

The Fall 496

Chapter 496: Death Defiance

At first, there was just a thin green line, but they were able to make out the landscape soon enough. Zac breathed out in relief when he saw that it was a pretty normal coast with some leafy growth and grasslands.

It wasn't the sandblasted desert of the scorched continent, as the only greenery there was the strip of palms along the coast. Zac still couldn't see any massive Array in the sky though, which meant they were still quite far from the Dead Zone.

"We'll have to keep going until we find a settlement," Zac said as he put away his Miasma Crystals. "We will need to make another jump."

"Finally," Emily muttered. "It's so uncomfortable to sit next to you while you absorb that stuff. Feels like I am both cold and feverish at the same time."

"Sorry about that," Zac smiled as he turned back to his human form. "I needed to get some levels for my second Class as well."

Zac opened his screen again and couldn't help but marvel at the progress over the past day. Rushing levels in the E-Grade was just putting himself further and further apart from the rest of the humans of Earth.

Name

Zachary Atwood

Level

80

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

1988 [Increase: 91%. Efficiency: 199%]

Dexterity

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

Endurance

2004 [Increase: 99%. Efficiency: 199%]

Vitality

1278 [Increase: 89%. Efficiency: 189%]

Intelligence

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

Wisdom

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

Luck

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

Free Points

90

Nexus Coins

[F] 6 896 098 998

Zac's Strength had already passed his Endurance by this point, though [Forester's Constitution] was barely keeping it ahead in his human form. It was no surprise though, as his class choices heavily leaned toward Strength.

It was crazy to think that his Strength wasn't even 1000 just two days ago, and it was a clear justification why so many he met believed that choosing low-rarity classes was the way to go.

It made sense. He felt he had pushed the F-Grade to a point that was almost unprecedented in his whole Sector thanks to his combination of having two classes and snatching up almost all progenitor titles of Earth. He had then risked his life multiple times inside the Tower of Eternity to push himself even further.

Yet he had gained just as many attributes by simply gaining a couple of levels in the E-Grade.

He also knew it would be an extremely taxing challenge to form a Cultivation Core that was high-quality enough to be able to support someone like him, whereas a genius who chose an Uncommon E-Grade class would barely meet a bottleneck at all.

Zac's eyes turned to the 90 Free Points next, but there wasn't really a question of what he needed to do for now. He threw it all into his Dexterity, pushing it to 914. The flat points from the class had skewed his ratio, but the allocation had righted the ship once more.

However, he wasn't sure whether he could keep putting all his free points into Dexterity as he had done during most of the F-Grade. His fighting style didn't only rely on his massive strength, but also his nigh-invulnerability. The latter would take a hit during the E-Grade, as he only got 8 points in Endurance per level from his Fetters of Desolation class.

Meanwhile, he would get more than three times that in Strength if you counted the Strength coming from both his classes. Perhaps putting part of his Free attributes into Endurance to help it stay up was his best shot at keeping himself sturdy enough. That combined with the Boosts from his Daos would probably be enough to stay an unkillable juggernaut.

Zac put the matter aside for now as he wouldn't gain any more easy levels in the short run. However, he was still a bit leery about the attribute cap, and he ate one of his basic Race Evolving Pills to push his attribute cap forward a bit. It was obviously not enough to completely evolve his race to D-Grade, but he could still improve his attribute cap from 2500 by at least a few hundred this way.

That was all that Zac needed for the moment, as it was enough to avoid any issues in case he had some Dao Epiphany during the battle with the Undead. An exuberant energy entered his stomach, and an intense warmth spread throughout his whole body. Streams of the power entered every single pore, filling them with power.

His cells were like a bottomless abyss, and they greedily swallowed everything he could give them. Unfortunately, the pill only contained so much energy, and the warmth quickly abated as his body absorbed the last of the energies. He hadn't made any breakthrough or, but his body felt extremely good, like he had just had a full-body massage.

Zac took a deep breath to enjoy the fresh air, but an abominable smell hit his nostrils and immediately dragged him out of his reverie, only to be met with ten appalled stares. He quickly looked down at his body, only to find his skin covered in an oily brown substance.

"You stink," the demon said with a disgusted snarl. "Why are you improving your Race in this cramped space?"

Kenzie didn't even speak up before she blasted him with cascading waves of water with the help of one of her skills, utterly drenching him and almost throwing him off the leaf. The torrent of water continued for a few seconds, but all the gunk was blasted clean when it abated.

"Uh, thanks," Zac said as he spat out a mouthful of water. "I'd forgotten that would happen."

It almost felt like he had made a social faux pas akin to releasing a fart in a cramped elevator, and he turned his gaze toward the horizon to hide his embarrassment, instead focusing on finding a town. Thankfully he had the perfect item for an occasion just like this, and he took out the [Automatic Map] from his Spatial Ring.

The area it showed was a bit limited, but it was still twice what they could see with their naked eyes, and there were even markings of Nexus Nodes on it. It didn't take them long to find a settlement with the help of the map. It was a walled-off enclave with about 200 houses hidden in the shadow of a mountain, with no roads leading to and from the place. Zac didn't bother announcing their presence they landed in the middle of the square.

Unfortunately, it looked like the place was one of the weakest settlements that hadn't even bought a Teleportation Array so far.

