

New World 121

Chapter 121: What Lies Around Us

I put a foot on the squirming creature, “Well, uh...It’s called Baldowah’s Wrath.”

Yawm turned towards me, finding my foot on the squirming thing. It latched onto me as Yawm lifted a hand,

“Let’s kill it...kill it with fire.”

I raised my hands, “Wait a second, let’s see if we can’t figure out what this thing is first.”

Yawm clasped a hand into a fist, “I don’t need to learn anything about this abomination to know its evil.”

I shrugged, “If I followed that same logic, I would have attacked you when we first met.”

Yawm took a step back, “Ah...I suppose all of that is true...Excuse my curtness. I’m feeling rather strange as of late.”

I pressed my foot into the disgusting mess of a creature, “If anything, taking this off should help with that.”

The disgusting monster latched onto my foot, pinning itself against me. It latched onto me, but I stayed clam. My armor would eat it alive the moment it stuck its teeth in.

Yawm pointed at it, “Are you not concerned that its-” Yawm waved his hand, “We don’t really know what it’s doing to you in all honesty.”

I shrugged, “It can’t harm me.”

I analyzed the creature again, rereading the description. After that, I saved the bio of it in my archives. I took out my obelisk before screenshotting it and picking it up the creature with a hand. It wrapped around my arm. I gripped my fist, claspng onto it like a vice grip. Spines of my armor shot through the creature, tearing it open.

The gunk inside it gushed outwards, the blood of the creature silver like my own. I frowned at it as the shrill screaming ebbed out again. Blood dripped down my ears as I pulled it close, inspecting it. Nothing inside the monster looked even remotely familiar. Still, I took another screenshot of the thing before looking at it from other angles.

The oddest aspect of the creature was that it sent ripples through gravity. It was like this monster was here and wasn't here at the same time. It was a ghost I could touch or a memory made flesh. If that sounds cryptic, that's because the creature could only be described in such vague terms. It just wasn't solid enough for a concrete description.

Yawm squinted at me, "Does that armor of yours give you an immunity to disgust?"

I shook my head, "'Naw, being a real man does."

He rolled his eyes before I lifted the thing over me. It was suffering, so I laced it with needles of my armor and drained its energy. After a few minutes, it disintegrated into my armor skin, giving me a massive boon of exp. I sighed,

"Man...so that thing was what made you angry."

Yawm tapped his chin, "It was? So that's where my sudden outbursts of rage came from then...what an outlandish reason for moodiness."

I frowned, "Yeah, but for how long exactly?"

Yawm glanced up at the crystal trees above us, "That's an interesting question, isn't it? I've been studying the cipher for about 400 years. The outburst of anger started about 330 years ago. If you're correct about it being the source of my instability of mood, then that's how long its been there...over three hundred years."

I grimaced, "Over three hundred years?"

Yawm glanced at me, “It does boggle the mind, doesn’t it? What impresses me more is that you found it so quickly since our meeting. How?”

I shrugged, “Eh, I can’t give away all my secrets.”

Yawm laughed, “Then I’ll be more partial with my own then.”

I raised my hands, “Alright, you’re twisting my arm. I’ll tell yah. I sense fluctuations in gravity. There was a slight pull on your back that was greater than the air around you but less than your own body. Since there was nothing there, I needed to figure out what it was. After that, I guessed that it affected our world with gravity, therefore we could affect it.”

I opened a palm towards Yawm, “And so I got that thing off you.”

Yawm nodded at me, “Thank you, Harbinger. You discovered a curse I carried for over 300 years without knowing it. That’s quite a feat.”

I raised a hand, “The main take away is that...Oh shit.”

I sensed along my own back, finding another tiny pull of gravity. It was the same kind that Yawm had. I sighed before raising a hand.

Yawm tilted his head in confusion, “What is it?”

“You’ll see.”

I clenched tight, letting my mana flow in abundance. The gravity well pulled along my back. A minute later, and a wet, squishy something slapped against my back. After a few more minutes of pulling, a cold, slimy creature had latched onto my back. After feeling it for myself, I couldn’t blame Yawm for losing his composure.

It felt like I'd submerged my back into a vat of cold, squirming worms. It was gross as hell before I turned towards Yawm. He took a step back. I turned my head towards him but left my back facing him,

“Oh hell no.”

Yawm glanced away, scratching the side of his head, “What is it?”

I pointed a hand behind me, “You're not leaving whatever the fuck this is on me.”

Yawm turned towards me, “Oh that? It doesn't even look detrimental to you. If anything it accentuates your armor in a, uh, good way.”

I spread out my arms, “When I pry this son of a bitch off my back, I'm putting it on you while you sleep.”

Yawm stepped towards me, “If taking it off is that important, you should have just made that clear. There's no need for threats of such a caliber.”

Yawm raised a hand before swiping it down. The monster was torn off like wet tissue paper. I turned towards it, seeing an azure, moving blob. It bled the same silver blood that I and the other creature bled as well. It wasn't as squirmy, instead it was more like a snail with ten heads. Honestly, it was even more gross than the other one. At least in my opinion.

After getting over the fact that it was on me, I analyzed it as well.

Etorhma's Abyss(lvl 5,000) – This is a creation of Etorhma's. It latches itself onto unsuspecting victims and disrupts their train of thoughts. By exposing the victim to knowledge and concepts beyond their understanding, they corrupt the mind of the being over time.

In your case, your mind was strong, so it fought off these revelations while it was on you. It would have taken a few more years before serious symptoms took place. These symptoms include, losing memory, blanking out for days at a time, and eventual comatose.

What makes these creatures so malevolent when compared with other Old One's creations is the difficulty in spotting the symptoms. The reason they are considered an equal danger level is because Baldowah's Wrath can cause its victims to harm others and even worlds.

Etorhma's Abyss works much more along the lines of disintegrating an individual's potential rather than harming others. Regardless of these factors, it is recommended that you kill this abomination immediately. They can warp away at any second, returning towards a different time or dimension.

I took a quick screenshot and lifted my heel. I wouldn't let it escape. A second later, I splattered the thing against the ground. A bit of the silver blood splattered onto Yawm before he raised a hand onto it. When he pulled his hand back and saw the silver, his hands jittered. He jerked his hand, shaking the liquid off before rubbing his face with great concern.

My armor reached out, the thousands of wires soaking up every ounce of the creature's old body. Whatever this was, it was edible for my armor at least. I glanced back up at Yawm. He rubbed his back, looking for other alien parasites. A second later, he sighed,

"I'll have to give you something for getting that off of me. I can't quantify the harm it's caused."

I shrugged, "Well, if you've had a lot of anger issues in the past, this was why."

Yawm shook his head, "That and it tells us something vital. The Old Ones are trying to sabotage us."

Maybe for Yawm, but for me, these creatures were just easy experience.

"That's cool and all, but what are we able to do about it? I mean, aren't the Old Ones basically gods?"

Yawm snapped his fingers, ice chairs appearing beneath us. He sat down and gestured me to do the same. After getting comfortable, Yawm raised a hand to me,

“I’ve heard of that interpretation before. I believe it is inaccurate. The reason is that Old Ones are unpredictable. I’ve discovered many of the secrets behind Schema and his ilk. The Old Ones on the other hand are beyond my fathoming. Gods are easily understood on the other hand.”

Yawm lowered his hand onto the arm rest, “So I classify them as natural laws. Not only do they operate independently from time, they operate without any real reasoning or causes. They cannot be stopped. They can only be avoided or worked around. Gods accept sacrifices and tribute. They can give you strength, power, whatever it is that you want.”

Yawm leaned towards me,

“The Old Ones will reward your tribute with a third limb and an insatiable urge to devour dirt. Their reaction is incomprehensible, just like they are. I think of them as the unknowable, and therefore we must accept their existence and move on. In all honesty, this could be entirely coincidental.”

I raised a palm to Yawm, “There’s no damn way they did this on accident. To them, we’re both threats.”

These guesses came out of my own meeting with Etorhma. He mentioned something about Yawm destroying everything in pursuit of his goals. That’s why he sent me on a mission to kill him. If Etorhma was trying to kill Yawm, there’s no reason to assume the other old ones weren’t trying to either.

Besides for that, Etorhma turned on me during this little event. Having something attached to me like that was a slow, drawn out murder. I was going to handle it like that at least.

Yawm interrupted my thoughts,

“It seems as though every powerful entity despises the learning of that dimensional code.”

I nodded, “Yeah, I can’t really figure out why exactly.”

Yawm walked over, going back towards his dungeon core, “I think it’s a rather simple thing. Those that hold power and authority grasp it with all their strength. They’d rather have us sprint in circles, putting our heads down in the dirt and getting nowhere. All the while, they laugh from above, enjoying the spectacle.”

I followed Yawm, “Yeah, that’s an easy answer for now. I’m assuming it might be a bit more complicated than that though.”

Yawm shrugged, “I believe that even the most complicated plans have a simple motivation. Look at my plan for instance. It’s evolved from my curiosity and wanting for peace. Those aren’t the most convoluted reasons for starting such a complex ordeal.”

Yawm pointed towards the direction of the dungeon core, “Speaking of ordeals, we should return towards the core here and leave. Normally when I create these warps, the strongest nearby eldritch is drawn to the core. They feast on the ambient energy stored in it, mutating into a stronger creature.”

I stepped over a root, my feet caving into the grass with each step, “What’s the rush?”

Yawm moved a low hanging branch out of his way, “They could drain the core, meaning we’d be trapped here for an eternity.”

I shivered a bit at the thought, remembering the fate of Etna. Yawm turned towards me, “Most eldritch require weeks and weeks of draining the core before that happens. We’ve been gone for half a day at most. There’s no real need to worry.”

I sighed in relief as we continued our casual trek through the forest. As we walked, my mind wandered. The first thought was about the Old Ones. It seemed strange that they were out to get us. Afterall, it was hard to read the motivations of a creature beyond our understanding. It kind of came with the territory.

Still, I learned what I needed to know. It was against me. If it was against me, I was against it.

In fact, the more I thought about the situation, the more like a rigged game it became. Schema trapped us on earth and forced me to kill Yawm or die. My only way of making

that happen was the cipher. Since I learned the cipher, my bounty increased and the Old Ones were against me now.

If anything, a part of me just wanted to throw my hands up and join Yawm. I contained that urge with memories of Yawm's evil. He unleashed a plague. He tormented Althea. Anyone that followed Yawm was warped into a shadow of themselves over time.

Yawm was well intentioned, but then again, so was Hitler. That didn't turn out well for those that got wrapped up in what he was saying. Considering they both Hitler and Yawm had a history of genocide, comparing them wasn't unfair. If anything, it was honest. I had no intention of devolving into that, so I came up with a plan for my long term goals.

The first step was being unnoticeable. I needed to keep my head low for as long as possible, drawing little to no attention to myself. Hard to do when you're right beside a guy known in legends.

If I was able to stay relatively unknown, I could use that time to strengthen myself with the cipher. By the time I was ready to make a splash, nothing would be able to kill me. I would be a walking ball of endurance.

A home of some kind would be nice until then. I could join Torix and go to his home or make one here on Earth. Considering how backwater it was, it would be pretty hard to find me.

Althea and I could settle down and just enjoy ourselves for a bit. It would be such a nice reprieve. I could explore the galaxy one piece at a time while relaxing at my home. In my eyes, it was a goal worth shooting for. Getting to that point required time, and I didn't have much of it.

So while Yawm and I were nearing the core, I opened my status. It Blew me away.

I was level 3126. It felt like finding suitcase full of a million dollars on the side of the road. Killing the Old One's followers rewarded so much experience that it blew my mind. So much so that I opened up my obelisk and did a quick search on the matter. There had to be a compelling reason to give so much exp for these guys. Turns out, there was.

These mind changers of the Old Ones weren't that uncommon in the upper ranks of sentients. Once a sentient reached a certain level, they could be near impossible to kill using conventional methods. Yawm was a perfect example of being nigh unkillable. That's where these little balls of goop came into play.

The Old Ones would send these things to crippled threats before they did too much damage. The downside was how slow they operated. The upside was that they dispatched someone without a fight. After doing a bit of research on the matter, it usually only took 20 to 30 years for someone to go insane.

If anything, that meant that Yawm's tenacity was unbelievable. It also made me wonder how long I'd had mine on me and why. Even stranger was how Baldowah sent one to him and not Etorhma. Etorhma was the one that gave me the quest to kill Yawm. You'd think he'd be the one sending out octopus monsters to him.

It was a lot to chew on, but I saved it for later. Focusing on my status instead, I poured all my stat points into, that's right, you guessed it, endurance. It would ramp up my production of extra stats using the cipher. The mana was always helpful, and it fed into other stats. Besides for that, it would allow me to fight better against Yawm during spars.

Perception and intelligence were solid too, and I considered them. The thing was, I needed immediate power. Perception and intelligence could help me produce better renditions of the cipher, but how long would take to see a meaningful difference from them?

there was no way to tell how long it would take. Endurance achieved the same goal of getting more out of the cipher, but it enhanced my fighting right now as well. Besides for that, endurance increased my intelligence anyway. In my eyes, endurance was a dependable middle ground. It gave me what I needed now and later all at the same time.

With that in mind, I poured all my points into endurance and selected finalize. At that moment, the flow of my mana became pure. I was an engine of power, a living incarnation of energy. From the skin on my knuckles to the depth of my bones, I was unmitigated vitality. I was an endless spring of mana, no, an ocean of mana.

The mana was a part of my flesh, making me whole. It molded into every cell and every fragment of my being. It held me together, just like the chemical bonds between

atoms held steel together. It felt like I was a different material, if that made any sense. I was no longer made of anything that was human. I was something different altogether.

My mind sharpened at the same time, along with the might stored in my fists. The weight in each step was tremendous, and the will of my mind was undeniable. In ancient times, I'd have been some sort of god or demon. In Schema's world, I meant to make myself an unmatched warrior.

After bathing in the euphoria of a huge boost in stats, I opened up my character screen. The numbers were insane.

Level 3,126

Strength – 2,677 | Constitution – 4,175 | Endurance – 15,771

Dexterity – 949.1 | Willpower – 7,673 | Intelligence – 2,614

Charisma – 233.3 | Luck – 808.2 | Perception – 354.7

Health: 1.38 Million/1.38 Million

Health Regen: 1.57 Million/min or 26,269/sec

Stamina: 802,172/802/172 | Stamina Regen: 7,361/sec

Living Dimension: 0.22 Trillion/4.30 Trillion

Mass: 106,315 pounds(48,323 kilos~)

Damage Res – 98.5% | Dimensional Res – 49.25%

Phys Dam Bonus – 32,955% | Damage Bonus – 40%

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

My health regen eclipsed my health. It was because of my Determinator tree and the perk Arcane Blood. The Determinator tree doubled my regenerative stats. Arcane blood made willpower perks affect my health regeneration. This resulted in vast amounts of the stat, a ridiculous amount by any measure.

All of the multipliers and perks I set up were coming together now. By coming up with a plan and sticking to it, I was gaining absurd results. It was a refreshing feeling. Riding on that high, I siphoned my new and improved stream of mana into my cipher. I couldn't help but be giddy about it.

Instead of two augmentations a day, I would gain four. What a time to be alive. From how much I gained from those monsters, the Old Ones might have been trying to help me out after all. They could have done it differently though, so I didn't change my mind about them. I assumed they were trying to ruin me.

Considering just how devastating those tentacled monsters were, I was being pretty damn reasonable. The only question left was actually how I gained so few level ups. Two level 5,000 monsters should have given me well over a thousand levels. A bit of thinking cleared that up.

I wasn't actually in the quarantine zone when I killed them, so the exp wasn't doubled. They also weren't registered as unknowns, reducing their exp further. In fact, I'd been enjoying a streamlined growth for a while now. Leveling like this was probably much more in line with what an average day in Schema's system was like.

With that handled, I closed my status and caught up to Yawm. He turned towards me,

“You seem taller.”

I shrugged, “It must be the lighting.”

Yawm shook his head before turning forward, “You're several inches taller. It's a hard thing not to notice.”

The dungeon core appeared in front of us, the crimson light leaking out from between two trees. Yawm reached it,

“That sense of progression must be exhilarating. I’ve worked on the cipher for so long, yet my progress feels so stagnant. I’ll achieve a breakthrough once every few years, but every other moment is dimmed by comparison. Maintaining motivation during those times is difficult.”

