

New World 131

Chapter 131: Weaving Threads

I numbed myself, eliminating any thoughts about his accusation. I raised an eyebrow at Yawm. He stood up straight. He moved his hands between us, measuring our heights.

“Odd. I thought I noticed a difference for some reason. My mistake.”

I shrugged, “Eh, it happens. Sometimes I forget how much taller you are than me.”

Yawm raised his eyebrows, “I suppose I’m seeing stars after that lesson with the eldritch. I think you were right about her. She can’t speak even an ounce of sense.”

I raised both my hands, “Well, I’m pretty sure she knows what she’s talking about. She just doesn’t know how to get it across. Like, at all.”

Yawm nodded, “Some knowledge is carried on calm seas. She sends her knowledge through a muddy, viscous quagmire. Getting through that is becoming difficult. You didn’t need to worry about that recently as of late, however.

I grinned, “Yeah. I got caught up in the whole fighting thing. It’s a hell of a lot of fun.”

Yawm raised a hand, “I attempted to wait for you to finish at one point, but you trained within the cyclone of abstractions far too long for that. I’m guessing you wanted a challenge from the beetles?”

I scratched the side of my head, “I suppose. I was trying to see if I couldn’t work on my dodging skills. It worked ok.”

Yawm narrowed one eye and widened the other, creating a questioning gaze,

“It didn’t work well then. My guess would be the sheer disparity in speed.”

I shrugged, “It sucks, but yeah. They’re not the, er, most powerful monsters.”

Yawm cupped his chin, staring off in the distance, “I suppose they’re not. Though they’re interesting, they lack the dynamism to make truly challenging foes. If it wasn’t for the abstractions, they’d be worse than useless in that regard.”

Yawm looked at me,

“I thought about what you said about variety and blowing off steam as you put it. I think I may implement a bit of that as I find myself plateauing in my progress recently. I think injecting a few alterations in my daily schedule will get me out of this sticking point. What do you think?”

I looked around then pointed at my chest, “What do I think?”

Yawm nodded, “Yes. I’m asking for your counsel.”

I turned a palm to Yawm, “If it were me, I’d try and progress in something else.”

Yawm placed a hand on my shoulder, “I’ll implement that bit of ideology.”

Yawm paced down the hallway, “I may call on you later, if you wouldn’t mind.”

I waved him off, “It shouldn’t be a problem. I have a project I need to grind out. After that, I’m free for a while. Good luck with the cipher, World Eater.”

“Hah, hah, Good fortune for you as well, Harbinger.”

He walked into his study. I walked to my room, sighing with relief. I expected a bit more resistance from him. He might be taking it easy after the contract. Either that or he doesn’t want to put too much pressure on me. I didn’t have time to contemplate exactly what he was thinking.

What I did have time for was learning the cipher. I walked into my room, sitting on the bed. I wrote a thank you message to Amara. After that, I sent a string of messages to Althea. I missed her and having decent meals, among other things.

So I sent her a message about how I couldn't call her for a long time. I also explained that I had a chance against Yawm and for her not to tell anyone else. Ajax could be trying to fuck us over for all I knew. By then, I was paranoid. I had a good reason to be.

After finishing that, I read through Amara's messages in detail. The first few mimicked the basics that Yawm discussed with me. As I delved deeper into her advice, I found some incredibly interesting pieces of info.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Changing a confined space, the dual layered etching, and perspective, those three principles will only get you so far. In order to progress through the more advanced portions of the cipher, you'll need more than practice.

You need understanding.

That fool thinks he can dissect the cipher just as he's dissected others. The cipher isn't a code you can solve. The cipher is a fluid representation of your understanding of your universe. If you lack understanding in a subject, then you cannot write the cipher within that subject.

No matter how many decades that idiot spends writing, he will never progress because of that simple fact. He's expunged any chance of progression. Why else would I ask for books and information? It is to further my understanding of this material world, thereby enabling me to change it.

You'll learn the cipher quicker by reading books on a subject then by trying to write that subject down. Yawm is trying to run before he can crawl. Sharpening his knowledge on quantum physics or biology would help his efforts far more than his current method.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – That is where he and I differ. You will differ here as well with time. If you intend on gaining the true meaning of the cipher, then understand the true meaning of this realm. Is it your strength that you wish to enhance? Then read about true strength. Is it your dexterity you want to hone? Then research and understand the meaning of finesse and control. When you aim to write in the cipher, the marking will come to you as you make it.

These messages and the ones that followed had an underlying theme. Amara was bitter towards Yawm. I didn't know why, and maybe I'd ask one day. For now though, I blocked out the messages that went into excruciating detail.

I was a novice, so I focused on the basics. The first step would be mastering the meaning of endurance. I know, big shocker.

Based on that, I opened my obelisk and scanned through Torix's library. I entered the key words endurance, perseverance, and tenacity. Dozens of novels, biographies, and anthologies appeared. I scanned through them, opening the first book I found interesting. The book was titled, Worlds of Eldritch: Tales of a Fringe Walker.

The title was pretty self explanatory. Even then, the book was harrowing. It broke down three different worlds that a Fringe Walker went to. Each one outdid the last, until the last one. On that world, Flocks of eldritch flew so dense that they cast darkness below them. The land was fire and the air was acid. Those are quotes by the way.

He lived on that foreign, unlivable world for over five years. Being abandoned by a key comrade sucks like that I suppose. During that time, he struggled finding food and learning how to not die. It was basically a survival story ramped up to an eleven out of ten.

Even though it was about 600 pages long, I finished it in three hours. As I laid it down, I was blown away by how quickly I understood it. With how high my intelligence was, it made sense. This was the first time I noticed such a drastic shift from having that intelligence though.

After finishing that novel, I moved on and read a few more. After about twelve hours and five more books later, I was ready to give a new rendition of the cipher form. Before I gave it a shot, I thought about what I read.

My head was crammed with stories of life and death. There was a biography about a young girl who lived in a galactic slum all her life. She escaped and became a monstrous bounty hunter. One book was an anthology of victims of genocide. The most compelling story detailed something else.

It was a story about a man who carried a keycard that would save his world for over 9,000 years. It showed the vast loneliness, the maddening quiet, and the numbness of time. He never rested.

Over and over, he faced machines, androids, and hostile life. There wasn't even an ounce of hope for his situation. 9,000 years later and the guy won. It was inspiring, but I didn't learn a damn thing about endurance. Instead of taking that approach, I tried out my own.

I opened my grimoire and sat down with my legs crossed. As I did, I kept my ears covered with my armor. It blocked out the sound near me, blurring my picture of my surroundings. It blocked out the swimming of the jellyfish, the shifting currents, and the pacing of footsteps.

I closed my eyes, honing in my focus. In the roar of silence, I sliced into the charcoal colored page, visualizing my mark. As I wrote, I kept my hand steady and stable. I paced my breathing, keeping it slow and shallow, like a sniper. I eliminated all other thoughts, putting myself in the moment.

Like that, I etched out the framework of my new rune. I didn't add extra detail. There was no need to. Instead, I eliminated lines, took out excess pieces, and simplified the design. As I did, my translation didn't lessen the impact of the original rune. It refined it.

Without excess, the original meaning of my rune came across more clearly. I purified the meaning, like filtering water over and over. With each change, the rune's meaning popped ever clearer. With each shift, the subtlety of the inscription was gone. It was like pulling the body bag off a corpse. You couldn't see what laid beneath until you did.

Hours passed like that. I took my time. There was no rush. Messages appeared in the sides of my vision, but I pushed them aside. Everything was this rune. It was like shifting a gear. I pushed all other distractions out. I aligned my thoughts into a single thing. This rune, right now.

With that intense concentration, I neared the finishing touches of the rune. As I neared the completion of it, the rune sapped energy from me. My mana generation offered up an ocean for it, yet it wanted even more. It dipped into my health. A warmth spread up my arm from the channeling mana.

It was the opposite of the icy sensation I got from taking out dungeon cores. Energy wasn't infecting me. It was being taken away. After several hours of this, the rune

finalized. Brimming with an explosive excitement, I raised a hand, creating a single copy of the rune.

The vibrant, glowing letters floated in the air, landing on my left forearm. The new rune overwrote the old one, devouring it. Once it finalized, I channeled mana into the next one. Hours later, the marking sparked to life, drifting off the blackened page. The engraving landed onto my right arm, engulfing the previous rune.

The new, glowing mark sizzled as it engraved itself onto my armored wrist. I sighed with relief, the task at hand finished. I funneled my mana back into the runes, their work beginning once more. I squeezed my hands, satisfied with my work before I opened my status.

Althea Tolstoy(Time: Undefined) – I really, really don't like the messages I'm seeing, but I get it. I do. You're doing what it takes to make it happen, just like you always do. I miss you too, and I guess messages will have to do for now.

Hurry up though, because I have a surprise for you when you get back.

I promise I'll make it worth your while. ;p

I grinned at the message. I loved having something to look forward to once this was all over. It reminded me why I couldn't stop preparing myself. I had something to lose, and I'd be damned if Yawm, Schema, or anyone was going to take what I had away from me.

That inspiration fueled me as I stood up. I shook my head, wiping away my mental fatigue. I walked out of my room, intent on going back outside to train with the beetles. As I walked past Yawm's room, he stepped out. I turned around, finding him looking at me with one hand holding his door open,

"Daniel, are you going to fight the eldritch here again?"

I nodded. Yawm raised a hand, "I have a different idea of what you could do with your time, if you'd like to listen to my suggestion."

I shrugged, "Sure, I'm game."

Yawm waved me into his room, “Then come and sit. You may enjoy what you have to hear.”

We walked into his study, the rows of books lining numerous windows. The giant eye of a leviathan glanced inside, its iris glowing blood red. A school of squirming fish followed behind it, nibbling at a chunk of meat in its mouth. I sat down on a frozen chair, Yawm’s hulking form facing me.

The entire time, I kept my unique skill, Mass Manipulation constant. Maybe Yawm could make a mistake about me being shorter. I doubt he’d accept seeing me change size, however.

Yawm raised his hands unperturbed, “I’ve given your exercise a great deal of thought. In all honesty, I’d rather you not decimate the populations of eldritch I fostered here. It took effort to get them here, and it will require effort to do so again.”

I sighed, “Damn, I expected this honestly. I figured me doing something like that was out of line.”

Yawm shook his head, “In fact, it wasn’t. I more so than anyone understands why you fight as an outlet. The slaughter is healing. The violence is calming. Warriors such as you and I are most at home in carnage. That is why I offer you suggestion.”

I raised an eyebrow, crossing my arms, “Well what did you have in mind?”

Yawm raised a hand, “We go hunting for pieces of the cipher.”

Chapter 132: Expedition

I scratched my cheek, “How exactly are we going to hunt for the cipher?”

Yawm leaned back in his chair, “I gave the issue some thought, and I came to a realization – you learned the cipher from rifts.”

I opened my hand, turning it in circles,

“Uh huh.”

Yawm raised a hand,

“This gives a practical idea, especially after discovering Amara’s existence. The eldritch know the cipher on an intrinsic level. Learning it from her and my own musings is frustrating. My motivation is waning. I believe that my own indignation is stifling my progress.”

Yawm pointed outside, “You see, I’ve spent far too much time within the confines of my own castle. I’m losing my passion for my own goals, partly because of the length of my journey, but also because of the tedious nature of it.”

Yawm clasped his pointing hand into a fist, “I was not made to sit inside a room and study a cryptic language everyday. I was made a warrior. When I battle, I am most alive. That is when my mind is most active. That is when I thrive.”

He lowered his fist, “In order to regain that spark of life, I devised a solution. I can go hunting within rifts for fragments of the cipher.”

I tapped my chin with a loose fist, “So uh, you figure you’ll learn about the cipher while fighting eldritch?”

Yawm raised both his hands, spreading them wide, “You followed my line of thinking to perfection.” Yawm glanced around, excitement tracing his words,

“Your fight against the eldritch here made it clear. They’re no challenge for a warrior of any true caliber. In order to remain protected, I’ll need more than just a horde of fodder. While I explore the rifts, I’ll find eldritch that can repopulate my own rift. With them, I’ll generate a more powerful army at my disposal.”

Yawm raised a fist to me, clasping it with vigor, “Since you’ve been keen on killing them, I figured that I would offer for you to join in on the fun.”

I nodded, “Ah, so I’ll still get to relax and fight some, but I won’t decimate the population of your current eldritch.”

Yawm clapped his hands once,

“Isn’t the prospect exciting? You’ve even found portions of the cipher you could learn from. If my hunch is correct, you’ll have an eye for finding the portions of it that we may harvest.”

I raised a finger, “Give me one second to think about this. I gotta troubleshoot it for flaws and what not.”

Yawm leaned back into his chair, “Take your time. Skepticism is a shield against foolishness. Your skepticism shows wisdom.”

I crossed my arms, glancing down. I held back a smile. This was a golden opportunity. I hadn’t refilled my dungeon cores in forever. I needed hundreds of them. I could level up, get those dungeon cores, and stop eldritch at the same time.

I looked back up at Yawm, “I mean, that seems a like a pretty decent idea in my opinion. There wasn’t any glaring flaws in it.”

Yawm stood, the chair behind him falling backwards, “Then we leave at once.”

I stood, but I didn’t send my chair flying. Yawm laughed,

“I’ll create a core right now.”

I raised a hand, “Why not just go find rifts around us?”

Yawm’s grabbed his chin, “Why not use my core generation abilities?”

The main reason was because I wouldn’t get any cores like that. I wasn’t telling his ass that though.

“You said you were cooped up in this place for too long right? Staying in this room and teleporting sort of defeats the purpose of this entire process.”

Yawm face palmed, “Of course, this city is barren. The dungeons here have likely already fallen into dilapidation, turning into rifts. If we walk outside, the rifts will be there, plain to see.”

Yawm walked towards the doorway of the room, “Let’s find one.”

I jogged outside the room, catching up with Yawm. We walked outside his palace, reaching the exit of his palace. After diving through the bubble room, we swam towards the surface. The eldritch writhed in the water, an obvious fear permeating them. Yawm terrified them, even I did.

We paced out of the lake, water pouring off us both. We ramped up our speed, running out of the rift. Past the floating islands surrounding Yawm’s world tree, the gray cloud loomed overhead. It acted as the edge of Yawm’s domain. With the same crisp iciness, we pierced the cloud, getting outside the rift.

As we traveled, I pointed and described various buildings. Yawm paid close attention, a deep interest showing in how our world was. I pointed at a museum, the marble columns holding the entrance up,

“Bigger buildings are almost always home to dungeons. Since you like learning about the world, we’ll explore a rift while walking past an exhibition of humanity’s past. Sound good?”

Yawm leapt over a convenience store, landing beside a utility pole. His feet crushed through the concrete sidewalk, the stone like putty. He reached up, stopping the pole from landing on him. With his arm outstretched, he grabbed halfway up the pole with ease.

With a flick of his wrist, the power pole timbered in the other direction. It fell, crashing onto the convenience store. The rippling, alien sound of cords snapping echoed out as Yawm peered around,

“This world’s constructs are so...flimsy. They’re ancient it seems.”

I laughed, "I guess they are. We weren't even close to exploring space."

Yawn chuckled, "I assure you, that was evident."

He walked by a car, over twice its height. Without bending over, he grabbed under it. His fingers crushed the metal, shattering the glass windows. He lifted it, glancing under the vehicle with a tilt of his head,

"Your species doesn't even use graphene reinforcements for metal."

I frowned, "Ok, I get it. We're not space people. We didn't really start learning science until a few thousand years ago. Cut us some slack."

Yawn stared at the intricate series of metal pieces under the sedan.

