

## The Fall 1037

### [Chapter 1037 - Sendor](#)

Zac felt Sendor's starry eyes bore into him, and the pressure made it difficult to gather his thoughts. He felt like an ant put under the magnifying glass, his fate to be decided by the whims of the giant wielding the glass. Zac had been annoyed by the lack of interest in his Specialty Core and Bloodline when he first entered the Perennial Vastness, but he now desperately longed for that kind of disregard.

At the same time, Zac was excited. The man said it himself; Sendor was ancient when the Limitless Empire came around and most likely already a powerful entity. Did he know the secrets of his bloodline? Had he met Emperor Limitless? Did he know the truth about Laondio and Karz?

The scrutinizing gaze eventually relented, and Zac released a breath he didn't know he'd held until now.

"You're a pretty interesting brat," Sendor grinned as he gave Zac a thumbs-up, the image once more clashing with the transcendent master who'd just stared down the Heavens. "Not bad, killing one of those little imperials. Always walking around in my domain like they own the place."

"No thanks to you," Zac muttered but immediately regretted it.

Sendor's lacking energy and laid-back demeanor made Zac momentarily forget that he wasn't just some cantankerous old man. He was an entity at the level of Supremacies who'd lived far longer than most planets. Thankfully, it didn't look like the Perennial Vastness minded Zac's lacking manners.

"I guess that's my bad," the avatar laughed. "I was curious what would happen with the seal in the air. The storms the pillars generate can lead to surprising outcomes. I didn't get anything useful, but you still performed valiantly, even if your final blow was a shortcut. How about this? I'll make it up to you. What do you want?"

Zac inwardly complained, even if he didn't dare show anything but deference after his previous faux pas. Was he a magnet for weird and shameless old monsters? Or were they all like that? Reaching the limits of cultivation wasn't accomplished by measured and reasonable people.

"One second," Zac said.

He desperately wanted answers, but there were more pressing matters, so he hurried over to Kruta's side. The barbarian was growing increasingly pallid from the blood loss, and he seemed unable to expel the force of Valsa's light when unconscious. However, just as Zac was about to take out his healing pills, he heard an impatient grunt.

With that, the wounds were just gone. Even the bone stump had been replaced by a proper leg. Not only that, but Zac felt his own body heal in a process that was even more effective than when he used Creation Energy. Even the Dao Mold in his mind was repaired, and the motes of Oblivion stuck in its cracks were ejected into his Soul Aperture.

The only thing that wasn't restored to its original state was the energy he'd spent, both his own and the remnants'. His longevity hadn't recovered from reforging his arm either. Still, his Dao Mold getting repaired had saved him over a year and would allow him to head out again immediately without worry about not being in peak condition.

Zac hadn't sensed any energy, just like when his Duplicity Core was sealed. It was like reality had just changed per Sendor's will. Or had he rewound time, returning their bodies to a previous state? Either case, it was an incredible ability, especially since it seemingly worked on anything, from wounds to recreating a whole world. Zac's eyes turned to the unmoving puppet atop the dais.

It didn't emit any energy, but it hadn't been the first time Zac saw it either. Was Saeward back? If so, would it remember him interrupting his breakthrough?

"He won't jump at you again," Sendor said, grinning at Zac's hesitance. "Don't feel bad, brat. He would have failed whether you came crashing into his array or not. Like he's done a thousand times. He's never gotten past the fifth bolt, even when aided by one of you brats."

"What?"

Sendor didn't immediately answer. Instead, Zac suddenly felt like time was going out of control. He took a few shaky steps to distance himself from the puppet, but the whole atrium was going out of control. In seconds, Zac had seen the puppet stand up on the dais and face heavenly tribulation dozens of times. The details differed slightly each time, but the end was the same; a scorched, broken puppet unmoving on the ground.

"Saeward hoped to trick the Heavens and reincarnate using the captive souls of his followers in a loop of war and despair," Sendor smiled. "This scenario was actually his eighth 'final stand,' and the one where he'd finally accumulated enough impetus to make his attempt. Alas, he fell one step short of success, and the Heavens disintegrated his soul."

"Then this world..." Zac said.

