

**John Bishop:** So let me get this straight, William. You decided to work with the fucking Inheritors to be inserted on some Sub-Ascension [1] Lv. 25 realm.

**William Yu:** Cultivator world.

**John Bishop:** It doesn't matter what the archetype is, my question is why do they want you there? There doesn't seem to be any house of power from this place. If there's a system there, it's either really well hidden or really, really weak. So the question remains, what do they want you to do?

**William Yu:** I don't know, John. Frankly, I don't care. With what they're offering me? Clean slate? Getting the **Kindred** off my back? I'd do just about anything right now.

**John Bishop:** You see this shit? That's what gets you into these messes — fighting wars that aren't yours. "I'll do anything right now." You need to think. You need to think ahead. Man, if you do this, I'm not going to be there to pull your ass out of the fire.

**William Yu:** Yeah, because you've got so much else to be doing. Besides, are you fighting a "war that isn't yours" too? Heard you were committing to the lodge.

**John Bishop:** Yeah, I do. There's a really real chance that they try to invade Earth and I want to be in place to stop them.

**William Yu:** Seriously, John, what the fuck? What's so good about Earth anyway? Every time you mention Earth, it's always "my first wife this" and "my kid that." You don't have a single good word to say about the place, and here you are in the Lodge, preparing to fight a System War in defense of the shithole. And for what? It's not special.

**John Bishop:** It's our goddamn home.

**William Yu:** Not anymore. We're dead, John. Or at least, we should be. Call us god-blessed. Call us fate-touched. Call us chosen. Call us whatever you want. We've got a second chance to start over and live it up. And I'm not about to lose it over some dirtball I had no choice being born into.

**John Bishop:** Yeah, but you are going sell yourself over some Lv. 25 world.

**William Yu:** Please, John, this won't be the first realm I've overthrown. Without an active System, I might even be running the place before the century's done...

-Trespassers William Yu and John Bishop

Wei stared at the name for several seconds, unmoving as he tried to process his thoughts. His entire life, he knew his father by his official name, Yu Wu Wen. It was a good name, meant "one who comprehends literature or the arts."

Now, however, Wei found himself utterly lost. *William*. William was not any kind of name he was familiar with, and sounded awkward to say. But as the young master focused on the name, two lines extended from the text and a profile picture emerged. For a heartbeat, Wei thought he was looking into a mirror, except the man in the window was older and had a short crop of hair. There was also that smile that clung to his face. Wei had known his father to smile like that, often, especially when teasing someone about a particular mistake they made, or speaking to his mother about something intimate.

A dissonance welled up inside the young master as his mind strained. He knew the man. But he also didn't.

Across from him, Roggi was already talking to his fellow Oathbearers, his features animated, his physical deterioration forgotten. The young master heard the other forgekin mocking Roggi for his unfortunate state, and he simply threw his head back and barked with laughter. Furthermore, their mockery was also inflicted upon their fallen brother. It seemed that the Oathbearers were far better at processing grief and loss than most people were.

Taking heart from his friend's fortitude, Wei looked over the options connected to his father.

- >Message
- >Blacklist
- >Friend
- >Call

"If you wish to speak to them in real time, the last option is what you want," Rafael said carefully. The lich was trying not to intrude, and said only to be helpful. Wei didn't respond. For seconds thereafter, he just stared at his father's visage, wrestling against himself, warring against indecision.

With a sudden snarl, he selected the final option.

Why was he waiting? Why was he so nervous, so scared? He came here to claim the man's head. His father had much to answer for: the destruction of Wei's world, the murder of his mother, and now this! This fake identity, this lifetime of deception! He selected the call option with all his focus, and the icon flashed. The string connected to his father's visual interface vibrated as if cords on a zither.

His **Omniscience** captured both Ellena and Agnesia looking upon him with worry. The mother and daughter were speaking to each other and by the power of his Aspect, he could hear them clearly.

"Mother, should we?"

"No," Ellena said, interrupting her daughter. "We wait. It is best not to intrude on these things, especially when we are unclear about other people's matters."

Ellena of Dawnrest might not have been a warrior, but she was experienced and wise in a way only a mother could be. A pang of loss passed through the young master, and he did his best not to think about it. At that moment, there was only one person Wei wanted to talk to, and perhaps "talk" wasn't the proper term.