"Your species developed quickly then. I know of hive oriented species that required tenfold that time for development. Your society must orient itself around competition then?"

I took in a deep breath, "We used too. Good old capitalism."

Yawn nodded, "Excellent for growing into a self actualized society. Not quite the best model for staying there."

I raised an eyebrow, "What do you mean?"

Yawn flicked his wrist, sending the car flying. It landed onto the convenience store, barreling through the building. It collapsed in a wave of dust. As it settled, Yawn turned towards the museum,

"Capitalism promotes competition and incessant growth. As society develops, technology advances. This eliminates lower level employment, creating economic displacement. Until the necessity of work is voided altogether, social pressure rises."

Yawm walked and talked,

“Often times this creates entire classes of people left behind in the wake of advancement. As you can imagine, those classes of people aren’t the most pleased. This social unrest can create violent uprisings, destroying stable societies.”

We reached the wooden building, the brick entrance leading up to a tall entrance. Yawm shrugged at the foot of the stairs,

“Of course, these are only my own musings on the issue. Like anyone else, I very well could be wrong.”

I walked up the brick steps, “Eh, it’s interesting hearing your opinion anyway. I’ve never even thought about it that deeply in all honesty.”

I glanced around. This history museum once was a plantation home. After being converted into a state building, they retained its classic touch. Tall ceilings, tall doors, all designed for hot summers. As we reached the doors, Yawm stared at the door handle,

“Do you grab it?”

I shook my head, “Not for us.”

I walked through the doors, the wood crumbling while I spread my arms. My face crashed through the doorway, the drywall crumbling. Just above my head, the tallest spine of my armor scraped the ceiling. I turned towards Yawm,

“Ducking under it over and over sounded frustrating.”

Yawm leaned forward, resting his body weight onto his knuckles. It was reminiscent of a gorilla. Yanno, besides for the pulsing green energy, wooden skin, runic carvings, and mane of leaves behind him. If anything, his new posture intimidated even more than before.

“Is that how you’re supposed to walk?”

Yawm shook his head, “No, but porytians can walk this way. Since our species is symbiotic in nature, one of us evolved from herbivores and the other from predators. Walking on all fours was an evolutionary trait gained from when we were four legged creatures.”

I walked into the museum, the reception area rising just enough for me to walk at full height. Yawm kept hunched, walking with all the pressure on his knuckles. We paced through the hallway, reaching the exhibits.

Cannons, swords, and flags lined the wall. Natural light leaked in from windows, leaving shade in corners of the room. With a much taller ceiling, Yawm stood his full height. Further inside, we reached a row of empty exhibits. Yawm pointed at them,

“What weapon of war is missing here?”

I shook my head, “It wasn’t for war. This was a general museum. This was where dinosaurs were located.”

He turned towards me, “Dinosaurs?”

I nodded, “Yeah, dinosaurs. They were giant reptiles covered in scales.” I touched the struts that once held the bones in place, “Now why exactly are the bones missing, well I don’t know.”

A shriek ebbed from deeper within. Yawm turned towards the sound,

“Let’s have faith that a dungeon is here.”

We jogged towards the howling. We reached another room missing exhibits. At the center of the room, a pitch black, furry animal writhed on the floor. The creature writhed, squirming with violence, but it lacked any finer details. It turned towards us, the lump of hair sticking out on end. I analyzed it.

Baby Bojokan(lvl 467) – This thing has uh, black hair. It looks pretty mean too. I hope it doesn’t come at me like a parasite or something. That would be super gross.

Getting exiled had its problems after all. I sighed, venting frustration while the air crackled. Goosebumps welled across my arms as the aura of green condensed around Yawm. With a massive hand, Yawm flicked a finger,

“I can relate to your frustration. This is a weakling, and I don’t have time for it’s noise.”

The eldritch popped like a firework covered in rotten tomatoes. From the shadows, other bundles of fur expanded. The missing exhibits covered them, like an exoskeleton of petrified bone. They fitted into the skeletons like they were made for them.

Adult Bojokan(lvl 1,892) – Honestly, I was hoping for a bit more from these dungeon monsters. I mean honestly, a fucking dinosaur furball. Wow-

I closed out the analysis. Following my line of thought helped no one. I clasped my hands into fists, and Yawm sat down. As his ass landed on the ground, the building quaked. I turned to him,

“What the fuck are you doing?”

Yawm shrugged, “Fighting them would be boring, wouldn’t it? I’ll let you handle it and watch. That sounds far more entertaining.”

I turned towards the bojokans,

“If you say so.”

I charged my runes in seconds. Three bojokans surrounded me, each stored in a different dinosaur. The T-rex one shot towards me, moving fast as cars on an interstate. I rotated on my heels, firing a left hook into its nose. The poor bones disintegrated into powder, the monster splattering beneath the fur.

It fell sideways, my streams of gravity shuttling it away from me. Another bojokan rushed in, this one guised in the bones of an ankylosaurus. The tips of fur pushing out from between bones turned red. A viscous liquid covered them, making them slippery.

Whenever it reached me, I shot forward. I slammed my feet into the ground then slammed my fist into its face. With a bit of gravity, I pushed the viscous fluid away. My fist unleashed a kinetic bullet into the center of the creature. It swelled up like a balloon, the bones cracking.

As it deflated, a fountain of blood gushed from entryway of my kinetic bullet. With Hunter of Many, my armor shot into the abomination, sucking the life out of it. The blood never touched the ground as a forest of needles shot out in every direction. The other creature, a stegosaurus wannabe, ran towards me.

It growled with wrath, white, glistening teeth contrasting with the darkness. The spiny plates along its back glowed a bright orange. Vibrant arcs of orange electricity shot outwards, like an augments's mana. It barreled towards me. Instead of punching it, I welled mana into my hands.

With a third of my health, I unleashed a torrent of gravity. The creature bowed, unable to withstand the onslaught. The concrete cracked. The legs of the creature broke. The red colored bones popped through tears of its skin. Blood gushed as its organs pulped.

I grimaced before leaping towards the creature. I landed on it, stomping its skull. My foot was the wheel of a car and the monster's head was a squirrel. After a not so satisfying squish, a splash of blood splattered over me. I wiped my face,

"Blegh. Man, fighting these guys was fucking gross."

I banged the side of my head, my helmet echoing against my gauntlets, "I'm an idiot. Duh."

I gripped a hand, a wave of gravity pulling the coagulating slush from me. I reached out my arms, siphoning the monster mush from the edges of the room into a ball of meat. Using my armor, I devoured it. Yawm watched, his eye searching,

"It's tremendous. You're armor trumps even the eldritch."

I shook my head, "If the eldritch is dangerous, it can eat me. I think I'm more like a crab. The shell seems invincible until it meets a rock."

Yawm tapped the side of his face, “I suppose...” He stood up, “This was a disappointing departure from the norm. It remind me why I gave up on hunting in rifts a long time ago.”

I pointed around us, “Those weren’t even the dungeon bosses. Besides, they were about as strong as the solar beetles anyway.”

Yawm shook his head, “The beetles reproduced via sunlight. They don’t require actual sustenance. That is why I chose them as guardians. By the teeth on these animals, I’m guessing they’re carnivores. They won’t last long before spreading outwards from my rift.”

Yawm’s steps resonated through the room as he paced deeper inside, “It isn’t like I want to wreck more havoc than I need to. I’ve already done more than enough already. Seeing this derelict city reminds me of that.”

A bitter disappointment drenched his last words. Not knowing what to say, I stayed silent and I followed him. We both us made our way into the depths of the building. We found an empty elevator shaft. We leapt down the metallic pit. I reached out with both hands, my fingers scraping the iron edges of the chute.

Sparks shot out from contact, the sharpened tips of my fingers slicing the steel. Yawm crushed the elevator blocking our way outside like stepping on an empty can. He kicked it, the squished block of metal tumbling through the next room.

The block of steel trampled into the nearby hallway, caving the wall in. As cracks expanded from the wall, Yawm stepped out, looking around. The hallway split down the middle, one entrance leading towards a theater and the other towards a maintenance room.

I pointed at the theater, “The boss is going to be in that room, for sure.”

We walked through the hallway, dust falling from the roof. Yawm’s elevator kick shook the entire building, making the aged structure grumble. We reached the doors, Yawm stepping through them as if they never existed. With the pop of bending steel, we entered the theater.

Inside the dark room, a crowd of bojokans surrounded a mass of gears and hair. Wires stretched out from it, digging into the floor and walls nearby. These tendrils of metal siphoned energy from nearby. Atop this mountain of metal and fur, an enormous bojokan looked at us with no eyes.

Upon its gray, metal face, etchings of the cipher glowed white. It smiled at us, a wicked, terrible kind of smile. The wires and cords traced under its skin, like a cyborg. It stood, its sloped shoulders rising high. With no real neck, it tilted the mass of muscle and metal around its head.

Behind it, the dungeon core radiated simmered with power. The reddened core strained, holding in a mountain of energy. Soon it would shatter.

Yawm turned to me, “In most instances, the eldritch refuse to listen to reason. Allow me to show you how I’ve managed to domesticate the eldritch near my own rift. Consider this a lesson in intimidation.”

He turned towards the eldritch, his voice like an abyss,

“Kneel.”

The bojokans squealed at him, their shrill laughter echoing through the chamber. Saliva dripped from their frothing mouths. Their pot bellies shivered in delight at Yawm’s declaration. The air around us sparked, ozone tracing the air, bitter and acrid in my nose.

With the air warping around him, Yawm raised a hand. As he spoke, a primordial dread dug deep into my bones.

“I. Said. Kneel.”

Chapter 133: The Coming Tempest

The bojokans cowered in fear, all but their leader. The steel wires wobbled along his skin, the monster trembling. The force in his words slammed into me. I stayed steady, my will like iron. Yawm turned towards me,

“You still stand? Ah yes, you invested into willpower perks. A spirit like yours fights against suppression. These eldritch on the other hand are akin to animals.”

He gestured at them, “They shudder, terrified of a meaningful presence.” He stared at the bojokan boss, his eyes drilling into its mind. He spread his hands, “And you still defy me?”

Yawm took a step forward, and the metallic bojokan wilted, cowering in terror. Yawm laughed, and the bojokan stood back up straight. The eerie grin on its face transformed into a scowl. The monster twitched at random, its nerves overwhelming it. I stared at it, analyzing it.

Bojokan Originator(lvl 2,623) – Damn this poor bastard. Looks like he’s about to get humiliated in front of his underlings. Man, I’m sick of these statuses not working.

The ruined analyses bothered me now. Without their concise explanations, understanding the eldritch took time and observation. My lips pressed into a thin line while I watched Yawm step towards the eldritch boss.

The originator lifted its shaking arm. Its mouth and lips quivered, clanking its teeth. For the first time, a lump of pity formed in me over an eldritch. I never imagined that happening, but there’s a first time for everything.

I leapt over Yawm, sailing over him and over the rows of chairs around the theater. As I reached the originator, it slashed towards me with clawed hands. Burning a jolt of mana, I directed its attack away from me with a stream of gravity. The mouth of the monster flew forward, its maw gaping in shock.

With a slicing kick, I ripped a telekinetic bolt through its mouth. Its bottom jaw dislocated, popping out of socket with skin tearing right after. It fell sideways, crashing against the theater. My mass outdid the monsters. I was heavier.

I landed onto the wooden boards of the theater, dispersing my weight outward. I shot forward, detonating my runic energy. I pulled my leg back, flying through the air. I kicked at the bojokan’s face. My foot rushed into the upper jaw of the monster, snapping teeth. The telekinetic bullet fired right into the skull of the monster.

As it did, I transferred my body's inertia. I stopped moving, but the metal skull of the monster slung backwards into the edge of the building. A hole punctured through its head, like I planted a shotgun against it and fired.

Steel ruptured. Bone cracked. I landed on the theater with grace. The originator's mind suffered from fear, preventing it from defending itself. In that state of mind, it posed no challenge to me. It disappointed me a bit more than it should have.

More concerned about the world eater, I raised an eyebrow at Yawm,

"So why exactly are you tormenting these damn things? Just kill them for god's sake."

Yawm waved away my concern with a flourish of his hand,

"These eldritch didn't reproduce rapidly, their need for food stifles their longevity, and they lack intellect. What quality do they have that deserves dignity or respect?"

I waved my hands around, "Well, I don't know, maybe because they're alive?"

Yawm laughed, "They would offer you no mercy if the roles were reversed. In fact, they relished in the thought of inflicting anguish on us. Bojokans are notorious for torturing their victims. I treated them as they would treat me, with cruelty."

I shook my head, "Just because they're evil doesn't mean we should be evil."

Yawm jumped onto the stage,

"Evil is a relative term. I promise you, they view my evil as strength. They view your virtue as weakness, and they'll stab your back for showing that weakness."

I banged my chest, "Then their knife will break on my skin before I kick their asses into oblivion."

Yawm chuckled, "Then we'll disagree on this." He peered at the bojokans quivering in the corner of the stage. Yawm rolled his eyes, the glowing green orbs shifting as he sighed, "If I could be candid, they're not quite right for what we need, are they?"

I shook my head. Yawm walked off, "Do as you will with them."

Once Yawm turned his head, the bojokans stood up. They skulked towards me, pushing their luck. Drool dripped from their jaws, and they leaned closer, sniffing at me. With each step Yawm took away from them, they walked one step closer. I blinked, flabbergasted at their sheer stupidity,

"Did you guys not see what I did to your boss? I made mincemeat of him in seconds. Do you honestly think you're any different?"

My words fell on deaf ears. Yawm left the theater, and they pounced. I stepped backwards, the first monster smashing its face into the stage. Another snapped its jaws at me, but I dashed forwards. The wind off its bottom jaw brushed my cheek as the first bojokan raised its head from the stage.

Several planks of wood stuck out of its mouth. I kicked one of them, launching it into the monster's throat. It choked, leaning backwards and exposing its belly. With a swift overhand right, I smashed a fist into its potbelly.

The swollen stomach sunk in, the monster's spine erupted from its back. The third bojokan rushed into the body of the first one. It bit into the monster's insides on accident. With disgust, it spit out the mush from its mouth. I hopped up, planting a foot on its bottom jaw and my arms on the roof of its maw.

I pressed up and stepped down. The monster's jaw ripped out. It howled in agony, falling backwards. I kicked the amputated jaw, flipping it upwards. The second bojokan pounced at my back, but I grabbed the jaw and swung it in my hands. The edge of the jaw landed into side of the head of the monster.

The jaw bone pierced into its skull, the eyes of the monster deadening. The sickening crack radiated through the theater. It slapped into the theater, cracking boards of wood. I shot out my armor into the corpses, draining them in seconds. They lasted less than two minutes.

After finishing them, I searched around the room, looking for treasure. I found nothing except the dungeon core. I reached my hand into the dungeon core at the center of the stage. The iciness leaked into my hand, but sensation diminished when compared with before.

As I generated more mana, the mana of the dungeon core phased me less and less. I grasped the core with a firm grip, pulling it out of the spiral of white energy. Yawm leaned back into the room,

“Ah yes, the dungeon core. I forgot all about it.”

The familiar blue squares formed all around us, the sign of a cleared dungeon. My armor wrapped around the core. Needles of it pressed against the reddish, black sphere. Moments later, the spines impaled the sphere. Like a drowning child, the core sunk into my armor. My armor devoured the core, leaving nothing behind.

Yawm jogged up, jumped back onto the stage. He tilted his head at me,

“This armor of yours, it engulfed an actual dungeon core?”

I shrugged, “It’s a first for me. I don’t know anything about what it’s doing.”

