

## The Fall 1004

### [Chapter 1004 - Reincarnations and Rebirths](#)

Rivers of energy poured down the walls of the Storm Chamber, their density far beyond anything Zac had seen since entering the Calamity. Yet, an almost deafening silence had replaced the roar of the storm. Zac could tell some mysterious concepts were influencing the rivers of attuned energies, preventing them from actually touching.

The hundreds of fissures and their streams joined and separated, following a set of unique truths. Together, the streams formed a simultaneously simple and complex Dao Braid, allowing incredible amounts of energy to pass through the narrow space of the Storm Chamber.

The braid itself was almost the opposite of Zac's path and not of much use conceptually, but it made his life a lot easier. The explosions of these energy levels would have been deadly, and he would have been forced to split his attention between the war in his mind and the war on the outside.

Zac felt the ground beneath shudder as two small cracks appeared almost right beneath the two vortices that had already begun feasting on the more malleable attuned energies. But in contrast to the fissures above, these small slits exerted a weak pull. Zac understood what was going on, and he redirected the Creation- and Oblivion energy into the cracks—payment for the fuel coursing into him.

This was a trade Zac was more than willing to take. The energies trapped in his aperture came straight from the remnants and were tainted by their undying will. Giving it up could be considered helping him rather than being an actual payment. The only problem was that using the energies came at a cost, even when just releasing it from his Soul Aperture.

Thankfully, there was no rule saying he had to be the one paying the price.

An impossibly vibrant branch with four leaves rippling with Time and Life appeared in his hand, and the first leaf started to wilt as Zac extracted the longevity locked within. Similarly, Oblivion exacted a price of emotions and memories, yet Zac had prepared a spare for that.

However, this wasn't a Longevity Treasure like the one his subordinates had found at an auction. It was the lingering pieces of Mossy's consciousness he'd trapped and sealed. The last emerald motes winked out one after another as Oblivion claimed them for fuel.

Seeing that the process went smoothly, Zac could finally turn to the most important matter. The almost exhausted ambient energy in his Soul Aperture was already halfway replenished, and dense clouds of Life and Death battled for dominion over his soul.

The small nebulous swirls surrounding the two oversized Soul Cores had grown tens of times in size, each shuddering with power as they exerted pressure on the cores. Meanwhile, innumerable explosions went off every second in his mind, each exhausting some of the build-up while pressuring the Soul Cores.

Even without Zac controlling things, the cores had already shrunk 30% in size since the vortices had begun swallowing the liquified energy. Yet it wasn't enough. Zac could tell his cores had started to harden. He had a few minutes at most, and the cores still needed to be concentrated to a tenth of their current size. Right now, they were far too porous and brittle.

If things just progressed as they were, Zac would get nowhere near that point. Determination gleamed in Zac's eyes as he took charge of his Evolutionary and Inexorable Cores. His path had always been a straightforward one, and his solution this time wasn't any different. The cores hummed as they began to move with increasing velocity.

Right toward each other.

In their wake, two enormous shrouds of Life and Death followed, making up the bulk of the army. Meanwhile, the cores were the vanguard, each containing an insatiable desire for the extermination of the other side. Zac did nothing to quell these impulses—he did the opposite. The Dao Apparition of the Branch of the War Axe released torrential amounts of Dao into the approaching cores and their shrouds while the final stockpile of truth started pouring out from [Spiritual Void].

Life and Death, kindled by Conflict; a war as old as time itself. An earth-shattering shockwave erupted in Zac's Soul aperture as two cores collided. A second, just as powerful, explosion followed just a moment later as the two spiral clouds of opposing elements were forced together. Zac felt his vision swim, like his soul had been ripped in two as the two cores were flung back to the opposite edges of his aperture.

Blood poured down Zac's nose and ears, and cracks covered the surface of the two cores. But it worked. The clash of the cores and the huge shockwave from the shrouds exploding condensed the two cores by almost 50%. Just as importantly, Conflict had been squeezed into the two cores, moving them closer to his path.

The pain in Zac's mind was almost enough to make him keel over, but he ignored the agony as he swallowed a handful of soul-mending pills. The exhausted spiral shrouds had been replenished just seconds later by the nigh-inexhaustible energies from above. Zac was full of reluctance, but he knew he had no choice.

