

## Act II - Kael

The tranquility of his pocket realm always calmed him. The purity of it made him forget all his worries and fears, and he regretted not being able to meditate here more often. He pulled in the Tranquility Essence around him into his core, filling it slowly. Moments like these reminded him why he needed to meditate here more often. The longer he went without the calming effects of the tranquility Essence, the more... erratic he became.

And Kael had no intention of returning to the madness he once lived through.

Finally, he decided that he had spent enough time meditating. He stopped drawing in Essence and opened his eyes. The space around him was the size of a small room, with walls that looked as if they were in fact the open sky. It was an illusion, but sometimes even he didn't notice. The Tranquility made all other thoughts fade, leaving only emptiness.

He was sitting on a small rock, surrounded by calm water. There was no sound, no disturbance in the air, only calm, aside from himself of course. He knew that his presence here polluted the Essence, so he always took care not to come inside when he was too angry, and he never stayed for long. The room was his only source of high tier Tranquility Essence, and he had to make sure not to corrupt it.

His teacher always tried to instill the importance of having one's emotions in check. Kael had never truly mastered it, not in the same way that she had. His path was just a shadow of hers. But he had found a way to make it work. He did not abandon his emotion, his rage. He used it, he channeled it, at times he unleashed it. Tranquility helped him do that, and it helped keep him sane. His life was a constant battle to keep the balance between wrath and calm.

It was hard to keep himself in check, especially with everything that he had gone through. But he had made an oath, and he knew that he needed to make sure that his mind remained his own. A warrior that was not in control was not a warrior at all, just a raving beast. And the memories of a time when he had been that was the one of the things that pushed him further on his path.

He took a deep breath, then turned his attention to his screens. He intended to see just how close he was to filling his core, but he took the moment to read through them all. It was one of the things his teacher taught him, that knowing the path he had taken to reach this point was crucial in how he was going to advance in the future.

| Titles                |   |  |
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| Adventurer            | Hunted more than 100 monsters                               | +5 to all stats, 5 Greater Essence       |
| Hero of Promise       | Save more than 10 people with a single action               | +5 to all stats, 5 Greater Essence       |
| One Against Many      | Fight against more than 10 opponents alone and win          | +5 to all stats, 200 Greater Essence     |
| Alchemical Tester     | Use more than 10 alchemical concoctions to improve yourself | +2 to intelligence, 500 Greater Essence  |
| Beaten but not Broken | Survive torture for more than thirty days                   | +10 to all stats, 50 Greater Essence     |
| Broken and Bent       | Survive torture for more than ninety days                   | +60 to all stats, 1000 Greater Essence   |
| True Understanding    | Evolve a skill to tier 6                                    | +20 to all stats, 20 000 Greater Essence |
| Lord                  | Reach Lord Realm  | +5 to all stats, 500                     |

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|                      |  | Greater<br>Essence                                |
| One Against<br>Horde | Fight against<br>more than 100<br>opponents and<br>win   | +10 to all<br>stats, 10<br>000<br>Essence         |
| Murderer             | Murder more<br>than 10 people<br>that you had no<br>connection and<br>that wished you<br>no harm<br>outside of war<br>or feud setting      | +2 to all<br>stats, 10<br>Greater<br>Essence      |
| Torturer             | Torture a<br>person for<br>more than<br>three months   | +2 to all<br>stats, 5<br>Greater<br>Essence       |
| Cruel Mind           | Torment more<br>than 100<br>people that you<br>had no<br>connection and<br>that wished you<br>no harm<br>outside of war<br>or feud setting | +10 to all<br>stats, 5000<br>Greater<br>Essence   |
| Bloody Hands         | Murder more<br>than 100<br>people that you<br>had no<br>connection and<br>that wished you<br>no harm<br>outside of war<br>or feud setting  | +10 to all<br>stats, 10<br>000 Greater<br>Essence |
| Limitbreak           | Defeat the<br>three Rulers in<br>the <b>Solitary<br/>Mountain</b>  | +40 to<br>strength,<br>dexterity,<br>endurance    |

