

Chapter 220: To steal Prometheus' thunder?

Lvl Up: **[Frozen Meditation]** lvl 24

PERC +1

WILL +2

Contemplating the mechanisms of his soul, Priam acknowledged the impossibility of getting a mythical skill at Tier 0. The fact that nothing, not even the instructions of the Heavenly Dragon, mentioned such a possibility had already indicated to him that it was unlikely, but a part of him had still clung to it. Yet, the shape of his soul offered him no hope: it lacked the fifth layer necessary to host a Mythical skill.

However, not all the news was bad. Priam was optimistic about the possibility of a sixth Legendary skill. Even with four more skills like **[True Will]**, approximately ten percent of the legendary layer would remain free. By slightly expanding its size, it would be possible to host another Legendary rune.

It was an arduous and distant goal, but Priam knew it was essential: an additional ideal Legendary skill would set him apart even among the **[Aces]**. Tier 0 did not seem to truly have hard limits—the runes of common skills were minuscule, and its first layer was not even one percent filled—but an accumulation of mediocre skills would not allow him to defeat a Tier 3. It was Legendary skills maxed out, supported by Concepts and Supremacies, that would enable him to push above his league.

This kind of build would give him the ability to retrieve Sphinx and exact vengeance upon Sumstreh. For a moment, Priam imagined his hands closing around Bastard's neck. He tightened his grip, and the false god agonized, finally aware of their mistake...

[Focus] killed the useless thought, and Priam refocused. He was there to take control of **[Revelation Resilience]**.

His gaze fell upon the rune existing on the third layer of his soul. Instinctively, he understood that the sigil was perfect. The ideal resistance shone, transforming the aether delivered by the soul core before it was projected into Priam's body.

Mentally, Priam focused on the rune and... nothing happened. *It would have been too simple.*

The rune was a creation of the System and **[Homo Elysian Obsession]**. If the soul was a motherboard, each rune was a peripheral. Some were interactive, but resistances were passive.

Undeterred, Priam focused on the aether modified by the rune. The difference with his own aether was minimal, but he could sense it thanks to **[Ideal Aether Perception]**. Suddenly, he realized that it was the first time he had focused on the characteristics of his aether.

Lvl Up: **[Ideal Aether Perception]** lvl 8

META (AFFI) +3

META (PERC) +6

His ideal skill added dimensions to meta-perception. More than the presence of aether, Priam could discern its *color*, hear its *sound*, and smell its *odor*. The Seven Concepts had transformed his soul, allowing him to translate aether's information into organic senses. Energy now made sense.

Priam's aether possessed a sort of familiar scent. Perhaps because it was his own energetic scent, Priam had never noticed it before. If he were to describe it, he would say that the fluid emitted a fragrance of passionate struggle and a desire for freedom. His ego transformed his aether, and its imprint was profound. An enemy like Dishnu could not fail to understand who he was facing.

For a moment, Priam attempted to modify his aetheric scent using **[Aether Manipulation]** before realizing the futility of the action. It was certainly possible, but not with a rare skill.

Instead of wasting time, he compared his raw aether with the energy modified by **[Revelation Resilience]**. In addition to Priam's identity, the latter possessed a defiance towards observers. It was hard to describe, but it was the intuition that his ideal perception skill provided him.

The aether modified by the epic resistance left his soul, traveled through a spiritual meridian to his human heart, and began its journey through his ideal pathways. During its circulation, the fluid infused his body to impart anti-divination qualities. Priam followed its flow attentively.

Lvl Up: [Revelation Resilience] lvl 13

MEM +3

META (AFFI) +3

META (AUTH) +3

Lvl Up: [Ideal Aether Perception] lvl 9

META (AFFI) +3

META (PERC) +6

[Alert: Over 86% of the aether modified by [Revelation Resilience] is injected into the skin before disappearing.

Probable causes:

- Leaks to the external environment.*
- Mutual destruction with hostile divination probes.]*

Intrigued by his System's finding, Priam focused on the cells of his epidermis. If the majority of his resistance was concentrated on his skin, it was no coincidence. It was possible for the aether to dissipate into the air, but Domain detected nothing of the sort.

