

The Fall 465

Chapter 465: Beware the Terminus

Zac froze like a deer in the headlights as he looked in all directions. Back when the integration first took place he had been completely clueless, unaware of just how powerful a thing the System was. But now he was all too aware just how mighty it was, and the attention put him under immense psychological pressure.

However, he knew this was a rare opportunity and he needed some clarifications.

"Was it you who pushed me down this path, who put these two remnants in front of me?"

[Yes. User qualified for unique empowerment scenario. Congratulations.]

Zac felt some fury flare up at hearing the same annoying emotionless congratulations as he did when the two last spoke, but he quickly restrained himself this time and instead focused on what was important.

"Are we done then?" Zac asked, his heart pounding. "You won't mess with me any longer? I gave you that Pattern, and you provided me with protections against the fractals."

[Reciprocity has been achieved and balance is maintained. Beware the Terminus.]

"What does that even mean?" Zac asked with some bitterness in his voice, but he was only met with silence.

"What regrets are you talking about? And what alternate path? Please elaborate," Zac tried instead, as he didn't understand what the hell the system had been talking about earlier.

Unfortunately, it looked like the System wasn't any more talkative this time around, and it had left after delivering a few cryptic lines. Zac once again looked upon the screen with the three rewards, his earlier resolve completely crushed. Could he trust the System? Or was it messing with him once again?

His thoughts about the first reward didn't change, as the comment was in line with his own thoughts. But the other two threw him for a loop. What did an alternate path mean? Did it refer to his soul cultivation, or was it something much bigger? Would it tamper with his nascent Creation based on Life and Death? Would it actually force him to embark on Buddhist Cultivation, forgoing his current classes?

And what the hell did rectification of regret mean?

He had done things he wasn't too proud of since the integration, but he would say there was only one real regret; not reaching his father before he was murdered. It couldn't possibly be an array that could resurrect the dead, could it? Or was it rather related to his inability to cultivate? The more he thought about it the more likely it felt.

Wasn't that exactly what Divine Investiture meant? The ability to cultivate was based on one's affinity with the Daos, something that he was completely lacking. What if this array could rectify that deficiency in his body, allowing him to embark on the path of a true cultivator?

There were a lot of secrets related to his body, secrets that might make him want to stay a mortal. But he also knew that things would get extremely rough the further he walked down the path of cultivation. Things weren't too bad right now in F-Grade, but the situation would get much worse for each grade as far as he knew. This might be his shot at getting the final, and greatest, boost to his power, becoming a proper cultivator.

Zac finally went with his gut and reached for the second option.

Zac chose the [Divine Investiture Array] based on his guess that the System wasn't actively messing with him. Why would it even bother? It was in control of the rewards after all. He wasn't interested in changing his path, which would potentially make the [Yin-Yang Arhat Soul Array] useless. And between rectifying regret and strength, he chose the former.

He had plenty of Strength from a bunch of other sources, and a constitution array wasn't required for him to deal with the issues on Earth. He hadn't even seen anyone in his sector utilizing this kind of thing, and it didn't come up when Galau talked about constitutions. It was probably some sort of high-tiered boost not available in his sector, but people did just fine without them.

Rectifying regret was more in line with his purpose of cultivation. He didn't really care about power for power's sake, and not all his troubles could get solved by becoming stronger. Perhaps the [Divine Investiture Array] would make him a cultivator, or perhaps its function was something else entirely, but it didn't matter.

He didn't want to experience some tragedy in the future and realize it could have been prevented if he hadn't been too greedy for more power.

Zac didn't immediately pick the reward though, but he first started putting on one ring after another on his fingers, before moving on to bracers, earrings, and necklaces. It was the jewelry he looted from the mentalist, each of them a pretty strong treasure that contained one charge either of offensive or defensive nature.

He had seen a couple of similar items by now, and he guessed that all of them were either high or more likely peak-tier quality. It was like he was decked in treasures that each could release an attack or shield at least at the level of the [Void Bomb] that was powerful enough to tear holes in space. The items were clearly made for a woman, but he wasn't in a position to be picky at the moment. The whole square could be full of people wanting to rip him to shreds for all he knew, and every small advantage would make a huge difference.

They were outside items so they were pretty limited inside the Tower, but they would be back to their full power out in the Base Town. He actually wanted to don a few dresses as well to improve his defenses even further, but he was afraid that he'd ruin any chances of finding a patron if he came out looking like a maniac.

He looked down at his body a second later, satisfied with the result. Ogras had once told him that wealth was one of the greatest weapons, and he was inclined to agree as he looked at the glistening treasures covering his hands and arms. It was like he suddenly had 10 lives, though each item spent was probably the equivalent of losing Hundreds of Millions of Nexus Coins, perhaps even Billions.

Zac also had enough Creation Energy in his body for one major restoration as well, but he didn't want to use it unless absolutely necessary. He finally prepared one of the spikes of Faceless 9 in the sleeves of his robes, but he was even leerier about that spike compared to the Creation Energy. It might be lethal for outsiders to use, and he would only stab himself with that thing if he really didn't see any alternatives.

