

Chapter 219: The Princess's doubts

Priam swept aside the notifications before focusing on his vitality and **[Diagnostic]**. His trachea was in a pathetic state. A draconic Merit had modified his throat to allow the channeling of a pure aetheric Breath, not a kinetic one. Spitting some blood onto the ground, Priam realized he was not shielded against the variations of his Breath.

Yet, this did not mean he couldn't alter it. Through **[Fire Champion Physique]** and Fire Unity, he had managed to infuse his flames into the draconic attack. Nonetheless, his physical resistances weren't sufficient to block the terrifying shockwave he had unleashed.

"Variations bring versatility to my Breath and allow me to target my opponent's weaknesses, but they can be hazardous to my body," Priam summarized in a hoarse voice.

He was briefly tempted to use the Merit of **[Three-Headed Hydra]** to heal himself before dismissing the idea. His instinct warned him that trading his lifespan for enhanced regeneration wasn't without danger. The senescence of his body reverberated onto his soul, and that could be problematic if **[He Who Eludes Death]** didn't heal its aging. Not everyone could change bodies as Jasmine had done.

As his Domain blocked some bone fragments still falling from the sky, Priam analyzed his battle. His opponent had been a weak Tier 3, too occupied with advancing towards Oasis to truly attack him. Despite that, its ectoplasm had blocked most of his attacks. His victory wasn't a fluke, but it confirmed to Priam that he was still not ready to face Tier 3s.

The conclusion was disappointing, but Priam wasn't saddened. Just six weeks ago, he was fearful of rabhorns, and today, he had defeated a giant necro. His gaze fell on the fractured skeleton, and Priam smiled. He had won.

*Lvl Up: **[Revelation Resilience]** lvl 10*

MEM +3

META (AFFI) +3

META (AUTH) +3

The notification brought Priam back to reality. **[Revelation Resilience]** was a handy skill as it blocked divination attempts, scrying, and even **[Identification]**. It would undoubtedly be an essential resistance in the future. It resembled **[Mask]**, the skill he had fused with his add-on, except the latter could falsify his description.

Suddenly, an idea struck Priam. Could **[Revelation Resilience]** send back tampered information instead of simply blocking surveillance attempts? Or could the resistance tell him who was trying to spy on him?

Looking around, Priam saw the hoplites and his fellow farmers dealing with the inactive undead. Myuri was collecting Sun points with a turret she held in her arms while Blueberry was furiously smashing some corrupted.

"They need these points more than I do, and I'm not fit to go against the Necro Envoy."

Lvl Up: [Revelation Resilience] lvl 11

MEM +3

META (AFFI) +3

META (AUTH) +3

With the announcement of his Mythic Achievement, a ridiculous number of people must be attempting to divine him. It was the perfect time to test the limits of his skill.

Priam spotted a fallen trunk and leaned against it before closing his eyes. Divination probes were inevitably made of aether. The best method to understand the interactions between them and his resistance was to observe the primordial fluid.

Taking a deep breath, Priam cleared his mind of all unnecessary thoughts with **[Focus]** and **[Frozen Meditation]**. The world quieted down, and he focused on his Domain.

His sphere of authority perceived the world with an impressive intensity. Priam felt his breath mingling with the wind to create minute turbulence in the air. Temperature gradients were visible, as were the mineral grains constituting the earth beneath him. Priam had enlarged his soul space through his recent deaths, allowing his Domain to reach a radius of three meters. This represented a volume slightly greater than a hundred cubic meters.

Calculating this, Priam realized how much he had changed in two months. His vivacity and his add-on allowed him to monitor a vast space. Of course, he didn't always pay perfect attention to his Domain—and often ignored the half beneath his feet—but he could do so when he concentrated.

A human mind shouldn't have been capable of this, but this thought didn't disturb Priam. He had struggled to become the Homo Elysian he was today.

Satisfied with his choices, Priam focused on **[Ideal Aether Perception]**. A new world overlaid reality. Describing ambient aether was complicated. It was simultaneously an energy storm, a sea of knowledge, a galaxy where each star represented a world, an infinite web, and so much more. Aether could take any form and encompass all Concepts.

The path to the Zenith was still long.

Perhaps because his first Concept was Mist, the aether eventually took the form of mist. It covered the world, penetrated matter, and interacted with reality. Priam's modified soul perceived the matrix that governed Creation.

The aether cloud was both beautiful and abstruse. An infinity of interactions occurred every moment within his Domain, and Priam was incapable of recognizing those that concerned him.

He admired this vision for a few moments before considering how to control **[Revelation Resilience]**. Priam had no idea how to proceed. When he used an active skill, he connected

to a hidden bright star in his soul's depths. The process was instinctual and required no effort on his part. Since his resistances were passive, he had never needed to access them.

Lvl Up: [Revelation Resilience] lvl 12

MEM +3

META (AFFI) +3

META (AUTH) +3

"Well, there has to be a first time for everything."

