

**+++*(CONFIDENTIAL) PRIORITY (CONFIDENTIAL) COMMISSION (CONFIDENTIAL)*+++**

**ACCESS GRANTED**

***[EDIT MODE]***

***[INSTALLING MEM-DATA]***

**UPDATING CONTENTS...**

**NAME: *lomae Hatherene***

**RANK: *AGNOS OF THE 7TH KNOWING (RATED FOR SEVENTH SPHERE HEAVENS AND BELOW)***

**SPECIALTY: *SPATIAL ANOMALIES***

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**NAME: *Nandu Yuewei***

**RANK: *AGNOS OF THE 6TH KNOWING (RATED FOR SIXTH SPHERE HEAVENS AND BELOW)***

**SPECIALTY: *ENTROPIC CANONS AND HELL-BASED ARCHITECTURE***

**CHANGES CONFIRMED...**

**CONFIRMED**

**CLEARING EDIT DATA**

**INSTALLING MEM-CON ACCESS**

**RESTRICTING ACCESS**

***[DISCONNECTING]***

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-White-Rab's Edits for the SE-7777 Border Wall Commission

19-20

Walltaker (III)

## Updating hubris for [Flathider] (Geometry/Boundaries) x1

### Domain of (Geometry)

->**Canon: Flathide** - The user of this canon can fold their physical form along a flat surface; requires at least one section of the surface to bend away upward at 30 degrees

->**Hubris: Using this canon when the user's physical form has edges will trigger thaumic backlash (70%)**

Altering the cannons for the Flathider was ultimately a simple affair. The only thing required of Avo was death.

Using his Meta-Fac, he adjusted the parameters of the hubris with a mental command, carving a critical contradiction into the Heaven that sustained the barge. Now, with a single command cast by Chambers, the vessel's systems would activate its **Flathide** canon, and within seconds the Heaven of Geometry would rupture, undone by innumerable edges in its architecture.

Avo's success in constructing a functional golem proved to be a more muted success; an act that proved to be more impractical at present than advantageous.

Though the oracle glass did need to be carved into sigils to find symmetry with the cultural symbology of their corresponding Heaven, this requirement was of no impediment, nor did the grafting itself present any difficulty.

Functionally, as long as the vessel the Heaven was anchored to had the requisite systems to function and necessary catalysts to express its channeled Domains, the bind would present no issue. Quality failures aside, this was the easy part of golem building.

The process of thaumic investiture was where true irritation lay. Lacking a cycler or a Soul, every miracle expended by a golem burned Essence. Spent death. Wasted lives.

As Kae elaborated, the common way golems were built required a rupture to be open, a Godclad to be present to serve as a stable donor, and a golem housed in a stable pocket of space. Both Godclad and golem required overlapping Domains and the process would take anything from hours to days to weeks or even months depending on several factors, including the golem's ontological sophistication or how many Rendsinks it was equipped with. And once the sacrifices were made to the golem, the Essence could not be taken back. Lacking a cycler to keep each death in constant orbit around a Soul, thaums effectively seeped from the golem like a miasma, never to be reclaimed.

Pair all these factors with the fact that most golems lacked an ego, Soul, cycler, or corresponding Hell to counteract backlashes, paradoxes, or daemons, and the reasons behind why most Guilds held to a low-sphere, high-production, mass-based doctrine for their Knots in active warfare became clear as day.

Such was why Avo was entirely content to bypass these issues by continuing to steal other people's golems for now. Saved him both trouble and time.

"Might start a stockpile instead," Avo said, speaking to Kae thereafter. "Modify existing golems on existing chassis. Enhance them. Retrofit instead of produce."

"That's a good idea," she replied. "We would need a constant flow of death to make such a thing possible. And not like the opportunistic slaughters we are committing. The Agnosi run near automated pipelines with the Guilds. They provide the lives and Godclads, we provide the expertise."

Whatever the case, Avo decided the elevation of his cadre was a priority for now. But that did not mean a change in strategy was not in order. With Tavers by their side and new safehouses available, it would be useful to store a few Knots of emergency response golems. Or have some scrambled alongside the cadre was expendable support.

He would need to separate the Heavens he wanted to absorb from those better left as ghosts nested within their shells.

Regardless, preparations were fast approaching the end. Soon, it would be time for action and much rest upon the shoulders of Kae and Chambers.

