

## The Fall 802

### Chapter 802: Dao Manifested into Law

The System was often a bit annoying, but it had to be said that it was quite considerate when creating balanced classes. Just like his human side lacked a top-tier skill for survival, his undead side lacked a good finisher that frontloaded damage. [Pillar of Desolation] was a terrifyingly powerful skill, but not only did it cost more than half of his Miasma, but it even required some Oblivion Energy to activate.

Meanwhile, [Blighted Cut] was technically a finisher, but it required a few steps to set up. It was also quite cheap, with its finisher being even below [Rapturous Divide] in raw damage output. Of course, if hit by that dismantling skill while inside [Deathmark], you'd be flooded with corrosive damage, making your remaining life short and painful.

Zac hoped [Desperation's End] was a powerful skill like [Arcadia's Judgement], where he could make use of his Void Energy to instantly overwhelm and execute difficult opponents. That way he'd be able to better make use of his bloodline in his Draugr-form as well. As for extinguishing souls, Zac wasn't quite certain what that meant. It sounded like simple slaughter, but he would have to visit the wilderness to make sure.

Seeing as it was a quest for an Epic class, there might be some trick to it rather than simply slaughtering a bunch of animals.

A wisp of Zac's consciousness entered the small token he got from Murbot, and it listed his current Contribution as [11,584]. Some quick math confirmed what Zac had hoped; pushing both his levels to 125 had netted him 376 Contribution Points, an exact match to his gain in raw attributes. In other words, he gained Contribution Points for leveling both his races, making leveling more lucrative than for other people.

Together with his saved-up points, he had more than enough for the node-finding treasure and traveling the Orom for a while. He would first return to Samsara's Edge and hopefully purchase the Bloodline Treasure, after which it was time for him to start exploring the Orom World.

Some pieces of the puzzle to his escape were in place, but others were missing. He was able to use his skills and energy just fine, and swapping between races hadn't agitated the prison brand. He essentially had his whole arsenal available, and now he needed to turn all these tools into a way to break out.

The main issue was that space was sealed in the whole Orom World, so he would either need to use his abilities to escape the inner world or find a weak spot where the Teleportation Array could be taken out and activated. The Orom World had clearly marked edges, and perhaps it was possible to sneak into its actual body somehow.

So, he planned on traveling to the edge of the Orom in search of solutions. Luckily, these kinds of actions weren't considered anything unusual, and he didn't even need to cover up his activities. A lot of cultivators from his cohort had probably done the same thing already. Even those who had quickly adapted would often reach a point where reality set in, and they'd rail against their imprisonment.

If all that failed, he had one final backup plan, though it would delay him at least another year, possibly more. With his twice-reincarnated soul, he would be able to store a whole lot of Oblivion Energy, to the

point he would be able to create a terrifying crack in space. One large enough he would be able to sneak through.

If even that failed... Zac shook his head, not ready to even entertain that outcome.

Before setting out, Zac collected all the array flags and other items he had left across the island before erasing any traces of habitation. It wasn't like he needed to hide his soul cultivation, but he also didn't need to raise any unnecessary questions like 'why would someone cultivate in a place like this?'. Besides, he was done with this place for now, having accomplished his goal.

If he needed this place again, he could always set it again, though that would mean his plans had gone awry.

Zac set off along the now-familiar paths toward the settlement, and he was relieved to feel that he was essentially in perfect condition even though he had opened two nodes. It was thanks to the prisoner brand. It drastically limited his power output, but that also helped serve as a protection. In other words, gaining levels in this place wouldn't slow him down at all unless he overdid things.

He reached Samsara's Edge three days later, and he was surprised to see the town still full of hustle and bustle even after more than two weeks had passed. He guessed that the warriors who stayed behind took the opportunity to destress before consuming whatever treasures they had bought.

Many had probably been secluded for decades, perhaps even centuries, and were in dire need of some R&R. Besides, the next culling was in over twenty years for Hegemons, and 270 years for Monarchs. They weren't exactly running out of time.

A few of the cultivators recognized Zac and waved him over, which resulted in him making some new acquaintances. When asked why he had returned so quickly, he told the truth after some consideration. He had managed to break through with his Soul, providing him with a windfall of Purchase Points.

It was a bit unnerving to be so candid after having been introduced to the Dao of Paranoia by Ogras, but sometimes you had to give a bit to gain something in return. The more potential he exhibited, the better his reception would be among these powerhouses. That, in turn, could open up all kinds of doors for him in the future.

"Youngster!" a distorted voice drew Zac's attention as he closed in on the Contribution Store, and he looked over to see a radiant energy being in the distance.