Entering his soul space, Priam observed his soul. The glowing orb floating before him concealed the essence of his skills. Randomly choosing one, Priam selected **[Moon Mist]**. A switch flipped inside his soul. Driven by his curiosity, Priam tried to understand what had just happened, and **[Ideal Aether Perception]** revealed the truth.

Before the skill, his soul became transparent and offered its secrets. It consisted of four onion-like layers and a core. The rune symbolizing **[Moon Mist]** was on the third layer. Drawing the aether flowing from the core, the sigil gave it a misty affinity before propelling it into the spiritual meridians, which then led this energy into the pathways that ran through his body.

Sumstreh's mark briefly stopped this energy. The divine seal had partially fused with the first layer, monitoring the soul's inputs and outputs.

Looking away, Priam analyzed his soul. Four layers for four skill's rarities. The first was as massive as it was thin. Far from the core, it gave little energy to the common skills inscribed there in two dimensions. The fourth, closest to the core, contained only one immense rune, **[True Will]**. The three-dimensional sigil covered a large part of the available volume, plunging down to the heart of the layer.

[[True Will] covers 18% of the volume of the fourth layer. No fifth layer.

Tier 0's limits confirmed :

- *5 Legendary skills.*
- *No Mythical skill.]*

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Announcement to the Wandering Islands:

***Priam Azura slayed a Necromoon Viscount (Tier 3) while in Tier 0.
A Mythic feat!***

Esmée flashed a thin smile as the stream came to a close. Priam had triumphed solo against a Tier 3, becoming a Duke in the process. According to her intel, he was catching up to Arnold, Dishnu, and Tyr. Another person might have been disappointed by the First's delay, but not Esmée.

During her conversation with Priam, the princess had learned that upon his arrival in Elysium, he had been as weak as the lowest of the Empire's serfs. Despite this terrible disadvantage, he had taken every risk, pushing the boundaries of the impossible until finally defeating a Tier 3. He was a self-made man, and Esmée found that attractive.

Part of her was jealous of his progress, freedom, and audacity. Another part was surprisingly proud. Esmée didn't quite understand why, but her heart raced as she watched Priam's triumph. The telephoto shot captured by a drone from a great distance was worthy of a painting.

With a smile on his lips and clad in a cloak of flame, the First stood tall before a ruined forest. Fiery reflections danced in his hair tousled by shockwaves, and his enigmatic, misty eyes roamed over something invisible—likely his notifications.

Esmée found him magnificent.

"A new Duke," commented Aydan in a neutral tone. "He doesn't seem to have spotted our surveillance drone."

"The five-second delay between video capture and projection seems effective," confirmed the tech-specialized guard. "The drone is also over three kilometers from the target."

"Let's not forget the Necromoon's light messing with his instincts. Cut the transmission."

The hologram ceased, plunging the room into semi-darkness. Only the sound of fingers tapping on wood disturbed the silence. In the underground bunker, everyone awaited Aydan's reaction. Seated on a simple wooden chair, surrounded by several guards and a few local servants, the prince stared into space, lost in thought. Finally, he caught Esmée off guard by simply sighing.

"Priam is a monster, but I guess that's nothing new. Do we have a view of the fight against the Necro Envoy?"

"No, my Prince. The battle has moved too far away, and without relay antennas or satellites, I have no means to manually pilot our drones. Given the quality of the images and the interest some corrupted birds showed in them, I preferred to recall them," replied the imperial guard, pointing to the holographic screen.

A new video feed appeared in the center of the room. Four individuals moved at an extremely high speed, their clashes ravaging the forest. The fight was hard to follow, each exchange as brutal as it was swift. Aydan raised a hand, and the video slowed, displaying blurry and barely usable images. The cameras' sensors could not keep up with high-intensity combat.

"I'll look into this later," the prince decided, gesturing to a servant. She approached, presenting a wooden tray with several steaming cups. She distributed the hot drinks, starting with the prince and his guards. When the last drink appeared in front of her, Esmée raised an eyebrow.

"Our lucky charm needs to stay hydrated."

"Thanks, dear brother," replied Esmée, remaining on her guard.

The past few weeks hadn't been easy for Aydan. The initial setbacks had enraged him, but since Myuri's departure, his behavior had begun to change. Understanding that his survival was not assured, the strategist had calmed his violent impulses. However, Esmée didn't believe in a transformation and stayed on her guard. His new mask could crack at any time.

"We need to accelerate the plan," declared Aydan after a few seconds of contemplation. "Richard, how many men do we have?"

One of the imperial guards kneeled. "Of the thirty-three soldiers we bought from the Sun Shop, seventeen are still alive. Each is now decently powerful, the necro event having separated the wheat from the chaff. We have acquired a profit of eighty-three thousand Sun points since the start of the event."

Aydan nodded. "It seems my plan to buy cheap warriors is a success."

"Indeed, my Prince."

"Reinvest every Sun point earned in rank one soldiers. I want to increase the size of our army as quickly as possible."

"It shall be done as you command."

