

The Fall 486

Chapter 486: Decision

Zac looked at the options with mixed emotions. He had succeeded in the sense that there actually was an Arcane class available, a class called Vessel of Destruction. However, it didn't have another Arcane to accompany it. It was rather matched with an Epic Class called Nature's Lament.

He had been hesitant about what he should do after hearing Catheya's description, and this only muddled the waters further. With Arcane classes locking in your future path there was a real risk that picking just one Arcane class while leaving the other at Epic might have some unanticipated ramifications.

If there had been a set of two Arcane classes he might just have ignored Catheya's warning and followed Yrial's advice to shoot for the stars, but now he wasn't so sure.

His instincts told him that he needed to create a functioning system between his two classes where both sides moved toward a common goal. He had felt there were some compatibility issues with his second class for some time now, and there was a real risk that his Draugr side might turn into a bottleneck if he wasn't careful.

Zac slowly read the description of Vessel of Destruction. It felt most likely that it was based around the Splinter. It seemed to utilize the rage that the splinter radiated, and the class would perhaps even help him in harnessing the bronze sparks. It also provided a skill called Avatar of Wrath, which sounded like some sort of boosting skill in the vein of [Hatchetman's Rage], or perhaps something more akin to [Vanguard of Undeath].

However, nothing indicated that it also incorporated the Shard or the balance between the two forces, and neither was there any such indication on the accompanying class. It wasn't surprising though, as there simply hadn't been enough time for him to get acquainted with the pink flashes and the Shard of Creation.

He only had access to it during the frantic escape from the Technocrat vessel and the subsequent battle against the dragon. That was nothing compared to the months of carrying the Splinter and the weeks of constant experimentation into the bronze flashes.

The Dao requirements had been fulfilled after reaching Middle mastery with the Dao of the Coffin, and there was no doubt in his mind that he had gone far beyond what was required to generate enough merit for a second Arcane option. He had conquered the 8th floor of the Tower of Eternity. He had taken down a literal dragon before forcing the elites of the whole sector to give in.

He had taken out a whole Technocrat vessel, and he had closed almost all the Incursions of a newly Integrated world. He had even witnessed the 'Terminus', the origin and the end of the Dao itself. If he didn't have enough achievements by now, then who did?

That meant there was a problem with his 'creation'.

There was a fuzzy image of his future cultivation in his mind, one based on a few defining features of his power. It was a path of duality, exemplified through his two classes, his opposing Daos, and the two remnants in his mind. But there was still nothing that really tied these three pairs together. He also had

no actual idea what the bronze and pink flashes he created were, or even how he was supposed to properly use them.

He knew that there was no way for him to gain a quick fix to upgrade Nature's Lament to an Arcane option, so he could only drop the issue for now. Cultivation was measured in centuries, even millennia, and he had ample time to figure out the missing pieces of his cultivation path.

There were all sorts of logical reasons why he shouldn't take the Vessel of Destruction, but the word 'Arcane' was like a target that kept drawing back Zac's eyes. The class was clearly powerful, and it would both provide more attributes from the Base Attributes, while almost ten extra attribute points per level.

It was an extremely lopsided class, but his unique situation with bonus attributes would cancel out the huge downside of negative Endurance. He was frozen in indecision for a few seconds, but eventually, his fears of the potential risks overcame the lure of the potential rewards.

He was giving up on an Arcane class for E-Grade.

Zac slowly read through each of the four other options instead, not too surprised with the rarity of them. He had already expected to be presented mostly Epic Classes, perhaps with a few Rare ones peppered in. The only question was how many options he would be provided.

There was no denying that his visit to the Tower of Eternity had been worth it in terms of options to choose from. Not only did his options max out at five, but every single Class apart from Vessel of Destruction was Epic. Most of them were new as well, with only Undying Warlord remaining as an option from his previous inquiry.