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|                          | scenario, while on a lower Realm and lower level.            | +5% to all stats,<br>10,000 Greater Essence                    |
| Skill Lord               | Three skills evolved to tier 6 (4 skills evolved to tier 6)  | For every 3 skills evolved to tier 6 gain: 2% to all stats     |
| Monarch                  | Reach Monarch Realm  | +10 to all stats, 1,000 Greater Essence                        |
| Alchemical Experiment    | Use more than 100 alchemical concoctions to improve yourself | +10 to intelligence, 5 Greater Essence                         |
| Aspect Mastery           | Master your Aspect and improve it to tier 9                  | +150 to all stats, 500 000 Greater Essence,                    |
| Cikear's Peak            | First to clear the Cikear's Peak Dungeon                     | +2% to all stats, 5000 Greater Essence                         |
| Cannibal of Variety      | Kill 1000 people of every race for their essence             | +10 to all stats, 50 Greater Essence                           |
| Beyond Understanding III | Focus your understanding of a tier 6 skill. (3 skill)        | +250 to all stats, 100 000 Greater Essence (Per focused skill) |
| Cannibal                 | Kill more than 5000 people of                                | +10 to all stats, 50   |

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|                          | your own race for their Essence   | Greater Essence  |
| Heavenly                 | Reach Heavenly Realm  | +30 to all stats, 50 000 Greater Essence   |
| Immortal Skill Master    | Achieve three tier 7 skills   | +50 to all stats, Aging process halted, 100 000 Greater Essence                                  |
| Pilfering                | Kill more than 10 000 people for their Essence  | +100 to all stats, 300 000 Greater Essence   |
| Combined Understanding I | Combine two of your tier 7 skills. (1 skill)  | +50 to all stats, 100 000 Greater Essence, -1 skill slot, (per tier 8 skill)                     |
| Immortal                 | Reach Immortal Realm  | +50 to all stats, 100 000 Greater Essence  |
| Crucible of the Body     | Go through a harrowing experience to improve your body by forging it in the harshest conditions possible based on your body type. | +500 to endurance and vitality, +2% to all stats, Unyielding (Body Perk), 50 000 Greater Essence |

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| Rejecter of Reality (Unique) | Reach at least a combined power level of nine tiers. And embody an ideal. | +1200 to strength and dexterity stats, +5% to all stats, Reject, 100 000 Greater Essence |
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| <b>Perks</b>                     |   |
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| Whispering Steps (Class Perk)    | Your movements are muffled, and sound like the whispers of the wind. Strength of effect depends on dexterity stat.  |
| Stamina Rejuvenator (Class Perk) | Killing enemies replenishes your stamina. Strength of effect depends on level.  |
| Draining Strikes (Class Perk)    | Your strikes on enemies drain 1% percent of their highest stat and add them to you temporarily, up to a cap of 10% per target. Duration of effect depends on level.             |
| Recovery (Class Perk)            | Heal rapidly when outside of combat. Strength of effect depends on vitality stat.   |
| Tranquility Qi (Aspect Perk)     | Your Qi passively enhances your body with the essence of Tranquility. You are in greater control of your emotions while using techniques. Gain +20% to intelligence and wisdom. |
| Dreaming Mind (Path Perk)        | Your mind is constantly in a state of rest, reduces effects of focus lowering effects by 80%, gain +80% resistance to   |

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|   | mind altering effects. +20% to intelligence.  |
| Tranquil Forged Core— <b>Calm Focus</b> (Path Perk) | Your core is forged by the Essence of Tranquility. Increase core density by 20%, +20% to Qi speed. +20% to wisdom stat, your core is still and controlled, allows for absolute focus, your techniques do not require a breathing form. <b>The sea of tranquility hides great power.</b>   |
| Insight (Bond Perk)                                 | Allows the bond holder to anticipate opponent's movements 0.1 seconds in advance.   |
| Dual Qi Control— <b>Balanced Scales</b> (Path Perk) | Your Qi control is great, able to use two techniques at the same time. Gain +50% to Qi speed. +20% to wisdom. Control depends on wisdom stat. <b>Your dedication to balance fills you with power.</b>   |
| Essence Siphoner (Class Perk)                       | Killing other beings gives you 50% more Essence.  |
| Wrathful Claws (Skill Perk)                         | Your <b>My Art, Furious Strikes</b> has great power. Each chained strike increases your offensive power by 2%, stacking up to the total of 50% it also flames the feeling of wrath inside of you. If you break the chain or are damaged the stack is reset. +20% to strength. Strength of effect depends on your strength stat. |

