

## The Fall 1014

### [Chapter 1014 - The Gift of the First People](#)

"You're playing a dangerous game," Lova commented as they looked down at the children.

He'd just absorbed the last of the keys, which would trigger the summoning. A powerful force was building within his body, but it wasn't enough to obscure the raging storm of fate around the child. It was shielded using some unconventional means, but the obfuscation wouldn't work properly, what with their master being the Heavens in this realm.

"So what?" Engo grinned, his gaze turning to the sky. "Inserting myself into the tapestry didn't harm the child. He'll still get his opportunity. Isn't this why we've stayed in this world for so long, overseeing generation after generation? To find inspiration in the paths of the little animals, to benefit from their winds of fate?"

"Those winds might become a storm powerful enough to swallow you whole."

"That's fine. I've lived long enough," Engo laughed. "We both know I won't go any further unless something changes, and I'm tired of searching one god-forsaken corner of the Multiverse after another. I'm just trying a few things out. Besides, aren't you the same? I'm guessing you're here because of that old thief."

"Esmeralda is interested," Lova admitted. "I wasn't sure whether he was suitable for this inheritance, so I thought I'd come and make sure he didn't get himself killed. Since he survived the inverse keys, I'll be on my way."

"Aren't you curious?"

"Of the First People?" Lova smiled. "Not particularly. I've already read their primer."

"Don't you want to know what this trove's holding? Not even master knows which tier this parcel is."

"Even if it's one of the Ancestral Precepts, so what? Their path is not something we can emulate. Or, well, not you and I, at least. As for him, who knows? Theirs was a path of purity, while he chose to embrace the Dao."

"You're too pessimistic. Great things have emerged from the most unexpected places through the ages. Who's to say what can and can't crystallize from the teachings of the First People? If we can make the heritages of the previous Heavens work in our favor, why not a heritage of the Void Heaven? For all we know, some might already have succeeded."

"Even then," Lova smiled as a gate appeared next to her. "That's a path for someone else to trod."

"Boring," Engo scoffed as he pushed down his cane.

A ripple spread beneath his feet like they were standing upon a lake rather than far up in the sky. A second avatar of the old Kan'Zek Troll rose from within, and it didn't emit a speck of energy. Instead, it was completely detached from the environment, as though its body lived in its own dimension.

"A Blank Phase Avatar? You've come prepared," Lova said.

"I'll follow these threads of karma to see what's what," Engo smiled as he wove a weave of arrays around the avatar. "Don't worry; I won't disturb your little candidate."

"Well, have fun," Lova said as she stepped through the gate. "Though I must say, those threads look an awful lot like a noose."

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The mountains rumbled and the ground shook as the ancient sky grew more potent. Seeing the innumerable pillars light up the Quarry, Zac suspected it came at the cost of most, if not all, the Fate Kernels. The First People were calling all the Aether back home, which would break the containment.

Zac had no time to worry about him ruining yet another environment because of the transformation taking place in his own body. Torrential amounts of Void Energy were dragged out of the depths of his cells, fueling the seventeen seals. They were finally satiated when only 10% of his store remained. Together, they formed a full circuit, creating a simplified copy of something he'd seen in his vision.

It was the 15th constellation he'd seen, or rather the 15th iteration of the lone constellation. Zac didn't know if that was good, bad, or if it mattered at all. All the stars had looked the same in the vision, none clearly better or worse than the others. He was more curious about what the seals would do than what the constellation meant.

He didn't have to wait long for answers. The seventeen seals hummed with increasing vigor, releasing an ancient aura that spread through every corner of his body. Then they simply disappeared in a flash, and Zac gasped in relief as he felt his strength come surging back. His parched cells were finally flushed with Vigor after two weeks of steadily withering. Part of him wanted to destroy a mountain with [Arcadia's Judgment] just to completely rid himself of the uncomfortable feeling of vulnerability since he started collecting the Void Kernels, but he pushed down the sentiment.

The seals didn't completely disappear after leaving his body. They had appeared right above his head in the form of stars, miniature versions of the ones he'd seen in the vision. They pulsed following a mysterious pattern, and a rain of light answered the call. The light pillars across the horizon had already winked out, drained by the vortex above. Now it all came back, pouring into the seals.

Zac's vision flickered, and he realized there were no longer seventeen stars illuminating the valley. There were 24, then 33, and new ones kept appearing out of nowhere. In seconds, the valley was covered by a true replica of the fifteenth constellation, a full 229 stars. The constellation hung hundreds of meters in the air, but Zac felt far closer to it than when he'd carried the seals around.

The powerful resonance lingered in his body, forming a mysterious connection with the stars. And the stars, in turn, linked him with the Heavens themselves. An instinctual understanding filled his mind as his vantage expanded to the size of a world. A smile spread across his lips.