There was only one fate he desired to inflict on his father above all others—but his brooding thoughts of violence were interrupted when the call went through in a sudden instant. The still window of his father's image came alive with animation as William Yu's portrait started moving. His background turned pitch black with only faint trace of light painted his features.

Wei felt something shudder within his **Aspect of Relativity** as he faced his patriarch from across space and time.

For several heartbeats, father and son just stared at each other, the older man weary, filled with remorse, the younger glaring, a font of endless hate.

"You shouldn't have followed me," William said, his tone somber. "Are you in the Tower right now?"

"There is nowhere in this world and any world you can run where I will not find you," Wei replied. His words were not a threat, but a statement of pure truth. Outrage clawed at his senses, a burning sensation seared up his throat as nausea threatened to overtake him. Racing with his disgust were creeping veins of red that crawled along the corners of his eyes. Before, he could only scream at his father, demanding to know why, like an incoherent petulant child. Now though, he had more details, was slowly understanding that this entire game was far larger than he was aware. And so the first question he asked was direct and simple. "Are you a Trespasser?"

His father's lips thinned. "Yes. Do you know what that mean—"

"I know what that is," Wei cut him off. He couldn't hold back a hiss of rage. "Has everything about you been a *lie*? Have you always just been an invader from another world? A predestined traitor dispatched by a higher power to damn our sect to ruin?"

"No," his father replied, more with a little bit of frustration lingering in his voice. "No," he said again, his tone softening. "It was supposed to be a simple job. I was just supposed to be an agent in place. Keep the sects at war, keep the place from becoming any kind of threat, and make it easier for System Assimilation when the time came. I didn't think they would—the order to destroy the world was... It wasn't *necessary*. I had everything under control."

Under control. The redness overtook Wei's vision but he kept himself in check, though his hands were beginning to shake. "Clearly not. Clearly the Inheritors decided for you."

A stunned expression passed over his father's face. "How... you know about—"

"Why did you serve them?" Wei said, continuing to press. "Is it all for their 'Final Design'? What did they offer you?"

William Yu's face paled as he realized his son knew far more than he ever expected. "How did you—" He closed his mouth. "Mepheleon, he provided you with a Compendium, didn't he?" He answered the question as he closed his eyes. Wei's **Aspect of Relativity** rang inside him as he regarded his father with visual proximity, so too did it feel as if the man was right next to him. Like he could just touch him.

**Orienting Corresponding to [William Yu]...**

**>Relativity [38]/Direct Visual Vector Trace + Unmoving Entity + No Spatial Disruption > 1%**

Slowly, a shimmer of Source formed around Wei.

**Your correspondence to the relative spacetime of your father is being attuned, the System said. Keep talking to him until the trace fully loads to establish to develop a conceptual lock.**

Wei barely hid his surprise. He didn't know he could do that. And judging from his System's lack of reply, it was likely something his System only just manifested right now. How many more miracles did his System Ascension allow?

"Listen, Wei," William continued, "You're involved yourself in a war that isn't your own. What's being fought over has nothing to do with you anymore. You survived. That's more than I could have ever hoped for. What you should do—"

"The realm was destroyed so that they could get to another, right?" Wei said, cutting his father off. "My world was destroyed so that it would stop impeding the flow of the Fathoms and allow your masters to seek out a new realm. A... a special place... This—this *Earth*, is it not?" Wei paused. "Where an antediluvian vault awaits? The place from where Trespassers hail? All that you've done is toward this end, isn't it?"

In truth, Wei barely understood half the concepts. He just spouted out most of the things he saw, or momentarily gleaned, from the Trespassers' compendium earlier. But his father didn't know that, and judging by his father's increasingly huffed expression, Wei was right on track.

William Yu swallowed. "When you get to the Claimed Hells, when you get off the Tower, you forget about me, you forget about the Inheritors, you carve out a nice life for yourself here. You have a System, you have the capability of making yourself very powerful, you can preserve your own life—"

**Orienting Corresponding to [William Yu]...**

**>Relativity [38]/Direct Visual Vector Trace > 43%**

"What life?" Wei said, and to his shame, a single tear dropped from his right eye. He swiped it before it could ever hit the floor but his **Omniscience** told him that Ellena and Agnesia witnessed his weakness. Damn this place. Damn this place and its lack of privacy. Damn his father.

