

PRESENT – Nayra  
Heart of Battle

Nayra sat in her cycling room, surrounded by blades. Ryun sat across from her, waiting patiently for her to be ready. Tali stood leaned against the wall nearby. There was a crate of cycled Essence Crystals next to her. They had been bought for a lot less Essence than they held, as the Sharpness Essence inside of them had already been cycled some. There was no point for her to use the best Essence that she could get, she would never be a great cultivator. Her path is there to support her class, it was not her focus.

“You didn’t need to do this for me,” Nayra said.

“You deserve it,” Ryun said. “I’ve talked and listened to the people in the sect, you are respected. And you had held up your end of the bargain, you taught them how to fight better. This is a small token of my appreciation. I need you to be strong.”

Nayra glanced at the second crate, this one too filled with Essence. It wasn’t pure Essence, but it didn’t need to be. He had given it to her to use for her Class. With what she had already gathered during the last year and now with this gift she was sure that she could reach level 300.

Nayra nodded and started cycling with the crystals that she had bought from the auction. It didn’t take her long, and after a few minutes she was ready to advance her path to the next stage.

She took a deep breath as she put in the final amount of Essence, met Ryun’s eyes, and then advanced. The Essence in her core churned, and her core changed, improved.

The sensation of advancement for her always came with a quick, sharp pain, something to do with her aspect. She gritted her teeth as it felt like her insides were being cut apart, and then finally it was gone. She relaxed and then glanced at her perk choices.

<b>Path Perk available: True Body</b>	
True Body—Flawless Coordination	Your body has been reforged into your true self, adopting attributes that reflect your

	<p>path. Your path is that of dancing precision, as such your body is designed so that you may perform any physical movement that your mind imagines without difficulty at great speed without the need for muscle memory.</p>
<p>True Body—Winged</p>	<p>Your body has been reforged into your true self, adopting attributes to reflect your path. Your path is that of one who dances in the air, as such your body is forged in that image. You gain a pair of wings on your back. Physical changes.</p>
<p>True Body—Lotus Born</p>	<p>Your body has been reforged into your true self, adopting attributes to reflect your path. Your path is that of one untouched by impurity, of pure heart and mind. As such your body is forged in that image. Your cultivation is no longer affected by the impurity of Essence you use, and always grants the most benefit. Your movements induce dreamy forgetfulness in those who gaze upon you. The power of the effect depends on their mind resistances. Physical changes.</p>

Nayra was surprised by her choices, she hadn't expected anything like that. After she read through them, she made the choices visible to Ryun. He looked through them, his expression barely changing.

“What do you think?” Nayra asked when he said nothing.

He scratched the side of his face, then spoke. “Tali, come see this,” he said.

The blind woman walked over and sat next to them as she reached out with her hand. Nayra looked at Ryun, then sighed and took her hand, making her choices visible to her too.

The older woman’s lower face, the part that wasn’t burned, turned into a frown. Then she tilted her head.

“Which one do you think you should take?” She asked.

Nayra blinked, then glanced at Ryun, who didn’t seem to be in the mood to help her out. She read through her choices again, then spoke.

“Well... having wings all the time would be a pretty big advantage. My perk has already served me well. But I don’t know what will happen with it if I do pick that, will I get a second set of wings?”

Tali shrugged. “Probably, or it will change. It isn’t important, seeing as that is the worst of your choices.”

Nayra leaned back, she wanted to argue, but before she could Tali continued.

“You have no skills that would help you fly better, you have no techniques that will aid your flight in any substantial manner, no abilities or perks. If you had wings all the time, it would help you against people who had no flight or any way to get into the air,” she nodded at Ryun. “But if you ever face someone who really focuses on flight, you will not be anywhere near as capable. You will never be better than even those who are average.”

Nayra opened her mouth, but then closed it. What Tali said did make sense. “So I should pick one of the others,” Nayra said.

“**Flawless Coordination** will help you immediately, you are a physical melee fighter. A Classer that relies on her combat mastery and abilities. The ability to move better with little training will serve you well. The other choice...” Tali shook her head. “It is interesting, not nearly as powerful as it seems because your path is only uncommon and you are not talented enough to push it much further. In the end it depends on what you want to do. If you want to push your cultivation higher than this, to make it your true second focus. Then it will serve you well in that it will save you Essence and

time. The secondary effect will be useful on people with weak mind resistances, which isn't a bad thing. But it will also interfere with your everyday life. Training people who can't resist that effect will become a chore, just talking with them will be the same unless you learn how to control the effect."

