

The Fall 690

Chapter 690: Inheritance Crystal

The little flying vessel immediately shot toward the disk where the Dao Repository was housed. Zac's shopping spree had not only shored up on things that his little planet sorely needed, but it had also given Zac a decent understanding of Twilight Harbor as a whole. The past days had doubled as a crash course that you simply couldn't get from reading a missive.

He had seen tens of thousands of warriors who, just like him, were stocking up and preparing for the Twilight Ascent. He had even seen quite a few Hegemons making their final purchases, as it turned out that this generation's Twilight Ascent was a "Double Grade-event". That thankfully didn't mean Zac would have to compete with a bunch of Hegemons, but rather that they had their own Trial simultaneously.

Usually, the Twilight Ascent was an E-grade trial, with it occasionally being swapped out by a D-grade version for Hegemons. Even rarer was the Monarch event, which only took place once every 250,000 years or so. The last one took place just 20,000 years ago, and it was the last time the Twilight Lord had been seen in public. Many believed he had entered and gained some big opportunity that would allow him to take the next step.

Finally, there was the Double-Grade-Event which was even rarer than the Monarch Event. The prevalent guess was that the Mystic Realm had an overabundance of energy and treasure, which resulted in two Trials in parallel dimensions instead of one. Each time such an event had taken place historically, it had resulted in both amazing treasures being discovered and mass casualties.

It was no surprise the atmosphere in Twilight Harbor was absolutely electrified.

Vilari had mostly tagged along during the past days for the experience, though she had made a few purchases meant for her cultivation. One of them was a Soul-Boosting array they found in the store of the Array Clan where Zac made a few custom orders of his own. It would help speed her cultivation up now that she was swapping away from the Nine Reincarnations Manual.

His total spending over the past days had reached over 15,000 D-grade nexus coins, which was simply a monstrous amount of money even for E-grade cultivators in Twilight Harbor. But that investment would completely transform every aspect of his forces, from defenses, to cultivation standards, to depth of heritage.

He would definitely have a few Hegemons among his followers in a century or two unless they were all pigs in disguise.

Most importantly, he had prepared a slew of materials meant to improve almost every facet of his own cultivation. The items he had bought were mostly things readily available. They were still the best of the best though, which was saying something with the exponential costs of high-quality products.

He doubted even Catheya could enjoy the kind of resources he had prepared for himself unless her master was a lot more generous compared to how most clans operated. Even then, some of these items were simply back-ups meant to be used in case he had to flee quickly or if he didn't find the things he needed in the auction in a few days.

The auction would probably have amazing things but there were other factors to consider when bidding. This time there might even be Late-Stage Monarchs present, and offending them with only a fake clan as backup was suicidal. He had already discarded any thought of getting the peak items, but he should be able to snatch a couple of useful things as long as he was willing to overpay a bit.

Any further than that was risking his and Vilari's lives. He had avoided any ambushes so far thanks to his pure Draugr heritage, but he knew that he would have to avoid the spotlight for a while after his massive spending spree. After all, while order was pretty good in the Twilight Harbor, there was no lack of desperate people either.

That was fine with Zac though. The auction was tomorrow, and he'd enter seclusion for a while after it was over. But first up was the skills, and Nala landed her flying vessel in front of a building that looked like a supersized gothic cathedral with thousands of enormous miasmic fractals floating in the air.

"Young master, we've been expecting you," a ghost attendant said as Zac walked toward the entrance with Vilari in tow. "We've been given instructions from the mistress to help you out to the best of our abilities. First, let me add a hundred years to your Token."

Zac nodded in thanks, and his three-week visa suddenly turned into a century-long entitlement. He didn't know if adding a whole century was to showcase the company's resources or if it was just an expression of goodwill. In either case, he wouldn't turn down something like this.

Most continents charged by the week to outsiders, and the fee to stay a hundred years without joining a force had to be exorbitant. As for buying a plot of land and becoming a native, that didn't require just wealth, but also deep connections.

"I am here to pick out a skill from the VIP section as well," Zac said.

"Certainly," the attendant nodded. "However, there is the matter of the contract... Also, young master's attendant cannot follow into the inner sanctum."

"I know," Zac said as he glanced at Vilari.

The Mentalist didn't seem to mind. She rather seemed to be looking forward to perusing the skills in the public section.

"See if you find any skills you like and I'll buy them for you," Zac said as he walked away, led by another attendant toward the area where the supreme skills were kept.

"Mister Arcas Black, I presume? Welcome," an elderly Draugr smiled when Zac reached the tightly-secured inner sanctum. "I am Revault Sharva'Zi. The young mistress told me about your arrival. Please, peruse this contract at your leisure. After signing, I will take you to the Inheritance crystals."

