

The Fall 490

Chapter 490: The Second Step

Zac took a deep breath as he looked around, a sense of calmness filling him.

He had done it, he'd passed the first true bottleneck of cultivation, the watershed that separated those who had a shot at immortality and those who were destined to stay mortal. He had been a bit worried about complications arising due to his weird body without any affinities, but it looked like he had been worrying about nothing.

Then again, he certainly understood why most warriors waited to consolidate their gains before evolving, some taking years to ready themselves for the Tribulation. He hadn't been prepared for just how perilous it would be. However, things had gone above expectations all things considered. Getting dual Tribulations was pretty rough, but he almost felt he was lucky it happened.

The Heart Tribulation was much harder than the Spirit Tribulation in his case. Enduring pain was his forte by now, but he had been drawn into those visions that preyed on his insecurities way too easily. If it wasn't for the constant waves of pain he might have forgotten himself for real, which would have made it so much harder to extricate himself.

He might even have failed that Tribulation altogether.

It was dealt with now though, and he wouldn't have to worry about the next Tribulation for quite some time. The remnants had fallen asleep again it seemed, but they didn't look quite as wretched as before. However, it was a good sign that they immediately started fighting each other rather than the cage the moment they got energized, and perhaps he wouldn't have to keep living in dread of their awakening.

But he made a mental note to mention the arrays for the Soul Strengthening Manual to his sister. Perhaps she could work on it while he dealt with the undead threat.

He cracked his neck and looked down at his watch, extremely surprised to see that almost 14 hours had passed since he sat down. It felt like the Tribulations hadn't taken more than half an hour. Something had messed with his sense of time it seemed, most likely the five visions.

But it still was better than his allotment of one day, and it gave him some room to figure out his situation. He immediately opened his status screen to see what was going on.

Name

Zachary Atwood

Level

75

Class

[E-Epic] Edge of Arcadia

Race

[E] Human

Alignment

[Earth] Port Atwood - Lord

Titles

Born for Carnage, Ultimate Reaper, Luck of the Draw, Giantsbane, Disciple of David, Overpowered, Slayer of Leviathans, Adventurer, Demon Slayer I, Full of Class, Rarified Being, Trailblazer, Child of Dao, The Big 500, Planetary Aegis, One Against Many, Butcher, Progenitor Noblesse, Duplicity Core, Apex Hunter, Heaven's Chosen, Scion of Dao, Omnidextrous, Eastern Trigram Hunt - 1st, Tyrannic Force, Achievement Hunter, The First Step, Promising Specialist, Tower of Eternity - 8th Floor, Heaven's Triumvirate, Fated, Peak Power, Monarch-Select

Limited Titles

Frontrunner, Tower of Eternity Sector All-Star - 14th

Dao

Fragment of the Axe - Middle, Fragment of the Coffin - Middle, Fragment of the Bodhi - Early

Core

[E] Duplicity

Strength

1704 [Increase: 91%. Efficiency: 199%]

Dexterity

708 [Increase: 65%. Efficiency: 170%]

Endurance

1871 [Increase: 99%. Efficiency: 199%]

Vitality

1136 [Increase: 89%. Efficiency: 189%]

Intelligence

434 [Increase: 65%. Efficiency: 170%]

Wisdom

721 [Increase: 70%. Efficiency: 170%]

Luck

321 [Increase: 91%. Efficiency: 179%]

Free Points

0

Nexus Coins

[F] 6 862 691 291

There wasn't a lot of things that had changed to the status screen from his evolution, apart from his attributes having increased a by quite a bit. However, Zac was a bit surprised he was still level 75. He had assumed that he would move to level 76 upon evolving, but it looked like he was wrong in that regard. It seemed that Evolving was just shedding the limiters on your body, but you would still have to do the work yourself.

He opened his Class Screen next, and he saw one of the major sources for his massive boost in Strength.

Class: [E-Epic] Edge of Arcadia.

Strength +100, +10%. Vitality +50, +5%.

Level: Strength +14/28/42, Vitality +8/16/24, +10 Free.

Skills: Rapturous Divide (LOCKED)

The class itself gave him an impressive 100 flat Strength, which turned into almost 200 thanks to his titles. He guessed that his Draugr form provided a similar boost, but he held off on swapping over for the moment as there were more things he wanted to check out first. Another reason for his increased attributes rather was his new title.

He couldn't help but be a bit curious about his first E-Grade title, and he focused on the line that said 'Monarch-Select'. Titles would get harder and harder to get now that he had Evolved, so anything he got was likely based on a real tough accomplishment.

[Monarch Select: First to Reach E-Grade in World Reward: Base attributes +50, Luck +5, All stats +5%]

The term 'Base Attributes' was the same as the one he had seen on the prompt where he chose which class to upgrade. It looked like any low-tiered title he got now wouldn't give +All Stats any longer, as the boost to Luck would be too massive. That was a relief for Zac though as it meant it would be easier for him to maintain his advantage.

The flat attribute bonus was enormous though, 50 points in each attribute was a massive boost even for him, especially with his extreme multipliers. A single title gave him 305 raw attribute points, which was almost as much as he got from gaining 50 levels while in F-Grade. Add to that yet another multiplier, and he had gained big from not letting anyone else snag this unique title.

He had thought that the massive amounts of Attributes gained from his Dao Fragments would be the only thing that mattered for a while, but he now knew that wasn't the case. Both his levels and Limited Titles would provide massive boosts that would be equally impressive.

It really made sense now that he could take care of dozens of Early E-Grade warriors without breaking a sweat, but started struggling against Middle E-Grade warriors. Peak E-Grade was still impossible for him to deal with, even the weakest ones.