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| <p>Tranquility<br/>Aura—<b>Calm<br/>Sea</b> (Path<br/>Perk)</p> | <p>Manifest your Qi in the form of an aura around you. The Tranquility Aspect calms everyone in your presence, clearing out any mind altering effects initially. The more they are exposed to the aura or depending on its intensity the targets in range will eventually enter a tranquil state where they will be trapped inside their own mind. Targets will enter the tranquil state at base speed after 20sec-<b>(1/400(1/2000) x your wisdom)</b>sec of exposure, current:12.75sec. Anything marked by the Tranquility Qi feels the calming effects of the Qi for an additional 4 seconds.<br/><b>All in your presence are calmed.</b></p> |
| <p>Physical<br/>Appearance:<br/>Improved<br/>(Path Perk)</p>    | <p>Your body and features are improved. Any physical defects are removed. Enhances your current capabilities and extends life expectancy by 10%. +20% to strength, +20% to dexterity, +20% to vitality.</p>  |
| <p>Ruler's Eyes:<br/>Safe Dream<br/>(Path Perk)</p>             | <p>You have achieved a great power, your eyes reflect your achievement. Their appearance reflects your inner spirit, and allow you the ability to put those who meet your eyes in a dream like state. They will be transported to a dream of the</p>   |



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|  | <p>safest place they can imagine. Effect depends on target's willpower and intelligence stat. You gain +15% to strength, +15% to dexterity, and +15% to wisdom.</p>  |
| <p>Serene Core—<b>Still Well</b> (Path Perk)</p> | <p>Your core is a serene sea of tranquility. Your total core capacity is doubled, it allows you greater control over your Qi, +20% to wisdom. <b>Your core, a sea of calm. Nothing can damage your control.</b></p>  |
| <p>Calm Form (Skill Perk)</p>                    | <p>Your body is infused with the fraction of power from your <b>My Body, Tranquil Control</b>, the offensive power of any physical attacks against you is perfectly distributed across your body, lessening its impact. +20% to endurance. Strength of effect depends on endurance stat.</p> |
| <p>Stamina of the Dragon (Path Perk)</p>         | <p>Your stamina is strengthened by your training, the effects of your endurance on your stamina are tripled, you regain stamina at double current rate. +20% to endurance.</p>   |
| <p>Weight of a Mountain (Skill Perk)</p>         | <p>All blows done with your fists hold a fraction of your <b>My Fist, Weight of A Mountain</b>, and deal damage as if your strength is 25% higher. +10% to strength. Strength of effect depends on your strength stat.</p>   |

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| <p>Wind Step<br/>(Skill Perk)</p>  | <p>Your <b>As Whisper, In the Wind</b>, allows for near silent steps. Once per day you may make a spatial step that will bypass real world obstacles anywhere in the one hundred meter range around you.<br/>+10% to dexterity.</p>  |
| <p>Forging of Body and Aspect:<br/>Ataraxia—<br/><b>Primordial Tranquility</b><br/>(Path Perk)</p> | <p>Your body is forged by your aspect and your path. It is in a constant state of tranquility, allowing you to always have complete control over every part of it. You are able to mitigate and absorb the effects of physical damage according to your will up to 90%. Influences that seek to disturb the balance of your body have their effects reduced by 90%. Allows for use of all your stats without a need to adapt to them. All Tranquility powers are 50% more effective. You gain +25% to wisdom and +80% to endurance. <b>None may shake my calm.</b></p> |
| <p>Exuding Wrath and Tranquility<br/>(Skill Perk)</p>  | <p>Your attacks induce wrath in your opponents with every strike, their attacks against you calm your mind and increase your control. Gain +15% to wisdom and +15% to intelligence.</p>  |
| <p>Immortality: Regeneration<br/>(Path Perk)</p>   | <p>Your body has perfect control over its own functions, as such it has perfect metabolism and regeneration. You gain immortality. As long</p>   |

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|                                     | <p>as sufficient amount of your body remains, it will regenerate fully in time. Your body is immune to the effects of soul damage. Time to full regeneration depends on your vitality stat. Current minimum amount of body required for regeneration: 1 kilogram in a single piece. Current regeneration time from minimum amount of body: 5 years. Your soul will be anchored to the largest amount of your body remaining and unable to leave to the ethereal realm or the afterlife. Destruction of the last piece of the body will release the soul from its anchor and send it to the Ethereal realm. Gain +20% to vitality and +20% to endurance.</p> |
| <p>Unyielding<br/>(Unique Perk)</p> | <p>Your body is highly resistant to physical damage and can function at peak condition in all states, even after it was damaged beyond the point where most would falter.</p>   |
| <p>Reject (Title Perk)</p>          | <p>Once per month you may <b>Reject</b> the reality around you for one minute and shut down all power use in the one hundred meter radius around you. The use of ability also returns you to your most optimal condition, removing any injuries and debuffs. Once <b>Reject</b> duration</p>  |

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|  | expires, you return to your previous state. |
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| Name | Kaeliss<br>Cloudwrought    |
| Race | Drakarura (Infinite Realm) |