Yawm placed a hand over the core. As he did, clouds crossed over us above. The pleasant light shifted to shade. Yawm continued without worry,

“I won’t relent anytime soon, however. With that monstrosity taken off of me, I’ll be able to learn the cipher at full force. Thank you once more for helping me, Harbinger.”

An internal groan rippled through me. By buying time for my cipher, I ended up unshackling Yawm in the process. His own progress with the cipher would improve.

Mine would as well at least, so I shrugged, “If anything, I’m glad I found Baldowah’s minion on you because that’s how I found Etorhma’s minion on me. Don’t worry about it.”

Yawm nodded, “Let’s go back then. I have something to show you.”

Above us, a blot of water fell onto my shoulder. A second later, another drop landed on me. One piece of rain dripped down Yawm’s forehead as he and I stared upwards. The clouds collecting overhead turned gray, a storm brewing above us.

I murmured, “I thought you said the weather never changes here.”

Yawm murmured back, “I was talking to a tree. You have to take its advice with a grain of salt.”

Off in the distance, the ground shook. Yawm and I turned towards the sound.

“What do you think that was?”

Yawm walked away from the core, balling his hands up into fists,

“An eldritch. Hopefully a powerful one that might challenge us both.”

The ground quaked again. Trees in the distance cracked, the sound of breaking branches ebbing outward. As the sound of heavy footsteps echoed nearer, I leaned towards Yawm,

“What do you think it is?”

Yawm shrugged, “Perhaps an eldritch that controls the weather here. Wouldn’t that be fascinating?”

The rain turned from the size of pellets to bullets as it approached us.

I walked towards the source of the sound,

“Come on. I don’t want to leave this mystery undiscovered.”

Yawm sighed, pulling his hand off of the dungeon core,

“I wouldn’t mind a bit of discovery as well.”

Chapter 122: Amara

The coming storm roared a ways in the distance. Yawm and I walked through the wind with ease. The branches of trees clanged against each other, the crystalline leaves clanking like glass. It was like being in a wind tunnel surrounded by wind chimes. It would pretty nice if it wasn’t so overwhelming.

Once we paced a bit further, the falling trees were a block away. The head of the creature shown above the treetops. It’s head was a glossy, plum colored metal. The two eyes were angled trapezoids, giving it a permanent glare. The metal didn’t stay the same shade throughout, however.

Once the monster crashed through the nearest trees, it revealed itself. Thirty feet in height, it was a behemoth. Unlike previous golems, many intricate pieces composed its hulking frame. The pieces came together, creating a cage over the center of the creature.

From this glowing, azure pit, a set of eyes stared back at us. They were relatively humanoid, like some kind of feminine creature. A thick layer of blue, clouded crystal covered it, hiding it from view. A frigid mist fell from the crystal cage it was in, further clouding our view of it.

Curious as I was, Yawm cupped his chin,

“So this golem controls the weather here on the planet. If a tree assumed the weather never changes, then this...thing mustn't have moved for a long time. I wonder if I could turn it into a terraforming unit.”

As the rain poured, I turned towards Yawm, “That's a pretty damn good idea actually.”

From within the glass confines of the cage, two hands pounded against the side of it. As they scraped against it, they see through streaks. Within these streaks, the insides of the crystal cage revealed itself. Inside it, there was a beautiful woman with skin like porcelain. She wore gray rags made of burlap, hiding a seductive figure.

Yenno, normally I would want to save a damsel in distress. The thing was, her face wasn't right. The creature's silky, raven hair wrapped all the way around its head, covering its face. On its palms were its eyes.

Its pale skin contrasted the black hair, making the red eyes on the palms pop out even more. It looked like one eldritch trapped within another eldritch.

I pointed at it,

“That thing looks like it wants out.”

Yawm shrugged, “It's likely less useful than something that terraforms environments. It will suffer for the good of many that use the habitable planets this thing will create. Besides, it's a mere eldritch. What it wants means nothing.”

I frowned. What Yawm said made sense, but it sounded a bit like a reptile was talking in a human's skin. That's how casual and cold he was while talking.

The golem stomped onto the ground in front of us, interrupting our discussion. As it tore trees apart, the air around us crackled, turning a hue of green. Compared to the roaring winds, the crackling was subtle. In my mind, the sound was like a deafening roar by comparison to the storm. That was because I knew what would follow.

Yawm raised a hand, the aura condensing into his palm. A second later, a forefield formed around the golem. It was the same forefield he used against me when we first met. It wasn't as peaceful from the outside. That was partially because the air hummed with chaotic energy, but also because of the green lightning.

As the torrent of emerald electricity tore the forest apart, Yawm crushed his hand. As he did, the force field shrunk. It lashed out with the sound of ripping steel. The golem pushed out with its mighty limbs, trying to overpower the field. It stood no chance at the field kept the exact same rate of reduction.

It was like Yawm didn't even notice the strength of the monster. Once it was unable to move, another wave of cackles rippled out near us. Yawm raised another hand, creating a portal beside us.

The eyes of the eldritch within glanced around, panicking as the portal appeared. The golem sucked into the green abyss, pieces of its body disappearing. A second later, the eyes from within locked onto me.

To be more precise, they locked onto my forearm. A second later, it etched markings onto the glass container. I squinted at them, curious of what she was making. A moment later, I shoved Yawm.

He turned towards me, the descent of the golem into the portal ceasing. I grinned, directing his attention towards the markings,

"She's trying to write the cipher."

Yawm's head locked onto the marking as he took a few steps forward. He rubbed his hands together, rearing a fist back. A second later, a shockwave rippled out from him. The wind off his strike overwhelmed the surrounding storm, the rain stopping for a moment.

The golem's body ruptured, a chunk of it disappearing. Yawm raised another hand, energy coalescing much faster than before. He struck with the fist, decimating the lower left leg of the golem.

Where Yawm fist touched the metal of the golem, the eldritch evaporated. Yawm continued striking, each of them eliminating more and more of the golem. Before long, nothing remained but the icy core of the monster. I walked up as Yawm reared his fist back. I placed a hand on his shoulder,

"Maybe I should handle this. Yenno, since I have a bit more finesse."

Yawm glanced down, paused, then lowered his hand,

"You might be right about that."

He stepped back before I analyzed the creature,

Eldritch Energy Dispersal Unit #23-4544(lvl 1,000) – This mechanical construct was created to disperse the energy of a powerful, sentient eldritch. This attracts it to powerful energy sources nearby. Without the dispersing feature, the eldritch's corrupting influence would destroy it, like other, previous models.

The reason for storage is because this eldritch is much like angel or demon eldritch. The creature respawns upon death. For most eldritch, this isn't a problem since their goals and aims are so simple minded. This eldritch is different.

It's one of the only eldritch that has been shown to use forbidden knowledge with fluency. It can communicate with language, and can even give the impression of something 'likeable.' This is merely a guise for you to lower your guard. The moment you rest, it will wrench its teeth into your throat.

It's recommended that you leave this eldritch within its containment cell. If you wish for experience for this monster, simply go towards any sentinel and give them a code at the end of this analysis. If you destroy this holding cell, you will be penalized with a class B penalty.

You have been warned.

Experience Code: 57305673-!49#5983-Amare

I frowned at the penalty, so I turned towards Yawm, "I'll be getting a B class penalty for destroying this. I actually don't want to destroy it now."

Yawm crossed his arms, "You don't even have a B class bounty yet?"

I shrugged, "Honestly, I don't know. Even then, I think we're better off with you breaking this instead of me."

Yawm shrugged, "It's all the same to me."

He walked up, raising a hand. Instead of using his hole fist, he flicked at the glass with his index finger. It pierced the quartz like bulb, creating fissures all throughout the structure. Yawm reached both his hands into it, ripping outward. The bulb shattered, and the eldritch fell down. As it did, I analyzed it.

Amara, the Lost One(lvl 4,744) – Amara is an eldritch with immense mana generation and forbidden knowledge. Using this mana generation, she produces elemental bursts that are immense in power. Outside of her elemental prowess and knowledge, she can manipulate even intelligent sentients.

She's used many sentients already with her cunning. It's of utmost importance that you understand a singular fact about Amara; she is still an eldritch. It doesn't matter if she appears gentle and kind. There is potential to decimate worlds lying just under the surface of her skin.

Like all eldritch, it's imprinted into her biology to consume biological life. Like all eldritch, she will betray any trust you give her. Be ready.

Normally this kind of message would make my heart sink, but it didn't this time. That's because I met Yawm and discovered that most of what Schema told me was wrong about him. Amara might be the same. Heavy emphasis on might.

With that in mind, I stepped towards her. Yawm placed a hand on my chest, stopping me. His eyes narrowed as he hissed,

"I can sense what that is. It doesn't matter what it looks like. It's an eldritch."

I pushed his hand off me, "The thing is, Schema's message is telling me the same thing."

Yawm raised his hands, "That's all the more reason to stay away from it. Schema is our enemy, but he is no fool."

I shrugged, "What makes it weird is how much emphasis is on the monster being bad. Schema did the same thing with you, but look how that turned out."

Yawm's hands lowered as he clasped them.

"I, hmmm." He opened a palm towards me, "An open mind is essential for discovery then." Yawm lowered his hand afterwards, "This is a piece of the adventure."

I nodded, "Get ready to attack if you need to. I'm giving this eldritch a chance, not my life."

I turned towards the creature, "Hell, the only reason I'm doing this instead of you is because of my armor. Otherwise I'd be recommending you for this bullshit."

Yawm cracked a set of knuckles, "Hah, then I'll disintegrate it in an instant should it attack."

I walked up to the eldritch. I reached out, offering a hand up,

“Hey, my name’s Daniel. What’s yours?”

It took my hand, lifting itself with a damn near dainty grace. The hair moved off its face, revealing no expressions. A mouth ripped open, revealing sharp teeth. From this jagged set of jaws, a voice spoke out. You wouldn’t believe it, but it wasn’t a shrill screech either.

She spoke like a song,

“I am Amara. It’s wonderful to meet you, Harbinger.”

Chapter RPG-Analysis: Daniel #2

Rpg Analysis Daniel #2: Dimension C-138, the Harbinger of Cataclysm

This analysis was a long time coming, but I felt like right now was a good time to release it. Considering the length of time since the last update on how his stats are working, some of you guys might feel overwhelmed. Fear not! Over the next few paragraphs, you’ll gain a solid understanding of how Daniel’s stats are working.

In other words, I’ll be de-mystifying Daniel’s character screen. I’ll do so in a question answer format. Hope guys enjoy this tidbit of text.

Is Daniel OP?

Yes, he is very much overpowered now relative to your average joe. It is worth mentioning that he’s not really surrounded by average Joe’s though. Yawm’s a perfect example of this, with his absurd level and unbelievable mastery of matter itself. He’s an example of how the story’s general power operates less off of raw stats and more on knowledge.

As an example, let’s consider what it is that makes Yawm so powerful himself. Is it his strength, speed, his stamina perhaps? Not quite. All of those factors do help his rather godly persona, but in actuality, it’s his knowledge of the cipher that makes Yawm so unwieldy.

His unlimited mana comes from codes of the cipher on his skin. His ability to generate antimatter at will comes from the cipher. Even his ridiculous regeneration comes from the cipher. In many ways, Yawm is a representation of a sentient breaking the limits of the system. I would compare it with a mortal becoming stronger than gods in xianxia fiction.

That means that stats and abilities won't level the playing field, at least in normal amounts. For instance, how would a normal build tank Yawm's antimatter attacks? What about Ajax splicing the dimensional plane that someone exists on? It's a daunting task even imagining how to combat these techniques.

Daniel's going for pure efficiency since he doesn't know how to stop these techniques. For example, a single point in endurance gives about three attributes worth of stats. Daniel gets four attribute points per level, so he effectively gets 12 attributes per level. Eventually that many stats will add up to something insane.

Daniel's character has shown several of these insanity's coming together.

Ok, so Daniel's pretty op. The thing is, I've gotten kind of lost in the numbers and what they mean now in the story. So uh, how exactly is he op?

The biggest oddity in Daniel's stats is his health/mana regeneration. It is by all accounts and measures the highest of any warrior shown so far. Yawm can outpace it with his atomic splicing, but it doesn't count as health and it takes a second for Yawm's mana to kick in. Combine that with Daniel's absurd health pool and increased damage resistance, and he's nigh immortal.

The only entities that can do decent damage to him right now are Althea, Yawm, Ajax, Sentinels, and the overseer. Other entities like Schema and Old Ones could destroy him instantly, but they aren't going to go out of their way to squish Daniel. Not just yet at least.

Besides for that, Daniel's legendary skill, Force of Nature, is a very high tier legendary skill. It wraps up melee combat, the fluid use of telekinesis and gravity, and movement all into one handy dandy skill. Even for sentients that have hit the level cap, most of them lack a legendary skill. That kind of paints a picture for how rare it is to have what Daniel has.

Event Horizon is also a really powerful aura. Considering how crazy his health is, the damage is starting to stack up pretty nicely. You're average build gets about 12-16 health points per level. That means a level 5,000 thief has 75,000 health or so. With 95% damage resist, they die to the aura in about 2 minutes or less.

There are items, armors, and all kinds of methods to slow that down, but even then, Event Horizon is a nice addition to his arsenal. It shines when he's in a group of enemies more so than when he's alone, which makes him a warlord of sorts. At least that's what I imagine from warlords. Yenko, being stronger on a battlefield than versus a single person.

Daniel's armor is a powerful weapon as well. It makes him a heavy, dense warrior with pseudo-shapeshifting abilities. It makes him the only character so far that doesn't fear the eldritch. If an eldritch swallowed Daniel, his armor would eat the eldritch from the inside out after all.

His knowledge of the cipher will result in explosive ramifications in the future as well.

TLDR: Daniel is uber tanky, deadly up close, and pretty hard to stay away from. That basically sums him up.

You mentioned earlier that knowledge is the way to power. Why isn't Daniel investing into intelligence then? Wouldn't that be a better idea than his near obsession with endurance?

This is a solid question. The reason is partially explained above, but the answer also lies in how his stats distribute. For every one point Daniel puts into Endurance, he gets right at 1/4th a point into intelligence. This drives home an important point. Even though his endurance is high, that doesn't mean his other stats are low.

In fact, look at his level relative to his intelligence. 3,126 compared to 2,614. That's about a 500 point difference. A normal build would invest over half of their level ups into intelligence just to match Daniel's intelligence. That means Daniel doesn't have a low intelligence. So basically, direct investment isn't required for an effective amount in a stat.

This is due to how Daniel's stats feed into each other, and due to his leveling perks. I'll leave a link below that examines how the stats feed together in detail in case some people forgot. Hell, even I refer to it from time to time.

Alright, I guess that makes sense. Thinking of his stats relative to his level does lead to a better perspective I suppose. I was wondering how can Daniel still move though? He's hardly invested into strength, and he weighs a TON.

This is how I calculate how well Daniel will move. Take his bonus physical damage percentage. It's 32,955%. What does that mean exactly? Well, I consider one 'athletic unit' of this stat to be 100%. That equals the strength of an average athletic dude. This means Daniel is about as strong as 400 athletic people(The percentage plus his basic strength).

So I take his weight(106,000 pounds) and I divide it by the number of 'athletic units' Daniel has. This gives me an idea of how many pounds each 'unit' has to carry. If I do the math, I get 265 pounds per athletic unit.

I know what you're thinking. 265 pounds is a bit bulky to move with ease, don't you think Monsoon? You're damn right it is. That isn't the end of my calculations though. Remember that one of constitution's perks halves strength requirements for movement. That means Daniel's strength is twice as effective when applied to his own body.

So we have to halve the amount that each 'athletic unit' has to move. That means it equates to about 132.5 pounds. An athletic person's strength wouldn't struggle to move 132.5 pounds nearly as much as 265 pounds. There are a few other factors that help Daniel's mobility even further.

Force of Nature helps some. The runes on Daniel's skin power him up, reducing that number further. His gravity movement skill helps now too, reducing the number even further. At this point, Daniel is actually quite mobile. I hope this clears the confusion surrounding Daniel's wieght.

How tall is Daniel? I get ideas that he's some giant, but it doesn't seem that way in the story.