The two cores began moving again, their advance collecting all the energies in the aperture. Another set of shockwaves erupted as the cores clashed. This time, Zac felt his consciousness slip, but he stabbed himself in the leg to regain clarity. The cores groaned in agony, but they had shrunk another 20%.

One time after another, Life and Death rallied and fought for supremacy, with Zac's mind as a battleground. The cores were no longer pure expressions of Life and Death. Now, they teemed with ferocity as Conflict integrated into their depths. Furthermore, their size was just 15% of before. The pressure had elevated them from rough coal into diamonds, their power far beyond his previous stage.

But the improvements came at a cost. Cracks covered every inch of their surfaces, deep scars that threatened to leave lasting damage. The same was true for his Soul Aperture, which was damaged to the point of leaking Mental Energy. He'd also run out of Creation- and Oblivion Energy already, and he could tell something was happening to the Calamity Mountain.

The mountain had been shaking over the past three minutes, the tremors growing deeper and more ominous by the second. The mysterious presence had also grown more distant, to the point Zac felt himself about to lose the connection altogether. He could tell the energies he'd provided had already been used up. For what, Zac had no idea. But he knew he was running out of time.

"One more," Zac growled with a hoarse voice, his vision red while his mouth tasted like metal.

He'd endured eight collisions, each putting him closer to his goal. Nine was the last and the ultimate—the final battle.

The two cores were forced into battle, becoming missiles on a collision course. They collided, and Zac desperately formed a huge net of Mental Energy around his aperture to minimize the damage. The cores were pushed back, but this time was different from the previous clashes. Glittering dust was left in their wake, making them look like comets drifting through space.

The tail was made from pieces of Zac's soul, but there were also emerald splinters from the Moss Crystal and pieces infected with the lingering will of the remnants. The cores had been condensed to such a point that some of the impurities had been forced out, such as the pieces of Mossy that he'd failed to integrate into the cores.

His soul was rapidly filled with energy from the vortices, but Zac eventually reached out and crushed the gates leading to his mind. Two new spiral clouds soon formed, but Zac no longer needed to push the two sides together. Instead, the two cores commandeered one half each of his Soul Aperture, forming two vertical swirls.

The Evolutionary Core was surrounded by a deathly cloud, while the Inexorable Core was ensconced in life. In the center of his aperture, his Dao Avatar sat in meditation, continuously releasing its Dao of Conflict into the clouds. Eventually, the deathly cloud would turn into an inexorable cloud, and so on.

The clouds slowly spun around the newly formed cores, constantly putting them under a small amount of pressure. These clouds would become the key to continuing through the [Nine Reincarnations Manual]. For now, they worked as protection. The pressure the clouds released wasn't strong enough to damage the cores, but it helped keep them pressed together.

Zac swallowed a series of treasures meant for nurturing and healing souls, and a fresh wind swept through his soul. It was like outside and within had swapped positions. The Storm Chamber had been deathly silent since the streams of energy were released, the complete opposite of the raging war in his mind.

Now, the laws keeping the falling energies at bay were wearing thin, and explosions had resumed further up the chute. Conversely, a fresh wind from the healing treasures swept through his mind, helping seal the tears in his aperture and on his cores. His soul finally found peace.

He'd done it. His soul aperture was a wreck, and the cores looked like they had been through years of fierce battles. But that was fine. The two cores were incredibly condensed, creating a powerful foundation to continue his cultivation. And while his soul was damaged, it wasn't to the point he couldn't use it at all. He should be fine if he didn't draw more than 30% of their power. Using 30% of his Mental Energy with his two cores was far beyond what he could release during his previous reincarnation.

The explosions drew closer as the tremors grew more powerful. It almost felt like the whole mountain was about to collapse. Yet Zac sat in place, almost forgetting his fleshy body altogether. He was one with his powerful soul and felt it spread like a domain for hundreds of meters in every direction.

Boulders that should have smashed into him were nudged away, landing on the ground around him. Even the awakening storm avoided him, allowing him to gradually get used to his newfound power.

