

Accepting a Class from a System can feel like getting owned, with everything you do now influenced by a governing structure a new guideline for your personal reality. But it can also be like having your interests protected against powers you previously couldn't hope to match.

Those of you who crossed over into dystopias know what I'm talking about. No choice. No chance. Not until you finally got an offer of power to change everything.

Personal agency is an easy thing to sell when you never had it in the first place.

-The Trespasser's Compendium

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Classed (III)

Entering Path of Pride...

Integrating Class into System...

Warning: Unable to Integrate Class—>Source Corruption has unmade Class

Beginning System Ascension

>Generating [Gate] 1

Wei triggered his **Lesser Hollow Mind** the moment they staggered through the portal. He felt his broken body slowly knit together as his mind drifted into a trance of passive meditation. His thoughts slowed, and the pain dulled. Around him, he felt essence clench at him, tried to burrow and settle beneath his bones, but the powers of hell dissolved against his System.

Manifestations of gold and brilliance broke against the Source enwreathing him, and he was like a spot of coldness at the center of an inferno.

The same was not so for Ellena, for beside him, her being began to shift and change once more. Amber bathed her body, wrapped her in a building glow. Her strides grew stronger, and a gasp escaped her voice. The world around them was blinding, and Wei couldn't even tell what he was walking on or where they were heading.

The Knight of Lust had not pursued them. Still incapacitated, the young master assumed. Good. He needed his adversary to stay down for as long as she could.

Mepheleon had not lied. This was a threat beyond him.

For now.

He was about to embark on his System Ascension. From with, pulsing ripples of monochrome swirled and splashed, building in intensity with each passing second. It was as if a force was about to hatch free from his chest.

"Wei," Agnesia groaned, her voice hoarse with effort and strain. "I feel... I *feel*..." She gasped. Her strides were growing faster, but she sounded hysterical. Through the searing radiance, her tainted eyes were like dark beads.

"We keep going," Wei said, hobbling as fast as he could. While his mangled leg worked to reassemble itself, he began to shift his weight off the older woman, lessening her burden. But from within her, he felt a shifting, a surge of intrusive energies. Suddenly, the flooding powers of hell detonated out from Ellena and Wei found himself tossed aside. As he rolled, he saw blood erupting free from under her flesh. Wings of black ichor extended from her back, and they materialized as six transparent flaps, each flat and transparent, congealing together to form a window into another place.

Wei beheld a portal made from darkened blood, and through its surface, he saw the murky visage of a woman impaled by a silver blade, trapped upon a scab-made through. A pale circlet of pointed teeth were fused deep into her skull, and she sat slouched, blood gushing free from her chest like an endless river. The same blood shivered across the surrounding room and flowed outward into Ellena as well, becoming strings to manipulate her person.

The Dying Queen: Lv. [Unknown]

Slowly, the Dying Queen looked upon Wei, and he felt a shudder run through his System.

System host detected

The young master swallowed. He could feel a subtle power lurking within the Dying Queen—a power that dwarfed the Knight of Lust. Hers was domination and contamination, easily allowing herself to meld and corrupt. Then, the Dying Queen herself opened her eyes and gazed upon Wei. He saw in those dark pits a cold pity and a yearning. A sorrow.

"Join us," the Dying Queen said, reaching out for him. *"Join us. You need not be alone at the end. You need not be alone before the passing of your life. You need not be alone. Life need not end. Join us. Give yourself to me and see yourself prevented from crossing over into that long abyss thereafter. Join me. It is cold in the end. All we might have is each other."*

Ellena reached out to Wei in her stead. The young master shuffled away from the claw-like digits, but found his mangled leg uncooperative. The same tendrils of blood enwreathing Ellena crawled closer to him, sought to claim him. Wei prepared to roll aside—create distance somehow.

Only for salvation to arrive in right when he needed it.

System Ascension Complete

[Gate] 1 Generated

Prepare for Threshold Breakthrough from Foundational to Conceptual

And then he was no longer beside Ellena. He was no longer consumed by the light. Instead, Wei found himself elsewhere. Source washed out from his body, and his flesh was whole again. Looking down, he saw his leg restored, though entire sections of his armor had been stripped clean, leaving the space from his knee to his ankle exposed. The many cuts that lined his exposed flesh were also gone, and the broken bones and lingering concussion he sustained were but memories.