I get this question a lot, so I'll answer it here. Daniel's weight reflects his height. So as Daniel's weight increases, his height increases too. He would easily be 20 feet tall if it weren't for his increasing density too though.

Because of how dense he is, Daniel doesn't actually need to become insanely tall. He can manage with much less overall height because of this. With his armor on, he comes out to about 8 feet in height. A giant by a normal person's measures, but nothing too crazy. Yawm on the other hand is about 10 feet tall. A grown woman would come up to his waist for reference.

How do you calculate Daniel's weight/mass?

A point in constitution is worth 5 pounds of mass. Each level is worth 2 pounds of mass due to the constitution leveling perk. So, $(\text{Constitution} * 5 + \text{Level} * 2) = 20,875 + 6,252 = 27,127$. Then I add the armor dimension mass, which is about 1,000 kilos for every 56 billion mana stored in his armor.

So Daniel has .22 Trillion = 220 Billion Mana = 3,928 kilos. Then we add the base weight of the armor so 4,928 Kilos = 10,843 pounds~. So $27,127 + 10,843 = 37,969$. Now Daniel has a leveling perk for constitution that adds 10% more mass for every 1,000 points in constitution. Therefore we multiply $(1 + (0.1(\text{Constitution}/1000))) = 1.4 * 37,969 = 53,158$ pounds.

Last but not least, Daniel's tree, TitanSlayer, doubles his effective mass. So, $53,158 * 2 = 106,315$ pounds. That is the math behind it all, and that is how I come up with that number.

That Concludes this RPG analysis for now. Here are some links to up to data and stat sheets and up to date skill sheet for Daniel. Hope these add some legitimacy to the numbers in the story for those interested in them. (I forgot to save a backup for the leveling up math. I did remember to do it for skills at least.)

Skill Sheet's Spreadsheet: Daniel Ch.121 Skill Spreadsheet

Visual of Attributes 'Feeding': Visual of Attribute's Feeding

Chapter 123: Eyes of Eldritch

I pulled her up, an uneasy chill running up my spine,

"How is it that everyone knows I'm some harbinger?"

The eerie lips on her face grinned. It was like watching a doll smile with teeth made of glass.

“That’s not all I know about you.”

I raised an eyebrow, “What exactly is that supposed to mean?”

She rubbed her lower jaw back and forth, her teeth grating against each other. As they clanked against each other, they sounded like gears churning in her head.

“You ask many questions, don’t you?”

Her answers threw me off. They weren’t normal, and they had a way of unsettling me. Instead of answering with frustration, I waited a second. This wasn’t panning out like I had hoped it would. Before I continued talking, I changed my approach.

I pulled back my helmet revealing my face. I leaned over her, being a head taller as I inspected her,

“And you don’t have any real answers do you?”

She looked towards Yawm. Her smile shattered like a vase dropping on concrete. She turned back towards me, “I see...Are you one of his minions then?”

Yawm stepped up, “No. He’s an equal and a guest. As a guest of my company, I won’t allow you to treat him in a manner unbecoming of him.”

She turned between us, her pale lips quivering. A strange pause passed over us before she nodded at me with a new grin,

“Ohhhh...Things are not as they seem. Deception. Lies.” Her head tilted as she reached out with a hand towards me. The eye on her palm inspected the runes across my armor, “That rune...it reflects an inner strength...and growth, doesn’t it?”

I’m not gonna lie. At this point, I was getting tired of her cryptic bullshit.

I shook my head at her, “I don’t know if she’s going to be useful at this rate. She’s talking like she’s a living riddle, and we don’t have time for it.”

Yawm raised a palm towards me, “Let’s take our time with the puzzle. Throwing it away so soon would be a waste. Remember, we sacrificed a terraforming golem for it.”

Yawm turned towards Amara, his voice hard, “Though your cryptic manner of speaking is doing you no favors.”

Amara laughed. It was carefree and easy on the ears, like hearing a baby giggle. Considering her monstrous appearance, it only unsettled me more.

“You both are more than you appear...I am eldritch, but I can help you both.”

Yawm and I leaned back, then we looked at each other. This was the first time I’d heard an actual eldritch refer to themselves as an eldritch. Normally they spoke of themselves as wolves and us as lambs. Even Baldag-Ruhl didn’t know he was an eldritch. Amara was different. She knew what she was.

She pointed at my forearms, “I can show you more about that than you know. I can explain what eldritch are. I know many things. I’ll give you pieces if you give me what I want in return.”

Yawm spread out his arms, “What exactly is it that you desire?”

Amara tapped her chest, “I want to be free from the hunt.”

Yawm lowered his arms, “The hunt?”

She nodded, “I cannot fight with power like others of my kind. My strength is with knowledge and how I use it. I want to escape it.”

Yawm waved his hand towards the dungeon core, “We’ll discuss this elsewhere. I’ve tired of this place already.”

She walked up to him, her steps slow and steady. There was no thumping of her feet. She was more like a walking twig. At the same time, there was an energy radiating from her. It wasn't the same as Yawm's overwhelming bursts of radiation, but it was a steady river of mana.

It reminded me of my own mana generation, though less volatile. My mana was dominion mana and augmentation mana fused together. It gave my magic an explosive, violent kind of feel. Her mana was a stable flow of energy. I was a coming storm with wind and rain and thunder. Hers was a flood.

Even with that kind of mana, Yawm didn't fear her. He turned his back to her, his confidence absolute. We walked back towards the dungeon core. As we did, Amara turned her head towards me. Instead of tilting her body, her head just swiveled 180 degrees.

I pointed a finger at her, "You know, you're like a bunch of horror movie cliches smashed together."

With sickening pops, her arms dislocated, letting her place the back of her hands on her face. Her eyes faced me as she grinned at me,

"You're body, the flesh, the skin...It's like nothing I've ever seen."

I frowned, "Do I look tasty or something like that?"

She shook her head, "No. You are living dirt. You are the inanimate given life."

I rolled my eyes, "Uh-huh. I had other eldritch tell me the same thing."

Her eyes narrowed, "They tried eating you?"

I nodded, "Yeah. Anyways, what's the point of the conversation?"

Her grin curled up higher, the unnatural look of her teeth give her a surreal look. I molded my armor back over my face, making my helmet grin.

“Look, I can do a creepy grin too.”

I clamped the armor’s teeth together, “Mine has a bit more bite though.”

She laughed, the childish giggle gushing out of her mouth like music. I squinted my eyes at her in confusion. She just stared at me for a minute before hissing,

“We shall see.”

Yawm was hunched over in front of us, pointing before tapping his chin. He mumbled to himself, trying to organize his thoughts. What for, I didn’t know. A few minutes later and we reached the dungeon core. With the crimson core’s light still brilliant, Yawm placed his hand over it.

He turned towards us, “Is there anything you may have forgotten, Amara?”

She shook her head, “Not at all.”

The ground beneath us shifted, a blank whiteness bleeding out from the core. Yawm turned towards us,

“Whenever I slayed one of Schema’s sentinels, I inspected his spear. I discovered much about the cipher, and using that code, I’ve given myself this ability.”

After a few moments, the pale ice of his fortress and the water of his lake appeared. He turned towards Amara, “I do hope you enjoy the amenities here.”

Amara quit staring at me, her head turning towards him as her arms cracked back into place. I sighed with relief as Yawm gestured a hand towards her. When he did, his ice chairs coalesced from thin air. I sat backwards, finding a chair for me as well.

With rays of light bleeding from the water above, Yawm steeped his fingers, “Now, tell us a bit of your history, if you would.”

Amara tapped the side of her cheek, “History? You mean my past, the before now times?”

Yawm nodded. Amara crossed her arms, as if she were cold, “I was...not like other eldritch. I spoke, as the brightest of our kind does. Unlike the others, I lacked their insatiable hunger.”

She pointed all around us, “It’s different...everything here. From where I came from, things are foggier, less defined. In order to grow, we would feed on the mana surrounding us. Here, however, the mana is all in one place.”

She uncrossed her other arm, shaping a ball on her hands, “Everything is so...solid and dense. The energy here...it’s changed from mana to a solid fabric.”

I raised an eyebrow, “You mean, like...mana into matter?”

Amara nodded. She inspected the room with a hand while staring at me with the other one. Her head remained unmoving,

“There was only mana where we come from. Once here, it’s like staring at endless delicacies. The living pieces have the best, most dense parts.”

Drool leaked out of her mouth. It was gross as fuck.

Yawm leaned onto one hand, “And your telling us that you’re different and you’re not hungry, is that right?”

A trail of her saliva leaked down her robe as she murmured, “That’s right.”

“Riiiiight.”

It was like Yawm was giving her a slow clap with his tone of voice. He leaned towards her, his gaze piercing,

“Assuming that’s true, what makes you so different from them?”

She reached out a hand, her fingers darting back and forth. It was like she was typing on a keyboard. After a second, a blue screen popped up in front of her. Yawm and I leaned forward, both of us curious. I read closer, seeing a character screen for her.

Level 4,744

Strength – 451 | Constitution – 97 | Endurance – 232

Dexterity – 457 | Willpower – 3,173 | Intelligence – 2,897

Charisma – 2,709 | Luck – 1000 | Perception – 46

Health: 3,821/3,821 | Health Regen: 43/min

Mana: 123,765/123,765 | Mana Regen: 460,301/min

Stamina: 5,093/5,093 | Stamina Regen: 62/sec

Legendary Skill: Sentience

Damage Res – 95% | Phys Dam Bonus – 3,955%

Yawm and I turned towards each other again, then back towards Amara. Yawm lifted his hands,

“A status screen...but you’re an eldritch.”

The creepy ass grin just grew on her face as Yawm’s eyes narrowed,

“You...What are you?”

She giggled, “Something that can help you...if you help me.”

Chapter 124: Almost

Yawm laughed, “Hah, hah. It seems as though I’ve run into several talents that defy expectation. One is a mysterious warrior clad in black armor and the other is an eldritch that knows a way into Schema’s system. Incredible, truly incredible.”

He raised his hands as fists, “What a marvelous awakening this has been. Earth treats me well. I’ve explored many planets over hundreds of years. None have given me the gift of seeing a crack in Schema’s code.”

Yawm stood from his chair, giving Amara a light bow, “Just knowing the possibility of what you’ve done is a precious gift. Thank you for sharing that with me.”

The eyes on Amara’s hands opened wide. She pointed them towards me, then back towards Yawm. After a few seconds of being frozen in place, she stuttered,

“Your kindness is overflowing. This is what made me different from the others that floated on the other side. I had a mind. and access to a pristine example of the dimensional code. With my adept form of touch-”

Amara’s raven hair moved, each strand acting as if it had a mind of its own. I glanced closer. After inspecting her, I learned what she meant. Each strand of her hair was an antenna. A creepy, disgusting ass antenna, just like a roach or cricket. I suppressed a shiver and a grimace.

It didn’t matter if it was a pretty way of learning the cipher. It was undeniably effective.

Amara continued, “Time and opportunity let me learn the depths of this...cipher as you call it. Over the many years that I was imprisoned, I mastered it. At least what I found of it.”

She regained her calm aura as she continued, “I may share what I know with you, for a price.”

Yawm steepled his fingers. If the man had a mouth, he’d have a glowing grin on his lips,

“What is it that you want?”

Amara’s fingers flexed. It reminded me of someone creasing their eyebrows in anger,

“I want many things. I need a safe, quiet place. I want books, more books than my eyes could ever read. I want protection, not only from the AI, but from my own kind as well. For these things, I’ll share what I’m willing to tell.”

Yawm raised a hand, the ominous hiss and pops of his magic echoing out,

“Done.”

The aura collapsed into his palm before he snapped his fingers. Another room appeared along the side of Yawm’s ice castle. It mirrored my own room, though it was given additional size. As I wondered why, Yawm answered,

“I have given it additional storage for bookshelves. As you read, I’ll add bookshelves and room for more stories. All you have to do is ask, and I have no problem accommodating more than what you’ve asked.”

Amara glanced back and forth from the new room and Yawm. Her mouth gawked with amazement at Yawm’s speed at granting her request. She murmured,

“How do I know this place is safe?”

Yawm raised a finger, “Because this is my own personalized rift. Since it’s not a part of Schema’s world, he can’t glass us with orbital strikes. Outside of that, I’ve tamed most of the wild eldritch here. If anything even comes within several miles of here, I’ll know.”

Yawm leaned towards her, “And I assure you Amara, I will handle whatever threat that comes personally. You will never know it existed, just as it will never know it died.”

I pursed my lips, “Hey, Yawm.”

Yawm turned towards me, “What is it?”

I pointed towards her room, “Where did you get the books to fill her rooms?”

Yawm’s chest deflated, “Oh...yes. I did disintegrate all of my own personal books several decades ago. Now all I own are research logs. Well, that and tomes detailing certain aspects of the cipher via vague, cryptic terminology. They aren’t the most stimulating of reads.”

I turned towards Amara, “If you’d like, I can get you a library with a bit more diversity.”

Amara turned her hands towards me. They narrowed into slits,

“You can do what Yawm cannot?”

She sounded like she had a hard time believing that. I didn’t bother giving her an answer. Instead, I opened one of my dimensional storages, pulling out an extra obelisk. In the back of my mind, I thanked Torix for giving me a few extra. I tossed it towards Amara. Her hair/antenna shifted into place, catching the sphere.

I pointed at it,

“That’s an obelisk. Connect to it, and it will automatically upload a peaceful memory. Once you’re done with that, I’ll look through my own personal library and send you a few books. There should be a few thousand that I can give you at the very least.”

Amara moved her hands around the sphere, inspecting it in the weirdest way possible. Once done, she used her hands to click an invisible screen. Seconds later, and a sphere

of white materialized around her. As she messed around with the obelisk I stood up from my chair of ice.

Yawm did the same. I walked up to him. He crossed his arms,

“If there is something I miss about Schema’s system, it’s an obelisk. If I can regain access to his system, then that will be the first thing I acquire.”

I nodded, “It’s a really nice device to have.”

I took a step back from Yawm, opening my obelisk. The clicking of cicadas and running water flowed into my ears with a pleasant hum. I smiled before opening Torix’s library. In it, there was a section marked as forbidden books. I selected every other book and sent Amara a friend request.

Seconds later, Amara appeared on my friends list. I sent her the file, thousands of books being sent in seconds. I closed my obelisk. Yawm’s viewing room reappeared, the same aquatic giants floating in the water above. Yawm tapped his chin,

“I hope this question doesn’t probe too deeply, but how did you acquire such an extensive library so quickly? Your planet hasn’t even been in Schema’s system for a year.”

I shrugged, “It was from Torix, the lich that came with me when we first met.”

Yawm nodded,

“Ah, now I feel even worse about my misunderstanding when we first met. After all, if there exists one aspect I respect about another person, it’s a love for books. I simply must apologize next time we meet and invite him for a discussion about stories.

I glanced up, looking at the phosphorescent shimmer of a passing jellyfish, “Who knows, maybe he knows a few fairy tales you haven’t heard yet.”

Yawm clapped his hands once, “An excellent suggestion! Fairy tales hide the wisdom of the cultures that created them. There’s much we may learn from one another.”

I frowned. If Yawm and Torix talked for more than a few minutes, Torix may give away our secrets on accident. In my head at least, it seemed like they would get along too well.

Before I continued along that train of thought, the white sphere around Amara dissipated. She walked up to me, inspecting my armor,

“You are more than you appear to be. Here I imagined you were merely in a guise.”

Yawm turned towards me, “A guise?” He turned back towards her, “What do you mean by the word guise?”

Amara turned towards me. As much as I was hiding it, there was an inkling of fear on my face. It was obvious now. Amara could see my level and Yawm’s. Anyone with half a brain cell could tell there was a massive gap between us. It looked like she was about to reveal me.

My brain entered overdrive. It was now or never. If she exposed me, all hell could break loose. Would I be able to bullshit to Yawm about my strength again? I didn’t know. If he hit me twice in a row, then I’d be dead. That was a risk I didn’t want to take.

An idea popped into my head. Was it a good one? I didn’t know at the time because the pressure was on. I just went with it. I opened a hand towards her,

“Since you don’t think much of me, how about we have a little test?”

Amara grinned at me, “What kind of test?”

I would use her biggest strength against her. I weighed my hands back and forth,

“A test of wills. We’ll see who has higher mana generation rates.”

The grin on Amara's mouth grew. A bit of drool leaked from her, "What will I receive if I win this contest?"