"Saeward's choices, this thread of fate... It has potential. Perhaps not with the Heavens in its current state. Perhaps not with the variables you little brats introduced this time. But it has the potential to show me something interesting. So I disentangled the scenario from the river of time. I freed the suffering souls and replaced them with my own creations. Every Cosmic Gallery, the scenario starts anew."

Sendor looked back at the puppet, and Zac shuddered as he saw the look in the man's eyes. He still had a playful expression as he looked at Saeward dying repeatedly, but there was a terrifying coldness within his gaze. Not the coldness of hatred or animosity. It was the chill of complete and utter indifference to life and death.

It was beyond the morbid detachment cultivators gained as they walked over the corpses of their enemies on the path of cultivation. It was akin to the unfeeling callousness of the System, where right and wrong didn't matter. Saeward's soul being locked into that puppet in an eternal cycle of suffering wasn't even a punishment. It was just an experiment that may or may not produce results.

"Saeward's soul will continue to toil until he provides me with an answer. A solution that moves the tapestry closer to completion."

Zac slowly nodded, putting two and two together. He finally understood the origin of the various zones and the role he and the other guests played. The realms of the Perennial Vastness were seeds of potential collected by Sendor. The guests of the Cosmic Galleries would enter the realms, introducing

variables of randomness to the experiments. And because the Heavens were still healing and moving toward perfection, the experiments had to be continuously performed.

"What happens when you get the answer?" Zac asked.

"The Stand of Saeward will be retired, replaced by another scenario."

"Then, the Quarry?" Zac ventured.

"It's functionally the same," Sendor nodded. "You closed the loop by accepting the inheritance and desire of Solevur. The Quarry will no longer appear in future Cosmic Galleries as it has no more potential to extract."

Saeward eventually stopped moving in the distressing cycle of despair as the castle returned to the state where he'd just failed his tribulation but before Valsa arrived. The rubble from the broken dais reappeared, and Zac could even feel his Dao inside the marks on the ground. From within Saeward's broken frame, two lights suddenly flew up. One moved to Zac, while the other stopped over the still-unconscious Kruta.

"Your prize for reaching the end of the scenario," Sendor explained.

"What's this?"

"It's the remains of a Natural Treasure. Saeward called it the Embryo of the Wargod, which is both inaccurate and a bit boastful," Sendor laughed. "I call it a [Warstone]. Saeward stumbling onto this thing is how he cooked up this scheme. If you use this shard as a basis for your core, it will naturally generate a bit of energy as you fight. A pretty useful feature for someone walking a path full of Conflict."

Zac curiously looked at the small stone in his hand and felt the waves of Pure Conflict from within. Just holding it almost made Zac feel like he'd eaten another [Rageroot Oak Seed], even if his mind remained completely clear. Still, his Dao Avatar stirred, and it began its dance between his two cores, swinging its axes in deadly arcs.

The truths of his Branch of the War Axe soon coursed through his veins, which made the stone release even more energy. It was like the resonance between two tuning forks, where two frequencies empowered each other. Thankfully, it only took a thought for the Dao Avatar to stop and sit down, and the [Warstone] calmed down soon after.

"Conflict breeds conflict," Zac muttered, placing the stone into a box and stowing it away.

"Exactly," Sendor said as the stone hovering above Kruta's body shot into the Spatial Ring on his hand.

Unfortunately, no quest had been triggered, but Zac believed the barbarian would still be happy with the sudden windfall. Mortals were the only ones who required precious treasures to form their cores, but that didn't mean Cultivators couldn't benefit from them. The [Warstone] perfectly complemented Kruta's path, and infusing its essence would elevate the resulting core.

Getting the [Warstone] and securing the final item he needed for his Core Formation was exactly what he'd hoped for when setting the course for the Stand of Saeward. Still, it wasn't enough to forget the real opportunity that had presented itself. So Zac quickly turned to Sendor before he could change his mind or flash away.

"You said you'd make it up to me just now. I'd like some answers," Zac said, the words spilling out his mouth. "You've seen my bloodline when you inspected me. Can you tell me more about it? How is it related to the Limitless Empire? Is it the bloodline of the Limitless Emperor or someone else?"

