

## The Fall 451

### Chapter 451: Little Bean

The single tree looked like any ordinary one, apart from its lack of branches. But it quickly grew into a tremendous spike, like the finger of a forest god. It just took a second for it to grow to a size that almost eclipsed the mountains he had pulled through the array before, and the tip of the tree pushed straight toward the command center beneath.

A shocking burst of energy rippled out from the massive avatar's weapon, and multiple layers of the protective membrane of [Nature's Barrier] were decimated even though the princess aimed at [Nature's Punishment] rather than in his direction.

A hollow with a diameter of almost fifty meters was punched straight through the wooden spike, but hundreds of branches grew from the hole and merged to restore its original form. Zac felt a huge strain on his mind from the increased consumption, but he could only grit his teeth as he pierced the avatar with his punishment.

The avatar only managed to ineffectually rip off a few layers of the branch before it was forcibly dispelled, and the branch passed through the chaotic energies as it slammed straight into the command tent where the princess resided. The ground heaved and cracked and Zac felt a surge of energy enter his body,

A shudder went through his body as a storm of miasma spread to every inch. The hundreds of leaves around him disappeared into motes of lights, and the verdant forest of [Hatchetman's Spirit] was gone a second later. Only the towering tree remained as a testament of his earlier attacks.

That didn't mean the army was safe though, as billowing clouds of corrosion and miasma quickly spread out before the warriors had time to understand what was going on.

This was the true power of the upgraded core, and it was the only feature that mattered as far as Zac was concerned. It was disappointing that it hadn't provided any attributes when reaching E-Grade, but the transformation only took a second now as long as he used Yrial's Transformation skill.

Not only that, but he had also learned that he could now transform twice before he needed to wait for an hour again. In other words, he could now almost completely freely use his two classes in one battle as long as he had a second to spare during a fight.

Zac stomped the ground and appeared next to the massive branch that was stabbed into the ground, just in time to see a part of it explode as his target emerged. She was drenched in blood and one of her arms hung limply to her side, but she still radiated the aura of someone with a fight left in her.

The cage of [Profane Seal] was erected with the branch in the middle, and five of the chains immediately cut into the massive piece of wood. A surge of energy entered Zac's body as he started his usual whittling down of his enemy.

It was one interesting perk he had found from being able to quickly change between classes. Most of his skills disappeared when he changed classes, but there were two exceptions. The first exception was the punishments he could summon through [Nature's Punishment], like the tree he was able to call forth since gaining the Fragment of the Bodhi.

It was teeming with life force that the chains could steal and then feed to his Draugr-form. This synergy was why he opted for the tree rather than the massive mountain he usually used.

It made him even more unkillable as the piece of wood turned into an enormous battery that would keep him going far longer than he would be able to without. It was to the point that miasma steamed out of his body due to overconsumption, which further aligned the surroundings in his favor against living enemies.

The second skill that lingered was [Winds of Decay]. The skill was made from his breath, so it didn't matter that he changed class as the mists remained. This wasn't as much of a boon though as the skill targeted him the moment he changed to his human form. It didn't bother him thanks to his huge pool of Vitality, but it was still pretty uncomfortable to stand inside.

The miasmic cage shook as the two clashed one time after another, but soon enough the princess couldn't stand it any longer. Her body was covered in festering wounds as the armor-clad Zac towered above her.

"Why?" she asked with fury and despair in her eyes. "Who are you?"

"Fate, I guess," Zac answered as his bardiche fell.

Zac didn't swap back to his human form just yet as he wasn't sure what would await him at the other side of the teleporter. He rather just restored his reserves to peak condition before he stepped through to the next realm.

It felt like he was being squeezed for every piece of potential he had, and he was embroiled in constant battle as he kept going. At least it kept the Splinter mostly satiated as he ripped through the later levels of the 8th floor. Unfortunately, he never heard of any treasures or inheritances that seemed able to restrain the corruption in his mind, and this continued all the way to the 71st level.

The second-to-last level of the 8th floor would no doubt be a real nightmare, but his all-out push the past weeks had at least made sure he had over 3 days to complete it. [Verun's Bite] was already high in the air to counter any sneak-attack, and Zac had equipped [Everlasting] and changed into his Draugr form just in case of a sudden assault.

But when the scenery changed he realized there would be no ambush this time around the moment he stepped through the teleporter. The surprising stillness even seemed to subdue the splinter in his mind as it crept into the back of its miasmic cage.

He was in a small cabin that was best described as futuristic. The whole wall in front of him was just one massive screen that seemed to be showing a blueprint, and another wall displayed a majestic nebula and stars that were fixed in the distance. Zac almost forgot he was in the Tower of Eternity for a second as he looked around with excitement.

Was he on a spaceship?

That was the immediate conclusion judging by the screen in front of him, unless he was reading the blueprint completely wrong. The map showed an elongated vessel that looked pretty sleek apart from a large circular bulb in the middle, and Zac found that he was able to zoom in and out by touching the screen.

The first thing he could see was that the ship was just massive. He was currently in a section that seemed to house thousands of cabins, just like the cabin floors on a cruise liner. The cabin he was in was around twenty square meters, and while it was less than a tenth the size of the largest cabin, it was still a decent size.

Each cabin had a series of numbers or letters marked, though Zac couldn't read them. He guessed it was either the name or serial number of the person who lived inside. Some cabins were pretty large, but they had over twenty numbers attached, meaning they were probably barracks or shared domiciles.

Perhaps the cabin belonged to some sort of middle-management or a petty officer on board the space cruiser. The huge number of cabins only took up a small section of the total space on the ship though, and he saw that there were more sections just like it. If it wasn't due to the shape and the two massive thrusters at the back of the vessel he would have thought it was rather a space station than a ship.

