

The Fall 1003

[Chapter 1003 - Resonance](#)

Unbridled destructive urges and mad exuberance fought for dominion as a set of remnants squeezed out from the crack in their prison. Accompanying them was a storm of accumulated energies that had yet been filtered by the profound patterns crafted by Be'Zi and the System.

Yet, when the second set of remnants attempted to follow in their wake, a nine-layered gate appeared to seal them inside. Conflict, Life, and Death, three by three by three, bolstered by an unyielding heart and an immense amount of Mental Energy. The still-trapped remnants raged and railed against the barrier that suddenly barred their path to freedom, but they found themselves unable to break through.

The first set stopped for a moment, but their desire to unleash their madness upon the world quickly won over their desire to free their compatriots. They surged forward, crashing through the hidden gate leading to Zac's true Soul Aperture. Zac didn't try to stop them. He bolstered their momentum with his Dao while gently guiding them forward.

Right at the Moss Crystal.

The undying wills inside the remnant needed very little prodding to target the incredibly energy-dense gemstone that just so happened to float very close to the exit of the prison. Both Oblivion and Creation were processes that needed energy, and the remnants were always kept in a drained state inside the prison. Right now, they only had around 15% of the energy compared to when Zac found them, and the Moss Crystal was a way for them to fuel up.

But a vast alien consciousness spread through Zac's aperture just as the two scrambling remnants were about to reach the emerald crystal. It didn't possess the splinters' desolation or the shards' exuberance. Instead, it was filled with acceptance. And the hunger to grow. Zac inwardly smiled. It looked like Mossy couldn't sit still with those little calamities making their way over.

The Moss Crystal released an enormous amount of Mental energy, forming an emerald shroud that tried to swallow and suffocate the two remnants as they approached. But clearly, the discarnate consciousness of Mossy had underestimated what it was dealing with. The remnants weren't some easy prey, and they teamed up when targeted by an outsider.

They released powerful waves of energy that either destroyed or subverted Mossy's spiritual quagmire as they inched closer. All while giving out their insidious promises to Mossy. Even Zac could hear the whispers of destruction and possibility targeted at the crystal, but he did nothing to stop their corruption.

He let the two tie each other up while he dealt with the volatile situation in his Soul Aperture. The shroud of Creation and Destruction released by the prison had agitated the energies even further, to the point large scars appeared at the edge of space. If those two Daos were left unchecked, they'd turn his whole breakthrough on his head.

Zac spent the next couple of seconds trapping the two clouds before they mixed with the ambient clouds of Life and Death. Some of it slipped through the cracks, but there wasn't much Zac could do

about it. The escaped Creation and Oblivion would likely slip into his reformed soul, but he had the experience and skills to deal with that in the future.

It looked like the battle between Mossy and the remnants wouldn't take long, which was an immense relief. Incredible amounts of Divinity and Death had already been dragged into his Soul Aperture by the vortices formed from the Array Disks. The Outer Cores had absorbed more than they could withstand, making them ticking time bombs.

Luckily, it was just as Zac expected. Mossy, especially not the fragmented consciousness hidden within its crystal, had no Dao Heart to speak of. It had never encountered real trouble as it grew to cover Emerald Eye. As such, it was incredibly ill-equipped to deal with the urgings of the two ancient wills inside the Splinter of Oblivion and Shard of Creation.

The previously radiant green had become mottled, and the crystal groaned ominously. This was it. Zac finally entered the fray in the most direct way possible—launching his central core right at the battling sides. The central core was over five times as large as the emerald crystal, and it looked like a meteor about to shatter the core to pieces.

'The weak light hurts. Betrays,' a sigh echoed through Zac's mind as his core drew closer. 'So be it. We both fade. But Moss remains.'

Zac braced himself but did nothing to prevent the incredible implosion that swallowed both his central core and the remnants. Zac's core was instantly ground to dust, but he ignored the soul-rending pain as he erected a few barriers around the lingering remnants of Mossy's fading consciousness.

Having trapped the final vestiges of Mossy's trap, Zac breathed in relief. His breakthrough still was in an incredibly precarious situation, but this was one major hurdle dealt with. For years, he'd known a piece of Mossy hidden in the depths of the Moss Crystals. It had hidden itself well and never done anything except silently observing.

But not even a mighty dragon can subdue the local snake. The moment Zac had realized what was going on, he'd started scheming for Mossy's demise. Having another consciousness inside your soul when you reformed it was incredibly dangerous, especially if the soul was hostile.

It was easy for impressions and characteristics to slip inside at a moment of such weakness. And if Mossy wanted, it would have been able to launch an attempt to take over his body. One reason he'd targeted the Moss Crystal was that he needed its massive stores of Mental Energy to fuel two cores instead of one. However, getting rid of Mossy to continue the process was just as important.

