

## The Fall 532

### Chapter 532: Upgrading the Shipyard

Zac looked down at the letter in his hand as he walked the last stretch toward the array, but he eventually put it away unopened and unread. He didn't want to ruin the state he was in right now, and he took one last look at the world David had built for himself and Hannah.

David had said something that stuck with him as they walked along the fields. He said that the world had become extremely terrifying, but it had also become far more beautiful. David had chosen to focus on the latter, which was what had turned this island to such an amazing place.

It was true. With the Dao unlocked the world had fundamentally changed, like a bleak tapestry having been given color and meaning. Wasn't the quest for meaning something that so many struggled with before the Integration? Searching for an understanding of the universe and what their place was.

Now it was actually possible.

Over the past year he had just run from one goal to another, desperately clawing himself forward in his pursuit of power. But that wasn't any way to live. He would eventually crash and burn if things continued this way, or he would at least end up with a shaky understanding of the world around him. It wasn't that he needed to ignore all the things that needed to be done, but he also needed to find some joy in his life.

This was the mindset he needed to remember, along with the sincerity he needed to nurture as he kept working on his Dao Fragments.

Zac took one last breath of the enticing mix of aromas before he activated the Teleportation Array. He also bought a comprehensive set of upgrades to the Arrays put in place by his sister. It would take decently strong E-Grade beast a lot of effort to break through the barriers, and Zac would be instantly warned anywhere on Earth.

He briefly considered adding some Farming Arrays to the island as well, but he eventually decided against it. David wasn't looking for efficiency or actually farming for profit. He was rather cultivating his heart and his mind through farming, and arrays wouldn't help with that. He left the fields as they were, not putting his thumb on the scale any further.

However, Zac didn't return to his compound but rather decided to tour his domain for a bit. Visiting Abby had reminded him how long it was since he had seen the day to day operations of his force, and now was as good a time as any to check things out.

He visited the farming islands first, but he was surprised to see that the scale actually hadn't increased over the past months. Zac asked a foreman what was going on, and learned that most of the herb production had been moved to either his own island or the large Spirit Soil Fields on the main continent.

The old farming island was mainly used for growing high-quality crops for the people of Port Atwood now, rather than Spiritual Herbs for cultivation.

It was a step in the right direction in Zac's mind, as it showed that people were not only thinking of surviving and getting stronger. People were no longer living day to day, and didn't just plant what would

grow the fastest. They were rather growing rice and all kinds of vegetables to improve their quality of life, while simultaneously providing them with greater profit.

He could see the same energy in the towns that were studded along the archipelago, though some of the verve no doubt came from the fact that the Incursions had finally been closed. A massive harbor had sprung in Refugee Harbor unbeknownst to him, and he could spot dozens of boats sailing out on the sea, likely to catch fish or search for valuable herbs underwater.

All kinds of shops had cropped up as well, real businesses started by people. Strong-looking warriors walked down the streets as well, seemingly returning from monster hunting ventures. Most of them carried the insignia of Port Atwood, meaning they were part of his army, whereas others looked like free cultivators.

Zac felt that it really wasn't a coincidence that humans littered the Multiverse. They were resilient creatures that could adapt so quickly to such a drastic change of their lives. Or perhaps that was a too generous a conclusion. With only around 10% of all humans remaining, one might rather say that those unable to adapt had long perished.

In either case, it felt extremely gratifying to walk through the bustling streets, his real identity hidden with [Thousand Faces]. He had already arranged a secondary set of credentials with Adran, a Port Atwood inspector which gave him blanket access without having to expose his true identity.

He soon continued from the local cluster of towns to the various alien towns he had snatched out of the hands of the invaders. However, he quickly realized that most of them were little more than outposts who would be hard pressed to do much more than act as scouts for any threats. He had multiple mines and fields standing empty, with no personnel there to extract the resources.

He needed more people. That was the biggest takeaway he got after making the rounds. Thankfully, he shouldn't be as hard-pressed to attract talents as when he had to sell himself with the help of Sap Trang in the market of New Washington. There should be millions of people willing to relocate to one of his towns.

He finally made a series of jumps that took him to the small outpost at the edge of the unhabitated continent. It had surprisingly grown to a proper town by now, and Zac saw quite a few molemen walking the streets. He found the local mayor, a human administrator who worked under Adran, to find out what was going on.

It turned out that Westbound Harbor had turned into a massive trade hub in the short time since it was established. It still wasn't possible to freely travel back and forth between the two continents as there were still the cultists roaming about. Of course, it was not solely a security issue, but also a financial one.

There were still massive untapped resources in the underworld that were almost worthless to its inhabitants, while they lacked some things that existed in abundance on Pangea. It would be foolish to not take advantage of this opportunity, so Port Atwood allowed people to travel here from the underworld to trade with their own merchants.

These merchants would then head over to the other continent, to unload the inventory before returning once more. It was exceedingly lucrative, but Zac snorted when he saw how nervous the Mayor started to become the more Zac asked about the situation. A short interrogation later had netted Zac a shocking

200 million Nexus Coins that the administrator had gathered through bribes and skimming Port Atwood's coffers.

It wasn't that much compared to the massive wealth Zac controlled at the moment, but it was still shocking how much one single person had managed to take for himself in just a few months thanks to the lack of oversight. He really needed to set up a proper organization to take care of issues like this.

The mayor obviously couldn't stay on, so Zac released his aura in the government building, which immediately alerted the guards staying put. A squad of demons appeared a few seconds later, but they visibly relaxed when they saw it was Zac who had appeared rather than some dangerous threat.

"This guy has proven a bit greedy. Have someone new take over. Remind the next mayor about the value of moderation," Zac said to the guards, who nodded as he sneered at the despondent administrator.

