

The Fall 778

Chapter 778: A Little Bit of Chaos

Zac looked at the receding backs of the Havarok army as they made their way toward the core of the City of Ancients. He briefly wondered what they would think upon seeing the gristly scene inside, where enough blood to fill a small lake had been expelled by the blood mistress, painting the whole courtyard red.

A sharp pain brought him back to the present, and he slowly turned back his gaze toward the one person who remained. Ventus Kalavan. Zac still didn't know how much about his situation this elf knew through his Dao of Numerology. Did Ventus know they had met already, that he had two identities? Or had the elf rather gleaned somehow that Zac would be able to save him upon his capture?

From the expression of Ykrodas, the latter seemed to be true at least, where the elf had already made some preparations for his release. It was a real headache to deal with a mysterious ability like numerology. Part of him wanted to simply kill the elf to keep any secrets from slipping out, but his conscience wouldn't let him.

The elf had helped him not only by warning him about the situation here, but he had even helped him break through in one of his Daos. Also, Zac was completely spent, and there was no way he'd best this man in a confrontation at the moment.

"Ah, Lord Black, it is a pleasure to finally meet you," Ventus hesitantly said after the silence had stretched on for a while. "I hope my warning served you well."

"You illuminated the path for me, and I saved you in return," Zac grunted. "Thus, balance is restored."

"Then I'll take my leave, unless young master has any further instructions?" Ventus smiled.

"Be careful when meddling with fate," Zac said. "Small actions can grow into storms that swallow all in its path."

Ventus froze for a second before he wryly smiled in return. "I'll bear that in mind. My actions were my own, unrelated to the temple."

With that, he disappeared a puff of stardust, finally leaving Zac alone. He waited a few seconds before bending over to take the Spatial Ring of Uona before stowing away her body. After that, he slowly walked away until he slumped down at a secluded spot with his back against a dead tree. Just exchanging a few sentences had almost been beyond what he could manage now that the surge of chaos had left his body.

He felt like a hollow husk now that things had calmed down, especially with the side-effects of the [Rageroot Oak Seed] coming to bear. That's why he tried to give off an aura of confidence when talking to Ykrodas, and why he tried to fill the prince with some urgency. Luckily, the seal of the main tower had failed when the System unleashed its lightning, which gave the Havarok warriors pretext to hurry on their way.

Zac took a ragged breath, and his hands shook as he took out a small box. His vision was already blurred, but he managed to cram the thing inside into his mouth, swallowing it in one go. Warm streams along with an odd undulating power spread through his body, swiftly mending some of what was broken.

It was the supreme treasure that contained the power of time, used to restore his body as much as was possible. The effect was immediate and amazing, effortlessly sweeping away the after-effects of the berserking pill, along with most of his internal wounds. It even restored some of his missing energy, making it like it was never spent.

Of course, the damage wrought from the remnants wasn't something an E-grade herb could so easily fix.

Zac sighed as he looked at the wretched state of his body. More than half of his pathways were broken, and even his nodes showed some damage. Healing treasure had managed to stabilize the nodes and pathways a bit, but there were lingering energies that refused to be cleansed. He would barely be able to exert a tenth of his peak power at the moment, and judging by the state of his nodes, that alone was a risky endeavor.

He might worsen the damage, leading to the nodes cracking altogether. A node breaking was extremely troublesome from what he had gathered. It could be restored, but there were few items that could expedite something like that. Most commonly, you simply had to rest up for a couple of years, slowly nurturing them and letting them regrow. If you didn't, you'd have an imperfection in your pathways, making the formation of a core pretty much impossible.

Two strands of Chaos, that was all that it took for his body to reach a state like this. Allowing such a thing into his pathways was like pouring jet fuel into a moped. The energy hadn't actually been rampant at all, but its mere existence was lethal to his body. It wrought more havoc without trying than the sets of remnants did.