As the blue squares altered the reality around us, little changed from before. The theater still surrounded us. Once the dungeon completed its subtle transformation, a portal opened beside us. My heart sunk in my chest, a wicked realization dawning on me.

With my jaw opened wide, the overseer stepped out of the portal. He stood the same height as Yawm, the both of them staring at one another. For a while, we all sat like that, soaking in this tense atmosphere. The sudden sharpness of the situation stung, like a bee sting. I grimaced under my helm, a deep unease pressing into my gut.

Yawm opened a hand towards the overseer, shattering the silence,

“Ah, one of Schema’s dogs. I never imagined I’d meet another of your kind so soon, especially not one so familiar.”

Chapter 134: Anticipation

The overseer stayed silent. Yawm clapped his hands, a vicious delight infecting his voice,

“Is it so shocking to see me? Why does it stun you so?”

The overseer gripped his fist. As he did, the air around us cackled like a banshee, turning a shade of emerald. Aura’s of green condensed in the palms of Yawm.

“Now now, stay calm. Otherwise that leash choking your neck might turn into a guillotine.”

The overseer shook in visible rage. Based on the story the overseer told me a while back, Yawm’s race enslaved his own. The bad blood between them ran deep. That hatred simmered right beneath the surface.

The pistons surrounding his electronic armor hissed as he lifted a hand. Off reflex, I stomped my foot, slamming a telekinetic wave into the overseer’s hand. His colossal palm veered right, aiming his attack elsewhere. A sphere of matter disintegrated, erasing a portion of the building. The overseer stared at me. I thundered,

“What the fuck was that? Are you a dumbass?”

The overseer gripped his opened hand back into a fist, staring at it. Schema planted kill switches on overseers. If they attacked anyone in the system, the kill switches eliminated them. With a sentinel’s spear, Yawm was a monster. With an overseer’s armor, Yawm would be unstoppable.

Knowing this, Yawm laughed and clapped his hands,

“And so the Harbinger stopped you alone. Pity. I’d rather you sliced a hole in my chest. As I regenerated the flesh wound, your killswitch would put a piston through your head. Having your life saved by one so young, I’d be ashamed.”

Yawm stepped up, his eye meeting the eye of the overseer, “Quite a predicament you’ve found yourself in, isn’t it? Schema cannot bend or change his rules, not even when eliminating someone like me. Isn’t that right?”

The overseer hissed his words with more venom than a snake,

“Yes. That is correct.”

Yawm nodded, leaning back from the overseer, “Unlike you, I don’t have to submit to that artificial intelligence for the power I wield. The competence I gained, I earned. It is my own.”

The overseer laughed at him,

“What exactly is yours? The runes you gained from Etorhma? Those are no more yours than this chassis is mine. Are you lying to impress the Harbinger, or are you lying to yourself?”

The overseer pointed at the runic inscriptions tracing Yawm’s skin, “You haven’t implemented a basic improvement upon them. A shame. Daniel has already inscribed his own versions of the cipher onto his skin. Quite a feat. He did so without an Old One’s guidance.”

The overseer tapped his chin, “He didn’t need five hundred years to do it either.”

Yawm’s shoulders lowered, and he clasped his hands into fists harder than cannonballs. Yawm breathed deep, letting out a long sigh before loosening his fists.

“My life isn’t in the hands of a cold, unfeeling automation.”

The overseer shook his head, “No. Your life isn’t in anyone’s hands. Instead, you are hunted by bounty hunters and the horrors that worship the Old Ones. You run, but you can’t escape them, can you?”

The overseer leaned towards Yawm, “No. You are a blight. You will struggle, but you will never learn the cipher you stole. You will be hunted down until you die. You will drag this talented one along with you.”

I stared at Yawm, my stomach sinking. His chest rose and fell, his breath ragged. His face scrunched as he stared the overseer down. Yawm’s anger at me never lasted longer than a passing moment. This rage towards the overseer, it gouged deep into him. Like magma beneath a volcano, Yawm’s wrath boiled under the surface.

Yawm turned his head around, glaring at me. His eyes opened wide. He snatched the glance away, his anger cooling. His hands loosened. His breathing steadied. His shoulders relaxed.

“So I’ll be dragging this one along with me...Who locked him on his world and forced him to fight against me? Who gave him a bounty for surviving a harrowing introduction into his system?”

Yawm nodded, “You’re master gave him a death sentence, and he isn’t even hiding his own hypocrisy. What has Daniel done that deserves death? It it due to surviving his first dungeon, therefore he must be hunted as I am?”

Yawm pointed a finger at his chest, “I served Etorhma. I chose my path.” Yawm pointed towards me, “He never had a choice. You call him the Harbinger, but you know nothing of who he was. I had reason to kill him. His mission was to kill me. I showed him mercy. What more am I to do? Lay down and die as he evolves?”

Yawm stepped away from the overseer, “No. I’ll battle until the flesh is rendered from my bones and my hands are ground to dust. Remember this, dog. I may be the one who is hunted, but I will survive. I’ll find Schema. When I do-”

Yawm’s hatred saturated his words,

“I’ll tear his mind and soul apart.”

Yawm stepped out of the room, his steps thumping the ground. After he left, the overseer and I stared at the exit of the theater. A tense silence passed before I shrugged,

“Damn...this feels like a movie.”

The overseer turned his gaze to me. He shook his head, the electronic wires running down his back waving like hair of metal.

“You are one of my biggest disappointments. You could have been so much more.”

The overseer opened his portal, walking through before I replied. As the portal closed, I stood there, stunned by his response. He understood my situation in detail. He knew I didn't stand a chance against Yawm.

He expected something ridiculous of me, yet he acted like my failure was some big surprise. Really now? Defeating the eater of worlds was getting messy? Who would have guessed.

Before I wasted my time being frustrated, I used a trick I learned forever ago. I put my hand on my shoulder and 'brushed' his comment off. Something about the physical act made it final; why let a dumbass ruin my day anyway? I had important tasks that needed doing anyway.

Other rifts needed clearing.

I paced out of the theater, jogging back up towards Yawm. As I reached him, he kept his gaze facing forward. We walked by each other in silence. Sometimes giving someone space was the best policy. This was one of those times. Once we left the building, I pointed at the next likely rift location. We headed out.

We ran through the city for several hours like that. Each time I ate a dungeon core, I invested all my points into endurance, as always. Each time the blue squares appeared, Yawm left before the overseer appeared. I ignored the overseer when he appeared. I let the guy do his job. Unlike him, I didn't need snide remarks for satisfaction.

Well, telling him off would be pretty satisfying, but I didn't need them, yenko?

Instead, I honed in on the task at hand. After the day ended, we cleared two dozen rifts. While walking back, we an intersection in the dead city. Around us, the wind howled

loud, like some banshee. A dozen cars littered the streets around us, their windows bashed in.

The door of a nearby building slapped open and closed with the wind. Yawm bent over, lifting a rock nearby and lobbed it at the noisy distraction. The rock exploded on the side of the building, like someone fired a rocket at it. With no hinges holding it up, the door fell down, flopping against the porch.

Yawm sighed, "That series of events between the Overseer and I...It was a rather nasty series of events, wasn't it?"

I shrugged, "On both ends, yeah. It got ugly."

Yawm nodded, "And there is your blunt manner of being." Yawm stood up tall, looking up at the sky, "He and I have history, as you may imagine. It makes holding a civil conversation with him impossible. At least for me that is."

I laughed, "Man, I can relate. I thought he was going to kill you before you responded. Talk about terrifying."

Yawm frowned, "Next time, do avoid deflecting his attack like that. I want to see him die."

I rolled my eyes, "You wouldn't see anything. He'd have obliterated you, just like you'd obliterated him. I just tried defusing the situation so that I wasn't annihilated in the process."

Yawm chuckled, "Your sense of self preservation hasn't ever led you astray, has it?"

I gestured to all of me, "Obviously not."

Yawm nodded. We stood there for a minute, then he looked back at me from the sky,

"I do hope your thinking of me hasn't changed."

I waved his words away with my hand,

“What? Hell no. I already knew you had beef with Schema, sentinels, and the overseers. That overseer in particular was a total asshole.”

Yawm nodded, opening turning a palm towards me, “I couldn’t agree more. I despise my coarse manner of speaking with him as well. It degrades my own opinion of myself.”

I shook my head, “You sound like me when I’m talking to, well, when I talked to my dad. For some reason, I couldn’t be remotely cognizant of anything when he was around.”

Yawm shrugged, “A checkered past between people muddies the mind. It distorts our perception of others, making us rash and unlike ourselves. I’m glad you forgive me for that.”

Yawm sighed, “I’m glad we discussed the matter at the very least.”

I walked forward, “Eh, just be ready to let my bullshit go when I fuck up something next time.”

Yawm jogged back up to me, “Allow me to assure you. I will voice not one word of dissent.”

I spread out my hands, “Good, because it could come at any moment. I mean, I fuck up all the time.”

The mood changed, turning almost jovial. After running around with something weighing us down for a while, resolving the issue let us both breathe. From my experience, those situations either broke friendships down or built them up. Considering how things ended up, I considered it the latter.

With the day ended, we walked through the city like that. Yawm’s questions about human civilization sprang back up. I answered with jokes thrown in. We reached a mile from his rift, the gray cloud looming overhead. We ran through the gray cloud, entering the different world.

Once we dived through his lake, we returned, once more in Yawm's underwater castle. I walked towards my room, looking forward to a bit of down time. As I did, a message appeared in front of me,

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – I've been searching through forums and message boards. While hard to find, I hunted down several threads regarding Yawm and the system. Within the den of these hunters, I discovered quite a few delicious details regarding both Yawm and Schema.

Using the knowledge, I can repair our identification systems. They work like this. Schema's operating system identifies the monster using your own senses as the lens. Once he's gathered data on it through your sensory systems, the system sends a personalized query towards your region's AI.

This little Schema interprets the data and gives you an answer based on what you see, smell, etc.

If done with the improper channels, this little Schema can boot us from the system. It also exposes our location, something we'd both rather avoid. I found a way of avoiding their hunting eyes.

We upload the most common forms of eldritch and their overall rarities. As we see an eldritch or object, our obelisks will sift through these files. After probing for the item most similar to what we sense, our obelisk gives us information.

The teeth of our new identification systems won't be as sharp as Schema's own. Having teeth is better than being toothless, however.

I celebrated the good news before reading her next message.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Know that this is the best of what I have to tell you. The other half involves Yawm. He rarely stays in one place for long. The monster prefers to hop from planet to planet, tossing them aside like used rags.

No matter how much I researched, I never discovered how he hunted worlds. Whenever Yawm stole the sentinel's spear, Schema neutralized its power. To fix such a convoluted

tool should have been outside of Yawm's abilities. Yawm can hardly write even a basic incantation. How did he fix something of unmeasurable complexity?

Even more so, I fail at understanding his motives. He is a battle junkie. Why is he trying to create eternal peace? I doubt that's his true inclination. If anything, he might be trying to destabilize everything we know for war. My opinion of that monster may be biased.

I also discovered discrete forums hidden in the depths of the monolith's network. Within these forums, I discovered a site dedicated to active Breakers. Breakers act as Schema's best bounty hunters with a heightened level cap. They hunt for monsters like Yawm or even people like you.

Information has spread. One of the levelers you killed from before uploaded a video of you fighting. The video showed an instant quest of A- rank. The quest detailed how you are following Yawm. Considering that Earth has been on the list of quarantined worlds, and the Breakers have put two and two together.

They are coming.

Chapter 135: The Coming Tide

Increasing the pacing of the story. Hope it isn't jarring. Let me know if it is.

I closed out the message, biting my lip. Before anything else, I composed a message back to Amara.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Thank you again Amara. I'm gathering dungeon cores and closing rifts around Springfield. I'm using them to max out my current potential. I will be working on improving my incantations of the cipher with the tips you gave me.

As for the sentinel's spear, Yawm didn't get the tool to work again. He gave the spear's power to his most trusted ally, Ajax Volan. I have no idea how he did it either, but I'm guessing it has something to do with the Tears of Etorhma. In all honesty, I still don't know what the tears are exactly either.

I'm sorry if this is unhelpful, but it's all I know for now.

I sent the message and brainstormed for a bit. With a bit of thought, I devised a simple plan. For now, forming the conduit between Amara and I was paramount. Her added mana generation would feed the cipher on my forearms. After coming up with a simple plan, I sent another message.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – I also forgot to mention this, but I have a plan for creating a conduit between us. It's a simple piece of magic honestly. It will be a ring with a simple need of blood. Handing the ring to you in secret is the difficult part.

I'll need to create a distraction. Otherwise I think Yawm's going to figure us out pretty fast. My idea is that I'll come into one of your lectures tomorrow. I'll create a hollow pocket in my armor and hide my ring within it. Something that eldritch do is they'll walk near me, smell me, then say I smell like dirt.

You can do that and while your smelling, I'll mold my armor to hand you the ring to your hair. God, that plan sounds so weird. If someone took that shit out of context, they'd think I was literally insane. Anyways, let me know if you think this is a good or bad plan. Good luck.

With those messages handled, I bit my lip. Breakers capped out at level 12,000. If five or six maxed out Breakers attacked us, we were in some serious trouble. Before making that assumption though, I opened my obelisk and researched some on breakers. After about an hour of reading, I changed my mind. We weren't in trouble.

We were completely fucked.

Breakers gained many advantages when they took on their class. Their resistance cap raised by 2.5%, doubling their tankiness. They're given arcane implants, giving them access to true damage dealing spells. They even get extra trees and skills designed for anti-personnel goals.

In Schema's system, they acted as the ultimate duelists and 1v1'ers. Even with a higher level cap, a Fringe Walker gets his ass kicked by a Breaker when fighting 1v1. If I guessed right, two maxed out Breakers decimated Yawm. With me helping Yawm, it took maybe 2.5 in total.

It depended on how the fight played out, and on who got the jump on who. These next few weeks decided whether I might live or die. The gravity of the situation weighed on me, but I carried myself through situations like this before. Considering my track record, the odds were with me.

I stood up, planning out my next plan of action. My cipher needed dramatic improvements. Making that happen required some serious, exponential increases in the cipher's effects. In particular, antimagic effects proved the most valuable assets I could gain.

Arcane magic dealt true damage, some of it dealing percentage based true damage. Even with all the health in the world, a coordinated assault of arcane spells disintegrated me. Cancelling that required some method of canceling magic. When I faced the levelers, they managed that feat during the fight.

Who's to say I couldn't make it happen either?

With this goal in mind, I opened my obelisk and researched antimagic. Within a few minutes, antimagic garnered a lot of flack on online sources. Schema regulated antimagic to an absurd extent, giving it a bad reputation.

The levelers I faced used a rare consumable given out by Schema for their immunity to magic. They lacked any true impunity to spells. The only true sources of antimagic came from gene manipulation and hereditary traits. Since Schema outlawed gene manipulation, only remnants gained access to antimagic for the most part.

In other words, getting an immunity to magic wasn't an option. I sighed, a bit of disappointment washing over me. I shook my head, brushing off my chagrin as I slapped the sides of my face. With no idea what to improve, I sent a message towards Torix, Hod, Kessiah, and Althea asking for advice.

My explained my situation with the Breakers. A few minutes later, I got replies.

Hod(Time: Undefined) – Hod miss Harbinger. Dry Man entertain Hod, but Hod not like spells cast at Hod. Hod not annoying. Hod insightful! Hod handsome and easy on eyes too. Hod get caught up in Hod's greatness. Hod Digress.