Nayra turned her eyes from the blind woman and looked at her perk choices. She realized that she was right, as she often was, which was only a tiny bit frustrating. But Nayra knew that she wasn't the best Cultivator around.

She turned her eyes to Ryun, who had remained silent.

He tilted his head and then spoke. "I agree with her, if you had a skill slot open so that you could get a flight related skill, taking **Winged** would be another story. As it stands it will only weaken you. In my personal opinion, I would lean more toward the choice flavored by your path. In my experience, such choices will lead to greater benefits down the line. I do not agree with Tali that your path is weak, or rather that it will always remain so. I do not know about how she or others practice Cultivation. For me it is..." he closed his eyes, his face relaxed, he touched his chest with one hand, just over his heart and then smiled. "It is about feeling. About what is inside here. Even when you can't quite grasp it, just let go, don't try to think of what you want to do, how you want to change your techniques. Listen to others, but never let yourself be guided by them. That is not what a path is. It is not theirs, it is yours alone. Do what feels right for you, and never look back."

Nayra looked at him as he opened his eyes and held hers. It was... so strange, to see and feel such conviction in his words. He almost made it seem as easy as his words suggest. But if it was, people in the Empire would've figured out how to do things on their own. He didn't realize his own talent, but... He was right in a way. Nayra and Reyla had been called talented by their instructors, and then they had been forced to do something their way. Nayra didn't know how talented she was, because she had only just now started doing things her way.

She glanced at Tali, but it was hard to tell what she was thinking, the scars that covered the upper half of her body made only her mouth able to show any expression. And right her lips were drawn into a tight line.

Nayra sighed and then made her choice.

She felt the perk change her, her body changing. It had said that there would be physical changes, and she wondered what they were as her skin tingled. Then, it was finished and she looked at the two of them.

“So, any changes?” She asked.

Ryun narrowed his eyes and leaned in close to her face, startling her. Finally, he shook his head. “My sense allowed me to feel your skin change, but... I can’t see a difference. We will need someone who can see better than me,” he smiled.

Nayra blinked, then narrowed her eyes. She knew that there was something strange with his sight, when he gained his new eyes it had to have changed. She glanced at Tali but asking her was pointless. Nayra sighed and pulled out a mirror from her storage. She raised it and looked at herself. Immediately she saw the changes. Her skin had been changed, it was smoother, looked softer. Her appearance didn’t change much, it was the small things, blemishes on her neck, on her cheek, they were gone, her eyes seemed more expressive.

She put the mirror down, not sure how to feel about the small changes. “What about the secondary effect?” Nayra asked.

Ryun shrugged. “We will probably need someone who has a lot less mental resistances than I.”

“And I’m blind,” Tali said.

“Right,” she said slowly. “Sorry. Now, my class.”

“Yes, I’m really interested to see what you’ll get,” Ryun said.

Neither of them was an expert on Classes, but she had still asked them to be here. Ryun was the most powerful person that she knew, at least here in the sect, and Tali had helped her a lot with Cultivation. She had wanted Anrosh here as well, but she was busy, and she said that she didn’t have that much to contribute. Which Nayra felt wasn’t exactly true, but she didn’t push.

She took Ryun’s Essence first, and put it all in her class, his gift was enough to give her a few levels, but then she finished with her own Essence. As soon as she hit level 240, she looked at her Class choices. Then, she blinked as she saw a screen that she hadn’t seen in a long time. There was no choice for her to take, only one Class.

Something had to have shown in her expression, because Ryun spoke, his tone concerned. “What is it?”

“My sister, she advanced before me.”

“What do you mean?” Ryun asked.

It was Tali who answered. “They are twins, it means that the twin in the lead gets to pick the Class, if they pick the direct evolution at least.”

Nayra could only nod as she read through her new Class.

