

## The Fall 1015

### [Chapter 1015 - Cosmic Forge](#)

The firefly sun had turned into a storm that engulfed the whole building, even dragging the flames out of the braziers by the walls. Zac stood in its center, pick hammer in his hand as he looked around with wonder. The billions of fireflies created dazzling patterns that kept changing in incredibly complex ways. Just like he'd sensed before, there were truths hidden in their movements.

An impartment.

As the fireflies danced, a seal started to appear inside his soul aperture. It formed a hidden chamber much like the remnant prison, likely invisible to any outsider. And as the seal appeared, Zac felt his vision split in two. He was looking at the dance around him, yet he was also witnessing a completely different scene—a different life, even.

He stood in an unfamiliar yet familiar room with piles of materials on the floor. Zac took up a piece of glowing rock, and a swirl of fireflies began dancing around his hand. One by one, small seals appeared on the stone, written in the script of the First People. Suddenly, the stone cracked, and he sighed in despondency. But a warm consciousness buffeted him, and the crude scripts detached themselves from the rock before flowing into the air.

They formed a simple dance above Zac's hand in the alternate reality, mirroring the vastly more complex patterns around him. They showed him the true path and the mistakes he'd made, and Zac eventually retrieved a second stone and began anew.

One scene after another appeared in Zac's mind's eye. Years of practice crystallizing into an experienced hand's intuition. It truly felt like it was him experiencing all these experiments. His attempts were based on his understanding and his failures because of his shortcomings. So every time that gentle consciousness showed the way, he gained true skill and comprehension.

Zac had lost all concept of time already. He was fully committed and entranced by the magical technique. All the while, the firefly sun shrunk, and the seal grew. The motes of light weren't expended, though, but rather absorbed by the small stone pick.

Eventually, only a few thousand motes remained, at which point Zac had lived through decades of apprenticeship under a master artisan. Thousands of trials and errors had given him an instinctive understanding of materials and energy. It was a form of information impartment he hadn't encountered before, akin to flowers naturally blooming rather than having things forcibly crammed into his brain. Of course, it couldn't compare to real hands-on experience. However, he had likely saved years on his journey, and the vision had ensured he wouldn't set off on the wrong path.

The remaining starlight formed a small swirl in front of him that turned into a bust of a face of a member of the First People. They looked like a mix of a herbivore dinosaur and a humanoid, with two large black eyes but no nose or ears. Instead of hair, they had back-facing horn-like formations that almost looked like flower petals. Over twenty of them formed a flower at the back of his head.

The bust looked decidedly alien, but Zac got a warm feeling. Zac had never seen this man in the visions, but he could tell it was this man who had guided him through his spiritual apprenticeship.

"I am Dasorm, a Cosmic Pathfinder of the First People," the bust said. "Fate brought you to my forge, and I gift you my creation with no expectation beyond remembering my name. I was not the most powerful of my kin nor the brightest. Neither did I ever cross that final threshold and join the six ancestors."

Zac's heart shuddered when he heard the voice. It was the same as the booming voice that spoke up when he touched the stone pick, but it was gentler this time. It felt like the voice of a patient teacher who had guided him for a large part of his life. His emotions swelled, but he focused to avoid missing anything the long-gone craftsman had to say. Zac could tell this was a recording rather than a lingering spiritual will, and this was likely the first and last time Zac would see his benefactor.

There were a few things he could deduce from that short introduction. First, this wasn't one of the peak inheritances left by one of the six gargantuan beings Zac suspected were Supremacies. However, it was still not far off. Dasorm was just one step below those six, which meant he had to have been one of the top beings in the innermost circles.

Then again, that was probably the case with all the 229 inheritances. There had been millions and millions of cultivators on that platform, but only a few of their creations could become a star heritage.

Dasorm continued. "I was, however, the only Cosmic Pioneer to ever forge an Ancestral Instrument."

As expected. Zac was amazed but not surprised. Even if Zac had only experienced the basic techniques of this master artisan, he could tell Dasorm's methods were unique. Almost heaven-defying. Since the highest-grade cultivators were called ancestors, it was a safe bet that an Ancestral Instrument was something at a similar level.

He took a ragged breath in anticipation, his heart rapidly beating. Zac had been so swept up in that vision that he hadn't fully grasped what he'd been given. A Void-based crafting method, possibly the greatest one of the First People.

Wasn't this perfect? If it had been a cultivation-based heritage, it would probably have been useless except as a reference source. Even if it turned out he could cultivate the Void, he still had his own path to follow. But this? This was amazing. As for the fact it was created in a time without the Dao, Zac wasn't worried. Most people would probably have to refit the technique, but Zac strongly suspected he was an exception.

