

You know what, you're right. I'm not sure what I was thinking, making the word "Knight" both a Specialization and the Lv. 25 Class Ascension title above Servant.

I supposed I was more occupied by other things at the time, such as drinking as many stars as possible. A word of advice to those of you above Level 250 with a [Devour] skill: don't get addicted to drinking suns. You'll develop a habit. There is a lot of energy in fusion, and you'll start getting addicted.

Ahem. Anyway, just read the bloody descriptions. One's about offering major Strength and Constitution boosts to your Class while the other is general boost and an evolution. Why, at Level 25, you can even evolve your Knight Specialization to something greater, you'll be able to acclimate in—

Oh, who am I kidding, you're right. You're right! I need to rename this bloody Specialization to something else. What about "Direct-Murder-Person"? Hm? Would that help you understand its function better?

-Mephelean the Harbinger

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Specialization (IV)

The Knight of Wrath vanished as it rushed forth, and Wei barely evaded the first cut. The Knight's bone-made blade was colossal, displacing air and essence in equal measure. Wei ducked beneath the edge. He felt a few strands of hair get severed in the process, but worse yet, a section of his skull fractured, as if tugged by an inexorable force with the passing of the bone-sword.

Source: [93/110] Lumens

Launching himself backward, Wei created distance as he kept his **Omniscience** focused on the Knight of Wrath.

The rift's inner space was no longer darkness and mist. Instead, he found himself standing in a volcanic arena, extending as far as his eyes and senses could perceive. Eruptions of fire lit up the area, as the sky above crackled with crimson bolts of lightning. A dim ambience settled upon the Knight of Wrath, and Wei got a better look at his adversary. The demonic warrior was at least four times Wei's size, equalling an armored Oathbearer in height.

The contrast was made all the more ridiculous by the fact that their colossal bone-made sword was as wide as they were and even a bit taller. Interestingly, the Knight of Wrath's not composed of an alloy either. Rather, it looked like clumps of obsidian fused around the warrior's body. With each shifting movement, stones broke free in crackling fragments. An exoskeleton was also fused over the obsidian, with sharp, wicked ribs gripping the Knight's midsection and a long, jagged spine dotted with gleaming spikes.

From the Knight's back sprouted six wings of hissing ash, and along their surfaces, blinking eyes of fiery essence glared.

"Slippery," the demon taunted, two dots of red peering out from the narrow slits of the Knight's visor.

Wei took a breath and centered himself. He had expected the trial to start gently, to offer him something like a Collector to fight and get his bearings. But then again, Mepheleon's System had spent most of the day observing him fight threats far beyond the threshold of his levels, and so, it wasn't that much of a surprise when he faced a Knight of Wrath

In fact, he had been looking forward to meeting the Knight of Lust again and settling his former humiliation.

The Knight's ash and wings grew brighter as embers of fire seeped forth from the swirling haze. The Knight took its colossal blade into both hands and shifted its foot backward. Wei sensed a sudden explosion of essence spill free from his foe. With each moment he spent honing his **Omniscience**, he could better sense his opponent's power and realize just what concepts they had control over.

The Knight reeked of ash, bone, and destruction. The fire here was a slight thing among all the other elements, and yet there was still something more. A faint aura behaved in the Knight as the circulation of its powers trailed along the lengths of its exoskeleton and flowed to the very tip of its blade. Bone seemed to be the focus of all their powers, and Wei studied the effects a moment more before he felt his **Omniscience** advance.

Omniscience Advanced > 21

[7/10] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

The Knight of Wrath spoke once more, throwing out some grumbled statement. They mentioned something about luck and how Wei was not going to survive its next swing, along with threats about being interested in the shine of his bones. It didn't matter; the young master was no longer listening.

Rather, he immediately summoned a **Source Catalyst** and infused it into his Eidolon. At once, sixteen percent of his Source vanished, but he immediately began transferring his growing **Aspect of Will** into **Speed**.

A bubble of displaced time formed around Wei, and the world beyond slowed dramatically. Universal essence began to fill the young master's flowspear. The Knight of Wrath paused their speech, noticing the sudden spike of power leaking from Wei's weapon, but as it did, the young master marked his foe with his **Minor Icon of Domination** and also invoked **Minor Castigators' Smite** as well.

At once, a golden shroud enveloped his flowspear, and this time it was Wei who surged forth.

The Knight reacted, accelerating with a flap of their ashen wings, but though Wei had barely been able to keep track of the demonic warrior's sheer velocity a moment ago, though the barrier of sound shattered around the Knight of Wrath in an instant, the equation was different now. The young master's **Aspect of Relativity** had matched and then exceeded his adversary in a startling instant, and the dynamic between them shifted.

