

The Fall 644

Chapter 644: Bloodline Resonance

Zac refused to believe that even the universal Bloodline Method wouldn't work on his body, so he kept squeezing out more and more mental energy. The churning ripples of [Bloodline Resonance] were quickly descending into a chaotic storm. His whole body felt like it was under assault, and blood started leaking down his nose.

The Bloodline Method should normally not be dangerous, but Zac had long exceeded the recommended usage. Following the manual one would create a new ripple every second, which meant that after fifteen minutes there would be 900 ripples bouncing back and forth. These ripples in turn tried to create a resonance with the bloodline hidden deep in his cells through weak collisions.

Most bloodlines would respond after just a minute or two, but the more stubborn or impure bloodlines could take a bit longer. However, Zac was already approaching 45 minutes by this point, and the number of ripples was over 2500. And not only that, but Zac had also started cranking up the force in each ripple.

If a normal ripple used one unit of mental energy, the ones in his body had been cranked up to five units each by this point. The normal ripple collisions were like gentle nudges at his body aimed to elicit a response, but Zac's method was essentially akin to slapping his organs to shake his bloodline awake.

He understood why the manual had said to stop after 15 minutes. The danger started to increase exponentially as the number of ripples increased. The increased density of ripples created a far higher number of collisions, and each collision impacted his body. Each collision by itself could barely be felt, but when there were thousands every second? It quickly started to stack up, especially with him also increasing the power.

Zac knew he was being foolhardy, but his eyes were already bloodshot as he kept going, increasing the intensity every second. His whole body screamed for mercy, but there was none to be had. It was lucky that his soul had undergone so much tempering up to this point, as he would already have passed out from soul exhaustion otherwise.

Finally, after a full hour, the raging storm had turned into a world-ending cataclysm in his body, and even Zac couldn't withstand it any longer. Even his pathways and skill fractals were starting to get damaged. If he didn't dispel the ripples now he would get some serious internal wounds, the kind that you simply couldn't fix with [Surging Vitality].

There was too much at stake over the following days, and he couldn't take that risk.

But just as Zac was about to give up he felt an extremely weak response from the depths of his body. Zac almost lost control over the chaotic storm of ripples in his body from his extreme relief, but he quickly refocused since he knew his job wasn't over. The pain was intense, but he kept the ripples going as he focused his attention on the resonance of his bloodline.

It gave off the same sensation of antiquity as the skills he unleashed with the Void Energy, like there was something billions of years old hidden in the depths of his cells. It felt like he was rousing something ancient and reluctant from its slumber, but Zac refused to let the resonance recede into his cells.

Rousing that response was the first step of [Bloodline Resonance], and the second was quite straightforward as well. He was supposed to take charge of the mental energy that coursed through the body and merge it with that resonance to form a lasting bond. The problem was that Zac had gone overboard with his energy expenditure, and there was no way that he could control that much mental energy in one go.

Zac figured that he could only do it piecemeal, and he took roughly five percent of the rampant energies and crammed it into the resonance. His energy disappeared like Cosmic Energy entering a Node, and Zac quickly fed it another chunk. More and more energy entered the resonance over the next minutes without any change, but Zac didn't worry.

As expected, he felt a new sensation in his mind the moment all the accumulated mental energy was exhausted. There was a direct correlation between the number of ripples you needed to form and the amount of mental energy needed to form the spiritual connection. It looked like that balance still held even after Zac started painting outside the lines.

He had succeeded, and Zac marveled at the unique feeling in his body. It was extremely odd, like he had grown a new limb that he could instinctively control just like his arms and legs. But it was actually his bloodline that he had connected with, allowing him to rouse and suppress it at will. There was no circulation or enhancement provided by [Bloodline Resonance], but just some rudimentary control was a huge step forward.

Zac was about to start experimenting with his skills, but a wave of exhaustion hit him the moment he relaxed. He had forgotten the state of his soul from the excitement. Over eighty percent of his mental energy was exhausted from forming the ripples, though he wasn't completely full when he began.

Running around on Memorysteel Mountain with his soul exhausted was extremely foolhardy, so he immediately took out two Soul Crystals as he ate a top-quality healing pill. There were some minor wounds all over his body from the ripples, but he had thankfully completed his goal before getting completely in over his head.

Of course, if he didn't have his remnant-refined soul and unnaturally durable body, he would have died long before [Bloodline Resonance] would manage to find a connection to his Void Emperor-bloodline.

Thick streams of pure mental energy poured into his mind from the Soul Crystals, and the exhaustion was quickly washed away along with his splitting headache. However, he only had time to fill the tank up to half before his communication crystal vibrated. Zac sighed and immediately stopped, knowing that his people wouldn't contact him unless it was urgent.

"I'm sorry. I didn't want to disturb you, but I think you need come here," his sister's voice echoed out through the communication crystal.

Zac grunted in affirmation before he got back to his feet. People talked about spending centuries in secluded cultivation, but he somehow couldn't even find a few hours. He thought he would have another hour or two considering the army's speed had slowed down the moment treasures started appearing in caves again a few hours ago.

At least he had managed to make the connection, which was the most important part. From now he would just need to get used to it.

