

## Chapter 418

### It's Still Not About Killing Monsters

The Bertinelli Collection in the menswear department of the department store Jason found had a very specific set of clothes. Modelled after the clothes designed for Jason by Gilbert Bertinelli in the other world, they fit like a glove. Unlike the originals, these were silver-rank, although none boasted any exceptional abilities. They were clothes, with some minor self-cleaning and self-repair functions, but mostly designed for casual wear. Gilbert's designs and material choices made them more durable than most but they were hardly adventuring gear. Many of Jason's original outfits had fallen to misadventure, in no small part because he and the threats he had faced had both come to outrank them.

The silver-rank replacements felt perfect sliding on, Jason hoped they wouldn't dissolve the moment he left the transformation space. Erika wouldn't like it if Jason showed up naked on the news. He also looked around at the goods that weren't just ranked-up reproductions of his old clothes.

Gilbert's Resilient Attire For the Discerning Gentleman was a store that catered to the adventurer with armour that would put them in good stead, all the way until they ranked up. One of the first things Gary had warned Jason against was cheaping-out on equipment since it would cost more in the long term than investing in good gear from the start. The menswear department didn't have any of the heavy armour, but there was some of the lightweight cloth armour that Jason preferred and was a particular specialty of Gilbert's.

Jason looked around at outfits he had seen in Gilbert's store but never purchased, along with some that he had. There was a copy of his old trap weaver armour, which had served him excellently at iron-rank. It had stronger self-repair enchantments than the clothes, along with a plethora of additional features. There was even a replica of his bespoke bronze-rank armour that had been destroyed in Makassar. He wasn't going to wear them, since they were at their original rank, but he took both if only for sentimental reasons.

Jason loaded up his inventory's outfit tabs with new clothes and then looked over some of the silver-rank armour options, although the pickings were slim, being a menswear section rather than an actual armoury. There wasn't anything as fancy as his custom armour, but he picked up an outfit of black and dark green material. It highlighted Gilbert's expertise in getting as much protection as possible without compromising flexibility.

The outfit was a ranked up version of an inexpensive armour Jason had considered at iron-rank, before being convinced to splurge by Gary. It may have lacked features but even Gilbert's basic products didn't skimp on quality. Jason took off the fresh clothes he had slipped on and suited up in the armour.

"It's still not about killing monsters," he told his reflection in a wall mirror. "It's about how good you look while killing monsters."

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The next expansion of Jason's territory went smoothly, being a repeat of the rabid horde anomalies he had faced with the gold rankers. The minigun proved to be highly effective, mowing down anomalies like blades of grass. Using the gun to completely deplete the unstable cores converted them into something else.

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Item: [Genesis Reclamation Core] (transcendent rank, legendary)

*A magical vessel capable of reclaiming the energy of unseated reality cores (consumable, magic core).*

- **Effect:** Can drain the energy from unseated reality cores, as well as individuals and objects that have consumed that energy. When completely charged, this item will transmute into a [Regenesis Core].

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Jason had no idea what a regenesis core was, but it seemed the reclamation cores could potentially drain the power from gold-rankers and ancient vampires, which represented a huge weapon against them. Jason resolved to use the minigun to create as many of them as he could.

With his increased arsenal and a lot of territory left to claim, Jason conducted his next domain expansion with a large excess of the required stable genesis cores. Each expansion had increased the affected area, but adding all those extra cores caused the expansion to blow out to an area five or six kilometres across.

The domain finally reached the limits of the city zone, which Jason estimated to be roughly the area covered by the dome in the real world. With so much expansion, Jason wouldn't be able to see what lay in the gloom beyond his new territory until he ventured out to the new border, but he had more important things to deal with. He sensed anomalies penetrating his domain from all around it and could immediately tell they were not like those that came before.

Given the distances involved, Jason commandeered one of the cars out on the street. He could have used his silver-rank speed to sprint around but the cars were just there, so he decided to use them. They were rather science-fiction looking cars, which he didn't

hate, but he had no keys. Seeing as it was part of his domain, he concentrated on controlling it and the door clicked open. It took longer to get the car to start but after a minute of prodding with his aura, the electric engine hummed to life.

The ride wasn't as smooth as Shade's car forms but it was still an easy journey out through the streets of Jason's expanded domain. He stopped the quiet car a few hundred metres short of where he sensed the closest anomaly and progressed on foot. Compared to the human-shaped anomalies of the last few expansions, Jason could already tell these were different.

Their auras were notably more powerful and there were far fewer of them, although fewer was relative. Jason's spirit domain was now somewhere between five and six kilometres across and he sensed anomalies cross the border at fairly even distances, all around. He estimated the number of anomalies somewhere north of a hundred and fifty.

Jason's first objective was to scout out the enemy, catch one before they started converging and test its strength. He moved carefully, observing its aura. It was moving swiftly, although not at the breakneck rush the rabid anomalies had. He was in a more suburban area of the city without so many tall buildings, one and two-storey homes with one-floor businesses peppered amongst them. He found one three-storey apartment complex and went inside, using the roof as a vantage.

What he spotted walking down the middle of the street looked like a werewolf, a hulking hybrid of man and beast that stood larger than either. It was bipedal, with long arms ending in brutal-looking claws. It would have stood some eight or nine feet tall if it hadn't been hunched forward.

Jason was about to move when the anomaly sniffed the air and looked right up at him.

"Crap."

He pulled the pistols in his hip and shoulder holster, immediately firing at the werewolf. He wasn't anticipating much but wanted to compare them to previous anomalies. It was already moving fast before the first shots went off, sprinting at the building. Its shambling gait wasn't wildly fast, but when it leapt at the wall and started climbing, its pace barely slowed. Strong claws digging right into the wall, the creature rushed up as Jason leaned over the side to rain down pistol blasts.