A pang of incredible danger suddenly pierced through the roar of the mountain. It interrupted his rebirth in the eye of the storm, like a discordant note in a beautiful orchestra. Zac still sat rooted in place, eyes closed, but he could sense a cultivator effortlessly pierce through the storm on his way to Zac's exposed cave. The barriers had long since shattered, and the enemy was already upon him. But Zac only felt tranquility as he opened his eyes.

A pulse of pent-up pressure from his Soul Aperture was released through Zac's glabella, and the hooded cultivator who'd targeted him lost all control over his body as an earring and a brand on his forehead snapped. His eyes glazed over like his soul had just left him. In a way, it had. It had been pushed out of place by the tremendous force Zac's breakthrough had generated.

"Bad luck," Zac muttered as [Verun's Bite] flashed, cutting off the reptilian's head in one swift motion.

A surge of Kill Energy entered his body, confirming it wasn't a puppet or something else that had been destroyed. Zac shook his head as he swiftly looted rings and everything else of interest on the man's body before he stowed it away in his Corpse Sack. A second piece of high-potential material had delivered itself—doubly so since the assassin seemed to cultivate a Dao of Death without being undead. He would most likely make an amazing Revenant.

Zac had actually already sensed someone was targeting him a while ago. Fate had been gathering toward him since he broke open the walls to release the floodgates. And when his soul spread through the area, he'd spotted the reptilian. Zac had expected it to be a powerful Beast King, though, rather than another guest.

What he hadn't expected was how powerful the accidental pulse he released was. He'd planned on stopping the man in place with mental pressure, immediately seizing the momentum. But his soul had fractured, much like when Zac met the original owner of Vilari's body. It was a shame such a powerful bust was a one-off thing and not something he could charge up.

But it gave him the idea to look for mentalist skills, something for in-fighters in the vein of [True Strike] he'd owned for a while. It was a bit of a shame to cultivate such a powerful soul and not properly leverage it in battle. He even had two empty slots for skill fractals in his head, a result of both his sides being such one-track martial classes.

A huge rock tumbling down forced Zac to put planning aside. The stone itself wasn't a big problem, even if it was too heavy for his newfound telekinesis. Rather, it felt like a harbinger of what was to come. Zac could tell the shakes were not just the result of new pathways being carved through the mountain.

It almost seemed as though the mountain was dying. Had he accidentally killed it? He'd infused quite a bit of Creation and Oblivion, but he didn't believe that was enough to take out the spirit that had communicated with him. Especially not considering how much it had desired those energies.

Then again, it was hard to argue with facts as Zac could sense the mountain was no longer climbing in altitude while the cracks in the Storm Chamber grew more serious. But suddenly, a weak message appeared in Zac's mind before his connection to the mountain was thoroughly cut. A thank-you and a goodbye.

Zac didn't know exactly what was happening, but his eyes gleamed with greed as they turned to the top of the Storm Chamber. A moment later, a spiraled crystal reminiscent of the twinned World Core fell

through the ceiling. It didn't fall with the rest of the rubble but rather floated, showering the whole chamber in powerful truths of Life and Death.

This was a Supreme Treasure, nurtured for eons in the heart of the mountain. A gift from the spirit as it was reborn.

Its emergence was like the lifeline of the mountain being cut, and Zac felt the spirituality of the mountain rapidly drain. Zac couldn't be sure, but he doubted the mountain would still be flying in a week or two.

An unbelievably enraged roar suddenly rocked the mountain before a powerful presence swept the area. The mountain's owner had woken up, and it wasn't happy. Worse, it was clearly a Late Stage Beast King, only one level beneath the terrifying snake he'd met in the Twilight Chasm. It wasn't something he could contend with.

Zac's hair stood on end upon feeling the aura of the powerful Beast King, but he ignored warning bells going off in his mind as he started climbing toward the treasure. He'd already been discovered, so he may as well get the prize before running for his life.

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A croaking snicker echoed through the storm as the two looked down at the drifting mountain.

"Poor man," Lova laughed. "Targeting a person with such powerful fate is bound to result in a cosmic hiccup if your own providence isn't up to snuff."

It was as though their gaze could pierce straight through the mountain, observing the young man within. His aura was unsteady after his brutish breakthrough, yet his eyes had unyielding determination as he braved the storms of energy, climbing toward the Mountain Heart floating above.

