

The Fall 393

Chapter 393: Last Day

Zac woke up early the next day and got ready to head out after training a bit more with [Cyclic Strike]. Unfortunately it seemed that the small progress he had attained in the skill over the past weeks had been completely erased after gaining the Fragment of the Coffin. The Fragment completely overpowered the Seed of Trees, making it impossible to maintain a balance.

He could only pause his practice until he gained his final Fragment as well.

At least he could confirm that the odd Dao Fragment worked with his new shield, perhaps even better than the Dao of Hardness did. Hopefully that meant that his Undying Bulwark class would still work as intended.

It was also a decent indicator that Fragment of the Coffin was a Defensive Dao as well, meaning his final skill quest was also most likely completed. He didn't dare change into his Draugr-form to make sure though as he was still in the Base town. He would be stuck in his undead form for roughly an hour after shifting which might cause unintended problems. But he was heading for the Tower soon enough, and there would be ample time to go over things in there.

Today was the last day before entering the tower, so getting the additional fragment ahead of time was a huge boon. Zac and Ogras had already decided upon what to do. They would visit the weekly auction once more in hopes of finding anything of value. It was their last shot before returning to Earth where they were limited to Calrin's selection once again.

No matter the results of the auction they would immediately enter the Tower afterward. They would spend one day inside, leaving one day afterward for networking. Provided that Zac managed to reach a floor high enough to warrant the attention of the larger forces, that is. In either case, they would have to return to Earth since their ten days were up.

The auction was pretty similar to the first one, though on the second-to-last segment an item that piqued Zac's interest appeared. It was simply called a [Heaven's Secrets Array] and was said to upgrade Nexus Nodes.

"What is this?" Zac asked Ogras, but the demon shrugged with confusion as well.

"It's normally called an [Information array], but perhaps this is a special variant," Galau said, not showing too much interest. "It acts as a substitute if you're unable to upgrade your Nexus Node for your town."

"Upgrade the Node?" Zac asked with interest. "What does it do?"

"At the lowest level a Nexus Node doesn't provide almost any information about the skills it sells or details about Class Choices. But if you manage to upgrade the status of your force then all its nodes will be more helpful. This Array gives that kind of effect as well, but only to one Node," Galau explained.

"Buy it," Ogras said without hesitation.

"What kind of information?" Zac asked with interest, also pretty interested in purchasing it. "Does it provide better Classes?"

"No, it can't help there. But it gives information about the type of classes, their main attributes and things like that. It's doesn't display everything, but enough to get a better idea of what the classes represent. It is a bit hard sometimes to understand the description after all," Galau shrugged.

"Is it rare?" Zac asked, completely agreeing with Galau's assessment of the cryptic descriptions of the Class choices.

"I guess these things are slightly rare, but it's still not too valuable," Galau said. "Most people that visit this place are from forces that have upgraded their crystals the normal way and have no need for it. It's meant for weaker and newly established forces as a stopgap until they get the real thing."

Zac was immediately interested, and he would make sure to buy that thing unless its price got out of hand. It would help him to choose a class better in line with his goals.

"Next up is the [Heaven's Secrets Array]. I know what many of you are thinking; 'Isn't this just an Information Array?' Truth be told, the array itself is just that, but this specific array is still a bit special. It was crafted by a cultivator adept on the path of Karma, which has given the array a slightly mysterious effect."

The auctioneer saw that he had managed to catch the attention of quite a few people, and he continued with a bombastic voice.

"It not only provides the benefits of an Information array, but it even gives small Karmic hints of which choices might be best for you. It would be a marvelous opportunity for the youths of your factions who are unsure what path to pick for themselves," the man said.

Zac was a bit disappointed in the extra function, as that wasn't something he needed for himself. He only had two options at the moment, and he wasn't so sure it would expand all that much even with his new seeds. Besides, he had already had a high enough Luck stat that his gut feeling was at least as effective as some small Karmic infusion into the array.

He had rather hoped that it would contain some hacking function that would give access to better structures in the Town Shop or better Classes, but he wasn't that lucky. Still, it would be an item that would prove greatly beneficial for Port Atwood, especially since the system was so new for everyone. Most established forces followed heritages to choose their classes, but this was a great option for his people.

The price on the screen immediately jumped up to 200 million nexus coins, but the bidding already slowed down after 300. It clearly wasn't a too valued, and Zac finally snatched it for the price of 380 Million Nexus coins. This was one of the types of items that might be very valuable on the outside, but here it went for a discount since people were more interested in items that could help them climb further.

Soon enough they reached the final segment, but Zac didn't found anything else he wanted. The treasures were extremely good, but they were either too expensive or not things that weren't suited for himself. A set of six small Spirit Tool axes appeared that Zac felt would be perfect for Emily, but they ended up with a price-tag of 3 billion, quickly forcing Zac out of the bidding.

Soon enough they reached the final item, and it wasn't something that Zac could recognize either.

“Our final item in today’s Auction is something that might only enter our halls once every few years. It is the crystallized eye of a Pathfinder Oracle,” the Auctioneer said before he paused for dramatic effect.

Zac, along with a lot of other people looked extremely confused, but a low susurrus could be heard from the platforms up in the air.