Zac also asked the guards on duty about whether they had found anything of interest on the continent, but there were nothing at all for at least four days' travel inland. There were just endless dunes. However, initial estimations put the continent at least half the size of Pangea, which meant there were ample room for multiple climate zones.

Some day he would travel further inland assisted by his flying treasure, but not today. He had some breathing room before he needed to enter the Mystic Realm, but not to the point that he could map such a massive place. He instead returned to his courtyard before he started walking toward the Creator Shipyard.

This was one of the things Zac had looked forward to since getting the Iliex Shipyard as a reward, though upgrading the shipyard had gone down in priority somewhat since he got his hands on his flying treasure. But equipping his army with proper Flying Treasures would be a huge boon for his force in general, as long as he could stomach the price.

Zac soon arrived at the shipyard and headed straight into the Liaison's office. Rahm stood behind a reception, like he had been expecting Zac's arrival. Of course, knowing this particular Creator it was just as possible that he had simply stood there without moving for a couple of days.

"Lord Atwood. Congratulations on your evolution," Rahm said with his usual staid expression.

"Thank you," Zac smiled. "Is Foreman Karunthel here?"

"About time you came to visit," a rumbling voice snorted as Karunthel emerged from the depths of the building. "Didn't you evolve almost two weeks ago?"

"I'm sorry. There's just too much for me to do," Zac said with a wry smile. "You don't happen to have a clone technique that can allow me to get more stuff done?"

"Takes a certain aptitude to make the most of clones, and I'm not too sure you have that kind of aptitude, you little brat," Karunthel laughed, not seeming all that miffed about being forgotten.

"Well, it was just a joke," Zac said, though he couldn't help but feel a irritated about the low evaluation.

It really felt like he would have to work a bit on his image. Everyone seemed to think that he was just an unkillable brute swinging his axe around. Certainly, it was mostly true, but he still wanted to be known for more than just that.

"Are you here about upgrading our facilities, Lord Atwood?" Rahm asked, conveniently giving Zac an opening for the real reason he came.

"Yes, exactly," Zac nodded. "You said I could upgrade the shipyard after I evolved. Is the process automatic, or do I need to pay a price..?"

"Not so fast, kiddo. I am supposed to come up with some sort of quest for you before we can release the good items," Karunthel mused.

"We already have instruct-" Rahm tried to interject, but he was silenced by a wave of one of Rahm's legs.

"How about this. Being stuck on this desolate rock is causing delays to my experiments. I am lacking some materials that I cannot get my hands on here. Bring me what I require and we'll process the upgrade for you," the foreman decided.

"This is not-"

"This is not an unreasonable request indeed, thank you Rahm, I know," Karunthel said as a dense aura spread out throughout the lobby.

Only then was Zac reminded that the spider golem in front of him was no doubt a D-Grade being, and not an early D-Grade warrior either. His aura was far beyond that of the Technocrat Captain that almost got him killed, and Zac could barely breathe in front the suffocating pressure. Rahm didn't look affected at all though, keeping his neutral expressions.

However, he seemed to relent to the demands of his boss as he only sighed and took a step back.

"That's better," Karunthel smiled as the pressure disappeared. "Here, get me these things. It might be a bit challenging to gather them all, but I'll add something extra as a reward."

"Get you what?" Zac asked, but he soon understood what Karunthel was talking about as a quest prompt appeared in front of him.

Materials for Karunthel (Unique, Limited): Acquire 100 Kilograms of [Urgarat Flakes], 1 kilogram of [Realm Locus], 1 living [Ferric Worldeater], 1 [Daemonic Manastone] Reward: Upgrade Iliex Shipyard to Early D-Grade. 1 Custom-Designed Early D-Grade Vessel. (0/4)

Zac read through the quest, his mouth turning a bit upward as he felt like he had just gotten a standard fetch-quest from a MMO game. The problem was that he didn't recognize a single one of the materials. The last two seemed to be pretty rare, as they only needed one of each. The demons might have some clues about the last one, but the third item seemed exceedingly troublesome.

"How am I supposed to catch something that eats worlds?" Zac asked with a grimace.

"They're not as dangerous as it sounds," Karunthel laughed. "Well, not the young ones, anyway."

"Where can I get these things" Zac asked, hoping to get a running start on the quest.

"Sorry, can't give any clues. Finding the items is half the challenge," Karunthel said, his smile widening even further.

Zac couldn't help but feel that the creator foreman was messing with him a bit, but there wasn't much he could do about it. He would have to inquire with someone more knowledgeable, like Brazla or Calrin. It felt a bit difficult, However, Zac was more interested in the rewards right now.

"What's this reward at the end?" Zac asked with anticipation.

"It's a reward for completing the quest. We'll be able to provide a flagship vessel for your force, and I'll be in charge of it myself since you're helping me out," Karunthel explained. "I'll build it based on your specifications."

"D-Grade vessel. A Cosmic Vessel?" Zac said, and he couldn't help but look up at the sky through a window.

"Don't get your hopes up too high, brat," the foreman snorted. "I only make good things, but it is still an Early D-Grade vessel. You will not be able to explore the whole Sector in that thing, but you might be able to visit neighboring planets as long as they're not too far away."

"What about the customization?" Zac asked.

"The reward has a set budget," Rahm said. "It cannot excel at everything for the quoted price."

"You could skimp out on the spatial arrays and focus only on offensive capabilities, turning it into a slow-moving mobile fortress. Or you could do the opposite, making a scout vessel that can reach further into the cosmos," the foreman added. "Just figure out what you want to use the thing for, and I'll whip up something nice."