I waved my hand like I didn't care, "I don't know, you can eat me or some shit. If I win, stop questioning my abilities, eh?"

Yawm observed with an expressionless face. I'd been around him enough to know that if he had lips, he'd have an amused grin on his face. Amara seemed giddy at the prospect,

"You are a warrior. Why are you comparing our mana generation? We could have a simple fight if you'd prefer that. Even though I may lack the brute force of many eldritch, I have magic and what I've learned from the cipher. It would be a fairer test."

I shook my head, "There's no need for all that. Let's just keep it simple, short, and sweet. What do you say?"

Amara's hair bristled up, goosebumps appearing over her skin as saliva flowed from her maw. She grinded her teeth together, the sound of gears turning echoing out. She hissed,

"I accept."

I grinned at her confidence. It was nice to see, but I unlike her, I had something she didn't have. I'd seen her status screen in full. All she knew for certain about me was my level. I couldn't blame her for her certainty either. She was 1,000 levels over me, a mage, and mana generation was her specialty.

The thing was, she didn't know just how stupid high my mana was.

Chapter 125: Origin

But just like everyone else, she would learn soon enough. If I had anything to say about it, my mana generation would be the talk of legends. Amara gestured towards me with a palm,

"You may begin the test."

I grinned, siphoning out about 100,000 health regen from the cipher on my arm. The mana radiated from my skin like a far off earthquake. Amara's eyes widened,

"I'm impressed. You've already exceeded what I expected from you. It isn't enough, however."

An aura of calm emanated from her skin, a gentle blue overwhelming the chaos of my red mana. Her grin grew, "It seems as though you've been overwhelmed."

I matched her mana, my mana canceling out hers. I pretended like I was straining to add unnecessary drama. Sometimes it's fun to play jokes on people after all, so I grunted out,

"Not quite. I haven't given it all I've got."

Yawm covered his mouth, holding his laugh in. I quashed my own smile so it wouldn't give me away. Amara clapped her hands as she giggled,

"Hehehe, it seems as though you have quite the energy in you. How about this then?"

She doubled her output, her aura overwhelming mine with ease. She reached out a hand, her eye facing mine. I noticed the iris was a sky blue, making the eye pop on her pale skin. That eye strained as she maintained 400,000 mana regeneration.

It was near her limit. I grit my teeth and clenched my fists, increasing my mana generation at a steady pace. I began humming out as the energy increased. Amara stared at me in disbelief as my mana generation eclipsed hers, though barely.

I struggled out my words with an immense yet false effort,

"I...I won't be eaten...I won't."

She raised both her hands, her breathing relaxing. As she calmed down, her mana output increased. As if she were meditating, she reached the apex of her mana generation. She spoke with a serene calm,

“And you’ve been outdone again.”

I laughed, “Really now?”

In an instant, I doubled my mana generation. Carmine colored lightning arced across the room, singing spots of the walls. The aura was like evaporated violence, giving the air an electric vibrance. The relaxing immanence of Amara was quelled into oblivion.

She gasped, “I...I can’t believe it.”

I laughed as I reached out with Event Horizon. I poured the aura over the creatures above us. As I did, I gained even more mana generation than I could make. Yet again I doubled my mana generation, reaching 1.6 million mana a minute.

I felt like a damn super saiyan as my mana coursed through me. My aura warped the gravity and space near me, making the air around us thick and heavy, like lead. The energy rippled out in waves, pulsing outwards with physical force. The aura was bright, like a crimson flare. It was a sight to behold.

Yawm clapped his hands a few times, “Impressive. This display out does the one you showed when we first met. I’m in awe.”

I raised a finger with a sly grin, “I want to see how high I can go with it.”

I reached out, covering dozens of creatures floating above us. Their natural resilience turned into even more mana generation for me. Higher and higher I pushed it. I even dipped into my health some, letting me reach two million health regen. As I achieved that feat, Amara stumbled backwards, her mouth gaping in shock.

She pointed a shaking hand up at me, “How is that even possible? You’re only level 3,000.”

I shrugged before raising my fists,

“I’m called the Harbinger for a reason.”

I stood up, soaking in the excessive amount of energy. I’m not gonna lie, I felt like a god for a few seconds.

I didn’t want to get too cocky though, so I pulled in Event Horizon and simmered down. Without delay, the energy ceased like a boulder falling on a fountain. A few seconds later, and my health was backup to full. I siphoned my mana back into my cipher, powering the runic inscription.

I walked up to Amara, offering her a hand,

“Come on, you have a lot to show us.”

It took her a few seconds before she reached up with her hand. Instead of grabbing it, I grabbed her wrist and pulled. After she stood, she rubbed her wrist,

“Thank you for not clenching my eye.”

I gave her a thumbs up, “No problem.”

Yawm placed a hand on my shoulder, “You’re only level 3,000 then?”

I shrugged, “You of all people know how little that number matters.” I met Yawm’s eye,

“I’m ready and waiting if you want a real fight though.”

With the afterglow of the energy surge, my confidence was sky high. So high in fact that Yawm starred in surprise for a few seconds. After a moment passed, he let out a deep chuckle. He pat my back with force, the sound echoing through his viewing room,

“Of course I want to fight a worthy warrior, but that will have to wait. As you’ve said before, fighting accomplishes nothing.” He opened a hand towards Amara, “We have a guide who can open a new world to us. Let’s focus on opening that chapter instead.”

There wasn’t fear in his voice, but there was a begrudging respect. He took a step towards the exit of the room,

“Come. If we are to hear her out, then my study is the natural place for it.”

We walked down the spiral staircase, the wonders of the deep wondering around us. Every creature shifted and swam with extreme activity. It was because of Event Horizon. Yawm glanced around, noticing the shift,

“Hmmm...They must have sensed the surge of mana as well.”

While we walked, Yawm pondered for a while. I had a solid guess about what he was wondering about. Amara let it slip that I was around level 3,000. No matter what my mana looked like from the outside, Yawm would be curious now. It looked like she sparked his suspicion.

It wouldn’t be long now. If I was lucky, he might only tear my flesh off and use me as a mana battery for other experiments. If I wasn’t so lucky, then he might try to take my armor off and wear it as his own...

I silenced my anxiety, letting myself relax. There was nothing more I could do right now. Learning the cipher from a pro was about as good as it gets for self improvement. Especially considering I could encode it into my armor. With her help, I’d be able to amp up my rune’s efficiency.

Either that or I would need to get a bit more risky with my own formulas. Regardless, I turned around towards Amara. She was wheezing, each breath pained. I thought about it for a bit. She just escaped a prison she’d been in for god knows how long. She needed sleep for a while, so I tapped Yawm’s shoulder.

He turned his head towards me, “What is it?”

I pointed at Amara, “I think she needs some sleep, or at least to lay down. She has been imprisoned then transported across dimensions all over the course of an hour.”

Yawm stopped walking. He turned towards her, smacking his forehead,

“Of course she needs rest. What am I even thinking. I’m so lost in thought that I didn’t even see what was right in front of me.”

Yawm snapped his fingers. A few seconds later, Keeja walked out from a hallway nearby. With his blank stare and monotone movements, he floated along like a spectre. Once he reached Amara, they seemed like a natural couple as he bowed to her,

“Hello miss Amara, I will show you to your new room so that you may rest.”

Amara glanced at us with her hands, then back towards Keeja. She followed him, her knees shaking a bit. Yawm opened the door of his study then turned towards me.

“Do you have some time to talk?”

I nodded, “Of course.”

We walked into his study. The toms lined the bookshelves of the room. Yawm reached near his desk, right where lights of the room where brightest. From all sides, the phosphorescent lights bled inside. Yawm took a chair and set it down in front of him. After that, he walked over and set down a chair for him to sit down.

My nerves were already getting to me. He gestured towards the chair,

“Sit, if you would.”

I walked up and sat on the chair. He walked towards a window, letting his gaze wonder outside. Yawm waved his hand and Keeja walked into the building from inside, carrying his favorite kind of tea. Yawm sat into a chair in front of me, Keeja walking by and handing us our beverages.

Yawm sipped on it, the warm aroma of coffee and vanilla floating in the air,

“Is there something you wish to tell me?”

I sipped my tea, but my heart seized in chest. I ignored that sensation, crushing it with my mind as I spoke with a casual ease,

“Do I seem worried or something?”

Yawm tapped the edge of his teacup for a second before speaking.

“I’ve noticed that you seem stressed, if not outright mortified at times. I’ve been alive for a long time. Sensing something like an increase in someone’s heartbeat or seeing some discomfort isn’t too difficult for me, as you may imagine.”

Yawm pointed towards me, “That is what makes me wonder about you. That, among other signs.”

I frowned. I was being caught between a rock and a hard place. Neither option seemed very good at the moment. Either I tried to continue lying about myself and see what happens, or I tell him and also see what happens.

At this point, we’d been around one another for a few weeks. He probably already knew what I was doing. We’re talking about Yawm here, not some random schmuck. If anything, this was probably an opportunity to come clean about everything.

It wasn’t something I wanted to do though. There was so much uncertainty, and Yawm had deformed so many people before me. Without meaning to, I asked a question,

“Why did you create Althea the way you did?”

Yawm set his tea down on the ground beside him. His arms were long enough to reach it with ease. He crossed his fingers, resting his chin on them as he inspected me. I don’t know what he saw exactly, but he replied after some contemplation,

“To answer that question, I first must give you context. During my travels, I was picked up as an avatar of Etorhma. I accomplished many tasks in his name for many rewards. Most of what I know about the cipher came from him. That’s why I was so impressed with your own use of the language. You learned it on your own.”

Yawm leaned up, resting his back on his chair,

“I digress. During one of those many missions, I picked up useful intelligence from an information broker. One of Etorhma’s oldest avatar’s was being summoned soon. Using that information, I matched up my own summoning with his.”

Yawm raised a hand,

“That peculiar avatar had an interesting ability to travel through time, to a lesser extent. I created a singularity where he was, warping the space time he was in. This slowed him down. Before he could escape, I detonated antimatter on his location, using a thin sheet of stasis to contain the explosive damage.”

Yawm gestured outwards with a hand,

“It was a clean, effective execution. After I slayed Etorhma’s champion, the Old One did something unexpected.”

Yawm leaned towards me, the intensity of the stare like acid.

“The creature wept.”

Yawm leaned back up into his chair,

“And so, this monstrosity flooded the plain that we were summoned in. I was able to contain much of this viscous fluid that was released by him. As the pocket universe around me collapsed, Ajax warped in and pulled me out of Etorhma’s temporal plane. I can still remember the racking cries of that creature.”

Yawm squeezed both his hands into fists, “Can you imagine why I would do such a thing?”

I shook my head, curious as hell about the rest of the story.

Yawm opened a hand, “He...That avatar was the one that expunged my family. He was contracted by Schema for a bounty quest. I was given the chance to cut his throat, and I took it.”

My stomach sank at hearing that. Not the killing the avatar part but at the losing his family part. Yawm continued,

“I never intended on gaining Etorhma’s Tears. It was a result of enacting a hollow revenge. After I discovered the tears, many people wanted them. The effects of the tears on most sentients were poor at best. Poor might be the incorrect word. Exposure led to grisly and vile outcomes. I won’t go into detail about them any further.”

There was a disgust hidden in those last few words he spoke.

“On the eldritch, however, the effects were astonishing.”

Yawm raised both his hands,

“If you can imagine it, the eldritch corrupted the Old One’s essence! They deformed it into their own flesh and blood. These eldritch could tear through any material as if they were moving through air. Those creatures were deadly and dangerous, so I slayed them.”

Yawm gripped his hands into fists, “And so I discontinued my experiments. It wasn’t until much later that we discovered a fringe world at the edge of being taken over by the eldritch.”

I frowned, “You discovered Althea.”

Yawm nodded, “Among many others left of her kind. They were a unique species, naturally given an affinity for Arcane Blood. They were clustered on a mountain, hidden from the rest of their world. Before the eldritch decimated them, I took the species under my wing.”

Yawm waved a hand around, as if he were grasping for details,

“They were a prideful species, even more stubborn than we porytians. They would raise their young in caverns until they were adolescents. Until then, they weren’t allowed to see natural light. As I learned about them, they learned of me. The situation devolved once they learned of the potential hidden among the cipher.”

Yawm lifted and turned his arms, showing several of the markings of his cipher,

“They wanted to know how I fought the eldritch with such ease. I told them it was the cipher etched on my skin. I refused them, not because I wished to hoard the knowledge but because I didn’t want them exiled from Schema’s system. They ignored me, trying to carve the cipher on their own.”

I grimaced, “There’s no way that worked out.”

Yawm shook his head, “As a fellow practitioner, you understand that. With their marred characters, they were torn asunder by the language. The wrath of the cipher deformed them utterly. They killed one another like a pit of hungry cannibals. Few survived.”

Yawm leaned forward towards me,

“Among that chaos, I discovered something extraordinary. Among the ruins of their village, there laid a woman strapped against a tree. Her belly was swollen. Dried tears traced down her cheeks. Her limbs had been dislocated, an eldritch tying her to a tree. In the end, her body was merely a catalyst for what lied within.”

Yawm looked off in a different direction, “There was something strange about it. Two open wounds were on her belly. One was where the wasp eldritch had tried laying an egg within her. The other mark was where she had tried tearing it out. I believe the remnants of that egg mixed with the already formed baby.”

I grimaced, “Althea is some sort of eldritch hybrid?”

Yawm sighed,

“Perhaps. She was like her kind, but the eldritch had infested her flesh. Once the mother died, Althea burst from its belly. She plopped onto the ground, already larger than most toddlers of her species. I believed she would be some twisted chimera. Instead, she was a crying, healthy baby.”

Yawm turned a palm towards me, “We never discovered exactly how it was created. From her mother’s carcass, we gained a genetic signature that was unusually reactive. Combine that with their Arcane Blood, and they molded together.”

Yawm steeped his fingers together,

“Still, I was in no position to care for a child. I gave her to one of the last remaining members of her species. As she aged, she grew, but so did the eldritch within her. She was a bomb waiting for detonation. Once she was about to burst, we took her from her foster parents and placed her within the confines of a lab.”

Yawm’s eyes narrowed, “It would amaze you how much tragedy there is among the stars. My lab was a home for those tragedies, a way for them to try and regain some semblance of a life.”

Yawm stared at the ground,

“There were so many failures during our time in that laboratory. Even now the thought of what I did there stings. I used the abominations of eldritch and sentients to experiments with the tears. It was by no means my proudest moment, but i was desperate for something.”

Yawm waved his hands outwards,

“I had studied the cipher and the eldritch for hundreds of years. I spent lifetimes researching the very darkest pits and deepest holes I could find. It weighed on me. I needed some breakthrough, and I had found that with Althea. I was hoping to find another breakthrough again.”

Yawm grabbed the sides his head,

“She was eldritch and took the tears without the effects that most sentients experienced. I prayed the tears would help her affliction. They made her nigh immortal and gave her the same slicing abilities as other eldritch, but it didn’t save her.”

Yawm spread his hands, “The eldritch grew within her with the same fervor as before, threatening to overwhelm her. In order to extract the eldritch essence, I used the only method I know of pulling out eldritch energy.”

Yawm formed a ball in front of him,

“We would surround her with the ‘dungeon cores’ as you call them. I would pull out energy from them, and they would in turn drain the energy from her to power themselves. Between these cleansings, we would pump Althea with sedatives. Otherwise her emotions may swell, making her energy unleash in a torrent.”

Yawm clapped his hands together, “We tried many other methods. None of them were successful.” Yawm gestured a hand to me,

“With your armor, we could have formed a conduit between you and her in order to siphon her excess energy. Any mage with experience would know that. Without something extracting her mana at a routine rate though, Althea was restricted. She would go over the edge at regular intervals.”

Yawm closed his eyes, “When I discovered that our scientists where using her for bounty hunting...”

Yawm paused, finding himself at a loss for words. He opened his eyes and steepled his fingers once more,

“I learned they were doing other questionable things within the lab. Most of them unethical and pointless. They were culled along with many other members of my ranks for that reason. I had no need for the unloyal and those that lie.”

There was some serious acid in his voice at the last word. I had a decent reason why. He continued,

“And so, you found Althea in her state. Does that explanation sate your curiosity?”

I nodded, “Uh, yeah. It does.”

