PRESENT – Ryun
Frustration

The nothingness pushed him on all sides, devouring his body. Since his immortality perk, he could stay in the void for a lot longer. His body was part of the void, except that no he wasn't really being destroyed. Instead, it was almost as if his body was degrading and becoming part of the void around him. The pain was also present, his body did still act like his previous one, but he could handle that. He had pushed himself into the tier 9 void area. The highest, and the most powerful. He couldn't stay there for long, but he wanted to be there for this. He felt like he was close to his revelation, to the ideal that was deep inside of him.

He focused his mind as he drew in the Essence around him into his core, the flooding of his conduits made him feel more connected to the void. The conversation with Nayra made him feel like he was getting closer, so he tried to compose a chant in his mind again. The words came back to him, as if he was remembering something he had once known.

My word, is my bond.
My power, is my right.

He was certain of this part, it had always resonated with him. But it was not everything, just a small part of what he wanted to be.

My word grants me a purpose.
My power grants me means.

The second part he felt was the same. He gained power so that he had the means to enforce his word. It was simple, and it was enough for surviving day to day. But he wanted more, an ideal that could be his guiding principle for all of his life. Inside, he still felt the turmoil of his emotions, the sorrow he felt at losing Melody, the emptiness he felt where the other part of the Eternal Hunter should be. It was... hard to even think about that.

He tried to focus on his inner world.

Nothing exists outside.
All is within me.

He turned his thoughts to the things that influenced him. His Path, something that sought the final end. It wanted him to destroy, to bring an end to things. His perk had a great influence on him as well, something that was outside the scope of the class or path, the remnant of a being that had once been one half of the Aspect of True Death. It was a final end, in a way. His path and his perk went hand in hand, and his Void Aspect did as well. He was struggling to truly grasp what Void in this reality was. It was an emptiness, and yet, it existed, it was here he could feel it through the absence of everything, through the pain it caused him when it tried to destroy him.

In his mind, it was something beyond ordinary comprehension. What existed before the universe? Before the Infinite Realm, if not a void. An oblivion that contained everything, a void to what everything would eventually return to when its Final End came.

All is Void.

The words trembled inside him, and he felt elated. And yet nothing happened. Frustrated, he lost his focus, and felt pain reach his mind. He had been so focused inward that he had barely felt what had happened to him.

His body had suffered a lot of damage from the aspect around him. He used his technique and pushed himself out of the tier 9 void, back into tier 8 that he could now survive in with greater ease. He pushed himself out of the void realm entirely, and created a platform to sit on as gravity reasserted itself and air hit his open wounds.

He was breathing deeply and quickly. Not from the pain, or anything like that, but because he was frustrated. He failed, again. He opened his mouth and screamed his frustration to the empty sky. Then he slumped, feeling exhausted. His body and skill were able to handle his wounds, but he knew that he should take care of that. He pulled out his storage rings from

his Void Storage and put them on, then he pulled out a healing potion and drank it.

The part about everything being the void had felt right, but in the end it wasn't enough. He closed his eyes, he was remembering more now than he had the last time, so perhaps he was closer. He started to think about the void, as a concept in this reality. It was... nothingness, and it was in some ways everything. Something had to exist outside of all of this, something that surrounded an infinite universe. It was hard to wrap his head around, but he did believe that there was a void out there somewhere, a true void. The Aspect of Void in this reality was not exactly what he thought the concept to be. It existed as Essence, a particle that produced a certain effect. In a way, it was a copy of a real concept, just like everything else in this world was.

Fire was not fire, it was Essence that acted like fire, producing a similar effect, only not quite. It wasn't combustion, a reaction between oxygen and fuel. It did consume air Essence, he had seen it happen, but it was... It was created in a different manner. Fire essence was created in a copy of real fire, friction that simply created it out of nothing. The Fire Essence then started to burn everything around it while consuming Air Essence nearby.

To him the difference didn't matter that much, it didn't apply to anything that impacted him. And yet, gravity was different too. It was almost a dense ocean of Essence that pushed everything down. The higher you went, the deeper you were, and the more pressure it exerted against you, pushing you down.

The rules were not the same here as they were on Earth, and perhaps that was part of what was holding him back. Void was nothingness in his mind, and perhaps his words resonated because he had nothing as a goal. He shook his head, forcing himself from the topic. He was too frustrated to think about it now.