It was something akin to a Life Elemental that Zac had spoken with while waiting for the store to open last time. Its true name was unpronounceable, but people called it Ubo. The elemental looked a bit like a spectral cultivator drenched in gold, but it was actually a semi-corporeal species. The large shimmering rock in its belly was its true core, but the shimmering body that it had formed was real enough to carry items and even consume food.

Zac immediately walked over with a smile on his face. Not only was Ubo a Monarch and a gold attendant, but there was someone familiar standing next to it; the half-tree woman he met while crossing the forest two months back.

"Hello, again," Zac smiled before turning to the semi-tree. "I hope your experiment was a success."

“Oh, you know Heda?” Ubo exclaimed with surprise. “She rarely leaves her little plot of land.”

“I watched him dance,” the woman smiled before she looked strangely at Zac. “I have been thinking of you.”

“Uh... Alright?” Zac hesitantly said.

“Don’t mind her,” Ubo coughed. “For some reason, she decided to fuse her soul with an unknown seed the Orom picked up a few dozen millennia ago. She hasn’t quite been herself since.”

“It worked,” Heda shrugged. “I would have been culled if I didn’t try something new.”

“Is having your soul subverted that much better than simply dying?” Ubo muttered before they turned to Zac. “So, what are you up to, youngster? Your life energy is quite vibrant. I guess you are below 50 years of age, no? Having trouble acclimatizing to the repose of reclusive cultivation?”

“Something like that,” Zac smiled. “I thought I would tour the Orom World for a bit. I’m still finding my way, and there are so many things to draw inspiration from.”

“Taking inspiration is fine, but be careful to not get swept up in someone else’s path,” Ubo urged as a token flashed into being. “I will not enter true seclusion for another ten years or so. If you’re interested, you’re welcome to visit my abode. I was born from a sanctified rock and instilled with untainted life since my mind’s eye first gazed upon the world. My experiences might be of use to you.”

“Absolutely,” Zac nodded as he stowed away the marker. “Thank you.”

“Me too,” Heda said as a wooden plaque sprouted and detached itself from her left hand. “There is death in your life. Perhaps, we can inspire each other.”

“I’ll try to make it,” Zac slowly nodded.

With these two, he had gathered almost twenty markers. They were essentially invitation tokens that not only acted as maps to people’s cultivation caves, but they were also markers and messages to the outside world in case someone managed to leave.

It was a simple form of quid pro quo in this place, where people exchanged cultivation lessons for hope. These two cultivators were the first Monarchs he had received an invitation from though, making them even more valuable.

These two were not quite as powerful as Yrial in his heyday, but they were not just fragments of a soul. Just a few simple instructions could help a lot. Zac was almost disgustingly powerful for his level, but that didn’t mean there wasn’t a lot that he could learn, even from Hegemons. No matter if it was their experiences in breaking bottlenecks or their pursuit of the Dao, they had walked far further down the road than he had.

Zac could freely enter the contribution store by this point, but he still had to wait for an hour before a disk became available. A few minutes later he emerged decidedly poorer, but with the treasure securely stowed away in his Cosmos Sack. Apart from the [Seed of Eldritch Awakening], as the node-finding treasure was called, Zac also spent over 4,000 points on a series of items.

Items geared toward E-grade cultivators were dirt-cheap, so he managed to purchase treasures that could improve his constitution and soul, longevity-boosting items, and top-quality Attribute Fruits and Dao Treasures. He still had roughly 1,500 points to spare, but there was nothing else he urgently needed in the Store, and nothing he feared would go out of stock if he didn't buy immediately.

Rather, Zac believed he was better off renting some of the high-quality cultivation grounds with his remaining points unless he found an exit quicker than expected. Those places could help with everything from his skill fusions to helping him comprehend his Dao and stances at an accelerated pace.

If he managed to escape ahead of schedule, he would simply have to give up on those 1,500 points, which wasn't a big deal compared to his vast fortune.

There wasn't anything else left to do, so Zac walked over to the transport hub and teleported over to Glimmerwood. The Orom World was shaped like an oblong circle, with the wilderness commanding one of the short sides. Closest to the other edge, and the Orom's head according to speculation, Glimmerwood was situated.

Zac figured he'd check out the space-attributed zones and the edge of the Orom World first, working his way down as he looked for weaknesses to exploit.

As luck would have it, Zac ran into a familiar face, the old man who had helped him a bit when they first arrived. He was currently drinking with two others he didn't recognize. But judging by their auras, they should all follow the Dao of Stars. Perhaps they were others from the Radiant Temple who had been captured as well.

