

The Fall 472

Chapter 472: Arcane

"Oh?" Io said, looking up from his position in the middle of the Data Array.

The thousands of screens around him faded away as he stood up and walked out, taking in the fresh breath of air for the first time in almost a year. He didn't like to be away from his array for too long, so he immediately made a beeline toward the restricted area in the middle of the sect.

Io was just a peak D-Grade warrior, but he was still let into the hidden realm without any hassle after flashing a token. A guard even arranged for transportation to where he needed to go, and he stood in front of the Lake of Solace after just a couple of hours.

Being friends with a Grand Deacon had its benefits.

"Oh? I thought I would have to drag you outside for you to leave your little cave," a laughing voice echoed out across the lake.

"I experience far more in the Data Array than I could ever do with my own two eyes," Io said with a smile as he drifted over to the small island in the middle. "How are things on your end?"

Io and A'Feris came from the same world, so Io had helped him gain his footing in the sect, which had formed a friendship that had lasted for eons. A'Feris had passed him by in terms of cultivation long ago, and was now one of the elites of the force.

"Same as usual," A'Feris said with a smile as he poured a cup of tea for his old friend. "Something is lacking. I need some impetus to take the next step, but it eludes me."

"You still look quite calm," Io commented.

"Well, my road has taken me further than I ever expected. Even if it stopped here it wouldn't be the worst of fates," A'Feris laughed.

"How about taking a disciple?" Io smiled. "Some have found the experience rewarding, and have even managed to break through their barriers that way."

"Why would I want to get bogged down with one of those snotty brats who keep relying on their elders to solve all their little problems?" A'Feris snorted with derision before he looked at Io with suspicion.

"Wait, why are you saying this right now? What have you found out through your Array? Or do you have some descendants you've hidden from me?"

"I just received a report of an outlier in the Zecia sector," Io said as he took a sip of the tea.

"Zecia? I haven't heard of it," A'Feris said. "What sort of outlier?"

"It is one of the frontier sectors that could tentatively be said to be within our domain, though ownership of those sectors is quite contested as you know," Io explained. "Someone just reached the 9th floor of the Tower of Eternity, though just the entrance."

"Tower of Eternity?" A'Feris muttered. "Haven't heard of that place in a long time. So who was it?"

"His name is Zac Piker, but that's all I know," Io said. "It is likely a pseudonym though."

"That's it?" A'Feris laughed. "Is this the limits of the so-called Living Library?"

"I am guessing he is a wandering cultivator or a Planet Progenitor. The established forces in that kind of place don't have the means to nurture that level of elite, so those who appear are the results of a series of lucky encounters. Of the 14 people who have passed the 8th floor in the Zecia sector, 11 of them have been unattached," Io said.

"A gem in the rough," A'Feris muttered. "What path is he following?"

"I just found out about his existence, no real information has leaked out yet," Io said. "One of our agents will know more in a few hours. I thought I'd let you know before others learn of it. I will only be able to block the information from leaking for a day or two though."

"Discipleship..." A'Feris muttered as his fingers ran along the grisly weapon that never left his side. "We will see. It's not just a matter of convenience, but also of fate. He might be someone worth nurturing, but he needs to walk a similar path as mine. Otherwise both our times would be wasted."

It was a pretty odd situation.

The man had essentially been killed by Catheya and turned into a revenant, but he still seemed happy enough to follow her. But Zac knew that "realignment" wasn't anything evil in the eyes of the undead after his stay at the Undead Kingdom during his climb. It was the same as waking up someone who had been sleepwalking.

"What if I sign a contract with the scions here?" Zac asked as he turned back to Catheya, getting back to the topic at hand. "Something along the line that they cannot attack me and promise to provide assistance, in return for me joining their force."

"The people here are just juniors, they can't speak for their elders," Catheya said with a shake of her head. "Besides, there are ways for the elders to forcibly break the contracts as the difference between them and you is so vast. Then they can simply make up some reason for why they apprehend you before they steal all your treasures and dig out your secrets. They might even hand you over to that Heliophos Clan to curry favor."