“This mythical creature has long been hunted to extinction due to its marvelous nature, but now and then a lucky hunter can find its crystalized remains in various Mystic Realms. Legend states that the Pathfinder Oracles could see the truths of the universe, which turned their whole bodies into a treasure for almost any field,” the auctioneer kept going.

“The eye of an oracle is the second most valuable part, with only its core superseding it. It can be used for a wide array of purposes. Almost any Spirit Tool would gain a great boost to spirituality from consuming it, and it can be used to upgrade most basic Specialty Cores. You can even plant it in your cultivation cave, and it will start attracting Origin Dao. It is truly one of the few treasures that almost any genius could make use of.”

Zac had only halfheartedly listened to the Auctioneer’s efforts to upsell his final item, but he soon showed full attention to the proceedings. Being able to upgrade the spirituality of a Spirit Tool was pretty amazing, but his axe had already awoken due to that mysterious rock. He was far more interested in the second effect. That large eye could upgrade almost any Specialty core?

Wasn’t this exactly what he needed for his Duplicity core?

“Is this thing real?” Zac asked with a hushed tone to Galau who looked at the scene with wide eyes.

“I can’t believe such a good thing was put up for auction,” the squirrely man said with shock. “The seller must be desperate for cash.”

That was all the confirmation Zac needed. It truly possessed the capabilities that were advertised, and Zac immediately got ready for a heated Auction. This was already the last item, so it looked like he would need to find a solution for Alea somewhere else than here. But if he bought this thing he would at least be able to accomplish one of his goals for coming here.

But the auctioneer’s next words were like a cold shower, quickly waking him up to reality.

“Opening bid is 5 000 E-Grade Nexus coins. The seller is also willing to accept payment in Attuned Nexus Crystals at market rate.”

Five thousand E-Grade Nexus Coins was equivalent to 5 billion Nexus Coins, which was almost all the money that Zac had brought to the Tower. Worse yet, he had already spent a decent chunk on his shield and various other items. Even if he included the 3 billion from Galau he was just above 6 billion at the moment, and it felt very uncertain that would be enough.

His thoughts of borrowing money from Ogras and Galau were soon moot as the price rose with shocking speed. This time there was no one placing open bids, but the number on the screen rose as the auctioneer kept screaming out the current price.

“12 000!” the Auctioneer exclaimed with glee, “An- Wait! 14 000! 22 000!”

Zac's eyes widened in shock at seeing the price, and he couldn't help but inwardly mock himself for thinking he had a chance at that item. The price landed at almost 80 billion nexus coins, which elicited a small round of applause. Yet no one openly admitted to buying it, perhaps to avoid getting robbed. The eye was truly an item that someone might risk everything to snatch.

Even Ogras looked a bit shocked at the price. That was a huge amount of money even for a small D-Grade force. They might certainly have it, but using it on a consumable item that could only benefit one junior was likely way out of their budget. Such expenditures could only be used on safer investments, such as allowing one of their ancestors to progress a step forward.

This only became more apparent when the System apparently didn't spoonfeed powerhouses Nexus Coins from kills at higher levels. Zac had been shocked when learned of it, but Ogras explained it with the fact that anything E-Grade warriors and higher killed were worth a lot of money by itself. The System didn't feel it necessary to reach into its own pockets to supplement the income.

It was a small relief to Zac since he had initially been afraid that the stronger forces could earn hundreds of billions of nexus coins in a day by going out into the woods and killing a few beasts. But reality showed that it didn't rise that dramatically. Stronger forces could still earn shocking wealth in short times by going out hunting, but not to the degree that Zac feared.

None of this helped Zac though, and he could only wistfully sigh as the Eye went to the unnamed moneybags. The auction had concluded, and Zac was in no mood to stay on for the following festivities.

Their second visit to the Naspheyi Auction was the final thing on their agenda, and Zac couldn't help but despair a bit when he realized they hadn't accomplished a single one of their goals. He was still without any cure for Alea, and his chance at evolving his Duplicity core had slipped through his fingers due to his apparent abject poverty.

An ember of anger ignited in his mind, no doubt fanned on by the splinter. It had already gotten restless after days of Zac's inactivity and tried to instigate something. So Zac was a bit muddled as they walked toward the Tower as he needed to spend some of his energy to suppress his violent tendencies.

It was getting late but there was no point in returning to their courtyard. They had ample time to rest inside the Tower. They had bought everything they needed, and Zac was unwilling to waste his accrued wealth on anything else at the moment. He felt tired of the whole Base Town and wanted to get on with the challenge already.

The buildings got increasingly grander as they walked down one of the main roads leading toward the immense tower that blotted out half the sky. Soon enough the massive surface of the Tower of Eternity filled up half his vision, a massive block of white that pushed the blue sky to the sides. Even the grand towers and mansions they passed felt like small doll-houses compared to the impossibly large structure.

But even though the structures got larger and more refined, the number of people on the streets were generally decreasing.

Most people stayed at the middle and outer edges of the town since the risk of running into someone dangerous increased the closer you got to the tower itself. There always some who went to the central square to look for carries or just to take in the sights, but people rarely lingered in the area unless they had the power to back it up.

After an hourlong walk they finally reached the Core Area, the solitary row of extraordinary structures placed in a semi-circle around the entrance to the Tower itself. Each structure was as large as a town by itself, and inside the most powerful forces in their star sector resided.