<p><b>Twin Dawnspirit Valkyrie</b></p>	<p><i>You come with the dawn, shrouded in golden flames, to carry the souls of the dead to their deserved rest.</i></p> <p>The <b>Twin Dawnspirit Valkyrie</b> is a warrior focusing on the use of a spear and augmented with dawnfire. A <b>Twin Dawnspirit Valkyrie</b> excels at melee combat and has powers that dwell deeper into the Ethereal Realm. A Valkyrie can cross over from one realm to the other, and gains additional powers depending on the boons granted by those she carries over. Dawnspirit Valkyrie gains greater powers when conducting her duty.</p>	<p><b>Dawnspirit:</b> All dawnfire abilities gain 50% more effectiveness in the Ethereal Realm. Your soul regenerates at 200% faster rate. Gain +10% to strength and intelligence.</p> <p><b>!Gain one of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-<b>Dawn Heal</b> support ability: Allows you to heal light soul damage, using this will expend your own soul.</li><li>-<b>Spirit Shatter</b> offensive ability: The Valkyrie makes a reverberation strike forward, damaging the soul directly.</li><li>-<b>Might and Intellect:</b> Gain plus 10% to base dexterity and intelligence.</li></ul>
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The Class was a continuation of their own, but it was shifted into a different path, one that was not Nayra's own. It had to concern the things that Reyla had done during the last year. It made Nayra feel the same as she had felt before when she had to follow in Reyla's footsteps. Like she didn't matter. The last year had been incredible for her, she had finally felt like she had a place. Like her efforts were valued. She raised her eyes to look at Ryun, seeing him watching her calmly.

He trusted her, had faith in her, even though they didn't know each other for long. He had seen through her with those void eyes of his. She knew from her conversations with Anrosh that he was like that. He made decisions about people quickly, and he was rarely wrong. He saw something in her that at the time not even Nayra had been able to see, not even her sister had been able to see.

She looked at the Class and then forced herself to calm down, it wasn't a bad evolution. It was a great one. She glanced at Tali, wondering if perhaps it could help her, but then she shook her head. If what had been done to Tali was so easy to fix, it wouldn't have lasted this long. Perhaps if Nayra focused solely on the healing part of the Class, eventually she might be able to get a perk or ability powerful enough to help her. But that was a great sacrifice to ask of someone, and she knew that Tali wouldn't ever do so. She valued Cultivation and personal choice above all else. She might complain and pretend to be annoyed, but in the end she left the decisions to those who she guided.

Nayra showed her Class to them both, and saw Ryun's eyes twitch. She wondered if he would ask her to take the ability to heal, to try for Tali, but he didn't. Of course, she had known that he wouldn't ask, it was his debt to pay.

Nayra didn't pick an ability, instead she went for the stat bonus. She had only one ability slot left.

Then she put more Essence in her Class, leveling more before she even looked at her perk choice. She stopped before she hit level 300 and then looked at the perks. She made them visible for Ryun and they read through together.

Dawnspirit Shout	Once per day release a shout that will increase soul regeneration to everyone within ten meters radius around you by 100% for one hour.
Dawnspirit Cry	Once per combat release a cry that will increase soul protection of everyone around you by 50% for 15 seconds.
Dawnspirit	Increases the leveling speed of any skill that can be used to heal the soul by 200%. Any Dawnspirit powers are 20% more effective.

Great Lunge	Once per combat, lunge forward and reset the cooldown on one of your abilities of choice.
Severing Slice	Once per combat execute a slice counting as if you've done it with double your total strength and dexterity.
Warrior's Stand	Once per month you may ignore any wound, even lethal ones for one minute.

Valkyrie's Presence	Souls in the Ethereal feel more comfortable in your presence and are more likely to listen to your words.
Valkyrie's Greater Call	Your presence in the Ethereal passively draws nearby souls. While in the Ethereal your Valkyrie's Call has its range increased by 100% and the souls are more likely to listen.



Valkyrie's Mantle	Passively gain +20% Essence from every kill you make even when Avatar of Fire isn't active. The bonus is added to that of Avatar of Fire when it is activated.
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Quick Stabs	Three times per combat, execute four quick stabs with twice your attack speed.
Dawn Stun	Once per combat, send a blast of dawn flame all around you that will damage and stun anyone caught in it for 1 sec. Time varies depending on targets resiliencies.
Dawnspirit Bond	When standing next to a soul you have a contract with in the Ethereal, you gain 10% of the stats they had in life until the contract is finished.

The three of them went through her choices, and she told them what direction she wanted to go, while they gave their advice. In the end, she made her choices and picked, **Dawnspirit Cry, Great Lunge, Valkyrie's Mantle,** and **Dawn Stun.**

Then she put in her Essence and advanced again. She hesitated for a moment, but then she took a deep breath and looked at the choice. Immediately she relaxed as she saw that she had three choices. It meant that Reyla hadn't yet advanced.

