

## The Fall 541

### Chapter 541: Dust and Bones

"How can a planet having multiple attunements not be good? It sounds extremely good," Zac asked with a frown.

"In some cases, certainly. Worlds with Wood and Water attunements are supremely valuable among Herbalists, for example. One such planet might be worth as much as 1000 normal worlds of the same grade as they can grow unique plants that require both attunements to thrive. However, such planets appearing is thanks to the two elements harmonizing well with each other," Triv explained.

Zac immediately understood what the ghost was driving at. Was the World Core going to explode from the clashing elements of life and death? Attunements didn't get much more mismatched than life and death. They were each other's opposites, and they would constantly clash. His own cultivation chamber was proof of that.

"So what would happen with such a world?" Zac asked with some trepidation. "Will the World Core be in trouble?"

"I have never heard of a life and death planet before," Triv admitted. "I don't think there's not much use for one, with young master being the exception. The Empire wouldn't want their planets tainted with life, and death-attunement would make large sections unsuitable for the living. Perhaps it would be able to birth unique treasures, but that's beyond my knowledge."

"So what is the worst-case scenario?" Zac sighed.

"The World Core might crumble from the opposing attunements, which would turn the planet into a desolate rock void of energy. Or it could cause the whole planet to completely fall apart," Triv said.

Zac closed his eyes, a wave of exhaustion hitting him almost like a sledgehammer. Was there yet another thing for him to worry about now? There was already enough on his plate, and now he had to prevent the planet from going up in smokes on top of everything else?

"It might not happen," Triv quickly said when he saw Zac's reaction. "I am not an expert on the subject, but there are multiple outcomes. Sometimes one attunement can overpower the other, and turn into a single-attunement planet. It is also possible that the planet finds some sort of equilibrium, turning it into an extremely rare existence in the cosmos. In fact, I believe this is the most likely scenario."

"Why? What did you find?" Zac asked eagerly, like a man gripping hold of a lifebuoy.

Zac would take any clue that indicated that the world wasn't actually ending.

"Well, didn't young master mention that the World Core upgrade was part of a quest reward that encompassed the whole planet? It would make no sense that the System would provide a detriment as a reward," Triv said.

Zac's quickly nodded in agreement. It was true. The System was pretty annoying, and its gifts often felt a bit backhanded. Being stuck with annoying Tool Spirits like Brazla and Big Blue was ample proof of that. However, they were undeniably rewards. It made no sense that the system would leave the world worse off than before as a reward.

However, it didn't hurt to make sure.

"Is there anything I can do to decrease the risk of anything bad happening?" Zac sighed.

"Our Empire can easily realign a planet as you know, and many living forces possess similar capabilities. Perhaps there are some arrays to stabilize the process of giving a planet attunement?" Triv ventured, but he didn't seem very sure. "In either case, with the speed things are progressing it will probably take decades before the attunement is finished, so we have ample time to prepare. There are only small hints right next to the nexus Vein, I might even have seen things incorrectly."

"Well, that's good I guess. Wait, your first instinct was that the planet would blow up because of the dual attunement? What about me? Am I in any danger?" Zac asked.

"I honestly don't know how young master is still alive," the ghost coughed. "Life and death shouldn't intermingle. It is one of the most basic rules of the Undead Empire. But at the same time, everything is possible. I am just a poor ghost, my understanding of the truths of the heavens are shallow at best."

"Have you ever heard of undead cultivating life attuned classes or Daos?" Zac asked.

"No, never. It is almost impossible. Our affinities with those types of Daos are essentially non-existent. Why would you spend centuries on attaining a life-aspected Dao Seed when you can gain a death aspected one in a few months?" the ghost said, looking disgusted at the mere thought.

However, the ghost shuddered the next second, meaning that this line of questioning wasn't permitted by the restrictions engraved on its soul, so Zac could only drop it.

"Well, I guess I will have to figure things out myself," Zac sighed before he produced the body refining recipe he just got from Calrin. "Do you think this will work on me?"

