

The Fall 643

Chapter 643: Wrestling Control

Zac perused the contents of the tablet he gained from Hekruv Vira while walking north with the army, and he gained far more in an hour than he had from all the missives he'd bought until now. And that was even when just scratching the surface. The Bloodline Codex, as they called the database, was essentially True Sky Faction's holy scripture, the accumulation of thousands of years of effort.

Being stuck in a Technocrat prison took its toll, and many in the True Sky Faction had turned to academia to not go insane from the passage of time. The burly monkeyman was one of these people, and Zac had found over thirty theses on cultivation and Bloodlines in the database penned by him, totaling over forty thousand pages altogether. And Hekruv Vira was far from the most verbose author.

It looked like the Atwood Academy would gain a few new professors soon enough.

A lot of the content was completely theoretical in nature and often untested, but there was also all kinds of in-depth and practical information. For example, there was information on dozens of different bloodlines, including those of the natives.

It turned out that the bloodline of the Cartava Clan was actually just called 'Gaze of Cartava'. There were some differences between members though, with them awakening different talents, likely depending on the purity of the bloodline. The most common talent was called [Lord's Eyes], but a few talented individuals instead gained [King's Eyes], both of which empowered ocular skills and classes.

Even Leviala's unique eyes were listed, and the tablet called them [Heaven's Eyes]. There were no details on this talent though, but it did list a suspicion that it allowed the cultivator to harness the power of time. It even mentioned that they suspected Leviala to be in possession of it, though it wasn't confirmed.

The Lunar Tribe was also a subject of intense study. Their bloodline was called 'Lunar Light', and it was indeed based on a common ancestor to the Lunar Wolves. The Tsarun Clan had tried refining their bloodlines with the help of the normal wolves, making it regain the power of some wolf ancestor, which apparently was insanely powerful and nigh-unkillable.

Apart from that, there were dozens of other bloodlines Zac had never heard of, but that was just the tip of the iceberg. There was actually a whopping thirty Body Tempering Manuals as well, though all of them had various requirements on the user. Furthermore, only eight of them were complete, with the others being incomplete to various degrees. Some of the elders had tried fixing them, but it was clear that the effect wasn't quite at a satisfactory level even after centuries of experiments.

There was also all kinds of general information along with tips and insights into refining and awakening bloodlines and constitutions.

Unfortunately, there was no information on corrupted bloodlines, but Zac honestly wasn't too surprised. Zac had a feeling his situation was the result of something extreme his mother and her clan had done. They perhaps had tried to fuse that affinity-boosting bloodline with the Void-energy talent he had, getting the best of both worlds. But they might have gotten too greedy and reached beyond their abilities.

Perhaps he was a failed experiment.

The thought was pretty depressing, but Zac knew he couldn't complain. After all, his situation was pretty good, and his newfound ability might even be more useful than being a cultivator in some scenarios. And he could confirm that his bloodline was definitely something extremely high-grade, at least when comparing it to the bloodlines listed in the Bloodline Codex.

First of all, it didn't seem to pigeonhole Zac in a certain direction. It simply gave him a hidden energy boost, and possibly slightly thicker energy pathways. It didn't negatively affect his classes at all, and it didn't require him to retrain or change his path. You could say that his bloodline was lacking any attunement, something that appeared to be extremely rare.

All of the bloodlines listed in the compendium restricted the cultivator in return for a specific type of power. They required certain types of classes to provide any benefits, and they even worsened one's progress and affinities in unrelated Daos.

Secondly, only three of the listed bloodlines had Bloodline Nodes. Furthermore, these bloodlines had only swapped a single Hidden Node while the others were still the normal racial nodes. Not one of the three 'top-tier' bloodlines had graded nodes either, but their existence was mentioned in the database. That meant it wasn't something unique to Zac, but rather something that normally might not appear in a frontier sector like Zecia.

The Codex didn't explain any more than that, but after reading the information on the Bloodline Nodes Zac started to form a hypothesis of his own. There wasn't necessarily a big difference at the beginning between normal and graded nodes, but the difference lay in potential. Apparently, the benefits Hidden Nodes provided gradually tapered off on the road of cultivation, a bit like Low-tiered Titles.

They would often be extremely useful during the E-Grade and no doubt help when preparing to break through to D-Grade. But by the point one reached C-Grade, most Hidden Nodes would provide limited help. Graded Hidden Nodes shouldn't have that limitation, and they could continue to provide benefits even if you reached extremely high cultivation levels, just like High-Tiered Titles did.

The vast compendium of information was extremely useful, but it would take months, perhaps years, time to digest everything. But there was one final part that was even more valuable to Zac right now, the six general Bloodline Methods.

Bloodline Methods were similar to cultivation manuals in the sense that they helped a warrior use their bloodline as efficiently as possible. For example, having his bloodline constantly run would be both wasteful and stupid, almost like when Zac simply pushed Cosmic Energy around in his body during the early days of the Integration.

Besides, the biggest value of his Bloodline Talent was the element of surprise, the ability to suddenly launch a massive strike out of nowhere.

If his normal attacks all appeared without any energy fluctuations or buildup, even the dumbest enemy would quickly realize something was up. So Zac wanted to turn off his bloodline until he went in for the kill. That was exactly what Bloodline Methods were made for, the ability to control, and to a certain degree empower, Bloodlines.

In an optimal world, Zac would have a method tailored for his Bloodline, one that would make the most of his Hidden Nodes and his talent. But Zac's instincts told him that such a thing didn't even exist considering his bloodline was corrupted. He would have to create one by himself, but he had no idea to go about doing something like that.