The second hypothesis of his add-on was certainly closer to reality; the skin was a boundary between the body and the outside world and, as such, a probable stage for the information warfare that concerned him. An observation validated the hypothesis: the modified aether dissipated upon contact with a particular type of foreign aether.

By focusing on the microscopic currents created by the encounter between his energy and the hostile energy, Priam discovered that sorts of aether packets would stick to him. Some melted like snow in the sun, while others disappeared, taking a sample of his aether with them. The latter probes were often small, sometimes barely detectable, and Priam theorized that they came from skills rarer than Legendary.

His resistance was both epic and ideal, but it was far from invincible. *For now...*

By focusing on the rougher probes, Priam quickly captured some similarities. These packets all shared a scent of inquiry. They asked for information about him, and his own aether, modified by his resistance, refused. The interaction caused mutual pollution. The remaining fluid spread into the air like smoke, impervious to Priam's orders.

Lvl Up: [Ideal Aether Perception] lvl 10

META (AFFI) +3

META (PERC) +6

"It's fascinating..."

By hypothesizing, testing, observing the results, and interpreting the findings, Priam was uncovering a whole new aspect of the aether. Delving into the mysteries of magic armed with scientific rigor, he was ecstatic. Understanding the world thrilled him more than just casting fireballs. There were undoubtedly nuances that eluded him, but Priam thought he understood the essentials. *Now, can I glean information from these probes?*

Focused on his Domain and **[Ideal Aether Perception]**, Priam selected a large and crude packet. Using **[Aether Manipulation]**, he attempted to influence it, but his mental command slipped over the foreign aether. The probe touched his body before dissipating, blocked by his resistance.

Lvl Up: [Revelation Resilience] lvl 14

MEM +3

META (AFFI) +3

META (AUTH) +3

Frowning, Priam chose another packet and focused on it. Using Domain on such a tiny target was hard, but he managed to clumsily immobilize it. He attempted to take control using his aether proficiency, but the probe ignored him. Like an agile fish, it escaped his sphere of authority, and suicided on his defenses, increasing the invisible experience bar of **[Revelation Resilience]**.

Priam sighed before massaging his temples. He was satisfied with his resistance but refused to be a dumb tank. More than spotting those attempting to scry him, it was an opportunity to increase his aether proficiency. *And to reach five hundred points in Memory.*

Glancing at his titanic reserves of Potential, Priam opened the floodgates, letting the divine fluid provoke artificial epiphanies. It was time to use all his advantages.

*

"Long live Prometheus! Long live the king!"

It had been nearly a quarter of an hour since the battle had ended, yet the troops continued to let out cheers as they worked. Those who had finished the fight without suffering serious injuries seemed determined to prove their worth.

The sight of a united and passionate humanity stirred Guandi's heart. Sitting atop a hill overlooking the plain, the king's general sharpened his greatsword as he watched the human army bustling below. Before him, men and women searched the bodies littering the field before transporting them to two pyres—one for the Arkaneans, the other for the humans. The theoretical existence of necromancers meant that nobody wished to be buried.

Further on, military engineers were establishing defenses, digging trenches, filling craters, erecting ramparts, and setting up ballistae and trebuchets. These weapons of another era were currently the pinnacle of human artillery.

It wasn't for lack of advanced technological knowledge; his king had recruited numerous researchers and scientists who, aided by skills, high mental attributes, and a bit of Potential, were now capable of recreating weapons from the Cold War era. What the army lacked was the infrastructure to mass-produce firearms and ammunition.

Proxima was a planet rich in resources, and mines were already being exploited by different rival civilizations—it was even the cause of this battle. However, factories, machinery, and secure transportation methods were still lacking. Thanks to the System, the engineers hoped to industrialize weapon production within a few months.

Guandi's gaze left the engineers to settle on the makeshift hospitals to his right. The battle against Arkana had been devastating. Despite their numerical superiority—100,000 humans against 12,000 Arkanean mercenaries—almost fifteen percent of his troops had lost their lives.

