies the item contained. It was the same with [Verun's Bite] as well. Zac eventually found six treasures that elicited such a response in his body.

He also discovered 4 items that Verun seemed interested in, two slabs of metal, a piece of bone that was almost pink, and an odd rock. However, the axe was only able to absorb the rock, while it could only roar in anger at the other three items. Perhaps they were materials that could assist in upgrading the quality of the axe, but reforging a Spirit Tool probably required the assistance of a skilled Blacksmith or Inscriptionist.

Soon enough everything in the two Cosmos Sacks was transferred to his own spare cosmos sacks, at which point they dissipated into motes of light. The high-quality spatial ring stayed behind though, even though Zac had emptied it of all its contents. Zac was pretty sure that it was a permanent item, but he wouldn't risk the vast wealth inside on a hunch. He also stowed away the Natural Treasures that elicited such a strong reaction in his body, albeit not without some reluctance.

He would put Calrin on figuring out what to do with these items. The Sky Gnomes seemed to be thieves as much as merchants, and they probably knew what hidden dangers there were to owning loot like this. He didn't want to add a bunch of B-Grade forces to the list of Earth's enemies due to ignorance.

Having dealt with the treasures he sat down and redoubled the efforts on restoring his body, this time with the additional support of Soul Crystals.

Zac set out five hours later, which was a lot better than what he expected going by the state his body had been in. The combination of the Fragment of the Bodhi and his newly acquired Soul Crystals helped supercharge his recovery, building on his already shockingly high Vitality. Since he was pretty much healed up he swapped over to his human form in order to move quicker.

Unfortunately, things didn't go quite as smoothly for the rest of the level as in the beginning. It quickly became apparent that the Hayner clan was very aware of his existence as they had disseminated the news that a dangerous solitary invader threatened their whole world. Zac had been beset by everything from righteous citizens to large Bandit Gangs as he headed toward the lands the Hayner Clan controlled.

But Zac was like a moving calamity, essentially fulfilling the Hayner prophecy whether he liked it or not. All obstacles were destroyed in the quickest manner as Zac had no time to spare. Most opposing forces were destroyed with utter prejudice, apart from a few unlucky souls who Zac caught and dragged along to question on the move.

However, he suddenly stopped in his tracks just as he was about to enter the domain of the Hayner. An old troll wearing a voluminous robe with a star-pattern stood in the middle of the road, and from the looks of it, he was waiting for Zac. The old man seemed to be blind judging by his milky-white eyes, yet he stared straight at Zac like he was peering into his soul.

"Catching a glimpse of heaven's secrets can be both a blessing and a curse. It told me that the key to my family's survival was stopping you," the man said, and surprisingly enough there was a kindly smile on his face. "Karma brought us together, but severing karma is Heaven's Path."

Zac was about to respond, but suddenly he found himself without any ground to stand on as an enormous sinkhole hundreds of meters across swallowed them both up, causing them to barrel into the abyss.