"I'm a bit nervous," the Agnos said, sitting next to him on a crate in the gutter warehouse as they studied the unnatural fractals peeling from the contours around the barge. A shaky breath escaped her lungs. "Okay. I'm very nervous."

"Won't be soon," Avo said. "Proxies. Will overwrite all bad habits once you put them on. Makes sure you know how to act the part. Operate accordingly."

She nodded, but the motion lacked confidence and life. "Okay."

"I know you don't like getting your mind overwritten," Avo said. "Understand that. Understand if you don't want to do this mission. But—"

She interrupted him. "I'm fine—I just need to... I just need to focus... I want to do this... I want to, I want to perform and experience my craft beneath daylight again. In the open."

Avo regarded her a moment further. "Should take this opportunity to steel yourself. Harden your resolve. Find the fire inside. Have something prepared. Need you to be ready. Your time is coming."

A sudden spark flashed behind her eyes as she turned to look at him. "You mean..."

“Yes,” Avo said. “Making your retribution will not fail. Cannot fail. Might not even need to risk the Tiers. Have your assailants be forced into vulnerability. Brought before us.”

Her gaze was fixed upon him for a long while, and though her thoughtstuff pulsed with tension, she said nothing. Not at first. “Good. Good. I... I want to face them before the end. I want to know what they did to me was wrong. I want to hear them say it.”

Avo allowed a slow smile to spread across his face as his templates chattered their schemes. “It will be a pleasure to see this arranged. Now. Need to get ready. Alter the others. We have a rupture to make.”

“Yes,” Kae said, nodding. “Let’s go *bomb* a wall.”

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No one saw the barge coming.

No one saw it shoot out from an inch-thin wall-sized sheet of glass, plunging down into the Maw even as the reflection it dove out from dissolved. No one saw it hop through another pane of glass flung down from the gutters above, or the Manta high overhead, serving as overwatch for its route.

Passing through unnatural shortcuts and cutting its journey short by tens of kilometers at a time, the unstable barge accelerated toward the risen pillar housing SE-7777, spatial reality pulsating outward from where it stood in layered waves, a lonesome watchtower choking a narrowing straight, colorful stands of thaumaturgic patterning threaded their paths through the rings in its upper structure before parting in all directions, paths splaying apart unnaturally.

By the time the barge was within sixty kilometers, Nether traffic came live, not knowing they were already compromised by unknown hostiles. By the time twenty kilometers remained, the operator was just realizing the potential situation at hand.

By the time the barge passed within ten kilometers—then five—and manifested its Heaven, the Knots hadn’t even been scrambled yet. Only a few errant drones sailed out to seek the threat.

But things were too late by then.

Existence ruptured like a broken kaleidoscope. Aspects of space, directionality, and what shape matter could hold came undone, and the drones unfortunate enough to be affected collapsed inward on themselves in a mess of grinding angles.

The SE-7777’s pylon pulsed. Spatial reality condensed around the rupture as the first golems began to close in. The waves coming from the tower were swirling tide now. An eruption of

neon-red phantoms composing themselves as warning symbols around the border paired with the banshee-like wail of klaxons filled the air.

All the while did entropy leak, and all the while did the unseen few watch, pleased that the first part of the operation proceeded without unforeseen circumstance.

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In the very same instant, Paladin Kassamon used the pull of his rank to claim a desired assignment for himself. It wasn't the first time in his career that he did such a thing, but volunteering for rupture detail was usually regarded as more punishment than a glorious mission with how much paperwork it entailed.

Still, he applied the proper pressures and made his demands known.

And so it came to be that Paladin Kassamon found himself soon dispatched to SE-7777 to wait for the summoned Agnosi and aid them in the patching of the Heaven's vulnerabilities.

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At the same time, Kare Kusanade just so happened to be spending her spare time reviewing footage of the rupturing barge.

Though she already had other tasks at hand and was due to check in on a Fallwalker-related disturbance with her mentor, Paladin Sandrupal, a compulsion demanded that she review the mem-data coming in from the SE-7777 incident.

Ruptures were chaotic affairs, the scenes they left both damaging for once sanity and chaotic in the extreme. But somehow, somehow, her instincts would not be denied, and she found herself able to track a piece of the barge on its descent down into the Mas. Analyzing its trajectory using her Phys-Sim, she cast the local Exorcists and forwarded her memories to them.

By the end of the day, her Meta would be choked by casts from her colleagues, each commending her on the treasure trove of mem-data she uncovered, with offers of libations and hints of a coming promotion.

