

The Fall 480

Chapter 480: Desperate Times

Zac's mind was thrown into disarray after witnessing one snippet after another of Alea's life pass by his eyes, but he still desperately tried to figure out a way to salvage the situation. Once he was back in his own body again he immediately lifted the casket, only to be met by a horrifying sight.

Alea's body had been turned completely black, and dense waves of corruption and death radiated from her body. Gases leaked out of her pores as well, and Zac was forced to quickly close the lid again as the noxious fumes almost made him keel over after a single breath.

That scene alone made him furious enough to almost spontaneously combust, but he restrained his anger as he searched for a solution. However, there were simply no treasures in his possession that would allow him to save her life.

Her soul was falling apart, and her body was no longer fit for a living being as far as he could tell. But her last words echoed through his mind, and he refused to give up as long as there was a chance that he could save her.

His first idea was to turn her into a Revenant somehow, as that would at least allow her to keep 'living' in a sense. However, not only would that erase Alea and create a new personality, but it might turn her into a subordinate of the Lich King. It was those robed liches who had initiated the process, which might have left some sort of mark.

Also, he had no idea how to actually turn someone into a Revenant.

"Follow me..." Zac muttered as he stared down at the crystalline casket, and in his desperation he suddenly thought of something.

He didn't have any idea whether what he did was insane or not, but he was unable to think of anything else as he took out an object and placed it on top of the lid.

It was the [Divine Investiture Array].

This the only solution available to him. Her soul was already a problem that was out of his league after having lost the [Prajñā Cherry], and with the Lich messing up her body she was way beyond his means of salvation. He wasn't even sure whether a D-Grade healer would be able to bring her back from the brink of death, let alone his paltry E-Grade pills.

But what if she became a Tool Spirit, a being that was essentially immortal? He had recently learned about two pieces of key information. First, living beings could be turned into Spirit Tools, or rather 'Sword Slaves' through sacrificial rituals. Second, the [Divine Investiture Array] could pretty much turn anything into a Spirit Tool.

If he turned Alea into a Tool Spirit she would be able to live on, just like Brazla. It was obviously a messed-up solution, but one that would fulfill her wish and keep her 'alive'. The universe was full of magical things that he couldn't even imagine, and perhaps he would be able to turn her back into a living being again in the future.

He immediately infused a stream of Cosmic Energy into the [Divine Investiture Array] before he could change his mind. A massive pillar of gold shot down from the heavens and slammed into the valley with enough force to completely obliterate all clouds for kilometers in each direction.

A groundswell of energy rose from the depths of the mountain to meet the golden pillar, and Zac found himself submerged in a surge of power so dense that it was almost a liquid. He did not doubt that he would be able to gain multiple levels in minutes from staying in a magical place like this upon reaching E-Grade, but that wasn't why he had summoned these energies.

He suddenly felt a spiritual nudge from beneath the lid, and Zac refocused on the coffin Alea lay inside. His eyes lit up in excitement upon sensing it. Zac couldn't be sure, but he felt it was as an agreement of his plan. Perhaps she could understand what was going to happen after being in the middle of it.

However, nothing happened with the casket, and the energies simply seemed to swirl around it as Zac felt the spiritual signal from within weaken. Zac's mind spun for solutions, trying to figure out what the problem was. Was the array wasn't enough?

Zac emptied his Spatial Ring of anything that might help with her situation, and a stream of golden energy immediately emerged from the [Divine Investiture Array] and snatched a third of his Soul Crystals before starting going over the other things he had taken out. Zac didn't mind at the least, as he suddenly felt Alea's presence once more from within the coffin, making it seem as though the Soul Crystals had condensed her soul again.

The next thing to be selected by the golden tendrils was the fossilized bug that radiated an unceasing aura of corrosion. Zac had picked it up on the 3rd floor of the tower, but he believed that it was a lucky find as neither Ogras nor Galau had been able to even get close due to the aura it emitted. He thought it might fit with Alea and her constitution, so he took it out as well.

However, it wasn't enough as he felt Alea's spirit slowly weaken again.

Panic welled up once more, and he grit his teeth and took out an intricately inscribed jade box and opened its lid. The tendrils of light immediately pounced on the contents, and Zac wasn't surprised as it was the [Pathfinder Oracle Eye]. The Auctioneer had said that it was perfect to improve a Spirit Tool's spirituality, and it might just be what was needed.

The cost was pretty shocking, but he had already gone so far as to expend his [Divine Investiture Array]. It was too late to hold back.

But Zac's eyes suddenly widened in alarm as another tendril reached out behind Zac and picked up [Everlasting] that he had poured out of his spatial ring along with the rest of his treasures. Zac was about to take the shield back, but he stopped himself after some hesitation and let the golden light use the E-Grade defensive treasure as another ingredient.

It wasn't even a Spirit Tool, and he could always get another shield elsewhere.

The tendril also reached behind him and ripped off a few of the largest branches of the [Tree of Ascension] while a storm of gases was dragged out from the underground where the Amanita Mushroom resided. Only then did the array seem satiated, and the tendrils receded back into the crystal as a Golden Cocoon formed around the Stasis Array.

'Thank you...' a silent whisper suddenly echoed out in his mind, but its volume grew lower and lower toward the end, as though Alea was moving away from him.

"Are you okay?" Zac asked, but a sinking feeling spread through his chest as there was no answer. "Alea?"

