

The Fall 640

Chapter 640: Force of the Void

Zac woke up with a start and was greeted by a throbbing pain all over his body. His skull had become two sizes too small, and it felt like his mouth was full of gravel. He coughed and got up on his feet, realizing he was not in the pod or even the lab any longer. He vaguely remembered the cave and the pod exploding, but everything was still a hazy blur.

"Are you okay? How do you feel?" his sister's voice reached from some distance, and Zac turned his bleary eyes toward the source.

He saw almost fifty people standing on a cliff peering down at him, with expressions varying from confusion to fear. Zac didn't understand why they were over a hundred meters above him, so he looked around, only to realize he was standing in an enormous hole. He made a quick scan of his body, and nothing seemed to be wrong, except for a sense of weakness.

"I'm fine. Just a bit hungry," Zac shouted back up as he took out one of his spatial flasks. "And thirsty."

"How the hell is that possible? Eating half the mountain wasn't enough?" Ogras spat as he appeared next to him in a flash of shadows,

"Wh-" Zac said as he looked around again, and the memories suddenly came rushing back.

The feeling of a monstrous hunger, of how an enormous vortex had appeared behind his back. How the whole mountain was being absorbed until everything turned black.

"I'm sorry. I had a breakthrough," Zac muttered. "Didn't expect that to happen though."

"You need to get your mood swings under control," Ogras snorted. "Murder, hungry... It all ends in a huge mess. I better pray you never get raunchy while I'm in the vicinity."

Zac could only weakly smile in response. "I'll try some meditation. Is anyone hurt?"

"Everyone is fine, and it doesn't look like your antics attracted any of our enemies. Then again, who in their right mind would run toward a world-eating vortex?" Ogras said before he turned to Kenzie who was floating down the cliffside along with some of the Valkyries.

"It's good you're fine," Kenzie breathed in relief as she landed. "Can you move? The protective film was weakened over this side of the mountain. We probably want to get out of here before any Void Beasts realize it."

"I can move just fine," Zac said. "I will have to bother one of the Anointed to carry me while I consolidate my breakthrough though. Shame I can't keep looting the caves."

"It's not just you," Joanna said with a wry smile. "That black hole of yours picked the whole mountain clean. The caves are drained all the way down to the first layer."

"What?!" Zac exclaimed, his mind blank with incomprehension that turned to stupefaction as Joanna explained what had happened.

He had already swallowed a terrifying amount of treasures in his frenzied feast inside the pod, but it sounded like that was just the appetizer. The question was, where did all the energy go? He didn't feel all that much stronger, and he almost felt drained of energy rather than overstuffed. Zac remembered his cells greedily swallowing everything they could get their hands on, but was his body really voracious to the point that he could swallow enough treasures to nurture a whole elite army without leaving any trace?

"Well, at least some good came of you hogging all the valuables," Ogras shrugged, making Zac look over with interest. "Whatever you did pulled a lot of Spatial Energy from the depths of the mountain. Our people gained over fifteen hundred seals in ten minutes."

"What?" Zac exclaimed.

He quickly opened his quest screen, and it was just as Ogras had said. His quest had already disappeared, meaning he had completed it while being possessed. However, the quest didn't need him to provide everyone with a seal, so there were probably people still without.

"How many are still in need of Seals?" Zac asked.

"Around a thousand," Kenzie said. "Pretty much everyone should be able to get one before the time limit unless something unexpected happens."

"Like someone draining the rest of the mountain like a god damn Devourer Rat King," Ogras muttered, drawing an angry look from Kenzie and a couple of Valkyries.

"What do you want to do?" Kenzie asked as she turned back to Zac.

"Let's move," Zac said, pushing away the exhaustion. "I'll go with you a while longer."

He actually needed to rest, but he couldn't put everyone out like that if the protective film in this area had been weakened because of him. The group immediately set off, and they kept an even greater speed than before. Part of it was because of the looming threat of a Void Beast invasion, and part of it was simply because all the caves in the area had apparently been sucked clean of both Seals and treasures.

Zac himself borrowed the shoulder of an Anointed again, and one massive slab of meat after another went down his gullet as he started inspecting his situation while trying to make sense of what had just happened.