We sat there, facing one another for a few minutes before Yawm picked up his tea. He sipped it in silence. A second later, he stared at me. From where I was standing, it was pretty obvious he already knew. I figured my best bet was coming clean.

“Hey Yawm.”

“What is it?”

I sighed before meeting his eye,

“I’ve been lying to you.”

Chapter 126: Honesty

My goal here is to humanize Daniel and make him more relatable. Let me know if it worked.

Yawm leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees. He rested his chin on his hands,

“Really now? Would you mind describing how you’ve been lying, though I may already have a general idea.”

I took a moment, my heart pounding in my chest. Thump, thump, thump, adrenaline flooded my system, my hands growing sweaty in seconds. I took a deep breath, let me get control of myself. It amazed me that a conversation like this had me much more nervous than a battle to the death did.

That was the reality though as I continued,

“Alright, I guess I’ll start from the beginning. When a quarantine was issued for your visit to earth, no one on earth could leave. Your damn plague destroyed my hometown, and it killed my friends. In all likelihood, it killed my father too.”

Honestly, I could give a damn about my dad. I was trying to get some sympathy points however I could though.

Yawm tapped his hands together, “So you intended on killing me for revenge then?”

I shook my hands, “No. Schema put out a mission for killing you. Your plague looked like it was going to destroy the damn world, and I couldn’t leave either. I didn’t have much of a choice but to accept. “

I raised up my hands in exasperation, “Here, I’ll give you some context. I was level, like, 100 when I accepted this mission. I had no idea what the hell I was getting myself into.”

Yawm scoffed, but his expression didn’t change.

I pointed at him,

“You laugh now, but I worked my ass off to get to this level. It’s not easy making that happen in less than a year. I ran around the entirety of Springfield, clearing out your plague. It wasn’t until we met your followers that things got complicated.”

I lowered my hand, “After that, I had a training montage in a dessert rift. I even managed to finish off some of your followers after that. Before I killed any of them, they would deform into these disgusting eldritch. That’s the perspective I had going into meeting you for the first time.”

I leaned back in my chair, raising my hands again in exasperation,

“Ajax betrayed you. I didn’t kill him. He came up with a plan where I would lie until I was strong enough to defeat you. That sure as hell worked. Yeah, I only need to gain about 10,000 more damn levels and learn to create gravitational singularities. Sing-u-fucking-varieties.”

I let my arms flop on the chair, my weight cracking them,

“This whole time I’ve been bullshitting about how strong I was. Sure, I’ve got a few things going for me, but I can’t beat someone who’s 10,000 levels over me.”

I pressed a finger to my chest, “I was a normal guy a year ago. A normal, non monster eating guy. I have no idea why in the hell everyone thinks I’m able to kill a literal god.”

I shook my hands at Yawm, “That’s the thing. You fit the actual definition of a god, did you know that?” I raised a hand, counting on my fingers,

“Immortal? Check. Can destroy the world with ease? Check. Can control the weather? Of course you fucking can. Can evaporate my ass? With ease.”

At this point, I was entering full-on tirade mode. A lot of this had built up over the last few months, so let it out was liberating. Yawm had a way of making himself accessible to trust as well. Because of that, I couldn’t help but go on a tangent about everything.

Because of that, I leaned towards Yawm, “I live with a lich and remnant that are over a 1,000 years old. I am only eighteen years old. Why in the hell do they expect me to be able to do a damn thing to you? Our plan was garbage, but I couldn’t think of any other way. I had zero options.”

I shook my head, laying back in my chair, “And now everybody is calling me Harbinger and acting like I’m supposed to be able to do this shit.”

I moved both my hands to one side of me, “Not only am I supposed to be a hardened war hero-” I moved my hands to my other side, “But I have to be a spy, craftsmen, and god-slayer too. I stood up because no one else would, the whole time my back against a wall. I never wanted to sign up for all this.”

I sighed. My throat was on fire like someone had made me swallow a hot coal. It surprised me how emotional I was being. I guess I was like this because Yawm wasn’t relying on me to make some miracle happen.

Riding on those emotions, I continued, “And I failed...I failed man. I tried so hard for so damn long. I was a machine. Some days I didn’t think I was even human. I sure as hell don’t think I’m human now though. There’s no question about it.”

My voice laced itself with venom, “No, I know I’m not anymore. I bleed silver blood. My skin and bones are metal. Monster’s don’t eat me. I eat monsters.”

I gestured a hand to Yawm, “And look at what good that did me. Now you’re going to wipe me off the face of the earth. Pa-Blow, then I’m gone. Over two years living in hell disintegrated in an instant. All that hard work just gone. It’s a hard pill to swallow.”

I leaned my head down, holding in my tears with my artificially enhanced willpower. It was like I wanted to cry like a baby, but I couldn’t.

“Go ahead man, Do your worst. I’m done with all this lying. Right now, I’m just tired.”

A long silence stretched out. It was the kind of silence that was hollow and biting. It was like learning of some deep hurt that someone hid. I had no idea what Yawm was thinking about as I said it. Besides for that single scoff, he didn’t say a word or change his expression.

It was the weirdest damn thing. I just gushed out stuff I’d been holding in for months. I hoped it was because Yawm’s charisma was high. For some reason, I doubted that. Either way, I settled back into my chair, a sense of relief coming over me. Even though I was probably going to die, at least I got all that off my chest.

Yawm sat back up. He laid his hands on the armrest of his chair with his back upright. He spoke,

“That was...uh, well, more than I anticipated hearing...Wow.”

I guess the stress got to me or something, but I laughed. Yawm scratched the back of his head,

“I believed you were an agent sent by Schema or perhaps an avatar of an old one.”

I scratched the side of my face, “Well, I am...sort of. Etorhma sent me to kill you. He didn’t give me a damn thing to help with doing that though.”

Yawm’s eyes opened wide,

“Really now...That’s quite the predicament you’ve found yourself in then. It seems as though all these powerful forces around you are relying on you to fulfill some sort of preordained destiny. That sounds like quite the set of burdens for anyone, let alone an adolescent.”

Yawm leaned back in his chair, “How exactly did you strike me with such force when we first met then?”

I sighed, “It was a bullshit perk.”

Yawm tapped his chin with a single finger, “And what about your mana regeneration? It’s far higher than my natural generation. There must be something to it.”

I shrugged, “Let’s just say I’m a regen specialist.”

“And your durability? I couldn’t seem to hurt you with my strikes unless I applied real force.”

I banged one of my shoulders, the clank of metal on metal coursing through the room.

“My armor is hard. That’s it.”

Yawm nodded. He snapped his fingers, calling Keeja into the room. Keeja walked inside, bringing us two more glasses of Yawm’s favorite tea.

“There are many more questions I’d like to ask if you have the endurance to answer them.”

I laughed, “If there’s one thing I have plenty of, it’s endurance.”

Once that was done, Yawm asked question after question. It was a mild mannered interrogation, his questions pointed but never probing too deep. I ended up describing how I grew up. I detailed how sinister Baldag-Ruhl was, keeping quiet about his runes. I explained the horrors of Yawm’s plague.

By the time I finished, it was morning in Yawm's personal rift. It was nice to tell him my story. Something about it was liberating, mainly when it was someone like Yawm. He had this way of listening that made me open up. Once again, it was probably his charisma squeezing information out of me. At this point, I was finding it hard to care.

At the same time, I kept the most critical and private details to myself. I wasn't about to tell Yawm where Althea and the rest were. I also never told him about my arcane blood. I didn't want to become some sort of mana battery for him.

Once I finished discussing everything, Yawm stood up from his chair. He opened a palm towards the doorway,

"If you wouldn't mind waiting, I need some time to decide what to think of all this."

I nodded, "Yeah, sure. I don't mind. If anything, take your time."

I walked out of his room, closing his ice door behind me. I had no idea what was going to happen. I could try and run, but I doubted that would work very well. In the end, Ajax could always warp me out at some point.

In a way, I hadn't failed. I stopped Yawm from spreading his plague across the world. He hadn't destroyed everything or tore everyone apart just yet. That was the entire point of this venture. Now that I knew Yawm, I understood just how impossible it was to push him into a different dimension.

Ajax was suicidal if he thought I was going to pull off something like that. I mean I tried. I gave it my best effort, but it wasn't enough. Yawm wasn't just dominant, he was smart too. It wasn't all over just yet though, so I walked back towards my room.

Once there, I opened my status screen. I sent out a message to Torix, Althea, Hod, and even Kessiah. It let them know that the situation might devolve soon and that I might need Ajax to take me out of here. After finishing that, I focused on doing what I could at that moment.

I had two options. One was to try and improve my current rendition of my cipher. In my opinion, that wasn't likely to give me immediate returns. Instead, I had a different

plan. It was oriented around a part of my legendary skill, Force of Nature. One line of its description mentioned that it could improve my current skills.

It's why my unique skill Overwhelming Pressure was so good. It used to be called Overwhelming Presence. In that form, it helped me intimidate people and monsters alike. After Force of Nature amplified the skill, Overwhelming Pressure allowed me to disperse my weight out into an aura.

Considering I sunk into the ground otherwise, it was crucial for my build. Just like that ability, I had plenty of other skills with each of them having room for improvement. It seemed like an easy way to get a power boost for now.

After mixing the skills, I would focus on re-writing the cipher on my arm. My writing of the language improved. That meant I might make improvements in my inscriptions that are meaningful. With this plan in mind, I looked down a list of my unique skills.

The first in line for improvement was Tactile Cognition. I used that skill all the time, and improving it in any way would be amazing. Being mindful of that, I reached out with the ability. I sensed through the walls, using subtle shifts in temperature and wind to scope out my surroundings.

Once fully extended, I focused on Force of Nature. It was a passive bonus essentially, not needing activation or something of the sort. If I kept Tactile Cognition active while training Force of Nature, it might organically evolve the skill.

With this theory in tow, I went through my fighting stance. I shifted and moved on my feet, molding gravity and using telekinesis as if I were breathing. I kept at this process, moving faster and faster. After about an hour of trying this out, I got the notification I was looking for.

Unique skill Upgraded! Tactile Cognition is augmented with your legendary skill, Force of Nature. This converts Tactile Cognition into Restless Senses. Restless Senses retains the same skill value as Tactile Cognition.

Restless Senses(lvl 52) – Many lower their guard given time. Your senses won't allow you to lower yours. Increases the passive perception of your senses. The effect increases with level.

I had a mini celebration before looking around and trying to discover the difference in the skill. I couldn't actually figure it out at first. When I stopped working to activate it, the sense of awareness didn't go away. I could still sense the hallways, the marine life outside my room, even the breathing of Amara in the room beside me.

It would take a while before I got used to this feeling, but it was a fantastic bonus in the long run. Sure, I wouldn't be able to sleep in any raunchy motels ever again, but I wouldn't be killed in while unaware either. It could be worse.

With that in mind, I looked at my next skill in line, Gravitational Flux. This was the unique skill that I used to enhance my movements while fighting. If I could fuse it with Force of Nature, it would make the skill infinitely more natural to use at the very least. Understanding that, I trained the same motions as before but this time while using Gravitational Flux.

This skill was much newer than my other ability, so I figured it would take longer to enhance with Force of Nature. Still, it was something worth doing in the long run, so I grinded the skill out. It was awkward at first, juggling gravity and antigravity into my usual fighting style. On more straightforward maneuvers it wasn't that hard. As the complexity ramped up, it became arduous, however.

It was like wearing a combat exoskeleton if that made any sense. The mechanic apparatus of a combat exoskeleton helped with moving. The gravity and antigravity streams were the same way. The critical difference was that I made those streams as I went. I couldn't leave it up to some suit I was wearing.

After several hours of working with the skill, I discovered why the skill wasn't being improved yet. I wasn't even thinking of using them against an enemy. Even when I sparred against Yawm, all my focus was on using gravity to help me move. It was like I was using half of the skill's potential in a way. Since that was the case, I relied on an old skill from long ago – Shadow Boxing.

It's a time-tested ability I used to ramp up my skills when the system started. As the enemies became less and less human though, it became a damn hard thing to keep using. In this case, I could get an idea of how to use the skill against a person. After mastering it against that kind of opponent, I would apply what I learned from different opponents.

Before doing that, I sat down on my bed and opened my dimensional storage. I pulled out one of Torix's rations, a reddish, milky liquid, and poured it down my throat. It went down like chugging a dozen raw eggs.

I shook my head, shaking off the disgust before standing back up. I spent the next few hours honing in on disrupting an opponent while helping my own movements. As I suspected, this wasn't the kind of skill I would gain over the course of a day, however. It would take time which was something I didn't have at the moment.

Instead of panicking though, I pushed all my doubts and anxiety out. Yeah, I wanted to sit down and cry myself a river. I chose not to. Something I learned a long time ago was that crying was like throwing myself a pity party. I was the only one showing up, and I was the only one who cared about it too. In other words, it was a waste of time.

So I kept on the grind, honing in on disruption. I got a few tricks as I went. One of them was what I called a gravity press. I would use a skill called mana press that extended the effect of spells in a particular area. By using that in conjunction with a gravity well, I could snap streams of gravity onto an opponent. These would pull them in different directions, throwing them off balance.

Another useful tactic involved telekinesis. A lot of my telekinesis was like hitting transparent plates. I struck one plate and a different plate somewhere else would be shot forward. In this case, I incorporated my footsteps as disrupting tools. I transferred the kinetic force of my stomping feet into confusing pushes against my opponent.

This is how I thought about it. Imagine stomping your feet on a glass floor. If I stomped on a glass floor, it wouldn't crack because that energy was transferred into my opponent's face. It was a lot like what I used to bounce across the deserts of Hod's homeworld, just adapted to fighting.

I gained dozens of other little tricks on top of those techniques too. I incorporated them into my style as I went. By the time it, my imaginary opponent would be jerked around like nobody's business. That's when I got my second notification from that training session.

Unique skill Upgraded! Gravitational Flux is now augmented with your legendary skill, Force of Nature. This converts Gravitational Flux into Kinetic Leviathan. Kinetic Leviathan retains the same skill value as Gravitational Flux.

Kinetic Leviathan(lvl 36) – By manipulating the latent energy in the physical world, you conquer your foes and your movement. +36% to ease of using gravity and antigravity. +36% to use of gravity and antigravity to manipulate opponents.

After the notification appeared, all the extra tricks with gravity and telekinesis became easier. If anything, I expected some enormous increase in the skill considering the name. I mean Kinetic Leviathan sounded like a mythical or legendary skill. It was strong still though. Either way, I'd have to wait until I was in combat before I could see its full effectiveness.

With that handled, I homed in on the last unique skill I intended on improving, Gorgor of Mana. It was a powerful skill, allowing me to drain the mana of foes if I could dig my armor into them. Enhancing that skill may even let me strengthen Event Horizon or squeeze more mana from my enemies. Either of those effects bolstered my growth, so I brainstormed a few ways of gaining the skill.

That's when an obvious idea popped into my head. There was plenty of eldritch right outside that I could practice my ability with. I just needed to ask Yawm if that was ok. It could be super awkward, but that wasn't going to get in the way of my power boost.

So I walked out of my room. As I opened the pale blue handle of my room's door, Keeja's stood in front of me with one hand primed to knock. Keeja's expressionless eyes met mine. He gestured down the hallway. I took a step back, giving the creepy and wiry creature some space.

Keeja gave a short bow, pointing towards the hallway. I followed. We walked through the icy corridors, the view of the underground lake no longer amazes me. It had become a part of life here. As we walked, I preemptively prepared a message towards Torix and company about getting me the fuck out of here.

I would mentally send the message at a moment's notice. As I finished the note, we reached Yawm's study. Keeja knocked on the door,

“Master?”

Yawm's voice muffled through the door,

“You may come in.”

Keeja opened the doorway, showing Yawm hunched over a plate of marble. On it was many elaborate markings of the cipher. Yawm walked out from behind his desk, unlatching a wooden bridge connecting two sides of it. He lowered the wooden entrance, walking up towards me. Once there, he motioned for Keeja to leave.

With the smell of yellowed paper and powdered stone in the air, Yawm turned one his massive palms to me,

“Hello, Harbinger. It’s good to see that anxiety didn’t eat you alive.”

I shrugged, “I’m not one to worry.”