He stood upon a pedestal of white and dark. The ground beneath him was like a pool that oscillated between brightness and darkness, and he could see his own reflection in its surface. His long hair matted to his forehead in clumps thanks to his sweat, but then he noticed something. His eyes were no longer green, for one was the purest white and the other was darkness, stained by the void. Around him swirled a miasmic haze compromised from a rushing torrent of countless colors, including some the young master couldn't even describe.

Something was moving through the chaos, swimming and shifting, its immense mass revealed in a faint outline at first. It emerged in a long serpent-like form. It was the size of a mountain, or perhaps even bigger, and down the side of its body, countless eyes of glistening whiteness blinked. Peculiarly, it had twenty humanoid arms, and it used the foremost of these limbs to bear a massive hammer imbued with a constellation of swirling runes.

Wei knew those runes. He had seen the symbol burning over Roggi's now destroyed artifact. Together, they formed a dancing constellation that moved, animated with constant motion. The serpent circled the platform upon which Wei stood, coming to a halt just above him with hammer held high.

Slowly, the multicolored madness closed in.

The young master leaned back and stared, frozen by awe and curiosity, uncertain about what was going on.

What is happening? he asked his System.

System ascension in progress. Please wait.

System? Wei repeated.

No response. He sighed. Of course, now of all times, he would be left in the dark. Well, in the chaos, anyway.

The grand serpent dipped its hammer in the swirling mass of chaos and began to churn. As it churned the flowing contents of primordial havoc, it shaped the contents into a sphere — a simple shape that slowly grew to resemble a dawn. But as more time passed, the colors bled

into each other and changed. Spots of black and white emerged from the dilution, until they were all that remained of these constantly warring tides.

A quiet oscillation followed, and the dragon then balanced this nascent star of Source upon its hammer, leveling it just above Wei. It oscillated. As the did waters upon Which Wei stood.

And finally, the Serpent spoke, rearing back with its hammer. ***"Inheritor of my system, I greet you, whoever you may be, however long as it is. I am Asaru, the Creator. I am first from the chaos, firstborn of all that will be. First among all that was, first and predecessor to all that will be, I, along with my kindred, have created the Systems, the governing structures used to shape the realms from primordial chaos into laws of power and harmony."***

"You made the Systems?" Wei asked.

If the titan heard him, it gave no response. ***"Of the systems, there are ten, ten to dictate the structure of all things, ten woven from the fabric of discord. Nine are made to rule, to witness, to bind, to join, to seal. Yet one stands beside all other Systems, for it is not a system of creation but primordial destruction, a System made to represent the end of all other Systems, the breaker of laws and concepts***

"I speak to you now, host to my paradoxical final work, to be an instrument formed by creation towards the undoing of reality's structure itself. You, Keter, Concept-Breaker, System-Slayer, understand that you are charged not with divinity but ruination, granted not the gift to be tyrant overall, but the execution of the powerful few that dominate those below."

Slowly, the serpent began to tilt the monochromatic dawn over Wei, and the young master shifted backward, caught between a desire to flee and an urge to stay and witness what was to come. Then the hammer slammed down, and the Source impacted Wei in a cataclysmic joining. It fused over him, becoming something akin to a cauldron, bathing his entire person within a new shell. Alarm filled the young master's mind as he felt his entire being ignite and *shift*. Things were changing inside him. Expanding. And as he tried to move, he found himself unable, trapped within the cage of his own body.

Once more, the antediluvian spoke, and this time a mournful tone entered its voice. ***"We, of the Firstborn, learned too late our great folly. All it took was disagreement to see our efforts laid low. For when I desired to create a final design and bring order to the primordial chaos that birthed us, we found ourselves divided as to what future we wished to see. And so Systems that were meant to build became weapons, and so those among the races and peoples we've seeded across forged realms became tyrants instead of leaders. For while the eldest warred against one another, the young grew without guidance.***

"Breaker, you are my last work, my final effort. Seek out hosts bearing sibling Systems, and judge them by their actions and virtues. As the Fathoms stand barren of guardians

or protectors with our passing, so you must pick up this duty, an exact tribulation in our stead.”