It took a few tries, but he eventually managed to disable the Bloodline Talent so that he could use [Loamwalker] without burning his remaining Void Energy. It was still half-empty, though Zac had already found at least one way to refill it already; Attuned Crystals. He had been looking for the wrong thing back when he absorbed the Divine Crystal, and had missed that a part of the energy disappeared and never his energy reserves.

Zac also suspected he would be able to find some way to use [Void Heart] to fill up on Void Energy, either from eating random things or from eating the Beast cores of the Void Beast. Zac really hoped it would be the former since those kinds of Beast Cores were no doubt hard to get a hold of outside of this place.

The world turned into a blur around him as he pushed his movement skill to the limit, and it actually felt a bit cumbersome to suddenly have to move his Cosmic Energy into the fractals on his feet. But [Force of the Void] didn't actually provide many benefits to that particular skill in either case, since its usage was still restricted by him taking an actual step forward.

He knew that there would be some cases where the talent worked better than others, but getting a better grasp would require some hands-on experimentation. And it seemed like he would get that opportunity sooner rather than later. Because the reason his sister was calling him was simple; the advance scouts had spotted activity, and it was a full-blown war.

It was like the restrictions of the sixth layer didn't exist as Zac flashed forward, each step with [Loamwalker] taking him over a hundred meters forward. It took him just over ten minutes to reach the rear of his army, and he signaled Hekruv Vira to join him before he made his way past the vanguard.

He had already confirmed the situation with his sister while catching up, and he made his way toward a large cliff on the seventh layer. It provided a good vantage of the battle without exposing their location, and Zac nodded at the gathered group before he made his way to the edge to peer out across the northern slopes.

Huge swathes of the mountain were ablaze as a massive and chaotic war raged. At first appearance, it looked to be a battle between cultists and a joint army of Zhix and a few hundred odd creatures that Zac had never seen before. It was doubt were the Gemlings that he had heard about.

The native race was roughly one meter in height and looked a bit like stone turtles as they had rocky grey scales instead of skins. He had heard from Leviala they weren't golems though, but rather a "normal" species.

They were bipedal with two short stubby legs, and they had a set of muscular arms with oversized hands. They had a shell covering their backs, and their wide and flat faces lacked any nose or external ears. The most attention-grabbing aspect of them was the luminous crystals that covered their bodies though, and each of them emitted a mysterious power that made Zac's mind slightly shudder.

Most of the crystals shone in a sanguine red as their owners fought tooth and nail, but Zac spotted a few other colors as well. Most of the Gemlings had less than five shimmering crystals, but Zac also spotted a handful of natives with over a dozen attached to their bodies. These individuals were unsurprisingly the most powerful Gemlings he could spot, but even they were just at the earlier to middle stages of the E-Grade.

Another interesting detail about the situation was that while the Gemlings and the Zhix seemed to be allied on the surface, the former obviously wasn't happy about it. Or it might be more accurate to say that the Gemlings seemed to hate the Zhix. The insectoids almost solely focused on dealing with the small cultist army, but Zac had spotted the Gemlings launching over a dozen sneak attacks on the Zhix even though their main focus was the Church of Everlasting Dao as well.

It more or less confirmed their suspicions. Knowing the Inevitability and Void's Disciple, there hadn't been peaceful cooperation between the two factions. The Gemlings had definitely been enslaved and suffered tremendously over the past months.

"Adcarkas and his child aren't here," Rhubat rumbled with a frown, and Zac nodded in agreement as he backed away from the cliff.

This cultist army was small, just half of the one Zac dealt with before, and it didn't seem to have a bishop taking charge. Yet they were holding the advantage against thousands of Zhix and their unwilling companions. If Void's Disciple was there he would have been able to quickly and effortlessly turn the tides of the battle.

It looked like the Dominators already had gone ahead, and Zac wasn't too surprised. They seemed wholly focused on accomplishing their master's task, and the normal Zhix were just a tool. They would probably be sacrificed along with everyone else when the Great Redeemer arrived. The Zhix had probably been given an order to stay put, which put them in the cross-hairs of the crazed cultists when the second squad reached this far.

As for the cultists themselves, they had probably been in charge of the same task as the main army, which would explain why there weren't any remaining islands all the way to the northern slopes.

"We will deal with the last traitors before continuing the pursuit," Rhubat said, and the Anointed immediately started gearing up for war.

"Wait a second. Those small stonemen are like your people. They have been enslaved by the Dominators," Zac said. "If possible, I'd like to invite them to Port Atwood. But I'm afraid they would attack you as well if you just go storming down."

"It's true... They are brethren in suffering," Rhubat slowly nodded. "They are not Zhix, but they can join the Crusade."

Zac nodded as he looked at the Gemlings. If there was one native faction he really wanted to integrate into Port Atwood, it was the Gemlings. He had a decent heritage left behind by Brazla himself and boatloads of resources, but no skilled craftsmen. These Gemlings were his solution to the problem.

The problem was that they no doubt would be skeptical for various reasons. First of all, he was allied with the same type of insectoids as the ones that had caused so much suffering. Secondly, they had already been enslaved once for their gems by an outside force. They would probably be extremely cautious around strange factions on the outside.

Luckily he had an in with these people in the form of a half-roasted monkeyman that had caught up to Zac by now. It was time for Hekruv Vira to prove that he had the wide connections and diplomacy skills as he claimed.