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| Class            | Essence Wraith (L) |
| Level            | 89                 |
| Combat Ability   | Wraith Lash        |
| Movement Ability | Wraith Dash        |
| Support Ability  | Harvesting Ritual  |

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| Cultivation      | The Path of the Primal Wrath (Ma) |
| Stage            | Mid Immortal                      |
| Aspect           | Tranquility                       |
| Base technique   | Ferocious Blow                    |
| Branch technique | Tranquil Fury                     |
| Fruit technique  | Release All Restraints            |

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| Cultivation      | The Path of the Primal Dream (Ma) |
| Stage            | Early Immortal                    |
| Aspect           | Tranquility                       |
| Base technique   | Tranquil Dream                    |
| Branch technique | Waking Dream                      |
| Fruit technique  | Dream of Tomorrow                 |

| <b>Passive Skills</b>   | <b>Active Skills</b>   |
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| Of Wrathful Claws and Tranquil Body   | Perfect Greater Blow: My Fist, Weight of A Mountain                  |
| Greater Flight >> Flying >> Greater Flying >> Soaring >> Greater Soaring  | Perfect Spatial Evade: As Whisper, In the Wind                       |
| Danger Sense >> Greater Danger Sense >> Threat Awareness >> Greater Threat Awareness >>Threat Assessment          | Kick >> Greater Kick >> Piercing Kick >> Greater Piercing Kick       |
| Mind Resistance >> Greater Mind Resistance >> Mind Fortress   | Rend >> Greater Rend >> Sever >> Greater Sever                       |
| Enhanced Speech >> Inspiring Word >> Greater Inspiring Word >> Words of Philosophy >> Greater Words of Philosophy | Block >> Greater Block >> Absorbing Block >> Greater Absorbing Block |
| Weakness Sense >> Greater Weakness Sense >> Vulnerability Sense >> Greater Vulnerability Sense                    | —/—  |

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| Strength  | 3401 |
| Dexterity | 3291 |
| Vitality  | 2467 |
| Endurance | 2889 |

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| Intelligence | 2250 |
| Wisdom       | 2901 |

He still had half of his core to fill in order to have enough to cycle with just Tranquility Essence. It was a lengthy process, but it made him strong. And he needed to be strong if he was going to achieve his goals. Cultivation was the thing that saved him, the only thing that his teacher gave him before she abandoned him. It was the thing that mattered to him the most.

He stood up and turned around, walking on the stones that were peeking out of the water. He reached the large archway filled with white light and stepped into it. A moment later he left the small spatial space, a pocket realm, the place that was a carved out piece of the Tranquility Essence plane.

He found himself in a small garden filled with carefully arranged plants and a two small ponds. Arranged so that they created a small amount of Tranquility Essence just by their presence. The archway behind him helped, the Tranquility inside seeped through and helped the garden grow, helped anchor the Essence in the garden. The tier of Essence wasn't as high out here, but it served a purpose when Kael needed to calm down, making it unnecessary for him to taint the Tranquility room with his emotions.

He saw someone standing at the entrance to the garden, and made his way toward him. He reached the old demasi who was leaning on his cane. His long white beard reaching almost to his stomach. He bowed to Kael and then spoke.

“We have a visitor,” Geor Ur Kagla said.

Kael grimaced, then used equip on his battle robes and put them on. “What kind of a visitor?” Kael asked as they started walking down the winding path that led to the castle below them. He took a moment to glance over the side of the cliff. They were high up in the mountains, this entire territory was one big mountain range. Impossible to navigate unless you knew exactly where you were going. Only a few people knew the location of their base, and if they had a visitor the list of who it could be was short.

“One of them,” Geor answered.

Kael's eyes narrowed. “They aren't supposed to come here, they aren't supposed to even know about this place.”

Geor nodded gravely. “Apparently we underestimated them. They seem to know much.”

“Who did they send?” Kael asked.

“Not anyone that we are familiar with, I believe that this is one of the people near the top. He is... powerful,” Geor told him.

Kael grimaced. “What do you suggest?”

“Don’t antagonize, give them the item and send them on their way,” Geor said.

“They wouldn’t have come here just for the item,” Kael said. “They want something more.”

“They could fear you deciding to keep it,” Geor suggested, but Kael could tell that he didn’t really mean it.

Kael shook his head. “No, they know that I would never break my word. This means that they’ve come with an offer beyond what we agreed to.”

“I do not think that we should involve ourselves in their crusade any further,” Geor said.

“What they seek aligns with our goals, does it not?” Kael asked.