Yawm nodded, “Neither am I. I did, however, dwell on what you said yesterday. It seems as though you’ve been placed in an uneasy position. I can offer you a way out as I still believe that we can coexist.”

I frowned, “I’m just being honest here, but how in the hell do our goals align? Mine was to kill you.”

Yawm laughed, “Hah, I admire your candid manner of speaking. It’s refreshing. You’ve got an equally blunt manner of being, both honest and direct. Besides for the lies about your strength and origin of course. Besides for that hiccup, that directness is why I think we can come to a compromise.”

He walked towards a window, facing outside. He stood there for a moment, debating with himself. He laid a hand on a panel of pale ice,

“Do you know what I thought when Amara said you were level 3,000?”

I shrugged, “Probably something along the lines of, ‘This piece of shit thought he pulled one over on me.’”

Yawm laughed again, “Hah, hah. Your sense of humor is better when you’re honest.”

Yawm gazed out into the distance, “I was thinking about your future. Your abilities are far beyond any other level 3,000 being I’ve ever met, eldritch or otherwise. I couldn’t help but imagine you as a fully leveled with knowledge of the cipher in tow. You would be a fearsome sight to anyone or anything, even Schema or perhaps the Old Ones.”

He turned towards me,

“I fear what you may become as well, yet there is an excitement in me as well. You mentioned much of your journey to me yesterday. As a warrior, you took a road less traveled. You were brutal, efficient, and violent with crushing your foes. Unfortunately, I am one of those foes.”

Yawm opened both his hands outwards, “Surely you understand why I am uneasy with letting you leave here unscathed? You will grow into someone I need to be wary of. To let you live is a risk, a dire one.”

I was so close to sending my message to Althea and the others. So damn close.

Yawm let his arms flop against his sides, “Yet we aren’t enemies by your choosing. There is no hatred in you towards me. By taking that creature from my back, I regained my old self. You saved my life. That proved to me that you are no pawn of Schemas. You even knew the cipher before we met. That results in exile.”

Yawm shook his head, “No, that isn’t what you intended. Our problem is that you cannot live as you choose too because Schema is forcing you down a path that isn’t your own. You have as much a reason as anyone to hate him.”

Yawm walked back towards me, “I empathize with your predicament as you may imagine. The issue is that I too have my own goals and aspirations. After thinking about the issue, I came to a conclusion.”

Yawm lifted the marble plate beside him, “It’s this marble plate. It will allow us to function as two independent entities and help one another until we no longer need each other. At that point, we may part ways as equals.”

I frowned, “It’s gotta be more than just a marble plate.”

Yawm clicked his fingers, forming a table of ice between us.

“It’s not a chunk of stone.”

Yawm placed the marble on the table, turning the inscriptions towards me,

“It’s a contract.”

Chapter 127: Duplicity of a King

I frowned at Yawm,

“What kind of contract?”

Yawm spread out his arms, “A contract written in the cipher. You’re actually the first being I’ve tried making one with.”

I narrowed my eyes, “Why exactly?”

Yawm pointed at me, “You’re the first sentient I’ve had the need to create one with. Therefore I might have made errors in the text. You may take your time deciphering through it.”

I leaned over it. I gave it a cursory glance before looking back up at Yawm, “Could you give me a hint about what it says?”

Yawm pointed at the first line of the contract engraved in the marble, “This clause states that neither of us will kill the other until the requirements of the contract are fulfilled.”

As he spoke, his markings of the cipher became clearer. By understanding his intention when writing the markings, they became much easier to read. That may be why it’s so difficult to learn the cipher. It could also explain why Schema’s ok with me running around with the cipher on my back. Unless I tell someone what the inscriptions mean, they can’t learn from them.

Yawm interrupted my thoughts by pointing at the next line of the contract, “The first line is obvious with its meaning and intention. This next clause is where it becomes interesting.”

Yawm moved his colossal finger along the plate as he spoke,

“Dimension-C138 will reprogram Schema as he sees fit within the next thousand years. Otherwise, Dimension-C138 will be disintegrated.”

My head whipped up like I just took a mean uppercut to the chin,

“Wait, what?”

Yawm widened one eye and narrowed the other, like he was raising an eyebrow,

“Is there something unclear?”

I shook my hands, “I understood what you asked. I’m asking why in the living hell did you put that in the contract?”

He held up a loose fist, “I understand that you don’t believe in my goal for creating an eldritch hybrid. That’s why it goes unmentioned, as does changing the Old Ones. However, reprogramming Schema to an extent should be well within acceptable terms. It’s also well within your abilities.”

I shook my head, “Fighting Schema is like telling someone to kill an Old One. It’s a lifetime commitment. Don’t you think that’s a bit much to add onto a contract that I’m assuming I can’t break?”

Yawm sighed, lowering his hand, “I understand the monumental nature of my request, but you’re asking a tremendous amount from me as well. By letting you live, I’m allowing someone within Schema’s system to evolve into a true threat. By ending you now, I can save myself trouble over the long term.”

Yawm raised his hands, “But I don’t want to kill you. Despite your affiliations, you’re intentions are forced on you and even noble in some respects. That moral compass combined with your limitless potential, and you can change this galaxy for the better.”

Yawm narrowed his eyes, “But Schema is manipulating you into a machine of his own making. This contract will ensure that he will never take full control of you. Also, you’re current goal involves tearing my heart out. I believe setting up safeguards for myself is wise.”

I cupped my chin, “Doesn’t the whole ‘not killing you’ part cover that?”

Yawm crossed his arms, “It does, but you see, I am in a position of leverage.”

Yawm clasped his hands into fists, “So I intend on using that leverage for my gain.”

I frowned, “So I have to take on your goals or else you’ll kill me?”

Yawm uncrossed an arm, shaking his hand, “Not at all. The contract states that you may change Schema in a way that you see fit. I also gave you a rather lenient time frame. 1,000 years should be plenty of time considering your current rate of growth.”

I weighed my options. If I signed this contract, I would become an enemy of Schema. More than likely, it would boot me from the system. That might not even be a concern over the long term since we met Amara. I could hack myself back into the system just as she has. Besides all that, a part of me wanted to fight Schema.

The quarantine was bullshit since it forced us to fight a hopeless battle against Yawm. We had no chance from the start. Schema killed a lot of people with how he handled the tutorial too. If he gave Earth just a ten year notice, Earth would have avoided most of its growing pains. Something that simple would make a night and day kind of difference.

That wasn’t the only problem either. The whole unknown status was a serious point of contention. Torix, Althea, and Kessiah would struggle with their unknown status forever. What Schema did to the remnants was twisted too. Hell, Schema destroyed Hod’s home race for trying to learn a cipher. To my knowledge, they weren’t even a part of the system yet.

The more I thought about it, the more I thought about what I would make different. I mean think about it. Guilds coming in and enslaving entire races didn't seem like the best way of modernizing planets. Why didn't Schema offer lessons and education to new planets before the system activated? Why didn't he at least give everyone an obelisk so they could figure out what was going on beforehand?

With all that in mind, I came to a conclusion. Yawm was probably right about how to handle it. Schema's tutorial and assimilation for new planets was almost certainly hardcoded into the AI. Otherwise it wouldn't be so damn inefficient. That meant the only way of fixing it was going in there and changing the code that made it that way.

Still, having a time limit put on my life was disconcerting to say the least. I also didn't enjoy being forced into bad situations on principle. I put my hands on my hips, a bit disgruntled,

"So if I went out and changed the way Schema assimilates new planets, that would count for this, er, clause?"

Yawm raised both his hands,

"It would. That is the precise kind of change I hoped for when creating that piece of the contract. You remember the problems involved with planetary assimilation as it was recent for your kind. Your perspective gives you clarity. Armed with that clarity, you can advance Schema for the better."

I bit my lip before sighing, "I suppose fighting Schema over the next 1,000 years is better than fighting you right now. I can handle that, I guess...What's the next line of the contract?"

Yawm pointed a finger at the third and last line of the cipher on the stone,

"Dimension-C138 will not serve the will of any Old Ones until this contract is fulfilled."

I reached out a hand to Yawm, "You know you're busting my balls, right?"

Yawm pointed above and behind him, “There are two fates for those that serve the Old Ones. Either you end up turning into something that is unrecognizable from who you were, or-”

Yawm pointed at himself, “You end up hunted like an animal by those that became unrecognizable. I assure you, Harbinger, that is not a fate you want for yourself. That isn’t even the fate you would want for your worst enemy.”

I turned my eye towards the roof, “What if I already have a mission to kill you. What am I supposed to do then?”

Yawm pushed the contract towards me, “You’ve been offered a quest by an Old One. Think of the offer as an initiation into their world. You’ve yet to take it.”

I didn’t think the situation would play out that cleanly. I sighed, staring at the tablet, “Is that it?”

Yawm nodded, “That is all that I require. I believe it’s a lenient request considering your circumstances.”

I scratched the side of my head, “Do you mind if I take a few minutes to think about this?”

Yawm opened a hand towards the ice chair behind me.

“Take your time. This is a life altering decision.”

As I walked over, I loaded up my message towards Torix and the others. I had no intention of taking on commitments like this just to get Yawm out of my hair. It was like jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire. The strategy wasn’t sound.

A chill ran up my spine, however, stopping me from sending the message. I looked back up at Yawm. He was observing me, an eerie nonchalance emanating from him. Once I looked closer, I found no emotions from him. I couldn’t read through his poker face at all, not even 1%. I raised an eyebrow at him, giving him a questioning glance.

Yawm sat into his chair, steepling his fingers,

“I’m just wondering what decision you’ll make. I assure you, regardless of what you decide, I’m more than ready. I will act accordingly.”

He was in complete control, and he knew it. He was stronger, faster, and better at combat than me. His confidence was terrifying. It made me want to send the message and get out of here asap. It made me want to run and hide in a hole.

My gut was telling me that sending the message was a terrible idea though. Up till now though, my gut never betrayed me, so I listened to it. There was something not quite right about how Yawm was sitting. He was expecting something. I couldn’t tell what exactly. After another minute of thinking, something simple snapped into my head.

Yawm was waiting for Ajax to appear so he could capture him.

It all made sense. If anything, Yawm could’ve observed me the entire time I was here. I didn’t know if he had or hadn’t. I didn’t even know if he couldn’t see Schema’s messages as I wrote them. The guy talked to trees and plants. It’s not a large stretch to say he had plants in my room that acted like spies.

Yeah, maybe a bit paranoid of me to think that, but it was definitely possible. I mean, Yawm’s charisma was incredibly high. He could be putting on a false act so I lower my guard. He could be lying about everything, there was no way of me knowing.

The fact I let my guard down so completely was a testament to that. In fact, he reminded me of this one story I read about in history class. I was reading about a German interrogator during WWII. This guy was the best of the best at his craft, squeezing information out of his enemies like no one else. I thought he was a torturer, but no, he killed them with kindness.

He would isolate spies for prolonged periods then talk to them. Apparently he was friendly, funny, and charismatic. He would become their friends while they were in prison, their only human contact. Once they were buttered up, the spies would let the information slip.

This situation with Yawm was eerily similar. The more I thought about it, the more likely it seemed. If anything, I stared at the contract and reviewed it once more. It was

carefully designed. It was just good enough that I could accept it in theory yet just bad enough that I wouldn't.

Yawm knew me pretty well after all. He knew what I would accept and what I wouldn't. I tapped my teeth together, deep in thought. Yawm didn't just know me well, I knew him well too. That was a tool I could use to my advantage. After brainstorming for a bit, I remembered one thing about Yawm I knew for certain. The guy was greedy.

That's why his goals were the way they were. Even after a damn eldritch told him that making an eldritch was impossible, he just scoffed. Amara understood more about the cipher and how it worked. She was the best possible resource for checking how realistic his goals were. Despite all that, Yawm just blew her concerns off.

The reason was because he thought he could have it all. Armed with that realization, I tried a different line of thought. I put myself into Yawm's shoes and wondered what the most he could gain from us was. It wasn't pretty.

If he captured Ajax, he could interrogate the protytian and find the others at our base. He'd capture everyone. He could experiment further with Etorhma's tears on us. He could gain us as his new followers using contracts like the one in front of me. Considering that's how he arrived, it wasn't much of a stretch to guesstimate his goals like this.

Skill gained! Empathy(lvl 1) – By seeing the world through others eyes, you can use their perspective to gain insight. +1% to understanding others emotions and thoughts.

Breakthrough Achieved! Empathy(lvl 1) →(lvl 26)

I didn't let the skill notifications distract me. For Yawm, That was his best case scenario. That was the thing about Yawm that I could use against him. He didn't want a good scenario. He wanted the best scenario.

Just like with the eldritch, he didn't want us to fight them off better. He wanted us to not fight at all. Every solution he thought up was grand, inspiring, but most of all, unrealistic. He was betting that I wouldn't sign this damn contract. He was betting that he would capture Ajax. He was betting that he would make contracts and have us all sign them.

This whole time, he wanted me to believe he was a good guy so that he could get information. He succeeded, but he wouldn't continue succeeding. I stood up, armed with my new awareness. I walked over towards the contract. I pointed at Yawm,

“Do you mind if I add one extra clause to this contract?”

Yawm raised an eyebrow, “I...I suppose you can.”

If anything, I stared at the contract and reviewed it.

It was carefully designed, just good enough that I could accept it in theory yet just bad enough that I wouldn't. Yawm knew me pretty well after all.

Skill learned! Tact(lvl 1) – Some conversations are like surgery. Others use an axe. You use a scalpel. + 1% to handling of delicate situations, especially social ones.

Using my bettered knowledge of the cipher, I carved a few symbols into the stone. It took about half an hour, but I got what I wanted onto the tablet. I pointed at it,

“Do you want to read this?”

Yawm stood, walking over,

“Of course.”

I pointed at the beginning of the clause, “Neither Dimension-C138 or Yawm of Flesh will alter this contract in anyway once it has been signed. This will be the first and final contract between Dimension-C138 or Yawm of Flesh. No more contracts will be allowed between them.”

Yawm raised his head, tapping his finger over the last clause, “Why did you add this final piece?”

I opened a hand to Yawm, “Because I didn't want anymore contracts after this one.”

Yawm shook his head, “You honestly believe you’re in a position to make demands of me? You sincerely believe that?”

There it was. Yawm was leaking out from under his mask, even if only a little.

I nodded. “No, but I think you’re the kind of person to accept requests like this. You’re not a bad guy after all. It isn’t like I’m asking you to never make a contract with anyone again, just contracts between me and you. That’s all.”

Breakthrough Achieved! Tact(lvl 1)→(lvl 26)

Skill Gained! Deception(lvl 1) – Those talented in lying know that the best lies are simply half truths. +1% to your likelihood of deceiving someone.

Breakthrough achieved! Deception(lvl 1) →(lvl 126)

Yawm tapped his finger against the stone. The gears in his mind turning. For once, he wasn’t in control. I was. Yawm was surprised, but he hid the emotion completely. That’s how I knew he was acting, however.

In this situation, he should be responding with some emotion. Curiosity, anger, perhaps even shock, it didn’t matter what emotion he felt. He didn’t have a single exposed feeling, meaning he was hiding them. His emotions were almost always delayed, meaning they were planted for a certain response.

In this case, he was still trying to keep up the nice guy act. When he did meet my eye, he raised an eyebrow, “Why wouldn’t you want another contract between us?”

I pounded my hand against my chest, “Because we’re warriors and friends. We don’t need contracts between us. Besides, this is probably going to boot my ass from Schema’s system anyways. We won’t be enemies then.”

Yawm nodded, “That’s very true...This version of the contract is acceptable then. I do hope this agreement doesn’t create bad blood between us. It’s a means of guiding you in a direction while ensuring I’m not killed. Given your undeniable potential, I’m sure you understand.”

I raised a hand, “Yeah, it’s not that big a deal regardless. It’s more of a timeline for what I had planned anyway.”

What I said was true to some degree. I did plan on resisting Schema at some point. A 1,000 years was more than enough time for fighting him thanks to the cipher on my armor. Once I was finished giving Schema a few tweaks, I’d give Yawm a makeover. I’d make sure it was with my fists though.

I quelled that bit of anger as I pointed at the contract, “How do we sign it?”

Yawm pressed a finger against the cipher, creating a long line, “On this line, you create a signature mark that represents you. The marking will reflect your name written in the cipher.”

