

Levels indicate how much essence a Class or System is capable of manipulating, and for a brief refresher on essence, that's basically the substance governing a specific "concept."

In simpler terms, consider a flame. Consider a flame in real life. It burns, right? For a period of time. It gives off heat and light. Now, consider the very idea of a flame transferred into the pyromaniac class. This Class, which is entirely composed of the conceptual essence of a flame, can use the essence attuned to their being to create hotter flames, brighter flames, bigger flames... Other things like that. Effectively, the higher your level, the more powerfully you can affect the many, many aspects of a flame.

Hell, you can even potentially burn time itself if your level is high enough. The rules of reality become more like suggestions once you pass Lv. 100. Everything after that? Well, that's just a question of how much you want to reshape the laws of reality, not if.

But, uh, as a warning, don't overcharge any of your Aspects before you have the levels... it kind of ends like a dam collapsing. Except your soul is the dam.

-The Trespassers' Compendium

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Overload

Excitement crept across Wei's face as he watched his **Aegis of Arrogance** climb. With each passing second, the golden shroud of protection around his body thickened and grew ever more powerful. He also tried transferring Advancements from his **Will** to other **Aspects** and felt power slip from one stat to another without any difficulty.

>>Aegis of Arrogance: [250/10]

Will > 250 >> 260 >> 270

[Will Above All]

>Will [10] - Strength = Will [260]/Strength [22]

>>Aegis of Arrogance: [260/10]

Wei's incalculable **Aspect of Intent** flowed like an unceasing stream from him into the **Source Catalyst**. He found himself more than satisfied with the effects. It seemed that rather than his will being infinite, it was constantly building, always growing. That explained why he still had to resist certain effects, why it took him some time to overcome powers directed at his spirit.

"Wei," Ellena said, observing the golden glow wreathing the young master with curiosity, "what is happening to you?"

"I've discovered a new technique," the young master said, a ghost of a grin pulling at his lips. "The Claimed Hells and spiteful heavens sought to deny me an advantage, but despite everything—"

Before he could finish speaking, cracks spread along the shaft of his flowspear. Jet streams of gold shot out from the cracks, spreading along his weapon as chaotic essence rushed free. A tidal wave of force cleaved into the sanctuary's walls. The glass-like surface shattered, and Wei felt himself get blasted into the opposing wall. The others flinched and dunked as shrapnel showered the room. Roggi placed himself between Ellena while Rafael threw up a hasty cipher-made shield.

Warning Eidolon at risk of essence overload in [06:35] seconds

More cracks opened along his weapon, and Wei felt a sudden spike of pain flood his mind. It was as if his weapon had a ceiling of power it could contain, and his converted **Intent** had just exceeded it. A spiral of ciphers snapped free from Rafael's shield as the lich direct their working. A series of symbols flared along Wei's Eidolon, and a stabilizing field manifested along its length, containing the leaking essence.

No longer needing to struggle against his weapon, Wei turned his focus to cutting the flow of his **Intent**. With but a thought, he severed the connection binding his System to the **Source Catalyst**. Immediately, the building pressure in his skull waned and fractures stopped spreading down his Eidolon. At the same time, his **Aegis of Arrogance** and newly infused stats plummeted sharply as well, leaving his Eidolon in a riptide of universal essence.

Colorful wavelengths swept out across the room from the Eidolon, washing over the sanctuary before dissolving into nothingness.

>>Aegis of Arrogance: [10/10]

Will — 10

It took around 5 seconds in total for him to transfer over 260 Aspect Advancements from his System into the Eidolon. It would have lasted a bit longer than that before it overloaded. Ultimately, all the power he infused was released nigh instantly as everything returned to baseline, and the fluid-substance composing his flowspear coalesced back together, washing over the cracks as if they never were.

With the weapon stabilized, Rafael drew his ciphers back, and Wei glared bitterly at his Eidolon. In retrospect, this might not have been the wisest decision, and he'd come close to losing his new Eidolon as soon as he gained it. Worse, his plan to boost his own potential had been taunted with success, only to end in crushing failure.

"So," Roggi said, voice deadpan, looking between Wei and the deep gashes he left in the wall. "What was that? Were you trying to figure out how to make a bomb with that spear?" The Oathbearer laughed. He was about the only one who did.

Rafael, meanwhile, looked upon the young master inquisitively. The lich tilted his head as the embers within his sockets burned.

"Were you trying to transfer your aspects into the weapon somehow?" the Rafael asked, sounding a little bit more confident than inquiring.

"I developed a new technique," Wei answered, unable to keep the disappointment out of his voice. "I wanted to empower the weapon's Aspect of Will. But it seems that... my convictions are more than this instrument can contain."

"Ah, I understand," Rafael said. "The problem is with the level. It simply cannot channel so much essence at once. You need to level your Eidolon more."

The young master grunted with annoyance. A cultivator's **Spirit** also held limits about how much power it could process. Still, he thought that with his System and the **Source Catalyst**, things could be potentially different. Everything he learned prior had been mostly disproven, after all. Why couldn't this just be another limit to break?

"Oh, it's still a success," Rafael added. "Your powers did climb for a few moments, no?"

Wei paused to consider that. "Only for five seconds," he replied.

"Five seconds is quite a long time in combat," the lich mused. "So it takes five seconds to build it up before it starts breaking.... How long does it take to be lost?"

"Immediately," Wei said. And then he began consider just how much a failure this was as well. 270 Advancements to an Aspect was a substantial boost in power. It might not last very long, but during that time he could augment himself to absurd extremes—with this, he could have shattered his father's Speed outright. Moreover, his **Aegis of Arrogance** would have also sustained damage far in excess of his current power.

