

The Fall 1023

[Chapter 1023 - Recreating a Miracle](#)

It was a shame [Cosmic Infusion] didn't work when you wanted to extract the essence of Natural Treasures for his personal use. Instead, Zac opted to rely on his tried and true method of cramming things down his gullet. It hadn't failed him yet.

Zac wound the stalk around the mushroom before cramming it into his mouth. An explosion of three distinct flavors greeted him; an earthy yet delicious flavor from the mushroom, a minty taste from the stalk, and iron from his mouth filling with blood. The stalk was incredibly sharp and had opened dozens of wounds, but Zac ignored the sting as he chewed and swallowed.

The effect was immediate, and Zac's mind expanded to the size of a galaxy. It felt like the Heavens descended to greet him, and he raised his hand to touch the Dao. Of course, the Heavens weren't actually there, but moving his fingers through the energy-dense environment was enough to fill him with inspiration and new ideas.

The Evolutionary Soul in Zac's aperture lit up like a Christmas tree and began to spin furiously like a motor pushed into overdrive. The Inexorable Core couldn't withstand the pressure and was pushed to the side, hiding away while its sibling went crazy. Zac did nothing to stop the madness. He was fully occupied with running his plans and ideas through the filter of his temporary enlightenment.

But the momentum of decades of preparation combined with a raging sea of synthetic insight urged him on. Zac felt like he securely held a corner of the Dao in his hand, with utmost clarity that shed its light on all points of hesitation. He couldn't wait any longer. He needed to create, to usher an expression of his vision into the world.

Dozens of mental streams entered the large emerald, and Zac soon located the mysterious space within. Zac had no idea whether the emerald was a Natural Treasure or an array, but it was far beyond his [Fractal Framework Arrays].

The gemstone empowered and improved every stream of consciousness, and Zac had never felt so in control of his mind. Each string became a master artisan's brush, and an intricate tapestry of patterns started to appear within the arranged space. The emerald was incredible, a tool truly worthy of his undertaking. It didn't only hold the patterns in place while Zac added to the fractal. It nourished and perfected them.

Zac was filled with visions of destruction as he engraved the first sections. Golden roots of endless potential breaking out of the ground, the seas, and the sky. They were everywhere where life existed. They weren't guardians or adjudicators. They were an expression of the primal truths of evolution; rebirth through destruction and survival of the fittest. They cut down all opposition with ruthlessness and efficiency worthy of a hardened veteran.

Cutting, stabbing, binding, consuming. Anything that entered his domain was prey, nourishment to his path. More patterns joined the first, like petals unfurling on a flower. He needed speed. He needed regeneration. He needed unyielding persistence. The more you gave, the more you'd get back. Right now, it was almost impossible to exhaust his Cosmic Energy in his human form. This skill would change that.

In seconds, whole sections of the skill fractal were finished, thanks to his sudden ability to multitask. Furthermore, Zac constantly received detailed feedback telling him of imbalances and imperfections. One man and a gemstone formed a perfect partnership as increasingly complex patterns appeared on the fractal.

It just took fifteen minutes for the skill fractal to gain as many patterns as some of his simpler skills, yet he hadn't even completed a fifth of its final form. In fact, he didn't know exactly how the final fractal would look—some sections his inspiration had him add were completely new. Zac kept going with increasingly manic fervor, uncaring that small cracks had begun to form on the emerald's surface.

He soon felt drained. Creation did not come without a price; the shards in his mind had driven that point home. However, the cosmos yielded to his desire, and a storm of energy was dragged into his body to fuel the process. One vine after another withered and collapsed, and the scars lost some of their radiance. But with their sacrifice came further inspiration. They were like soldiers laying down their lives for a greater cause.

The influx prompted Zac to make a few changes, improving the previously prepared sections. The huge spiral in his mind groaned from exertion, but a beam of pure Mental Energy erupted from the Inexorable Core and nourished its sibling. Another hour passed, and the skill fractal approached its mature form. A form that was very different from the prototype blueprints he'd prepared back on Earth.

However, this time Zac wasn't possessed by the almost delirious state when he created [Pillar of Desolation] and added patterns far beyond his understanding. Everything had a purpose, working together to drag his vision out of his mind into reality. Finally, only the impartment remained.

Zac's heart rippled from nervousness, but he still went ahead with his plan. If he stopped right now, he'd walk away with a powerful Peak-quality skill. However, it wouldn't reach the level of [Pillar of Desolation]. For that skill to exhibit such monstrous power, it required one special ingredient; Oblivion. Back then, the idea to incorporate it had come naturally. This time, he'd have to take a controlled risk.

He extracted a wisp of Creation Energy from his body, and the withered vines in the square suddenly thrashed with hunger. Thankfully, something kept them from entering the meditation circle, allowing Zac to channel the capricious energy through the pathway on his shoulders and then into the emerald.

