

## The Fall 464

### Chapter 464: An Old Friend

“Worst dragon ever,” Zac muttered with disgust as he emerged from the dragon’s den.

He had expected to be met by a veritable sea of treasures upon entering the cave, but the only thing that had waited for him was an enormous mat and a small mountain of raw fire-attuned crystals. Certainly, the mat seemed to have been woven from extraordinary materials to create a soft and luxuriant feeling, but it was a far cry from the dragon’s hoard he had been expecting.

At least there was the actual carcass of the dragon itself. Such a beast was no doubt a living treasure, and he needed to harvest it before moving on. He had already given up on any hope of finding treasure on the 9th floor, so he needed to make the most of this beast.

However, Zac didn’t simply put the whole thing into a cosmos sack, but he rather chose to methodically harvest its body piece by piece. It would be a huge shame if the whole dragon turned to dust the moment he left the tower, and this way he would at least be able to guarantee that some parts would make it.

Zac tried to pry off as many scales as possible, along with its two massive horns. He also dug out what he believed to be a Beast Core from its head, though he was a bit surprised since those things usually only appeared after reaching D-Grade. The dragon was extremely powerful, but Zac truthfully suspected it was still in early E-Grade.

He had heard a bit about dragons from Galau. They were terrifying beasts and among the most naturally endowed creatures in the multiverse. They could grow impossibly large as well, making Zac believe he was only dealing with a youngling or a mixed-blood dragon.

Still, leaving anything behind would be a waste, so he even poured almost all his containers to fill them with dragon blood. Enough blood to fill an Olympic-size swimming pool entered his dozen or so canteens and the magical barrels of liquor he had bought.

He did feed a lot of it to [Verun’s Bite] as well, but not enough to accidentally cause another upgrade. It took hours, sometimes days, for [Verun’s Bite] to absorb treasures, and Zac was about to potentially face an army waiting outside the gates of the tower. The spirit tool was extremely interested in the beast core also, but it would have to wait.

It was a waste, but he could only pray that the Dragon Core would turn out to be real as he might need Verun’s special skills for the upcoming battle. He had somewhat counted on the bronze flash to act as an ace, but there was no way that the remnants were in the position to provide help anytime soon.

He had tried summoning a bronze flash over twenty times while carving up the beast, but nothing happened. The two Fragments entered his reworked fractals just fine, but when they met in the chest they just turned into an impure mix of the two fragments that soon dissipated, just like the failed attempts from before. Something had clearly changed, as he had almost 50% success rate before.

The transformation of the fractals on his shoulders might be causing problems, but he was pretty sure that wasn't it.

An hour had passed since he had woken up by now, and he started to see some patterns of how things might go from here on out. It quickly became clear that the remnants were really capable of some sort of self-restoration. Small motes of energies appeared from within their bodies, even though no Cosmic or Mental energy had entered the cage.

However, it had been a slow grind for a pitiful amount of energy.

Things only went even worse for the remnants from there as the new cage created some sort of suction just moments after the motes of energy formed. The energy was instantly ripped out the Shard and Splinter, leaving only a fraction behind. The rest was purified and funneled out into Zac's body.

The purified energy from the Splinter made its way to his soul, as usual, subtly strengthening it. However, the energy from the Shard rather went into his body, where it seeped into his cells who greedily gobbled it up in an instant. Zac didn't feel any difference in his body, but he guessed that it would slowly improve his constitution.

The amount that he got was far lower compared to before though, and he was not even receiving a tenth of the purified energies he got from the Splinter before he entered the tower. That was fine with Zac though, as the gifts from the remnants always came with deadly downsides.

Focusing on just himself for the time being felt a lot more pertinent. It seemed like he had touched upon some of the massive secrets of the multiverse, and he was slowly forming a few theories based on what Jaol had told him about the System and what the four-eyed alien said. But all those things were too grand, too complicated, and not something he wanted to get involved with.

He could mess with the broken peaks of the Boundless Path when he had reached A-Grade and was bored with life. Until then the Chaos Patterns and the skies full of lightning could stay as far away as possible as far as he was concerned. He wasn't even in a mood to start experimenting with the flashes again before he had got his Soul Strengthening Manual up and running.

Actually, it seemed that his mind was agreeing with his reluctance to get involved, as his memory Chaos Pattern he had just witnessed was growing foggier by the minute. He couldn't remember any details any longer, and he wouldn't be surprised if it would completely disappear from his memory in a day or two.

It was a pain to dismember the extremely sturdy dragon, and Zac was quickly running out of time. So he finally ran into the carcass and chopped its insides into massive slabs of meat and threw them into his Cosmos Sack. Finally he threw the mangled remains into the sack as well and called it a day.

There was one more thing Zac wanted to do before he left the floor though, and he took out an inscribed box containing an unknown fruit. It was one of the natural treasures he had found during the climb. He still had no idea what it did, but he figured that his body knew what it was doing as it urged him to eat it.

He was somewhat certain that the items he had pilfered during the Battle of Fates would stay, but the same couldn't be said about these things. He wanted to follow Galau's advice and rather eat them than have them turn back into the System's hands the moment he left.

It was only 30 minutes later that he snapped out of his state of vivid hallucinations and bouts of extreme gastrointestinal distress. His whole body was covered in a film of extremely foul-smelling oil, and he felt weak like he had been afflicted with food poisoning.