He tried to engrave every detail into his mind in case he needed it later, but it seemed the resident of this cabin only had limited access as over half the ship was blacked out except the general outline. Perhaps those sections were critical parts of the ship only accessible to authorized personnel.

Zac eventually backed away and tried to figure out his next step. A quest screen conveniently appeared after he retreated though, indicating what needed to be done.

[Stop the Little Bean from returning from its expedition.]

Zac wasn't overly surprised to read the contents of the quest after seeing the surroundings, but some hesitation crept into his heart as he looked at the wall displaying the vibrant nebula in the distance. This was still the Tower of Eternity, right?

Or had the System sent him out on an actual mission to mess with its enemies, the Technocrats? Since meeting the Hayner patriarch he had started wondering if he was actually ever inside the Tower, or if he was just sent to various corners of the multiverse like when he completed the Hegemony-quest.

A muffled swishing sound interrupted his thoughts as the door leading to his quarters suddenly opened, displaying a young man who was looking down with a troubled frown at a screen that hovered in front of him.

He entered the small cabin without even looking up, and he only noticed something was wrong when a grey object ripped through the air straight toward his head. His eyes widened in shock when he looked up only to find himself face-to-face with Zac, and an orange shield started to materialize around him.

But it was much too late, and [Everlasting] slammed into his head with enough force to throw him into the wall, immediately knocking him out cold. Zac hurried over and dragged the man further inside the cabin, and sighed in relief when he saw that the cabin door closed by itself.

Things calmed down again, but Zac stood frozen for almost ten minutes, waiting for some backup to come rushing through the door. But it looked like his actions had gone by unnoticed, allowing him to breathe out in relief. Zac didn't put away his weapons though, but rather just hunched down to take stock of the man whose cabin he had been thrown into.

It was a human just like himself, or at least mostly human. Some parts of his body seemed to be mechanical, which Zac guessed made the man a cyborg. His clothing made believe he wasn't a warrior like the other cyborg he had met though, but rather some sort of non-combat personnel.

He had also all but confirmed Zac's suspicions that this was a Technocrat vessel.

The shield that he had smashed through was clearly of technological origin, just like those in the technocrat incursion, though it was a bright orange rather than the red ones back then. Apart from the shield, there were no signs of any weaponry on him though. The man wore a uniform made out of cloth, and there was not a single fractal anywhere on them.

His build wasn't anything to write home about either, and when Zac activated [Cosmic Gaze] there was almost no response either from the man or the surroundings. It made Zac guess that he was on a vessel belonging to the Machine God-faction. Both Transcenders and Technomancers would possess at least some equipment connected to cultivation.

Zac quickly found the source of the shield, a small bracelet on his arm, and after having taken it off he started to look for any piece of detachable technology on him until he finally poured some water over the unconscious man.

"Wha? How?" the man sputtered as he wildly looked around, making Zac realize that the guy even had mechanical eyes. "Who are you?! How did you manage to board the Little Bean? We just fell out of subspace!"

"Nevermind that," Zac said as he trained his pitch-black orbs pierced into the man's augmented vision, making him flinch. "Tell me what I need to know and I'll let you live. If you're not willing to cooperate I don't mind killing and reanimating you. You will help me one way or another."

"No, please!" the man cried, clearly horrified at the prospect of being turned into a zombie.

Being a Draugr had its advantages, and there was no way for the guy to know that Zac didn't even know how to turn someone into a Zombie. None of those he had killed in his undead form seemed to have shown any inclination to turn at least, meaning there was probably some hidden component to it.

"Have you heard of the Tower of Eternity?" Zac asked first, wanting to check on his earlier suspicions.

"The Tower of Eternity?" Jaol said with confusion. "Never heard of it. It's not related to our corporation, I swear!"

Zac nodded in relief, but he suddenly froze. His answer sounded similar to all the others during his climb, but there was one significant difference. He actually mentioned the tower by name, which had never happened before. They had always responded with some sort of confusion and completely glossed over the mention.

"What is your name, and what is your mission?" Zac asked as he settled in front of the man who had slowly inched toward a corner of his cabin.

"I am Jaol. I'm just a comms officer of the Little Bean, no one important!" he said.

"A comms officer?" Zac repeated. "Know this. If you send out an alert through any hidden gadgets that end with me cornered, then I'll kill you first before trying to fight my way out."

The man quickly nodded his head, but Zac noticed his eyes darted toward his arm where Zac had taken off the wristwatch.

"Where is the Little Bean heading?" Zac asked, and pushed the axe toward the man once again when he seemed hesitant to answer. "Answer me."

"We're heading to the closest outpost, but we've fallen out of subspace," Jaol explained. "It's because of that thing. I guess that's why you're here? It has created too many anomalies for our engines to handle. We were forced out of subspace until our engineers can fix the damage."

Zac's interest was perked when he heard about the situation aboard the ship. It was clear that the leaders Little Bean had found something that they wanted to bring back to their forces, but it was obviously something pretty amazing if it could mess with the entire vessel and its advanced technology.

It also gave him a lead in completing the quest in the normal manner. If he could take out the engineers, or somehow sabotage the repair efforts, then he would essentially be done with the mission? The best thing would be to blow up the engines altogether, but Zac guessed that they would be pretty hard to get to. But it felt entirely possible that the chief engineer would be the guardian if it wasn't the captain.

"What have you found out about the item?" Zac urged, not wanting to let on he had no idea what the guy talked about.

"It keeps bending the laws of physics in unpredictable manners, fusing, and changing matter without following any of the known rules. It really deserves being a shard from the [Spark of Creation]," Jaol exclaimed, excitement seemingly making him forget he was a hostage at the moment.

"Spark of creation?" Zac repeated, his eyes widening.

Didn't this sound a bit too familiar?