

*The **Platonic Scalpel**, otherwise known as the Editor to some, is a Perfect-Omnipresent Artifact left behind during the times of primordial chaos. The Antediluvians, those precursors to all that exist in these fathoms, created the ciphers as additional supplements to systems and perhaps corrective elements to them.*

*They cannot make lasting changes, but they can bridge some elements.*

*At a glance, the High Craft of Ciphering bears semblance to magic. However, spellcraft falls under the purview of a **Conceptual System** — one that potentially governs a realm, a world, a reality, or even several of these things. Its function exists within the parameters of a guideline, and requires essence to be fueled.*

*The Editor, on the other hand, allows you to capture effects, concepts, and moments in the world. These moments are then contained within encoded **Signs**, connected by **Reference Circuits**, and then molded into **Arguments** per the crafter's design to form a paracausal construct layered into present reality.*

*Such is why we, Ardents of the Unshackled Fate, wish to see the distribution of **Platonic Scalpels** across the worlds via the Trespasser's Compendiums. For even the Classes should be granted the right to decide their own fates.*

-Moonscar, of the Unshackled Fate

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Paths to Ascension (III)

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The information was not read so much as directly inserted into Wei's mind. Every detail was overlaid upon his perception, with subsections expanding from below major options. The layouts of his choices were strange, the young master felt heard his System speak to him.

**The Trespasser's Compendium interfaces directly with your (Mind) Aspect. Focus on one of the major criteria to expand existing entries or options. Send mental queries to gain suggestions and filter for desired information.**

Wei did so for a specific topic: a fresh wound constantly reopened with every reference.

## **Forum**

### **>Popular Entries**

#### **>Breaking: Destruction of Evernest**

Another page tore free from the tome and sailed out before Wei, and a sea of text continued splashing across its sides like a flood. The updates came constantly, and as the end of the page was reached, Wei expected another piece to be torn free from the compendium. Instead, the page flipped right, and there was suddenly more content on the other side.

**The action of turning the page right or left will allow you to cycle through existing material. Should you have any specific inquiries, you can also filter them directly using the search function.**

Wei was about to ask what the search function when it appeared over the page.

### **Search: [Enter thought here]**

Wei blinked at the strangeness of the request. Performing the act was paradoxically uncanny and intuitive. Forcing through a hurricane of discomfort, Wei strangled his emotions into submission and entered his thought into the 'container.' It was something he asked his father upon the discovery of his mother's corpse. It was something he both yearned to know, and feared the actual answer to.

### **Search: [Why was Evernest destroyed]**

#### **>Related messages: 3,513**

The sheer quantity of messages left Wei staggered. As he considered starting from the very top, the compendium responded and the page rotated leftward at blurring speeds. When it finally stilled, Wei's attention was captured by brightly lit letters amidst a sea of darkened text.

**[20040815-3]: Well. Looks like the Inheritors are going for it. Another Fulcrum Realm just got cracked. That makes... what, now? Seven realms they already destroyed? Pretty aggressive, if you ask me.**

**Next>>>**

**[19881230-0]: No surprise there. Still. Poor bastards. Think that was just a Level 20 or so world. They barely have any magic. All those people killed just to open a pathway... Makes me sick.**

**Next>>>**

**[19990304-0]: We all know what these bastards are doing. They're preparing to make a run on Earth. Be the ones to claim it in the end before anyone else is ready to fight them. Of course they are. It'll basically stack the deck permanently in their favor afterward. Hell, if they capture the Antediluvian Vault, they might actually transmigrate the entire planet. Bring an apocalypse straight to Earth.**

**Next>>>**

**[20040815-3]: Okay, this seems too psycho. Even for them. If they hit Earth, that won't be an apocalypse, but a full-blown System War. No one is going to let someone else claim a Nexus World like Earth without a fight. Too much at risk.**

**Next>>>**

**[19990304-0]: Why do you think they've been hunting for a "Concept-Breaker" System for so long? They're playing to win. And I think they might have just found their ace in Evernest...**

Wei frowned as he tried to understand what was being said. Even after going through several other lines. He also didn't understand what the numbers at the front of each line denoted.

