

## To the Sects

They were in front of the large door in the stone. Glowing glyphs covered it, shining blue and green. Okim, Bera, and Naha stood to one side of it, while Zach sat on a stone on the other.

“They’ve been inside for too long,” Naha said, her eyes on the doors.

“Not that long,” Bera said. “They said that the dungeon run can take a few hours.”

Naha glanced at Bera for a moment, then turned back to look at the door.

“Relax Naha, he’ll be fine,” Zach said, he could feel her anxiousness through their True-link.

“We should’ve gone with him, why put him in the hands of strangers?” Naha asked.

“It wouldn’t have worked, and you know it,” Zach added. “They are professionals, they do this for a living, don’t worry.”

Naha grimaced, but didn’t say anything else. He did feel some of her worries, of course he did. But he also had to constantly remind himself that Hiro was not a young child anymore, otherwise he forgot. A decade was nothing to him, though he had gotten better at living in the moment. Hiro was almost thirty years old, not a child at all, by some standards at least. And Zach trusted in him, in what they taught him.

The dungeon they were in front of was a respawning one, owned by the Kingdom of Helaris. A small kingdom that didn't have much in the way of wealth. Their dungeon was one of the ways that they survived. They sold runs through it as their main source of income, they had rotating teams that were booked for months, sometimes years in advance. Or at least that is what Bera had told them. The war had shaken things up, and the kingdom had used the dungeon to raise their own people, and they started selling slots only recently. Thankfully, Bera had managed to secure them a slot, an old favor she had said.

It was a good thing, since it was one of the very few dungeons that had a dragon monster in it of a tier that Hiro needed that wasn't located on the Island of Dungeons. Zach was confident that Hiro would be fine. His training had borne fruit over the last few months, and he had gotten very good with his powers. And as he said, the people he was in there with were professionals.

Then, the doors started to open, and Naha stepped forward. The dungeon diving team stepped out, their armor battered and scorched, some of them even injured, but they were all there. Zach saw Hiro walking at the back of the group and watched as Naha rushed over in a blink of the eye to stand in front of him, looking him over for injuries.

"I'm fine," Hiro said as he tried to fend her off and failed. She grabbed his chin and turned his head around, looking at him with narrowed eyes. If Zach wasn't mistaken, he could see that a bit of Hiro's fur across the side of his face and neck was free of any soot and grime, clearly regrown through a potion.

"A neck wound," Naha whispered.

"It wasn't that bad," Hiro said weakly, now no longer struggling against Naha's mothering.

“You are going to explain what happened, in great detail, and then we will figure out what you did wrong,” Naha told him.

Hiro nodded, but Zach could tell that he was embarrassed by the looks he was giving to the dungeon team talking with Bera to the side. Zach stood and walked over to the two of them.

“You did it, I assume?” Zach asked.

Hiro met his eyes and then smiled as he nodded.

“Good,” Zach only said.

They wrapped up their obligations in the kingdom quickly enough, then returned to their airship and continued their journey to the sects.

\* \* \*

Zach, Naha, and Hiro sat beneath the deck, in one of the small rooms.

“You ready?” Naha asked.

Hiro took a deep breath, then nodded. He closed his eyes and Zach knew that he was leveling. “It’s there!” Hiro said with a grin on his face.

“Of course it is,” Zach said, he never really doubted it. “Well, what are you waiting for?”

For a moment Zach saw the image of a young child superimposed over the man that Hiro was now, but quickly it was gone. Then, Hiro blinked

and waved his hand, making a window visible, showing them his choices of immortality.