He healed up, then dressed and headed back down. The caravan had continued to their destination, and he needed to catch up.

They entered the city of Dall'dvor through a massive gate halfway up the mountain. The entrance was flanked by two great statues, carved out of stone, one looked like a minotaur holding a hammer raised high above its head, and the other was a demasi with a feather in its fingers. As they followed the procession leading into the city, Ryun studied the people around them. Many of them were as different from each other as they were from him. He saw other races, those that he had never seen before. He blinked as he realized that a few of the carriages were actually moving by themselves, it seemed like they were running on formations or arrays.

They were walking on foot, and he was flanked by Nayra and Anrosh, with Lesamitrus following close behind them. His ever present sidekick had been left behind in charge of the caravan that would camp outside a bit down the mountainside, as they didn't want to pay to store their wagons and mounts inside the city, it was expensive.

The plan was not just to rest, but to take some time to learn more about the situation in the core. They knew very little about the politics, and while Ryun didn't particularly care, Anrosh had insisted that they needed to know at least the basics if they wanted to avoid saying the wrong thing at a wrong time.

Ryun didn't really plan on socializing, he was content to leave all of that to the two of them. The only reason why he came with them to the city was because he wanted to see what a big city looked like in the Infinite Realm. If what his senses were telling him was right, it was truly massive. He couldn't wait to see it with his own eyes.

The procession drew closer to the gates, and then they were stopped by the guards who stood there in almost bored stances. The one that spoke to them was a karura, a feathered bird person. Ryun looked at him or her since he couldn't really tell. They didn't have wings from what he could tell, but the feathers covered nearly all of their body. Their hands ended in short talons that seemed like they had been trimmed. He got no feeling of Qi from them, which was what surprised him the most. He had gotten so used to feeling it in other people. Yet now he realized that there weren't many people around them that had Qi.

"Purpose of visit?" the guard asked.

Anrosh cleared her throat and responded. "Passing through on our way to the tournament."

The guard's small beady eyes blinked at that, and he looked them all over for the first time. His eyes took each of them in, and then finally he turned back to Anrosh.

"Affiliation?"

"Twilight Melody Sect, I'm the Sect Leader," she answered, then gestured at Ryun. "And I am accompanying our Sect Head"

The guard blinked at that, and Ryun could feel every one of the guards tense at that. He didn't quite understand why though.

"Do you know our laws?" the guard asked.

"Yes, we've familiarized ourselves with them," Anrosh told him. Lesamitrius had been the one that told them the laws, his education had included the laws of the most prominent factions.

"Our city is not the sects," the guard stressed. "Follow our laws, and we will have no issues."

"Of course, guardsman," Anrosh said with a bow.

The guard looked at the other guards around him, uncomfortable, then he simply nodded and waved them through.

Once they were out of the earshot. Lesamitrius spoke out.

"They don't like people from the sects here," he said. "Most consider us battle crazy fanatics."

Anrosh glanced at Ryun, then shook her head. "I wish that I could say that we aren't."

Nayra chuckled, while Lesamitrus looked somewhat ashamed. He had come to the Twilight Melody Sect looking for a fight after all. Ryun didn't comment, instead he watched the entrance to the city. It was a massive corridor, with pillars and murals painted on the walls. The battles were sprawling and filled with war and death.

He saw Nayra pause as they reached a part of the painting that depicted a large mountain pass and a large battle.

"What is it?" Anrosh asked.

Nayra glanced at Lesamitrius, and then shook her head. "It's nothing."

Obviously she knew something about that battle, but no one pushed. It probably had something to do with the things she was hiding.

They continued, reaching the elevators that led into the city proper. And as the elevators started dropping, more things entered Ryun's range. He knew what to expect before the walls were gone and they could see into the massive cavern stretching before them. It was as if the entire mountain was hollowed out in the shape of a large dome. Bright spheres of light hung in the air, illuminating the inside.

And below them the city itself stretched in all directions. To his eyes it was filled with a fog of all the colors imaginable, making it hard to see the city in great detail.

"Wow," Anrosh said. It was probably the largest city she had ever seen.

Nayra didn't seem as impressed, nor was Lesamitrius. To Ryun, it was amazing, but he had seen cities on Earth, in the media that he consumed. One thing did catch his eyes though, the large hole in the center of the city.

"What is that?" Ryun asked.

Lesamitrius cleared his throat. "It is the path to the Under."