The pistols singed hair but didn't seem to impede the creature at all, which vaulted onto the flat roof as Jason scrambled back, dropping his pistols. He smoothly pulled the lightning gun from the magnetic clips on his back and fired.

Electricity blasted out of the arc rifle in a blinding flash, locking onto the werewolf anomaly like a tether. The creature was rocked back on its feet by the jolt of electricity but let out an angry growl as it pushed forward again. The air was filled with the stench of burning hair as the anomaly tried to push on with the electricity burning up its flesh, only to collapse on the rooftop.

The muscle paralysis effect of the lightning gun had kicked in, leaving the werewolf struggling to swipe its claws vainly in Jason's direction, even as its arms savagely cramped up. Jason continued holding down the trigger to pump electricity into it.

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➤ [You have defeated \[Living Anomaly\].](#)

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Jason slung the lightning gun on his back and picked up his dropped pistols before holstering them. The lightning gun had proved to be effective against the werewolf but it burned through far too much of Jason's mana for just one monster. He could potentially bank on the chaining effect to take on multiples at once, but the chains weren't reliable and there were still more than a hundred and fifty of the anomalies. He had some mana potions but nowhere near enough to fuel the lightning gun enough for that.

The solution would have to be the minigun, which was an acceptable outcome. It ran on cores rather than Jason's mana and he wanted to deplete some of those cores anyway, so he set out to hunt the monstrous anomalies with his giant gun.

The anomalies turned out to be all human-animal hybrids, mostly wolves and bears that fell quite easily to the minigun. Other proved much trickier, such as flying falcon hybrids that dodged the blasts of his unwieldy gun. Against them, Jason was forced to pull the lightning gun back out and burn through huge chunks of his mana.

This was a trend as Jason's powerful minigun made short work of the larger hybrids. More troublesome were the smaller, faster ones that were hard to pin down with the unwieldy weapon. The worst were the fox hybrids, who were only the size of children but still boasted strength at the low end of silver-rank. Their speed was closer to the high end, making them agile enough to avoid the heavy minigun.

Jason's response was to drop the gun and pull out his sword. The fox hybrids were fast but lacked the strength of the bear hybrids and the savage claws and teeth of the werewolves. This meant that Jason's armour held up relatively well to the fox hybrids but they were still strong and fast enough that many drew blood before Jason cut them down.

Eventually, Jason took all the anomalies down. Things got hairy at the end as they started converging and attacking in groups, but the minigun was a specialty tool for

handling clustered enemies. Only against a mixed group of five, including some devilishly elusive fox hybrids was Jason ever worried about the outcome.

When the last anomaly fell, nothing happened. Jason had roamed close enough to the edges of the city to see that his domain now encompassed all of it, with a gloom-filled forest beyond. He had been sure that this would complete his second full territory but he had no response from the system. This meant that either the territory expanded beyond the limits of the city or there were still anomalies remaining.

Just as he was considering the possibility of some stealth hybrid that had evaded his aura senses, something new came lumbering out of the gloom. Jason heard it first, a rumble of distant thunder, then another and another. Jason had seen enough monster movies to know giant footsteps when he heard them.

The aura came next, pushing into Jason's domain as if struggling to escape the gloom. It was like Jason's aura in that, despite being silver-rank, it possessed strength far above the norm. Even Jason's aura, for all its power, fell short of the sheer magnitude of what was emerging from the darkness beyond Jason's domain. A giant leg appeared first, taller than a house and darker than night. It looked to be made from the same void-stuff as Jason's cloak, but without stars to light up the black emptiness.

As it stepped out of the gloom, The creature's full, looming height was revealed to be the equal of Jason's towering pagoda. It was more than a kilometre away from Jason but he had no trouble spotting it, despite being a dark figure against a dark background. The size was a huge factor, but also it was limned in a silvery light that only highlighted how much of a void its body was. It made the entity look like a gateway to some dark dimension.

The shadow giant had the proportions of a tall, thin man, with long arms that hung down at its knees, dangling limply as it walked. It moved with a slow inexorability, turning in Jason's direction. While it looked slow, that was an illusion of size, with the vast length of its stride actually propelling it quite swiftly.

Jason moved himself to a place where he had a long line of sight on the monster, picking the grassy strip between where the city ended and the dark woods began. He pulled out the magic bazooka, having positioned himself hundreds of metres away. He had no interest in catching himself in the explosion again.

He dropped in an unstable core and fired it with the lumbering giant not even trying to dodge. It was struck dead centre, its torso and head immediately wiped out in a blast that still had enough force to whip violently at Jason's hair and clothes, even from so far away. Gobbets of something black, wet and stinking rained down from the sky, the core

explosion almost having evaporated the giant. Only its legs and its severed hands remained, all dropping to the ground. The legs toppled like felled trees, one of them crushing a house.

“That was surprisingly straightforward,” Jason said to himself.

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- You have defeated [Greater Anomaly].
  - You have overtaken a genesis space territory and purged all anomalous elements.
  - Completed territory is being remade.
  - Return to core territory to initiate transfiguration of new territory.
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Jason’s first territory had undergone a wild transformation after completely claiming it, going from dingy hotel to opulent pagoda. It sounded like his second territory would undergo a similar change and he had no interest in being in the middle of a city folding in on itself like origami or whatever ended up happening. First, though, he had to loot the giant.

“Boss monster,” he said as he wandered towards the closest toppled leg. “This is definitely a dungeon.”

He frowned as a thought occurred to him.

“It better not drop loot boxes full of crap cosmetics.”