"As expected," Sendor nodded. "Honestly, I couldn't believe my eyes when I sensed the aura of the Void Emperor on you. Of course, it's oddly inverted, but the truth couldn't hide from me. What do you—"

Sendor's words were interrupted by another rumble in the sky. It wasn't the imperial who had returned, but the new arrival was still someone familiar. The gathering clouds crackled with power, and Zac felt a vast presence lock onto the area. It felt like time had frozen, yet it wasn't really the case. Zac couldn't move, but he saw Sendor scratch the base of his antlers as he looked up.

"You don't want me to speak?" Sendor said as a mischievous smile spread across his lips. "What are you scheming, you troublemaker? Still, I've never been one to—"

A loud rumble far surpassing the roars of the Planur Supremacy shook the Stand of Saeward, perhaps all of the Pennial Vastness. Or, for all Zac knew, it could be across all creation, judging by the unfettered force gathering in the clouds above. The stars shattered, unable to withstand the presence of the descent.

Zac had never seen the System gather so much energy, not even close. Even Alvod Jondir's ascent to autarchy didn't create such a scene. And this was just the start. An enormous swirl appeared above their heads, but it didn't unleash a torrent of heavenly punishment upon the lands. Instead, a seemingly innocuous item descended from its center.

It was a blue silk scarf, two hands wide, no longer than two meters end to end. There were no runes or engravings on it, but a spatter of dark spots covered one of the sides. It didn't look like anything special, but that only meant Zac was too ignorant to understand what was going on. Odd fluctuations rippled around it, creating scars that made Zac's hair stand on end.

It wasn't space that was being frayed, creating Spatial Tears. Reality itself couldn't withstand the piece of cloth and crumbled in front of Zac's eyes. Zac could tell even the Dao was twisting and turning as Eternal truths were coming undone. Meanwhile, cracks spread across the ground, and it looked like the Stand of Saeward would face a second calamity.

"Fine, fine!" Sendor screamed with alarm as a hairline crack appeared on one of his antlers. "Take that thing away. Are you trying to kill your dear friend?!"

Zac still wanted answers. But as things stood, he far more desired for the System to take that thing away. The scarf was far scarier than any tribulation lightning. It wasn't a trial to be overcome—that seemingly unassuming scarf held the Armageddon within its threads.

Thankfully, the System didn't seem intent on going to war with the Perennial Vastness, and the scarf was dragged back into the swirling vortex. The unfathomable aura of catastrophe lingered for a few seconds like an unspoken warning before it and the clouds dispersed.

"Damn, so touchy," Sendor swore as he looked up at the sky, once more donning the expression of a disappointed elder. "Too few of us old hands left for you to go around waving those things around. And

you know the others all have a few screws loose. Who are you going to reminisce with if I'm not around?"

"That's..." Zac said, finding his voice no more than a whisper. "What was that?"

"Oh, just some old thing the System keeps around. One of its safeguards to make sure people play by its rules," Sendor said with an annoyed wave, looking at Zac with mixed emotions. "Sorry, kiddo, looks like I can't put my hand into this matter. The Terminus Council is mostly forgotten, but their will and Karma still spread through all creation like a web. That scenario is far from over."

"Terminus Council," Zac muttered.

The words were almost like a spell, and Zac felt a storm of fate crashing down at him. However, the feeling was stopped by the receding clouds gathering for one final bout of fury. Karma was erased and fate subverted, and the clouds drifted apart. The System was leaving, but it imparted Zac with a final message before it was gone.

[Beware the Terminus.]

Zac didn't dare speak the words again, his heart still hammering from the series of events. Just what was going on? Why didn't the System want him to know the truth? Was it an enemy or a friend? Truthfully, it felt like the System had protected him this time around.

It seemed too early to dig into the truth of his origin, but Zac still felt he was a few steps closer. For one, Sendor had confirmed the existence of the Void Emperor without Zac mentioning it. The revelation further indicated that his original theory was off; Karz wasn't the Limitless Emperor. Still, Zac's instincts told him the two were connected somehow.

Was the Limitless Empire perhaps run by two people, where one stood in the light while the other moved in the shadows? It seemed entirely possible when remembering Karz's temperament in his Bloodline Visions. Or was Karz a member of this 'Terminus Council'? But if that was the case, why did Zac need to be wary of it? Were they the reason history seemed to have mostly forgotten about a cultivator who could infinitely improve his affinities?