Hod think Harbinger need improve on what Harbinger already have. Hod not improve Dry Man skills. Hod improve Hod skills. Therefore, Hod know that Harbinger know what Harbinger need more than anyone...besides for Hod. Hod know Harbinger better than Harbinger know Harbinger. Hod not need tell Harbinger that though.

Hod get back to practicing shade form. Hod beat voices in head with mental jousts! Voices get annoyed at Hod and leave, even when voices shouting. Hod learn simple fact to beat voices.

Hod just need shout louder!

Hod only hear Hod voice then. Hod solve problem! Hod wish Harbinger same good luck as Hod has.

As I finished the message, I grinned from ear to ear. Even if Hod irritated me at times, he offered a refreshing humor in dark situations. After finishing his message, I opened Torix's.

Torix Worm, of Darkhill(Time: Undefined) – It's good to hear from you disciple! Disciple might be the wrong term now, however. You've no doubt improved yourself dramatically since we last left. Your penchant for progress was always extraordinary.

As for your continued growth, I am of the belief that you need to work with Yawm as a team. It sounds counterintuitive, but synergizing your own fighting tactics with Yawm might give you the time you need to progress past this sticking point. After a few Breaker's worth of experience, you'd no doubt close the gap with Yawm.

That's assuming you'd still get experience for them. It also assumes you're in a position with him were he wouldn't mind fighting with you. My advice hinges on many assumptions, so take it with a grain of salt. That being said, I'll inform you on what I've been doing while you're gone.

I've organized your guild.

I've created a complex line of tunnels leading towards rifts further than ten miles from our mountain base. We've been training them by clearing these natural dungeons. I've told them that as they harvest cores, you'll improve their legacies. No doubt your legacy's improvement has nothing to do with that, but it motivates them nonetheless.

I've been capturing eldritch as we've went, collecting an army. The legion were wary at first, but after a few weeks, their worry's died down. We've even got a cavalry unit that rides eldritch into battle. With your legacy as a boon, these mobile fighters focus on becoming as tanky as possible.

They rely on the base damage from their rifles and the eldritch for mobility. This makes them operate as tanks, mobilizing across battlefields and laying down suppressive fire.

With Kessiah's tutelage, we've created a unit that operates with close combat as well. Humanity takes well to fighting physically. Of course they utilize modern weaponry instead of their fists as you do.

The eltari form our final group. With their natural flight, they work as our stealth unit. Althea's been training a group of them, teaching them her own tactics. They're not as bulky as humans are, but the Eltari's long limbs synergize with kiting and technical fights. They're quite the lethal set of assassins.

The Eltari also drop our vanguard units into the foray of a battle. It's a tremendous sight seeing the battle in action. As a leader of armies, the vision swells my heart with pride. The fear in our enemy's eyes is tantalizing as well.

This is all to say, I've not been standing still since you left. When you return, you'll own armies to lead. Look forward to it.

I frowned at the last few sentences of Torix's message. Controlling an army might sound fun, but in practice, it proved a stale endeavour. Remaking their rings, amulets, and enchanted gear loaded me down. At the same time, having someone else fight for me sounded pretty damn nice.

For now, I withheld judgment. Althea replied next.

Althea Tolstoy(Time: Undefined) – It sucks to hear you're struggling, but I'm glad you're still safe. It's kind of crazy hearing you ask for advice though. You always kept your head down and did your own thing. Even if people told you what you were doing was dumb, you just ignored them.

It's worked so far. Why stop now?

That's what I think anyway. If it were me in your situation, I'd probably break down. I'd pull out my hair going crazy. If I didn't go crazy though, I'd probably try and get one of those Breakers to get rid of Yawm for me. If that happened, it would be amazing.

That's me daydreaming though. Love you, and I hope your doing ok.

I smiled at her message. Reading their messages raised my spirit, even if they weren't helpful. I tapped my chin, reading over their messages once more. As insane as it sounds, I listened to Hod. As dumb as he spoke, Hod's wisdom exceeded him.

Out of our entire group, he invested the most into perception. Perception acted as a sixth sense, giving him gut reactions that were on point. Althea's message echoed Hod's, but it didn't lay out any concrete advice. Feeding them information was risky because of Ajax. That's why I communicated through these messages.

I trusted Ajax as much as I trusted a viper hissing beside my neck. With all that in mind, I stood up and cracked my neck a few times. If my plan involved sticking to my guns, I didn't have time to fuck around. I grinded out Force of Nature, practicing my gravitational disruption the entire time.

Training that skill was never a waste of time. Force of Nature leveled at a linear rate. Leveling to 1,001 from 1,000 was as difficult as leveling from 10 to 11. During the training, I incorporated my new mythical skill, Hunter of Many, with my techniques. The skill let me hunt then pin my enemies down. Against people, it would be invaluable.

After all, close combat was my main strength. Getting people up close was the hard part. Hours passed, and the day began again. After that, I took a class with Amara and Yawm. Yawm's patience with her wore thin, but he stuck it out with me there. After that, we went out hunting for new eldritch and to refresh ourselves.

This routine pervaded the next few weeks. I leveled at a slow grind, but the cipher kept my progress steady. The main boon for my build came from the dungeon cores. Not from the attributes mind you, but from the skill points gained from the dungeon cores. With the cores helping me out, I gained an absurd amount in Force of Nature.

As I did, my gravitational prowess expanded. Within three weeks of this routine, I devoured my last absorbable dungeon core. We found quite a few eldritch Yawm experimented with. He reopened his laboratory, and during the night, the screams of eldritch ebbed out above the lake.

It bothered me, but I preferred them facing his hatred rather than me. During this time, I remade my cipher several times. I never improved the cipher by a sizeable amount. Time seemed like the real marker of progress with the cipher. At least I learned a few of the more complex incantations from Amara through our messages.

Time was running out soon though. At this point, a group of breakers showing up any day was inevitable. With all that pouring through my mind, I laid out on my bed after a core harvesting session with Yawm. I looked at my ceiling, interlocking plates of ice reflecting a blurred reflection of me.

The bed Yawm gave us held my mass without a struggle. While not the softest material, not sinking into it was a triumph of engineering on its own right. When I asked Yawm about the fibers of the bed, he said they were complicated.

The fibers were created by interlocking graphene and aluminum plates, weaving them into fibers. The way of making them soft involved making the strands of the fibers microscopic. On that surface, I glanced at my status.

After every session with Yawm, I handled my status screen. It kept everything maintained and ready to go. With that in mind, I put all the skill points from the dungeon cores into Force of Nature. Once that was finished, I put my points into the Immense tree, unlocking the third tier.

Planetary in scope, orbital in your strikes, you stand over your foes. They crawl, ants under your shadow, worms under your feet. Immense(Tier 3) unlocked! 15% of your total mass is added to your physical bonus damage. Unlocks the unique skill, A Titan's Smile.

Unique skill unlocked! A Titan's Smile!

A Titan's Smile(lvl 1) – Most would judge you as unkind from your stature. Your aura tells them a different story. With leveling in this skill, reductions to your charisma from your size are reduced.

Before leaving the tree menu, I checked out my other skill, A Titan's Smile. It was a nice bonus, preventing my size from becoming a glaring issue. So far, the skills gained from the Immense tree worked like that.

They gravitated towards quality of life rather than raw power. I gained another unique skill from the previous tier of immense, Hands of a Giant. The skill helped me keep my hands adroit and dextrous. Mass Manipulation helped me control my size to an extent. All these skills culminated into an advantage over other huge ass people.

Hand's of a Giant helped the most so far with day to day life. I spent a large chunk of my day carving out tiny detail in runic lettering. Having fingers the size of tree branches didn't really help with that.

With these newfound tools at my disposal, I opened my armor screen, finding the modifications. I enjoyed checking them before finalizing my status screen.

[Modifications – The dimensional fabric composing this structure has been modified with code from the dimensional cipher. With mana, further bonuses can be applied. The bonuses are as follows:

+72 Strength

+72 Dexterity

+1,410 Endurance

+100% to effect of legacies

+705 Willpower

+50% to internal motivation]

After inspecting them, I opened up Force of Nature to check that out too.

Force of Nature(lvl 1,876) – You are nature given fury. Enhances all techniques and application of skills within this ability, including: Close Range Combat, Runic abilities, Telekinesis, Gravitation, Sensory Abilities, Bearing, and Draining Abilities.

Bonus Attributes: 180 Strength, 180 Dexterity, 72 Constitution, 72 intelligence, 36 Perception. +18 to all attributes for having a 1,800 total in a legendary skill.

Ability Bonus: +140%

Mana Cost Reduction: 28%

The percentage bonuses towards the ability and the mana reduction halved after reaching a thousand points in the skill. Even then, Force of Nature gave tremendous returns. The runes on my armor enhanced my abilities with time too. After that, I opened my status screen and found a few uninvested attribute points.

As I invested them, a notification appeared.

Previous save state downloading...Discontinued perk line opened...Old patch notes assessed...Requirements met...

[Cancelled Perkline]Jack of All Trades(Have 1,000 or more in seven attributes before level 10,000) – Grants a 10% bonus to attributes with a neutral or negative multiplier.

I raised an eyebrow as I read through the perk line. I blinked a few times after reading through it. The discontinued aspect of the perk came with my hacked system. Ever Schema exiled me, weird difference cropped up every now and again. This strangeness resulted from that. In this case, the perk looked pretty damn good.

It boosted my lowest stats. If anything, the title of the perk was ironic as hell for my build. I specialized more in a single attribute than anyone I knew. I also had the most attribute points of anyone I knew too though. I shrugged, counting my blessings. With the attribute points gained from hunting eldritch with Yawm, I selected the perk.

I put the rest of my attribute points into endurance and selected finalize. As I did, a deluge of vigor flooded through my system. I grinned, a dissonance growing in me. The

body surrounding my mind lightened, no longer feeling like metal. My skin could now bend in my hands without a desperate struggle.

At the same time, a clarity rushed across my eyes, my thoughts becoming clearer. Confidence coursed in my veins, my decisions no longer clouded by doubt. Complex concepts simplified. The horizons of my mind expanded.

I breathed, twisting my neck and moving my fingers. I laughed, my voice pleasing my ears a bit. The general improvement was an intoxicating rush, like caffeine and adrenaline. Except in this case, I didn't get jitters or anything like that. With Schema's system, side effects didn't exist.

That's why I loved leveling. Levelers hunted this sensation like a drug. Based on what it felt like, I understood why. Once the upsurge of improvement passed, I opened and observed my status screen.

Level 3,566

Strength – 3,488 | Constitution – 5,494 | Endurance – 21,861

Dexterity – 1,474 | Willpower – 11,438 | Intelligence – 4,362

Charisma – 480.5 | Luck – 1,485 | Perception – 622.8

Health: 2.35 Million/2.35 Million | Health Regen: 3.1 Million/min or 51,934/sec

Stamina: 1.4 Million/ 1.4 Million | Stamina Regen: 21,044/sec

Living Dimension: 0.42 Trillion/4.30 Trillion

Mass: 160,566 pounds(72,985 kilos~) | Height: 10'3(3.1 meters)

Damage Res – 98.5% | Dimensional Res – 49.25%

Phys Dam Bonus – 116,918% | Damage Bonus – 40%

Event Horizon – 20,000 + (100% of your total health)/min

My biggest improvements came from strength and my steady climb in regeneration. Yawm's base stats still dwarfed my own, but he didn't quadruple my strength anymore. By the time I finished my Immense tree and passed level 5,000 or so, I'd be able to battle Yawm. Well, at least physically. Beating out his antimatter bullshit would take a more creative solution.

Even on a physical level, outgrowing Yawm required years of practice and training. The more I tried, the more I learned about the distance between us. For now, I kept my head down and grinded out my levels and skills.

With that in mind, I lifted my legs and kicked up. I flopped off my bed, landing on my feet. As I fell into practice, a message appeared from Torix.

Torix Worm, of Darkhill(Time: Undefined) – Since the levelers appeared, I've been monitoring the sky and areas near Springfield for strange activity. Something odd appeared near Springfield yesterday. While I discovered the approach of the object during atmospheric entry, I failed to identify it.

It utilizes stealth and tactics that the levelers failed to implement. This tells us several facts of a sort. First, they understand a necessity for stealth. If they were investigating a normal quarantine, they wouldn't be so difficult to locate. Second, by avoiding my detection, we know they have access to high level resources. Otherwise they wouldn't hide from my probing eyes.

Third, they aren't here for eldritch. You and Yawm cleared out nigh all of Springfield. Nothing remains now. They would go elsewhere for rifts now. If they aren't here for a normal quarantine or for the rifts, there remains only one other reason. It all culminates in an inevitable outcome.

The breakers are here, and they're hunting Yawm and you.

Chapter 136: The Sound of Thunder

People mentioned that they didn't understand Amara's motivations or character very well. I took the time to elaborate on it this chapter and set up a fun next few chapters. Hope you guys enjoy.

Panic swelled in my chest, but I stomped it out. I tapped my forehead with a loose fist, wondering what to do. As I wondered, another message popped up.

Torix Worm, of Darkhill(Time: Undefined) – The others and I are positioning ourselves near you. Althea's scouting with Hod. He's mastered something he calls a 'shade form.' We'll see if it's of any use. Knowing Hod, I doubt it.

I'm certain Yawm will sense the Breaker's approach, giving you some warning. We'll assist as we can. Good luck disciple.

I kept thumping my head for a minute before sighing. Over the last month, I researched common traits about Breakers. They cleansed high class bounties across a planet when they arrived. Anything that was around level 3,000 and unknown fell into that category. I fell into those requirements.

To protect myself, I stood up and walked over towards Yawm. Reminding him about the breakers and what not was a good idea. I reached his room, finding Yawm behind his desk. Along the back wall, he stood with a hunched back between two tall bookshelves. Yawm pressed a hand onto a vine growing through the floor.

He stood up straight, turned towards me,

"Did you sense them as well?"

I raised an eyebrow, "Who exactly?"

Yawm rubbed his hands together, "An excellent question, isn't it? Something came here. Many of the fauna here discovered a blinding flash of light in the sky yesterday night. The trees and grass know nothing of the light, but I have an idea."

Yawm stepped up, walking past his desk in a few strides,

“Atmospheric entry. A shuttle arrived here, one big enough for more than a few people mind you.”

Yawm raised a finger, “After that, they disappeared from the view of this planet’s plant life. Now why would they go through such lengths for stealth? The answer’s rather obvious, isn’t it?”

I nodded, “Yeah, they’re probably after us.”

Yawm gripped his fists, “And they know where we are. Considering I relax within a gargantuan rift, they’ve discovered my location. When they come here, I’ll sense their entry.”

Yawm spread out his hands, “But I won’t know their exact location. We’ll need to work together for that.”

I frowned, pointing at my chest, “You want me to find them?”

Yawm looked around, “Well, uhm, yes.” He raised a hand at me, “You discovered the Old One’s plot to slowly destroy our minds. In my eyes, you’ve proven that your senses are well beyond keen. They’re tremendous.”

Yawm clamped the hand pointing at me into a fist, “And once we find them, we’ll disintegrate them into a fine vapor.”

Yawm laughed, excitement leaking into his voice. His hands shook a bit like lightning coursed through his veins.

He raised hands, “We’ll show them what they’ve come to fight. Here is a storm, and we will show them this storm’s lightning.”

His exhilaration was infectious. I banged my fists together,

“And they’ll hear the sound of our thunder.”

Yawm walked up and smacked my back, “Your words are vigor. Let’s go and show them a battle.”

We walked towards the doors leading outside the room. Yawm raised a hand, pushing them aside. The bolt of the door snapped, slamming the doors outwards. The doors crashed against the walls, Yawm’s heels pounding against the floor. He walked up towards Amara’s room.