The general had expected worse.

"We just finished counting: four thousand wounded," sighed a young redheaded woman climbing the hill to join him. "On average, one Arkanean managed to kill or injure two humans... At ten versus one."

Officially, Gloria was in charge of the army's logistics—food, clothing, tents, transport... Unofficially, she was the king's master spy.

"Not bad," commented Guandi.

"Not bad?" Gloria raised an eyebrow. "If we hadn't attacked by surprise, if I hadn't poisoned their rations, and if our King hadn't managed to kill their elite, we would have surely lost. This battle was a disaster."

"For centuries, the Arkanean elites have mastered the Concepts and their elites have access to the System. That humanity can stand up so quickly to such an advanced civilization is a miracle permitted by our King."

"I know but—"

"Look ahead," Guandi cut in. "Our soldiers fought with spears and swords when the Arkaneans possessed guns. Without the charisma of our king, the front lines would have deserted. But we rewarded their hope, and tonight, our soldiers chant the name of Prometheus."

"They're happy thanks to their level-ups and new weapons," Gloria pointed out. "You can hide behind optimism, but the reality is this: it was a group of mercenaries against our best army led by our king. It's not like we killed a group of sentinels."

"The System forbids sentinels from leaving Arkanean territory, and our king has no intention of invading them."

"For now," Gloria said, turning toward the setting sun. Behind the horizon stood the center of Arkana's power, waiting. The pseudo-democracy would remain a threat to humanity until it was uprooted. "The enemy possesses Tier 2s accumulated over centuries, and even with our racial Talent, it will take the sacrifice of at least a hundred thousand humans to create a weak Tier 2."

"Which makes this victory even more beautiful," smiled Guandi. "Our king eliminated one of their precious Tier 2s, becoming a Marquess in the process."

"What does that change?"

"Everything."

In unison, both paladins turned before bowing to their king. The tent Guandi guarded had just opened, revealing Prometheus and Eloise. The minister of propaganda was never far from the king.

"Your arm?" Guandi asked, looking with concern at the impressive enchanted bandage covering the king's right shoulder. The Arkanean elite had tried to take his killer to the grave.

"Markus was able to reattach it," Prometheus replied, shrugging. Nothing else interested him but humanity, not even his own body.

"You were saying that becoming a Marquess changes things, my king?" Gloria asked.

"Becoming an Earl gave legitimacy to our army in the eyes of the System with the army sub-system, with the benefits you know. Marquess goes further and allows for increased power when we successfully defend our territory."

Guandi became very attentive. War was his domain.

Prometheus looked before him, reading a text that only he could see. "When an enemy faction attacks our territory, the System creates a defensive event called a Wave. If we resist successfully, each defender receives rewards—most often Potential."

"It sounds like a permanent defense quest," commented Gloria.

"We'll need to test the limits of what is considered a defender, but it's excellent news!" exclaimed Guandi. "Given humanity's current situation on Proxima, it's exactly what we needed. Most of our troops lack the Potential to upgrade their skills."

Thanks to their Achievements, it wasn't a problem for Prometheus' elites. However, Potential was a rare resource for a basic soldier.

Eloise nodded. "When the Arkaneans want revenge, we'll be ready."

Gloria looked pensive. "Why wait for them to decide to retaliate? I have enough double agents among them to force them to attack us when we want."

"Our troops need rest and to consolidate our positions," Guandi grimaced. "It would be better to use your influence to repel the next attack."

Gloria turned to Prometheus, who nodded. The king rarely went against the advice of his paladins; he trusted in their expertise.

"Very well, I will try to buy us a few days."

"Our troops also need to be reassured about their future, and we have a perfect opportunity," smiled Eloise. "Our king defeated a Tier 2 in single combat today. It's his second Legendary Achievement and the first one he's announced. We must mark the occasion with a celebration."

To avoid assassination attempts, Prometheus had kept his first Legendary Achievement silent. Only his closest ministers knew that he was an Ace.

