

The Fall 671

Chapter 671: Vilari

Vilari came in a moment later, her eyes shielded by a black silk scarf covered in aquamarine fractals, which also held her shoulder-long white hair back from her face. Her build was still the same as the angelic girl who almost killed him in the Battle of Fates, but her aura was completely different.

Two black streaks ran down her cheeks and continued down her neck. It was a bit reminiscent of runny mascara if not for the massive amount, but its origin was rather Zac himself. When his soul cracked from the mentalist's attack back then, a surge of Annihilation had ruined Vilari's eyes and cracked her soul in return.

Those streaks of black blood had marked her skin, and they now formed a mysterious pattern that Zac felt had some sort of relation with the Dao of Oblivion. It gave her an oppressive aura, and one of perpetual sorrow, which was a bit unfortunate as her true disposition wasn't like that at all. She wasn't a ray of sunshine, but neither was she a dark cloud.

Her mental cultivation had resulted in a calm and gentle personality, though that didn't mean she flinched in the face of carnage. She wasn't blind like one could have expected from her appearance either, as a version of her old eyes had been grown back in the ruined sockets. It wasn't some unique ability of her predecessor's bloodline, but rather thanks to Zac's experimentation over the past years.

He had used Creation to conjure something out of nothing.

The energies of Oblivion and Creation were constantly released into his body, and he occasionally needed to purge as to not get impacted by the influence of the remnants again. However, Zac had felt it was a waste to simply use his Origin Mark on nothing. He had seen how it could heal his own body and create things where only his imagination was the limit, so why not use the mark on his corpses?

His first attempt had been on the nephew of Cervantes, the mutilated and bisected corpse of the leader werewolf. Zac wanted to see if he could regrow the missing half with a Pink Flash. Unfortunately, his experiment had ended up with the corpse turning into a mutilated blob of flesh and metal as Zac let his imagination run wild for a second, making him think of the Cyborg he fought.

The following experiments went better and better as he learned to properly focus and avoid distractions. However, there were still limitations to the skill. First of all, he could only use it on himself and on corpses so far. Using it on someone living caused a clash of wills between the two parties, and things got out of control.

Secondly, the limbs he restored were weaker compared to the original, though that was slowly improved over time. Finally, it couldn't create things Zac didn't understand. One instance of this was bloodlines hidden in the depths of cells. For example, he had created two eyes for Pika as well, but she had actually scooped them out of her own head after awakening, saying that the real ones were waiting for her.

Vilari's bloodline was thankfully not directly related to her eyes. In fact, Zac wasn't even certain that her old eyes looked like that scary eye that had filled his vision back then. His memories of the whole

encounter were a bit blurry, and he only remembered those enormous eyes. It might just have been a skill of the mentalist, but it was now a permanent feature of Vilari.

The real reason for the scarf covering her eyes was rather that her soul had grown too much in strength too quickly, and she wasn't able to control her latent bloodline. Her living predecessor probably practiced some specific bloodline method, but the Mentalist hadn't left any cultivation manuals inside her Spatial Ring. Most likely she hadn't brought things like that to Base Town at all, rather leaving them back with her clan.

So, his commander of the Einherjar was in a similar situation as Zac was before he awakened his bloodline. In fact, the Einherjar with previous bloodlines were all in this situation. Their bloodlines had been partly sealed upon awakening, and they had to work at unsealing them rather than awakening them.

It was possible that a proper Lich might be able to allow their Revenants to awaken with their bloodlines intact, but Zac definitely wasn't at that stage with his homebrewed methods. Conversely, his Mark of Creation would probably kick up a storm among Liches if they found out he had such a heaven-defying method to restore corpses.

"Lord Atwood," Vilari said as she looked back and forth in the cave. "Such a nice place. A shame it was destroyed."

"It's just surface damage," Zac said with a wry smile. "It will be restored. I'm sorry about the wait."

"It was no problem. The atmosphere outside helped me make some progress of my own," Vilari said.

"That's good. How are you coming along?" Zac asked.

"It's slow but steady," Vilari nodded. "I think it's best if I stay at my current stage for a few more years unless you need me to advance. Soul cultivation is a slow path."

Zac understood what she meant. His recent break-through should be possible to complete while still in F-Grade, but it would probably take a longer time. Who knew, perhaps it was even possible to undergo a second reincarnation as well. The greater the foundation she built early on, the further she would be able to go on her path.

"That's fine. Follow your instincts, and let me know if there's anything you need," Zac said as he threw her a crystal. "These are my insights after undergoing my first Reincarnation, it should be helpful to you as well. There were some surprises. I hope you'll aim for a perfect Reincarnation if you decide to stick with this method."

Vilari was the only one apart from himself who cultivated the Nine Reincarnations Manual. Zac had paid a small fortune for a Natural Treasure that allowed him to engrave at least the first section onto a one-time Information Crystal even though his understanding was a bit rickety.