"So what should I do?" Zac asked. "I can't be the first guy who has needed to hire someone much stronger than me."

"Of course not. But you have stood out too much. You definitely have a bunch of secrets on you, to the point that even I am extremely curious. Maintaining reputation in the face of such a huge potential gain is nothing," Catheya smiled.

Zac slowly nodded, and he remembered Yrial's situation. He had almost lost his life multiple times to so-called righteous factions who wanted his treasures without paying for them. There was no right and wrong in the Multiverse, there was only power and benefits. Crushing a token to arrive at a foreign force full of D- and C-Grade Hegemons would be like serving himself up on a platter if there were no safeguards in place.

The fact that The Great Redeemer was from a powerful clan of Karmic Cultivators only made the situation messier.

The only force he felt he could somewhat trust was the Peak family, but he wasn't completely ready to put his life in their hands. But it was a last-ditch solution if everything else failed. He could head over to their place if he got a token from Pretty. Even if he ended up captured he would probably have a better ending than whatever The Great Redeemer had planned.

"Do you have any solution? Just preventing him from finding my planet is enough for now," Zac said as he explained the situation with the Dominators and the beacon he had destroyed with the help of the old abbot.

"Cutting off any Karmic Ties before he reaches your plane is your best bet, as it doesn't matter how close or far he is from your planet then. He will not be able to find you through the spatial folds of the sector without any guidance, at least not while The Ruthless Heavens is shrouding your world. And I do have something for that actually," Catheya slowly said as she turned to the Revenant behind her. "Go fetch the 8th and 23rd treasures."

"The local chapter will require remuneration," Varo slowly said.

"That's fine," she said with a disinterested wave.

The man nodded and blended into the shadows with a bow.

"What are the treasures?" Zac asked with interest.

He probably had a lot of good things in his bag, but he had no idea what most of them were. Besides, even if they were valuable there was no guarantee that they'd be able to help him with his current predicaments.

"The 8th treasure is called [Lantern of Fate]. Anyone it illuminates will have their karmic ties exposed, and you will even be able to destroy the ties with enough effort. The wearer will also be immune from forming karmic ties when it's activated," Catheya said.

Zac's eyes lit up, as it sounded like a treasure that produced the karmic ties that the Abbot had allowed him to see for a short while.

This was exactly what he needed to make sure there were no lingering ties between Earth and The Great Redeemer after he had dealt with the Dominators. It could solve any potential issue stemming from his repeated contact with the Redeemer, and make sure that nothing was wrong with those who had almost been possessed during the activation of the Dao Funnel.

"And the 23rd?" Zac asked with mounting excitement.

"A peak E-Grade treasure of erasure. Use it on the corpses of the underlings of the Redeemer, and any hidden karmic links will be severed. We use those kinds of treasures before we create new subjects with... troublesome histories. No one wants an insanely strong powerhouse to come for you to reclaim the body of a descendant," Catheya said with a wry smile.

"Both these two items are yours in return for the information I'm looking for. You will have to sign a contract saying that the treasures cannot be used against the forces of the Undead Empire though," she added.

"Deal," Zac nodded without hesitation.

It was a bit disappointing that she wasn't able to directly help with neither The Great Redeemer nor the Undead Incursion. However, he wasn't really worried about the invaders any longer. He had gained far more than expected during his visit to the Tower of Eternity, and he had great confidence in dealing with the Lich King.

He had hoped to get some help with the incursion to be able to delay his evolution. He had made a lot of improvements in the tower, but he had been too rushed to make gains. If he could have a couple of months to figure out what was going on with his Dao fusions and what to do about the two items in his head he would probably be able to get even better classes.

"So...?" Catheya asked with a raised brow.

"Let me see the treasures first," Zac said with a smile, taking a cue from the paranoid demon.

"Fine," she snorted.

"By the way, do you know the requirements from the system for it to consider one's path a 'Creation'?" Zac asked instead as they waited for the Revenant to return.