"We're at war, I'm not sure we have time to waste on a party," grumbled Guandi.

"Our soldiers need to be unified."

"Are you implying that not all of them are loyal?" growled Guandi.

"Most of them were living in a democracy less than two months ago, you can't blame them," said Gloria.

"You too?! Our king—"

Prometheus raised his hand, and the three paladins fell silent.

"Enough," Prometheus said. "Guandi, we both know that except for my knights and paladins, the rest of humanity is not loyal to me. Even here, on Proxima, some dream of being political leaders. This Achievement is a way to affirm my legitimacy: humanity needs a powerful leader. Tonight will be a night of celebration," declared Prometheus.

"Yes, my king," the three paladins replied.

Satisfied, Prometheus stepped forward, using **[Voice of the General]**, one of Guandi's skills.

"Sons and daughters of the Earth, hear me!" The king's voice spread across the plain, and his soldiers stood up to listen.

"History will remember that today, humanity won its first battle against Arkana. A victory made possible by your bravery, your determination, and your unity. I am immensely proud to be your leader."

Upon hearing these words, the humans present puffed out their chests. The king's formidable charisma drew their attention, kindled their loyalty, and dispelled their fears.

"I do not forget those who sacrificed themselves to allow this victory. The best tribute we can pay them is to use the experience, weapons, and knowledge gained today to protect humanity. You are the Shield defending our civilization!"

Cheers began to erupt, and Prometheus waited a few moments before continuing.

"Today, you saw it with your own eyes, humanity's army achieved the impossible: we defeated an Arkanean Tier 2!" Prometheus thundered, fervor gleaming in his eyes. "Our triumph today is not a miracle; it is an event that will be repeated as long as we are united! Lend me your strength, and together, let us free humanity!"

The atmosphere began to tremble under the army's roars.

"Long live Prometheus! Long live the king!"

The shouts of thousands of men and women made the world tremble. Rage, sadness, passion, and thirst for glory; various emotions fueled their roars, but all shouted in unison.

Announcement to Humanity:

***Priam Azura slayed a Necromoon Viscount (Tier 3) while in Tier 0.
A Mythic feat!***

In a fraction of a second, silence reclaimed its throne. A shocked muteness descended upon the plain.

"What a monster... I'm sure he did it on purpose," sighed Gloria after a few seconds.

"He—" Guandi stopped himself. Knowing humanity's Spear, it was possible.

"Fuck," Eloise summed up, and everyone nodded.

Guandi turned to his king. Was he disappointed with his accomplishment? He'd beaten a Tier 2, a Legendary Completion, but Priam's feat was... Mythical.

Prometheus stood tall, rereading the announcement. As the general hesitated to speak, his king smiled, sweeping through his interface.

"The Shield defends, and the Spear attacks," he announced to his soldiers. His voice was soft, but the wind carried his words. "Tonight, let's celebrate and revel in humanity's double triumph. Tomorrow, the Arkaniens will come, and we will welcome them as they deserve. Let's show Priam he's not alone in the race!"

After a moment of silence, the army roared again, and Guandi joined them. Priam might steal their thunder, but he couldn't stand against the fire given by Prometheus.

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Status:

PHYSICAL:

Strength 620

Constitution 979

Agility 608

Vitality 870

Perception 755 (+1)

MENTAL:

Vivacity (D) 516

Dexterity 620

Memory 498 (+9)

Willpower 1 047 (+3)

Charisma 631

META:

Meta-affinity 600 (+19)

Meta-focus 387

Meta-endurance 428

Meta-perception 288 (+21)

Meta-chance 230

Meta-authority 84 (+6)

Potential: 18 844 (+20)

Tier 0

Sun points: 1 180 114 (+0)

[He Who Eludes Death] charge: OFF. Reloaded in 2 hours 23 minutes 15 seconds.

[Tribulation]: Four Tribulations pending.

Future Tribulations delayed until:

Time: 162 days 2 hours 56 minutes 28 seconds.

Next thresholds: 12 attributes > 600 / 3 attributes > 900 / 1 attribute > 1 200