New cracks and odd distortions appeared across the gemstone, but it managed to curtail the untamable energy as it was dragged toward the skill fractal. Zac didn't try to use the energy like a brush to add specific patterns. He only led it toward a section meant to house whatever it created while maintaining a steady vision of his goal. The wisp crossed the fractal like a small rock dropped into a pond, leaving ripples in its wake.

Small transformations took place wherever it passed, but Zac could tell it wasn't completely random and unhinged. The whole emerald was shaking ominously, but it forced the Creation Energy to create following the rules of the skill fractal. The cracks grew deeper, but Zac forcibly prevented the emerald from cracking by holding it together with his Mental Energy.

A set of runes completely foreign to Zac appeared and seamlessly fused with the rest of the Skill Fractal. Zac spent the next minute analyzing the patterns and estimating whether the new addition had created any imbalances. But no matter how he looked, it seemed perfect. The skill was fully formed.

It appeared the emerald agreed, or perhaps it was simply that it couldn't withstand the process any further. The large gemstone shattered, releasing a mysterious ripple of elevated Daos. At the epicenter, the skill fractal hovered, still protected by the special space. Zac quickly surrounded the fractal with a blob of Mental Energy before dragging it into his body.

Meanwhile, he cut off a section of his pathways on the low of his back, opening up the skill slot just behind where his Cosmic Core would be. The skill fractal was slotted in place, and Zac spent ten minutes connecting his pathways with the skill. Slotting a completely new skill without the System's help was quite painful, but it was nothing compared to some other things Zac had endured over the years.

The final connector was fused, and Zac exhaled with relief upon feeling his Cosmic Energy smoothly pass through the skill fractal. At the same time, a refreshing surge of energy filled cells, filling him with power. He felt as though he'd gained a new limb and knew the formation was a success. The skill worked and could be activated without any trouble.

Now, the question was just how good a skill he'd created. Zac eagerly opened his Skill Screen and found the new entry.

[E] Primal Edict - Proficiency: Middle. The fate of the world is dictated by the deadliest predator. Upgradeable.

Zac nodded with satisfaction. He'd already suspected as much during the formation process, but confirming that the skill had reached Middle Proficiency from the get-go was still nice. He'd actually been able to stop much earlier in the process. But he, the square, and the emerald had more to give. Since he would have to use the skill with his life on the line very soon, Zac had opted to push himself further.

It was impossible to say exactly how [Primal Edict] would work without using it first, but it should be an explosion of vines appearing to rip everything apart. Not only that, but he had added multiple sections at his height of inspiration that should create synergy with many of his other skills. The naming sense also hinted it was a creation more in line with Evolutionary Stance than drawing upon the mythos of Arcadia.

The big question was what kind of changes the infusion of Creation had lent to the skill. Another uncertainty was whether the skill could be considered at the same grade as [Pillars of Desolation]. The Skill Screen, unfortunately, didn't provide any hints in that regard, but the surge of power he'd felt before indicated there was another place he could check. So Zac opened his Status Screen, where more answers waited.

Name Zachary Atwood

Level 150

Class [E-Epic] Edge of Arcadia

Race [D] Human - Void Emperor (Corrupted)

Alignment [Zecia] Atwood Empire – Baron of Conquest

Titles [...] The Second Step, Singular Specialist, Apex Attainment, Runic Progenitor, Grand Achievement

Limited Titles Tower of Eternity Sector All-Star - 14th, Equanimity, Big Axe Gladiator, The Final Twilight - 1st, Gates of Rebirth

Dao Branch of the War Axe - Middle, Branch of the Kalpataru - Middle, Branch of the Pale Seal - Middle
Core [E] Duplicity

Strength 31300 [Increase: 164%. Efficiency: 372%]

Dexterity 14173 [Increase: 121%. Efficiency: 259%]

Endurance 26880 [Increase: 155%. Efficiency: 372%]

Vitality 25558 [Increase: 153%. Efficiency: 389%]

Intelligence 4429 [Increase: 115%. Efficiency: 259%]

Wisdom 9495 [Increase: 122%. Efficiency: 272%]

Luck 777 [Increase: 134%. Efficiency: 289%]

Free Points 0

Nexus Coins [D] 13 253 160

Mana 41 023

Just as expected. The surge of power before wasn't just the result of restoring the energy circuit in his body. It came from an influx of Attributes Points awarded by the System.

Adding another skill to improve his lethality was the biggest reason he'd created a new skill, but it wasn't the only one. He'd been waiting to claim the [Runemaker]-title since he first upgraded his first set of skills back in the Twilight Ocean. It was the reward for creating a Peak Quality Skill from scratch and the final readily available title he could gain before breaking through.

That specific title hadn't appeared on his Status Screen, but Zac knew that was good news as he focused on the title.

[Runic Progenitor: Create a path-bound supreme-quality skill while still in E-grade. Reward: Base Attributes +100, Luck +10, All attributes +10%, Effect of Attributes +10%.]

