

The Fall 408

Chapter 408: Creation

A warrior drenched in blood swung his intimidating two-handed axe, causing a wave of destruction to ripple outward. The attack created cascading explosions that cleared out a large swathe of rabid rats that tried to drown a town. There were millions and millions of them, but the axe warrior stoically took down one swarm after another.

The vision changed to a wiry warrior with two jagged hatchets who created blur with his frenzied swings in the arena. The swordsman desperately blocked one strike after another, but he was soon drowned in the avalanche of attacks. One of the hatchets snuck behind the guard and cut off the swordsman's arm, and from there the result was a foregone conclusion. The arena erupted in cheers as the Hatchetman held a decapitated head in the air triumphantly.

A man donning a gentle expression sat beneath a tree in a glade, carving an intricate figurine with the sharp tip at the edge of a grisly war axe. One could have thought he used a small engraving knife judging by the intricate details of the wood carving. But a snap of the twig brought the man out from his reverie, and he looked up to see a group of beasts encroaching on his domain. The congenial face was instantly swapped with one of fury, and the axe started to drip with blood as he lifted it toward its targets.

The warlord laughed maniacally as she decapitated one warrior after another with a swing of her axe. She had some time ago forgotten how to use a shield as she was consumed by her bloodlust, and she instead used it to cave in skulls or break bones. Her axe keened with its master's glee, and the two created a song of madness and fury as they roved the battlefield together.

One scene after another flashed past Zac's eyes, showing all kinds of axe-wielding warriors in the midst of battle. Some relied on raw strength while others on speed as they launched furious swings at their enemies.

Some had fused their axework with various elements, often ones rife with destruction. Flames and blood were common traits, as were wind. But one of the more powerful warriors shown actually seemed to use insight into the Dao of Space as his swings could pass right through a mountain to hit the target hiding on the other side.

There were also some unexpected usages of the axe. One vision showed a man wielding what looked like a halberd like it was a massive paintbrush, and he drew large fractals in the air with the weave of his weapon that unleashed massive attacks. Another one used hundreds of small flying axes that rapidly spun around him like a swarm of angry wasps.

There was a clear inclination toward certain types of elements and styles of battle though, which Zac felt made sense as not all Dao fit equally well with the characteristics of an axe. Some had created successful systems that stood out from the norm, but most followed the pattern of a blood-soaked warrior, just like himself.

However, Zac started to frown when he didn't sense any insights coming from the barrage of visions. He was starting to wake up and it was usually at this point that he would incorporate the visions into his Dao, pushing it one step further. There was no resonance and no Dao Stars descending on him to push his fragment to middle grade. It was almost like he had just watched an action movie.

It was cool, but it didn't connect to him on a deeper level. Zac kept trying to grasp onto something to spark an epiphany, but he reluctantly had to give up after an hour after the vision ended. He looked up with a frown, unsure what had gone wrong.

Was it because of the Tower?

He had already known since the start that improving one's Dao within the tower was pretty much impossible. Time dilation cut one's connection to the 'heavens' as Ogras explained it, and Zac immediately understood what he meant after his first real battle.

There was usually a resonance to his actions when he fought, like his moves and attacks contained a deeper truth. But that was completely missing inside the tower. The Daos still worked just fine, but everything felt hollow for lack of a better word. This didn't affect the strength of the Daos or his skills, but it was simply impossible to move his Dao Fragments forward this way.

It was so bad that he was even pretty sure that he wouldn't be able to gain anything after exiting the Tower. He had initially thought he could fight a couple of harsh battles inside the Tower, and then ponder on the fights outside. But he had already realized that this was likely a fool's dream.

There were no sparks of insight born through battle in the tower, and the Dao was clouded for him. And perhaps this was what had ruined his vision bestowed from his class. Had he missed the opportunity to push one his Dao Fragments to middle grade because he had pushed one of his Skills to the Peak while inside the tower?

It would be extremely frustrating if that was the case, but Zac had some reason to believe that there was something else in play. Ogras had already said that you could benefit from things such as Dao Treasures while inside the tower, even though the effect was worse than outside. The Treasure itself contained Origin Dao, which allowed him to move his Dao Seeds forward even inside the time chamber provided he had the necessary insights to match.

It should have worked the same way with the Vision, as it was an epiphany brought by his class. But there was not even a hint of pushing his Dao forward, which made Zac a bit suspicious there was another possibility. What if it wasn't a Dao vision?

The skill [Axe Mastery] was essentially a basic training skill that would allow him to gain a fundamental understanding of his weapon, and reaching the peak meant that he had completed the basic training course. But that didn't mean he had mastered the art of the axe.

He was still just a beginner, a brute who fought more with his attributes than any sort of mastery of his weapon. What if the vision was a way for him to gain inspiration as to how to move forward from his basic mastery. It showed him various masters who had forged their respective paths with the axe, opening a world of possibilities for him.

That might have been the first step in attaining the Fragment of the Axe if one followed the normal proceedings. He would first master [Axe Mastery], and from the vision gain inspiration on how to improve his combat further. That would eventually lead to an insight that could form a Dao Fragment. But he had skipped this normal path due to his access to all the Origin Dao on Earth and the Dao Funnel.

Or perhaps he was simply deluding himself to make himself feel better, Zac thought with a sigh. But he felt he wasn't all that far off from the mark with his guess. He would have heard about a second vision by now if there was such a thing as the Mastery-skills were extremely common.