"What a mess," Sendor muttered as he drew a finger across his antler, which dragged Zac out of his thoughts. "That's all the information you'll get for now. Sometimes, scary things come crawling out when you turn over old stones. Ask for something else instead."

Zac nodded in agreement, noticing that the antler was already whole. Zac didn't know why, but it felt like Sendor was partly pretending when looking so frazzled at the scarf's appearance. Still, there was a nugget of truth to the fear in his eyes, but Zac decided to put the matter aside. He could slowly pull on these threads later. There were still benefits to be had.

His gaze immediately turned to Valsa's Spatial Ring in his hand. A princess sent on an important mission by a Supremacy surely had to be drowning in wealth. However, his experience with Uona's Spatial Ring made him afraid to infuse even a sliver of Mental Energy into the Spatial Tool. What if Vastermal Planur had marked it? He didn't even trust K'Rav to deal with this thing.

But if anyone could remove its hidden traps, it would be the man in front of him.

"The Imperial Clans have targeted me, and I think the key to figuring out their plots is within this ring," Zac coughed. "With your unfathomable means, perhaps you could help me unlock it?"

"Nice try," Sendor said with a roll of his eyes. "Do I look like a graverobber to you?"

He'd been rejected outright, but Zac wasn't about to give up. "The events just now were outside the bounds of Lord Sendor's trial and affected my ability to gather Mana. How about some..."

"I would, but the System won't allow me to give out things left and right. You saw how stingy it is. I have to follow the framework," the avatar interjected with a clearly disingenuous smile.

"Then... There are two remnants in..."

"Go find them yourself; you have the strength," Sendor lazily said, his enthusiasm clearly waning. "I can give you a small hint related to them, though. Combine their energies, and you'll be awarded 25,000 Mana."

Zac inwardly grumbled at how stingy this guy was, but he refused to give in. "You saw how the imperials acted because of my seal. They'll probably keep cheating on the outside. If you can't help me with the ring, then could you leave me with my memories of their identities intact? Or perhaps teach me a way to hide the aura of my seal?"

"I guess I could edit your seal only to guard the secrets of my realm," Sendor shrugged. "I don't really care if you start messing with the other guests after you're gone. However, a little brat like you can't hide the winds of fate the Seals of the Left Imperial Palace radiate. That array inside your body will trick even Autarchs, though. Of course, it'll only work if you keep it running."

"Kruta's seal too," Zac quickly added. "He also suffered from this injustice and deserves to understand the threat upon leaving."

"Fine, but that's it, brat."

Zac quickly nodded in thanks. It didn't completely solve the issue, but it was a start. Zecia was already sealed, so Leandra's array would be enough during the war. He had only been discovered inside the Perennial Vastness since he didn't even know it was possible to expose sealholders. He'd never bothered keeping Leandra's Array active inside the Perennial Vastness either since he constantly shifted between his forms.

On the outside, he always ensured it was active when going off-world, so he didn't need to change anything. And with Sendor allowing him to remember all the names and faces of the other guests, he would be far better off than before. Still, Zac felt it insufficient. This shameless old man had let a Supremacy plot against him just because he was curious about what would happen. The name of a council he had no way to investigate, and a small adjustment to his seal didn't feel like enough of a restitution.

Unfortunately, Sendor saw through Zac's thoughts and waved his sleeve at Zac with annoyance. "Brat, didn't you hear me when I talked with Vastermal? You can't get too greedy. Ai, I need to go into seclusion. What was the System thinking, bringing that inauspicious thing into my body?"

Sendor was gone before he finished his sentence, preventing Zac from asking for anything else. However, his voice returned a second later. "Oh, if you want to pick that thing up, you'd better hurry. The other brats will soon sense it."

Zac was about to ask what Sendor was talking about, but he felt his vision shift. It stretched out from the castle gates and across the now-desolate battlefield and into the isolating shroud where he fought Valsa the first time. There, he spotted a dozen corpses lying among dried weeds. There was also the deep crack from [Arcadia's Judgment], from which a floating sigil had emerged, releasing increasingly powerful ripples of truth.

An outer court seal.