"Big appetite, already grasping for an Arcane class?" Catheya smiled.

"Something like that," Zac said, not denying it.

He had passed the 8th floor of the Tower of Eternity. It shouldn't come as a shock that someone like him wanted to get the best possible rarity for their class.

"You should think long and hard before taking that step," Catheya said.

"Why wouldn't I want to get an Arcane class?" Zac asked with some skepticism.

Was this another lecture like that of Alyn? To pursue greatness through mediocrity.

"Have you changed your view of cultivation since your world got integrated?" Catheya asked.

"Of course," Zac nodded.

"Will you change it again?"

"Probably," Zac responded after a short deliberation.

"Well, there you go," Catheya smiled.

"What?" Zac said, not following the logic.

"The Arcane class gives you a bit more attributes and a few other benefits, but you shouldn't think of it as something as simple as the next step after Epic rarity. Getting an Arcane class is confirming your path of cultivation, and doing so is irrevocable," she said.

"Irrevocable? What does that mean?" Zac asked with confusion.

"It means that you cannot change directions any longer. The path you chose will be the path you will have for the rest of your life. If your Creation is substandard, then your path of cultivation will be cut short," Catheya explained. "Arcane classes are probably extremely rare in this sector, but they are more common where I am from. However, most people hold off on choosing them until later in their life."

"What's the difference between choosing now and later?" Zac asked, though he had an inkling.

"We're just children," Catheya said. "Our understanding of the Dao and the universe is shallow at best. Choosing an Arcane Class immediately is like choosing your future profession as a child. You don't know what you are doing. So people wait until their understanding becomes deeper and the Creation becomes more refined."

"You lose some attributes, but trying to maximize attributes is a fool's venture in any case," the Draugr continued. "What is important is your path and your Dao. They will take you past the bottlenecks, a few extra points in Strength will not."

The room turned silent as Zac looked down at his hands with a frown. He would have to confirm that she was telling the truth about Arcane classes, but what should he do if it was the truth? He felt that his creation was extremely high tier since it followed the path of Life and Death, which might even be turned into that of Creation and Oblivion with the help of the Splinter of Oblivion and the Shard of Creation.

But was that enough? There were still huge obstacles to overcome. He still couldn't use the energies as he pleased, and he was essentially fumbling in the dark about most aspects. Besides, he wasn't even sure if his ideas would even work any longer after the changes just before he left the tower. The pathways to [Cyclic Strike] had been rebranded, and he hadn't been able to confirm whether they even worked like before.

What would happen if he chose an Arcane class based on such rickety foundations? His whole future might be ruined since he grasped for too much, just like Alyn had warned him of.

The silence stretched on for another four minutes until the revenant returned with two boxes.

"This is the lantern," Catheya smiled. "Be careful not to use it constantly. It consumes life-force to run."

"Lifeforce? How much?" Zac said with a frown.

"One minute's use will result in a year lost when used," the revenant spoke up after the Draugr shot him a glance. "Ten years if you have reached the D-Grade. It is not strong enough to protect the fate of those stronger than that."

Zac nodded in thanks. It was a bit creepy to pay with your life to use an item, especially after already having already lost so much of it to the Shard. But just using it for short durations wouldn't be too bad, especially as he was about to evolve and get a new chunk of lifespan any day now.

"So, about the information?" The Draugr said.

"I don't know if the one I'm thinking of is related to you, but you look just like a younger version of the one I saw," Zac said as he stowed away the two treasures. "I think her name is Be'Zi."

“So you really have met her?!” the Draugr almost screamed as she leaned across the table. “Is she in this sector?”

“I don’t know,” Zac said. “We met in a vision since we walk similar paths. She bestowed me with something to protect me. Perhaps that's what you can sense from me.”

“Why would she help you though?” Catheya said with confusion.

“She believed it was fate we met,” Zac shrugged. “According to her husband she seemed to place pretty great emphasis on such things.”

“Her WHAT?!” Catheya shouted as she slammed the table. “WHO?!”