

The Fall 1060

[Chapter 1060 - Fate Divided](#)

Lova looked at the departing clouds with marvel through the dimensional chute. She could still feel the tapestry of red on her retinas while comparing the spectacle with her own breakthrough all those years ago. Her blood-steeped path had resulted in a furious tribulation, but it was nothing compared to this. That final bolt, especially... Would she have survived if it were her?

No.

There were no ifs and buts. The Carnage World, the Heart of Madness, or the ancient curse wouldn't have been enough to protect her against that power. Just how had he accomplished such a thing? Just scattering the wrath used techniques she'd never heard of, but it was nothing compared to his uncanny ability to consume the lightning. Where did all the energy go? She couldn't sense a speck of it on his body.

Was it the Void? Did it truly have such a powerful ability? It shouldn't be possible. The Void was impossible to grasp for most, but it followed the Law of Balance. Whatever field or defense he managed erect shouldn't be able to stand up to that amount of energy. Nothing in the E-grade should, really.

The curiosity that had called her over in the first place burned hotly, but she calmed the waves before she lost control. She had her own path to tread. Besides, harming the boy would be akin to dropping a stone on her foot. Only Esmeralda could help her get that item, but the old thief needed to regain her strength before they could set out.

Unfortunately, it didn't look like everyone had the same considerations.

"Why are you hiding like that?" Lova said as she pointed at the side, prompting an annoyed grunt as the Arcane Ogre was exposed.

"You little maniac, are you trying to bring a calamity down on my head?" Engo frowned. "With this level of attention from the Boundless Heavens, us old hands might get implicated if spotted."

"The cosmos will eventually come to collect. That is the price of our actions," Lova smiled, though there was a chill in her eyes. "Besides, if not for the baleful impulses in your heart, I wouldn't have found you."

"Baleful impulses?" Engo snorted. "You reveled in blood and fell karma for too long, to the point you're seeing ghosts of your sins in the shadows."

"Perhaps," Lova said as she turned back toward the spatial opening. "Fate is gathering, and this boy is an important piece. The Dao is coming alive from the pillar's ascent. Some might see this as their final opportunity to erect their Heavenly Territory."

"You're talking like I'm out to harm the kid," Engo scoffed. "So what if I'm benefiting slightly from his providence? He's not hurting from it, and I've paid the price. His success is only possible because of my help in the first place."

"Providence is a mysterious concept," Lova countered, not bothering to argue about the 'price'.

Like this boy wouldn't stumble onto the inheritance of the First People on his own, with his fate and affinity to the Void? The old ogre had essentially stolen an opportunity and given it back, wanting to use it to force a Karmic debt. People really grew more shameless the older they got.

"Who knows how a small nudge will affect the future?"

"Are you any different? You were here long before me, and I can sense the strings you've tied to the brat," Engo countered. "You should be able to tell something is wrong, even with Master obscuring the details. He's like a bundle of paradoxes, bound to get himself killed sooner or later by tempting the Heavens like this. Before that, why don't we—"

"How disappointing," Lova sighed, glancing at the ogre. "To think that a Trinity Tome of the Smerian Archives has reached this point. So much for the untainted pursuit of knowledge."

"My purpose remains the same. Unearthing the mysteries of his body can have untold benefits for everyone," Engo said. "Besides, you do not have the ability to stop me unless you unseal your murderous heart. I think you forget I too had some renown on the outsi—"

The Ogre's words were cut short as both he and Lova turned toward Mount Illumination. Something had changed within the boy's body, but their vantage disappeared as the spatial opening was forcibly sealed shut. Lova sighed with disappointment. Something interesting was just about to happen, but it was cut short before she had the chance to investigate.

"Damnit! A dimensional blockade!" Engo growled, his inlaid staff appearing in his hand.

"I thought I made my wishes clear just now."

"Lord Sendor," Engo gasped as the Realm Spirit formed an avatar in front of them. "I was just—"

"I know what you were thinking," Sendor said with a lazy wave of his hand. "I've looked the other way as you kids borrowed the fate of the guests or investigated their opportunities. It was a small matter compared to the value you bring to my undertaking. But this one you cannot interfere with."

A ripple shook the whole sky as the crystal on Engo's staff shattered. Lova shook her head upon seeing the madness in his eyes as a storm of runes spilled out of the broken container. Each pattern was a world unto its own, holding enough power to either create a reality or seal one. Each rune held a corner of the Heavens. To form even one was no doubt centuries of work. The old Ogre was going all out.

A seal on the Dao itself was enforced on the dimensional pocket. Lova opted not to fight back as the scholar's aura rose to shake the sky. So much for keeping a low profile. A false territory and an A-grade array cut off the whole sector of the Immemorial Realm, turning it into a kingdom ruled by Engo alone.