The [Heaven's Secrets Array] was also showing its worth, and the information he was given was just on a completely different level compared to last time. It didn't just provide him with information about what attributes the classes provided, but even revealed the names of the skills he would gain.

Zac already knew about the base attributes after having spoken with Ylvas and Catheya, but it was still eye-opening to see the numbers in person. It was not without reason that Ogras had said that Low-Tiered Titles were useless for anything except leveraging them into medium and high-tiered counterparts.

Even a common class warrior would gain the equivalent of a top tier Low-tiered title every level while still early E-Grade, excluding Luck of course. Furthermore, that boost would increase further at reaching Middle E-Grade, and then once more upon reaching High E-Grade. If things followed the same pattern as F-Grade, then there might also be a bonus waiting at the peak of E-Grade.

And that wasn't all. The actual class gave another round of attributes on top of the base, and a quick glance proved that an epic class seemed to give another 20 to 25 attribute points, in addition to the ten free attribute points. That meant that a Low E-Grade Warrior with an Epic class would gain almost 80 Attribute points per level, which was in line with what Ylvas had said.

The real question on Zac's mind was how this base worked for him. Judging by the description it seemed like a done deal that he would get the class-specific attributes from both classes, along with two sets of free attributes as he did level his classes separately. But would he also get two base packs per level?

It would make a huge difference, as more than half of the attributes came from the Base Attributes awarded upon breaking open a node. If he didn't get the base attributes twice he'd "only" get 50% more attributes compared to a normal cultivator, drastically reducing his advantage.

Another piece of information that the array added was whether the evolution was an upgrade or a divergence. Zac guessed that meant that the new class would either build upon the earlier class or move it away from its predecessor in some other direction.

For example, Edge of Arcadia and Gaia's Apostle were both clearly related to the Hatchetman Class, but judging by their attributes and skills they went in different directions. Edge of Arcadia seemed to focus more on axe-work whereas Gaia's Apostle leaned toward nature skills like [Nature's Punishment] and [Hatchetman's Spirit].

A divergence would instead stake out a new path, perhaps only partially relying on the earlier class. It wasn't surprising that he saw mostly divergent options for his Draugr-class after splitting up its Dao Seeds with hardness going into the Coffin and Sanctuary going into the Bodhi. It might result in some of his old skills becoming obsolete, but Zac already knew that going in.

Zac knew he needed to make a decision, and he first excluded the fourth option. The Draugr-class seemed to be purely defensive, which was the very thing he wanted to move away from. Gaia's Apostle didn't really resonate with him either, even though [Nature's Punishment] had been one of his main skills for dealing with tough opponents.

The other three options both had strong points and demerits, but Zac eventually discarded the first option as well, leaving him with options three and five. Undying Warlord seemed like a good fit for him, as it probably was just like his current class with a higher focus on offense. However, the problem was with the class 'Gatekeeper of Sukhavati'.

The class didn't provide a single point in Strength, which indicated a significant step away from his current fighting style. Even worse, it seemed to be lopsided in the sense that it was based on both the Bodhi and the Coffin. He didn't want those two Fragments going into the same class, as he wanted for each class to represent one of the concepts of life and death, or Creation and Oblivion.

The third and fifth options both seemed to fulfill all his goals for his new class. The Draugr Classes seemed to be geared much more offensively compared to Undying Bulwark. Risen Asura gave the feeling of pure violence and oppression, like he would become an unstoppable killing machine that refused to die until all his enemies had fallen before him.

The Fetters of Desolation was a bit less clear, but he still felt it was a very good match. The name of the class didn't really sound like something he'd want to use, but there were some good indications that it was still suited for him. The first indicator was the skill, Blighted Cut. It sounded like a weapon-based attack, and perhaps something that took advantage of the Corrosive elements of the Dao of the Coffin.

The flavor text also made him think of a restriction-based warrior who entrapped and weakened his enemies before he delivered the killing blow. That seemed like a good option to him, as that was the main way that he used his Undying Bulwark Class. He trapped his enemies in the Miasmic Cage, then whittled them down with [Winds of Decay], [Deathwish], and the Spectral Chains.

