

## The Fall 458

### Chapter 458: Creation

The whole room violently shook as the wave of ash collided with the vibrant beam. There were no explosions though as the collision of the attacks was very different from anything Zac had witnessed before, and it led Zac to believe that Dr. Fried really had managed to harness at least a small part of the Shard of Creation.

The energies that had been contained inside the crystal ball contained the ability of inception, and weird items kept popping up one after another, each stealing a bit of the momentum from his attack. A massive blue icicle appeared from nowhere and shot toward Zac, but it crumbled into drifting ash by the wave of desolation before it even had time to pick up any momentum.

There were rocks, waterfalls, and scorching flames that appeared to hinder the wave of desolation and strike at Zac, like all the elements of the world had combined to take him down. However, the third swing of [Deforestation] was the pinnacle of Zac's power, and it wasn't enough to just throw some rubble in front of it.

The grey cloud was noticeably diminished as it pushed through the construct's attack, but it still had almost half of its energy remaining when it finally exhausted the beam and swallowed the odd machine along with the doctor on top of it. There was still no explosion as the mecha only shuddered before falling apart. It was as though the thing was a burnt-out log that turned into a pile of ash when prodded.

The doctor's face was frozen in a visage of fear and incomprehension as it crumbled as well. Zac knew the man was finally dead body and soul as well as he felt the surge of energy entering his body. A quick look around unfortunately indicated that the doctor wasn't the level guardian, as no teleportation array had appeared upon his death.

The largest threat was dealt with, but Zac didn't rest as only half his objective was completed. He flashed forward, running past the pile of dust that was once the doctor and his battle platform. He wanted to stay in the wake of his own attack, though he kept a healthy distance as he didn't want to turn into another dust pile.

The wave had lost even more energy from killing Dr. Fried, but it was a large-scale attack capable of taking out tens of thousands of people, so it continued forward in the limited space of the inner containment field. It finally reached the core that housed the Shard itself, another spherical shield with a diameter of no more than 10 meters.

A tremendous shockwave suddenly threw Zac back across half the room, but his eyes lit up when he saw what was going on.

The last burst of power inside the [Axe of Desolation] had managed to crack open the final shield, and radiant tendrils reached out from the breach. They looked like condensed sunlight but almost moved around like the tentacles of an octopus as they gingerly felt around outside the containment shield.

It looked just like when the Splinter in his mind was searching for cracks or weaknesses inside the miasmic cage, and Zac knew his opportunity had presented itself. He flashed forward with [Loamwalker]

as far as he could until he left the spiritual forest of [Hatchetman's Spirit], at which point he started to run normally. He needed to snatch the item before the shield healed.

“HALT!” a tremendous roar suddenly echoed from behind, and the power in the voice alone was enough for Zac to stumble as bloody gashes appeared all over his body.

Zac knew this was the end-run, and he scrambled to his feet and kept going, ignoring the mounting sense of doom from his danger sense.

However, it quickly became too much and he glanced back and spotted an infuriated metallic humanoid approaching. The cyborg's speed was way faster than his own, and it was upon Zac in an instant. Terrifying energies surged around him, and Zac desperately activated a Bodhi-infused [Nature's Barrier] to protect himself.

However, a flashing light almost blinded Zac, and he felt a stabbing pain in his mind as all the leaves were shredded to pieces in an instant. They didn't even impede the technocrat for a second as he reached for Zac's throat.

Zac swung his axe with all he got at the incoming hand, but [Verun's Bite] didn't even leave a mark as it was blocked by a thin energy layer covering the hand. Conversely, the hand released some sort of counter and Zac felt the Spirit Tool yowl in pain from the clash. Zac already understood who this was, and he wasn't surprised that his attack didn't work.

This was the captain, a true D-Grade Powerhouse. Even if he was the lowest rung among D-Grade warriors there was no contesting him while still in F-Grade.

But the clash had fulfilled its purpose as Zac was shot backward like a comet from the counterforce, straight into the core containment area. Zac prepared himself to swap classes if needed to block another strike, but he realized the man had stopped some distance away with a sinister smile. A small pang of pain suddenly flared up in the back of Zac's head as he hit something within the light, and Zac immediately felt an odd force invade his body.

He realized that he had accidentally hit the Shard, and he quickly tried to reach for his Tower Token to teleport out as planned. However, he only had time to see the technocrat captain shouting a bunch of orders before the world turned white.

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A crackling sound full of ebullience echoed out into the void, each snap exuding the primordial Dao. For untold ages the [Spark of Creation] left its mark on the universe, its conceptions growing ever larger and more intricate. But suddenly its revelry was encroached upon.

His breath was the Dao and his hand was the earth, and when he moved the Heavens shied away. He gripped the Spark and clenched with enough force to tear the fabric of reality to shreds. The shockwave shattered the Dimensional Core that the Spark had turned into its nourishment, the explosion destroying innumerable planets.

Unwillingness. Desperation. Desire. The spark shattered, its remnants fleeing to all corners of the myriad planes. Creation was never over.