<b>Class Evolution Available</b>		
<b>CLASS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ATTUNEMENT</b>
<b>Soulfire Spearmaster</b>	<i>The spear and the fire are the way of life and death.</i>	<b>Soulfire:</b> All fire and spear based powers are 10% more effective and now deal 15% of their

	<p>The Soulfire Spearmaster is a warrior focused on wielding the spear sheathed in Soulfire. Reliant on keeping the distance between yourself and your opponents as well as commanding the space around you with fire based attacks that can singe the soul, a Soulfire Spearmaster shines in martial combat.</p>	<p>total damage dealt as soul damage. Gain +10% to strength and dexterity.</p> <p><b>!Gain one of the following:</b></p> <p><b>-Swipe on Soul</b> combat ability: Execute a swipe with your spear that cuts directly at the soul while bypassing real flesh.</p> <p><b>-Soulfire Heart</b> support ability: Activate to increase your soul defenses by 500% for 10 seconds.</p> <p><b>-Might and Deftness:</b> Gain plus 10% to base strength and 10% to base dexterity.</p>
<p><b>Twin Dawning Valkyrie</b></p>	<p><i>You come with the dawn, shrouded in golden flames as a star, to carry the souls of the dead to their deserved rest and punish those who try and harm them.</i></p> <p>The <b>Twin Dawning Valkyrie</b> is a warrior focusing on the use of a spear and augmented with dawnfire. A <b>Twin Dawning Valkyrie</b> excels at melee combat and has powers that</p>	<p><b>Dawning:</b> All dawnfire based powers are harder to put out. All fire based powers are 25% more effective. All special attacks deal 5% of total damage dealt as soul damage. Gain +15% to strength and intelligence.</p> <p><b>!Gain one of the following:</b></p>

	<p> dwell deeper into the Ethereal Realm. A Valkyrie can cross over from one realm to the other, and gains additional powers depending on the boons granted by those she carries over. Dawning Valkyrie gains greater power when fighting surrounded by the light of dawn and dawnfire.</p>	<p><b>-Dawn Field</b> support ability: Lift your spear above your head and summon the light of dawn. A field of golden light surrounds you, making all your dawnfire abilities more powerful for 20 seconds.</p> <p><b>-Dawning Strike</b> offensive ability: Make a blindingly bright strike covered in dawnfire.</p> <p><b>-Might and Intellect:</b> Gain plus 15% to base strength and intelligence.</p>
<p><b>Heart of Gunnr</b></p>	<p><i>A Valkyrie of stories old. A terror to her foes, and caring presence for the dead. You are a warrior and a caretaker.</i></p> <p>The <b>Heart of Gunnr</b> is a class focused on battle, that gets more powerful on the battlefield. It shines in war and gains greater respect from the souls of warriors. Increasing her allies' power in life, and shielding them in death.</p>	<p><b>Gunnr:</b> Your stats are increased by 20% in battle. Any person you consider an ally gains 10% to their stats while fighting with you. Your base ability cooldowns are reduced by 20%. Souls of warriors think of you as a kindred. Gain 15% to strength and dexterity.</p> <p><b>!Gain one of the following:</b></p> <p><b>-Crumbling Strike</b> offensive ability: Execute a powerful strike that deals greater</p>

		<p>damage and sends a shockwave around the impact spot.</p> <p><b>-Battle Shout</b> support ability: Release a great shout that bolsters your allies, giving them +15% to stats and reduces your enemies' stats by the same amount for 10 seconds.</p> <p><b>-Might and Deftness:</b> Gain plus 15% to base strength and 15% to base dexterity.</p>
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She looked at her choices, seeing the direct evolution of her Class, that it had turned back to more combat focused that fit her more. Another spearmaster one, and then the last one. A second Valkyrie choice, but one that wasn't twin. She knew that usually the great Valkyrie classes came around this level. She showed her choices to Ryun and Tali and waited, although she already suspected her choice.

After a while, Tali spoke first. "Soulfire is... powerful, but it will push you in a single direction. There is a benefit and a drawback, as with all things. Come against someone with a lot of soul resistance and you will be useless. Your twin class, I suspect you already know. I dislike those classes for the same reason I think you do. If you are not in front, you are following in someone else's footsteps. The last choice... it is powerful, and it does fit you. I haven't heard of it before, but I don't know much about Classes at the end."

Nayra glanced at Ryun and he shrugged. "I don't know much either. I'll only say what I said before: unique choices are always better."

Nayra nodded. She looked at her three choices, and remembered how she felt just a few minutes before. When she had seen that she had no choice. She didn't want to feel like that ever again.

In the end, she wouldn't lose her attunements.















