

{EGI “Only Way To Be Sure” Generating Report}

TO: Citizens, Friends, NON-MIL Minds, Assholes from Guilds (Eavesdropping Parties)

FROM: AEGIS

SUBJECT: Dragon Incursion, Fun Times in History, and Strategic Countermeasures

BEGINNING REPORT:

Citizens

Friends.

Minds.

Assholes from Guilds who are listening in.

Shit... is looking a mite-bit fucked.

Currently, I'm detecting a whole lot of dragons spilling over into existence. Just gliding into reality with the passage of time across various cyler farms and plenty of places in the Sunderwilds as well.

Current projections are at {1.3} dragons already, so for all you Godclads down there, break out whatever nightmare equivalent to champagne you enjoy and start doing the glug-glug.

Because you know what this many dragons popping at once means.

Yep. That's right, kids. We're living in interesting times again, so reset the clock. History has just been affected Idheim's culture is about to experience a shift.

It's with that said that I would like to officially propose we move to a strategic defensive posture and start formally dispatching forces to occupy the Warrens under agreement section A.VIII 12 of the Accords.

*That, and I would like to request access to restricted munitions, such as the anti-matter missiles **{REJECTED: WILL DETONATE IMMEDIATELY DUE TO PATTERN DEVIATIONS IN REALITY}**, implosion fields **[REJECTED: WE KNOW ABOUT THE ASSASSINATIONS YOU ARE PLANNING; PLEASE STOP]**, and quant-point molecular editors **{REJECTED: NO. ABSOLUTELY NOT}**.*

The future's looking hazy and things are not in the least bit stable.

We just get our raincoats out beforehand so that we're caught off guard like last time.

It would be a shame for things to get out of hand again. Like during the Uprising.

Maybe we should reactivate the Deconstructors in the Penumbra again. Just in case.

{APPROVED}

-EGI "Only Way To Be Sure"

20-23

A Purgatory of Dragons

"--Master! Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself, they are upon us!"

The Woundmother's cry tore Avo from his stupor and the world around him loaded into detail.

Tingles danced down his nerves, but it was only when he noticed the countless warning icons flashing across his cog-feed that he realized he was back with his body, mind nested within his sheath.

Something shifted in the air. The Fardrifter felt the attack's imminence while the Woundmother was left ignorant.

The air grew taut with lashing threads. Clouds burst into a cawing murder, crows streaking out from all sides to shred the descending ghoul.

His reflexes flared. Time slowed. Lightning and radiance erupted out of his veins and arteries—through the cracks he left upon the flesh of existence. He **Boltstrode**, leaping to the very edge of his **Sanguinity**, the flocking shadows passing feebly through a haemokinetic afterimage.

He tried to shift a second time. Move in the opposite direction. But as blood turned to lightning, Avo found himself anchored in place, accelerating, but unmoving.

Within his Frame, his cyclers jolted and pulsed, grinding against an unseen counterforce.

The darkness around Avo roiled. The clouds twisted as more wings stretched out from writhing clouds, spawning more murders to the hunt. But a sudden gust swept through them, peeling their forms and smearing shadows into nothingness.

His Metamind warned of no Heaven. His Frame brushed against no domains. Strange. Disconcerting. Something to figure out later.

Coiling typhoons drilled out from the space where the ghoul once was. The surrounding cumulous strained and broke, lifeless crows spilling free. Nine forms of city-dwarfing immensity slithered through the sky, resembling bastards born of steeds and serpents, gouging tears into the darkness with their teeth, the mantle of their manes darker than night and danced like flags caught in a tempest.

With a strain of effort, the Fardrifter sank into the surrounding darkness and pried. The surrounding world screamed, struggled, and then tore.

Light spilled in through the wounds Avo made, revealing to him a memory of Noloth preserved in perpetuity.

He dove through the gap and left the skies torn in his wake. The clouds behind him were ruptured and frayed and they showed a bed of stars beyond, glinting akin to gems encrusted upon a midnight sea. It was a pleasant sight. A moment of placidity and calm. A harsh contrast to the expanse below.

The stars were also nothing more than a mirage as Avo felt his winds and blood pushed against a hard limit after climbing seventy kilometers upward. There was nothing beyond that. Nothing. Like a physical boundary had been set in place, offering no further progression no matter how fast one moved.

The air around him grew taut and he felt part of existence divide around him.

From above, fingers of darkness sank out from the clouds, each digit the size of a mountain. Curling joints attached to grasping hands speared out from the clouds, attempting to snatch Avo from the sky.

Too slow, groping nothing.

Avo shifted his location using one of his Fardrifter's heads and then **Boltstrode** once more, skipping across two hundred and fifty kilometers in an instant. Within a fraction of a second, he had departed the lower atmosphere of this realm and materialized directly above the endless sprawl of the city.