He turned his gaze to the cage in his mind, content to see all four of the remnants locked in a hateful embrace. The moment the Glimpse of Chaos had been formed, the remnants had been completely drained like last time, allowing him to hurriedly push them back inside. Thankfully, Ykrodas Havarok and his army had been so shocked by the spectacle and the death of Uona that they hadn't dared interrupt the process.

A new golden fractal had appeared in the cage, replacing the one that he had destroyed to let the two others out. At the same time, the cracks that had covered some of the remaining fractals had been mended, reducing the risk of leaks or accidental cracks. It wasn't much, but it was as far as the System was willing to go by the looks of it.

Zac had hoped to extract some more benefits upon feeling the hunger of the Heavens, but that thing was just too stubborn. For one, he had hoped for the System to upgrade the cage, but he had only managed to make it repair the damage that was directly related to forming the chaos patterns. It did however promise it would keep doing so every time he conjured new glimpses in the future as well, lessening some of the pressure he felt at the prospect of gathering more of them.

Any more than that, it blankly refused. It almost felt like he had been talking with an insurance investigator trying to deny a claim, rather than an ancient and omniscient creation. When he had failed

to get any other improvements to the remnant prison, he had tried something else – he had demanded some things related to the [Nine Reincarnations Manual].

With the events in the Twilight Ocean, it wouldn't be long before he underwent the second reincarnation and begin work on the third. He had first demanded more layers of the manual, but the system had rejected the request with prejudice, to the point it almost zapped him with a bolt of lightning. When that failed, Zac had instead tried to get the materials he needed for the fourth reincarnation.

He had the array plates for the third reincarnation ready to go, but a bustling place like the Twilight Harbor actually lacked every single one of the core materials for the array needed at the fourth layer of the Soul Strengthening Method. He had already looked around in the Zecia sector as well without any luck, meaning he was bound to head straight toward a bottleneck unless something changed.

Having the materials needed for the fourth reincarnation would greatly increase his chances of taking charge of these remnants. Going by the Strength his soul had gained so far, he figured that undergoing three reincarnations would put his soul at roughly the same level as a soul-cultivating elite at peak E-grade.

That was extremely powerful, but still not at the level where he could command the remnants. The fourth reincarnation would push his soul into the territory of the D-grade, vastly increasing his odds as it put his soul at the same grade as the remnants.

Zac was pretty much certain he'd be able to withstand the Atavism that Be'Zi mentioned with five reincarnations. Four reincarnations would be far more difficult, but it would perhaps be possible with enough preparations and supporting treasures. Unfortunately, the result was the same; a blank refusal where the System talked about the Law of Balance.

Of course, there was one more thing he managed to squeeze out, which was that had allowed him to accomplish his most immediate goal. It was the ability to kill Uona, who would definitely become a thorn in his side if left alone. The System had helped restrain the Glimpse of Chaos and removed some of the pressure on him for almost a minute, allowing him to catch up and take her out.

Without that, he would have been stuck, frozen in place until he unleashed the glimpse into the sky.

The gains were less than he had hoped for, but he knew he was ultimately not in the best position to haggle. There had been a Chaos Bomb brewing in his chest at the time, and he couldn't have been too convincing when threatening to hold it back. What was he going to do, explode and die out of spite?

But the exchange had once more proven just how much the System wanted these glimpses. It had adjusted the rewards of its own quest and even played the supporting role when taking out a Heaven's Chosen of an A-grade faction, just so that it could take a look at this corner of chaos.

Zac wouldn't be able to make use of that fact in the short run, but hopefully, he would be able to turn that into his advantage when he found more of those remnants. This time he had lost most of his potential gains because of cashing in early, using the System's hunger to survive that massive snake back in the chasm.

Next time, he would hold out for some treasure as well.

Still, it was a revelation of just how powerful the young elites of established factions were. Without the Shard of Creation paving the path, he would have died ten times over. Let alone Uona, Aia Ouro would have killed him before the vampire even had time to show up. Furthermore, even when using the cheat-like remnants and a berserking treasure he had found himself on the losing end against Uona.