System Ascension Complete

[Gate] 1 Threshold Reached

Foundation > Conceptual

Aspects Advanced to Conceptual Threshold

Strength Ascended > Authority

>How much force one can exert against the laws of a reality or System

Speed Ascended > Relativity

>How fast one moves and reacts compared to the progression of time itself

Mind Ascended > Enlightenment

>How easily someone can conceptualize, assemble, and summon necessary information

Constitution Ascended > Fortification

>How much one can ignore harmful or unwanted effects from baseline reality

Awareness Ascended > Omniscience

>How wide one can project a field of absolute awareness from themselves

Will Ascended > Intent

>How much one can infuse and impose their will upon the world beyond them

Updating requirements to next System Ascension.

Source Core Lv. 10

>[0/10] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

>>[20/20] Core Ascensions to [Gate] 2 System Ascension

>>>Source: [90/90] Lumens

Masteries Demonstrated

>Meditation (II) — 1%

>Unarmed Combat (II) — 5%

>Spearmanship (II) — 3%

>Thrown Weapons (I) — 1%

No longer was Wei petrified. He surfaced from the sphere of Source engulfing him as his new power sank under his flesh. Flecks of black and white peeled from the young master, and he released a breath he didn't know he was holding, feeling more whole than he had ever been.

Looking up, he faced Asaru and saw the beast looming close. As he wondered what he was exactly looking at, his mind immediately isolated and assembled the necessary information via his ascended System.

Aspect of Enlightenment [9]

Asaru the Creator is an Antediluvian — the supposed first beings in existence. They are what the Inheritors supposedly worship, and judging from their title as Creator, they likely are worshiped by Roggi and the Oathbearers as a god or a divine.

“The path you lead is long and only now has your system fully been activated. Understand that nine more thresholds await. Nine more thresholds of Ascension, and boundless growth beyond that. You will be my final work. My final creation. I will scatter you and your like across the Fathoms to be found and used by hosts like you. This is all I have left. This is the closest to atonement I ever get for my sins in this great shame. Accept this blessing, host. Make right what you know is wrong. Stand for virtue. Stand. Make life one worth living for all.”

And with words finished, the world around Wei shattered like a panel of glass. Suddenly, he was back before Ellena. The last trickles of hellish essence were seeping into her and from her, the Dying Queen's tendrils drew close.

Yet, Wei sensed something that wasn't there before. And he had more than mere *awareness*. The world around him was *tangible*. His **Ascended Aspect of Omniscience** activated, and through Ellena's blood, he glimpsed the true nature of the Dying Queen. She was a nexus—a beating heard to a kingdom that stretched across entire realms. Her blood was the weave that held everything together, tethering her to countless beings.

Her will echoed through Ellena, and with the Taint running hot in the woman, there was little she could do to resist her master.

Little she could do. But that wasn't the same for Wei.

For the second time in his life, Wei triggered his **Aspect of Authority** and focused. The last time he did this, he was hunting his father across the void, trying to strike him down before he reached the tower. This time, he was not striking at distance, but resonance flowing through Ellena's blood, binding her to the will of the Dying Queen.

A wave of Source extended from Wei and painted the tendrils. The Dying Queen went still within her throne.

“What are you—”

Targeting [Tainted Blood]

Conflicting Laws of Reality or Adversarial Systems: 1

Threshold Established

Conceptual Structure Calculated

Concept-Integrity of [Distance]: 5/5 Integrity Points

Wei's fist snapped out. He struck the tendril of blood and instead of splashing apart against his knuckles, the darkness infusing the red *shattered* with a resounding echo across the face of existence.

At once the substance connecting Ellena to the Dying Queen was unmade, and the portal of blood behind her collapsed in an instant. The last thing Wei saw of the Dying Queen was her rising from the drone, hand wrapped around the blade lodged in her chest.

“Breaker,” she said.

And then the passage collapsed and was no more.

At the same time, the light faded, and Wei found himself placed in another space again. Ellena was at his feet, stunned and physically changed with the infusion of her Class. Golden regalia clung to her form, a glowing power radiated from her form. More than that, her blood was no longer dark—utterly stripped from her body.

“I... I can't hear her anymore,” Ellena muttered. She looked up at Wei with disbelief. “What did you just do?”

Wei looked at the Source rising from his hands. “I'm not sure.” Just then, a thunderous vibration pulled his attention across the room, and two colossal figures slowly approached the two with vicious intent, bearing wicked fanged maces for doing harm. Wei closed his hands into fists. “But it's time to see if I can do that again.”