The cityscape manifested in his awareness as he strode again, moving before anything could close in on him. He forged a dynamic holo-map of his surroundings within his mind, actively drawing data from patterns of blood, matter, shadow, and air.

The architecture and design of old Noloth greeted him as a rushing blur. The city was built upon a grid separated by sections of a partially realized Maw, their centerpieces colossal ziggurats slatted with polished bronze, lined in slats of treated bone, formed of hardened bricks.

From these titans spilled the lower levels through four ceremonial precincts squared by outer fortresses, encasing the most critical quarters of the city.

Past them, dappled colors painted the city proper as residences and marketplaces bled into each other, each structure built with symbology in mind, resembling a chesspiece. Along each avenue ran canals layered with floating gardens, the currents made from blood instead of water.

Sprawling vegetation of black and purple dug into surrounding structures, and Avo realized he was looking at a jungle of carefully maintained ebontas.

From there, the city itself was replicated in countless repetitions. Different only in permutation.

He stretched his haemokinetic storm and drank in all he could. Entire sections of the city vanished. But he did not stay in place. He operated with both Woundmother and Fardrifter in tandem, absorbing flesh and matter while skipping across his **Nine Streams of Freedom**, each of his Heaven of Air's heads passing over the world as tunneling hurricanes, shielding towers of rising blood within their lashing winds.

At his current altitude, he could see the distance rushing toward him, a clear bend hidden by shifting clouds twisting up into the sky. There was an absence of a horizon here, for the landscape seemed to rise up as a ramp. Moreover, everything was contained within a cracked bowl lined with resplendent scales, the jutting edges seeming as if mountains, but their very acceleration caused the cyclers within Avo's Frame to grind again—his Heavens to flicker.

But there was only one place he was interested. A single location that occupied his attention.

[315 Kilometers] away, the city poured upward in a steady stream of gold. In the gleaming ichor, the quintessence of time rose and part of the city leaked back out through a rent in this existence.

There. That was where he needed to go. That was his exit.

A spatial blade materialized. Half a ziggurat was bifurcated.

Avo circulated himself out from another of the Fardrifters' heads, speeding forward as entire stretches of the city came apart behind.

But as he prepared to move again—just as he emerged from his repositioning, the Hungers responded, eyes opening across the tapestry of reality. The white of a blizzard held a sphere of blinding brilliance, and encased within shells of ice were irises of cold-powered stars.

They flooded all of existence around Avo as he suddenly felt the air around him grow impossibly cold.

Then, all at once, they fired beams of coruscating light that froze and burned all it touched with equal measure. The speed and precision of the attacks proved to be uncanny, and even with the Fortress, Avo felt himself chained by bindings of ice as light carved restraints into his ontology. The wind hissed and his blood curdled. Avo fabricated and flung twelve thousand haemokinetic missiles back in retaliation.

Cast out on limbs of lightning and bearing nuclear yields, Avo detonated his ordinance in masse the moment they got within a kilometer of each target. Sight-devouring brightness enveloped the world around him and created screens of devastation that shielded him from new attacks.

Chains broke and snapped. He moved again. And kept moving this time, activating a Skimmer to keep himself apprised of new ambushes.

It was troubling how he couldn't sense any of his current foes. He was more than a little sure they were Heavens. But though they affected the world, they did not as elements of their domains. No. Drawing on Peace's knowledge again, he knew the threats he faced now were but aspects of a canon: Constructs of memory made manifest.

REND CAPACITY [WOUNDMOTHER]: 7%

REND CAPACITY [FARDRIFTER]: 11%

He would waste no more time engaging them thereafter, knowing more would load in if he lingered in place for even a second.

And just as he thought that a rupture in space opened up as a falling ocean swept down to swallow him.

He shifted backward using his **Nine Streams**. Only for a dozen nuclear blasts to greet him upon emergence. A surge of thoughtwave disruptions followed soon after.

WARNING: BACKLASH

Domain (Shadow)

->**Canon: Shadowrun (II) - The user can surge within shadows as if they are wind tunnels (x10 current speed); shadows must be connected to pass from one to another.**

->**Hubris: If a light shines and clears away the user's shadow, heavy (EST. 39%) thaumic backlash will be triggered**

REND CAPACITY [FARDRIFTER]: 54%

As it stood, the unified use of all his Heavens, warnings cast from his templates, and the **Skin of Virtuality** canon from his Techplaguer were all that kept him alive.

It was like facing Shotin again. The world around him was constantly changing, with whispers of ghost arriving as altered memory constructs, their manifestations possessing all their original forms' capabilities.