Relativity Advanced > 21

[8/10] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

Four seconds to overload.

Wei extended his Intent in an arching tendril behind his enemy. Shards of ignited bones exploded out from the Knight's ashen wings, cleaving through the air at speeds that startled Wei even now. The young master brought his shield up, parrying six shots that nearly knocked him off his feet before striking conceptual distance with a kick.

Concept-Integrity of [Distance]: [49/49]

Wei suspected that the interference from the rift caused the conceptual integrity of distance to be harder to break here, but that meant it only took Wei two strikes rather than one. Before more shards could strike him, he stabbed out with his spear and something within reality broke. The young master was promptly displaced. The remaining bone-shaped projectiles cut through the air and struck nothing, passing through where Wei once stood as the young master snapped into place behind the Knight.

The Source thundered within him as he brought his **Aspect of Intent** down upon his foe like an falling anvil. He seized their **Speed**, and with conceptual integrity calculated, drove his spear forward as if it were now a hammer.

Concept-Integrity of [Knight of Wrath's Speed]: [124/124]

The Knight of Wrath's speed was substantial, not that far off from even what Wei's father had. Which was rather questionable considering the forty or so levels between William Yu and this demon. This would be a question for Wei to uncover afterward.

Instead, the young master focused on crippling the Knight. Five jabs from the flowspear were what it took to shatter the Knight's **Speed** entirely. Unprepared for Wei's change in position and sudden reflex-dominance, the demonic warrior failed to adjust and received the flurry in the ribs without any chance of defense.

An explosion of darkness that promptly filled with white enveloped both of them, and even through the distortion of dilated time, Wei could hear the beginnings of an anguished scream. But he wasn't done. He would not give the Knight a chance to be a threat. Sweeping his Intent across the Knight's **Aspects of Strength** and **Constitution**, he discovered what he already

suspected: Demons of Wrath were foes of incredible might and survivability, and even now, those stats were only growing with the progress of the fight.

Instead, Wei focused himself on breaking the Demon's most vulnerable aspect of all: its **Mind**.

Concept-Integrity of [Knight of Wrath's Mind]: [50/50]

Authority Advanced > 21

[9/10] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

Two strikes. That was all it took to functionally unmake the Lv. 26 Knight of Wrath. No scream came this time, though a detonation of force still signaled the destruction of the Aspect. Wei dismissed his **Source Catalyst** a second before overload and triggered **Lesser Hollow Mind** to begin the activation of his **Source Surge**.

He circled the dormant and unmoving Knight of Wrath and used his **Omniscience** to examine them. The warrior was trapped in some kind of stasis — utterly incapable of any kind of movement at all. Wei tried nudging them with the tip of his spear but felt it locked in place, held still by a force that couldn't be denied or perhaps a force that no longer existed in its entirety. The vacant stare in the Knight's eyes and how all its wings of ash hissed away, dissolving as the massive blade it bore crashed against the ground, left Wei unnerved.

Though the Knight of Wrath still stood, there was nothing that could be considered even analogous to consciousness left within them.

Wei examined the bone-made blade next. His **Aspect of Enlightenment** told him that it weighed close to two tons.

Colossal Blade of Osteokinesis: Allows the wielder to use their Aspect of Strength to manipulate their own bones and the bones of all enemies the blade comes into contact with. Can consume and shed bone-mass to reshape its size and dimensions. Maximum mass determined by wielder's essence level.

Well, Wei was glad he never truly got cut. Even a brief glance from the blade nearly deprived him of a scalp. Regarding the weapon himself, Wei infused his **Intent** into the blade as he wondered about something.

Concept-Integrity of [Colossal Blade of Osteokinesis's Weight]: [150/150]

The young master grinned. So, he could break this too. He considered doing just that for a moment, but held himself back. What use would be a massive blade without mass? Would it still cut right? What about balance? He also thought about the others, and thought this weapon might benefit them more as well. Perhaps it would grant Agnesia a better item than she currently had, or give Roggi a close-quarter's option. Things to consider.

Triggering his **Inventory** skill for the first time, Wei felt spatial essence ripple around his flowspear and then gently guided it outward to grasp the colossal blade.

It took about four seconds for a pocket of space to collapse around the Colossal Blade of Osteokinesis, and after it was swallowed, the spatial essence reeled back into Wei's flowspear, as if the weapon was a meal to be swallowed. Immediately thereafter, Wei opened the inventory menu with a thought and absorbed the space the colossal blade took up. The young master had to admit this was a neat way to store things.

Spatial storages weren't unknown in his home, but the amount of ritual and focus it took to contain a pocket of space required a true master to maintain. Items that displaced space within were worth entire kingdoms. But nothing measured up to the convenience provided by the **Inventory** skill. Countless cultivators would have betrayed their sects and oaths just to possess a fraction of the power he did now.