The silence stretched on, and Zac started to panic as he couldn't get an answer from Alea no matter what he did. He wanted to go closer, but he was instantly rebuffed by the powerful force from the [Divine Investiture] array.

Zac could only anxiously wait for the light to dissipate. Time passed as more and more energy was infused into the cocoon, but Zac didn't move a muscle. He knew there were no doubt a dozen things that needed to be done on the island, but he refused to leave until he had seen this thing through. Only two hours later did the lights finally dissipate as the cocoon cracked, revealing the item within.

The large crystal encasing Alea was recuperating inside was gone, as was his shield and all the materials he had poured into the array. In their place was only one thing, a massive black coffin.

The coffin was just over two meters long, and seemed to be crafted from a mix of the wood from the [Tree of Ascension] and some black crystal or smooth stone. The two materials formed intricate patterns all across the surface, though they didn't seem to be fractals as far as he could tell. They were more akin to the markings of the Stone Stele he had seen in the vision, though they obviously didn't contain that kind of power.

The coffin's shape was traditional with the top being slightly wider before narrowing again toward the bottom. It looked nothing like the translucent glass studded with Divine Crystals of before, but rather a rugged and completely opaque box that carried a heavy and almost solemn aura.

There were two sets of fractals covering the lid as well. First was a circle placed at the wider section toward the top, and the other set was two lines of inscriptions that ran parallel along the length of the lid. The fractals almost reminded Zac of a funeral wreath with two ribbons hanging down.

Finally, there were thick pitch-black chains that were wound around the whole coffin a few times, and Zac was surprised when he realized they actually emerged from holes on the side of the coffin. A quick estimate told Zac there were over five meters of links wound around the ominous item, and there were perhaps even more chains waiting inside the coffin itself.

All in all, it felt like an extremely somber item, and Zac was pretty shocked at how it had turned out. He wasn't sure what he had expected the [Divine Investiture Array] to do, but at least it wasn't something as drastic as this. It had completely repurposed the items he had thrown inside in just two hours, a feat that would no doubt be utterly impossible even for great artisans like the original Brazla.

But the amazing craftsmanship wasn't really what Zac was interested in right now. He hurried over to the coffin and tried to open the lid, but no matter how hard he strained he was utterly incapable of moving it even an inch.

He growled in frustration as veins bulged across his arms, but he could eventually only give up. He tried peering into the six holes the chains emerged from on the sides, but there was nothing but darkness

inside of the coffin. Zac tried shining a light inside with an illumination crystal, but it was as though the light was immediately swallowed the moment it entered.

Zac sat back with a blank look, his determination slowly being swapped out by confusion and depression. Just what had he done? Making Spirit Tools from living cultivators wasn't just considered an unorthodox method, but a downright evil one. He felt like a mad scientist playing god, and he had no idea what would come of this.

"What have you done?" a furious voice said from the side, and Zac looked over to see Ogras walk over with bloodshot eyes, his eyes darting between the coffin and Zac.

"She said she wasn't ready to leave, that she wanted to follow me," Zac mumbled with a hollow voice. "Her soul was falling apart because of those damn liches. She wasn't ready to let go, and this was the only solution I could think of."

The demon stared at Zac for a few seconds, while Zac simply looked at the coffin with a lost expression.

"So what is this?" Ogras finally said as he looked at the coffin. "Exactly what did you do? I can't sense her presence any longer."

"I got something called a [Divine Investiture Array] from the eighth floor, it could turn anything into a Spirit Tool. I also added the [Pathfinder Oracle Eye], and it seems the process swallowed my shield along with a bunch of the treasures I have gathered so far," Zac explained.

"This... This is not right," Ogras said with disgust on his face. "It goes against the natural order. How will her soul find rest or enter the cycle of the Heavens this way? You have cursed her."

Zac said could say nothing in response, bleakness washing over him as he felt some disgust with himself. The silence stretched on with one man brooding and the other man stewing.

"You threw a shield worth over a billion into this, and it was one of the cheaper materials?" Ogras finally said with a grimace. "The things you expended here would be able to pay for the foundation of a great faction."

"I figured that if I could turn her into a Spirit Tool like Brazla, she would be able to stay alive. We could find a way to turn her back into flesh and bone in the future," Zac sighed as he looked up from the coffin. "Do you know if it's possible?"

"No idea," Ogras said. "Anyway, we can't stay here."

"What's going on?" Zac asked.

"We're getting invaded, remember?" Ogras snorted. "There are still enemies to deal with even after your rampage, we need to clear them out so we don't leave any hidden threats. Besides, we are running out of time to deal with the unliving. Your sister might have bought us some time, but we're still cutting it close."

Zac nodded before he walked over to the coffin. He silently looked at the beautifully crafted surface and the chains that kept the thing sealed before he slowly reached down to put it in his Spatial Ring.

But the coffin suddenly shuddered and started shrinking as the chains moved about. In just a second the coffin had shrunk to just half a decimeter's length, and one of its chains had formed a loop through the top holes of the coffin.

Zac immediately understood what was going on, and he didn't hesitate to put the chain above his head to wear it as a necklace. The moment the coffin touched a chest a weak tendril emerged from the treasure, but there was no voice accompanying it this time. It still gave some comfort for Zac, and he desperately clung to the idea that Alea was still inside there, but that she was simply too drained to communicate at the moment.