He knocked onto the doorway,

“Do you have time to discuss something?”

Amara’s voice muffled through the doorway,

“I don’t have a choice but to join your hunt, do I?”

Yawm laughed, “Of course you do.” Yawm tapped his chin, “Though remaining by yourself here does leave you vulnerable. Considering that both Daniel and I are far more effective in combat than you, I advise you join us.”

Amara opened the door, leaving one hand raised towards us. The eye on her palm stared at Yawm with a narrowed eye,

“If you’ve decided it, then I’ll follow.”

He turned towards me, “Let’s come up with a plan of action.”

I shrugged, “I can sit behind you and CC the enemy with gravity and telekinesis. While I pin them down, you can blow them away.”

Yawm laughed, “I doubt it’ll work out that easily, but we’ll work with that as the foundation for our plans. Let’s discuss it as we walk.”

I frowned, “Where are we going exactly?”

Yawm's footsteps shook the building, "Towards my world tree. Within it carries a few advantages we could use."

We paced towards the edge of his ice palace, talking about refinements on our strategy. Yawm's greatest strength was his long range combat. His antimatter explosions, singularity bs, and all his other shenanigans destroyed people from afar. Considering he and I owned extreme regeneration, wearing an enemy down was inevitable.

If they did come at us, I channeled my mana and slowed them down. Once they reached us, we would show them our teeth as Amara put it. We swam through the lake, pacing up a root of the world tree. As we did, the discussion slowed. Once it stopped, I turned toward Amara.

She glanced around with her hands, inspecting our surroundings. To my knowledge, Amara stayed in her room 99% of the time. Seeing the outside world for the first time engrossed her. With a bit of curiosity spurring me, I sent her a message.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Hey, why are you helping me instead of Yawm?

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Allying myself with you has a higher chance of survival and a lower chance for corruption. Why do are you asking?

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – I'm just curious.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – I'm curious as well. Why are you even fighting Yawm? Schema has bitten into you many times. If anything, Yawm guards you from him, and he enjoys who you are.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Eh, I think Yawm's trying to bait me. Besides for that gut feeling, he's trying to use people who mean a lot to me. He doesn't listen very well either, so I don't think I can convince him to stop.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – No. You won't be able to convince him.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Thanks for the support.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – I'm not insulting you. I'm pointing out the obvious. No one can convince him to change his mind once it's made. He thinks of himself too highly for that, and he doesn't trust anyone else enough either.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Yeah, that's true. I'm still wondering what you want to do after all this is over with though. I mean, I get you want to survive and all that, but what about after we've gotten away from Yawm?

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – I could ask the same question for you. Give me an answer, and I'll give another in kind.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – That's fair, I suppose. I honestly don't know what I'll want to do after Yawm's gone. I'll probably try and explore the galaxy some. Maybe set up a base here on Earth and help a few people out. I haven't really thought it through yet.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – I find myself in the same position. Surviving is all I've been thinking about since I was freed from my prison. Before that, however, I dreamed while in my prison.

I imagined a day where the eldritch and sentients could...coexist. Perhaps there will still be conflict, but it won't be an ongoing war at all times. Unlike Yawm, I believe there's nothing wrong with the eldritch. I am proud of my lineage. I am proud that we eldritch survive, even as we're thrown into another dimension.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Yeah, but if you guys didn't attack everything on sight, we wouldn't kill you guys.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – That is a lie. Many times I've offered peace. Many times your kind has snapped at my hand as I offered it. Your fear clouds your judgment. You offered me a chance because you never feared me. Anyone else would have killed me for status in your world.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – You gotta be aware of how destructive most eldritch are. You're the only eldritch I've ever seen that isn't trying to eat people. I've killed tens of thousands of eldritch too, and every single one tried killing me too.

A minute or two passed before a message popped up.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – There are three kinds of eldritch. Those that are relentless in their hunger, those that are nihilists, and those like me. The hungry eldritch want to come to this dimension and feast. They are the eldritch you most commonly see.

The nihilists come second. They've understood that their hunger leads to nothing. Once we've eaten everything that can be eaten, what lies next in our lives? I've discovered the answer; there is null. Our incessant greed leads to a full belly. That is all.

It's a harrowing realization that all of your instincts are meaningless. These eldritch sit and wallow in self hatred. You've likely never seen an eldritch of this sort, as they hide from the probing eyes of others. I've seen into them, and I've been one of them. I understand their plight.

That leaves the third group, my own kind. I still lack any answer for why I exist or why the eldritch desire what they desire. The difference between me and then nihilists is that I want an answer.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Well, we're just animals, like anything else. You just have to find your own reason to go on I guess. I haven't really thought about philosophy or anything like that in all honesty. I'm too busy just trying to get by.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – While in my prison, why I exist is one of the thoughts I dwelled on. I don't know the answer, but I'll discover it.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – How are you going to figure something like that out?

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – I'll create a place of learning. Somewhere I can be safe in, and somewhere with more books than I could ever read. I'll learn until I can devise a satisfying answer. I'll enlist other eldritch and sentients, and we'll hunt out the answers to our questions.

I'll discover a way to educate the eldritch, and I'll elevate our kind above mere animals.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Damn...that's pretty awesome. I wish I had some overarching goal like that.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Help me build my place of learning, and you might hunt down the answer you seek.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Eh, maybe. For now, I'm focusing on getting past Yawm. Thanks for giving me something to think about though. I'll, uh, chew on that later.

Amara moved one of her hands, pointing an eye at me,

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Is that supposed to be a joke?

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – You're always using biting and eating as metaphors when you talk. I figured I'd join in on the fun.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Hmmm...I never noticed my use of eating as a metaphor. I'll bite into my speech less, I suppose.

Dimension C-138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – See? There it is again.

As our conversation lulled as we reached the end of the world tree's vast root. While reaching the end of the wooden path, I turned around, checking out the view. Below us, the lake's edge peeked out from the world tree. The eldritch in the lake swam and snapped at each other, schools of fish swimming near the surface.

The angle of light hit the lake just right, giving it a pleasing shimmer on the surface. Around us, a dense jungle grew. A bit farther from the lake, and the cityscape took over. A trashed city, greenery growing from every crack, reached out into the distance. Skyscrapers with busted windows and cracks like bruises dotted the horizon.

Past the skyscrapers, floating islands dotted the skyline. Even further behind, a grey cloud loomed. The contrasting view took my breath away. I was in another world after all, and seeing it from a different angle reminded me how extraordinary it was.

I turned back around, finding the world tree above. The runic carvings covered the center trunk. I turned towards Yawm and asked,

“What’s all this for exactly?”

Yawm walked up to the tree, placing his hand on it,

“Whenever I teleport from world to world, an immensity of mana is required.”

The runes glowed a bright green along the light brown bark of the tree trunk,

“So much so that dispersing the mana exhausts me for a period of time. I enter a stasis for a while within the world tree, gathering my strength again. These runic carvings serve as protection and as a gateway into the minds of a world’s life.”

Yawm closed his eyes, leaning his forehead against the tree,

“The protection runes stem from deals with Etorhma. The other runes are ancient marking passed down by the porytians. Using them, I ask for energy from the plants. Some give, some do not. On a world with dense life on it like this, my recovery time is short. On less enlivened worlds, it takes a tremendous amount of time to heal.”

After that, Yawm stayed silent for a few minutes. Right as I got bored, he lifted his head, nodding with gusto,

“Ah yes. They’re here.”

I turned towards Yawm,

“So what are we going to do?”

Yawm reached out a hand towards Amara,

“Would you mind if I took your hand?”

He spoke to her as if talking to a lady. If Amara blushed, I couldn't really tell. Her pale complexion shifted a slight tinge of purple at least. He grasped her small hand, his thumb and index finger grabbing her palm. He lifted her hand against the world tree.

“The world tree will embrace you now.”

Amara lifted her other hand towards him,

“What? Why?”

Yawm raised an eye and narrowed the other, “To protect you from the battle of course.”

Amara moved her hand between us both, “I didn't agree to this.”

Yawm patted her shoulder, “Why do you think I told you after I started the process.”

He pushed her towards the world tree. She sunk into the bark, her body falling into the enormous trunk.

Amara howled, saliva spitting from her mouth, “No! I will not be imprisoned again. I would rather die.”

Yawm waved away her concern, “You'll be fine.”

Amara pushed with her hands, fighting the pull of the world tree. She sunk in, hissing her words like a viper,

“And what if you die and I am trapped here eternity?”

Yawm raised a fist, “It’s simple really. I won’t lose.”

Amara fought before only one arm and her head remained out of the world tree. Her eye darted around in her palm, tears of frustration pouring from it. She closed her eye, one tear falling down on the world tree. Before the tree swallowed her, I walked up.

I grabbed her hand, grasping her hand like a sideways handshake. From a pocket in my armor, I pressed the ring I made for her into her palm. Up till now, I never got the chance to give it to her. This was my golden opportunity.

“Hey, Amara. You’re going to be fine, alright?”

“I...I will be.”

I walked with her arm as she sunk in, only letting go of her hand as the tree consumed it. She gripped the ring as I let go of her hand. With all the drama of the situation, it disguised me giving her the ring. Finally.

It turns out that handing someone a ring under the eye of an all seeing, paranoid monster is pretty damn difficult. Even if this was a golden chance though, Amara still got shit on.

With that in mind, I turned towards Yawm,

“Man...That was mean as fuck.”

Yawm rolled his eyes, “It’s better than her getting in the way of our combat, isn’t it?”

I shook my head, “I don’t know. Did you really need to do all that?”

Yawm nodded, “When you see the breakers, you’ll understand why she was a liability. True cruelty would be leaving her at the mercy of the coming monsters.”

I frowned, but his point made sense. I wanted to live more than I wanted Amara’s feelings to remain unscathed. I sighed while Yawm rolled his shoulders. He lifted a

hand, cracking his knuckles. Deep, bursting sounds snapped from his fingers, like someone snapping bars of metal.

Yawm cracked his neck next, and he spread out his arms,

“Who’d have guessed. Two groups arrived at the same time.”

Yawm turned from one side of the rift to the next,

“I wonder which of them we’ll hunt down first?”

Chapter 137: They Come at Night

Yawm turned between the two groups, wondering which he should pick. Yawm placed a hand on the world tree, closing his eyes. With a deep focus, he honed in and listened. Moments later, he raised his head, pointing a hand northwards.

“They’ve told me which group is stronger. The other entity is merely a distraction.”

Yawm bent his knees, the air around us popping like burning wood in a wildfire. At the bottom of his leap, Yawm’s aura condensed over him. At the same time, I charged my runes, setting myself up to follow.

We leapt into the air, though Yawm out paced me with ease. Both of us crushed the wood underneath us at least. As we reached the edge of Yawm’s lush forest, a trinkle of mana poured in. After a second, the drops turned into a stream then a fountain of mana.

I grinned as Amara channeled her mana towards me. I siphoned the excess into my runes, letting it feast on the energy for now. Once the fight started, Amara’s regeneration would be a welcome edge in combat.

Once we reached the skyscrapers and floating islands, Yawm stomped his foot into the ground. The concrete sidewalk crushed under his heel. I stopped my movement by extending my footing with telekinesis. My telekinetic footing took a large circle around me and descended the ground downwards. It was like a giant hydraulic press compressed the dirt around me.

Yawm glanced around, his eyes probing. He murmured, "My brothers told me they were near here. Can you sense them?"

I didn't even know that plants had genders. I glanced around with my mythical skill, Hunter of Many, extending my senses. I noticed nothing of note. I whispered,

"No. I can't sense them?"

Yawm narrowed his eyes, "Well that complicates things a bit. To be fair-

Yawm spread out his hands, "It's more fun this way regardless."

I covered my ears with armor as Yawm clapped his hands together. As his palms contacted each other, they released a kinetic explosion. It was like he detonated a missile in his hands.

A wave of sound shot outwards, enough to leave my bones ringing and my feet unstable. The glass along the skyscrapers around us shattered as the wave of sound passed over them. Literal tons of glass clattered against the ground, a symphony of sharp, stinging noise rang out.

Yawm turned around, "There's no more easy cover, yet they remain hidden. Let's see them avoid this tactic."

Mana coalesced onto his palms, the emerald green quaking with unbridled violence. Yawm raised his hands and clapped them together, fusing the balls of energy. He clasped the energy in his hand, popping it.

Bolts of lightning shot outwards from his hand. Thick, crackling arcs of electricity flashed across the landscape, coating the area in singe marks. My ears popped several times, and the air smelled like ozone. As his display of might ended, a group appeared in the range of my senses.

A group of four people stood atop a nearby skyscraper. One mirrored Yawm's height. The others stood a bit shorter. They all wore armor, and their weapons were smooth and made of single pieces. They reminded me of the rings that Schema gave out.

I pointed upwards at the group. Yawm glanced at them. He raised a hand, the air cackling again. The group moved, shifting away from where they were. The area around entire upper half of the skyscraper disintegrated in a blinding flash of light. The miniature sun disappeared, leaving behind destruction in its wake.

I wish I could say I didn't gasp or gawk at it, but I can't. Around 40% of the skyscraper disappeared. It was like a giant sphere swallowed the building sending that part to a different dimension.

Along the edges of the damage, magma and molten metal dripped like some kind of orange syrup. A dense powder rose above the building. The smell hit me like acid across my face. I closed my mouth into a frown.

Yawm evaporated the rock and steel. Jesus Christ.

Yawm laughed then roared out, a ragged edge in his voice,

"Come. Fight me. Are you all so spineless?"

No one answered. He glanced around,

"Can you sense them?"

I shook my head. Yawm's tone turned solemn, "They don't rely on tech, at least they avoid it in a pure sense. Their more flexible in combat then I imagined."

A repressed joy leaked into his voice, "Good. Very good."

Yawm charged his mana, "It's been quite a few years since my last challenge. It appears these members are quite experienced, unlike the last."

We looked around for a while. Yawm's eyes narrowed, "They're hiding frus-"

A fist appeared as it slammed into Yawm's face. Covering the fist, arcane bolts of lightning shot outwards. As the massive hand crashed against Yawm's temple, another bounty hunter appeared behind me.

An arcane spear ruptured my armor, digging out through my stomach. Silver blood shimmered on the spear as I reached backwards. Event Horizon shot outwards, covering everyone around us. A shrill voice rang out, but the person behind me dug their spear deeper.

I dislocated my arms and hips, latching my hands onto him. A deep, guttural voice rang out,

"What in Schema's name is this abomination?"

I shot out spikes of my armor, piercing through the suit that covered him. Deafening blows rang out behind me as the bounty hunter stumbled backwards, landing onto the ground. I condensed Overwhelming Presence, my weight pulling him into the ground. The Breaker roared, kicking me off of him.

I flew through the air, the noise of a plane taking off ringing in my ears. The air and ground revolved around my vision. I gained control of my descent, landing on my feet. As I looked ahead, a vision of our enemies came up.

Yawm fought against a massive remnant coated in a iridescent aura. He stood with the same stature as Yawm, but with a denser frame. White, glowing tattoos covered his skin, the markings charged with mana. A braided beard of white came down towards the middle of his chest. He cut his black, combat fatigues at his sleeves, showing muscled arms. I analyzed him.

Korga Ryker, 99% Match

Class: Breaker | Race: remnant | Lvl:12,000 | Legendary Skill: A Mountain's Wrath | Guild Affiliation: The Wanderer's Home

Galactic Synopsis: A strong, able Breaker that is heavily involved in intergalactic politics. Focuses on accomplishing dangerous missions for Schema in order to revoke unknown status for Breakers. Risk taker and unafraid of dangerous combat. Well liked and feared among Breakers.