**It was the date of their trespass, Wei's System helpfully provided. The following dash indicates how many others fell before and after them. Dash-1 means you were the first. Dash-0 means you were the only. You are currently listed as [Null-0], as displayed in the upper left corner of the interface.**

Wei blinked and noted the small line of text in the corner of his vision. "... see." He also recalled another detail: How the System registered him as both a cultivator and a Trespasser for some reason. Does losing one's world make one a Trespasser?

**No. Trespassers are a human subspecies. You have not passed over from another world. However, you bear the genetic and conceptual matching that of Trespasser. It is likely why you managed to resist Source Corruption for as long as you did.**

A discomfort filled Wei. He wanted to reject the System's words, but it had no reason to lie. Moreover, though Wei couldn't be absolutely sure of if it was his mother or father that was the Trespasser, he had more than hunch pointing to the latter. Looking back, his father had always been... *unorthodox*. He acted and thought in ways no other cultivator did, and it was his sudden rise in power, his utter uniqueness, that earned the right to court Wei's mother.

There it was. Another memory defiled by his father's betrayal. Another truth to extract from the man when he was finally broken.

But he was no longer the only one. According to the messages, the *Inheritors* had been behind the destruction of Wei's home—something they did to further a grander, more nebulous goal. Trying to access this "*Earth*" world.

Wei paused as he looked at Rafael. The lich mentioned that name too. Earth. Did that mean Wei's father also shared a point of origin? Did he also have a Compendium. With each passing moment, there was more he needed to uncover. More threats loomed on the horizon.

**If you are confused about anything, the Compendium's Encyclopedia can provide you with potential explanations. You can search for multiple entries at once.**

Heeding his System's suggestion, Wei fed more thoughts into the book and accessed the Encyclopedia. At once, new pages ripped free from random places in the book, and Wei winced with each resounding tear.

"Don't worry," Rafael said, doing some reading of his own, "it won't run out of pages. Truthfully, I don't think it can."

Wei cocked an eyebrow at the lich. "Truly? It is that potent of an artifact?" He looked the book over once more. The book's paltry essence fooled him; for something to be literally limitless was beyond the means of most cultivators to achieve. Most cultivators on Wei's home world. Existence was far grander in power and scope than he could have ever imagined, and learning said fact left the young master drowned in both awe and apprehension.

Rafael hummed awkwardly. "Less potent perhaps and more... Omnipresent. This is an Antediluvian Artifact, my friend. The fact of its existence supersedes the laws governing most natural realms and realities. Only a System-Host could potentially affect its Conceptual Structure."

A beat followed, and the lich shot Wei a lingering look, but said nothing besides.

Entries related to **[Inheritors]** and **[Fulcrum Realm]**. Hovered before Wei. The first one displayed an illustration at the top of the page—an *emblem*, his System informed—that resembled countless tendrils burrowing through the shell of what resembled a world.

**[Inheritors]:** The Inheritors are a Trespasser-composed faction. They claim to have been chosen by Antediluvian Remnants to carry out the Final Design and align all realms under a singleton System. To this end, they have been actively destroying Fulcrum Realms across the Fathoms to access Nexus Worlds where Antediluvian Vaults and Foundries are stored.

**[Fulcrum Realm]:** Worlds or planes that channel the flow of Source circulating through the Fathoms along a specific Liminality Vein. These worlds usually possess Low-Essence Levels, and the most critical among them might also contain Systems at their cores or within their neighboring stars.

Annoyance consumed Wei. These entries gave him more questions than answers. It was just like reading through one of Master Hao's illustrative texts.

You can jump to connected entries by focusing on underlined text, his System helpfully provided.

*Almost* like Master Hao's texts. At least Wei didn't need to dig through a few thousand other scrolls to find what was being references. Wei called up the entry on **[Evernest]** first. In doing so, disappointment followed close to annoyance.

**[Evernest]:** **[Add thoughts here to generate entry]**

Nothing. Not even a bit of detail. His world was so insignificant that it's legacy was little more than emptiness and a request for more information. His fists were clenched, and he let out a shuddering breath. But if his world was so irrelevant, then why was a System stored at its core. Which also reminded him that he should probably—

***“Wei,”*** Mepheleon's voice sounded in the back of the young master's mind. Wei jolted in sudden surprise, reaching out to call his spear—scowling once more when it didn't come. No one else in the sanctuary noticed his sudden shift in expression. ***“Do not vocalize my presence. Just listen: you have a problem.”***

Wei resisted defying the Harbinger with a glib remark at that. He knew he had a problem—he had lots of problems, and every time Mepheleon spoke to him, his problems multiplied into more problems.