The ghost scanned the guide, his eyes widening in incredulity.

"It looks like something you would use on a beast companion to refine its constitution?" it hesitantly said. "I'm not sure. It might work? I don't see anything that would directly clash with you at least. But a pureblood Draugr using some sort of beast powder... The heavens will weep."

"I'm sure the heavens will be fine," Zac snorted as he handed the ghost the materials required for the dust. "I'll go cultivate for a bit. Are you able to prepare the [Bone-Forging Dust]?"

"Certainly, young master," the ghost said as he took the Cosmos Sack. "The process is quite similar to grinding the materials used for making incense sticks, and I have ample experience in this regard. There will not be any issues."

Zac nodded in thanks and the ghost disappeared into the wall the next moment.

It was quite an impressive skill the specter had, being able to freely pass through walls. He could even bring inanimate objects with him, making him an excellent scout or assassin. It sort of felt like a bit of a waste for such a special existence to become a butler.

Unfortunately, its abilities didn't work with the living, which ruined Zac's idea to have the ghost taking him to the depths of the Mystic Realm, ignoring all the barriers and walls. He couldn't send Triv by himself either, as that was a death sentence for a non-combat class.

Zac walked into his cultivation cave and immediately started up the Soul Strengthening array. His mind was slowly drained and he let his thoughts drift for a bit. Between grinding his skill and going over the list of treasures his mind was a bit exhausted, and he was too tired to ponder on the Dao while cultivating his soul.

He even dozed off a bit and was only awakened when the revolution finished and he felt a surge of Mental Energy entering his mind. Every time he completed a revolution he couldn't help but marvel at his soul. It wasn't really growing all that much bigger from the revolutions, but it felt like his soul was getting polished each time.

More importantly, it also seemed like the revolutions helped deal with the Splinter to some regard. He never felt the surges of murderousness like he did before any longer, even though the Splinter had regained a decent amount of its strength by now. It was still restrained by the Shard, but it wasn't in a completely half-dead state any longer.

The two remnants were still interlocked and unmoving inside the improved cage, but the amount of cleansed energies that was seeping out was gradually increasing without him feeling any negative effects from it. His mind had gained a few boosts during the climb, but it couldn't completely explain his balanced state of mind.

The small improvements that came from the array couldn't be the reason for his tranquil state either. His soul was definitely a bit stronger, but Soul Strengthening was a slow grind and not something that gave instant results. It was more likely that the spiritual dialysis also helped with the hidden corruption from the Splinter, either by design or by chance.

If that was true it was a huge boon, though it also meant that skipping cultivation sessions would harm his mental state.

Zac finished up the session after ten hours as usual before he walked over to the inner cave that housed the [Seed of Undeath]. He found his ghost butler cultivating by silently hovering in the air, and there was a supersized pestle by its side. Inside was a silvery compound, no doubt the [Bone-Forging Dust] the ghost had prepared for him.

"Young master, it is all done according to the specifications," the ghost said as it woke up. "There should be enough for 8 to 10 applications."

Zac nodded in understanding, though he felt a bit disappointed. The powder had roughly the same effect as the medicinal baths according to Calrin, and ten medicinal baths on the road to D-Grade would just scratch the surface. It should be able to increase his attribute limits by a few hundred points though, which was the most pressing matter.

"And the pain," the ghost hesitantly added.

"I know," Zac said as he sat down and disrobed. "Not much of a choice right now. Help me apply it."

The ghost nodded and a stream of the silvery powder rose from the pitch-black mortar, controlled by the ghost's miasmic tendrils.

Zac sat motionless for over a minute, waiting with a mix of fear and anticipation for the dust to start working. However, he started to worry about the dust not working after all, which would mean that he

had wasted over 300 million Nexus Coins. However, his fears soon abated as he started to feel some warmth covering his whole body.