Specialties: Utilizes antimagic strains of genetic manipulation. Enhances combat with runic carving. Expert grappler. Employs the use of arcane magic in the form of auras and to enhance hand to hand combat. Physically imposing. Inspiring leader of many remnants, ranked highly within the ranks of Breakers.

Guild: The Wanderer's Home | Tier: B –

He looked like a hulking version of what I imagined Kessiah's dad looked like. As Yawm used his spells against the muscled remnant, they fizzled out on his iridescent aura. This Breaker did his research. You can't tank Yawm's attacks. You have to nullify them.

Nullify them he did.

In front of me, a remnant and another alien faced me. I left holes in the suit of the arcane spear holder. The wholes exposed metal beneath his suit. Runic carvings coated certain spots on his body, marring the otherwise mirror like surface. His angular faced looked like mirrors plastered together at angles.

As the bounty hunter breathed, his polished, steel skin shifted like liquid mercury. Beside him, a thin, spindly alien stood in a black skin suit. It covered him from head to toe, except for tinted glass over his face. Two glowing eyes glared from the murky inside, looking just like the enigmatta from way back. I analyzed the metal one.

Brim, 99% Match

Class: Breaker | Race: Kolm | Lvl:10,941 | Legendary Skill: Forger of Divinity | Guild Affiliation: The Wanderer's Home

Galactic Synopsis: A Breaker with a natural affinity for building. He's known as an excellent blacksmith that forges with rare, valuable metals. Known for powerful creation magic that allows him to generate utterly unique metals and stones. He uses his skills to fund various operations lead by Korga Ryker.

Specialties: The Kolm are a species composed of living metal, giving Brim a natural sturdiness. Most of his race's movements are clumsy and slow, outside the dexterity of

their hands. Therefore, they utilize polearms primarily, letting them use their flexible, strong wrists for combat. Kolm's advanced runic carving, excellent weaponry, and basic mastery of arcane magic make him formidable.

In the hands of Brim, he held a spear made from his body. This extension of him ended with an intricate, arcane blade resonating with energy. Before I analyzed the hazmat guy, the thin alien opened his dimensional storage. He reached into the portal, and Brim dashed towards me.

I gathered mana before the metal Breaker reached me. As he did, he stabbed the spear forward. I deflected it with gravity, a swipe of my hand, and by molding my armor. The blade shifted sideways, and I struck his face with a solid right cross.

The ground quaked under the impact, a wave of dirt tearing the road apart. Brim took the blow like a champ, whipping the end of his spear across my chin. It hit me hard, knocking teeth out of my mouth. They clattered against the ground. A sloshing, snapping sound ebbed out too. I breathed out, a torrent of blood coming out of my nostrils.

The fucker broke my nose.

A hit of such magnitude should of have sent me flying, but something weighed me down. My vision blurred, blood leaking into my eyes. Behind Brim, the thin, suited alien clicked on his status. He placed potions onto his mask, clicking them in place. The liquid in the bottles drained then snapped off. They landed on the ground, the glass shattering on the dirt.

Brim erased himself from my senses. I sunk into the ground. A spear jammed through my chest once more. I dashed away, yanking out the spear. Brim followed through the dirt with ease. I shot up into a skyscraper. The ground detonated under Brim's heels, letting him skyrocket towards me.

I pierced the building behind me. Brim dashed in, but I outmaneuvered him using a burst of mana. Like a living cannonball, I fired myself at the suited alien. I reached him as he pulled out a vial of black, swirling mana. He tossed it down, teleporting him to another place. I landed in the black smoke.

Looking out of it, I took full advantage of their expectation that the smoke would deform me. I analyzed the tiny fuck in a suit.

Frode Favalsieray, 97% Match

Class: Architect | Race: Enigmatta | Lvl: 8,942 | Legendary Skill: Elevated Promethean |
Guild Affiliation: The Wanderer's Home

Galactic Synopsis: Frode is a technical member of a monolith service team. He assists in maintaining several information systems for maintaining the relay of information along the obelisk's network. With advanced knowledge for maneuvering through Schema's system, Frode adds value to his team. That doesn't even include his wealth, tech prowess, and bioengineering capabilities.

Specialties: Using the enigmatta's curiosity, Frode acts as an information broker, techy, and group organizer for Korga's guild. He utilizes consumables, tactics during encounters, and gathers information before combat. Stealths the group, learns the landscape, and assists Brim in combat. A jack-of-all-trades.

Over two seconds, I got the gist of who he was – a conniving little shit. Hiding from me, Frode squatted down behind a car. With Force of Nature rearing at full speed, I sunk into the Earth several feet. I drained the black mana around me, Brim gasping in shock. I grinned, dashing towards Frode.

I smashed through the car, grabbing the skinny alien. I wrapped my arms around him, drilling tendrils of armor through his suit. He shouted in a raspy, high voice,

“It eats eldritch. I repeat, it eats eldritch.”

A burst of writhing black mana spawned from the tears in his black suit. The smoky, dense cloud rushed into my helmet. Like someone shoving their hand down your throat, it dashed into my mouth.

A bitter, acrid taste rippled out, making my eyes water. It reminded me of swallow a log of wasabi. An unbelievable itch spread across my skin. It was the kind of itch that made you jump and tear at yourself. Overwhelmed by the sensation, I shot my armor into my own flesh, ripping myself apart.

The wounds only made the sensation worse. I let go of Frode, and I grabbed the sides of my head. It was like a swarm of mosquitoes landed on my skin, feasting on me. I snapped out of my panic, breathing a few times before shaking my head. With a willpower like granite, I suppressed my itching.

Frode scrambled backwards, getting away from me. I stepped forward, but a spear appeared through my neck. A liquid metal swarmed into the wound, spreading down my throat and up my face. I laughed, letting the metal drown me. Well, Brim thought it drowned me.

My own armor, a metal denser and harder than his own, pierced into the invading fluid. Brim roared, a deep, ringing voice that echoed outwards. He grabbed the head of the spear in front of me, ripping it out. He reached up, slicing his own arm off. He left his left arm behind, my armor feasting on it.

He glared at me with a face with no eyes, “This monster is full of surprises Frode. Be ready for more.”

The light, scratchy voice of Frode replied, “Affirmative. Maintain range. Close combat isn’t recommended.”

I shot towards Frode, staying silent. I didn’t have time for one liners. Instead, I used my head. As I reached Frode, I shot sideways away from him. He already reached into his dimensional storage, pulling out a grenade of some sort. It detonated when I would have reached him, releasing a kinetic pulse in front of him.

I dodged it, dashing back towards Yawm. Regrouping took priority. Brim followed, his left arm regenerated already. At the same time, he looked smaller than before, his black bodysuit baggy all of the sudden.

I didn’t have time to dwell. I turned forward, glancing towards Yawm and Korga. They fought on the other side of a skyscraper, their blows making the ground crumble. With Hunter of Many, I sensed past the visual obstructions in front of me.

Two people fought against Yawm. Korga battled up close, pressuring Yawm with grabs. The other hovered nearby, using a jetpack for propulsion. Once I crossed a corner, they came into view.

The hovering member was a slender, womanly figure. A black, carbon fiber suit covered her from head to toe. She maneuvered behind Korga with an experienced, casual grace. In one hand, she carried an ornate, silver staff ending in a block of crystallized bismuth. She smothered herself and Korga in the iridescent aura with it.

I sprinted towards her, Brim and Ford gaining on me. I neared them, a clear view of the fight arising. A few details sprung out to me. Something like sweat covered Yawm, dripping from his shoulders and chin. He heaved for breath, his throat wheezing. Cracks littered his bark skin. This fight, it defied all convention.

Yawm wasn't even winning.

He was losing.

Chapter 138: Prodigy of War

As I dashed closer towards Yawm, Frode tossed something towards me. I turned around, seeing a net right at my nose. Before it made contact, my reflexes kicked into gear. A wave of gravitational energy shot out, reflecting the net back. Brim sliced it with his spear, slowing him down.

I turned forward, smacking a telephone pole out of my way. The wires snapped, the wood cracking as I swiped through it. With gravity and telekinesis, I shot the pole toward Frode. Brim leapt in front of him, snapping the pole apart like a twig. It bought me more time, however.

As I reached Yawm, he turned towards me. Spotting Brim and Frode, he reached out an hand towards them. Korga knocked his arm up, sending a destructive pulse above us. Another skyscraper evaporated before Korga jumped up. He rushed past Yawm, wrapping his arm around him and pulling him at the same time.

They landed on the ground, the pavement sheering under them. I raised an eyebrow in shock as Yawm laughed like child playing with his friends.

"You fight differently than Daniel. He relies on strikes. You rely on wrestling. I find the difference novel, however."

Yawm laid a hand onto the ground, vines growing from his fingertips. Wooden tendrils wrapped around the thick neck of Korga, rushing up his nose and eyes and mouth. The mage flew over them, firing an arcane spell at Yawm. It landed on Yawm's back, leaving a crack in the bark. The spell hurt Yawm, making the vines retreat from Korga's face.

Yawm reached up over his head, grabbing the face of Korga. His grip split the skin of the old remnant. Yawm raised his legs, flipping his entire body over Korga. He slipped out of the grasp of Korga, his sweat making him greasy. Yawm drove his feet into the chest of Korga.

I blocked my ear, the shockwave of impact unbearable and unbelievable. The wave off the hit left glass crumbled and the ground rumbling. It was like a meteor struck the chest of Korga. From his chest, a plume of blood propelled, covering Yawm's face in red.

Yawm lifted his hand, but the mage cast a spell. Vibrant, ornate lines of green traced the air in front of her staff, sending out a flash of green. Korga recovered, twisting his body and dodging Yawm's punch at the same time. He flipped himself, catching Yawm in an arm bar. Korga pulled, but Yawm just laughed.

Yawm lifted Korga up with a single arm, curling his wrist up. The damn remnant turned a shade of lavender as he struggled against Yawm's might. Viens crept across the remnant's face, but it wasn't enough. Yawm was beating his entire body's strength with his arm.

I didn't see the rest. From behind me, a wave of black mana reached out towards me. I molded my armor, removing any weak spots. Brim threw a spear, however, piercing through my shoulder. The mana rushed into the wound, creating another onset of itching.

I uncovered my eyes, running despite the discomfort. Korga's arm bar held on by a thread. Before the arm bar broke, the floating mage pointed her staff at Yawm. She cast an aura over him, a pillar of yellow coming down from the sky. Yawm's arm went limp, letting Korga pull at him.

The bone snapped, the skin rupturing. Yawm's glowing green blood leaked out before he grabbed Korga's face with his good arm. From deep in his chest, Yawm let out a

bellowing chuckle, jerking Korga from his broken limb. Yawm's aura left my hair on edge and sent a chill down my spine.

"This is how you wage war, remnant."

Yawm whipped Korga through the air like a rag doll, slamming him into the ground. The impact was nuclear, unlike any kinetic impact I'd ever see nor felt. It rippled the ground, sending out a wave on the surface of the ground. It flipped cars as a shockwave passed over me. It left my skin numb.

Yawm lifted his broken arm above his head. He whipped it like a club, mauling Korga. With vicious, savage laughter, Yawm relished each strike as the clubbing broke ribs and bone and skin. Here I thought I was a hardass in a fight.

I really needed to step my game up.

Despite the awe of such brutality, the itchiness and discomfort overwhelmed me.

Skill gained! Itch Tolerance(lvl 1) – Not all forms of discomfort fall under pain. You've learned that, and you fight against irritation. -1% to itchiness felt.

I fell onto my knees, my vision blurring. The spell of the damn enigmatta hurt more than pain. I looked at my hands, maggots crawling out of my skin. I clenched my teeth, clasp my fists. I stood, ignoring this half baked illusion. The last damn thing I let stop me is me being a bitch.

As I recovered, a chain rattled behind me. The whipping of air siphoned around it. The same arcane blade cut halfway through my chest, leaving my legs limp. I fell down again. As I thud into the ground, I condensed my weight, sinking me into the ground. At the same time, I altered my armor, pulling the arcane blade from my spine.

Within seconds another wave of black mana infused with me through my wounds. My throat dried and my stomach emptied. A primal hunger surged up, like I hadn't eaten in weeks. Even with the illusion magic racking me, I grabbed the chain leading to the arcane blade.

The chain jerked, sending me whipping with it. I shot upwards, glancing down. One of Brim's arms molded into the chain, letting him control it. I glanced down, seeing the arcane blade beneath me. The embroidered, glowing arcane blade connected with a small spear at the end of the chain.

My spine healed as I whipped towards the road below. I dived into it, shooting towards the ground. Using my burrowing skills, I dragged the chain down. As it turned taught, moving the chain was like pushing a brick wall. Abusing my mana pool, I detonated several hundred thousand mana at once.

I shot down, breaking through the resistance. As the chain dragged further down, I no longer struggled with dragging him. My armor dug into his silver, extended body. Nearly a minute of digging passed before Brim let the arcane blade go.

As he did, the blade fell downwards, scorching through the earth. I jolted down, grabbing the precious block and blade. My armor coated it. I shot back upwards, lifting out of the ground. By the time I reached over the dirt, the four Breakers cornered Yawm...but Yawm also beat Korga to a pulp with his broken arm.

Yawm's arm had returned to normal too. He already tore off Brim's last arm, and he threw it at the floating mage. After that, he charged Frode down. I bolted towards the fight, analyzing the annoying utility mage.

Elessah May, 100% Match

Class: Breaker | Race: remnant | Lvl:10,439 | Legendary Skill: Fallen Into Abyss | Guild Affiliation: The Wanderer's Home

Galactic Synopsis: Respected as the right hand woman of Korga Ryker. She acts as a shield and he their sword. While Korga handles most of the obvious leader oriented details of the guild, Elessah handles the background details. In a way, she makes more of the guild's actual decisions than Korga does.

Specialties: Elessah's specialties are numerous. In particular, her stamina draining and antimagic aura are whispered of in legend. She also has access to basic arcane magic like most Breakers, making her dangerous to fight for prolonged periods. She's considered the guild's ace since she can cripple almost any foe and negate their potent strengths.

I knew which one to beat the hell out of at least. As I neared them, another Breaker materialized behind Yawm. Covered in a suit of hexagonal plates, the near translucent figure unsheathed a red blade. Sliding it down Yawm's throat, the metal tore the bark skin of Yawm.

Green blood burst from the wound, red residue from the blade wiping into it. Yawm reached back behind him, grabbing the assassin's neck. Frode stopped running and turned towards them. He created a plume of black mana. Green energy coalesced into Yawm's hand, and the warlord gurgled on his own blood, glee still in his voice,

"Antimagic this."

Elessah pointed her staff towards Yawm, but I already closed in. With an explosive burst, I dipped into my health with a burst of gravity. The wave pulled the staff, jerking it towards Frode. A pillar of yellow light beamed down onto Frode, making him fall limp. His magic fell apart as he clunked against the dirt.

Yawm pulled the assassin Breaker towards his other fist. In an instant, her helmet crushed open, revealing a mane of white hair and violet skin. Another remnant. At the same time, Yawm reared his fist back again, slamming his fist into her face once more. Her bottom jaw cleaved from her face, revealing her tongue and upper teeth.

Yawm reached back again, but Brim tackled Yawm's side. Yawm balanced himself, taking the charge with ease. Yawm dragged backwards towards a now refreshed Korga. Elessah had healed him yet again.

Yawm reared back his fist once more, but Korga reached behind him. Korga wrapped his arm around the neck of Yawm, pulling him back just in time. Yawm's fist still landed despite the loss of footing. Yawm's glancing blow caved the assassin's skull in, one eye hanging out of her squished skull. Frode dashed in, screaming in rage.