Geor grimaced. “Our goal is our own, just because they want to sow death and discord does not mean that we should align ourselves with them. In the end... I do not think that they can succeed at what they plan.”

Kael didn’t respond. They walked in silence down the path, until they reached the back gate of the castle. The tall gray stone that made up the wall was cut roughly, and molded so that from the distance the castle looked as if it was just the side of the mountain, giving them additional protection from discovery. The castle itself wasn’t large. Enough to house a couple of hundred people, but nothing like the sprawling fortresses that other factions called home.

Kael was very interested to know how the visitor knew where to find them. He did not immediately think that someone had betrayed him, there was an infinite number of powerful abilities in this world. It was possible that one was capable of finding them here.

People stopped in their tasks and bowed to both Kael and Geor as they walked through the courtyard, and Kael nodded back to them. He did not like leading people, but it was a necessity. Looking around at them, he decided

that it was unlikely that someone had betrayed him. His people were loyal for a reason, he had saved them from a life not worth living.

They reached the main building and walked into the main hall. Their visitor was already there, and was sitting at one of the tables with a goblet in his hand. The Exiled Shell and Fethum stood behind him while Maya sat across from him.

He heard her laugh at something the man had said, saw her blush and look away. Immediately Kael frowned, it was rare for him to see her laugh, let alone blush. Exiled Shell noticed Kael and Geor enter and informed the others. Immediately the man stood, and turned around to face him.

He was a human, with deep red-colored hair that was cut short, his face was clean-shaven and his eyes were green. Kael saw him bow deeply and then rise.

“Master Kael, it is a pleasure to finally meet you. I’ve heard many great things,” the man said. “Allow me to introduce myself. I am Erik Ornn, and I am here as a representative of my people.”

“I must confess that I am... interested to know how you found out about this place, Master Ornn,” Kael said slowly. The man did not feel like a Cultivator, so he could not precisely gauge his power, not without using his items, but that would be rude. Still, the man seemed at ease while surrounded by Kael and his people. Not many could’ve managed that, not even High Rankers.

“You need not worry about your secrecy. We’ve learned of this place by accident. One of our agents intercepted one of the agents of another High Ranker. They had apparently been following you and your people and learned of your home. Fortunately, our people intercepted him before he could’ve returned to his Master, the Axe Lord. We’ve of course been keeping your secret, we are friends after all,” the man smiled.

Kael didn’t respond immediately. It seemed plausible, and it was only a matter of time before someone managed to find them, Kael knew that. Still, they claimed that it was only chance, and the fact that they revealed that they knew where his home was without asking for something to keep the secret did suggest that they were being truthful. On the other hand, it could only be



a way to gain more trust. Kael hated politics, and such dishonest dealings. But he knew that that was a reality in this world.

“I thank you for keeping our secret,” Kael said. “But why have you come? We were supposed to meet at the usual spot to deliver the item.”

“Ah, yes. My apologies,” the man smiled. “The team that was supposed to meet with you had been... indisposed, and only they knew of that location. The item is of utmost importance to us, it was decided that we should reach out to you in person.”

Kael nodded his head. He did not like the way that this organization operated, but he knew that he wasn't strong enough to complain. Kael nodded at Feruth. “Feruth will go and retrieve the item from our vault, I am sure that you have the payment ready?”

“Of course,” Erik said and waved his hand. Three large wooden chests appeared next to him, and the Exiled Chest opened them in turn. The first was filled with weapons, each of great quality and power. The second was filled with Essence Crystals, and the last held potions and elixirs. A fortune that could make a faction from scratch sat before Kael, and he had to restrain himself from showing his relief. It was all going to go to a good cause.

“Thank you,” Kael said just as Feruth returned, carrying a small ornamental box. He passed it over to Erik, who looked it over.

Erik opened it and looked inside. “Remarkable, such a small thing, and capable of such destruction...”

“You plan on using it during the tournament?” Kael said. It wasn't like it was hard to deduce.

Erik's eyes turned to Kael's as he closed the box.

“Yes, it is a great opportunity for us to thin the ranks. It is also why I have come in person,” Erik said, confirming what Kael already knew. “I am here to make you an offer.”

Kael glanced around at his people, trying to read their expressions. He remembered what Geor advised, but in the end he lost nothing by listening. He gestured for them to sit at the table.

“I am willing to listen,” Kael began. “But that is all that I promise.”

“That is all that I expect,” Erik smiled as he took his seat. “I think that you will very much like what I have to say.”

Kael focused on his core, and pulled a tiny portion of his Qi to circle through his conduits. Calming him as he settled in to listen to their offer.