The remnants were much-sturdier than Zac's central core, but even they could not come out of that sudden implosion unscathed. The lights surrounding them had mostly faded as they emerged from the blast zone, their surfaces covered in cracks and scars that leaked tremendous amounts of energy.

Zac found it increasingly difficult to rouse his soul after it had turned into a cloud of swirling dust, but he readied himself for another battle. However, he watched with surprise as the two remnants voluntarily fled back toward their brethren, entering the prison of their own accord. They didn't even look at the great cloud of vaguely emerald green that had mixed with the dust from Zac's soul.

All that Mental Energy left on the table. Zac had thought he'd have to wrangle them and throw them back, but it looked like they'd had enough of the outside. Or perhaps they knew the prison wasn't long for the world. The cage for the Remnants had never been a permanent solution, and he'd known since first getting the runes installed that they'd sooner or later fail.

The prison hadn't been maintained since he fled Orom because the mysterious sigils rebuffed his attempts to repair or bolster them. Two runes had already broken apart during his secluded cultivation. The one he'd destroyed would shatter in a year or so, so Zac only hastened the schedule a bit.

With each rune crumbling, the next one would last even less time. If nothing changed, Zac guessed the prison would be gone before he even entered Ultom. Of course, that was a worry for later. Now, he had to stop his Soul Aperture from exploding from the rampant energies.

The new batch of escaped Creation and Oblivion had created another round of mayhem by the time Zac managed to trap it, to the point there was now a replica of the Calamity inside his Soul Aperture. The whole miniature cosmos was a constant battlefield full of eruptions. Each collision put Zac's Outer Cores under further duress, not to mention the aperture itself.

Zac took a deep breath as he imposed his will on the chaos, beginning with the spreading dust cloud that was a mix of his central core and the ownerless energy from the Moss Crystal. Two small swirls appeared a moment later. One spun clockwise, while the other one counter-clockwise. In all other regards, they were the same.

For now.

The swirls started gathering up Zac's soul before it drifted away, allowing him to turn his attention to the rest. The other parties, his Outer Cores and the native energy of the Calamity, weren't as easily controlled. But Zac was unrelenting. True, on the outside, he was just a small E-grade cultivator—an ant compared to the true masters of the Multiverse. But inside his aperture, he might as well be the Heavens themselves. His will was akin to a divine decree, and he refused to let anything revolt.

From Primordial Chaos, Yin and Yang were born—the delimited Dao. In the same fashion, Zac's aperture was soon delimited between Life and Death. In the middle were two vaguely green spirals turning in opposite directions. Right behind them, the Dao Apparitions of Kalpataru and Pale Seal hovered. It felt like they towered toward the heavens, reaching thousands of kilometers in height, each a monolith floating in space.

The soul shroud rotated in a plane spiral around them like petals. And behind, nine cores floated in an orderly line, each ominously vibrating with barely contained energy. Surrounding the Divine Cores were opalescent streaks of creation, which attracted all the Life-attuned energies in the aperture to its side. A similar scene took place on the other side, and it only took five minutes for Zac to completely separate the two sides.

It really looked like he had created two cosmic flowers, where the stamen and core were attuned while the petals were yet unblemished. But that was about to change. The innermost attuned cores floated into the center of the swirling galaxies, dragging with it a huge amount of ambient attunement. The cores and their tails passed right through the respective Dao Apparitions and were given a final anointment in Zac's Dao.

Zac infused his will, and the two cores shattered simultaneously, unleashing years of condensed and refined Dao. Most of it drifted into the swirling clouds, the small motes fusing with soul dust and painting them with their path. Some were thrown over to the opposing spiral, but it was rebuffed and relegated to the outer reaches of the spiral.

One explosion after another followed as Zac detonated the outer cores. The glittering dust of his refined inner core gained an increasingly majestic aura. Gone were the matte pastel green left-over from the Moss Core. One spiral now shone with an oppressive black, and it felt like just looking at it would suck your soul inside. Opposing it was a divine spiral of utmost Life, illuminating half of his Soul Aperture in magical light.

As the dust grew denser from the constant infusions of energy and Dao, it started to condense toward its center. It almost looked like the two cosmic flowers furled their flowers back into a bulb by the time the sixth set of outer cores had erupted. Surrounding the flower bulbs were now thin bands of opposing elements, like the rings of Saturn.

Each half of his budding soul seemed to follow the plan of the third reincarnation, yet Zac frowned. The clouds of Miasma and Divine Energy had grown dim to the point they would barely last through the process of exploding three final sets of outer cores. New energy kept pouring in from the radiant vortices around him, but the ambient energy in the cave was dwindling.