As he did, I met his charge.

Frode and I rolled onto the ground, but I ended up on top of him. I raised my fists, exerting overcharged runic strikes with each punch of my fist. A shield of mana protected Frode, blocking my precise, explosive strikes. With the mana protecting him, he opened his dimensional storage again.

A memory flashed across my eyes. I remembered the limitations of the dimensional rings. Frode could only hold as much mass in the ring as his own mass. If he put in more than the mass he had, he would die.

With desperation fueling me, I jabbed my arm into the night sky looking portal. My hand disintegrated then my forearm. As it did, all four of Frode's limbs evaporated. Before I reached any deeper into the portal, something pierced into my neck with force. I whipped through the air like a puppet with no strings. My throat burned.

I tumbled across the ground before standing up mid roll. I reached up towards my neck, touched it, then pulled my hand back. An arcane flame burned on my palm. I grabbed my wrist, jerking the armor over my hand off. The arcane flame covered strip of armor landed on the ground. It burned away.

I got an idea of where the wound in my neck was. The arcane flame dug into my health, spreading fast. Before it did more damage, I drove my armor around the entire wound. Turning my armor thin and sharp, I cut through the flesh of my neck and lopped it off me.

A three inch crater of burning neck landed on the ground beside me. An arcane flame ate away at it until only a metallic, empty round remained. I glanced up, breathing through a hole in my neck. A sniper did this.

I covered my neck wound with my armor. In front of me, Frode writhed on the ground in agony. The enigmatta architect would bleed out soon without intervention. Korga battled it out with Yawm again, this time with Brim's help. Yawm lashed out, keeping them at bay.

Elessah landed near Frode, casting her healing magic on him again. As she did, I dashed towards her. She looked up towards me. Her head whipped around like she was rolling her eyes at a nuisance. She pointing her staff, casting the same yellow light on me. As the yellow hit me, exhaustion grew up my limbs.

I stopped moving, but I stayed standing. Ellessah shouted in high pitched voice,

"How in Schema's name is a level 3,000 tanking my abyssal spell? What kind of build does it have?"

I stepped forward, a tenth of my stamina draining. My feet were lead and my head heavy. The light overpowered my body, enfeebling my mind. The mage didn't know about my endurance though.

With a stamina regen I'd long forgotten about, I took another step forward. Elessah stood up straight, cancelling her healing magic. As she did, the yellow beam's strength augmented. My knees debilitated, turning like noodles. My hands shook like dry leaves in a roaring tempest. My eyelids turned to lead, heavier than in months.

I heaved for breath, the edges of my vision blurring. I willed myself forward, but I didn't even budge. All my effort was in standing. That was all I had in me. I could do no more. I demanded more from my body, but the stamina drain breached my limits. A sense of defeat washed over me as I stood there, useless as a pile of dirt.

"Why won't you fall...Why won't you fall?!"

Elessah's ragged voice echoed across the booming impacts of battle. She reared back her staff, channeling more mana into her spell. The yellow light bathing me mixed with green and brown, turning sickly. My knees landed on the sidewalk beneath me. Elessah shouted,

"Finally, he finally fell."

Something tore into my chest. I looked down. A small tunnel led through my chest, blood gushing out. Silver blood spurted out, drenching me with it. Even in my exhaustion, I curved my armor onto the wound. I glanced over at Yawm, confusion washing over me with the blood loss.

He hadn't beaten Korga or Brim yet. Cuts gashed up and down his sides. Korga and Brim are worse off. Yawm tore an ear and nose off of Korga. Brim regenerated his arms, but he shrank further. His suit sagged on him, and I dwarfed his height. Behind them, the caved in skull of the assassin covered in blue squares of light.

The assassin lifted herself off the ground, scars tracing the remnant's violet skin. She looked around, utter confusion spread across her face. A portion of her hair didn't grow back from her revival. She slammed her hands into the ground and howled,

“My revival...That motherfucker stole my revival!”

Elessah shouted, “Don’t worry. We’re taking the revival of this monster too. Fair trade.”

I glanced at my health. It was at 40%. I raised my head from the ground as my neck healed,

“No, you’re not...Not yet at least...Keep up the pressure and maybe.”

Elessah raised her other hand, channeling an arcane spell.

“Be quiet. You’re not the reason we’re struggling, low level betrayer.”

Even on the ground, that pissed me off. As she shot her spell forward, I dipped into my mana regen. With gravity, a chunk of pavement raised in front of me. The arcane magic destroyed the chunk, a wave of dust covering us. Using the explosion as a distraction, I condensed my weight. My mass crushed the dirt, digging me into the ground.

Elessah raised her hands, “What is giving me this damn headache?”

A bullet lodged into the ground, passing just over my head. I smirked. Even if my stamina was zero, I made a difference with magic and auras. Over the sound of impacts and struggle, Korga roared in his deep voice,

“Use your magic on Yawm, you idiot. Why are you wasting it on that level 3,000 unknown when we’re fighting the world eater?”

From above, the exhaustion ceased. Life force rushed into my bones, stamina flooding my system. At the edge of my senses, a few strings of mana connected with me. It felt just like the conduit between Althea and I.

Between the heated combat, Yawm murmured under his breath, “Others are here now as well...A large group.”

Yawm turned towards Korga, meeting his eye,

“Did you bring an Army?”

Korga squinted his eyes, his beard shifting, “And what, have them obliterated in a second? We’re not that moronic.”

Yawm turned towards me. I layed on the ground, unable to move yet. Six seconds later, and my stamina passed the 10% mark. I pushed myself off the ground, shrugging towards Yawm.

Yawm sighed, “Then I’ll bring my own army as well.”

Chapter 139: Turning the Tide

Korga snapped, “I told you we didn’t bring an army.”

Yawm raised his eyebrows, “Really? Then whose army is it...We’ll discover soon.”

The conduit links built up in the back of my head. Countless links to people I didn’t know came up. A message appeared in my status.

Torix Worm, of Darkhill(Time: Undefined) – We’ve arrived. Don’t let Yawm stop us.

I turned towards Yawm and shouted, “Can you bring the eldritch here?”

Yawm nodded, “For what purpose? As Fodder perchance?”

I shook my head, “I can use them-”

A bullet punctured my neck again. With skipping a beat, I covered the wound with my armor, letting me speak again “For mana. I...It will help us.”

Korga tapped the edge of his helmet. He mouthed words, but no sound came out. He pointed at me. Brim turned towards me, running over towards Frode. Before they

rallied further, I charged my runes and exploded from the ground. Yawm dashed towards Elessah. She dodged with grace before Korga met Yawm's charge.

I couldn't watch any more. Frode stood up, his limbs regenerated. I wooshed right past Brim, reaching the architect first. I grabbed the enigmata and launched us into a metal telephone pole. The rod bent, uprooting from the sidewalk.

Our momentum dragged us further, bashing us against a concrete wall of a gigantic bank. Along the all of the high rise, a granite panel crumbled from our impact. As the pieces of stone fell, they exposed a bent steel girder.

I grinned, Frode's head smashed into the metal. I reared back a fist, getting my first punch off of the damn fight. A telekinetic bolt slapped into Frode's helmet, cracking the glass. His helmet whipped around like a bobblehead toy during an earthquake.

With a savage intent, I reared my fist back hit him over and over. The cracks spread across his face until the helmet broke. A face appeared as the foggy water rushed out of the helmet.

The enigmatta looked like an anglerfish, long teeth sticking out of a jutting bottom jaw. Large, black pupils stared back at me. I lifted my fist for the finishing blow, but a chain wrapped around my arm. Frode raised his hand, placing a circular piece of metal on me.

Lightning consumed me, its teeth jolting through my nerves. I fried, stiffening like a board. I fell off the bent girder. As I landed onto the sidewalk, Frode leapt away. Once again, my body failed me. I learned from this fight however. Even if my body didn't respond, my armor still did.

I created curved spines and pierced the taser thing that fucker put on me. I tore it apart with spines of my armor. Even with my body immobilized, I controlled my armor over my skin. Like a puppet, I lifted my limp body and moved towards Frode. I shambled like a zombie.

Frode squelched out his choking voice, "It won't stop. I can't kill it."

A few seconds later, and the electricity ceased. I fell onto my feet. As I bent over, I dashed towards him again, my pursuit relentless. Behind Frode, Brim came towards me. Yawm and Korga faced one another.

Yawm's entire body was a moving wound. Three bullet holes stuck through his chest. Deep trenches of exposed flesh showed all across his bark skin. His glowing green blood drenched the ground below him.

And yet, he still seemed invincible.

He stood tall, his height dwarfing those around him. He heaved for breath, exhausted yet unafraid. Elessah floated behind Korga. The assassin paced behind Yawm, a deep fear over her face. They all looked puny compared to him. Even in this kind of state, Yawm was invincible. Here on a battlefield, he was whole.

Here, he was home.

Yawm chuckled at his wounds, the ground crackling beside him, "I've already stolen two of your revivals. How many more lives will Schema give you?"

Fear clouded the eyes of the Breakers. They circled him, looking for some kind of opening. They found none.

Yawm spread out his arms, "Your minds are your weakness. You lack resolve. Faced with a true death, you falter. You fail. You fall."

Yawm raised his hand, absolute confidence radiating from him, "I am the slayer of armies. I am the eater of worlds. I am the defier of false idols. You all worship a robot who believes himself a god."

Yawm clasped his hand into a fist,

"I am no sheep. I worship no one, and no one is worth my worship."

Brim interrupted Yawm's words. He sprinted in front of Frode, protecting him. The thirty second lull in combat nearly healed my entire health. My chest healed. My stamina filled. Thank god for Yawm's charisma. His presences affected even the Breakers.

This kind of back and forth, it was my strength. Taking breaks would be their downfall. However, Yawm lost blood with every passing second. If he fell, I was next. Korga took a step towards Yawm, his footing less bold than before. Yawm clasped his massive hands into fists,

“Be ready, Korga. You won’t survive my next strike. Unlike before, Schema’s little perks won’t get you back up.”

Yawm swatted his hand, deflecting a passing bullet. As he did, Korga and the assassin charged him. I detonated my runes, dashing towards Frode and Brim. Frode threw a vial towards me, Brim slapping a chain arm towards it. Before it made contact, I swatted the vial with a wave of gravity.

Frode pointed at me, “Affirmative. I verified it Brim. It has gravity magic.”

I got within ten feet of them, stomping the ground. With a wave of telekinesis, I sent the force of my stomp into the chin of Frode. His fishy head whipped up, blood shooting out of his mouth. Brim whipped his chain towards me. I grabbed it. From between the links of the chains, a vial of liquid emerged.

The other vial was a distraction.

A sniper’s bullet drilled through my back and came out my chest, detonating the vial. A discharge of green dust went over me. I covered my eyes, ears, and mouth with my armor just in time.

Acid sizzled on my skin. Three more vials lodged into the bullet wound on my chest. Another bullet pierced through my back, blowing up the black mana jars. Eldritch seeped deep into my wound.

It was eldritch energy. I uncovered my mouth, laughing a bit as I absorbed it. Brim grunted,

“It isn’t the armor Frode. His flesh eats the eldritch...What in the hell did Yawm do to him?”

I roared, “He did nothing. I did this to me, to live through hells like this.”

I put up an act, but their combination attack hurt me. My health dwindled again already, reaching 30%. I stumbled a bit, and Brim rushed me. I shot out a stiff jab at him, but he deflected my strike and struck my stomach. I belched blood, his fist heavier than a ball of iron.

He was weaker and smaller than before, however. Having his arms taken and his arcane blade stripped from him made him easier to beat. I ignored the damage he dealt, spinning on my heels. I struck his side with a left hook, whipping another strike right after into the lower part of his head.

Considering it was all mirrors, it was the closest thing to a jaw he had.

Brim's face wobbled, but he overcame the pain and countered. He struck my head with a bludgeoning right. His fist dislodged three of my molars. I grit the rest of my teeth and hit him with a right uppercut into the gut.

He covered his stomach with his arms, his mirror face sticking out. I shot out two slicing hooks into his head. He stumbled backwards, but I reached out a hand towards him. A tendril of armor wrapped around his neck, jerking him back towards me. I detonated my runes, leaping up with a flying knee.

The mirrors across his face shattered, my knee caving them in. As Brim flew backwards, Frode tossed a vibrant, violet colored wire at my neck. It landed, wrapping around me. The wire sunk into my neck, tightening around me.

Behind Frode, Yawm was carnage. More blood than bark, he withstood the technique of Korga, pushing him back. Korga blocked with his left arm, the bone snapping. The sniper redirected its aim, a bullet firing through the chest of Yawm. Yawm ignored it, throwing another heavy blow at Korga.

Korga's other arm broke. Yawm raised his fists slamming them down onto Korga. Korga blocked with both his arms, a blue energy shield materializing above him. A panel of green energy formed beneath Korga as Yawm's fist landed. The shield acted as a block of metal, preventing Korga from dispersing the impact of the strikes.

Instead, Korga absorbed the kinetic force of Yawm's blow, but both of his shin's snapped. Yawm raised his fists again. Another crushing blow hit Korga's blue shield.

Korga's spine crunched, his body deforming sideways. Yawm roared, his final blow coming down. I rasped out as the wire tightened around my neck,

"Look behind you."

A dagger stabbed into the back of Yawm's neck, piercing out of his throat. It left a tar substance on him, the black invading his body. Yawm swiped his arm backwards, but the assassin ducked, cutting at Yawm's heels. The red blade sliced through the tendons at his feet. Yawm fell down onto Korga, a bloody mess.

Yawm wrapped his hands around Korga's neck. A pillar of yellow light appeared over them both, but Yawm roared in defiance,

"And so you fall."

Yawm crushed the remnant's neck before his stamina was drained. The assassin dashed in, slicing towards Yawm's neck. Yawm swiped his arm, back handing her side. His hand was the size of her hip. The remnant assassin's back broke. She flew backwards, slamming into a jeep several blocks away.

Yawm continued his chokehold. Before the yellow light drained all of Yawm's stamina, he snapped Korga's neck like a twig. With vicious intensity, Yawm gripped further, squishing the boned and meat between his fingers. Korga's head rolled away from his body, decapitated by blunt force.

A notification appeared in front of me. I gained experience because that son of a bitch was an unknown, like all remnants. I opened my status, investing all my points into endurance. A message from Torix sat in my inbox. I didn't have time to view it. I selected finalize.

A surge of mana rushed through me. With it, I sent out a strong pulse of antigravity around my neck. The wire encircling my neck snapped with a metallic ring, falling down onto the ground. Elessah screamed out in despair,

"No...anyone but Korga...anyone...Not Korga, no. No!"

As she lamented Korga's death, her antimagic faltered. She repeated the words over and over. Yawm turned himself around, his legs useless. He lifted an arm, the air around him crackling. A bullet went through Yawm's shoulder, making the raised arm go limp. Yawm laughed, raising his other arm. Mana coalesced in his palm.

By now, Brim stood back up from my knee to his face. He ran up to Elessah and slapped her across the face,

"You have to stop him. Keep it together Elessah."

She wept, her ragged voice shivering under her helmet. Yawm's laughing echoed, sending out a primordial fear. Frode tried stopping Yawm, throwing a circling blade towards him. Before it landed, Yawm turned his palm towards Frode. Yawm's magic unleashed.

A circular hole appeared around the skyscraper behind Frode. Frode and his grenade disappeared. They disintegrated faster than I could comprehend it. I didn't even see it. One second Frode was right there. The next, he was gone. It was like an edit in a video. Yawm's strength was still overwhelming, even in this state.