Sendor frowned as a dark pattern appeared on his avatar's right shoulder, and his antlers dimmed from having a part of his body usurped. Of course, Sendor wasn't in any real danger—Lova wasn't sure if it was even possible to kill the old Realm Spirit at this point.

He had worked so long on his expansion, all to accomplish his dream of becoming a true universe with himself as its Heaven. Meanwhile, his core was gone, turned into a Heavenly Territory that suffused his whole body. With his boundless energy and with his lack of weak spots, he was an impenetrable fortress.

But with a body the size of a Multiversal Quadrant, it wasn't easy to focus his power on a small location. It wasn't a natural state for him, after all. A genius like Engo was able to create a short window of opportunity by exploiting that weakness. He only had a short window before he had to flee, but the Ogre was clearly prepared for this moment.

It would only take a moment to capture the child and teleport away. Lova hesitated whether she should unseal herself after all, but a golden rune flickered on Sendor's shoulder, and the Heavenly Pattern shattered like the runes were made of glass rather than the Grand Dao itself.

"How disappointing," Sendor said as he wiped away the lingering traces of his bindings.

Lova's heart shuddered upon seeing how effortlessly he'd unsealed himself. How was this possible? Sendor was a creature of antiquity who reached his peak in the earliest days of the System. Since then, he'd been stuck at an impasse, and his abilities had long since been spread. Had he finally made a breakthrough? Or had he been fooling the world all this time?

This control, this focus... It shouldn't be possible... Unless his avatars weren't actually avatars?

"You—" Engo said, perhaps even more shocked.

The Ogre's eyes were opened wide as he looked at his 'master' in disbelief. Lova could understand his confusion. Engo had spent over a million years inside the Perennial Vastness, and the scholar likely thought he knew every secret of its lord. Now, his gambit had failed and he didn't even get to plead for mercy before he was swallowed by a vortex.

"I let that brat become a follower thanks to his profound theoretical knowledge. Not many have had the chance to study the heritages of three different Eras. To think he'd waste it all on a foolish plan like this. He should have understood the fate of that child is not something that can be used by an outsider."

"Similar things have been done before," Lova commented after gathering her bearings. "Like the Dragon Emperor and Lord River."

"I guess you kids would look at it that way," Sendor said. "But those events were different. They didn't borrow fate, they received it. You should put the matter aside. Introducing the two troublemakers to each other should be the limit to your interference. Any more and you might bring calamity to yourself."

"What—"

"Don't ask," Sendor said, shaking his head. "Suffice it to say, Engo will continue his work in another form. Work hard on your rebirth. Things are moving much faster than any of us expected. You'll have to speed up if you want a chance to fish in these waters."

"Is he going to be okay?" Lova asked.

"Who knows?" Sendor said, a smile spreading across his face. "He never seems to do things the way he's supposed to. I guess that's what makes him so interesting."

Zac screamed as he fell onto the ground, his vision swimming from pain that almost drove him mad. The energy draw and the barrier weren't the only surprises his mother's clan had left him. The pulses and

tearing pain came from two sources; the Duplicity Core and the [Quantum Gate]. The mysterious Hidden Node was releasing one shockwave after another, which then harmonized with the Duplicity Core to form extraordinarily dangerous currents.

Not a single corner of his body was spared from the horrifying agony. Even his Soul Aperture was invaded, and new cracks appeared on both cores and aperture walls. Trying to seal the [Quantum Gate] did nothing. Any Dao, Mental Energy, or Miasma he tried to summon to his aid was affected by the pulse and ripped out of his control.

His horror only mounted when even his bloodline failed him. In fact, it felt like he'd suddenly lost connection to it altogether. Had some safety protocol been triggered, where the [Quantum Gate] tried to neutralize him after noticing something like an unauthorized breakthrough? The possibility was all-too-real, but Zac refused to entertain the thought since he was unable to stop it.

Instead, Zac furiously wracked his brain, trying to maintain a semblance of clarity as he analyzed what was happening. If it wasn't a kill switch, then the [Quantum Gate] was trying to do something else. Something he hadn't prepared for with his Core Formation plan. Something that didn't take into account his having completely diverged from Kayar-Elu's original script.

But no matter how Zac looked, it seemed as though the [Quantum Gate] tried to disintegrate him with energy-dense vibrations. His cells were tenuously holding on, resisting the assault with the help of two constitutions and his Eoz Hidden Nodes. Yet, it was a losing battle. Damage spread into the depths of his cells, like cracks left behind by the remnants.

The same was true for his soul, and even his newly formed Cosmic Core seemed to be going out of control. Then, he finally grasped a clue. A puff of Life appeared as a few of his cells finally collapsed close to the pathways on his shoulders. He also saw something familiar just before the cells crumbled. For a moment, they had turned intangible.