"Under?" Ryun asked.

"Ah... It is the world beneath the ground. Many dangers and opportunities lie there," Lesamitirus answered him.

Ryun nodded his head, it made sense. If the world was infinite, it probably stretched beneath as well. They rode the rest of the way in silence, each taking in the sights in their own way.

After they found an Inn, they decided to split up and explore the city. Ryun went with Lesamitirus, which left Anrosh and Nayra alone. He knew that they wanted some time together and he was happy to oblige.

He and Lesamitirus walked in the streets in silence, taking in the sights. Ryun was surprised to see things that he hadn't seen in a long time. Walking platforms, flying disks, and even something resembling a car. The city of inventions did live up to its name.

"What do you think of this," Ryun asked when they stumbled upon a particularly large vehicle, it shone with formations, looked like a cross of some kind of steampunk car and a modern car.

Lesamitrius was surprised to be asked anything, but Ryun waited patiently for him to recover.

The man looked at the vehicle, then at the city around him. Finally, he met Ryun's eyes. "I think... I think that this all is a waste, Sect Head," he answered.

Ryun raised an eyebrow. "How so?"

"That thing," he gestured at the vehicle. "The amount of resources invested in it is enough to raise a dozen Cultivators to higher realms, Lord perhaps. And yet, whoever made it threw that resources at it. And for what? I can run faster than it, I can carry more. I could probably destroy it with ease. It is nothing but a vain expense for no benefit."

Ryun smiled. "Perhaps it is that now. But in time, people will get better at it, and eventually they will be able to create wonders."

Lesamitrius didn't seem convinced, but that was fine. He had lived his whole life in the Infinite Realm, he hadn't seen what was possible. But here, in this city, Ryun could see that the technology of the Infinite Realm was advancing slowly.

They continued their walk, seeing all kinds of different and interesting sights. The people around them were throwing curious looks at them. Probably because they stood out, they wore their robes, in black and violet colors of the Twilight Melody Sect. It was obvious that they didn't belong, that they were from the sects. The people around them wore clothes that were more in line of what people on Earth used to wear. Although they obviously had different styles to them. Still, Ryun could pick up conversations around them. Hear people talk about them. They were weary of them, apparently people from the sects were not only rarely seen, they were also usually stronger than average people around.

He ignored them for the most part, and tried to focus on seeing what kinds of marvels these people had invented. He wondered just how many of the people around him, thousands, millions that lived in the city, how many of them had their own ideals. Had they gone through what he had been trying

to do? To fix his existence inside his mind and soul, to know what it all was for. Those thoughts turned his mood foul again, and he grimaced. He doubted that most of them had even thought about it. They lived their lives so... so small. And part of him wondered if he was wrong to try and do this. What was even the point? He had power, and he could get more of it in time. He shook his head, at times it felt like he had no reason to gain power, not when there wasn't someone there to share it with. Which then made him feel his loneliness again, surrounded by millions, he was alone.

Then, Ryun stopped in the middle of the street.

"Sect Head?" Lesamitrius asked.

Ryun grimaced at himself for being so wrapped up in his own head. Looking around, he saw that the busy streets were gone, replaced by a small street in between buildings that were clearly less maintained. There were few people around outside, and if he had been paying attention this never would've happened. They had wondered into what was obviously a bad part of town, and as they stopped, four people stepped out from around a corner in front of them.

Six more came up behind them.

"Well, well," a man in front of them said. He was a minotaur, tall and wide, wearing dented and scarred armor on his chest and a large hammer in one hand. It was obvious that he had seen a lot of battles. The others all around them were carrying weapons as well.

Lesamitrius stepped in front of Ryun, his scimitar coming free of its sheath.

"Do my eyes betray me or do we have some sect freaks in front of us?" the minotaur said which made the others all laugh.

Ryun couldn't tell how strong they were, since they didn't have any Cultivation. Slowly he turned the ring on his hand and their screens popped up. He was surprised, the leader was level 285 and had a perfect skill, the others were lower, but all around the same power level, between four and five tiers of power. They obviously had no idea what they had walked into, and Ryun already frustrated by his own failings was looking forward to spilling some blood.

He was about to jump on them when Lesamitrius spoke.

"We have no quarrel with you, we are just passing through," he said, and his voice snapped Ryun back to reality. This wasn't the frontier, and they were not part of a sect. The law of this place forbade killing, and Ryun couldn't attack first, not if he wanted to respect the law. He sighed, and resigned himself to waiting until this dance was over.