"How long do you think this... thing will last?" Ogras whispered. "People are undoubtedly already running here as fast as their legs can carry them."

He was right; Zac could see it. There were twenty-two other cultivators spread throughout the Quarry. Two were trying to gain some benefits from the scene in the sky or investigate the spots where the

pillars appeared. The others were all running toward their location using every means in their repertoire, including teleportation talismans, treasures, and all kinds of movement skills.

"They won't get here in time," Zac smiled. "And it won't matter."

"More importantly, are you okay?" Catheya asked. "It almost felt like you died there for a moment."

"I'm fine now," Zac nodded and released his aura to show he was no longer toiling under the restraints of the seventeen seals.

"So what do we do?" Ogras asked. "Where's this inheritance?"

"It's wherever I want it to be," Zac said and pointed ahead.

The constellation answered his call, and its light rapidly increased with intensity. For a moment, he felt like a powerful Autarch, wielding the power of the cosmos. The sky roiled, and a rumble originating from the beginnings of the era shook the world. And then it appeared—a finger whose size was beyond comprehension.

It barely fit through the vortex, covering the whole land beneath.

"Holy..." Ogras whispered as he hunched down, unable to fully withstand the mental pressure of seeing something that big descend toward him.

Zac also gazed at the unfathomable finger but didn't feel the pressure. He felt a longing call coming from the depths of the river of time—the call of the First People, searching for something beyond themselves.

"I'm here," Zac whispered, stretching his hands to welcome the probing search.

A blinding flash of starlight answered him, drowning the whole world in unbearable light. Even Zac was forced close his eyes and to block his sight with energy. He felt a light touch on his forehead that subtly changed the resonance from the seals. The light soon receded, and the finger was gone when Zac opened his eyes.

In its place was a pillar of starlight falling toward them. It looked minuscule compared to the finger, but it was over 500 meters across. It had emerged from the vortex's center and passed through the constellation still glimmering above. With a flash, the mountain lining the valley was gone.

In its place stood an ancient stone building. It shared a lot of features with the ancient library he'd seen in his vision, but its design was completely different. It was circular, almost resembling a cauldron, lined by hundreds of engraved pillars. Between each pillar was a burning brazier, except the fires looked like thousands of blue fireflies dancing around.

There was one entrance pointed right at them, but Zac couldn't see anything through the open gates. The only clue of what went on inside was a huge star floating in the middle of the building, with roughly a third of it peeking above the outer wall. The star wasn't a ball of fire but looked like a condensed ball of the mysterious light in the braziers.

There were two more items of note, each placed in front of the entrance. To the left of the gate was a larger version of the braziers. To the right was a stone tablet reaching over ten meters. Both were

covered in the script of the First People. Even if Zac couldn't understand them, he felt his mind shudder as he looked at the pattern. Dao or not, those things contained incredible truths.

A shimmering bubble surrounded the whole structure, and Zac could tell it was a lot like the arrays surrounding the Fate Kernels. Only infinitely more powerful.

"What was that?" Catheya asked as she fearfully looked around. "What's going on?"

Zac wasn't surprised by their hesitant reaction. He could tell that the bubble was not just a shield to protect the building from the Dao and energy outside. It was more accurate to say that it had created a completely separate dimension superimposed on the mountain range. Catheya was looking upon the same mountains as before rather than the inheritance building.

"Here, let me show you," Zac said as he placed his hand on Ogras and Catheya's shoulders.

The mysterious vibrations in his body spread over into the two, and they gasped simultaneously.

"What the...!" Ogras exclaimed. "Is it an illusion?"

"No," Zac said with a shake of his head. "It's not quite in phase with our reality, and the seventeen seals created a resonance that has temporarily attuned me to the library. I'm sorry, but I don't think I'll be able to take you inside. The energy will annihilate you."

"Figures," Ogras muttered, but he didn't look overly surprised. But the demon's eyes suddenly widened as he looked at the large brazier by the entrance. "Wait, is that...?"

Zac followed Ogras' gaze, and he realized there was something different about the large brazier. In its center were a dozen shimmering spheres, each the size of an ostrich egg.

"They resemble Fate Kernels, but at the same time, they don't," Ogras hesitated. "I can't sense any Dao from within them. Are they broken?"

"I think they're just empty," Zac said, his eyes lighting up. It looked like his companions wouldn't walk away completely empty-handed. "Stay here. I don't think you can survive passing through that barrier."

"Be careful!" Catheya urged as Zac moved forward.