If the enemy tried a desperate strike he took them out with [Vanguard of Undeath] and [Unholy Strike].

Of course, these were still just hypotheses, but there was undeniably something about that class that pulled at him. He wasn't sure whether there was the advertised Karmic Guidance that was supposed to be included in the [Heaven's Secret Array], or if it was because of his recently acquired Spirit Tool.

As for the two classes for his human side, both of them had strong points.

Arcadia contained the meaning of becoming one with nature, which was exactly the direction he wanted to take the class based on his life-aspected vision for his path. But it still had Strength as its main attribute, which clearly indicated a warrior-archetype together with the flavor text and skill option.

However, Warmaster of Hecate had provided an interesting twist to his envisioned path. Hecate was a goddess of witchcraft, death, and poison. It was a fusion of Death and Life, while still being a warrior-type class with a connection to nature. This fit well together with the 'Risen' part of the other class, which seemed based on his recent insight of Life from Death.

So one of the options blended life and death, incorporating a nascent duality of his two main concepts into both the classes. The other option was more neatly separated with his Human side representing life and nature, and his Draugr side representing death and desolation.

The question was whether he wanted to fuse these two concepts already and build upon it, or if it was better to progress in the two paths separately until he understood more about what the paths entailed.

Eventually, his eyes turned to the third option, the combination of Edge of Arcadia and Fetters of Desolation.

He decided to go with this option for two reasons. First was the fact that Warmaster of Hecate was a Divergence of Hatchetman, a class he felt perfectly suited for him. He would rather upgrade his human side and get a Divergent class for his Draugr side.

The second reason was that he felt it was too early to start mucking about and fusing the two concepts of life and death into one single class. He wasn't even sure if that was the form his 'creation' would take in the future, and he didn't want to walk down that path before he had come to a conclusion there.

However, he didn't immediately activate his option, but rather turned toward his sister and Ogras who curiously looked at him.

"It's working," Zac nodded.

"Well no shit," the demon muttered. "You've been standing still with a disgusting grin on your face for five minutes. Are you ready to evolve?"

"I'm going now," Zac nodded.

"None of us can help you if you mess up, so you might as well do it in your courtyard where you won't be disturbed," the demon said. "You will have a minute or so before the tribulation descends."

Zac nodded in agreement, as it sounded as the best option.

"This might take a while, but make sure I'm okay if I haven't emerged in a day," Zac said as he took out the dozen Array Breakers from his Spatial Ring. "And focus on identifying treasures that will help in the

battle against the Undead Empire. I'm pretty sure that these are all Array Breakers, see which ones might be of use against anything the Lich King uses."

"We'll certainly extract their secrets by the time you're done," Calrin hurriedly nodded, obviously eager to rack up some contribution.

"Good," Zac nodded before he turned back to the Nexus Node and picked the third option before having a chance to change his mind again.

[Tribulation will descend in 1 Minute]

"Good luck," Kenzie said from the side, but some excitement was evident in her eyes. "You're making history here."

"I'll be back soon," Zac smiled before he flashed away, quickly returning to his courtyard.

The moment he entered he activated his layered arrays before he sat down on his prayer mat. He doubted it would be of any help, but it did help him calm his mind a bit better as he waited for the minute to pass.

Finally it arrived, and he felt himself being surrounded by a mysterious energy. He couldn't figure out what it was made of, but it felt a bit reminiscent of the sky of lightning he had witnessed when the Chaos Pattern had appeared. Of course, it was an extremely watered-down version.

He was just about to close his eyes and brace for the tribulation when two prompts appeared in front of him.

[Heart Tribulation Descends. Struggle for Survival]

[Spirit Tribulation Descends. Struggle for Survival]

"...Shit," Zac muttered before his world was consumed by pain and fire.