"It seems to be working," Zac said with excitement to Triv who waited upon him to the side, but the smile on his face quickly turned crooked as the warmth turned to pain.

First, it just felt like an itch he couldn't scratch, but that was just the appetizer. It seemed as though the powder was slowly getting absorbed through the skin, and the pain just kept getting worse as more and more of the powder entered his pores. The itch turned into a stabbing pain after ten minutes, and after another ten minutes he felt almost like he was on fire.

The slowly mounting degree of agony was torture by itself, as Zac still didn't know where the limits lay. There were no timeframes indicated in the crystal either, meaning he had no idea how long the torment would last. He could only try to keep his mind stabilized and bear with it, while not even using his Daos to counteract the powder.

Doing so would no doubt counteract the effect, and it would be the same if his [Void Heart] activated. However, even he couldn't stop himself from shuddering as the pain suddenly spiked to a level he previously thought was impossible.

"My lord, are you okay?" Triv worriedly asked.

"Ow... My bones," Zac spat through grit teeth as veins danced all across his body.

He didn't trust himself to open his mouth again, afraid that he would start screaming on top of his lungs. The powder had just entered his bones, and it felt like some sort of parasite was gnawing at him, slowly breaking down his body from the inside. It was beyond painful, and it almost made him look back at the ordeal with the cultists with longing.

Zac quickly realized what the powder was doing. It was continuously breaking down his body parts, especially his bones, before forcibly mending them, each time leaving them slightly stronger. It was a bit like his Soul Strengthening Array which utilized the clashes between life and death to strengthen his soul, though the powder was far more crude and brutal.

"All the powder has entered your body by now," the ghost suddenly said. "Young master just needs to bear it a bit longer."

Zac stiffly nodded, no longer able to speak. He didn't know how long he sat in the death-attuned sanctum until the pain finally abated, and he took a deep ragged breath even though there actually wasn't any need for oxygen in his current form. He slowly put on his robes once more, but his hands didn't really listen to his commands.

"Let me, young master," the ghost said and hurriedly dressed Zac.

"Thank you," Zac said with a hoarse voice. "How long did this take?"

"Around forty minutes," Triv said.

"Forty minutes?!" Zac exclaimed, his voice cracking. "It felt like days."

Zac shakily threw a healing pill into his mouth, though he knew that he wasn't really hurt. The soothing stream of energy that spread through his body helped him stabilize himself a bit at least, but he still needed over 30 minutes before he felt ready to stand up.

"What do young master want to do with the rest of the powder?" Triv asked.

"I'll take it," Zac sighed.

"If I may, if you just-"

"Enough," Zac said, not in any mood to hear about how great the Undead Empire was and how this all was unnecessary. "When can I use this next time?"

"Three days," the ghost sighed. "Your body will need to rest and recuperate for three days."

"Fine," Zac nodded. "By the way, ready yourself for war. You will need to come with me and activate the Jamming Arrays, perhaps as soon as today. I could do it but I don't want to expose my identity."

"I would have loved to, but I can't," Triv said, clearly relieved. "Those arrays can't be activated by just anyone. There are restrictions in place."

"We've removed them," Zac said. "Anyone wielding miasma can activate them now."

"What?! Impossible!" the ghost said with shock. "There's no way we would leave such a weakness that it could be used against us... Hm?"

"You figured it out?" Zac snorted. "It might be impossible for the living to take control of those things, but it's not like the protections against other undead are as strong. But don't worry. You just need to activate the array then hide while we do the fighting."

"It's my pleasure to assist," the ghost said, clearly void of any sort of pleasure.

"Oh, and that insane Tool Spirit at my Dao Repository wants a natural spirit gathering array because he thinks he's a cultivator, can you start thinking about how such a thing would look? It needs to be pretty too, or he'll probably start shooting lightning bolts at people," Zac added.

"Naturally," Triv nodded. "Anything else?"

"No, that's it," Zac said as he left. "Pretty calm day for Port Atwood."