This old man was clearly a Hegemon, yet he had to call Catheya the 'young mistress'. Zac guessed that Revault was a branch member native to the Twilight Harbor, rather than someone sent here from the heartlands. Zac perfunctorily greeted the Draugr and took the crystal before he started scanning its contents. There was nothing unexpected in the list of clauses for what essentially looked like an employment contract.

The distribution of pearls was clearly stated, and Zac's only obligation was to help fight in case of ambushes or attacks, and to help run the purity array for his allotted time. The contract would mostly end after they were done harvesting pearls, but there was an additional clause barring clashes among the members of the group for the duration of the Twilight Ascent.

There were also provisions that Zac could freely attack anyone attacking him and so on, though that was already guaranteed through the Apostate of Order.

"There is no clause barring Catheya from attacking me? Just for me attacking her or the others?" Zac said with a raised brow.

"Truthfully, there is not much use in putting such a clause into the contract due to her master being powerful enough to break it," Revault said. "That's is why multiple clauses are worded as though Mistress Catheya or other members are under no contractual obligation at all. The same goes for the other members of the party."

Zac slowly nodded and read through the contract once more. It was true. Zac was essentially freed from any obligation at the first whiff of betrayal, but he would not be able to preemptively attack the others unless he was ready to withstand a contract backlash. He eventually infused some energy into the crystal, which prompted a System-screen to appear.

"This way," Revault smiled after Zac had confirmed his employment, and they passed through a series of extremely powerful arrays to reach an underground vault.

The room was pretty simple, and the only thing was a series of light pillars with a crystal hovering inside each one. In front of the pillars was a plaque, probably describing the skill.

There were only twenty or so Inheritance Crystals, but that by itself was a show of wealth considering there was always demand but never enough supply. For clan Sharva'Zi to be able to put a dozen top-tier skills in a remote region like the Twilight Harbor was impressive, since this place was obviously just one remote branch among hundreds of others.

Zac walked from crystal to crystal, reading the descriptions carefully. Every skill sounded extremely powerful, but they also often had strict requirements to bring the most out of them. Thankfully, the Eldritch Archivals were a lot more professional when it came to descriptions compared to Brazla. He was currently looking at a green hovering crystal with red runes covering it.

[Endless Repose. Peak E-Grade, Upgradeable. Vitality, Dexterity, Spear-related Daos, Poison-related Daos. Creates a storm of poisonous spear tips with extreme penetrating power that can break past even High E-Grade defensive skills. Each stab creates a restrictive force equivalent to a Middle-grade Restrictive Skill and administers poison. Can be refitted to work with other sharp weaponry such as needles, thorns, and claws.]

Zas read the description with interest, but he soon shook his head and moved on. The minutes passed as Zac walked from pillar to pillar in search of the most suitable skill. Almost every skill felt enticing to some degree, and it took a while to narrow it down to two skills.

[Deathlock. Peak E-grade, Upgradeable. Strength, Endurance, Vitality, Death-related Daos, Restrictive-related Daos. Creates a number of Abyssal Graves that binds and locks down enemies. Also creates an

absolute domain that disables up to High-Grade Movement Skills. The Skill at Peak mastery can even restrain weak Hegemons if infused with suitable peak Dao Fragment.]

[Abyssal Phase. High E-Grade, Upgradeable. No attribute affinity, Death-related Daos. Transforms the user into an abyssal wraith. During transformation, the user is nigh-invulnerable, nigh-invisible, and extremely hard to detect. Peak-quality movement speed boost.]

One peak skill aimed at restraining, and one high movement skill. The efficacy of [Deathlock] spoke for itself, it was a restraining skill that matched extremely well with his attributes, and it could even be empowered by his Fragment of the Coffin. It was a perfect complement to his class, allowing him to completely lock down the enemies inside [Profane Seal], for example, and then finish them with [Blighted Cut].

He had initially considered getting a massive wide-scale finisher like [Arcadia's Judgement], but Zac had eventually decided against it. That was simply not the type of archetype his Undead class had. It was more about stacking advantages in his favor with restrictions, domains, and corrosion. He was intractable and inevitable like death itself, like a precise and ruthless army who slowly whittled down the enemy while taking minimum losses themselves.

Eventually, the enemy would be worn out, at which point Zac would end them in one swift stroke.

The second skill Zac considered also provided extreme benefits. It was not only an amazing movement skill, but it even provided multiple additional benefits. It almost seemed like a perfect skill from the description. The best movement skills were generally Dexterity-based, which was a problem for his Strength-focused classes, yet this one had no such affinity at all.