The cost he had been forced to pay was shocking. Of course, that didn't mean his prospects were all that much worse compared to Uona's. There was still a lot of room for growth for him in the E-grade, be it levels, Dao, or skills. Meanwhile, Uona had to be at the stage where she prepared to form her Cultivator's Core.

Besides, while the cost had been steep, it wasn't like he was without benefits, and Zac found his gaze turn to the Spatial Ring that had previously belonged to the blood mistress. It was sealed by some unknown method, but it was bound to have a lot of good things, perhaps even materials that would be useful when forming his Cultivator's Core in the future. Her body was valuable as well, for a variety of reasons.

Verun was clearly keen on drinking her blood, to the point that the Tool Spirit had almost entered a frenzy when they fought earlier. Not only that, but her body had essentially turned into a lightning rod that filled her with Heavenly Lightning, which still lingered in her body. That energy had proven pretty useful for him before, and Zac would hopefully be able to extract it with [Void Heart] later.

Thinking of a dead person as a cultivation resource bordered on unorthodoxy, but he knew he had to grasp any opportunity that came his way as a mortal. Besides, how was this any different from raising his foes and turning them into members of his army? He had already gone pretty far in his pursuit of power. Also, it somehow felt justifiable in this case, considering Uona had called him cattle before.

There were other gains besides the loot as well, and Zac opened his Status screen.

Name

Zachary Atwood

Level

123

Class

[E-Epic] Fetters of Desolation

Race

[D] Draugr – Void Emperor (Corrupted)

Alignment

[Earth] Port Atwood – Planetary Lord

Titles

Born for Carnage, Ultimate Reaper, Luck of the Draw, Giantsbane, Disciple of David, Overpowered, Slayer of Leviathans, Adventurer, Demon Slayer I, Full of Class, Rarified Being, Trailblazer, Child of Dao,

The Big 500, Planetary Aegis, One Against Many, Butcher, Progenitor Noblesse, Duplicity Core, Apex Hunter, Heaven's Chosen, Scion of Dao, Omnidextrous, Eastern Trigram Hunt – 1st, Tyrannic Force, Achievement Hunter, The First Step, Promising Specialist, Tower of Eternity – 8th Floor, Heaven's Triumvirate, Fated, Peak Power, Sovereign-Select, Frontrunner, Apex Progenitor, Pathstrider, Runebinder, Runic Erudition, Grand Fate

Limited Titles

Tower of Eternity Sector All-Star – 14th, Weight of Sin, Equanimity, Heart of Fire, Big Axe Gladiator

Dao

Branch of the War Axe – Early, Fragment of the Coffin – Peak, Fragment of the Bodhi – Peak

Core

[E] Duplicity

Strength

11792 [Increase: 110%. Efficiency: 261%]

Dexterity

4772 [Increase: 80%. Efficiency: 187%]

Endurance

8114 [Increase: 101%. Efficiency: 250%]

Vitality

6615 [Increase: 89%. Efficiency: 238%]

Intelligence

1945 [Increase: 74%. Efficiency: 187%]

Wisdom

4036 [Increase: 81%. Efficiency: 197%]

Luck

514 [Increase: 96%. Efficiency: 208%]

Free Points

30

Nexus Coins

[D] 933 662

He had actually gained three full levels without trying, and without using the torrential amounts of kill energy that still filled his body. His mind was a bit fuzzy on the details, but one had been burst open when the four remnants clashed in his body. It had already been at the precipice of opening since long ago, and the rampant energies had pushed it over the edge.

Luckily, between the Supreme Healing Treasure and the [Stone of Hope], the damage wasn't too bad. The other two nodes had been opened with him barely noticing from the two streams of Chaos. Each tendril had infused a minuscule amount into a node of their own, and the nodes had simply been open the next moment, without as much as a pop or eruption.