She wasn't quite as suited as himself for the method, considering she didn't really have any affinity or relation to the Life-attunement. But the [Nine Reincarnations Manual] was still a top-tier Soul Strengthening Method, and it helped her strengthen her soul at a decent pace. In fact, her soul was already superior to Zac's pre-reincarnation soul, but it still hadn't reached its limits.

Whether that would lead to an easier reincarnation or a stronger end-product, Zac wasn't sure. Honestly, it wasn't for certain that she would stick with the current manual at all since she could easily swap to another method before she actually underwent the first reincarnation. Afterward, it might be a bit more complicated.

Still, the information was of great value to her, and Vilari gratefully nodded as she stowed away the crystal.

"Let me look into your eyes," Zac suddenly requested, giving Vilari a start.

"Ah- Are you sure?" the small Revenant hesitantly said. "Your state after grinding your skills-"

"That was before," Zac coughed with some embarrassment. "I want to see the effects of completing the first reincarnation."

"Alright," Vilari nodded as she undid the knot at the back of her head, exposing two almost reptilian eyes.

The eyes were fashioned after the massive eyes that Zac had seen when the Mentalist attacked him during the battle of fates, with white sclera and a blue vertical scar running through them in the middle. The only difference was that the blue back then was a lot deeper, whereas Vilari's fractured pupils were the aquamarine of condensed Miasma.

Until today Zac had found himself on the losing end to Vilari's gaze, even when activating [Soul Guardian] or [Indomitable]. His soul wasn't actually hurt by the exchange like back during the tower climb, but it did make him slightly dizzy after just a few seconds. Which was shocking considering that Vilari was just peak F-Grade.

But this time was different. He felt some pressure and the oceans in his soul aperture started to churn a bit, but he was still able to maintain a completely lucid mind even without activating his mental defense skill. It was like the oceans acted as a buffer, and the core wasn't affected at all by the latent pressure Vilari exerted. It was clear; mental defense was once his weakness, but it had now turned into his strongest point.

"I can't see your soul," Vilari exclaimed with surprise, confirming Zac's hunch, and a smile spread across her face.

"What's with you?" Zac asked with confusion as he saw Vilari light up.

"I'm just happy. I can finally look someone in the eyes without hurting them," Vilari said with a smile.

Zac weakly smiled in return, once more feeling that the familial bonds of the Undead were a bit hard to get used to. He was essentially Vilari's father as she carried his mark, and the awakening was performed with him as the "lifegiving source". But Revenants turned this way were adults the moment they gained sapience, though they were still a bit wide-eyed even after two years of education.

So Vilari was his child, yet she was not. She was an adult, yet she was not, and Zac had some trouble adapting to it. Triv had just told him to see it as the same sort of relationship as the one he had with his Valkyries, which pretty much was true since the Einherjar were bound to him just like Triv was bound to the Undead Empire.

"I'm sure you'll be able to control your strength when we find a way to unseal your bloodline. It shouldn't be long until we find a way," Zac said. "And if you want, I have an opportunity for you. The Crown of Despair-Inheritance. There are some risks-"

"I'm willing," Vilari said without hesitation, eagerness written all over her face.

"Okay, let's go," Zac nodded before he activated his Specialty Core to return back to his human form.

He had already kept Vilari waiting for three days, so they headed out without delay, leaving Triv to start repairs on the cave. The two teleported over to his compound and immediately walked over to the intricate hedge maze that also doubled as Brazla's Energy Gathering Array.

Even more functions had been added over the past years; it now also contained hidden bewilderment and trapping arrays that Kenzie had installed. Of course, the main reason for them being there was because Brazla had demanded it in return for divulging some of his knowledge.

Zac was in control of the array cores rather than Brazla though, and he effortlessly led Vilari through. The size of these additions around the Dao Repository had forced Zac to slightly move the inner wall, not that anyone in Port Atwood wanted to stay too close to the Dao Repository after it started stealing their ambient energy.

"It's you," Brazla muttered, glancing down from his golden cloud when Zac walked inside with a curious Vilari in tow. "What do you want?"

"I want to give the Crown of Despair to Vilari here," Zac said. "Is it a problem that she's a Revenant?"

"Should be fine as long as it's not a man," Brazla shrugged and waved his hand, conjuring a portal in front of the statue.

"Good luck," Zac said as he turned to Vilari. "I'll wait here."

"This inheritance is a bit special," Brazla interjected. "The undead lass will be gone for at least a month, probably more."

"What?" Zac said with shock.

Most trials just took a few hours, and even his own inheritance had just lasted for a day. Meanwhile, the trial for the Crown of Despair would last for a whole month? What kind of treasures hid within that realm?

"It's not that the quality of the things left behind is higher. The owner had some... peculiar demands when constructing the inheritance realm," Brazla snorted, clearly reading Zac's thoughts. "Also, it's the only inheritance site I am completely unable to sneak inside, so I have no idea how it looks by now. That dour woman might have gone even more insane over the long years."