Just breaking open all nodes alone would rack up to something like 1300 points in each attribute by the time one would have reached level 150. Furthermore, someone who had reached Peak E-Grade couldn't be complete trash as such people would have been weeded out long before then. They would have a bunch of titles and Daos to supplement those attributes even further.

There was still a long way for him to go.

The name of the title made him think of something else as well, and he opened the Quest Screen next. As expected, there were new quests that had appeared in the previously empty menu.

Second Step of Hegemony (Unique, Limited): Enter the Trial within one Year. Reward: Unique E-Grade Structure (Quality based on performance), Qualification to stake claim on World. (0/1)

Zac's eyes lit up with glee as he saw the new quest. He had been pretty sure that he would get something like this upon Evolving, and he had been proven right. The quest where he had killed the Star Ox had only been called the first step, which heavily indicated it to be a chain quest.

That quest had given him the ticket to the Tower of Eternity which had turned out hugely beneficial to him, so he had high hopes for the follow-up quest as well.

And the rewards really didn't disappoint.

Every unique structure that Zac had seen had come with enormous benefits to a nascent force. Brazla was pretty annoying, but the value of the inheritances and the Skill Repositories was enormous. The Creator Shipyard was perhaps even greater, with the ability to upgrade its grade perhaps even all the way to B-Grade. Even Thea's Library was a valuable asset.

Qualification to stake claim was likely related to upgrading one's town to a World Capital, and himself from a Lord to whatever the equivalent was of someone ruling over a whole planet. However, the upgraded title wasn't directly given as a reward, making Zac believe there was some hidden catch to the qualification.

Perhaps it would activate some sort of quest that pitted him against the world, and he wasn't sure if he was ready to do that while the Dominators were still around. But as long as he dealt with them one way or another he felt confident that no one on earth would have anything to say about him becoming the de-facto leader of the planet.

The contents of the quest itself were equally vague as the last one though. It looked like he would be teleported to another world once more. However, after having completed over 70 levels in the Tower of Eternity it didn't feel like a challenge to do one more.

The only issue was that of what level the System expected him to be before undertaking the trial. For the last quest he had been given a month before he needed to activate the quest, but this time there was a full year. It was great for Zac who had his hands full at the moment, but it also made him wonder what level of strength was expected to complete the quest.

However, the Hegemony Quest would have to wait until he'd dealt with the more pressing issues, and he rather turned his attention to another quest that had appeared.

Rapturous Divide (Class): Split Life and Death. Reward: Rapturous Divide Skill (0/1).

The second quest was far more inscrutable than any other Skill quest he had gotten before now. Split Life and Death? What did that even mean? It made him long for the easier tasks back in F-Grade, which essentially told him to go chop a tree or kill some monsters. It really felt like he finally had left the beginner village of a game and the difficulty suddenly spiked.

Life and death were related to his path though. Was the System testing him? Or perhaps even pushing him to experiment until he managed to push his Creation to the next level. He already knew that there would be less hand-holding in the E-Grade, and that was probably even more so for Epic-Ranked Classes.

They were on the precipice of forming their own cultivation paths, and it made sense that the System tried to encourage you in that regard.

It also probably meant that his other Class, Fetters of Desolation, had a similarly inscrutable quest to gain the [Blighted Cut] skill. The name might sound simpler compared to [Rapturous Divide], but he doubted that meant it was a weaker skill or an easier quest. [Chop] was a pretty simple skill, but it had become a staple of his fighting style, something that could be used in almost any situation.

Apart from the quests and the updated class, there was not much new in the Status Screen. However, there were still differences to explore, and Zac turned his vision inwards. His outward appearance was the same, but that couldn't be said for his interiors. Almost completely new Pathways had been branded onto his body after he passed the tribulations.

The pathways were far more intricate compared to before, and there was a sense of spirituality radiating from them that had been completely missing before. His skills were thankfully all still there, and from the looks of it, the fit of his skills was at least as good as before. However, that might not be the case on his undead side, as he had chosen a divergent class.

Zac immediately started to experiment with his new pathways, it felt as though he could cram massive amounts of Cosmic Energy into the pathways without damaging them. That would no doubt allow him to generate far more power in his attacks, provided that the Skill Fractals could accommodate all that extra energy.

However, even though the flow of Cosmic Energy far eclipsed anything he'd felt before, he still noticed dozens of spots in his pathways that worsened the circulation. They reminded Zac of stagnant ponds in the middle of a river of Cosmic Energy, disrupting the flow and tainting the outlet.

They could be found all over his body, but they seemed to mainly be in 'critical' spots, with almost two-thirds being found in his head and torso. But there were also places like this in every major joint, and next to the locations that housed or could house Skill Fractals. Were these hazy ponds the nodes he needed to break?

It was as though these stagnant pools in his pathways both contained some sort of leaks while simultaneously blocking the flow. With this happening all over his body he felt he could only use his

body to a fraction of its real potential, and it was no wonder that fixing these trouble spots by breaking open nodes would boost one's attributes.

His mental image of nodes had been completely different compared to how these things looked like though. He had pictured something like a pressurized tank he needed to push more and more energy into until it finally popped. But it seemed like it was more like a clog in a pipe that needed to get flushed.

But even with all these obstructions in his upgraded pathways, there was no denying that the speed with which he could circulate Cosmic Energy had increased by at least five times. That was pretty huge as well as it would drastically cut down on recuperation time since it meant he would be able to absorb Nexus Crystals a lot faster.

He still was barely better than Thea who was still in F-Grade though, but he was doomed to fall short in this regard when comparing to elite Cultivators. But with his Vitality and Endurance, he would be able to keep fighting almost continuously, which would be needed if he wanted to move through the levels quickly.