They were a small community completely cut-off from the world, and seeing the flying treasure and the weird retinue was a huge shock to them. However, Zac had no time for an orientation with these people, and they simply found the leader, a nondescript middle-aged man who had reached level 32.

There was a small exploit he had found while traveling before. Zac essentially explained who he was and exposed his level, and the mayor was more than willing to join his banner as a subordinate. Judging by how gaunt everyone looked they had a hard time even getting enough Nexus Coins for food, and joining the strongest man in the world was no doubt a godsent opportunity.

A small hovel like this would never have unlocked the ability to buy a Teleportation Array normally, but now that they were part of Port Atwood the mayor suddenly had a large increase in available purchases, including a slew of arrays. There were limits to how many places Zac could "boost" like this, but he was still well within his limits as he only had a dozen towns or so under his command.

Zac then donated enough money for him to buy the array, and he breathed out in relief when he saw that almost all of his connections were still there when checking out the Array Menu. The advance forts belonging to the Marshal Clan weren't available though, meaning that anything inside or even too close to the Dead Zone was blocked out by jammers or the death-attuned energies.

They were gone from the remote village a few seconds later, having teleported over to one of the strongholds closest to the Dead Zone. It was a base controlled by the Underworld Council, and Zac felt it was their best bet at getting updated intelligence from the front-lines.

"Halt!" a man mounting a massive machine-gun shouted upon their appearance, but he quickly realized who they were and stood down.

"I need to speak with the Council," Zac said, and he was immediately led out of the building housing the Teleportation Array.

However, Zac stopped in his tracks the moment he exited the building, and he couldn't help but gawk at how the whole world was tinted in azure. The blue sky of Earth had been completely supplanted by the chilly light-blue tint of death attuned energies. If it wasn't for the normal Cosmic Energy in the area he would have thought the world was already realigned.

However, there was an unmistakable hint of death in the ambient energies even though this camp wasn't inside the Dead Zone, proving that the alignment was already in progress.

The azure hue was unexpected, but the most shocking scene was the gargantuan lines crisscrossing the sky, forming fractals whose size beggared comprehension. Just how much energy had been siphoned out of their planet to form this array? Zac started to worry that Earth would end up crippled even if they managed to deal with the undead somehow.

He hated to say it, but was this world even worth staying on if that happened?

Death Defiance (Unique, Limited): The war between life and death is as old as time. Stop the realignment of your world. Reward: World Core Upgrade. Individual rewards based on contribution. (0/1).

"Did you guys just get a quest?" Zac asked with confusion as he looked at the screen that had suddenly appeared in front of him. "To deal with the undead?"

"Yep!" Emily said with excitement shining in her eyes, and the Valkyries nodded their heads as well.

Zac frowned in confusion as he looked away from the ominous skies. Why was the System giving out a quest like this? It hadn't done that when he fought any of the other Incursions. Did the system perhaps feel that people weren't struggling enough against the Undead Empire, and wanted to push for a final cataclysmic battle?

They soon walked into a command tent, where six of the Underworld Councillors were already waiting.

"Thank god you're here. We were starting to get a bit worried," Gregor said, and it almost looked like he wanted to run over and touch Zac to make sure he was actually real. "We were even contemplating paying the fee to enter the Ark World. But seeing you shoot up in levels the past hours felt like a stay of execution."

Zac nodded at the human Councillor with a smile before frowned in confusion at the unfamiliar word.

"The what? Ark World?" Zac asked with confusion, almost forgetting about the quest he just got.

"The New World Government approached us two days ago, shortly after we lost connection with Port Atwood. They said that they have discovered a spatial tunnel leading to a safe Mystic Realm. They call it the Ark World. They are currently shaking down the elites of the Earth to allow them to join the exodus," Gregor explained.

"So they're abandoning Earth?" Zac asked with a frown.

"Well, honestly I can understand them. There's not much we can do. We can barely hold the lines against these undying bastards. Reaching the heart of the Dead Zone and taking out the leaders? Impossible. At least for us..." Gregor said pointedly.

"That's why I'm here," Zac said. "If the array in the sky activates, then I have failed. At that point, you might as well leave for the Ark World if you can. Humans won't survive long on a death-attuned planet."

"Is there anything we can do to help?" Romal, the official speaker of the council, said. "I would be honored to join you in battle. I would rather fight for our shared planet than hiding in some cramped Mystic Realm. Our people have already done that once, and I know what future such a decision will lead to."

"And it's not like the unliving are stupid," another councilor added. "They will find us sooner or later hiding in that hidden realm. I bet they have ten ways of forcing a passage open for every way we have to keep it closed."

"I will just take a very small group that will help with the arrays. I will deal with the Lich King myself. But you can still help me in other ways. Do you know if any of the Undead Generals are out on the battlefield?" Zac asked.

"We believe one still resides within the closest horde," Gregor nodded. "It has stayed extremely cohesive compared to the other two hordes."

"Can you make sure the horde and their army are occupied for the next two days?" Zac asked. "Things will go smoother if the Lich King isn't aided by any generals or his hordes."

"We'll do what we can," Romal promised. "When are you setting out?"

"Immediately after we're done here. The sooner the array in the sky is turned off the better," Zac said. "By the way, have you guys received a quest to stop the Undead Incursion as well?"

"We received it yesterday," Gregor nodded. "Everyone who is above level 30 and beneath this cursed sky has it. I guess the rest are considered irrelevant in this fight."