Normally he would have entered the new floor as a Draugr to defend against surprise attacks, but he, unfortunately, couldn't do that as he was exiting the tower. Zac wasn't ready to expose his second identity, which meant would have to defend against any potential assault with treasures and his nature-based defensive skills.

Zac took a few deep breaths before he picked the [Divine Investiture Array], and the next moment he was teleported to the 73rd floor. He crushed his token the moment he arrived, but his Danger Sense already screamed in alarm.

He immediately activated one of the defensive charges of a ring as he created a massive fractal edge that he swung in a grand 360-degree arc. A dozen massive rats were turned into mince-meat, and his whole body was drenched in blood and viscera in an instant. It wasn't exactly how he wanted to look upon exiting the tower, but perhaps it would give off an intimidating impression.

A glance at his surroundings showed that he had been thrown into the middle of an endless rat tide that relentlessly tried to swarm him from every direction with furious abandon, and he was forced to fight them off as their teeth seemed to be able to bite straight through the shield he had summoned. Even the leaves of [Nature's Barrier] were getting ripped apart and swallowed by the crazed beasts.

Thankfully he only needed to fight for ten seconds before he was teleported out of the Tower of Eternity, where the Dao Apparition awaited.

The stone slate floated through the vast cosmos, just as it had since there was only darkness. Ancient lines marred its surface, every single groove and turn containing seemingly boundless profundity.

It spoke of the grand tenets of the universe, but very few had the ability to glean any of its secrets. So it continued its solitary journey through the vast cosmos. It silently passed the grand warriors who traversed the stars, and not even ancient existences born from stardust itself could sense its presence.

But all journeys must end.

A remote and solitary planet shone like a green gem, the stele imperceptibly adjusted its trajectory to head toward it. It breached the atmosphere not long after, and it finally settled down in a secluded valley.

The stele settled down gently on the ground, as though it wasn't encumbered by gravity in the slightest. However, a simple touch of the slate made the whole world tremble, causing earthquakes and extreme weather to ravage the whole planet for months before subsiding.

The primordial stone plaque sat in its valley undisturbed, but the planet slowly changed from the fundamental truths it espoused. War ravaged the continents and enough blood was spilled that crops

refused to grow in the soil. Countries rose and fell like the turn of the seasons, grand warriors becoming kings before turning to dust.

One day a one-armed man found himself in the valley. His army had been utterly defeated in battle, and he needed a safe harbor to hide from his enemies. He hadn't lost through lacking skill or tactics, but through inferior numbers. It filled him with irreconciliation that a fool defeated him, but there was nothing to do about the situation. Reality wasn't fair.

There was something alluring about the valley though, and the general soon forgot his anger as he scoured its nooks and crannies until he found the ancient stele. He was unable to take his eyes away from the patterns covering the surface, and it felt like they were the most beautiful things in the universe.

He sat down in front of it as though he was possessed, his eyes never leaving the stone for a second. The seasons passed as the man pondered upon the stele, silent and unmoving. Months turned to years, and years turned into millennia. Forces emerged and fell soon after, great triumphs and defeats replaced each other one by one on the continent.

However, no one ever visited the secluded valley. No one even spoke about the mountains that shielded it from the surrounding countries. It was as though it was separated from the world, a dimension of its own. It was just a man and a stone, and eons of silence.

A storm suddenly erupted in the valley, and the millennia of tranquility ended. The cultivator shuddered, as though he was brought out from a dream.

"War," he muttered as he got on his feet and looked to the stars.

War was the motor of progress, and blood was needed to turn the wheels of fate. Bowed to his master before walking over to take away the monument, as he felt there was still much to learn. But no matter how he strained and pulled it wouldn't move the slightest. Cracks spread for tens of thousands of meters around him, but the monument refused to be moved.

The man sighed in disappointment, but there was no real anger in his eyes. There was just tranquility, and the burning fires of conflict. Increasingly powerful waves started to emanate from his body until he suddenly disappeared in a massive explosion. The next moment he stood in space, looking down at the planet below.

His homeworld had once been without end in his mind, a battlefield whose scale beggared comprehension. But now the scene was too small, just a small ripple in the universe not worth mentioning. He needed a grander arena to progress further. The warlord waved his hand, and a moon was ripped from its trajectory, and crushed into an unadorned lance of stone and steel.

Its materials were nothing special, but space still broke from the slightest movement of its tip.

He looked down at the planet, or rather the now-ruined valley where he had spent most of his life. If it wasn't meant for him any longer, then it might as well continue its journey toward the next fated one. Being stuck on this small corner was an insult to the grandeur it represented.

He swung the lance with one swift motion, and space trembled as a wave of unfettered destruction carved off a section of the planet, sending the continent spinning toward the endless black. The universe needed war, and war needed more than one general.

A stone slate floated through the vast cosmos, and it would continue doing so until there was only darkness. Ancient lines marred its surface, almost every single groove and turn containing seemingly boundless profundity.