Esmée nodded, masking a grimace. Where Oasis had decided to create traps to farm Sun Points, her brother had the idea to recruit an army. Rank one soldiers, the weakest offered by the Sun Shop, cost five thousand Sun points each. They were often local teenagers whose camp had been destroyed by a corrupted horde and had sold themselves to the System to survive.

They didn't speak their language, but that didn't stop Aydan from sending them to fight the corrupted. Utilizing the advantage of terrain and under the guidance of the imperial soldiers, most quickly developed offensive skills and paid back their purchase price.

The others died. Aydan was trading the blood of locals for Sun points.

"Kleya, how are things progressing on your end?"

A woman in her forties stepped forward. One of her ancestors must have sinned with a mole, as she had claws instead of fingers and was blind. The fur that covered her body didn't spare her face, which might explain why Aydan hadn't yet slept with her. He hadn't held back with the other female servants.

"We are in the process of expanding and reinforcing a fifth chamber. This one will be large enough to accommodate some crops."

Aydan had quickly realized that staying on the surface was as useless as it was dangerous. An underground base would increase their chances of survival, but the bedrock was an obstacle. That was where Kleya and her ilk came in. Their bloodline allowed their claws to dig through the indestructible stone. The prince relied on this to create underground farms and make his base self-sufficient.

"Perfect. What about our Holy Guardian?"

The question was directed at Esmée.

"The mutation is a success. When the Sun Wyrms reach adulthood, it will easily destroy any Necro Envoys. However, it needs the light of the suns to hatch..."

"That's annoying, but I understand. Bravo for your work, dear sister. Too bad you weren't as effective with Priam."

"A political marriage didn't interest him," replied Esmée. "He is a man who cherishes his freedom."

"According to Father, humans are like us. If you had let him ride you, he might have let us access the Auctions for free. Too bad, but don't worry, I'll find someone else to sell you to."

Esmée tightened her grip on her cup but endured the insult in silence.

The prince rose and caressed his sister's cheek. "Forgive me, I'm a little nervous because of this necro event... I'll never sell the one who can save us all. Wave eighty of the Colosseum is the key, and I trust you to beat it."

"Three weeks is a bit—"

"Seven. I'll use my Hearthstone to open a portal to our moon in seven weeks. Prepare yourself well."

Esmée briefly wondered why seven weeks. The Hearthstone could be activated once a month, and the current cooldown ended in three weeks. *What are you planning?*

"I'll need to train to make it happen," the princess replied, looking her brother straight in the eyes.

The prince scrutinized her gaze for almost a minute without saying anything. Esmée didn't look away. She hadn't lied—she couldn't with her geas—and her brother knew it. It was simply a way to intimidate her.

"Of course!" Aydan finally exclaimed. "Except during the necro waves, you have carte blanche for the next seven weeks. I advise you to succeed, or you'll owe everyone an apology." Aydan's face contorted into a vile grin. "If you fail, every guard, every soldier, even the animals, will take turns with you until you're *extremely* sorry. You get it?"

“...”

“You get it?!” the prince shouted, grabbing Esmée's hair to shake her head violently.

“Yes!”

“Perfect.”

With those words, Aydan kissed his sister's cheek and left the room with his guards. Kleya and the servant hesitated for a moment before following suit.

Once alone, Esmée wiped away a few tears of rage. It took her several minutes to calm down and summon her grimoire. Aydan's role was to be a buffer between her and her royal father. By becoming too dangerous, he had lost his usefulness.

The family geas prevented her from harming her brother, but the princess had the right to write a story about him, as long as it was beneficial or neutral. Activating her powers, Esmée traced letters on the enchanted paper.

*"Scrolling through the Sun Shop, Aydan Lóthandorim spotted a profession useful to him. He decided to acquire the expert on the spot, and she accepted the summons. The newcomer was a woman of great beauty but a carrier of a mutant and deadly syphilis... **The story takes place in the near future.**"*

After putting away her quill, Esmée tore out the page and swallowed it. Feeling the paper go down her esophagus, she winced. Her stomach was in knots, and the princess knew it had nothing to do with the paper she had just ingested. *Sorry, I don't have a choice...*

*

Status:

PHYSICAL:

Strength 620

Constitution 979

Agility 608

Vitality 870

Perception 754

MENTAL:

Vivacity (D) 516

Dexterity 620

Memory 489 (+13)

Willpower 1 044

Charisma 631

META:

Meta-affinity 581 (+11)

Meta-focus 387

Meta-endurance 428

Meta-perception 267

Meta-chance 230

Meta-authority 78 (+9)

Potential: 18 824 (+9)

Tier 0

Sun points: 1 180 114 (+0)

[He Who Eludes Death] charge: OFF. Reloaded in 2 hours 30 minutes 31 seconds.

[Tribulation]: Four Tribulations pending.

Future Tribulations delayed until:

Time: 162 days 3 hours 3 minutes 44 seconds.

Next thresholds: 12 attributes > 600 / 3 attributes > 900