The natural treasure hadn't actually been toxic, but it rather looked like the treasure was the kind that helped expel impurities like pill toxicity. The problem was the way of expulsion. Some things needed to be processed into pills before eaten, and that scary fruit was probably one of them. He had less than 30 minutes remaining, but he still spent 10 of those vigorously scrubbing off the foul gunk. The smell was making him nauseated, which was saying something considering he could be covered in blood without noticing it nowadays.

Zac immediately discarded any thought of eating any more of the treasures as he stepped into the teleporter with a tired sigh.

[Eighth Floor Complete. Upgrading Title.]

[Choose Reward: [Two Extremities Physique Array], [Divine Investiture Array], [Yin-Yang Arhat Soul Array]]

Zac found himself in the familiar black dimension, and he almost felt some wistfulness that this was the last time he would come to this place. Of course, the wistfulness wasn't brought on by nostalgia, but rather that this was the last of the rewards. He first opened his title screen to sate his curiosity.

[Tower of Eternity - 8th Floor: Reach the 73rd level of the Tower of Eternity. Reward: All stats +10, All Stats +10%, Effect of Attributes +10%]

The upgraded title was just as he had expected after seeing the change on the seventh floor, and he couldn't help but feel a bit curious about what would change upon finishing the whole tower. Was there a secret title waiting at the top after all? However, his attention was soon diverted from the Tower title when he noticed that there was a new addition to his ever-growing list of achievements. And it was an odd one.

[Terminus – Gaze upon the Terminus.]

There was only a short description and no reward, the first empty Title Zac had encountered thus far. Zac guessed the Terminus either referred to the lightning sea or the pattern that he could no longer remember, but he didn't understand why the System would add a title if it wouldn't dole out any Attributes.

Perhaps someone in the Base Town would know, but he felt that keeping this experience to himself was for the best. Stuff like the Dao of Chaos involved the System itself and the peak individuals of the multiverse, and just talking about it might bring a calamity upon his head.

He could only close the title screen with mixed emotions and instead turn his attention to the three arrays up for grabs. However, the rewards honestly had him a bit stumped. He understood the words as he read them one by one, but he had some trouble understanding what they meant.

Zac was surprised that the rewards didn't feel as tailored to his situation compared to the previous floor. Truthfully, they even seemed worse compared to the ones he had been awarded after succeeding in the

Battle of Fates, as each of them had represented a clear and almost immediate boost to himself or his force.

Was there an element of luck where you could either get a good set of reward choices or a subpar one? Or were the arrays perhaps even better than the 7th floor awards, but Zac was too ignorant to tell? He looked back and forth between the three options, and he felt some helplessness at the fact that he didn't know what any of the three arrays did.

The first array, the [Two Extremities Physique Array], might be some sort of training array to form a unique constitution. It might even be an extremely suited constitution based on the name. Two Extremities could refer to life and death, or perhaps even Creation and Oblivion. Remolding his body to be able to withstand the two remnants seemed pretty amazing. That might just be wishful thinking though.

That would mean that the award was an upgraded version of the body tempering manual, an array that would directly awaken a life and death constitution. However, there was another possibility, based on the wording of the first and third rewards. One was called a Physique Array, and the other a Soul Array.

That kind of wording was a bit reminiscent of War arrays, and it made him remember something; the Fire Golem down in the Underworld. Parts of its body had been engraved with crude fractals, and he had learned this was a common way for constructs to improve their power.

Was the same thing possible for humans? Was it perhaps an array that would be engraved to his body, somehow boosting it beyond its normal capabilities? He guessed something like that would work like a synthetic constitution or something, where it provided similar boosts.

Whichever way the array worked the end result was most likely the same. It would probably directly increase his combat power by improving his body, almost like having a private War array. It would give a direct and convenient boost to his Strength, and it was definitely a viable choice.

As for the [Divine Investiture Array], he had no idea. Judging by the name it might be something that could improve a person or an item. Divine Investiture, maybe it meant that it could bestow Heaven's Blessing. Perhaps it was something like the array that he had passed when he climbed the 8th floor, but a greater version? Or was it related to fate?

Getting the System's blessing didn't sound too bad right about now, and it sort of felt like the System owed him one after the last two levels.

Then there was the final reward, one related to the soul. He would have preferred one that mentioned caging rambunctious slivers, but this one rather seemed geared toward taking advantage of the odd scars covering his soul. It seemed to be based on the concept of duality just like the Constitution Array, but he had no idea what a 'Soul Array' could do. Did it improve one's control over the Dao's, perhaps?

It did however include the word Arhat, which was a Buddhist term. He didn't know if what would cause any issues with his cultivation or his recently acquired manual, but he guessed that anything he got from the eighth floor would be compatible with him. An Arhat was a perfected being who had reached enlightenment, so perhaps the Soul Array would be able to push his soul to a perfect state?

Zac looked back and forth between the options, but he truthfully didn't need to look too long before he decided on the third option, the [Yin-Yang Arhat Soul Array]. It wasn't that he felt it was perfect for his situation, as he honestly had no idea what it did, but he'd obviously take anything that helped his soul at the current juncture.

The other two options were probably great as well, but they were luxuries compared to a necessity. His arm reached toward the hovering prompt in front of him, but he suddenly froze in shock as the silence of the special dimension was broken.

[First choice will grant you power. Second choice brings rectification of regret. Third choice will lead you down an alternative Path]

Zac didn't know how to react when he heard the emotionless voice in his head. A year had passed and he had almost forgotten those early days of the Integration, but it all rushed back to him at that moment.

The System was once again directly speaking with him.