

The Fall 522

Chapter 522: The Abyss and Arcadia

The massive eagles soared ever closer, but Zac didn't panic as he opened his skill menu while fleeing from the flock. He had already looked at the description, but he wanted to use it as a clue to what might be the problem.

[E] Rapturous Divide - Proficiency: Early. Between the Abyss and Arcadia is an endless chasm. Upgradeable.

The [E] in front of the skill was unique, as the other skills were without any tag. However, that wasn't important right now, but rather finding out why he couldn't use the skill. His eyes bore into the text like he was trying to see any hidden truths behind them, and his mind furiously worked to put together the clues so far.

"Split life and death...The Abyss and Arcadia," Zac muttered with a frown as he tried to understand the fractal, and something suddenly clicked.

He quickly pushed Cosmic Energy into [Chop] as well, and a terrifyingly large fractal blade grew out from [Verun's Bite]. He was still only able to maintain a stable edge that was around 10 meters, whereas anything larger would start to destabilize after a few seconds.

However, a change quickly spread out through the blade as a powerful twinned surge of energy shot into the fractal edge from his left arm. The shaky blade immediately stabilized before it started to transform. The blade grew even larger and more robust as a new set of overlapping fractals covered its length, one golden and one black.

Zac felt a completely new connection to the blade like it was part of himself, and he finally understood what his new skill would do. He infused the massive edge with the Fragment of the Coffin before he swung it in a wide horizontal arc toward the hundreds of enormous eagles that were still bearing down on them.

The evasive maneuvers while he tried to figure out his skills had incited blood-lust in the flock, and their eyes shone with a sinister light as they flapped their wings with enough force to cause a storm. The fractal edge didn't shot toward the beasts like how [Chop] usually worked, but a black wave instead spread out from it as the edge itself turned into a lustrous gold.

The wave was extremely swift, and it covered a large number of the eagles before they even had a chance to react.

However, there was no scene of carnage that followed the swing. A few eagles screamed in pain as they were assaulted by the corrosive components of the Fragment of the Coffin, but there was blood raining the mountain walls this time. The eagles were instead shrouded in darkness, like Zac had thrown a can of black paint rather than a ferocious attack at them.

The odd scene wasn't surprising to Zac, as he had only set up the first half of the attack. The air screamed as he swung the golden fractal edge once more, and another wave shot out, this one looking like a wave of sunlight breaking through the clouds. The fractal edge still stayed attached to [Verun's Bite], but it crumbled shortly after the second wave had left it.

The golden wave passed through the flock of birds as well, and a shocking change occurred. A clear line ran straight across the flock, with the upper side only holding the golden sheen, and the lower side drenched in darkness. It reminded Zac of his bout of inspiration inside his cultivation cave where he split the two conflicting energies apart, though on a far grander scale.

The odd scene only lasted for an instant before the horizon cracked, the dividing line between gold and black turning into a crack in space itself. Two opposite shockwaves spread out, one toward the sky and one toward the ground. Hundreds of birds fell apart mid-flight, looking like they had been cut apart by a laser.

The two shockwaves caused a cascading halo to emerge on the horizon, and Zac froze in awe as he looked at the spectacle. The golden wave had turned into what looked like a massive sunset that spread for over a hundred meters. Even more amazing, Zac felt like he could hear Buddhist hymns coming from a paradise he could barely discern through the golden haze.

The golden sun was matched by a black opposite, the two halves forming an almost perfect circle. The hair on Zac's arms stood on end as he turned his attention to the darker half, feeling like he was looking at the netherworld itself. Distant wails of lost soul rattled in his mind, and Zac felt like someone or something was staring back at him from within the darkness.

The effect only lasted for a few seconds before it dissipated, leaving a sky clear of any aggressive birds. The attack hadn't hit every eagle, but it looked like a couple of them had been swallowed by half-suns, not even leaving a corpse like their bisected brethren. Zac nodded in appreciation as he kept flying, thankful he had done this test on the outer side of the mountain range.

[Rapturous Divide] was a lot flashier than he had expected, and he could only pray that no lizardmen scouts were hiding in this remote part of the mountain range. Of course, he knew that he had pushed the skill pretty hard as well, and he realized now that he didn't actually need to use a 100-meter blade to create it.

He could have activated the skill by adding a small half-meter edge over [Verun's Bite] as well, which would allow him to use the skill in a one-on-one melee battle.

The skill took advantage of the opposing natures of life and death. The two were each other's opposites, and this fact was utilized to create a divide in space itself. It was a high-concept empowerment that would turn most defenses useless, just like a spatial tear would. If he had this skill when fighting the battleroach king or the dragon he wouldn't have been so hard-pressed to wound them, as he doubted they were able to stop a tear in space itself.