Furthermore, it provided a slew of other benefits. Nigh-invulnerability and invisibility? Zac could almost imagine turning into an abyssal wraith after he had trapped his enemies inside his cage, avoiding any harm while his enemies fell one by one. It is also purely death-based, with suited with his Dao, and he could fuse it further at the D-grade. There was only one thing that didn't quite add up.

"Why is [Abyssal Phase] classified as a high-grade skill if it provides 'peak movement speed' and all kinds of other benefits?" Zac asked.

"It's the energy consumption," the old Draugr sighed as he looked at the Inheritance Crystal with some wistfulness. "The skill turns you into a nigh-invulnerable wraith and allows you to move through a subdimension with such a speed that it might as well be considered teleportation, but the energy requirements are immense. Especially since you need to phase back and forth if you want to use the skill repeatedly.

"The effect is among the best I've seen for a skill of this grade, considering that it does not only provide extreme speed, but also protection. But a movement skill with such high demands can ultimately not be considered peak quality, especially considering that activating the skill takes a while even for the most talented warrior, which can be lethal in a heated fight," the old man lamented.

Zac hummed in understanding. It was true, a skill that cost too much Cosmic Energy was ultimately useless. His new skill [Arcadia's Judgement] cost a whopping 25% of his energy reserves while still at Early Mastery, but that was fine since it was a true finisher-skill. But what if [Loamwalker] demanded that kind of energy per step? He'd never use it.

But his situation was unique. Not only was his energy pool massive thanks to his high attributes, but he even had [Force of the Void] to completely circumvent the downside of a slow charge-up. The question was if it was worth it, or if it was better to instead take the peak restraining skill and get common movement skill from the public repository.

But ultimately, the various benefits of the movement skill were too alluring. He already had multiple restraining skills, and it wasn't impossible that he'd get another one for the level 125 quest that always provided the second Class Skill of the E-grade. After all, the class was called Fetters of Desolation, yet it hadn't provided him with any such skill yet.

"It sounds interesting. I'll take [Abyssal Phase]. Who knows, I might be able to perfect it," Zac said with a small smile. "If not, it might serve as a good source when forming my own skills in the future."

"Very well," Revault nodded and took out a small crystal ball from his Spatial Ring.

A shudder spread out through the whole room, and the hovering skill crystal disappeared into thin air. Zac's eyes widened a bit, as he had not realized he had been looking at an illusion at all. He wasn't able to touch the crystal through the protective sphere, but he had still sensed its energy emanations.

A large black book instead appeared in front of Zac, and it emitted an extremely powerful aura, even eclipsing the Draugr Hegemon.

"Lord Book," the old man said with a small bow.

"[Abyssal Phase], paid for with contribution points," a soothing androgynous voice emerged from the book as it flipped pages until one depicting a black chest appeared.

The chest flew out of the page itself, leaving it blank, and Zac quickly stowed away the item. He obviously wouldn't learn the skill here since using an Inheritance Crystal was like a skill impartment and an Epiphany rolled into one.

"Thank you," Zac said and stowed away the box before he turned to the old man. "Can I purchase one of the skills here as well?"

"I am afraid not," Revault answered with a shake of his head. "Family rules. Truthfully, the main purpose of selling these limited skills is to provide favors and make connections with various powerhouses and clans, so we cannot sell them wholesale. What if a powerful warrior arrives one day and finds our stores empty?"

"I understand," Zac nodded, though he knew that there would always be exceptions.

Status and power was everything. They knew he was an elite hired by Catheya, which might garner some respect but not abject deference. His true heritage was obscure, intentionally so since he didn't actually have one. In comparison, if the son of an Undead Prince arrived, he could probably leave with half the skills in this place if he wanted to.

Also, if Zac had some rare treasures to barter with, then the Eldritch Archivals would definitely be keener on doing some more business.

"I'll also take a look at the public skills then," Zac said.

"I hope you'll find something useful. I daresay, our clan is fully committed to this branch, so our heritage is not much worse than the average Kingdom-store. Furthermore, our limit on the VIP floor is one purchase per century, so you're very welcome to return after a hundred years had passed," the old man smiled.

Being told to come back in a hundred years almost sounded like a curse to an Earthling like Zac, but he knew it wasn't meant that way. The old man in front of him almost felt like a kindly old grandpa, but he was probably somewhere between medium and high D-grade. His lifespan was no doubt measured in the tens of thousands, and a hundred years to him was the equivalent to a few months for the average pre-integration human.

"Thank you for your guidance, elder," Zac said and slightly bowed before he left for the floor beneath.

The issue of not having a movement skill in his Draugr form was finally solved, but there were other things he needed to shore up to turn himself into a perfect all-rounder.