

No one bleeds you deeper than kin.

-Asaru the First, Antediluvian

37

Decisions (III)

William Yu: Lv. 55 Count of Shapeless Enigmas (Circle of Envy)

The world vanished into a plane consumed by Source. Monochromatic energy spilled out from Wei, consuming everything around him. In seconds, all the others in the sanctuary were gone, and the room itself was layered over in a canvas projected by his System. In this space of darkness and white, only two individuals remained: one the young master blurring towards his father with a savage fist, the other the target himself, summoning a veil of purple force to shroud himself from harm.

Wei slammed hard against the projection, and Strength surged up from his flowspear into his body. A shockwave exploded as he struck the shield, but though the slightest of cracks spread across its surface, it did not shatter. In the same moment, William Yu moved, his body coming alight with a shimmering glow. He accelerated with a blast of propulsion away from Wei, but even as he grew faster, he only managed to get 200 meters away from Wei before he traveled no more.

>Relativity [38]/Direct Visual Vector Trace > 100% - 12%

Part of Wei remained tethered to his father, though a strain began to build within his **Aspect of Relativity**. If **Authority** allowed him to damage reality, then this Aspect seemed to let him anchor portions of space and time to himself. No matter how much more speed William Yu exerted, he never got any further than those 200 meters.

Laughing to himself, Wei brought his **Authority** to bear against the force field blocking his way.

Concept-Integrity of [Anxious Bulwark's Constitution]: 70/70 Integrity Points

Conceptual Integrity of Anxious Thresholds Wei's strike snaked free. His first hit reduced the conceptual integrity by 26 points. The next two shattered the blockade utterly. With the Bulwark deprived of Constitution, Wei moved forward, and the dome of force capable of taking supersonic impacts shattered like glass. He saw his father flinch two hundred meters ahead of him. There was nowhere for him to run.

Authority Advanced > 17

Omniscience Advanced > 17

Relativity Advanced > 18

>[12/10] **Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension**

>>[1/20] **Core Ascensions to [Gate] 2 System Ascension**

Immediately, William tried triggering a teleportation skill. Spatial essence clenched around the older man, and Wei felt part of his **Relativity** get severed by a sudden squeezing pressure. But the most of it held.

>**Relativity [38]/Direct Visual Vector Trace > 88% - 22%**

>**Aspect of Relativity [18+22] Resisting Anchor of Jealousy**

His father exerted every ounce of power possessed by his Class, trying to get away. Confusion spread across William's features as the glow engulfing his person flared bright, and Wei got the feeling that **Anchor of Jealousy** was supposed to be an instantaneous skill.

With a scornful backhand, Wei shattered the distance between him and his quarry. In an instant, he was right behind his father, the man unprepared for the young master's sudden transition across space.

Wei lashed out with an elbow. His father turned, still impossibly fast, yet he reacted a moment too late—was entirely unprepared by Wei's sudden arrival. **Proximal Acceleration** worked in tandem with Wei's **Aspect of Relativity** Wei struck first — at his father's **Speed**, no less.

Concept-Integrity of [William Yu's Speed]: 165/165 Integrity Points

William's **Speed** was still impossibly fast, far in excess of what his son could muster. A consideration passed through the young master as he questioned if his father always possessed his Class even while masquerading as a cultivator. Despite this, the man was unbalanced and utterly caught off guard.

Concept-Integrity of [William Yu's Speed]: 136/165 Integrity Points

Wei drove a trembling palm into the man's gut and the essence within William detonated. Parts of his power blossomed into black, then white, then nothing at all. The concept of "**Speed**" itself shattered within William and he cried out. His own counterattack came then, a blossom of force wrapping around Wei in a colorful tide of force—but though he remained fast, some part of his **Speed** was permanently lost.

Torn off his feet, Wei felt his bones fracture and flesh bruise. But rather than struggling against the kinetic force directly, he struck at the **Strength** empowering the Skill instead. His **Intent** slashed out, and with each blow, he felt its impact lessen, until what used to be a tsunami of pressure died to less than a trickle before Wei's raining fists. Soon, the young master was moving again as purplish essence parted around his person, as if he was a blade cleaving across a stream.

Source: 67/90 Lumens

"You cannot evade me, father," Wei said, his mind afire with the thrill of revenge. All sense was lost to him now, all logic. He was nothing but focus and retribution. His blood ran hot, but his heart was cold. This was his moment now. No more would he wait.

Essence imploded around William, clenching at his person, trying to separate him from this domain, but though each attempt loosened Wei's **Relativity**, it wasn't enough to free him outright. He was trapped here. This was a fight he couldn't flee from.

"Wei, wait," his father said, holding up a hand. He was slower, and pain expression on his face betrayed the depths of his pain. Good. Wei shattered space and blinked across the monochromatic expanse. He skipped closer and closer to his father. "Listen to me! You have no idea—"

Wei sent out a final kick that shattered the space between him and his father and moved.

But this action was anticipated. Even with a portion of his **Speed** permanently destroyed, William was substantially faster. Instead of creating another barrier, however, his entire personal came alight with a purple glow as the essence he projected constructed reflective panes, creating a layered maze.

Wei shot forth, but bounced off a transparent pane—his physical force utterly reflected. A jolt of pain passed through the young master, but he wasted no time before he adjusted his strategy. He could still sense his father's essence as the man fled into the reflections. The **Aspect of Omniscience** granted Wei insight on another level, and he found himself staggered by how clearly he could process detail from his environment.