He wasn't in any mood to ponder on his Daos or the Vision any longer in either case, and he instead took out one of his information packets instead. He perused them a little whenever he was free or when he needed to clear his head. This time he once again looked at the package that broached the subject of Arcane Classes.

The restrictions for attaining an Arcane class still felt distant even after gaining his Second Dao Fragment due to the lucky encounter with the calamitous Lotus. The most basic requirement was a Medium Mastery Dao Fragment, but that was just the start.

Zac had until recently felt that achievements wouldn't be a bottleneck for someone like him. He had achieved almost the impossible by rising up as a terrifying Progenitor who had snatched up most of the titles on Earth. Not only that, he somehow had gained dual races and classes, pushing his power and attributes to shocking levels.

Those advantages had snowballed into a list of achievements that would probably even shock the scions of the powerful clans in the Base Town. How many would be able to close multiple incursions in a week, while fighting all alone?

However, Zac had been thinking about achievements too shallowly. The most important facet of gaining the fabled rank of an Arcane Master is not defeating strong enemies or accumulating a large number of titles. It is about creation, about a spark of genius that opens up new avenues.

Zac grimaced when he reread the snippet from the information package he bought the other day. This seemingly innocuous paragraph almost felt like it was targeted right at him. It would appear that the largest bottleneck to gain an arcane class wouldn't be his Dao Fragments, but rather this part.

What is creation? It is about leading rather than following, a desire to push boundaries further and reach a higher sky. If you simply follow a Heritage to get stronger you have likely already failed. Each Arcane Master is unique, a genius across the eons.

How can one reach the peak by mindlessly following others?

The words resonated deeply with Zac, and he was doubly thankful that he had come to the Tower in the end.

Until now he'd kept moving forward with a reactive mindset. He had been thrown into this messy reality unwillingly and had tried to make the best of the situation one decision at a time. He had tried to be proactive when he chose his Undying Bulwark Class, but his lack of knowledge had still made it backfire a bit.

He was still pretty sure it was mostly fine though, as it was obvious that he could steer the class in other directions more suited for his cultivation path.

It was only after meeting Yrial he got a proper cultivation path and started to think about cultivation from a long-term perspective as well. But even then he simply followed Yrial's path and modified it for

his two classes. His master had walked the path of a cycle, and Zac followed in tow without thinking too deeply about it.

That wasn't to say that his path of life and death was bad. He still felt it was the by far best option considering his unique situation. But was there really a need to create a cyclic change as Yrial did with fire and ice?

He needed to figure out something that would be perfect for himself if he wanted to have a shot at an Arcane class. Or was the path he had devised already good enough to be considered a 'creation' as the information packet described? Zac's instincts told him that wasn't the case.

But try as he might, Zac couldn't just conjure a unique path out of thin air. His foundations were too shallow for something like this. Perhaps the old Abbot could do it as he was obviously a great genius in the Dao of Karma, but Zac wasn't talented in that way. He could only pray that getting pushed to the limits over the following months inside the Tower would open a path for him, something great enough in the System's eyes.

For now, he would focus on what he could do. His skills were the most obvious apart from getting better acquainted with his Daos. He opened up his skill window the first time in a while to take a look.

Normal Skills

Proficiency

Description

Inquisitive Eye

Early

See through their secrets. Upgradeable

Book of Babel

-

Enlightenment through understanding.

Mental Fortress

Late

Enduring Stability. Upgradeable

Thousand Faces

-

If you hate who you are, change it. Upgradeable

Nature's Barrier

Late

Brave thousand storms with Gaia's protection. Upgradeable

Beauty Yrial's Great Transformation Skill

-

If only this skill could fix your face as well.

Class Skills

Proficiency

Description

Axe Mastery

Peak

The seed of Dao is planted. Upgradeable.

Chop

Peak

There is greatness in simplicity.

Forester's Constitution

Middle

Man and Nature, one entity. Upgradeable.

Loamwalker

Late

Trod the unbroken path. Upgradeable.

Nature's Punishment

Peak

Awaken the wrath of the world. Upgradeable.

Hatchetman's Rage

Late

Burn with the vengeance of a forest fire. Upgradeable.

Deforestation

Middle

Their army is the forest and you are the Hatchetman. Upgradeable

Hatchetman's Spirit

Early

Oneness with nature. Upgradeable.

He had to admit his success was pretty varied and random. He was still only on Middle proficiency at [Forester's Constitution], but he had already reached Peak with [Nature's Punishment]. Meanwhile, [Cyclic Strike] wasn't even added to the list because he hadn't even reached early proficiency yet.

Zac had also been shocked to see that Hatchetman's Rage had skipped Middle proficiency entirely to jump to late-stage after his rage-out at the Zethaya Pill House.

It seemed that his Splinter had greatly assisted him in his skills related to anger, as many of his recent gains had come from the Splinter pushing his rage to new levels. First, it was witnessing Alea falling in battle, and then it was the battle in Base Town.

Even Deforestation had jumped one grade, which had to be considered a great speed of advancement since he had only used the skill a handful of times.

It was great that the splinter also provided some benefits, but made him slightly leery. He didn't want to rely too much on anger when fighting, even though it boosted his strength. But rampaging was what beasts did, and Zac didn't want to prove Ogras right by turning into an actual Netherbeast. He felt he had at least a decent head on his set of shoulders, and he should try to apply it to his fighting.

Or was he better off leaning into the anger?