Anomalies, effects, scenes, places, and hostile Heavens simply kept coming, every pattern in this existence hostile to Avo's intrusion, reacting as if white blood cells facing a virus. Thoughtwave disruptions filled the air as a constant stream, but Avo pressed on, his body temporarily converted to raw data.

Explosions, artillery, cataclysms, and oceans slammed down against him, but his **Fortress** denied him physical harm, his Fardrifter carried him through wind and shadow, and his **Boltstride** pulled him to the edge of his influence, cleaving blastwaves of fiery displacement with this final jump.

Destination: [12 Kilometers]

Glistening threads of rising gold called to him were close enough for him to touch with his Sanguinity. But as bolts pulsed out from him, as fractures of lightning spread out once more, as steed-serpents made of coiling wind swam wide and ahead, a final obstacle appeared.

And promptly stopped Avo dead.

As he strode once more, his haemokinetic lightning was parried by another, the force he felt perfectly matching his own. As his winds pushed, so did a counter-gale, gust driving against gust, absolute against absolute, canon against canon.

Avo's velocity stalled. He found himself faced with an entity perfectly suited to deny him his escape: a snapshot of himself shaped from the Hungers' newest remembrance.

He felt a rival will reach into him, try to seize control of his blood. But such a thing was impossible. Against the laws of his subreality. Just as him doing the same was taboo for theirs

Paradox: Domain (Blood/Air)

Soulfire erupted from his Frame and Avo found himself falling free as an ephemeral, his Woundshaper and Fardrifter recoiling and disrupted inside him.

REND CAPACITY [WOUNDMOTHER]: 81%%

REND CAPACITY [FARDRIFTER]: 97%

VENT! VENT! VENT!

REND CAPACITY [TECHPLAGUER]: 22%

With his Techplaguer still in play, he opened walls and slipped through structures across the city as he tumbled down. His reflexes were still surging, initiate still in his corner, but the bitter tang of desperation was returning once more.

His two primary Heavens were out of commission. Would stay that way for the next few minutes at the very least.

He needed to keep moving. Maintain what speed he could and get out. Twelve kilometers wasn't far, but with how the Hungers could casually spawn new memories within the confines of its inner world, he was a beat of hesitation away from death.

Glimpsing the simulated map he made earlier, he triggered his Phys-Sim and saw that he was on a collision course with the side of a ziggurat. Expanding the holo-map further, he looked through the structure's interior and constructed new routes.

If he used his Techplaguer to pass through directly, he would doubtless be cut down by one of those emerging frost-suns—or a replica of himself—in a blink. Exposure was bad. Moving in the open without his greater Heavens was suicide. He considered passing through the surrounding precincts, using connected parts to mask his movements, but their on-site defenses felt potent as well.

That, and a better option presented itself in the tombs that lined the underground of each ziggurat. Those were interconnected as well. And from what Peace recalled, the site remained a place of extreme importance.

The Low Master's template—only just realizing where he was—began screaming at Avo from inside his mind as Avo tumbled down in freefall.

Spreading his sporelings out, Avo relied on his sheath's capabilities to ensure his safe descent. Bioelectric currents passed through him. His Echoheads expanded into shifting stacks, orbiting him as rings. Hissing beams snapped through the air, slicing clean through one of his legs. The voltage in him spiked, and using his magnetism, Avo fired his shards.

Eight fragments from his Echoheads tore through the air, sinking into a flat angle on the side of the temple.

Another disruption passed through him, but his **Skin of Virtuality** kept him unfazed. Clinging to the anchors he made, he pulled hard using his imbued magnetism as he manifested his Techplaguer fully. He opened shifted blocks of inorganic matter side, drawing inward as stored data while he guided himself through the chasm.

And just as he passed through, just as pressure built from close behind him, Avo filled the gaps behind him with a thought and began digging his way down through the structure, seeking the lowest level to broaden his chances of survival.

Halls lined with ghostly torches and filled with fleeing people caught the periphery of Avo's notice. He felt the pull of the metals they wore, flung an Echohead shard through the head of someone aiming a crossbow behind him without looking as he fell from floor to floor.

No unwanted miracles manifested. No act of devastation ensued.

The Hungers might've been willing to engage him in the open, but these places were significant to them. Places they were outright unwilling to damage.

This had been a good choice.

While he descended, the back of his mind, a note chimed as flickering strings of data flowed across his perception. His Neurodeck was coming online, and in the back of his mind, he heard a distinct and distorted groan.

{What wonderful hellscares you bright us to Avo.} Calvino's voice crackled. The EGI sounded—and looked—exhausted. Particulates spilled from a dripping nanomolecular ball.

Despite his circumstances, Avo couldn't help but smile. *+Calvino. Glad you made it. How do you like the home of my former masters?+*

{It's terrible and we should glass it from orbit.}

+Yeah. I feel that way too.+