Before his System Ascension, this Skill would have rendered him utterly lost, but now, it was little more than momentary delay. Breaking the **Constitutions** of the surrounding walls, Wei destroyed his father's summoned maze as he hunted the man unimpeded by the force-reflecting structures.

His father held a **Class** many times his level, but the difference between **Class** and System was growing more evident with each bit of progression Wei made.

"You cannot evade me," Wei snarled, his focus nigh-prescient as he shattered the **Aspects** keeping a curved wall of reflections in existence. As he stepped through a fading echo of monochrome, his father mere steps away, a counterattack came, and Wei's System sounded out with warning.

Psionics detected

Wei shifted to his **Form of the Resonant** reflexively. A projectile of pinkish smoke slithered through the air like something between a snake and an arrow as it sought to pierce Wei. It had been fired from within the reflection of a glass pane, and within its space stood William Yu transformed.

Most of his facial feature remained, but his lower body had turned into that of a serpent's, and he now had six additional limbs to help man what looked to be a massive war bow trice as long as Wei was tall.

The young master parried the first shot with his flowspear. His **Form of the Resonant** shuddered as if a gong, and his father's attack had been shoved off course—if only barely. Yet, the arrow coiled backward and continued seeking Wei and from the shining glass walls compromising the rest of the maze, countless more arrows came sailing free as William Yu slithered from place to place.

Wei cast his **Intent** out at the first arrow, but before he could wrap the attack with his Source, it dissolved into delectable smoke.

Arrow of Rapturous Ardor Being Resisted by Aspect of Intent [Incalculable]

Though Wei's will held, a haze crawled across his mind as his thought's grew loose and slow. The other arrows slammed into him a moment thereafter, shattering more against his **Aspect of Enlightenment** than his actual flesh. From all reflective veils came a storm of smoking arrows, and they burrowed into Wei impacting him over and over again until his mind began to drown...

The young master swung out with his flowspear, but the memory of his System and his **Form of the Resonant** was lost. He was a man drowning as a sea passed over his vision, sinking deeper and deeper as an unwilling feeling of absolute bliss built within his heart...

Wei An Wei found himself standing upon a golden path. The rich scent of fertile soil on both sides. The Hundred-Names worked in gridded patties. Ahead, the mountain hold of the Drowned Sky Sect loomed. The Everblossoms sprouted higher than ever before from crevices between the stones. The sky was a painting composed of glorious shades of white, pink, and red. Through the branches, the dew of dappled day shone.

Wei found himself drifting for a moment, wondering how he got here. Wondering, but part of him knew something was wrong. Most of him wanted to continue down the path. Return home and think no more of his odd feelings. His matriarch and patriarch must be expecting him now. He had spent some time meditating at the lake after "instructing" some outer court disciples. Truly, the quality of the sect diminishes year after year.

Alas, all things must end, and he needed to finish his practice today to... to...

Host's Aspect of Fortification has adapted to effects of Arrow of Rapturous Ardor

Fortification Advanced > 11

Arrow of Rapturous Ardor Has Been Resisted by Aspect of Intent [Incalculable]

>[1410] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

>>[1/20] Core Ascensions to [Gate] 2 System Ascension

Wei coughed as a blast of Source erupted from his body. Suddenly, he felt a part of himself *acclimated* to the effects of the arrows. Before even the scents faded, he felt a building swell of power wrestle against the hostile essence. As the powers of hell assailed his being, so too did his own Source retaliate and learn to consume the arrows.

A dozen spots of pain flared across Wei's body as the spectral arrows wriggling into his body shattered. The world was clear to him once more. His **Omniscience** returned, and in an instant, he located the exact location of his father just 64 meters away, gliding across a corner of the maze as he triggered his teleport Skill once more.

>Relativity [38]/Direct Visual Vector Trace > 66% - 22%
>Aspect of Relativity [18+22] Resisting Anchor of Jealousy

Wei cursed as he felt his **Relativity** slipping. By this point, his father realized his arrows had lost their effects as well. A storm of arrows resumed, coming at Wei from all angles, but this time the young master was ready.

Instead of trying to catch the arrows using his Intent, Wei marked a veil of space surrounding him, shattering it and creating a spatially distorted cocoon around his person. Arrows slashed into the Source claimed threshold—and were promptly displaced as found themselves far off course, never getting anywhere near Wei.

And as the moment continued, the young master extended the channel of his **Intent**, using it to reach across the maze to the place where his father had stopped. The man channeled his teleport skill using two free hands with others he had left continued loosing arrow after arrow. Doing so much at once, he never noticed the tendril of Source approaching, nor how reality was beginning to crack.

With a final stab, space broke, and Wei's position shifted right next to his father once more. Again, the man was caught off guard, but managed to turn his bow on Wei at the last second. The young master took three shots to the chest before his **Intent** plunged into the reflection and consumed his father. But this time, instead of targeting the man's Aspect, he struck at something adjacent in his Class.

Concept-Integrity of [William Yu's Maze of Self-Facing Deceit]: 50/50 Integrity Points

The arrows struck Wei with as much force as they did before, but part of him was long used to their effects, and digested the illusion faster than they could manifest. As William held up two scaled hands, crying for Wei to wait, the young master slashed trice with his Eidolon, and something within his father detonated once more.

A crystallized shard deep within his father's Class shattered with a monochromatic shockwave, and every pane compromise the reflective maze burst apart with it, sending William Yu tumbling free.