He'd long since realized there was something special with his relationship to the Void, and the vision of the First People had essentially confirmed it. They had called the Dao poison, and just touching it was like matter and anti-matter colliding. But that wasn't Zac's experience at all. He found no issues activating skills with Void Energy, even if they were based on the Dao.

Zac could even imbue the skills with his Dao Branches, which should be downright impossible. But his bloodline had made the impossible possible, acting as a bridge between the Void and Dao. This was the true marvel of his bloodline, rather than instant skill activation or having an extra energy reserve.

"My creation is called [Cosmic Forge]. No matter your path, no matter the material. Everything can be refined by the Cosmos! At the highest level, the Cosmos itself can be refined! I wish you luck, inheritor!"

With those parting words, the final motes of light entered the pick. Looking around, Zac realized the floating seals had disappeared at some time and had turned into small sigils that lined the handle.

Zac felt a tremendous pull of Void Energy when the final mote of starlight was gone. Luckily, he had been fully replenished by the unique environment while undergoing the impartment, and he let the pick eat its fill. But the pick was like a black hole, and Zac was eventually forced to stop it when he only had 20% of his Void Energy remaining.

At least it was enough to form a preliminary connection to the tool. Zac wasn't sure if the hammer could be considered a Spirit Tool. He could tell it followed a completely different path, but Zac could still sense a connection to the tool like he did with Verun and Alea. Zac wryly smiled, realizing it had only absorbed less than a tenth of a percent of what it required.

Holding the hammer in his hand, he knew what to do. The hammer had to first be filled with Void Energy to recover. The whole inheritance had almost been drained for eons, and it would have been unable to withstand the Heavens for much longer. After the hammer had been replenished, Zac would have to infuse Daos from all seventeen peaks into the tool. By that point, it would be fully stabilized.

Until then, it would be damaged when exposed to the environment. It would be a lot of work, but Zac was confident he'd be able to repair the hammer before leaving the Perennial Vastness. He could even do it while earning Mana in the various Red Zones. Seventeen Missions, seventeen months. That would take him through environments based on all the Dao Peaks. It would provide him the treasures he needed and valuable experience dealing with Daos uncommon in Zecia.

The impartment building felt hollow and empty with the sun gone and the braziers extinguished. Zac sent a command, and the hammer turned into light that entered his Soul Aperture and then the new hidden compartment that had opened up. There, it reformed into a miniature version of the firefly sun and began orbiting the new brand that had appeared.

Zac spent the next thirty minutes scanning the seal, even if the vast majority of the technique was still sealed. The section he could access by infusing his will only covered the concepts displayed in the visions. It was the first chapter, which Dasorm Called [Cosmic Infusion]. It wasn't a method to craft gear, though.

[Cosmic Infusion] contained two techniques. The first was to extract 'Truth and Aether' from a base material. The second technique was to infuse the unique energy into a piece of gear.

For example, he could take a Life-Attuned Natural Treasure and extract its essence before infusing it into a normal dagger. With enough essence, the dagger would turn into a life-attuned weapon. Not only that, but by accepting more energy, its quality would slightly improve.

According to the method, there didn't seem to be a limit to how much essence you could infuse into an item. Of course, the worse the base item, the more demanding the process. Stacking infusions also increased the difficulty. Still, this seemingly simple solution would probably drive most blacksmiths mad with envy.

Even an apprentice blacksmith could craft a decent weapon if they only focused on tempering and shaping. The real difficulty came when you wanted to infuse Dao into the weapon. Even unattuned weapons relied on the Dao, from the Blacksmith's comprehension to his technique. These things would

impact the product. It was doubly true for attuned weapons, which were far more popular. And attunement was something you had to infuse during the forging process. If you wanted to add an affinity later, your options were limited, and none were optimal.

The first alternative was to reforge the item to add attuned materials. This was actually more difficult than just crafting a new one. You didn't only have to retain the old weapon's spirituality, arrays, and pathways, but also infuse new ones that wouldn't clash with the old. There was a high risk of damaging the internal wiring, so to speak. Even if you succeeded, there was a high risk of degrading its quality and potential for growth.

The other alternative was only possible with Spirit Tools, and it was to feed the weapons attuned materials as they grew. This was the path Zac had taken with his Spirit Tools, albeit mostly by accident and necessity. However, there were detriments to this path. Every new item swallowed made the internal workings more complex. The risk of mismatch increased, and gear suffered from impurities just like cultivators.

[Love's Bond] was still fine thanks to the System overseeing the evolutions through the [Divine Investiture Array], though evolving to D-grade would finally exhaust the array he got from the Tower of Eternity. [Verun's Bite] was a lot worse off in that regard. It had swallowed all kinds of weird things over the years. Bones, vampires, dragon blood, and pure Dao of Life. Zac knew he would sooner or later have to slow down its progress and focus on harmonizing and purifying the weapon.