And then a final epiphany turned Wei's mind from bitterness to mute satisfaction: his **Source Catalyst** possessed potent offensive capability as well. If he had infused that **Catalyst** into one of his allies, or potentially even a foe like his father or the Knight of Lust, he could have overcharged their Wills ruptured their Classes. He didn't know what that would eventually look like, but considering the cracks forming around his weapon and the sudden expulsion of force ejected from the breakage, he assumed death to be a likely option.

But how explosive would that death be?

More experimentation was necessary. He needed to test his new improvements against the demons. There was no point in waiting any longer. "Alright," Wei said, disregarding his recent misadventure with his Eidolon. "Let's go."

The rest of the group just stared at him. Until Agnesia shrugged and took her place before the portals. "Right. These demons aren't going to kill themselves. Time for some more levels." Heft her new axe, Wei noted that its edges were jet blade while flames danced within the obsidian-like material. Such was probably the conduit for her **Abyssal Rage**. Standing before the Path of Wrath, she rolled her shoulders and generally seemed far less anxious than she was earlier. If anything, she was impatient.

As per Wei's earlier demands, Rafael waved a hand at the paths, and a portal shimmered into being. A thin veil of essence formed over the portal, its color a crackling crimson holding the faintest symbol of a fist.

Roggi took his place just a few steps behind Agnesia as his construct's large limbs loaded a bolt into the ballista. "Did promise me brothers and the Trine that I'd beat them to the Hearted Realms earlier. No sense in being losers, eh?"

Agnesia let out a slight scoff. "I think we'll be doing more waiting than racing."

"Overconfidence is a killer, lass, Roggi replied.

"Being weak is worse," the girl replied, a casual edge lining her tone.

Wei's **Aspect of Omniscience** caught a worried look from Ellena directed at her daughter. A second thereafter, she turned back to Wei, that look of concern clinging to her like tar. It was still hard for him to meet her gaze, and he clenched his jaw as the former queen spoke to him. "Are you well, young sir?"

"The weapon should be fine." Wei answered, looking at his flowspear. "Damage has mended. No permanent harm is done."

"Weapons can be lost. Broken armor saves lives. But people..." A forlorn expression came over Ellena's features. "People are the ones that matter. I didn't ask if your spear was fine. I asked if you were well."

It took great effort for Wei to finally face her, and as he opened his mouth, he searched for words of reassurance. A beat of choked silence followed, but he found the statement, and the growing reality he internalized.

"I cannot be broken," Wei said. "I cannot be broken by my father, though he has tried. Though he has damned my world to ruin, damned my sect to destruction, murdered my mother. He cannot break me. The hells cannot break me. Nothing can break me. Nothing will stop me

from... from..." He looked at his flowspear, and inspiration came over him. The weapon didn't have a name. Now that it survived his attempt on its life, it deserved a christening. "*Inevitability*. Our retribution... our ascent... is inevitability," Wei muttered to himself.

He bestowed the name upon the flow spear, and immediately that section of its menu was filled.

Name: Inevitability

Artifact Type: Flowspear [Weapon]

Class: Tyrant Lv.3

Wei swallowed the bitterness and roiling emotions within him. All of this was fuel. The weapon hadn't broken. Neither had he. These hells weren't enough. The heavens would not be enough. And all who transgressed against him will learn their folly. "I am more than well. I am not the one you should worry about. Send your well-wishes and prayers for our enemies. I intend to make victims of a great many."

He stepped past Ellena before she could say anything else and took a position right next to Agnesia. As he arrived, the girl tilted her head and shot him an apologetic look.

"Sorry about your greatsword. I broke that trying to cut down a large brimstone bastard. Gauntlets melted afterward too, channeled too much fire through them."

"Artifacts are meant to be used to preserve the life of the warrior?" Wei said simply. A faint change of color came to the girl's cheeks, and she nodded thereafter.

"Right. So. Do—do you have any suggestions for using an axe? Not my most familiar weapon."

Recounting her performance with the greatsword, Wei doubted that she had any "familiar" weapons. "Use it on the unskilled and weak. Strike them from behind. Smash through their defenses. Save your flames for the strong and superior. You are a terrible duelist."

The girl just blinked at him twice. Wei nodded in response. Perhaps she wanted more advice? "And don't just cast your flames wildly. Be technical. Strategic. Only unleash them when you have an opening. You will be fighting alongside a group—take advantage of that."

"Right," Agnesia replied, sounding slightly overwhelmed and rather disappointed.

Rafael muttered something under his breath about someone being all-seeing but also incredibly blind. None of this mattered. Extending the sphere of his **Omniscience** beyond the path, Wei felt his awareness slip through a wound in space before arriving in an uneven land of iron and sweltering heat.

It was like a forge awaited them on the other side, and as he searched the limits of his perception, he sensed no foes in wait for an ambush. Not 70 meters immediately beyond the portal anyway.

“The way is clear,” Wei said. “Me and Rafael go first. You all follow after three seconds. After that, we progress as planned. I break. You kill. You follow. We level. We claim our Specializations. We move.” He looked over the others in case anyone was confused.

No questions followed.

Rafael dusted his new suit—and body—off as he stood before the portal next to Wei. “Well, then. After me?”

Wei eyed the lich as a whirlwind of clashing emotions followed. The Trespasser was a coward, but also skilled and effective when he needed to be. What he did with the essence overload, how he navigated the fallout of Wei’s rage...

Every sect had its rats, but some rats were more useful than others, and some rats learned to be masters, striding the path between duplicity and value.

The young master would be watching the lich carefully. And use him thoroughly. Whatever the case, he must always remember the cost of betrayal.

“Together,” Wei said, as he took Rafael by the arm and stepped through.