"But this here is out street," the minotaur gestured around with his free hand. "You are trespassing. Now, if you pay our toll, we might let you pass through."

"And how much is this payment?" Lesamitrius asked, his hands tightening on his weapon as his eyes narrowed.

"Oh, nothing much, just everything that you are currently wearing," the minotaur snickered.

Ryun shook his head. Both he and Lesamitrius were wearing their rings openly, it hadn't occurred to him that someone might see them as a target because of that.

"Don't attack first, and don't kill" Ryun whispered, barely audible, but Lesamitrius' ear twitched letting him know that he had heard.

"So, what is it going to be?" Minotaur asked as he raised his hammer up to his shoulder.

"It will be a no from us," Lesamitrius said. "I will give you this one warning however, this will not end well for you. We are not some common rabble that you can just rob. Continue at your own peril."

The minotaur snorted, and then his eyes narrowed at them. "I've fought sect warriors in wars. This is typical sect arrogance, we outnumber you little ravzor, be smart, preserve your lives."

Lesamitrius relaxed, then stepped back next to Ryun. "I am being smart."

With that neither of them moved, and the minotaur lost his patience.

"Go," he said simply and his people moved. Their weapons raised and ready as they charged. All were blunt weapons, probably because they wanted to beat them up and take their stuff and not actually kill them, Ryun assumed at least.

In an instant after they moved, he cycled his Qi through his body and activated {Null Mantle} at nearly instantaneous speed. He moved some of

his stats to endurance. One of the thugs behind him surged forward at great speed, probably using an ability, and swung his club at Ryun's head. He didn't move, and the club hit his head. He didn't know what the club was made out of, but he felt it vibrate, felt it crack and then shatter to pieces.

And with that, they had attacked first. Any truth-seeing or sensing power would confirm it.

{Layered Qi Armor} blossomed around him, and then he activated **{Growing Qi Shaping}**. Blunted rods grew out of his armor at incredible speeds, smashing into every thug on the street. It sent some flying, others managed to avoid the hit. The minotaur leader roared and his hammer increased in size as he activated a skill and swung it down. Ryun pointed his fingers in his direction and a rod shot out hitting him in the center of his chest and sending him flying back.

He sent a few rods at the thugs behind them, knocking one up and hitting the others hard in their chests, sending them back to the ground.

"Take care of the ones behind us," Ryun said to Lesamitrius who had jumped to the side when they had charged.

With that he changed his stats to his strength and dexterity and jumped forward. One of the thugs was getting up to his feet, Ryun stomped on his hand and shattered every bone in it. Then he punched him in the head and knocked him out. The second thug was already up and Ryun turned with his |Pouncing Rush| his body blurred and pounced at him, his hand grabbing his shoulder and squeezing hard enough that he cracked bones. The ravzor man screamed and Ryun saw flashes inside his body as he activated his perks. Before the man could bring whatever that was to bear he threw him across the street into the wall on the other side.

Then, only the minotaur was left. The man was on his feet his hammer in his hand and his eyes focused on Ryun. He opened his mouth to speak, but Ryun wasn't interested to hear a monologue.

[Inevitable Step] brought him close, surprising the minotaur. The lines in his body flashed and then he bulged, probably a stat boost. He swung his hammer and Ryun let it hit his armor. It hit the Void Qi wrought armor and stopped. Ryun reached up and grabbed his hand, then he kicked one of his legs out of him and dropped him to his knees.

"Wha-" the minotaur started, and Ryun broke his arm. His question turned to scream as Ryun grabbed his horns and broke them off too. The minotaur's body was flashing, perks and abilities triggering, but from what he could see they had to be stat boosts. The problem was that none of them got him even close to Ryun's strength.

Ryun shattered his other hand, then his shoulder. Then he moved on to his legs. He broke his bones, one by one, all the while the minotaur was screaming, and by the end crying. When he had broken all his limbs and a few bones extra he stopped. And stood up.

He sighed, breaking their bones hadn't made him feel any better.

He turned around and saw Lesamitrius standing there with his sword pointed to the ground, a complicated expression on his face. Ryun stopped his techniques and his armor collapsed to nothing.

Then, with a look around the street he turned to Lesamitrius.

"Go find the guards, we should take care of this."