The difference in phrasing was only a single word. [Runic Erudition] had said "form" a skill, while [Runic Progenitor] said create. It didn't seem like a big difference, but Zac knew how much greater the difficulty had been. Forming [Pillar of Desolation] was a great achievement, but it ultimately built upon the signature skill of an Epic Class; [Profane Seal].

The foundations required to create something from scratch were far greater, which was also shown by the fact the new title was far better than [Runic Erudition]. Zac hadn't risked his life as he had for some of his other top-tier titles, but getting it was only possible through a series of lucky encounters.

Truthfully, Zac knew he was a bit lucky. He had originally planned on visiting Red Zones from all 17 Dao Peaks before creating his skill. Being inundated in those environments had broadened his understanding

of the Dao itself, and he had hoped to use that understanding to control the Creation Energy at the final step. Now, he had been forced to create the skill early, which partly left things to chance.

That wasn't the only thing. Without the lake water, he would never have reached his current attainments in fractals. Without access to a region like the Keys of Ascension, he wouldn't have managed to push the skill from a Peak Quality to supreme skill. Luck and hard work had come together to create another miracle.

Getting a second supreme pathbound skill was exactly what Zac had hoped for. Of course, Zac didn't quite know how to feel about the fact that neither of the two supreme skills used his axe as a base. Instead, they were supplementary skills designed to fill similar purposes. Still, Zac couldn't complain. This was exactly what he'd aimed for.

Better yet, the good news didn't end with a supreme skill and a top-tier title. [Runic Progenitor] had even brought a friend.

[Grand Achievement: Gain 50 Titles while in E-Grade. Reward: Effect of Attributes +6%.]

[Runic Progenitor] was his 50th title when you included Limited Titles, the [Pathstrider]-title which marked him for 'further training,' and the weird hidden title for the Terminus. Reaching the milestone awarded him a companion title to [Achievement Hunter]. It worked and was named similarly to his stacking Luck-based titles, where he got a second title instead of replacing his old one with a slightly better variant.

The net gain was significant, especially thanks to the double injection of efficiency. Gaining 10% and 6% respectively meant his effective attribute pool had been boosted by almost 17%. It was a huge improvement, especially considering how overbearing his raw attributes already were. Add to that both an increase and flat attributes, and his combat strength should have increased by roughly 20% in just under two hours.

With such an improvement, his skills would become even harder for his enemies to deal with. His defenses would become unbreakable, his attacks unstoppable. A smile tugged at Zac's lips upon seeing the 777 Luck on his Status Screen. If such an auspicious number couldn't help him get the last pieces needed for his Core Formation and Omnitool, then nothing would.

Zac was just about to close the status screen when he noticed a final change. Or rather lack of change. His Mana was the same as before he entered the Keys of Ascension.

"I got a bounty?" Zac whistled.

"Yup! Not bad," Null confirmed. "The peak reward for new skills is 2,500 Mana. Getting 1,000 is quite rare."

"Such a good skill only awarded 1,000?" Zac grimaced.

"Well, these bounties are different from your blueprint evaluation," Null said. "It's based on novelty and a new application of Dao. But the System and boss are both so ancient. What's really new under the sky? The Dao evolves and changes a bit, and the young thousands of generations help fill the gaps. Getting 1,000 is already quite generous, and I think it's completely thanks to your Dao of Life. You know, less than 5% of guests manage to get this kind of bounty during their visit."

"Well, it's better than nothing," Zac agreed.

Zac's head felt like both mush and a squeezed-out rag after pushing beyond his limits for over an hour. He just wanted to lie down and sleep, but he took a Soldier Pill and got up on unsteady legs. In 20 minutes, he'd be charged for a third hour, and Zac wanted to be gone before then.

Even then, Zac couldn't resist trying to snatch a few of those mysterious vines. They'd withered during his skill formation, but they were already starting to radiate powerful waves of Pure Life again. They'd make great materials. Unfortunately, when Zac cut one off, it turned to ash while all its brethren hid underground.

Thank God he hadn't tried that before beginning the skill creation.

Zac shook his head and began his descent toward the exit. The return was much more difficult to endure. His mind was exhausted, lowering his defenses against the constant impressions around him. He almost stepped off the path a few times but eventually left in one piece. Zac hurried back over the bridge and returned to his mansion, where he fell into a deep slumber.

He only woke up a full twelve hours later, feeling mostly refreshed. Two new messages were waiting for him, both from Catheya and Kruta. Zac sent a message to Kruta before activating the teleportation array. It opened, but he didn't step through. Instead, Catheya walked over, radiating a mist of chilled Miasma to shield her from the Pure Life on the peak.

"Hello, beautiful," Zac smiled.

"I knew it. You have the face of a child who's up to no good. Vastness City is abuzz, and people are rushing toward the battlefield you've talked about," Catheya said, a helpless smile tugging at her lips. "What have you done this time?"