When I looked at the contract, what he said felt right. I grasped it on an intuitive level. It’s not that I could tell if he was lying. I could tell he couldn’t be lying. I leaned over the contract, “Can you give me an example?”

“Of course.”

Over the next hour, Yawm etched in his name onto the contract. As he carved, it the air around his crackled many times, letting him feed mana into the contract. It was enough mana to blow Springfield off the map in his hands . Once he finished the marking, I had to admit it. His etching really did reflect him.

The mark was strong like steel and explosive like fire. It was gnarled up, unafraid and unashamed of its own inner demons. It was an inexhaustible curiosity mixed with a bloodthirsty hunger for change. It was deceptively light yet undeniably heavy, like iron in your hand. It represented a misguided force of entropy, dead set on changing the world. It was Yawm.

I walked up, Yawm looking at me,

“Are you certain you’ll take the contract as it is?”

“What made you think I’d have any doubts?”

“Even I have doubts about something this final, yet it seems like the only nonviolent compromise.”

I raised an eyebrow, “What will the contract even do exactly?”

Yawm pointed all around us, “The cipher rewrites the space we inhabit. In this case, this tablet will enforce itself in the same manner. Whatever space that is considered us will be altered if we fail the contract. Other than that, nothing will change besides whats mentioned on the contract.”

I leaned against the ice table in front of me, staring at the contract, “So it works like anything else made from the cipher. The bigger the change, the more mana needed. Efficiency is also very important for it as well.”

Yawm took a step back from the contract, “It might take a tremendous amount of time for you to fully charge it in fact. It shouldn’t be too strenuous considering your circumstances....I will admit, however, you seemed like someone who’d rather not be controlled. I didn’t anticipate you to agree to the contract so easily.”

I began my marking, “Eh, we’ll just have to see how it plays out in the long run. A thousand years is a long damn time to make something happen.”

Yawm crossed his arms, “How well I know.”

Unlike Yawm, I carved my marking into my grimoire. As I carved my marking, my mana siphoned into the marking like a drain. It wasn’t as much as I imagined it would be though. Since discovering the cipher, I learned quite a bit about it. That allowed me to adjust my carving for efficiency.

I added extra details, mentioning the finer details of who I was. I didn’t just stop along general guidelines, I dug deep into my history. Where I came from, what I’d done, and who I wanted to be, it was all there. It was fun, kind of like writing an autobiography. When I finished the marking, it wasn’t what I expected.

The mark was like metal, but it was flexible as air. It could bend and warp with ease. It made the inscription malleable yet unbreakable at the same time. There was potential in the marking as well, like it wasn't quite finished. In a way, that seemed just right for me. I wasn't quite finished either. There was a lot left I planned on doing.

And like that, I finished marking it down. After ten more minutes of giving the marking mana, the contract clicked into place. Something shifted, like a gear clicking into place. After that, there was nothing new. For something that sounded like a life or death ultimatum, it didn't have much shock and awe.

Life Oath accepted! You have now been contracted by Yawm of Flesh to alter Schema's baseline programming. If alterations aren't made within 1,000 Earth years, Dimension-C138 will disintegrate into the space of dimension-C137.

You have broken one of the primary tenants of Schema's system. Sentient rights have been revoked. Leveling and further data uploads are hereby locked.

You have been exiled.

Chapter 128: Fissures Form

I sighed. Yawm walked over,

“What is it?”

I let him see the screen. Yawm scoffed,

“I wouldn't worry about your exile. We have someone who can reconnect us to the system.”

I nodded, “Let's hope so.”

As I said that, the marble tablet disintegrated in a flash of white fire, like a firecracker burning. Yawm put his hands on his hips, looking at where the tablet was,

“Then that settles that. It’s time we learn some of the cipher’s secrets from Amara, don’t you think?”

I shrugged, “I guess so. Lead on.”

We walked towards Amara, I wasn’t frustrated. I didn’t have time for frustration. I had to learn the cipher with everything I had now. If Schema’s system was taken away, then I’d find another way of fighting Yawm.

By the time we reached Amara’s personal library, I was pumped. Yawm glanced at me,

“You seem revitalized. I anticipated a fit perhaps at signing the contract, even if it was voluntary.”

I raised a hand, “You’re an example of just how strong someone can get without Schema’s system. There’s no real reason to be mortified. It just means I have to focus on something else for progress.”

Yawm knocked on Amara’s door, “I didn’t anticipate you bouncing back quite so quickly from such a setback.”

I looked at the opening door, “It’s just another fight. That’s all.”

Keeja opened the door into Amara’s room. Yawm leaned back, surprise splashing across his face, “Keeja, why are you opening the door and not Amara...better yet, why are you here at all?”

Keeja bowed to Yawm, “She asked for me to serve her tea and turn the pages as she read.”

Yawm nodded, “Hmmm, an interesting request. It’s good to she’s making herself comfortable.” Yawm looked up towards Amara who was lounging on a leather chaise lounge. A stack of books were spread beside her as she read, both her hands scanning across the pages. She raised one hand, looking towards us,

“So you both have come back for what I know?”

Keeja stepped out of our way, letting us walk into the bedroom and library. Every wall was a bookshelf, and she separated her room with them. On one side, the leather chaise lounge let her relax as she read. On the other, her bed was hidden behind a bookcase that acted as a separator for the room.

That was what was normal about the room. What made it extraordinary were the jellyfish. They floated along the air, like floating candles. They added an otherworldly ambiance to the room.

“Why didn’t I get these jellyfish in my room?”

Yawm walked up to Amara, “You never asked for them. I can have them added if you’d like.”

I shook my head, “Naw, I was just a little jelly is all.”

I know, that one was pretty bad. That’s how you know a pun is good though. If it makes everyone else wince, then you can laugh like an evil mastermind afterwards.

Yawm turned towards me along with Amara. Amara tilted her hand which tilted her eye,

“Jelly? Is that a human phrase I don’t understand.”

This was where the pun gets particularly good. If a pun is like stabbing someone with a dagger, explaining one was giving that dagger a twist. Since Amara asked, I couldn’t help but oblige,

“See, I mean jelly as in jealous. I said it like that bec-”

Yawm raised his hands, “Don’t teach her about that evil. Now back to the matter at hand.”

Amara turned her hand towards him, looking at Yawm. I laughed, “Hah. Nice one.”

Yawm shook his head, flabbergasted for a second. He raised his hands, looking at them,

“I...I’ve been infected.”

Yawm lowered his hands, laughing with me for a moment. Amara stared at us both with abject confusion. I walked up, waving off her curiosity,

“It was an inside joke, sorta. Anyways, do you have some time to teach us about the cipher?”

She nodded, standing up from her reading area. A second later, Yawm spawned ice chairs behind us and whipped out two marble plates. I picked mine up, “Damn, you’ve been fancying marble lately.”

Yawm nodded, “I don’t understand my desire to see it either, but it is so.”

Amara walked in front of us, almost like a lost puppy. Everything was happening pretty fast, so I cut her some slack to get her bearings. Yawm didn’t.

He raised a hand at her, “Here is a board.” A thin sheet of sky blue crystal formed behind her. It thickened, the material expanding to the sound of cracking ice. Amara looked between us. She pointed at the board,

“I can write on this?”

Yawm nodded, “Do so.”

She turned towards the board, then back at us. That’s when she began her lecture, and what a lecture it was. If I had to describe it in three words, they’d be cryptic, confusing, and complex. Everything she said made the cipher harder to understand rather than easier.

It was something I couldn’t quite put my finger on. It almost felt like she was misleading us, but I doubted it. Learning the dimensional cipher was a massive

undertaking. It wasn't something easy to teach, and she could just be an awful teacher. Hell, it could be that she was eldritch.

Regardless, after three hours of complete nonsense, Yawm stood up,

“That will be all for me until later. I appreciate your efforts at transferring knowledge, but my frustration has reached a boiling point. I'll need some time to decompress.”

Amara reached out her hands, “I meant to unveil you both. My words, if they puzzle you, then I'm puzzling.”

There was a steady fear lining her words. Yawm waved a hand at her, “There's no reason to apologize. This will take time and effort, that's all.” He sighed, “I was hoping for a more instantaneous benefit. Having my hopes dashed feels unpleasant, but I will persevere.”

He turned towards me, “Are you exhausted as well?”

I shook my head, “Eh, it's less frustrating than staring at a blank page and not knowing where to start.”

He raised his hands, “Then you may both continue. I'll self study for a while. You both enjoy this...lecture, we'll call it.”

Yawm walked out of the room. As he did Amara raised her eyes towards me, “Are you certain you want to continue this?”

Her black hair moved out from over her face. It twitched around, seemingly at random. Her creepy mouth opened, and she rubbed her teeth together. It sounded like a watch's hand ticking down the seconds. A second later, she mouthed her words without saying anything. I managed to read her lips,

‘Do not react.’

Like she said, I didn't react. Instead, I stood up from my chair,

“It’s ok if you don’t want to teach me. I get it. Take some time, plan your next lesson, and-”

48##\$%SystemError#%*#)%\$#

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm given admittance into sub-system C-137 Fringe Walker clearance. Access to cipher enhancements, learning enhancements, and the obelisk mainframe given. Classes and guild rights are reinstated. Pardoning of bounties lays outside the clearance of Admin M-Y-444.

Exile terminated.

Chapter 129: A Chance

I stopped my face from curling up like a raisin, but it was a feat of sheer willpower. I paused, lost for words as I stared at her. Once I got my bearings, I finished what I was saying,

“Alright Amara, fine, I’ll...leave.”

I turned and walked out of the room, holding in my shock. I had no idea Amara was that powerful. Even Yawm would be blown back by the tools she had at her disposal. She connected me to the system in seconds. The message even mentioned she was an admin. I thought Overseers were admins.

Those and many more questions swam in my head as I walked back to my room. It was right down the hallway, so I reached it in seconds. Once there, I sat down on my bed and opened my status.

Rebooting system details for Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm.

Gathering details...Assessing analytics...Gathering internal details of trees, attributes, and numerical scaling...System assessed. Status now available for viewing.

Level 3,126

Strength – 2,677 | Constitution – 4,175 | Endurance – 15,831

Dexterity – 949.1 | Willpower – 7,673 | Intelligence – 2,614

Charisma – 233.3 | Luck – 808.2 | Perception – 354.7

Health: 1.39 Million/1.39 Million

Health Regen: 1.60 Million/min or 26,669/sec

Stamina: 802,172/802/172 | Stamina Regen: 7,361/sec

Living Dimension: 0.34 Trillion/4.30 Trillion

Mass: 106,315 pounds(48,323 kilos~)

Damage Res – 98.5% | Dimensional Res – 49.25%

Phys Dam Bonus – 32,978% | Damage Bonus – 40%

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

The stats were back up, along with my tree menus. It was a thing of beauty. A second later, a message came from Amara.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – We'll speak through these messages.

I remembered a simple fact about the system that would help us out.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – You can send messages with a thought. You don't have to type it out like you did with your hair. You're more stealthy that way, if you're trying to be stealthy that is.

It took a minute before she answered.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – I will do so from now on. It's good you understand the necessity for secrecy.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Why did you let me back into the system and why are you helping me?

This message took a few minutes.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Keeja told me about what Yawm has done. He is an immense evil, even for we eldritch. I also researched him using the obelisk and found out that the world eater isn't as kind as he pretends he is. He even hid notes in the research logs he gave me access to.

I am new to this world and I am eldritch, but the demon lying under his skin is easily seen. It's hungry, an ego that happies itself by controlling and deforming others. I despise the way he hides behind pretty words, either that or he simply kills for silence.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Well, it's good that you figured that out. Still though, how do you even know I'm against Yawm?

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – It took a while before I could discover some method of communicating with you in the open. You were lying to Yawm when we first met. After a few hours, I discovered that you used your abnormal qualities to deceive him. Clever, but doomed for failure in the end.

I verified it by mentioning your level whenever you were charging your mana. After the fact, I planted a spell on you during the height of your mana generation. It disguised the weak listening spell to perfection, as I planned it would.

After that, I listened in on your 'contract' with Yawm. He threatened you into joining his cause. I know why he did, and I will share my judgements with you.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Damn...I never even felt it. I'm the one who's impressed now. Still, I'm wondering why you thought to fight against Yawm. You have a lot of know how that he doesn't. You could use that for quite a few advantages. I'm not in the same position to give you stuff.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Yawm's favor is like the favor of an Old One. You're still nothing more than meat to them. He has used many eldritch for his own gain before. Look at the eldritch chained to him that manifest around us. They are nothing more than props and experimental fodder. He reminds me of the eldritch that parade around as angels and demons.

They are all evil, from Gabriel to Michael. Yawm would rank among the worst of them, if he were classified as such. To trust him is to trust one that is worse than Lucifer. It's more than foolish. It's willful ignorance.

What I wonder is how will you defeat that abomination of cipher and skin. What makes you imagine you could? His inscriptions that smother his body are beyond me, their complexity unknowable. It was given by gods and horrors beyond us. He is strength and he is speed. He'll crush us under his heel as we are.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – I can't trust you enough to tell you anything. You're the reason I was locked into this damn contract to begin with. Why in the hell should I help you?

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – I gave you back your access the moment I could safely do so. I cannot cancel that contract. I could think of no other way to learn of your integrity. With your admission to Yawm, I verified it. You are someone who can be trusted.

You're just trying to get rid of him before he destroys you and your home. We are the same. He will rip my mind apart, lobotomizing me before using my flesh as fuel for his delusions. Do want to share the same fate? If not, then put your trust in me as I've put my trust in you. Otherwise we will both be devoured.

I scratched the side of my head, a bit disgruntled at my situation. After a bit of thought, I decided to at least try this out. To Amara, I was the lesser of two evils. She was taking one hell of a risk telling me all this. If I wasn't willing to at least put something on the line, then I'd never get anywhere versus Yawm.

He was waiting for me to fuck up and get Ajax here. If I didn't do something crazy, then Amara was right. Yawm would turn me into his next follower at this rate.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Just know that if you give this information to Yawm, we're both fucked.

Remember those inscriptions on my forearms? I can channel mana into them to increase my strength. With enough time, I might have been able to kill Yawm even without the system's help. I was biding time so that Yawm wouldn't destroy Earth. Yenno, my home world.

During that contract, Yawm tried taking away my way of getting stronger. He missed these inscriptions on my armor because he didn't know about them. Besides for that, I can eat eldritch and turn the energy into enhancements. Now that I have the system, I can gain experience for level ups like normal. That's all I got for now.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Feeding your armor with mana...Do you know a way that I can share my mana with yours? I know my mana generation pales compared with yours, but it will help accelerate your growth.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – I do know a way of doing it. I'm surprised you're willing to though.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – You're not as psychotic as that mongrel is. Just as well, I saw his personally made inscriptions. Though he may act as though he knows the cipher well, he has no talent for it. All of his most powerful inscriptions are from something else altogether.

We can take advantage of his ignorance. I already gave him a vague, nonsensical gibberish for a lesson earlier. He couldn't even tell that I was leading him into dead ends.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Yawm did mention getting his inscriptions from missions with Etorhma. I'm starting to piece things together. I remember showing him my own carvings when we first met. I expected him to bash on them. He was surprised by the quality of my technique even though I just learned how to make them. That's not what I expected at all.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – We found the chink in his armor. Know we must dig our knife deep into the opening and twist. Give me whatever it is I need to send you my mana, but do it inconspicuously.

I can give you lessons about the cipher over this messaging system as well. A better inscription should result in better enhancements for your armor. If you can come up with a way of leveling up, then it should only take a few years at most to overcome him.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Sounds good. Besides for that, we might be able to sneak you some of Etorhma's tears. They are from an Old One who gave Yawm the inscriptions on his skin. According to Yawm, they had no negative effects on eldritch.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – Words from him mean little.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – True. I'll try to handle it then. I'll see if I can't get him to help us out without meaning too either. I'll also send you an invite into my guild. It will give you some extra attributes, making you a bit more durable.

We'll have to pinch pennies if we're going to beat Yawm's ass.

Amara, the Lost One(Time: Undefined) – We begin work immediately. Good fortune in your hunt, and may you never be hungry.

Dimension-C138, Harbinger of Cataclysm(Time: Undefined) – Uh...yeah, sure. Same for you.

