

## The Fall 483

### Chapter 483: Against the Natural Order

Zac quickly opened up his Dao Screen, and as expected, there was a change.

Fragment of the Coffin (Middle): All attributes +20, Endurance +190, Vitality +120, Intelligence +35, Wisdom +65. Effectiveness of Endurance +10%

Zac still didn't know when the upgrade took place, but he guessed that it mainly came from creating a Coffin-type Spirit Tool. He had sat as though he was in trance witnessing the whole process, and something about the experience had helped him break through.

Of course, more things had contributed to the upgrade. He had taken the first step toward upgrading the Fragment from witnessing the Dao Apparition of the War Stele, and he had fought both in the life-and-death battle against half the Base Town, followed by the battle against the cultists.

These battles had set the foundations for the evolution, and the magical activation of the [Divine Investiture Array] was probably the final spark that upgraded the Fragment. However, these things were just the latest additions. Alea had been the spark of inspiration to the formation of the Fragment of the Coffin since the very beginning.

The vision of her lying in the stasis array had felt like a perfect mirror of the blood-drenched lotus he witnessed during his Dao Vision. The two visions had merged into the Fragment of the Coffin, and the recent events were a continuation of that reality. Zac couldn't exactly pinpoint what concept was added to the Dao Fragment though, but he slowly started to form an idea.

He had long since started to walk the path of life and death, but only the Seed of Trees had properly incorporated this concept so far. The Seed of Rot was clearly death-attuned, but that seed was mostly propped up by fortuitous encounters. The concept he had incorporated into the Fragment of the Coffin was one he already had brushed upon before; life through death.

There were some differences though. The insight related to trees was more akin to how a seed would grow from the ashes of a burned-down forest, gaining life through death. However, the insights he gained now was rather based on embracing death for a shot at life.

He knew that he essentially had killed Alea when he turned her into a Spirit Tool. Even if her consciousness awoke again she wouldn't be living. But Alea dying was the only way for her to live. The insight contained the willingness to go against the natural order, whereas the earlier insight was based on making the most of the natural order.

They were the same, but also the opposite.

Zac felt it was an extremely important step in the creation he was building for himself, a realignment of his Dao so that it would better fit as one half of the whole. Getting a second Middle-Grade Fragment would no doubt improve his choices upon evolving as well, but for now he focused on the gained attributes.

The improved attributes weren't too surprising, apart from the boost to Endurance being slightly smaller than expected. That was the best-case scenario though. He had reached a terrifying 1692 Endurance in

his Human form after the latest upgrade, and while he still was some ways from the attribute cap of 2500, he still needed to be careful. A few more titles and another Dao upgrade and he might hit the ceiling.

He had only lost 3 points in Strength from reaching the limit of the F-Grade, but a loss at this stage could be huge in case there were complications for him to upgrade his Race to D-Grade.

There wasn't cause to worry just yet though, and Zac refocused on [Love's Bond]. He already knew that there were also actually two skills in the Spirit Tool already to match the two fractals on the handle of [Verun's Bite], but he wouldn't use them now as they had pretty big cool-downs.

A long cool-down was fine with Zac though since that meant that the skills were a lot stronger than normal. It was just like how his ultimate skills, except [Vanguard of Undeath], couldn't be used over and over.

All in all, he felt that his new Spirit Tool was even better than expected. The more he thought about it the more he felt it would be extremely easy to incorporate [Love's Bond] into his fighting style without it affecting the fighting style he had come up with for himself.

It almost symbolized his whole creation in a sense. It was an extremely good fit with most of his skills in his Undying Bulwark class, while also adding something new to the table. It perfectly mirrored his Fragment of the Coffin as well, and he would perhaps be able to move them both toward the Dao of Death over time.

But the Spirit Tool also represented life and rebirth through Alea's soul and the purpose of its creation. If things progressed as he hoped he would be able to turn Death into Life, and give Alea back her life again.

He could even think of some interesting possibilities with the sparks he could create with the help of the remnants. Getting them under control was a long-term plan, but perhaps he would be able to use the chains as a delivery method in the future.

In the final attack against the dragon he had used Creation Energy to form a spear to house the spark, but perhaps he could simply put the sparks into the coffin and shoot them out with a chain. He could only imagine the destructive potential of a Neprosium chain infused with the purest destruction.

He wouldn't need to force it or change himself to adapt to the shield, and the System upheld its end of the bargain and created a Spirit Tool suited just for him. The process had even given him a second Mid-Tier Fragment, which might allow him to get a fitting Arcane class. After having upgraded a second he couldn't help but fantasize about what options he might see when touching the Nexus Node this time.

Zac didn't immediately head over to the Nexus Node though, but he rather spent another hour to completely rid himself of the weakened state from using [Hatchetman's Rage]. He had gotten mostly better during his talk with Catheya, but he wanted to be completely rid of any lingering threats to his evolution before taking that step.

He already had the ticking-time bombs in his head to worry about.

Truthfully, the Undead Incursion wasn't the only reason why he wanted to evolve as quickly as possible; there were two more reasons. The first was the two remnants in his mind. He knew there was a

tribulation waiting for him when evolving. It was the final test before reaching E-Grade, and he would normally be completely confident in passing.

However, the two remnants in his mind had already proven extremely adept at causing chaos at the most inopportune times, and Zac was afraid that they would flare up during the tribulation. It was better to smoothly into E-Grade now while they remnants were still drained and in an inactive state.