"One in a million find, rookie," Paladin Sandrupal said, grinning as the details from the Exorcists came flooding back. "Fucking smuggler routes. Jaus must be smiling back at you from the Big Nothing."

That made Kare frown. Somehow, she felt like someone was in fact smiling. But it wasn't Jaus.

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+Avo,+ White-Rab said, manifesting as a phantom through Tavers. *+It's done. Commission intercepted and edited. An emergency patch request for SE-7777 has been sent to Agnos K6 Nandu Yuewei and Agnos K7 Iomae Hatherene, and they are due to arrive at pre-dawn tomorrow for initial inspections.+*

“Good,” Avo said, staring at the simulated pylon—and through it.

Soon, he would glimpse the world beyond the borders of New Vultun. See the refugee sanctuaries. Sunderwilds. Enclaves. And start making prey of the more unruly Fallwalkers. More than merely expanding beyond, his influence was also spreading above. Good things would be in Kare's future, and her ability to affect and influence Ori-Thaum's politics remained far beyond even her own comprehension.

Her, Abrel, Kassamon, Elegant-Moon. And more. They would form his initiate bridgehead into the Guilds, give him means to target isolated Godclads, and turn them as well. But also inch politics and instability in his favor.

New epiphanies were taking form in his mind with the passing of the minutes, and his understanding of the great game he was now a part of blossoming beyond gutter wars and intra-district engagements.

As he had done with this operation, he needed to increase his control. Build his influence across all situations. In this manner, his Heaven and capacity to manipulate information would serve to elevate each other nicely.

It was a predator's way of doing things, hunting for vulnerabilities to explore. But he was more than that now.

*Suzerain.* The word and concept offered by Benhata—a sovereign with a certain degree of control over other internally autonomous entities.

Though he sought not the enslavement of humanity's choice, he would be remiss to never burn the branches of possibility down to his preferred paths.

What need did he have to wait opportunity to present itself when he could manufacture more? And on a scale cascading across the city, no less?

**[Hey,] template-Draus whispered. [Stop lickin' your own ass and get your head back in the game. Get Chambers and Kae ready. They got new skins that need puttin' on. Go make yourself useful 'stead of daydreamin'.]**

+Starting to regret burning you,+ Avo replied. Sighing, he turned and sought the two he would soon deploy. The proxies were already sequenced and ready. All he needed to do was enmesh them beneath another layer of flesh to mask them, and the rest would take care of itself. *{Kae.*

*Chambers. It's time. Kill yourselves then get to the Nexus. Not going to have time for sleep tonight.}*

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“Iomae” watched the snaking channels of the Maw tumble behind her accelerating aero. Everything below ran as winding gorges of bone plate walls punctured by rusted vents. Festering blackness stained the air as pillars of trash descended like collapsing ladders from on high. Routed along a dedicated skylane, she studied the warning icons flashing over the see-through interior of her luxury aero.

Numbers and mem-data flickered and burst all around her. Phantoms danced in a symphony of flowing information while she rested on a seat made of fine leather, bathed in the light of a spinning locus.

The Esteem Mark-20 aero was an unfamiliar vehicle to Iomae. Travel, in general, was a novelty she rarely experienced. Her focus was on the cutting edge—working to conceptualize the theoretical and turn the experimental into something practical. The few times she played the role of surveyor were years ago when she was still a neophyte studying her craft.

Studying the exterior sensory overlay constructed by the ghosts governing the aero, the walls around her were splashed with high-definition renderings of her surroundings, visual feeds scrubbing away any blurriness to provide maximum detail. In the corner of her own vision, her DeepNav was paired to the vehicle’s navigational systems, keeping her cognizant of her position. And Nandu.

She knew those weren’t their names, and all she remembered was cover identity, but the memories that currently protected her were perfectly constructed, their sequences sprouting from the scrambled mem-data of her base Meta imperceptible to even most thoughtscans.

A dedicated Necro could perhaps pierce the mystery of her disguise, but she somehow knew everything on-site was already taken care of, and things were well in hand.

Still, a weight pressed against her nerves, and between the flashing menus surrounding her, she studied her reflection.

Her hair was too straight.

Her skin was too rough.

Her skull felt too heavy.

Her flesh was a lie.

But why did it feel so freeing? Why was she looking forward to this?

Somehow, she knew the right answers were waiting for her once she arrived.