I closed the mission log and stood up from my bed, a sense of invigoration pumping through me. I shook my head and slapped my hands together, a renewed sense of purpose coming in. It was pure insanity. One second a demonic bastard forced me into a life oath I can't break. The next, a tech eldritch broke me back into the system.

That's life though. I cracked my neck then rolled my shoulders. I paced back and forth in my room, thinking for about fifteen minutes. I devised a nefarious plot for Yawm. I'd make him help me without him even knowing it. That was the plan at least.

I walked out of my room, pacing down the luminescent hallway. Eldritch darted away from me as I walked towards Yawm's study, knocking on the door. I took a deep breath before Yawm beckoned me in, papers spread all over his desk. As usual, he hadn't made any progress with his cipher.

I didn't rub it in though,

"Yo Yawm, Do you mind if I kill a few of the eldritch outside?"

He raised an eyebrow, "What for exactly?"

I shrugged, "I need to unload some steam. I can't study all day. It gets so damn dull."

I wasn't lying for the most part. Studying for weeks on end without doing anything else was tedious as watching paint dry. Yawm cupped his chin, feeling the same way. He gestured outside,

"Avoid the eldritch in the lake if you can. They are for our visual splendor after all. The eldritch above and below that should suffice?"

I nodded, "Yeah. I personally prefer crushing the abstractions, if you wouldn't mind."

Yawm rubbed his hands together, "They do pulp rather nicely, don't they?"

I grinned, "At least someone gets me."

Yawm shooed me off with a hand, "Then go have fun. I'll be in here, enjoying my own self imposed drudgery."

I left the room and reached the exit of Yawm's palace. It was a doorway with a bubble outside of the doorway. When I opened the door, there was a pocket of air keeping the ocean outside. I jumped, taking a deep breath before the water surrounded me.

Beneath the murky water, my eyesight was pristine. I landed on the clear crystal lining the bottom of the lake. I sprinted up the edge, leaping out of the lake with an explosive plume of water following me. Waves rippled across the water before I neared the edge of Yawm's rift.

Here the floating islands and chunks of suspended skyscraper darted the landscape. Innumerable Abstractions sat upon the ledges of these islands. Their angular, geometric bodies stuck out like a sore thumb. Their awkward, unnatural twitching made them seem like insects of a hive mind.

As I paced closer, they reacted like hornets guarding their nest. Beneath me, the solar beetles crawled out from their nests underground. Since the abstractions could enhance the levels of enemies, I'd avoid them until they were worth killing. Once that happened, I'd slaughter the whole group.

As I hoped, the abstractions circled around me, generating energy. The beetles evolved before my eyes. Their armor thickened. They molted from their old shells, their size too large for their old carapaces. I grinned at the sight while cracking my knuckles. For the first time in a long time, I'd be able to cut loose.

This was going to be fun.

Chapter 130: Hunter of Many

The insects neared me, their shining mandibles clapping with enough power to split cars apart. It wouldn't even hurt me, but I decided on practicing my skills. I leapt, dodged, and dashed between the insects. Kinetic Leviathan throttled them, pulling them off balance. Combined with my speed, they couldn't even touch me.

The unique skill was pretty damn good. If I could actually outweigh Yawm by a decent amount, it would be invaluable against him. So good that I experimented on Gorger of Mana with Force of Nature.

Enhancing a skill was simple so far. I just needed to use Force of Nature to augment a different unique skill. It was an intuitive, natural process. In my eyes, augmenting Gorger of Mana would be much the same way. Since Force of Nature revolved around close combat, telekinesis, and gravity, mixing it would be simple.

While dodging the beetles, I pushed and kicked off of them at times. During these light touches, I pulled them towards me with gravity wells. I would puncture them with sharpened spines of my armor. Before I pushed off them, I would stab my armor inside and drain what I could.

After a few hours of practicing this, I got a good handle on it. The solar beetles leveled up along with me, letting the challenge remain constant. It was invigorating and fun for many reasons. These beetles once posed a serious challenge for me. Now they were mere fodder.

I could've crushed them all in seconds. Event Horizon would drain their souls. My fists would crush them to powder. Their teeth and claws would shatter against my skin. With my magic, I could set them floating helplessly off the ground. Seeing my progress was a solid moral boost.

Against Yawm it was different. We were so far apart that I couldn't even see my progress. These beetles were different. They crumbled with ease. After a while, I wondered why Gorger of Mana wasn't being enhanced by Force of Nature. I was shifting with fluidity and even grace. I was well past the point of augmenting.

My status disagreed with my sentiment. Several more hours passed before I began thinking skills couldn't be enhanced anymore. I was a renegade of Schema's. It didn't surprise me that a few things didn't work right. Even if that was the case, learning all this would help me in the long run.

I'd just have to do it the good old fashioned way. I kept engaged and involved with what I was doing, ensuring a steady progress. As I did, I fell into a rhythm, a sense of ease falling over me. It was like breathing or counting your steps as you run. If you think about it, it reminded me of running.

As a baby, humans can't even crawl. The idea of running is daunting to say the least. As we progress, we gain finer control of complex movements. Eventually it culminates in dextrous and difficult activities. The skills in Schema's system were similar. They combined as I learned them, turning into tasks just like walking or jumping.

In this case, it was fun to just get lost in the process. I theorycrafted with the cipher for weeks on end. Getting some quality time killing eldritch was like ice cold water on a hot summer day. Damn it was refreshing compared with sitting down, hunched over a book for hours.

For that reason, I don't know exactly how long I spent dodging beetles. I stopped every few hours, getting some distance between me and them to chug some rations. After that, I jumped right back into the thick of it. Once the beetles were worth killing, I turned around towards them.

As they evolved, they grew ugly. Their shells thickened until they looked like shambling chunks of yellow pavement. Their mobility was lessened, interfering with their sleek, aerodynamic shells of before. This rendered them unable to fly anymore. What they lacked in mobility, they gained even more in strength.

Imagine you injected a vial of steroids into a beetle and it swelled up. Yeah, combine that with a few spikes and you had these new solar beetles. Their disorientation tactic suffered from this as well, making their previous light display far less blinding. With Restless Senses on high alert, I hardly noticed when I closed my eyes for it.

The abstractions were frenzied, their abstract forms shivering with energy. The entire time I avoided the eldritch, their tornado of energy condensed. It was a physical wall of lightning at this point. The energy looked delicious, so I reached out with Event Horizon.

I stretched the aura out to its fullest extent, a cascade of mana coming in. It was like standing under the force of a waterfall. It converted straight into my cipher, the rune devouring the mana with hunger. I no longer dodged the beetles as I passed them. I let my armor kill them for me.

Tendrils of it shot outward, puncturing through their hard shells. As solid as their shells were, my armor skin made their hide seem soft. These armored spines stole their life force, taking their mana from them as I passed by. As I gained more and more control of that function, I used my other skills with Gorgon of Mana.

With my streams of gravity, I held beetles in place, preventing them from escaping. With my enhanced senses, I dodged them, letting my armor rip and tear at all angles. I was a ball of hungry spines, puncturing them with needles that sucked out their mana and health. When surrounded, I was a nightmare to deal with.

I culled the horde with a steady, slow pace. Not even a drop of mana was wasted. I wrung them dry, like squeezing blood from a stone. If they clamped their mandibles on

me, I detonated my runes in timed bursts. This gave me the strength to tear their teeth apart.

The abstractions even dove at me from above. They were mana sponges, letting me absorb their vitality. It was satisfying because I was getting the most out of the monsters. At the same time, it was eerie. Why? Because it was something that Yawm would've done.

These eldritch were out to kill me though, and they wouldn't hesitate to do the same to me. They weren't intelligent either. I wouldn't do something like this to a crowd of people for instance. Maybe I would though, given the right circumstances.

Enough with ethical dilemmas. I finished the last of the high leveled beetles, enjoying a bit of silence. I invested all my excess points into endurance, handling the issue with little thought. After that, I ate, exploded out a shit real fast, then jumped right back into action.

That's how literal days passed before I even thought of stopping. Before I knew it, I wasn't even thinking about using Gorger of Mana with Kinetic Leviathan. It all just clicked. Once the entire process grew a bit tedious, I finished off the last bit and ran back to Yawm's.

As I did, I jumped from the side of a skyscraper. I landed onto a mini-van, my feet slicing through it with ease. I burrowed into the ground before catapulting myself from the earth. I landed on the ground, running out my momentum. As I did, a notification appeared.

Mythical Skill learned! The unique skills, Kinetic Leviathan, Restless Senses, and Gorger of Mana all combine into Unescapable Hunger! Half of unearned skills are rewarded as tree points: 68 tree points.

Skill augmented! Force of Nature enhances the mythical skill Unescapable Hunger, evolving it into Hunter of Many! The new skill retains its previous skill value.

Hunter of Many(lvl 1) – Your pursuit is unending. Your hunger is everlasting. Your jaws are wide and your teeth unseen. Your bite is horror for those that see it. Your bite is death for those that feel it. The effects are as follows:

Enhances your manipulation of telekinesis and gravity on yourself and enemies. This effect does not apply to allies. Ability to discover living beings and treasure is enhanced. Draining abilities no longer require a ramp up time and drain more health. Draining effects don't deal more damage, they convert more damage into health.

A wild grin spread over my face. I didn't expect a new mythical skill like this, but it was always welcome. The formatting of the skill was better too, giving me a clearer idea of what the skill does. What the skill did was pretty damn good too, giving me a plethora of useful bonuses.

Speaking of bonuses, I opened my status screen. I gained 340 levels in total over about three days of hardcore training. It probably would take exponentially longer to gain levels since the beetles stalled out at around level 2,500. Any higher than that took minutes for them to gain a single level.

That may not sound like much, but when you're thinking of adding a thousand more levels, time adds up fast. Before closing my status, I checked out my augmentations on my armor. They were starting to make a difference.

[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

+360 Endurance

+36% to effect of legacies

+180 Willpower

+18% to internal motivation]

I also opened up my legendary skill, Force of Nature to check out the bonuses again.

Force of Nature(lvl 1,011) – 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: 100 Strength, 100 Dexterity, 40 Constitution, 40 intelligence, 20 Perception. +10 to all attributes for 1,000 in a legendary skill.

Ability Bonus: 100%

Mana Cost Reduction: 20%

This reminded me why I focused on skills instead of my cipher. The cipher might pay off in the long run, but I gotta survive today before I survive tomorrow. I needed Amara's help to really take advantage of the cipher. With her giving me a boost, it might not even be a full year before I can take on Yawm.

Amara already started the process. Despite being an eldritch, she was a trooper. She sent me a dozen messages during my training session. I skimmed through them as I fought, but none of them were urgent. They were basically just telling me how I should write in the cipher.

I would read them in detail once I got back. Before I did get back though, I invested all my attribute points into endurance. I selected finalize, and the jolt rippled through my skin and veins. The cells in my muscle multiplied, condensing till they were hard as iron. Hell, they were probably already as hard as iron. It was hard to tell at this point.

Mana flooded my system too, the energy dense enough to feel liquid. As I increased the flow of mana into my cipher, I passed a threshold. I channeled more mana than during the display with Yawm. The next time I trained like this, I would invest my levels as I went.

It may have resulted in only one more incarnation of the cipher, but that might make the difference later on. Before checking out the changes on my character screen, I checked out my tree menu. I put all my points into my current tree, Immense, and a notification appeared. I finally got enough points for it.

You are a behemoth with flesh of metal and blood of iron. They try and shatter your skin. Your laugh echoes over the sound of their fire and fury, like an omen. They feel your voice in their bones. Immense unlocked!(Tier 1) 5% of your total mass is added to your physical bonus damage. Unlocks the unique skill, Mass Manipulation.

Unique unique skill unlocked! Mass Manipulation!

Mass Manipulation(lvl 1) – Your will warps matter in its wake. Allows the user to increase or decrease the density of mass. Level of control varies by level.

Whenever the notification sounded, there was a flood of strength. I didn't think 5% of my mass would be that big a deal, but it was a colossal increase. It overwhelmed me, like adrenaline flowing into my veins.

I grinned, my hands clasping into fists. My arms thickened. My back broadened. I shifted my toes in my armored boots. They let out echoes, like hammers smashing against metal. I gripped my hands together, squeezing them with all my might. My armor bent under my grasp.

I laughed, relishing in the sudden explosion of vigor. A couple more ranks in immense and I might even be stronger than Yawm. With that fervent excitement, I checked out my character screen.

Level 3,466

Strength – 3,010 | Constitution – 4,720 | Endurance – 18,336

Dexterity – 1,119 | Willpower – 9,441 | Intelligence – 3,207

Charisma – 297.5 | Luck – 996 | Perception – 435.7

Health: 1.78 Million/1.78 Million

Health Regen: 2.10 Million/min or 34,957/sec

Stamina: 1,066,041/1,066,041 | Stamina Regen: 16,301/sec

Living Dimension: 0.32 Trillion/4.30 Trillion

Mass: 120,688 pounds(54,858 kilos~) | Height: 9'7(2.9 meters)

Damage Res – 98.5% | Dimensional Res – 49.25%

Phys Dam Bonus – 58,247% | Damage Bonus – 40%

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

I shook my head for a moment, flabbergasted at my health regen. It was something else altogether. The other dramatic increase was in my physical damage bonus. After crunching a few numbers, I understood why.

Immense gave me around 6,000% more physical damage. Combine that with my three times multiplier for the stat, and the difference was, well, immense. Knowing all that, I cracked my knuckles while walking towards Yawm's palace. A realization stunned me.

I was taller.

It wasn't a dramatic difference, but Yawm would notice. That would make him suspicious. When Yawm was suspicious, he made people sign contracts or worse. I sighed, a lump of frustration welling up. My eyes widened as I remembered the second part of the skill tree.

I gained a unique skill called Mass Manipulation. I reached out a hand, trying to condense myself. A few seconds later, an odd sensation crossed up my hand. It was like banging my ulnar nerve, sending pins and needles up my hand. There was no visual difference in my arm, but the sensation was distinct.

I reached out, amplifying that sensation in my arm. As I did, the sensation expanded up my arm and into my shoulder. I grit my teeth, hardening my mind. There wasn't time to spend learning this skill. I needed proficiency in it, enough that I wouldn't even notice it being on.

I turned around, walking back towards the beetles. I sure as hell didn't feel like fighting them again, but I had to hide myself somehow. It would take at least a few hours of messing with this skill before I had it down enough to keep myself smaller.

Just like that, I found some more damn beetles and started the chase once more. The abstractions circled me as I honed in on densifying myself. It sounds as hard as it was. The pins and needles faded with time at least. As I leveled the skill, the difficulty of it faded, letting me get the hang of it.

It helped that Hunter of Many made dodging the beetles a breeze. I kept sapping the poor beetles until I leveled Mass Manipulation to 15. Once that was done, I reached out with Event Horizon. Something I noted was that it wasn't working like before. It didn't drain half the damage it dealt.

It drained more.

That's when it clicked. Hunter of Many enhanced draining effects. That included Event Horizon. When I opened up my status, I couldn't find an exact value per say. It was enough to notice the difference at least.

So I closed my status and finished off the last fleet of beetles. They were all level 1,500 or so. Even after killing a hundred of them, I only gained a paltry for levels. It would be slow going for the levels now. At least Mass Manipulation let me disguise my gains from Yawm. That enabled me to pull this whole plan off.

With all that finished, I invested my attribute points and headed back to Yawm. By the time I reached his ice castle, the sun was setting. It was hard keeping track of time since I didn't sleep anymore. I mean life was just one long day. Without all the willpower, I wouldn't be able to take it.

But I did have all that nifty willpower, so I put it to good use. I swam through the ocean, manipulating my body with gravity wells. I remember the process being demanding and difficult. Now it was easy as blinking.

I floated into the air bubble on the far side of the pale fortress. I walked through the doors, a bit of water dripping off my armor. I stepped forwards, towards my room. As I

passed by Amara's room, Yawm walked out. He sighed, his lumbering shoulders wider than a fridge.

"Ah, it's good you're back Daniel."

I raised a hand, "It's good to be back. I got caught up in the whole process."

"Hah hah, it's easy to do." Yawm crossed his arms and leaned against the doorway. "I just finished a lesson with Amara. It wasn't particularly helpful."

"Heh, she's by no means a natural teacher. At least from what I've garnered from her."

Yawm nodded, "My sentiment is the same." He squinted at me,

"Wait a moment...are you...shorter?"