The weapon claimed, the young master looked over the warrior once more and regarded his foe with disappointment. His system was only at Lv. 12, and his Eidolon, meanwhile, was 5. Though his System offered esoteric powers, the raw amount of essence he could channel should still be inferior to his foes. And by technically, it was.

But in the end, it hadn't mattered.

After their initial exchange, he'd broken them easily. The System allowed him to strike at the most fundamental aspects of an enemy's being, rather than meeting them force against force. He still couldn't shake the drastic shift in his powers. Was he truly that much more than he had been a mere few hours ago, or was this knight just deficient and weak? Looking around, Wei waited for the trial to react in some way, to prompt the demon to attack or alter the situation. Instead, the moment just continued on, as if all was well.

Wei didn't waste this opportunity. He broke the remainder of the Knight's Aspects aside from Strength and advanced his **Authority** once more.

Authority Advanced > 22

[10/10] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

Refining Source

>>>Source Refined: [110/110] Lumens

Source Core Ascended > Lv. 13

>[0/10] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

>>[3/20] Core Ascensions to [Gate] 2 System Ascension

>>>Source: [120/120] Lumens

Reviewing encounter...

Masteries Demonstrated

- >Meditation (I) — 21%
- >Unarmed Combat (II) — 44%
- >Spearmanship (II) — 11%
- >Thrown Weapons (II) — 15%

Mastery Node Capacity [7/10]

- >Proximal Acceleration
- >Form of the Manticore
- >Form of the Resonant
- >Lesser Hollow Mind
- >Lesser Manifestation
- >Vector Chain
- >Lesser Cast Possession
- >Mark of Enmity

Sourcery Advancement Available!

Select [1]

~~Source Surge~~ > ~~Source Eruption~~ [~~Requires 5 Sourcery Advancements (Currently at 2)~~]

Source Amplification > Source Magnification — The host can expend 50% of their Source to double any Aspect. Amplification will remain active until the host break's concentration.

~~Aspect Infusion~~ > ~~Aspect Expansion~~ [~~Requires 5 Sourcery Advancements (Currently at 2)~~]

Selecting Source Magnification as his final Advancement, Wei regarded the Knight once more, and felt its essence holding together by tattered threads. With one more blow to its Strength, it would leave an fading imprint on existence and vanish like the Bearers he fought earlier. But Wei wasn't quite ready to move on just yet.

Tyrant Lv. 5 > Lv. 9

Allocatable Points [20]

The four additional levels to his Eidolon was not surprising considering how much he dominated the second phase of this fight, but Rafael's had proven true. No new skills arrived after his fifth level. He needed to hunt for them independently or create them. Then, with curiosity, Wei extended his **Intent** into the Knight and dug around for any Skill Shards. Nothing. Considering it was created only for this trial, Wei wondered if an actual foe would have Skill Shard he could sever from their Class. He knew they could be targeted, so why couldn't he break the link?

That was something he was definitely going to try later. For now, he assigned his points. More **Authority**. Some **Omniscience**. Some **Mind**. He was already using his Catalysts to amplify his Speed—the effects more than worth it right now, despite the five-second intervals of hyper-acceleration provided and the 16% Source cost.

Strength — 21

Speed — 32

Enlightenment — 15

Awareness — 6

Constitution — 5

Will — 10

Shattering the Knight's final aspect, he watched as his first adversary vanished and heard a rumble echo high above. The text scrawl promptly returned.

You have defeated the Lv. 26 Knight of Wrath. Well done, well done. Everyone likes a scrapper who can fight above their weight. Now. Prepared to do it again?

"Yes," Wei shrugged, building up more Source via **Source Surge**. His Core Ascension also allowed additional excess Source to be stored, adding to his survivability.

Source: [155/120]

Reviewing your recent combat encounter...

Calibrating second encounter!

Two bolts of lightning flashed this time, and a feral smirk pulled the young master's features. With his Source restored, he wasted no time as he summoned the **Source Catalyst** and infused his Eidolon once more. Two Knights of Wrath were smote into existence upon the volcanic soil. The first looked a perfect copy of the one Wei just killed while the other resembled a Hivekin in burning robes commanding a cloud of floating daggers made from light itself.

Unlike the first fight, however, Wei was the one who seized his momentum first, accelerating before either demon was ready and lashing out with his **Intent**.

Within seconds, he left the bone-sword Knight crippled in Mind and the Hivekin broken in **Speed** and **Perception**—its Mind Aspect considerable higher. As the first went catatonic, the latter tried to move, but found themselves trapped within their own body. Their cloud of daggers slashed and cut wildly, and Wei realized that the Hivekin could still direct their essence despite being conceptually broken personally.