Before the Breaker's recovered, I dashed towards the assassin remnant. I reached past Yawm and the others, landing onto the jeep with the assassin lodged on it. The remnant looked up at me, her eyes loaded with fear. I lifted a fist, slamming it down against her. With a sleight of hand, she turned her dagger and sliced it through my wrist.

She amputated my fist, but I kept pushing my fist down. With the arm nub, I gouged the dull edge of my armor into her neck. She stabbed her dagger into the side of my neck, slicing it. I lifted my other fist. As I hammered down, she aimed at my arm with her dagger again.

I used a wave of gravity, expending a portion of my health. It made her dagger slice through a portion of my forearm. My fist crushed her face, teeth falling out of her mouth. She sliced her dagger again, but I detonated another burst of mana. A gravitational wave pressed her hand down.

I lifted my fist crushing her face. Two more strikes, and her jaw crunched sideways. Her upper teeth gone, her nose and cheeks mangled. A wave of yellow light appeared over me. At the same time, a chain wrapped around my waist, pulling me backwards. My neck almost slipped off, but I kept it attached with extensions of my armor.

I crushed into the pillar of a building. I slapped against a slab of sidewalk, flopping down. Brim jumped onto me, crushing my chest. Blood erupted from my neck as he did. I shot out a wave of gravity at him, but Elessah's antimagic wrapped around him. It had no effect.

Brim raised a fist, slamming it down on me. Molding my armor, I created a curved spike that his fist landed against. It guided his fist onto the ground beside me, ushering forth a quake across the ground.

I dug my armor into his legs, draining as much mana as I could. Brim lifted his fist again, slamming another slicing strike against me. I shot out another curved spike, but he predicted it. He evaded the deflection, crushing a blow into my face.

My teeth turned to powder. My nose crunched. Skin split across my face, tearing one of my eyelids and eyebrows. From beneath me, a rumbling diffused. Something was crawling up. Off in the distance, hundreds of mana streams fed me mana at once. It was as if the conduits connecting with me entered a certain range. Now they could give me mana.

Hundreds of mana streams turned into thousands. I didn't know if the mana was enough. Brim lifted his fist, smashing it into my face again. I hardly even felt his strike, my face numb now. A deep pressure radiated down into the back of my head. It was probably the only place that still had feeling.

Brim lifted his hand again, crushing my face with fists of iron. Somehow I lived, but I weakened. My grasp of my armor faded. My limbs were numb. I was becoming cold and numb. Brim raised his hands again, roaring with fury. I hardly heard it.

Everything was so foggy.

"Why won't you just die?"

From below, mana rushed into me. Several dozen entities entered the radius of Event Horizon, boosting my health regeneration. Just enough to survive the pummeling fists of Brim. Brim wheezed, "How does it live? There's nothing left of its head."

More and more creatures entered the vicinity of Event Horizon. More and more mana rushed up, giving me strength. The conduits turned into a raging stream of mana. Even as Brim crushed me, my body restored. Even under his onslaught, I regenerated. Covered in a silver blood, Brim choked out the words,

“Is it immortal? Can it die?”

Feeling returned. My hands tightened, control of my armor regained. My eyes opened. Light rushed in, and I was no longer blind. Sound rushed into my ears. Soft dirt layed beneath me. I gouged my armor deeper into Brim’s legs. He bent down, stomping into my chest as he leapt away.

He snapped several of the tendrils digging into his legs. A few remained, dragging him back towards me. Brim jammed his arms into the road beneath him, pulling himself away,

“It’s worse than a bottom feeder.”

The same yellow light washed over me, sapping away my stamina. With more endurance, I outpaced the light’s sapping energy. I pushed my arms against the ground, my limbs shaking. I stood up, first hunched but then tall.

I heaved for breath, a deep exhaustion pressing against me. I crushed it, reaching for all my strength. I dragged Brim back to me. He looked up, clapping his hands together. He caught something between them and shouted,

“Finally Frode. I thought you’d never be back.”

I glanced up, finding Frode existing nearby. He stood behind Elessah, stark naked besides for his dimensional storage ring. When Yawm attacked him, he destroyed his clothing I guess. After that, he revived thanks to the luck perk. Goddammit.

Brim pulled his hands apart, an azure mana forming between his fingertips. He formed a spear of the energy, slicing the tendrils of my armor. Frode tossed a vial at Brim. I shot out a nulled gravitational wave. Elessah stopped me again.

Using a chain, Brim caught the vial. and then drank it. From within his legs, my armor disintegrated. Frode tossed a few more vials at Brim. Brim drank them while I waited for my own health to restore. Brim's size enhanced as he healed. Brim moved his feet around, relishing in the restored movement,

“Ah, they're finally back.”

I turned towards Yawm. He laid in a heap of his own coagulating blood. He didn't move. His chest still glowed with tremendous vitality. Along his neck, some red tumor spread across his chest. It looked like an eldritch growing out of his body.

Yawm stared at me, whispering under his breath.

“You seem stronger... You're still within Schema's system then?”

I kept my face expressionless. Controlling my mass in this kind of mess wasn't about to happen. With the boost in levels from Korga, I was likely much taller. Disguising the difference wasn't practical while fighting for my life. Yawm's eyes narrowed, but he spoke with a pained voice,

“You lied to me... You...you betrayed me?”

I shook my head before turning back towards the remnants. Brim, Frode, and Elessah remained alive. Frode lacked his revival from the luck perk. Elessah and Brim probably had theirs. I stood no chance under normal circumstances.

At the moment, Amara siphoned me energy from her new prison. From below, Yawm's solar beetles crawled from the ground. From above, the abstractions soared in a circle around us. I sapped their strength with Event Horizon, using them for my gain. From an unknown source, several thousand allies sent me mana.

The mana rushed in as the Breakers reorganized. During the lull in combat, I opened Torix's message.

Torix Worm, of Darkhill(Time: Undefined) – We're entering the rift with your legion. I created several thousand conduits between you and your troops, all with the enchanted

gear you gave them. We'll be able to send you our mana and health to give you a buffer in battle.

I grinned at the message. Torix put some serious thought into helping me. His tactical intelligence exceeded my own. Combine that with Amara, the eldritch around me, and my level ups from Korga, and my mana generation amazed me.

It exceeded thirteen million in my heightened state.

With the Breakers watching, I let the mana soak out of my runes. It saturated the surrounding air, putting a reddened tint onto it. It reminded me of what Yawm's mana did to the air. Instead of popping like his, cracks of lightning and thunder raged from my aura. The energy fought outwards in violent snaps, like wolves snapping at prey.

The energy thundered and roared like the sound of hatred. My armor grinned with me, a sickening lust for violence overtaking me. The sensation ebbed into the surrounding eldritch. My mana fed them, streaks of deep red striping across them. Their eyes widened. Their maws gaped. They cried crimson. They drooled blood.

Unique skill gained! Fuses the skills Mana Press, Arcane Blood Mastery, Mana Theory, Fear, and Empathy creating the new skill Haze of Fervor! Half of ungained skill points awarded = 135 tree points.

Haze of Fervor(lvl 1) – Allows you to churn allies and enemies alike into a vicious frenzy using your volatile mana. Efficiency of mana use and effect enhanced by level of the skill.

A sniper round pierced through my chest. I laughed at the damage, my mana healing it in seconds. I lifted out my arms, my mana like a storm surge, engulfing everything around me. Brim turned a blank, smooth face of metal towards me. His mirrors returned from the potions he drank. He brandished his blade of arcane and origin mana,

“By the will of Schema, we will kill you before you turn into another Yawm.”

I raised a fist, speaking with words of strength and an overwhelming presence,

“I am no Yawm. I am the Harbinger of Cataclysm.”

The eldritch roared, echoing the might of my words. I pointed at the Breakers, my voice an omen,

“To war.”

Chapter 140: No Longer Alone

The eldritch charged towards the breakers. Yawm commanded them earlier. My mana only enraged them. As the eldritch rushed against them, I turned towards Yawm. I pulled in my armor and leaped towards him with a burst of mana. The red tumor spreading from his neck had covered over half his face.

Yawm stared at me with the one eye he had left. I gritted my teeth, sighing with frustration before lifted my hands. I slammed them against Yawm’s neck, piercing into the bloody tumor. I drilled my armor into the fleshy mass, sapping its strength. The assassin’s blade was coated in some kind of eldritch poison. I was the man to save Yawm from it.

With a surgeon’s precision, I eliminated every ounce of the infestation from Yawm. I pulled my hands away from Yawm, his green blood soaking into my armor. His one eye widened in disbelief. I didn’t know why I wanted to save him. In all honesty though, Yawm was my friend. As much harm as he’d done, he didn’t deserve to die.

Not like this.

All the leveler’s capping out to level 12,000 wouldn’t be very helpful either. I turned away, the bullet of a sniper piercing into my chest. I sighed again, realizing this wasn’t enough to stop Yawm’s death. I put my palms over him, extending and wrapping my metal skin around him.

Like a thousand black vines covering him, I encased him in an umbral sheath. I lifted him, tossing Yawm into the broken window of a skyscraper for cover.

It was the best I could do for now.

With Yawm healed and covered, I turned towards the Breakers. They dispatched the horde of beetles and abstractions with ease. Before they eliminated the horde, I rushed

into the mess. The rush of mana flooded into my system, like liquid power. I pumped that energy through my veins as I reached Brim.

He spun like a whirlwind of death. He slew a dozen eldritch with his energy spear as he positioned himself between me and Frode. Above him, Elessah floated and held the abstractions back. Frode set up mines and other traps around them, his back to Brim.

I raised a hand right as Elessah shot out an arcane spell at an abstraction. Her antimagic failed to target me, letting me unleash a wave of gravitation. A wave of gravity crushed Elessah to the ground, her staff snapping in two. Frode eyed me, and he opened his dimensional storage.

Brim sliced his spear towards me, and I raised both my arms towards Frode. A gravitational stream redirected Brim's attack, making his spear slice at the ground. With an antigravity and gravity well, I sundered Frode's arm from his body. The enigmatta choked out a scream, his dry, green skin and anglerfish mouth crinkling up.

Brim roared in rage and wrath, spinning his spear towards me. He overpowered the gravitational stream this time, but I ducked under his strike. As I stood up, I let loose a monstrous uppercut. Detonated runes, waves of gravity and antigravity, every tool at my disposal amplified my attack.

My punch shattered the rejuvenated mirrors across Brim's face. A dagger stabbed into my back, slicing down my spine from behind. The damn assassin Breaker recovered from me killing her. Elessah must have cast a few spells.

As the dagger slit down my spine, mana rushed in, healing the wound as she created it. I swung my fist back, but the assassin ducked down, slicing at my armpit. She cut arteries and armor alike, but I lashed out a wave of gravity towards her. Nothing happened. Elessah nulled my magic once more.

I grit my teeth, using the gravity on myself instead. The remnant assassin struck at my neck. I pulled myself back, dodging the strike. As I did, I kicked upwards at her side. She ducked again, deftly dodging my kick. A wave of gravity stopped my foot in midair, and I swung it down at her.

She stabbed my groin, but my heel broke her back. Like a guillotine, my leg cleaved her spine apart. Brim's spear stabbed across my throat, leaving my head hanging on by

a thread. With an unnatural movement, I shot a wave of gravity at my back, shooting me straight forward.

I took the blade out of my neck without cutting any deeper. At the same time, I dodged an explosive bullet sent by the mystery sniper. I lifted an arm, wedging a layer of the road beneath us upwards. A slanted chunk of earth lifted between me and Brim, leaving me alone with the assassin.

With the assassin lifted up, she tumbled down the patch of pavement towards me. I grabbed her throat with my hand. Brim charged through the crag of ground towards me. I sent myself sideways, dodging a pillar of yellow light once more. A one-armed Frode tossed a grenade towards me.

The grenade shot out a thick, orange jelly onto us both. I slipped on the mush, falling backwards. Brim charged past me, grabbing the assassin. Even as I squeezed down, the jelly let her slip out of my grasp. A beam of yellow light rushed over me as a bullet whizzed right towards my skull.

I already had a grasp on the sniper's timing and location, however. With a meteoric burst of mana, I created an intense gravitational field beside me. A bullet skimmed into the ground beneath my head, saving my life. I already discovered the weakness of Elessah as well. She could stop magic on others.

She couldn't stop my magic on me.

I sent out a wave of gravity, slipping me out of the jelly and yellow beam of light. I rolled across the ground in a clumsy mess. Brim shot towards me like a silver bullet. My immense endurance let me get back my stamina, so I stood up. I faced his charge head-on.

I raised an arm, blocking his arcane spear. It sliced through the bone of my forearm, but it didn't amputate the limb. With my other arm, I whipped a slicing hook into his stomach. I pulled my arm back as he keeled over yet again. I wrapped my good arm around his neck.

I had him in a headlock. I jerked upwards with all my strength. This move leveraged all his mass against his neck, breaking it. I let him fall back down on his feet. I wrapped my arms around him, flinging him backwards into a german suplex. His head smashed into the ground, cracks radiating through the destroyed city square.

I kicked off my feet, flinging myself upwards. As I did, I crossed my arms in front of me. The assassin sliced into my forearms, aiming at my neck. I frowned, not knowing if she had a revival left. I'd fight as if she did.

She whipped out three rapid sliced at me. I deflected one, the other strikes slitting my wrists. Her injuries, while deft and precise, did little against me. My regeneration outpaced the damage she dealt. With that in mind, I charged forward with a quick jab. She dodged and slit her knife down my arm.

We pressured each other, each of our strikes compact and dense. Unlike with Brim, the assassin's technical skill made her hard to hit. If I reared back my fist, she'd slit my throat before I knew what was happening. With that in mind, I gaged the timing of her hits, getting an understanding of her rhythm and attacking patterns.

I kept mixing my attacks up, alternating the speed and angles. Some of my strikes involved waves of gravity. Some involved tendrils of my armor. Others involved telekinetic pulses. As I intermingled those three patterns of attack, I overwhelmed the assassin.

I landed three clean strikes against her side. She slowed down, the body damage stunting her stamina regeneration. I aimed for that, letting her attacks graze me. If I stopped her damage completely, she might run. Like this, she'd stay longer and let me get off more damage.

After a minute of this fighting, I dashed backwards while she reached out at my throat. At the same time, I clocked a weak left hook into her jaw. This rattled her brain, making her stumble.

I hurt her.

Scrambling forward with a wave of gravity, I dashed forwards, capitalizing on her mistake. A bullet pierced through my knee cap, causing me to fumble. I stabilized with gravity, but a grenade from Frode blinded me and left me deaf. I felt my way with gravity, but the sudden shift left me groggy.

The assassin slit my wrists, ducked under a wild strike of mine, and cut my throat. After three more slices, I fell down, my tendons ruptured. Before I healed, she raised her

dagger over my head. The dagger extended as she forced it down towards my eye socket.

Before the blade entered my brain, Althea appeared beside me. She roared as she whipped her hand up, deflecting a bullet from hitting me. With her other hand, she grabbed the assassin. The remnant gasped at Althea's hold, the remnant's arm breaking,

"Who are you?"

Althea answered by waving her hand through the throat of the assassin. Her hand slit down through the bone, lopping the assassin's head off. I pulled in a patch of Event Horizon, taking it off of Althea. Althea stepped forward, her free arm deforming into a mass of claws and muscle.

The reformed arm squashed the assassin down into the road below us. The force of the strike mimicked the might of Yawm, ushering forth a shockwave. The assassin's body pulped under the raw power. Althea turned towards me, her face covered in the blood of the remnant.

She gave me a smile sweet as sugar and deadly as venom,

"I missed you."

I grinned back, "I missed you too."