The situation was quite odd. He had been completely swept up by that limitless hunger, and his mind was spotty at best. He had never read that anything that weird would happen when unlocking one's bloodline. He had also been shown two separate visions, which was pretty odd as well. He had an idea as to why, but his hopes were immediately dashed when he realized that the third Hidden Node in his spine wasn't actually opened.

He had figured that the first vision, the one with the ancestor on the meteor, was a vision of his node, while the second vision was one brought forward from his bloodline awakening. But that didn't seem to be the case, and Zac thoughtfully went over what he had witnessed.

When thinking of it, both the visions seemed to show the same thing, though the setting was vastly different. One was a great powerhouse, and one was a mortal who hadn't even embarked on the road on cultivation. But they were doing the same thing in the vision, and the implication made Zac's heart gallop from excitement.

They were absorbing energy to improve their affinities.

The mysterious predecessor had endured the bolts of lightning to slowly increase his control of the element. Meanwhile, the youth named Karz was eating everything from bugs to smearing his body in broken Nexus Crystals, slowly improving his affinity. At least that was Zac's takeaway of the vision, considering how similar the small crystal ball toward the end was to the item Alyn used to test the talent of students.

Something like continuously improving one's affinities was absolutely heaven-defying. Certainly, some rare treasures could help cultivators with things like that, and you would normally increase your affinities a bit when you evolved and leveled up. But to continuously improve one's Dao Affinities just by doing things like absorbing Attuned Crystals was unheard of.

It would also explain why he had such a shitty constitution. His body simply had no affinities, which should technically be impossible. But yet he could connect to the Dao. Perhaps it was because he hadn't awakened his bloodline yet. Now that he had, he might be able to turn himself from trash into a genius.

He might even be able to cultivate.

Zac immediately looked inward and started to manipulate his Dao a bit as he circulated it through his body. He had swallowed a mountain of treasures, so his affinities should have improved quite a bit going by the situation of Karz. A single broken Nexus Crystal had a measurable effect that early in cultivation, so surely Zac should have made large strides.

But there was absolutely no effect. Nothing at all.

He was still just as clumsy as before, and his Dao Fragments resisted any attempts at creating a Dao Braid. Zac frowned a second before he took out a Divine crystal and started absorbing it, which only caused his frown to grow deeper.

The second vision, in particular, had been extremely vivid, and Zac had felt everything Karz did as the youth absorbed the scraps on the trash mountain. Zac could even remember the rotten taste of the weird bugs he forcibly ate. The energies of the Divine Crystal spread out through Zac's body and nourished it, but his cells definitely didn't swallow and fuse with the energy like Karz's body did with the remnant fire-attuned energies.

"What the hell," Zac muttered, causing the large Zhix to freeze and look over.

"Is everything alright, Warmaster?" the Anointed hesitantly asked.

"Oh, sorry, it's nothing," Zac said as before he opened his status screen to see how things looked.

Name

Zachary Atwood

Level

88

Class

[E-Epic] Edge of Arcadia

Race

[D] Human – Void Emperor (Corrupted)

Alignment

[Earth] Port Atwood - 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, Monarch-Select, Frontrunner, Pathstrider

Limited Titles

Tower of Eternity Sector All-Star - 14th

Dao

Fragment of the Axe - High, Fragment of the Coffin - Middle, Fragment of the Bodhi - Middle

Core

[E] Duplicity

Strength

2957 [Increase: 91%. Efficiency: 228%]

Dexterity

1403 [Increase: 65%. Efficiency: 187%]

Endurance

2408 [Increase: 99%. Efficiency: 218%]

Vitality

1693 [Increase: 89%. Efficiency: 218%]

Intelligence

642 [Increase: 65%. Efficiency: 187%]

Wisdom

1131 [Increase: 70%. Efficiency: 187%]

Luck

359 [Increase: 91%. Efficiency: 197%]

Free Points

30

Nexus Coins

[F] 1 839 804 598

Zac blankly looked at the status screen for a few seconds, not sure what to think about the situation. There were both good news and bad news from the looks of it. The good news was that not only had he gained three levels somehow, but he had also boosted his race to D-Grade while simultaneously awakening his bloodline.