Zac's eyes widened as a shocking possibility struck him. If he was wrong, he'd die without a doubt. But that could be said to be true in his current state too, and there was no time to observe any further. He could tell he was approaching a point beyond salvation, and he furiously put thoughts into action.

Dense opalescent clouds were dragged out of the Evolutionary Soul Swirl, and a bump began growing on his forehead. At first, it was no larger than a raisin, but it twisted and creaked as a storm of Creation entered it. In seconds, it was the size of a watermelon, and that was just the beginning. The tumor grew arms and legs while its upper part separated into a head and torso. Centuries' worth of Longevity was lost as Zac created a perfect copy of himself, attached to his forehead. Abyssal eyes full of pain stared into a set of similarly black orbs.

The powerful pulses from the [Quantum Gate] had already spread into the avatar, and Zac did nothing to stop it. Instead, Zac took a fearful breath as he forcibly quelled his bloodlines and Hidden Nodes. Without his body fighting back, he felt the situation rapidly deteriorate. However, the surrender no longer suppressed and distorted the Technocrat pulses, letting the waves between real body and clone harmonize.

At that moment, Zac made his move. The spiritual framework he'd worked on for over a decade stirred as he activated the ultimate survival method of [Thousand Lights Avatar]. The technique wasn't really

ready for this kind of use, and Zac felt a powerful resistance. It was like the avatar was fastened to his body by thousands of small chains.

Pain and madness urged Zac on, and a dense cloud of extermination was squeezed out of his Inexorable Soul Swirl. It spread throughout the [Thousand Lights Avatar], strengthening it while Oblivion severed the chains that held it in place. Zac felt his vision double, but he could tell his desperate gambit worked as the soul avatar separated from his spiritual body.

The ripples reached a crescendo, and Zac felt his whole body begin to collapse as Life and Death suddenly tried to share the same space. Zac refused to go out in a gory detonation, to have his path cut short in such an ignoble way. He roused his soul's full power, his will, and his desire to live just as he was about to explode.

And he pushed.

An unstoppable force separated Life and Death, or rather two sides of the coin that was his being. The Thousand Lights Avatar became the carrier of his Inexorable Path as it fell into the Creation-wrought clone. Pathways, bloodline, nodes. Everything that made him Arcaz was forcibly attached to the spiritual framework. Meanwhile, his body returned to its original human state, where Life filled the gaps left by Death's exodus.

No longer were his cells being pushed to accept both his forms at the same time. The pain temporarily abated, but Zac swore when [Quantum Gate] seemed to get a second wind. The painful waves reached a crescendo as the Hidden Node detached from its spot and crashed into his Soul Aperture, leaving mysterious patterns across its edges. They seemingly held no energy, but Zac screamed with horror as they lit up with ominous light. He desperately tried to move his consciousness to his new body, but it was too late. Out of better options, he roused his final stockpile of Oblivion to cut the connection between his original and new body. Hopefully, at least one would survive.

Two muffled explosions were followed by utter darkness.

Zac took a gasping breath as he shot to his feet, but he immediately fell back onto the ground as a confusing burst of impressions left him completely disoriented. For a moment, he couldn't tell what was up and down as incongruous realities fought for dominion in his mind. At least one thing was for sure.

He was alive.

No vibrations tried to tear him apart, and no energies inside his body were threatening to turn him into a bomb. He would even say he felt fine, except for a slight headache and a general ache across his body. The confusing and conflicting impressions didn't go away, but his mind slowly learned to sort through them.

Zac slowly crawled to his feet trying to make sense of the situation. His internal clock indicated a whole month had passed. During that time, his surroundings had only grown direr. He was still on the broken peak of Mount Illumination, and desolation spread across the horizon. Only now, there weren't just a handful of broken mountains around him. The mountain range was no more, replaced with what looked like a spiritually dead quarry.

It even felt like the Dao was shattered, like his breakthrough had destroyed the environment on such a fundamental level it had become a cursed land. Zac felt a pang of worry for a second but soon discarded it. Sendor had the ability to reform a world broken by a Supremacy, surely he wouldn't cause a stink over him destroying a couple of mountains?

Zac shook his head in an attempt to get rid of the confusing double-vision and yelped in surprise upon finding himself staring into a set of familiar eyes. A pair of Abyssal Orbs seemingly leading to the depths of the underworld. A pair of brown irises that had shifted toward gold since cultivating the [Void Vajra Sublimation].

Two visions, two conflicting scenes, both equally real. He was looking at himself, from both vantages. Zac slowly tilted his head, and it felt like he was looking into an odd mirror as he saw both forms move in sync. For a few minutes, Zac didn't move, his mind trying and failing to compute exactly what had happened and how it was possible. Eventually, two sighs echoed across the desolate peak.

"Well, I didn't expect that."