Zac only stayed behind to talk for a few minutes before he left with three more tokens. It turned out the old man was called Travo Raso, and he was some sort of fixer for the Radiant Temple. For example, if some minor clan didn't pay their taxes or hid a promising talent, Travo went there to see what was going on.

Such activities were a bit beneath the officials of the Radiant Temples, so they preferred to use outside experts like Travo to make sure the money and young talents kept coming. Certainly, with Travo's apparent talent, he would easily have been able to enter as a proper member of the Radiant Temple. However, he had enjoyed the freedom too much to become a proper enforcer.

More importantly, Travo had enjoyed the huge number of bribes that kept coming his way in return for looking the other way when people shirked their responsibilities.

From Glimmerwood, Zac headed west, aiming to reach the tip of the Orom Word. The surroundings of Glimmerwood were quite different compared to the other zones he had passed through so far. For one, the sky was black, though the area was illuminated by numerous constellations that kept changing.

Apparently, the sky contained the echoes of the Orom's own understanding of the Dao of Space and the Stars. There were innumerable such truths hidden all across the Orom World. It was all designed to subtly influence the captives' paths, thus increasing the likelihood of them generating useful insights.

Those at the top could see through it, but for an E-grade cultivator like Zac, it was simply impossible. Thankfully for him, the way he gained insights was pretty weird. He could look at the Orom's Sky for a

million years without forming any Dao Branches unless he was absorbing some Dao Treasures. With zero affinities, a sky was just a sky.

Right outside Glimmerwood's area of influence stood a forest full of luminescent plants that stretched for a day's travel. Zac encountered several warded-off cultivation caves among the trees, but he didn't encounter anyone as he took a long berth around. Eventually, the trees grew sparse as the forest was replaced by a mountainous region.

It didn't feel like the mountains were natural formations, though Zac figured that might be a result of how the Orom World was created. There was no rain or strong winds in the Orom World, except in the elemental zones, and this particular section neither had seasons or a daily cycle. It would be odd if the stones were whittled down in such a place.

Instead, the mountain walls were covered in extremely sharp cuts and it almost looked like a laser had shaved off some sections. With the spatial fluctuations emanating from within, it was obviously the work of the Dao of Space. The area was rife with spatial energies, but Zac frowned when he realized it wasn't a good thing in this case.

Just like temporal energy could both slow down and speed up time, spatial energy could both weaken and strengthen the laws of space. In this area, Zac suspected it was the latter, making the seal even stronger. Wanting to try something out, Zac found a secluded spot where he activated [Earthstrider] with some Void Energy.

As expected, he was met with strong resistance, and he only moved a fifth of the distance compared to what he expected. It felt like pushing through quicksand, proving the spatial energies were working against him. Trying to tear open space in this area would be extremely difficult.

Zac still continued toward the edge of the world, but even after two weeks, he was unable to find a single spatial tear. Not that he had held expected much. If random tears popped up in the area, people would definitely try to escape through them, just like how desperate captives in the research base did.

Eventually, Zac crossed the final mountain between him and the edge, and his brows rose when he saw over twenty people already standing there. The atmosphere was pretty oppressive, but Zac still walked over. A few glanced in his direction, but most were seemingly lost in their thoughts.

"Trying your luck as well, kid?" a sigh echoed out, and Zac looked over to see a familiar face. It was one of the Havarok warriors who had been dragged here in the same cohort as himself.

"No good, huh?" Zac grimaced.

"See for yourself," the man said with a wave.

Zac nodded curiously as he continued past the group. One moment, his vision was filled with expansive vistas that stretched to eternity, but the scene grew blurred as he kept going. A moment later, he reached a shimmering haze that looked like a purple nebula. This was the true edge of the Orom World.

He hesitated for a moment, wondering if he would be committing a crime if trying to pass through the barrier. However, a Revenant suddenly popped out next to him, swearing like a sailor as he walked back toward the others. Zac wasn't planning on using his hidden cards in front of an audience, but he still entered to get a sense of what he was dealing with.

A moment later, he emerged again, looking at the spot where he came from with confusion. Just like in the City of Ancients, he had been redirected without noticing. However, while the thick haze in the City of Ancients had been the result of some intricate illusion arrays, Zac's instincts told him that the edge of the Orom World was rather the result of high-grade spatial laws.

His mind wasn't tricked to turn around, but space was rather folded in some way, where all directions were steered back toward the Orom World. Zac sighed and walked back to the group, and his suspicions were confirmed soon enough.

"How could people possibly have broken out from this place before?" the Revenant swore. "This isn't a barrier. This is Dao manifested into law. To break through, you'd need to overpower it. But how could we accomplish that without having confirmed our Dao?"