The second was that he was getting dangerously close to the limit of how many attributes he could have. With the Fragment of the Coffin having evolved just now, his wiggle room was getting limited. There was also probably a title waiting for reaching E-Grade first on the planet, and then there was potentially something for surviving the integration, closing the most Incursions, and becoming the world leader, and so on.

There were potentially a lot of titles waiting the moment he managed to close the final Incursions, and he wanted to have the ability to enjoy the bonuses. His plan was to immediately eat the [Fruit of Rebirth] and the two race-boosting pills he got in the base town while flying toward the core of the Dead Zone.

It might not be enough to completely pass into D-Grade Race, but it would at least set up the foundations and both increase his longevity and unlock some of the Attribute Cap of having a D-Grade race.

Zac finally felt he had both figured out what he needed to do and calmed his mind, and the next thing was simply for him to evolve so that he could set out toward the Undead Incursion. He walked over to the Nexus House and found that Kenzie was still installing the [Heaven's Secrets Array] he bought during an auction in Base Town.

"How are things?" Zac asked when he arrived, nodding at Ogras who stood to the side as well.

"I'll have this array installed in half an hour," Kenzie answered as she blew a wisp of hair away from her face. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. I'll be able to get a breather when the undead are dealt with," Zac sighed.

"Have you decided what to do to get to the mainland?" Ogras asked.

"If we haven't managed to stop the disruption by the point I'm ready to leave, then I'll risk it and use Kenzie's stabilization array. The area that was jammed by the undead the last time was enormous, and I'm afraid that going to Cogstown will just be a waste of time," Zac said.

"Fair enough," Ogras shrugged.

"I'll get Calrin's uncle to help me set it up," Kenzie said. "He's pretty skilled with arrays, but he can only help with things that we buy through Thayer Consortia. Something to do with limitations of the Mercantile License."

"That little blue bastard should be thankful that we don't throw him into a spatial tear to search for a safe passage for us," Ogras muttered from the side.

Zac snorted and was inclined to agree. The Sky Gnome's small act of giving him a protective ring had caused a ripple effect of almost incomprehensible proportions. It had led to the Zethaya Pill house blowing up, and him gaining infamy through slaughtering over a hundred scions of the Zecia sector.

Who knew what trouble waited for him when venturing into the vaster stage of the sector?

However, the demon's words also made him think of something else, and he turned to Ogras.

"Can you have the Sky Gnome and his appraisers come over?" Zac asked. "We need to make a preliminary tally of the gains, I want to see if there's anything useful we can bring to the Dead Zone."

"Sure," Ogras said with some excitement as he flickered away.

Zac turned to his sister and handed her his Cosmos Sack. His most important Treasures had already been moved over to his new Spatial Ring after it was confirmed that it didn't disappear. Most of the stuff he didn't have any direct use for was thrown into the Cosmos Sack to be either appraised or added to the Merit Store.

"I'll go talk with Brazla for a bit," Zac said.

"Is this about Alea?" Kenzie asked as her eyes darted to the necklace around Zac's neck. "Ogras told me what happened."

"I was too late again," Zac sighed. "This was the only thing I could think of."

Kenzie silently looked at her brother, but her eyes spoke volumes.

"I... I just couldn't sit and watch her die," Zac coughed, dodging the meaning of the stare.

He truthfully wasn't sure how he felt about the demoness even now. He had thought about her a lot during the climb, and seeing those snippets of Alea's memories had rekindled the memories of those months they had spent almost attached at the hip after he closed the Demon Incursion. They had gone through ups and downs together, and he knew her even more intimately than Ogras in a sense.

If this had been before the Integration he would no doubt have believed it was love. But the past year had numbed him, made him almost unable to think about anything except getting stronger. First, it was to find his family, then it was to save Earth. He had never stopped to consider things such as love, especially not after Hannah's betrayal.

But all of that was moot now that she was a coffin.

"So you think you can bring her back in the future?" Kenzie asked instead after seeing her brother's brooding silence.

"That's what I hope. I'll go talk with Brazla, he might know more," Zac said with a pained face. "Provided he's in a talkative mood today."

"Say hello from me, it's been a while since I had time to visit him. This thing will be up and running when you're back," Kenzie said as she turned back to keep working on the [Heaven's Secrets Array].

Zac smiled as he flashed away with [Loamwalker], and he found himself in front of The Towers of Myriad Dao in a few seconds. His Dao Repository had always looked gaudy, but now that he had witnessed the awe-inspiring Tower of Eternity and its mysterious apparitions, it looked even worse.

The lights were blinding but hollow, completely lacking the mysteries of the universe. Zac kept his opinions to himself though as he walked inside the repository with a staid expression.

“So you survived, after all,” the ever-annoying voice drifted over as Brazla descended from a golden light appearing out of nowhere.

The Tool Spirit was decked in golden armor with multiple golden and gem-studded swords attached to his back. Zac wasn't sure, but he guessed that he was copying the creator of the Blademaster Inheritance this time, perhaps inspired by the war outside.

“I thought more capable owners had descended on the island for a moment, but I guess the Great Brazla have to make do with you for a while longer,” Brazla added as he threw Zac a scathing glance as he conjured his throne.

“I'll try to live up to your expectations,” Zac sighed. “My sister sends her regards.”

“I-“ Brazla said, but he suddenly froze as he stared at the necklace around Zac's neck. “What's that?”