It was a welcome surprise, but Zac was more interested in something else, and he opened the Bloodline Screen after allocating the 30 free points into Dexterity.

Bloodline

[E – Corrupted] Void Emperor

Talent

Force of the Void – 50%, Void Zone

Bloodline Nodes

[E]Void Heart, [E] Spiritual Void, [E] Purity of the Void

Nodes

[E] Quantum Gate

The two biggest gains were related to [Force of the Void] and [Quantum Gate]. The bit of Chaos that hadn't entered his nodes had been swallowed by his Bloodline, pushing it forward by a huge degree. His Bloodline Talent had been improved all the way to 50% in one go.

Unfortunately, he somewhat felt the small vortices in his cells had reached saturation. Zac couldn't be certain, but he guessed that he wouldn't be able to pass 50%, at least not without evolving the talents or his Bloodline.

The recently discovered node had finally appeared in his Draugr-form as well, and it looked like his previous theory had been correct. He had needed to infuse the Hidden Node with Oblivion on his undead side to complete it. He had no idea whether he was simply lucky that he had the Oblivion and Creation necessary for the formation, or whether any two opposing forces would do the trick.

However, as Zac looked at the small node at his sternum, he couldn't help but feel a bit confused. As far as he could tell, it didn't do anything. It didn't seem interested in swallowing any energy, and it didn't provide any attributes or abilities either. Zac hesitantly circulated a small stream of Miasma to pass by the node, but there was simply no response. It might as well have been a decoration.

Zac grimaced, wondering if it was really something meant to be used with the machinery of the Technocrats, rendering it useless for him. He wasn't ready to give up just yet, but now was not the time to experiment. Zac sighed as he closed the status screen and once more turned his gaze toward the sky.

The more pressing matter was what the hell he should do next.

The chaotic scars continued to spread across the sky, and he could sense that the atmosphere itself had started to become a bit volatile. He hadn't been lying when giving the Mystic Realm one hour before all hell broke loose. If anything, he had been underselling just how rapidly the Mystic Realm was deteriorating.

When the Chaos had been coursed through his pathways, he had somehow inherently understood what would happen next. The cracks would increase with exponential speed until the Mystic realm destabilized and collapsed. He and everyone else would be thrown out, perhaps into the void, perhaps into the Twilight Harbor where a bunch of Divine Monarchs waited.

He had absolutely no idea how things would play out at that point. Even surviving the realm exploding felt uncertain unless the System stepped in. And even if he did, he would still be in extreme peril. Things were bound to get extremely chaotic when the realm collapsed a year early, with Alvod and the other Monarchs struggling to seize whatever it was that could help them ascend.

Zac remembered the terrifying shockwaves when the Vordis A'Heliophos fought against the Collector and the Administrator inside the Mystic Realm back on Earth. Just some errant bursts of energy had been enough to maim him. As bad as that was, it was nothing compared what waited outside.

At least three Divine Monarchs were going all out to seize the chance at Autarchy, with even more Monarchs entering the fray to help out their side. Any errant strand of energy from such a struggle was enough to turn him to dust a hundred times over.

Zac sighed as he took out the communication crystal to Catheya and infused a small amount of Miasma into it as he held a Supreme Miasma Crystal in his free hand. The connection was opened almost instantly, indicating that she had probably been waiting for him to call.

"It's me," Zac said with a hoarse voice.

"Are you okay?" a worried voice emerged from the other side.

"A bit worse for the wear, but I'll survive," Zac grunted as his gaze shifted from the spatial ring where Uona's lifeless body was stowed away, to the fracturing sky above. "More importantly, you need to prepare yourself. Things got a bit out of hand, and the Mystic Realm will collapse in less than an hour."

Zac's mouth tugged upward as he could hear a muted groan on the other side.

"You said 'a little bit chaotic'," Catheya sighed, the exasperation so palpable it could be felt through the communication crystal. "I guess I should have understood we have very different definitions of what that entailed."