This place wasn't like the mysterious temple of the Keys of Ascension, where the ambient energy was kept steady no matter how much he absorbed. He had misjudged how much energy could be dragged through the cracks and the stone itself when he broke through. He'd expected the energy vacuum to create a natural pull, but it appeared he was wrong. Either that or the storm chamber above exerted a far greater pull than he.

Either case, the situation had now become a bottleneck that couldn't be fixed by just Nexus Crystals. Even worse, integrating the outer cores into the dust cloud was just the first step. After, Zac needed far more energy to create a conflict powerful enough to refine and compress his creations. As things were, the Evolutionary and Inexorable Cores were more than one hundred times the size of the previous Central Core in his Soul Aperture.

This wasn't a good thing. Part of the increase in size was all the added energy from the Moss Crystal, Outer Cores, and the ambient energy that had been dragged into the soul spirals. But most of it came from the two nascent cores being so porous they could barely be considered solids. The original final step of the method called for detonating the remaining nine outer cores, but Zac couldn't do that. He'd already given them to his second core.

The only fuel remaining were two huge clouds of Creation and Oblivion that Zac had sealed with barriers of Mental Energy—the spillover from the remnants he didn't dare infuse into his new cores. But did he dare collide those two forces into each other? Obviously not. Even if he didn't kill himself, he might end up spawning Chaos in his soul, something he wasn't prepared to handle.

Zac scrambled for solutions, throwing all kinds of attuned treasures into the two vortices as the seventh set of outer cores were infused into soul dust. Eventually, his gaze turned to the ceiling. There was one place where all the energy he needed was readily available.

The problem was, if he broke apart the ceiling, his arrays would be torn apart. His breakthrough would be on full display, and with these amounts of Dao- and energy fluctuations, it'd seem as though a heavenly treasure had been born in the heart of the mountain. It wouldn't be long before beasts and possibly cultivators would arrive.

By the time the eighth set of outer cores was assimilated, the ambient energy in his cave had essentially been reduced to zero, and he barely managed to supply the needed amount of energy to recompense. If things progressed this way, he'd end up with two mottled Soul Cores in such a bad state he might even emerge weaker than before the breakthrough. It'd take centuries to fix this issue after the soul dust hardened and lost its malleability.

He couldn't wait any longer.

Zac gritted his teeth as he grabbed the activation token. A deep thud echoed through the hidden cave as the wallbreaker array startled to life. For a moment, nothing changed, except for five trickles of sand raining from above. Then, all hell broke loose as the ceiling completely collapsed, raining huge blocks of stones all around Zac.

A barrier had already sprung up to push away the falling boulders to the sides of the cave, but what came in their wake was far more deadly. Zac found himself looking up at a five-hundred-meter tall chute, chock full of ferocious winds of Life and Death. Winds that were now cascading toward him thanks to the sudden downdraft.

Zac immediately knew there was trouble, and not just because of the wounds that kept appearing across his body. The two vortices had a seemingly endless capacity to swallow energy, but only of their attunement. Meanwhile, the storm crashing down was a confusing jumble of energies that moved at incredible speeds. The vortices couldn't extract what they needed from that confusing mess.

He needed to help them out.

Thankfully, he had just the thing, and two alien energies were forced out of his Soul Aperture. Two streams, this time unblemished by Conflict, passed through the pathways on his shoulders and into his arms. Creation in his left, Oblivion in his right. He didn't keep them condensed this time, instead opting to release the energies as small clouds of energy that swirled around their respective vortices.

The higher Daos acted as beacons, dragging their subordinate paths toward them and into the vortices. Yet it wasn't enough. The energies were too unruly, to the point it was impossible to make much use of them. Zac barely scratched the surface of the vast energies coursing through the chute.

Releasing the energies did have one more effect, though. The odd sensation of being one with the mountain returned, this time more palpable than ever. A deep groan rippled through the cave, and the fierce winds inside the storm chamber simply froze. Zac looked up with shock, only for his vision to shift.

Suddenly, he saw the vast skylscapes of the Calamity, not a hint of land across the horizon. A sense of boundless freedom filled him as he became one with the sky. Then, Zac pushed through the clouds at the edge of the storm, at which point Zac found himself sitting inside the cave again as the chaos resumed.

In his mind, a strong desire lingered, one not of his own making.

"You want this energy? That's why you've resonated with me?" Zac roared over the raging storm. "Then you need to help me out as well!"

The response was immediate. A deafening crack echoed through the cave as enormous fissures appeared throughout the storm chamber. Then, rivers of energy came cascading down, drowning the storm before crashing down toward Zac. His eyes widened in a mix of anticipation and alarm.

It looked like he'd gotten more than what he'd bargained for.