Zac nodded, but he wasn't too worried. He already felt connected to the building, and each step he took imparted new information. Zac passed through the barrier without issue and found himself standing on the temple's steps. Everything felt normal. The stones were stones, and the air was air. He couldn't feel the Dao at all, but that didn't mean there weren't truths swirling across the temple.

The star radiated... Something. Something incredible, something alien. Was it a Void of Dao, such as the Void of Stars? Zac wasn't certain. Zac shook his head and turned to the brazier. There'd be time to figure out the mysteries within soon enough. Zac wanted to fish out two Fate Kernels for the others, but a burst of information filled his head when he touched the brazier.

A wry smile spread across Zac's face as he hefted two handles. "Oh well."

The First People were more generous than Zac, and a message had asked him to take the brazier and pillar for all fated to enjoy. Zac would personally have opted to keep them for himself or ransom them

out to anyone who arrived, but he chose to follow the message. It wasn't a command, but who knew if some lingering spirit was watching his actions.

Zac first carried the brazier out from the barrier and then the tablet. Both were covered in shimmering light, though Zac could tell they'd only last a day before disintegrating.

"You took them out?" Ogras said with surprise as he walked over.

"I got a message asking me to," Zac shrugged as he stuck his hand into the fire and fished out two eggs. "Here. Don't touch the pillar, or you'll lose a hand, but you could try getting something from it. This fire is also pretty dangerous for normal people, so don't play around with it."

"What should we do with these?" Catheya asked.

"Infuse them with all your Daos according to your path."

The two nodded and quickly got to work. The spheres rapidly transformed under the influence of the Dao. Catheya's egg turned into a crystalline necklace, while Ogras' turned into a weird three-eyed puppet the size of a fist. Each emitted an aura completely in sync with the two, and the energy they contained was just amazing.

"Peak? No, this is even—" Ogras breathed.

Zac could tell these Fate Kernels weren't so simple as to be Peak or even Supreme quality. They were something unique, and their effect might not be as simple as just boosting the efficacy by a certain percentage.

"These are amazing," Catheya whispered. "What about you?"

"I'm taking one just in case," Zac said, though he wasn't sure if even these things were useful to him.

"What about the others? Should we try to sell them?" Ogras asked.

"The one who left the inheritance asked these to be provided to whoever was fated. And they won't last long outside the protective fire," Zac said, not without reluctance. "Uh, but they didn't say anything about selling information."

"Got it," Ogras grinned. "I'll deal with it."

"What about you?" Catheya asked.

"I'm heading inside," Zac said. "These things will disappear in a day or so. No need to wait for me if I'm not out by then. I have no idea how long this will take."

"We'll stay in the area in case you need our help later," Catheya said before grabbing Zac's hand. "Thank you, and be careful."

"Don't listen to her. Take some risks and find something good for me inside," Ogras added, narrowly avoiding an icicle shooting in his direction. "What? Just look at him. The worst that can happen to that guy is him tripping and falling into a hidden treasure room."

Zac laughed as he walked back toward the temple. "Remember, if some lunatic arrives, call for me, and I'll try to come."

A moment later, he was back on the steps and eagerly entered the gates. Zac's vision shuddered as he passed the threshold, and the floating star was suddenly in full view. It hovered just five meters above the ground. Surrounding it were seventeen floating disks, each with a distinct rune pointing toward the sun's center. They looked different, but they reminded Zac of the Dao Spikes he'd seen in the center of the Technocrat Research Base.

As far as Zac could tell, they were there to empower rather than restrain the sun, which seemed to be wholly self-contained. Apart from the sun, there was not much else inside the massive structure. There was a second set of pillars and braziers mirroring those outside. Apart from that, only a simple table was standing right beneath the sun.

Zac hesitated a bit before approaching. The sun drew closer, but no heat was coming from it. Zac breathed in relief, realizing he wouldn't have to withstand the searing heat of an ancient sun. However, something about it still drew its attention. It looked like it was made up of billions of fireflies flying about and crashing into each other. It looked chaotic, but it seemed like there was order to the madness.

There was a mystery within, but Zac's eyes soon turned to the table. Only three things were lying atop it; a crystal, a tome, and in the middle, a tool with a small hammerhead on one side and a pick on the other. Curious, Zac walked over, his eyes turning to the hammer. He'd encountered all kinds of tomes and crystals over the years, but this was the first time he'd seen a simple tool given such a prominent placement.

Zac reached out and touched the pick, and the whole sun shuddered as an immense presence descended. Zac heard a distant scream, but it was immediately drowned out by a booming voice reverberating through his body. Each word was like a clap of heavenly thunder, containing immense will. Each syllable was a hammer hitting an anvil, steady and powerful.

"Master the myriad transformations! Subdue the elements and bend them to your will! Make the Cosmos your forge!"