Turning her attention back to her aero's inner systems, she frowned at the thousands of simulated strings and aerial trajectories constructed in her hundred-kilometer radius navigational map.

The interfaces of most aeros weren't so cluttered, but whatever defensive suite her benefactor had picked to ensure her security and safety was constantly loading, isolating, scanning, and simulating distant objects and entities. Subjects outlined in green were determined harmless; and non-hostile. Faint yellow had the potential for aggression but posed no danger. Orange for possible risk. Red for active hostile.

More than a few passing drones were detected and flagged by the vehicle. In seconds, Iomae knew their model and year of production, general specs, estimated trajectory, and who probably fired them.

None of it was useful information for her. If things went wrong, she would manifest her Heaven and depart through thaumaturgic means instead of leaving her fate to the aero's defenses. How she knew what to do was beyond her. It was like she was accessing pieces of knowledge on a need-to-know basis, with these sequences unnaturally conjoined with the rest.

*{Hey,}* "Nandu" said, calling her coldtech communicator with a cough. *{You feeling ready?}*

Less than a kilometer left before they would arrive at the pylon. He was a few minutes ahead of her and would land first and wait. She would come in along the west side and detach into public air space from her current skylane. Another waterfall of trash spilled down into the Maw, her aero zipped through a static offramp and soared over the open gorge.

Warning indicators formed ahead, her vehicle automatically dodging predicted debris. Problem with flying the Maw was the endless amounts of trash—and people—being chucked down. Still, her route proved solid and she found herself passing through spatially affected folds as her distance from SE-7777 shrank to less than eight hundred meters.

Zooming at where the rupture was supposed to be a few kilometers behind her, she noticed a quivering cleft in space guarded by hovering golems. They must have pocketed the destabilization. Contained the leaking Rend for now. But the damage there—and whatever contradictory canon existed in the border wall—needed to be fixed.

Though the Paladins were probably going to get a bit more than what they would bargain for.



As her *Esteem* slowed to a final descent and passed through the hanger doors along the middle of the pylon's structure, the twelve engines of her diamond-shaped craft tilted from their horizontal orientations to vertical ones one after another, ensuring her slow descent.

The ghosts around her dissolved in a puff and the walls turned back to padded leather. With a ring and hiss, the door across from her opened, and foul air billowed in, causing her to gag. Outside her vehicle stood her "partner," Nandu Yuewei. He was rubbing his comically large nose and had a miserable look on his face.

As she disembarked, she saw that his own *Esteem* was docked on the far side of the chamber, already being examined by Exorcist maintenance drones. The light of the city faded from behind her as the hanger doors began to close.

"Been sucking in bad air for three minutes," Nandu gagged. "The pylon's air filtration's fucked, I think. If their water's this bad too, I don't think we're making it out."

Though Iomae knew his conduct ran the edge of unprofessionalism, accepting his antics was easy, and actually offered her a sense of comfort.

"Perhaps we can fix that too," she said. "Though it will require a separate commission. A 'Heaven of Foul Smells.'"

Nandu snorted. "Is that a real thing?"

"There's a Heaven for almost everything."

"Almost indeed." The voice interrupting them was flat but smooth. Stepping past a closing door on the far edge of the room facing the inside of the structure was a tall man sporting a red mohawk and dressed in a particularly torn Paladin's uniform. The badge and the greys of the inner suit remained, but his outer coat was missing, and his sleeves were torn, exposing bulging biceps the size of a baseliner's head. Gashes and tears lined his pants while whining servos preceded each step of his left leg. Flashing the Agnosi with a gleaming smile, Paladin Riche Kassamon presented himself as their point of contact with their operation.

A few fist-sized surveillance drones hovered at his flanks, forming the shape of a "v" behind him.

"Agnosi. Appreciate you both responding so thusly."

"We are sworn to our duties," Iomae said, managing a fake, but knowing smile. The Paladin looked her up and down, and somehow she knew he was at least as compromised as she was.

"So we are," Paladin Kassamon said. Turning, he looked at Nandu and winced. "Jaus. I—uh, you alright?"

Nandu glared. "Why? Do I not look alright?"

"No, consang. You want me to be honest, it looks like you stole your nose off the face of a Scaarthian that got run over by a tank or something."

"Very funny," Nandu sneered. "How about you tell us a few more jokes along the way to the control center so we can take a look at how you guys shit yourselves this time."