It looked like swallowing half a mountain had some benefits, after all.

A small point of regret was that he didn't get the Title for awakening a bloodline. It had been mentioned in the missives, but he was too slow. You needed to awaken it before turning 16 for the good title, and before evolving for the normal one. But more importantly, the ominous "Corrupted"-designation remaining next to his bloodline. He had hoped that the corruption was something like the bloodline would be harder to awaken, but it looked like he wasn't so lucky.

Zac gave another mental command, and an entirely new screen popped up a moment later.

Bloodline

[F - Corrupted] Void Emperor

Talent

Force of the Void - 18%

Bloodline Nodes

[E]Void Heart, [E] Spiritual Void

It was the Bloodline Screen that became available upon activating his bloodline, just like the Dao Screen or Skill Screen. Zac hadn't read anything about 'bloodline nodes' being added to the screen, but he wasn't too surprised either. It was probably simply not something that the basic missives he'd bought covered. The fact that they were graded was a bit odd, but Zac had no way to get to the bottom of that either.

The line called 'talent' in his case didn't necessarily explain all the benefits of a bloodline, but it showcased the main part. Common talents were things such as 'Combat Boost – Fire' or 'Increased

Energy Absorption'. One bloodline could have multiple talents, but that was a lot less common from what Zac understood. It was more likely that new talents would awaken as one evolved on the bloodline itself.

The number of talents wasn't really indicative of a bloodline's quality though. There were no doubt supreme bloodlines who pushed a singular talent to the very limits, turning it disgustingly powerful.

In Zac's case, it said [Force of the Void], something that sounded like a combat-oriented talent to Zac. That really didn't seem to match with his visions at all. The Void Emperor-bloodline should clearly be an almost cheat-like cultivation-related bloodline from what he was shown. This added with his inability to improve his affinity with the Divine Crystal made Zac think of a troubling possibility.

Was this the effect of the corruption? Had he lost the ability to improve his affinities?

It was a shame that he didn't have the time to properly test things out right now, but he wasn't ready to give up just yet. Zac once more started looking inward, testing one thing after another to get a sense of what was going on. But nothing seemed to point toward increased talent in any of the Daos.

But he finally found something else. It somehow felt like the energy in his body was moving faster. Zac tried to figure out if that was related to affinities, but he could quickly pinpoint that it was made possible by something else. His pathways had become thicker compared to before awakening his bloodline.

It was very minute, like a thin string having been swapped out by a slightly thicker string, but it was definitely there. His pathways, including his skill fractals, had been somewhat widened. But even such a minute increase had allowed Cosmic Energy to more freely flow through his body. The talent screen said eighteen percent, and that number seemed to somewhat match what he was experiencing right now.

Was this really it? Zac couldn't help but feel shortchanged and confused. It didn't make sense. This type of talent wasn't anything uncommon, and it presented itself as 'Increased Energy Absorption' or 'Increased Energy Circulation'. Why was his Talent named something completely different when it provided the same effect? But was hard to focus on the issue at all when thinking of what he had lost.

He was supposed to have a bloodline where he could improve his affinities through absorption but instead was given something that improved his Cosmic Energy-circulation. The latter was obviously better than nothing, but a far cry from the ability to become a cultivator. After all, the utility of such a talent felt a bit limited considering it was just one of the many natural advantages of cultivators.

Increased circulation didn't really mean increased combat power. After all, a fractal edge from [Chop] only took a fraction of his Cosmic Energy to activate, and the ability to push more energy into the skill fractal wouldn't do much.

The boost would help with some things though. Higher-power skills took longer to activate, and being able to force Cosmic Energy into the fractals quicker would give him an edge in battle. It would also allow him to absorb energies faster, which might prove to have amazing synergy with his [Void Heart] down the road.

Of course, there was still the possibility that he had completely misunderstood the situation. Furthermore, it might be possible to heal or fix his corrupted bloodline in the future, and the road to

becoming a cultivator suddenly felt a lot more tangible compared to before. Zac wanted to go through what else he could do with his new pathways until that happened, but the Anointed suddenly stopped in their tracks, and Zac soon felt a pressure bearing down on him from above.

Something was trying to push through the spatial film.