"What do you think, Esmeralda?" Lova smiled as she looked down at the small toad in her hand. "He's a pretty interesting one. No wonder Engo has been muttering to himself for over a month."

The toad formed a few signs, its tongue flicking about.

"He's a good person because his Dao tasted nice?" Lova laughed. "Well, his unique flavor did help your 403rd reincarnation save a bit of time from reaching maturity."

Another enraged roar echoed through the area. The Dreambeast atop the mountain had awoken from its self-inflicted nightmare, and it was beyond infuriated to find the source of its dreams withered. It had already sent its tendrils through the mountain, and it was about to teleport to the heart of the mountain.

Esmeralda grunted unhappily, and a wave of ancient aura shot toward the mountain peak. The Dreambeast froze in place, shuddering at the sudden presence that filled its domain. A moment later, it turned into a river of vibrant dreams, fleeing toward the upper layers of the Calamity. It even left the wilting [Soulhaze Lily] in its cave, afraid that bringing it away would anger this terrifying intruder.

"This one is fine, but no more," Lova said. "Master does not like us meddling with the children's fate."

Esmeralda rolled her eyes, making a few signs while pointing toward the sky.

"You'd seal master if he'd get in the way?" Lova said with a helpless shake of her head. "Maybe if you were in your original form. But even then, you'd only manage to keep him contained for a few millennia. And what do a few years matter to someone like master?"

The toad snorted, pointedly looking away.

"Don't be like that," Lova said. "Who told you to go and eat that scary thing from the Time Nexus? Don't forget; it's only thanks to master and his old friend that you and your reincarnations haven't been washed away by the Obverse River."

The toad responded with a blithering stare before turning her gaze back to the mountain below. Cracks had spread across its whole surface by now, and huge chunks were already breaking off, falling into the void. A day at most.

"Well, it's true that your unique situation has been helpful for our undertaking. Either case, some things can't be avoided," Lova smiled as she glanced at a screen that had appeared in front of her. "A global event. You can consider this an opportunity for your little friend to temper himself. I am curious to see how this will play out. There are an unusual number of decent seedlings in this batch. I guess we have the ascending Pillar to thank for that."

"You're right," Lova nodded, agreeing with the sign-speaking toad. "It might be the other way around. The Pillar is ascending because of the gathering fate. The Heavens are rising. It won't be long until another throne can be claimed."

A tongue ripped through the air in a snatching motion, releasing a powerful aura that contained the echoes of the very beginning of the era.

"You?" Lova smiled. "You'll first have to escape your curse of reincarnation. But I guess you have a plan, considering you've been sneaking about the past decades."

Esmeralda pointed at the mountain, croaking in its ancient language.

"Use one Eternal Heritage to fight another?" Lova nodded. "I guessed as much. In your current state, you're not strong enough to sneak inside. So you have to borrow the fate of these children. Well, there are a few to pick from right now."

Esmeralda snickered with excitement as she looked at the chaos erupting throughout the mountain. Half of the beasts ran toward the exits, their survival instincts overcoming their greed for the Mountain Heart. Others had abandoned all reason as they rushed toward the heart, where the young human was still braving the increasing waves toward the treasure.

Lova looked at the proceedings, but a weak fluctuation made her look over curiously. The spirit was weak and small and full of unstable energies. But it freely existed in a permanent form, even when cut from its source.

"A Mountain Spirit who dreams of the sky," Lova smiled as she gently pointed at the spirit. "It goes against the natural order. Then again, so does all cultivation."

A small azure rune appeared on her finger, which enlarged as it flew toward the spirit. It had formed a gate in no time, leading to a vast azure expanse.

"Us meeting today can be considered fate. This place isn't suitable for the next step of your journey. The endless skies on the other side of the portal are just as dangerous as this place, but they hold the key to your desire."

The small floating mountain flickered, turning into a faceless humanoid looking like the young man who had given it the energy needed for its transformation. It bowed before flying through the gate, not sparing its former body a single glance.

And as one gate closed, another opened.

"It looks like the children are already arriving," Lova said, looking at the starter island far below. "This will become a bloody affair."