Such a divide might not completely be what he looked for when it came to his insights to his cultivation path, but Zac felt it didn't matter too much as it was just a single skill. Not every action he took needed to be an echo of his insights. It was still based on life and death, which better than most of his other skills, proving that his new class moved in the right direction.

Zac looked inward for a second, and he was somewhat disappointed to see that he had lost connection to the Skill fractal, just like when his other skills were on cooldown. It looked like he wouldn't be able to shoot out a rapid barrage of space-splitting life-and-death waves. Then again, that wasn't really on the

table in any case, as that single strike had cost him almost 10 percent of his total Cosmic Energy reserves.

At least it didn't seem to be a long cooldown skill like [Deforestation], which could only be used every 12 hours or so. He kept a close look at the fractal as he flew between the mountain peaks, and could soon confirm that [Rapturous Divide] could be used again after three minutes.

Three minutes wasn't bad, but not great either. Most intense fights felt quite long, but they were usually over in less time than that. However, it would be a great addition in prolonged battles, providing a repeatable destructive boost to just shooting out an infinite number of fractal edges. However, he still didn't use the skill at the next group of predatory birds that assaulted him, and instead opted to take them out with [Chop].

The pack of eagles that Zac annihilated earlier wasn't the only one, but most likely a single roost out of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of the mountain range. His flight through the towering peaks quickly turned into an endless battle, where the skyline was covered by frenzied birds defending their mountain.

Most of the birds were F-Grade, but the occasional early E-grade alpha appeared as well. The feather of the evolved birds was like steel, partly absorbing the strikes of a normal [Chop] even though [Verun's Bite] had been upgraded. Zac realized that this wasn't the fault of his Spirit Tool though, but rather on the skill itself.

The skill had definitely become stronger with the upgrade of the axe, but the effect was only partial. It seemed like a simple F-Grade skill wouldn't be able to keep up with the upgrades of an E-Grade axe. He sighed in disappointment when he realized that his main skill would peter out into obsolescence sooner or later.

However, the skill was still useful, not only as a delivery method of his E-grade skill, but on its own. The skill itself might not be able to outright kill these powerful birds, but it was another matter entirely when he infused the blades with the Fragment of the Axe. One silver flash after another lit up the pristine mountain peaks as desolate cries resounded, each wail marking the end of a king of the sky.

An ever-increasing amount of energy surged toward the turbid node in his left leg, and Zac realized that he would be able to burst open a node in a day or two if he kept going like this. However, Zac slowly started to look for some way to get out of this situation. It felt like no matter how many beasts he killed, there were still more and more that appeared in the skyline all around him.

It did allow him to get acquainted with his new skill though, and now and then a group of birds would be split apart as the white mountain wall was lit up in golden splendor. He quickly figured out that his maximum limit of the skill was a 150-meter spatial tear, while he actually realized there was a lower limit as well at 75 centimeters.

The cost of the activation wasn't quite linear though. Just activating the skill was the cause of over half of the energy expenditure, while the length of the tear added an almost linear expenditure.

The strength of the attack was based on the length of the tear as well, with the shorter tear unleashing a more intense wave of destruction. However, the shortest tear was at best twice as strong as the largest one, meaning that the massive divide wasn't all that weak compared to the one-on-one strike.

However, the hours passed and Zac couldn't take it any longer. He was starting to tire even when fighting while holding a D-Grade Nexus Crystal for energy restoration. He flew into a narrow canyon and jumped off the cliff mid-flight, immediately taking out an Illusion Array Disk the moment he landed. He shot forward a few hundred meters with the help of [Loamwalker] the next second, hiding inside a cave.

A sleeping bear yowled in surprise at the unwelcome intruder, but it was quickly cut in two before it could warn the frenzied eagles that flew back and forth outside. Their screeches caused the walls of the cave to shake as their feathers carved deep grooves in the mountain walls, but they couldn't find the target no matter how hard they looked.

They finally left after taking out their frustrations on a group of poor mountain goats who failed to blend in with the white rocks, allowing Zac to breathe out. He wasn't really worried about being overrun by the bloodthirsty birds, but rather that he was causing too big a ruckus. He had passed most of the mountain range by now, and he was closing in on the uncharted territory on the other side.

Thousands of massive eagles clumping around a foreign object in the sky while screeching at the top of their lungs would probably be spotted from miles away, and he wanted to retain at least some of the element of surprise. The birds were gone, but Zac didn't immediately move out, and instead sat down to recuperate his lost Cosmic Energy for a few hours.

Only when he was completely topped off again did he move out. This time he didn't take out his flying treasure though but instead tried to stay as inconspicuous as possible between the mountains. There were pretty much not a single beast barring his path down on in the canyon, which wasn't surprising considering what lived on the mountain tops. It allowed Zac to make good speed, and he reached the end of the mountain range just an hour later.

And what met his eyes was an endless primordial jungle.