"Do you still want to go ahead with this?" Zac asked with some worry.

"Even more. It sounds like a challenge where I can hone myself. We can't shy away from some minor difficulties if we want to be able to assist you in the future," Vilari said with a nod.

“Fine. Good luck. And if it seems like you will die, just give up. There will always be other opportunities out there,” Zac said and looked on with worry as Vilari walked toward the teleporter.

“And, young master? I am sorry about the mistress,” Vilari said as she disappeared in a flash.

The teleporter disappeared, taking Vilari with it. Zac gazed at the towering statue a few seconds, and he couldn’t help but feel a wave of dejection coming over him. The statue was holding her head in her hands and it radiated sorrow, and it made him glance toward the stalwart statue of the Blade Emperor.

Seeing him brought back a wave of unwelcome memories, and he wordlessly turned toward the exit. A snort echoed out from above, but Zac ignored it as he walked away.

“Are you... Getting her back?” a hesitant voice asked just as Zac was about to leave, which made him stop in his tracks as he looked back up at the Tool Spirit.

It looked like Brazla's sullen demeanor was caused by missing Kenzie, and Zac guessed he shouldn’t be surprised. She was essentially his only friend in this place, visiting him occasionally to just play around. Perhaps Brazla was dreading being left alone in this world again since Zac was always occupied with his cultivation.

“I’ll do my best,” Zac sighed. “Have you heard of Six Profundity Empire? Or Immemorial Realms?”

“I haven’t heard of that empire,” Brazla said with a shake of his head. “But I have heard of Immemorial Realms from my master. It was something he had learned from a mysterious being passing through his sector. He stayed with my creator for a few weeks when he was young and gave some casual pointers on crafting.

“Master always said it was thanks to this mysterious person’s profound knowledge he was considered the top among D-Grade craftsmen. It was thanks to him that even Monarchs came to his doorstep asking for help. Master always dreamed of meeting this mysterious master again, but he never got the chance.”

Zac’s brows rose with surprise. A few weeks of casual pointers completely transformed the fate of the original Brazla? Sounded like Brazla had a lucky encounter of his own. It might even be possible that that person was at B-grade to elicit such a change.

“Master learned that Mystic Realms are the lowest rung among the hidden pockets of space. There are higher-tiered worlds as well. He mentioned Ancient Realms, Immemorial Realms, and Primal Heavens. I don’t know anything more than that though,” Brazla muttered.

“Immemorial Realm... Higher-tiered Mystic Realm,” Zac mused.

“It is some sort of cultivation paradise, I bet,” Brazla shrugged. “I guess it’s the kind of place those lofty beings need to enter continue their cultivation. I bet a place like this backwater sector simply doesn’t have the fundamental requirements to nurture a B-grade Cultivator. And there is no way such a place is unclaimed. Getting in would be nigh-impossible.”

“You might be right,” Zac said with a sigh, knowing that his goal of finding Kenzie had just become even more difficult.

Leaving the Zecia Sector alone was a daunting task for someone who wasn't even powerful enough to freely walk among the stars. Gaining access to some supreme cultivation paradise to free his sister sounded like an impossible task as things stood. But Zac simply took a deep breath and left.

One step at a time.

Vilari being gone for so long was out of Zac's expectations, but it didn't affect his original plans all that much. Zac sent a message to Calrin next, ordering a huge batch of provisions for his next outing before returning to his cultivation cave.

He spent the next week healing up, resting, and going over his plans. Zac had formed all kinds of hypotheses and goals over the past three years, and the improved clarity from his soul helped him perfect those steps even further. Only when he was completely certain he was back in prime condition did he continue with his objectives.

Zac activated his teleporter, appearing in a small empty building, a logger's cabin that hadn't seen any visitors for months. He stepped outside, finding himself in a small town, though not a person was in sight. It was a small deserted settlement that Zac had found while flying around on his leaf, looking for good grinding spots or any natural treasures left behind after the Integration.

Judging by the signs and remains, the place had once been a drop-off point for a cohort of human cultivators. However, they had long died due to their unfortunate placement. The town was situated at the edge of a series of towering mountains to one side and a vast coniferous forest to the other.

Both the mountains and the forest were simply crawling with powerful beasts, and there were no other towns for hundreds of miles. The cultivators had fought valiantly against the dangerous surroundings, unlocking a Nexus Crystal and all sorts of battlements. They had all died before managing to unlock the teleporter though, leaving the town unclaimed.

Zac had quickly killed all the alphas in the surroundings before claiming the city, which gave him a small outpost far away from prying eyes, with ample prey to use as target practice. However, Zac didn't come here to just fight beasts, he had a specific goal in mind.

He walked over to the Nexus Crystal, putting his hands against its smooth surface.

[Fuse Skills?]