With [Cosmic Infusion], you sidestepped most of the downsides of both these methods. You only extracted the essence of the raw materials, so there were no impurities to speak of. And the infusion process could almost be likened to a rebirth of the material. As long as you succeeded with the infusion, whether it was the first or the fiftieth, it would result in a homogenous item with little to no internal conflicts. In other words, a Spirit Tool as perfect as one created by the System itself.

The biggest downside was that [Cosmic Infusion] could only create single-affinity items on its own. Luckily, the inheritance provided a few hints that wouldn't always be the case. The first chapter was completely unlocked, but it also provided a preview of the next one. It was a companion technique to the first called [Cosmic Extraction].

The details were vague, but it sounded like Zac would be able to extract clashing or unsuitable elements from equipment. For example, if Ogras found an amazing spear attuned with Shadows and Death, then Zac could remove the Dao of Death while keeping the rest intact. Beyond that, Zac had no idea what kind of techniques [Cosmic Forge] held. However, things like fusion and alteration were likely candidates.

Interestingly, there was not a single mention of actually forging equipment in the available information. It all referred to improving existing items. In a sense, it was more accurate to call it a refinement technique than a crafting technique. Of course, judging by Dasorm's introduction, actual crafting techniques would no doubt appear in the later chapters.

It was probably a matter of learning to walk before you could run, where the first chapters set up a solid foundation. It reminded Zac of a documentary he'd seen, explaining how it could take years for a sushi chef apprentice before they were allowed to even touch a sushi knife. First, master how to manipulate "Aether and Truth." Then you could use that knowledge to forge new creations.

Gaining access to the later chapters wasn't gated by his cultivation level or finding more inheritances. It was rather dependent on his progress with the method itself. To unlock [Cosmic Extraction], he needed to imbue a piece of equipment with two Cosmic Cycles. Zac had a decent idea of what that meant going by context clues, and the sudden appearance of a blue screen confirmed his suspicion.

Cosmic Forge (Unique, Inheritance): Infuse a non-mortal item with two Cosmic Cycles. Reward: [Cosmic Extraction]. (0/34)

Zac looked at the quest with annoyance. It really wasn't comfortable having the System all up in his business this way. Still, there was not much to do about it, and he could only focus on the quest. As expected, one Cosmic Cycle was seventeen infusions, one for each Dao Peak.

Neither his visions nor the inheritance fully explained what level an item would reach by being infused seventeen times. But it seemed as though each Cosmic Cycle would upgrade an item by one quality tier. In other words, two cycles would upgrade a Low-quality item to a High-quality one while simultaneously adding an attunement.

That was almost Heaven Defying. [Verun's Bite] appeared in his hand, and he thought back to all the encounters and opportunities that had fed his axe to this point. All that, and the axe still hadn't quite reached Peak quality. It wasn't easy to make an exact estimate, but it was most likely in the upper tiers of a High-Quality Tool Spirit. And that was for now.

There were no guarantees it'd retain its quality after evolving to D-grade. If anything, it was expected for a Tool Spirit to be downgraded a level or two when breaking through to a new grade. Like cultivators, Tool Spirits had limits to their potential, and breaking past those barriers required fortuitous encounters. Sometimes, it simply wasn't possible.

Or so Zac had thought.

Apparently, [Cosmic Forge] could subvert fate and continuously upgrade equipment. Certainly, it required skill, Raw Materials, and there was an element of risk to the process, but there were no such things as an item's bottleneck. As long as he reached a certain level of proficiency, he would be able to turn almost any item into a Peak-quality treasure. Perhaps he would be able to push them to even greater heights.

Zac could see a new path open up before him as he looked down at his companion. Infuse his Daos to elevate the axe to Peak Quality. Extract the clashing elements from all the random things he'd fed Verun. Fuse the essence of his path into the axe, replacing what was removed. Help Verun shatter the chains of its unimpressive origins. Who knew, [Cosmic Forge] might even be the key to helping Alea resurrect.

He took a calming breath, steadying his mental state heart before his thoughts ran amok. The ability was amazing, but he had to remember it was something created in an era before the Dao by a species that considered Dao poison. There were no guarantees it would work as advertised, even with his unique bloodline.

He definitely wouldn't dare use the techniques on [Verun's Bite] or [Love's Bond] until he had ample experience under his belt. He would prefer to unlock a few more chapters of [Cosmic Forge] to see his

options. Still, the gift was almost incomprehensible, and the inheritance was just one of three items left on the table.

There were still two more to go.