Hiding behind the bone-sword Knight for cover, Wei flung his spear out at the surviving Hivekin. As his Eidolon impacted against the surviving Knight's mandibles, it barely chipped the chitin as it bounced off, forcing Wei to dismiss and resummon it.

The young master frowned. So this was what it meant to fight the Knight's directly. Even at level nine, even with his **Authority** at over 40 Advances at base, he barely bled these foes. Without the **System**, he could have done none of this. None of this at all.

And without Classes or essence, all beings are at risk of living within a multiverse of indifference, his System said. **Justice and fairness are subjective ideas. Even less than concepts.**

Wei paused at that. This was as close to opinionated as his System ever sounded. Stranger, it was beginning to sound like him.

Soon, there will be no difference.

The young master tried not to think about that. Waiting for an opening, he targeted his second foe's **Mind** and broke them as well. Afterward, he took another Colossal Blade of Osteokinesis into his **Inventory** and examined the Hiveskin's daggers as well—only to be disappointed when he realizes they were purely essence shaped, and were beginning to dissolve already.

Authority Advanced > 24

Relativity Advanced > 23

Omniscience Advanced > 23

[5/10] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

Tyrant Lv. 9 > Lv. 13

Allocatable Points [20] >>> Allocatable Points [0]

Strength — 31

Speed — 32

Enlightenment — 20

Awareness — 11

Constitution — 5

Will — 10

Wei's excitement at his victory and growing power warred against a sense of deep dissonance. Combining his Sourcies and Invocations, he was a force beyond the limit of his levels, though his Class was rapidly advancing with each victory as well.

Comparatively, his System was progressing far slower, but that was the one that still felt far more potent, with each Advancement making him far greater than before. His Class was simply easier to level—the more he dominated or controlled his fights, the more the essence within his weapon could grow.

Still, Wei was wary about his Class. It didn't matter what the Harbinger claimed: it was something provided, and in time, Mepheleon or someone in the hells might try to take it back as well.

Too bad Wei didn't intend to let go.

With the two knights slain, Wei prepared himself for the third bout. As the text came, he accepted immediately and restored his Source. He wondered what would come next. Would he be fighting three Knights, or some new threat? With the combination between his **Source Catalyst** and his **Will Above All** invocation, Wei thought that he had good odds of taking enemies even few dozen levels above him.

Indeed, if he possessed his current capabilities, perhaps his father would have fallen before him already instead of merely suffering.

Then, all the surrounding flames were extinguished. The banished mists from earlier swept back as darkness repainted the realm around Wei. Enormous waves crashed forth in the distance as the young master's eyes widen. At once, the volcanic arena was no more, and the ground beneath him rose while the waters rushed forth, rending him a solitary figure standing on a tiny island.

A single bolt of lightning speared down before afterward. It was only one bolt at first, and Wei prepared himself, **Source Catalyst** primed for the summoning. But then another bolt coiled around at first, then another, then another, until an entire coiling storm built around a single bolt plunged deep into the roaring tides below. All of a sudden, the waters settled, and for but a moment Wei felt nothing but anticipation.

Then, everything began to *churn*.

The sea rose, tidal waves swirling around Wei's little island like a massive maelstrom, rising until a tidal wall of spinning water surrounded Wei on all sides while hurricanes descended from the skies above. But this was only a tertiary detail to the young master, for what truly drowned him was the immense amount of essence flooding the atmosphere. Essence to control water, essence to strike and destroy, essence to rule over storms.

From the sea rose a long, massive, sleek form that dwarfed Wei's island by five times. A snake-like leviathan emerged into the light, its form somewhat analogous to the Antediluvian Wei beheld when he underwent his System Ascension. However, this one was far smaller and lacked any arms, undulating through the air as a snake swimming in shallow water.

Porcelain-bright armor shrouded its body, and it regarded the young master with a single pale white eye nested in its skull. With a flex of essence, it forged a fleet of pointed lances from the storms, the water, the winds, and Wei felt a growing pit expand in his stomach. Each lance was the size of his island, and increasingly, the young master found it hard not to collapse against the crushing pressure exerted by his newest foe.

Dancer of the Calamitous Spiral Lv. 78

Wordlessly, Wei infused his Eidolon with the **Catalyst**. The turning waves around Wei slowed.

The serpent, not so much.

Then, with a casual twitch of its body, the Dancer loosed one of its lances, and Wei projected his **Intent** upward as he broke distance. A fraction of a second later, a massive kilometer-long rod of water and cyclones was carried forth by a leaping bolt of lightning, and the entire island upon Wei once stood was split clean through the middle.