***“A hunter has descended the Tower. A contract has been issued for your death or capture. I anticipate that you have at most half a hour before your pursuer locates you, should you stay in place.”***

That was indeed an issue, though one he could probably solve through conventional means.

***“Don’t expect to be solving this your usual way. I might not be able to pierce your thoughts easily, but you are not so complicated, my young friend. Violence is everyone’s first resort when they feel powerful. Sadly, you are not the powerful one in this equation. I expect your hunter to be a Knight of Hell. That puts them approximately at Lv. 20 or higher. Which makes them exponentially superior to you in all Aspects. Except for Will... Alas, even with that advantage, and though you might have a System, you haven’t passed through your First Gate. Best to avoid this problem entirely.”***

A sudden pulse of essence came from the eight obsidian portals awaiting at the opposite side of the room. He was beginning to see a faint sheen of light settle over each pathway.

***“And as a note of clarification, I’m warning you about this right now not because of blatant favoritism so much as someone has broken my rules. Of course the Circle may dispatch hunters to capture, aid, or even potentially slay Sinners, it is not to be done by a Knight of Hell, and it is not to be done toward the end of furthering Inheritor interests. Considering the pages you’re looking at right now, yes. Yes, they do hold your father’s leash—were the architects behind your world’s destruction.”***

The fires of loathing burned colder within Wei. The Harbinger continued. ***“Usually, I give Sinners a day before I start ‘nudging’ them to move. But as my erstwhile rival.’ have decided to reach their fingers into my playground, let’s see things slam shut around their fingers, shall we?”***

At once, all seven gates came aglow with ripple of force. This time, the rest of the group did notice. Rafeal turned away from his page and tilted slightly in the air. Roggi rose from the spring, an arm still missing, but otherwise completely healed. A vicious coughing fit from Ellena distracted her daughter. Wei regarded the deposed queen and saw a darkness outlining her veins.

“The Taint’s coming back,” Ellena moaned. She tried to rise from the waters, but she staggered—and Agnesia caught her before she could fall. “I can feel her... feel her reaching for me.”

***“Oh, good,”*** Mepheleon chuckled. His voice remained a whisper within Wei’s ears. ***“Right on time. The Dying Queen is making her play. Offering me another kindred. Well. That’s fine. I accept her connection. Wei. See our unfortunate queen and here Classed. Such is the only way she will be able to survive and resist the Embracing.”***

“Mother,” Agnesia cried, holding the older woman steady.

“What is wrong with her?” Rafael asked, flying close and dragging the Compendium in tow. His question was answered less by reply and more by noticing the marks on Ellena’s neck.

“*Ruination!* Vampire!”

“Not yet,” Agnesia said, eyes burning bright. “We can still help her. We’re close... we just need to—”

“To get her through one of the portals,” Wei said, cutting into the discussion, but mentioning nothing else of what he had just learned. He didn’t know why Mepheleon hid their presence from the others, but the Harbinger clearly had larger schemes. Frustrated though Wei was to be ignorant, he would be a fool to spite Mepheleon while they were trying to aid him.

The others looked to him, and he continued.

“She needs a Class. Her... *Constitution* is lacking.” He didn’t immediately state which Class she should take for fear of seeming too certain, and moreover, he wished to learn more details as well.

***“Oh, and don’t worry, whatever path you take will have an Eidolon waiting for you in some form. Ask the guide for more details... but Wei... time is against you. Be hasty about it.”***

So much for his hope for prolonged meditation and recovery.

“Why are the gates already open,” Roggi asked. “I thought we’d get more time to...” The Oathbearer glowered at his mauled armor. They had come out of the last fight far worse for wear. He likely wanted to make some repairs, but they just didn’t have the time.

“We think. Life happens. The heavens laugh.” Wei’s statements were blunt and cold, but Roggi took them admirably, accepting the situation with a nod.

“So... what now, then,” Agnesia said, supporting her mother? “Do we head through the gates?”

“No,” Wei said, eyeing the lich in the case. “That comes after we have a quick conversation with our guide...”