A lot of people were in the same situation though, in the sense that they somehow had managed to awaken a bloodline but didn't have a heritage to go with it. That's where general Bloodline Methods came into the picture. They were pretty average, but they worked with a large number of bloodlines.

As long as Zac found one that somewhat worked it would be fine. Bloodline Methods were just ways to rouse one's hidden talents, and they didn't alter one's pathways like a cultivation manual did. He could simply swap the method out if he found a better one, or he could start to modify the one he used to better suit his particular bloodline.

Zac didn't want to waste even a second since it would be a huge boon if he learned how to turn his bloodline talent on and off before he set out for the sphere in the top. He still hadn't gotten the 8th part of the quest in any case, so he went with his gut. He needed some time to get things in order, and they were closing in on their destination.

A few hours and they would reach the northern side of the mountain, and there would hopefully be enough seals both for his own people and the True Sky refugees. They had tentatively joined his faction, but Zac wouldn't take their word for it. The odds of them trying to pull something last-minute would decrease by a fair bit if they had seals by the time Zac left.

He had talked with Hekruv Vira for a bit after setting out, and Zac was shocked to learn that the taboo weapon the monkey-man mentioned was a freaking nuclear warhead. Anyone that could take a blast like that and walk around with some minor burns the next day wasn't someone to scoff at. Of course, atomic bombs completely lacked any Dao-empowerment, and the Technocrat shields were apparently extremely good at dispersing normal kinetic force. They had only taken a few percent of the blast head-on.

It would take around eight hours for his army to reach the northern side, giving Zac ample time to experiment with the Bloodline Methods. There were six of them to test, and Zac started with the one called [Wargod Tactics]. Its name was a huge exaggeration, but it did have good compatibility with many combat-oriented bloodlines. Zac opened the file containing the method, and he was shocked to see how much information it contained.

Zac was about to borrow the shoulder of one of the Anointed again, but he changed his mind realizing that most of the content was just personal insights and anecdotes from practitioners. The actual method was just a few pages.

The first and most important step of getting control of your bloodline was to form a mental connection to it, but that was easier said than done. It was like taking charge of your organs. They were there and part of your body, but they were doing their thing without any active input.

The method that the Wargod Tactics provided was to activate one's body with a series of stances while rousing one's body by releasing killing intent.

Zac tsked in annoyance as he memorized the 18 stances. Where were the Skill Crystals when you needed them? One burst of information and you were done. It was a reminder of how massive the changes the System brought to cultivation were.

These Bloodline Methods felt a lot like something the ancient cultivators would practice and seemed only partly integrated with the System's 'software'. This wasn't something unique to bloodline cultivation though. The same thing held true when it came to Soul Cultivation and refining a Constitution with Body Tempering Manuals. Then there were the beast rearing methods, and god knows what else.

All were valid paths to power, but not something that the System directly got involved with.

Perhaps the future generations would have it better. The last Apostate added the whole Mercantile System, so perhaps another Apostate would add some sort of side-cultivation functionality that encompassed all these different methods. But for now Zac had to rely on himself, and he needed to try the yoga poses that the [Wargod Tactics] provided.

"I need to try something out," Zac said to the others who glanced at him curiously. "Keep going, I'll catch up in half an hour or something."

Zac flashed away and found a hidden crevasse where he could practice undisturbed. He immediately started to perform the stances in order, making sure to rouse his killing intent as instructed by the manual. The whole area was awash with his murderous force as Zac completed the stances over and over.

However, absolutely nothing happened even after spending half an hour. Zac sighed in annoyance as he rushed forward to keep up with his army. The guide said it might take a few minutes, but if you didn't even sense anything after half an hour the method wasn't compatible. He tried another ten minutes just to be safe, but he eventually had to turn to the next method.

Reality was cruel. The hours passed as one method after another proved unable to rouse his bloodline. Zac even started to suspect that the True Sky Faction had fed him false methods, but that suspicion was quickly dispelled when four different people in the refugee party showed Zac that [Wargod Tactics] worked just fine.

Zac sighed as he looked at the last method. It was called [Bloodline Resonance], and Zac's face scrunched up when he read the description. The strong point of [Bloodline Resonance] was its shocking compatibility, making it work with pretty much every single bloodline out there.

The weak point was everything else. It was essentially the equivalent of a cultivation manual called [Cultivation Manual]. It was as basic as they came from the looks of it, and it didn't provide an iota of enhancement. Even [Wargod Tactics] improved the effect of a bloodline talent by between 5 to 10%.

Its method was simple, to form mental ripples with one's soul that spread through his body like some sort of sonar. Zac pushed away his anxiety as he sat down, and he quickly grasped the method. It was thankfully pretty straightforward and didn't require any adroit control or even usage of Dao. It just needed him to push out a little bit of his mental energy in specific intervals.

The minutes passed as one ripple after another spread out through his body, and Zac stopped them from leaving his body, just like the method told him to. They kept increasing in number until his body

was almost like a raging sea of spiritual energy. The anxiety from before started to creep back as Zac realized something wasn't right. Just fifteen minutes was supposed to be enough to complete the first step, but he had already doubled that without any response.

But Zac refused to give up on this one. It was his last chance to control his Bloodline until he found a proper method, and who knew how long that would take? He could only persevere, adhering to the method that usually solved his issues.

If things didn't go your way, apply more force.