Damn himself.

"You destroyed everything," Wei said. It took everything he had not to sob like a child. Pain was eating at him from the inside. "My entire life, I just wanted you and mother to be proud. I gave everything to honor our sect, to seek virtue and excellence and defy the heavens." A shuddering gasp cut his words off. But the young master didn't break. He refused. "Earth. That's where you were from as well, wasn't it?"

William stared on. "Yeah, until I died."

"Until you died," Wei replied lamely. "And then what? After death, you got a new life?"

"It's complicated," William said. "There's something like a filter that you pass through there. At certain times, it gets weaker and when you die, when your consciousness is loosed from your body, you end up passing through. Or maybe you might just crossover into a conceptually unstable zone and clip over into the Fathoms."

"Because of you, I am partially a Trespasser too," Wei said, realizing why his system had identified him so.

"Yeah," William replied. "It's also why the Source Corruption didn't devour you immediately. There is enough of you that's different. You're a being born of partially of pure matter, son. Most people here... their origin is mainly conceptual. Spirit. Magical. Whatever you want to call it. Not me. And not all of you."

Wei looked on at his father, trying to process all that he had learned. There were many other things he could still ask the man. There were so many other questions. But once again, he found himself returning to the first words he spoke to his father at the start of this day.

"Why? Why did you just listen to your master? Why didn't you tell me? Tell Mother. Why?"

**Orienting Corresponding to [William Yu]...**

**>Relativity [38]/Direct Visual Vector Trace > 77%**

William looked down for a second, and a flash of agony crawled across his face. But he caught it and suppressed it as well. Father and son, sharing habits.

"I ran into some trouble with the Dying Queen. She and her kindred... they were hunting for me after a botched apocalypse. I... might've tried stealing an embraced world from them. So, I needed a new start. A place to hide and a job to do at the same time. Your realm was supposed to be just that, a simple job. And I met your mother, and simple wasn't quite simple anymore."

Wei looked on at the man with disbelief. "You met my mother, and simple wasn't... You still killed her!" Wei roared.

"Yes, Wei, I did," his father said, a hint of anger now leaking through his voice. "I wish I didn't. I wish I had a choice in this. But it was either give her an easy death, or watch her suffer. Suffer, in ways you can't imagine. And you?" William swallowed. "You were supposed to die as well. You were supposed to die in the initial onslaught. You weren't supposed to survive. Trust me, son, it's better that I did what I did. Because if I didn't bring down the array, if I didn't... the Inheritors would have sent someone who actually specialized in apocalypses, and you wouldn't be dead. You would never be dead. You. Your mother. Everyone. You can't... Death. That's not the worst thing you can experience. Death is peaceful, son. Getting your soul claimed? Getting bound to engines of eternal torment and service? You don't know hell."

Something inside the young master snapped. "I don't know—" A sound befitting a wild dog than a cultivator escaped Wei. Ellena and Agnesia flinched back. Roggi stopped talking as his eyes went wide. Rafael cried out as a shroud of monochrome detonated out from Wei.

**Orienting Corresponding Relativity to [William Yu]...**  
**>Relativity [38]/Direct Visual Vector Trace > 99%**

Wei felt his **Omniscience** leak across an impossible span—drawn across time and space by a single point of reference. It was like his System was exerting its own will upon existence once more.

"Are you trying to tell me that what you did was some kind of *mercy*?" Wei whispered, coldness following the heat of blind rage.

"Yes," William said, unashamed. "That is what I'm trying to say. Wei, you have no idea—"

**Orienting Corresponding Relativity to [William Yu]...**  
**>Relativity [38]/Direct Visual Vector Trace > 100%**

And then space around Wei An Wei fractured. A pathway tore open, separating all that was between him and his father. In that instant, the world around him dissolved into nothing but Source. The world around him faded utterly into shadow and light, and William Yu stumbled into existence a mere step away from Wei.

He looked upon his son with utter surprise as Wei seethed with hatred. "You have no idea, father... You have no idea what I'm becoming."

And with that, he mustered his **Authority** and set upon crippling the man who sired him.