A great sage sat upon his platform with a kindly smile, and with a wave of his arm he brought forth his miracles. Magical scenes covered the night sky, scenes of unfettered creativity and depth. The crowd was busy gaining inspiration from the apparitions above, and no one heard the despondent wails from the captives below as their very souls were being used as fertilizer for the sage's false gifts.

The warrior's arm quickly grew and formed a massive scythe as he swung it in a wide arc that decimated the closest attackers. His eyes were already hollow and his face a sallow mask, but there was no going back now. He released a bestial roar as he rushed into the thick of the Verith Tribe's Truthslayers, and a shockwave of metal and flesh exploded out from him like a detonation of a Taboo Treasure.

Wings containing boundless force stretched out for hundreds of meters in each direction, like two canopies shrouding the earth. Each flap of the gargantuan bird's wings brought forth storms that ravaged the plains below as it traversed its prison. It hated its inability to soar higher, and it released a cry of desolation. A shudder pushed the clouds away as the wings grew yet longer. Blood seeped out from its body and fell like rain, but it didn't care as it soared ever higher toward the stars above.

The young monk desperately prayed for tranquility as he climbed the lonely peak. He couldn't stay at the monastery any longer, he couldn't risk the lives of his brothers. But the whispers never ended even after reciting the mantras. It would be so easy to give in to desire, to grasp the power that resided within. One thought to turn dreams into reality, one wish to challenge fate itself.

Zac had once again found himself captive within a storm of visions showing an unceasing number of fates. Most were pretty horrible, and any notion that the Shard was the 'good' to the Splinter's 'bad' was finally gone. Those who had found themselves in possession of a Shard mostly seemed to be just as wretched, just with a different flavor. Coming in contact with concepts that were too far beyond comprehension was to play with fire, you were bound to get burned sooner or later.

The flashing visions suddenly stopped, and he found himself looking at a solitary figure from above. However, this time there wasn't a Draugr-Lady calmly sitting within a lake of miasma in silent contemplation. Instead, there was a cultivator perched on a terrifyingly tall peak under a shimmering night sky.

He wasn't Dragur, or any other undead race for that matter, but rather a humanoid alien with ashen-grey skin. The alien almost looked human with extremely fine features, making it hard to discern its gender. It did however have four eyes, one normal set and another one placed almost to the side of his head. The cultivator probably had 360-degree vision thanks to this feature.

The warrior radiated a dense and powerful aura full of verve, and even if Zac couldn't put his finger on it he somehow felt like the cultivator was the exact opposite of the Draugr lady. The whole peak was drowned in a vibrant shimmer as northern lights in all colors imaginable danced around him. It was a beautiful spectacle, but the cultivator didn't seem to care as his or her eyes were closed in meditation.

"Hm?" the cultivator mumbled, and judging by the cadence of the voice he was no doubt a man.

The alien looked up from the ground, and his two sets of eyes seemed to focus on the spot where Zac's spirit hovered. Zac's emotions surged in anticipation as he tried to speak, but he was simply a blob consciousness without any opportunity to communicate. But it really looked like the System had prepared another fortuitous encounter after all.

"Be'Zi mentioned meeting a child following her path just this way, and now you arrive at my doorstep just moments later?" the man said with a spurious smile. "I wonder what The Villainous Heavens has planned this time?"

The elation Zac felt was slowly doused as he listened to the seated cultivator. Even though the expressions on this man's face were more amicable than the cold visage of the Draugr, he still felt less welcoming.

"Creation and Oblivion. Broken peaks and an ocean of despair. The cycle continues," the cultivator muttered before he smiled again. "Will you break it? Or will you drown as well?"

Zac didn't understand what the hell the odd cultivator was speaking about, but he was more worried about whether he would provide assistance or not. He felt fine at the moment, but he knew that a storm was probably brewing inside his body back at the ship. A storm that would have no problem crushing him, body and soul, if not dealt with properly.

"The Villainous Heavens brought you to me, but why should I bow to the bindings of fate?" the alien continued, his four eyes gaining a ruthless gleam.

Zac's Danger Sense was quiet, but his instincts still screamed of danger as the lights surrounding the peak started to flash with increased intensity. Zac suddenly sensed his soul being crushed by immense pressure, like he was being thrown into a black hole. But a sudden shudder from beneath the mountain froze the northern lights, and the pressure disappeared in an instant.

"Mh?" the man said as he looked down at the ground again.

"Very well. Let the threads of fate run its course. I hope you will survive long enough to provide my wife and I with some entertainment. The eons are growing tedious, after all," he said.

The man pointed a finger at Zac, and his surroundings rapidly closed in and disappeared. Zac realized that the man had sent him away, and he couldn't help but feel some disappointment over the fact that he still refused to help out, even though he obviously had a connection with the Draugr lady.

Had the path the System laid out for him gone awry due to the cultivator's reluctance to assist, and if so, what did that mean for him and his odds of survival? Frantic thoughts swirled in Zac's mind as his vision turned black, but the voice of the cultivator drifted into his ears just before his vision disappeared completely.

"Creation is a miracle, but it is also a drug. It will satisfy your desires until you are nothing but a ball of cravings, a husk of a man. But through temperance and austerity, Creation will bow to your will."