<p>Pillars of the Aspects: Immortality</p>	<p>You seek to understand the aspects, placing the basis of your being in their pillars. Allows you to place three pillars anywhere, in any plane in the Infinite Realm. Only one Pillar can be in any given plane. Upon death, your soul will be sent to the Ethereal Realm and you will retain the power of three perks. You need to make your way to one of the pillars in order to be reborn. Every future direct Class Evolution of Lord of the Aspects Class will give you two more pillars to place and one more perk to be retained. If all pillars are destroyed, your soul will move on to the afterlife. The rebirth process takes three days, during which you will not be able to act. When you are reborn, you will not be able to use the aspects in your arsenal for nine days.</p>
<p>Shrine of Rebirth</p>	<p>Your will to live is irrefutable, you are able to place a shrine anywhere in the world. Upon your death your soul will move to the Ethereal Realm, if you reach the location of your shrine you will be brought back to life, with the price of 5 levels. If your shrine is destroyed, you will be sent to the afterlife.</p>

Unlikely Survivor	You are a survivor, you gain nine chances at life. Upon death, your body will instantly be restored in a safe location somewhere in the world. Once all nine chances are used up, you will continue on to the afterlife.
-------------------	--

“Two of your choices,” Naha glanced at Zach. The survival was... strange, though perhaps someone would value instant restoration. And nine isn’t a small number if you are living a safe life. Hiro probably didn’t fit in the safe category though.

They didn’t need to discuss much, he picked the perk and then they moved to choosing aspects for his Aspectborn attunement, his arsenal. He could only use three, but they hoped that eventually he would get an upgrade for his attunement to increase that. For now, they choose, **Shadow, Mind, and Blade.**

After, Hiro showed them his changed abilities.

Aspect Strike	You may execute a strike, or imbue a tool to execute a strike that will be infused with the Aspect energy from one of the Aspects in your arsenal.
---------------	--

	<p><b>Shadow</b> infused strike will make your strike appear as a shadow, will increase your speed by 40% and deals 160% physical damage.</p> <p><b>Mind</b> infused strike will make your strike deal 120% physical damage, and unleash a mental attack on contact dealing additional 80% of your intelligence as mental damage.</p> <p><b>Blade</b> infused strike will increase the slashing damage of your strike by 20% and deal 180% physical damage.</p> <p>Cooldown: (5 sec)</p>
Aspect Dash	<p>You may execute a dash in any direction that will be infused with the Aspect energy from one of the Aspects in your arsenal.</p> <p><b>Shadow</b> infused dash will make you turn into a shadow during your dash, making you invulnerable to physical damage for the duration.</p> <p><b>Mental</b> infused dash will make you release a short range (1 meter) mental attack aimed at confusing anyone in range.</p>

	<p><b>Blade</b> infused dash will summon two spectral blades around you to defend or attack, with durability equal to your endurance.</p> <p>Cooldown: (6 sec)</p>
Aspect Presence	<p>You may manipulate your presence based on the Aspect energy infused from one of the Aspects in your arsenal.</p> <p><b>Shadow</b> infused presence will make you harder to see in shadows.</p> <p><b>Mental</b> infused presence will hide your mind from mental sights.</p> <p><b>Blade</b> infused presence will manifest an aura of the blade around you.</p> <p>Cooldown: (sustained)</p>

They were solid abilities, but Zach was already thinking about they would look like in the future, once Hiro advanced more. But now wasn't

the time for that, now they would push his secondary focus. Hiro was immortal now, he had the time.

Zach paused as he felt their ship slowing down, then sensed someone arriving on their ship. Naha glanced at him and then Hiro and the three of them walked out of their room to see what was happening.

Zach heard the voices talking as they reached the deck.

“... pleasure to meet you, this one is Kish Ur Inno, in the service of House Woll,” a karura dressed in sect robes said while bowing over his closed fists. “You are welcome to the Twilight Melody Sect, may I inquire as to the reason for your visit Wardens?”

Zach glanced to the side and saw another airship keeping position on their flank, a few sect warriors standing on the deck. It was obviously a patrol of some kind, they had to have crossed into their territory.

“We are expected by your Sect Head,” Bera answered.

The karura bowed his head. “Of course, I shall send word of your arrival ahead. My ship will escort you.”

Zach tilted his head, wondering if people just came and claimed the same often. The sect warrior didn't seem concerned, though Zach assumed that falsely claiming that you were expected would have consequences later.

With another bow, the karura turned and flew off their airship, heading back to his own.

“Just a bit more,” Naha said next to him.

Zach nodded, a few days more.