

Eidolons are items of subterfuge first and foremost. I created them by stripping the Aspect of Mind from certain demons that I then infused into artifacts and weapons. I gave them their own classes so they can level separately from their owners. Why did I do this? Because sometimes you need some non-inherent leverage.

Let me explain. Imagine, if you will, that you are someone trapped in a realm ruled by a tyrannical System. A System that you don't like. A System might be monitoring you through your own eyes. One that might even be able to control you via the Class they bestowed upon you. You can either play by their rules, gain experience, grow powerful, or, if it offends your sensibilities, suffer endlessly.

Now, my Eidolon gives you options. As they are designed to be bound and hidden within the recesses of your mind, and run on a separate System of advancement — and because I have taken measures to make them “hard to notice” by other System-hosts — you'll get more... options.

Now, what can an Eidolon do? Good question. Most of them are quite simple. They use a Foundational Class based on my Circles, and can take any form, any state, and all it needs to do is attach itself to your aspect of mind. After that, well, it's yours to wield, and it's mine to give. And I am a generous, generous benefactor.

And if you are worried that I might use it against you... well, you already live at the mercy of one tyrant, and there's a reason why I am providing such a boon to you. You don't need to trust my goodwill. Trust my greed. Trust that I wish to see you hurt my rivals using “misplaced” gifts while my hands stay clean.

Trust, because that is all you have in the end. That, or desperate sadness.

The devil isn't so bad once you get to know them.

-Mepheleon the Harbinger

30

Concept-Breaker

Two colossi approached Wei and Elena from across a long hallway of opulence. The walls around them rose high, licked by white marble arches. Vast windows, rounded with painted frescoes, were illuminated by crashing bolts of crimson lightning outside. Disturbingly, the ground beneath them was not flooring, but rather an amalgamation of bowed people. They were flayed of skin and served as rows of flooring as they knelt and bowed in the direction from which the adversaries approached.

Things grew worse as a third colossus stepped out from behind the two and trailed them as a backline.

Bearers of the Brazen Glory: Lv. 5 Demons of Pride

These enemies resembled humanoid cauldrons, cast from glistening gold. Their arms clutched fanged maces made to resemble screaming human faces. An amber shroud layered their bodies, and between them, a crevice of space revealed a massive black-iron gate about twenty meters away.

It was at this moment that the young master chose to look Ellena over as well. She had changed. Moments ago, she was frail, pathless, fighting against the fevers brought on by the taint in her blood. Now a golden regalia enshrouded her body, forming an armored headdress around her head, resembling something between a helmet and a spiked crown. The rest of her body was as if a flowing dress stitched together by armored plates. The slits along her legs showed that she was still wearing the greaves he gifted her, so her artifacts had not been lost, merely layered over.

And then there was the essence emanating from her, that raw, radiating brightness that he now understood she gained from imbibing in the Path of Pride. There was a layer of slight repulsion emanating from her person, almost like a resistant shroud keeping her safe, pin bricks of gold dotting the center of her green eyes.

She looked away and swallowed, "Boy, I have something to admit." The mace-wielding colossi approached, and hissing fluid splashed free from their tops. Wei readied himself and drew upon his Source. Time to see just how much of reality he could break. "I have never been good at fighting."

The young master couldn't help but laugh. "It doesn't matter if you're good, it only matters if you are better than whom you face. Stay here and keep their attention; I'll go behind."

"What?" she asked, but he didn't wait. He channeled his **Intent** and lined a stretch of space extending from him to a point behind the three colossi.

Concept-Integrity of [Distance]: 2/2 Integrity Points

He struck out with his face. Space itself broke. The distance between him and his desired destination collapsed as if it had been cleaved away. Suddenly, Wei was behind his foes.

The demons, confused as to where one of their prey went, froze. Without a spear, he was fifty percent slower than he could be, but something was different. When he moved, his Source flared and a coronal emanation distorted the world around him. He accelerated in contrast to time itself. His **Proximal Acceleration** worked in tandem with his **Aspect of Relativity**, and the colossi, already slower than him at baseline, were rendered flat-footed, unable to turn and bring their weapons to bear.

More, at the current distance, he *knew* everything there was to know about them. He felt their bodies and realized every detail through his **Omniscience**; examined the nature of alloy via his **Enlightenment**.

Sin-Gild: A rare material found only in the claimed hells, shaped by the Circle of Pride. It derives material toughness from the user's Will.

Enlightenment Advanced > 10

[1/10] Aspect Advancements to Core Ascension

He came in low, leg lashing out to strike at the joints of the rearmost colossus. These limbs were the thinnest parts of their entire body. In fact, he was surprised how such stilts could bear their enormous bodies. However, when his first kick went out, he winced as he felt his shin ring hard against an unseen force. The amber aura shrouded the demon flashed but endured under the blow. A set of numbers materialized at the point of impact.

Aegis of Arrogance: [5/25]

Ah, so these demons had part of the Path of Pride's Class benefits. Annoying, but Mephelian had to base them off of something, Wei supposed.

The colossi moved. The one that he struck turned to him, ignoring the impact to deliver one of their own. The others came on his flanks, ignoring Ellena entirely. And somehow, he was aware of every little detail, every little movement. He didn't even need to see it. He could just feel it. Nothing was beyond his awareness in this vicinity.

Changing strategies, he pushed off the colossus and shifted his momentum. He ducked. A mace slipped by his body, the weapon as long as he was tall. But the colossus was exposed now, and he used his **Intent** to target something even more specific than distance. Infusing Source into the enemy's Aspect of Will, he aimed to break what protected them. His action was pure instinct, and he wondered if it could be done. But as the Conceptual Integrity loaded, Wei grinned as sudden excitement roared within him. This changed everything.

Concept-Integrity of [Bearers of the Brazen Glory's Aspect of Will]: 10/10 Integrity Points

The System had not lied. He could now break *impossible* things — use his fists to reshape the very heavens themselves. His blow surged out and this time, instead of bouncing against the protective shroud, he hit their Aspect directly. Something inside the colossus cracked, and they shuddered. An echo shattered out of their body. Their Aegis of Arrogance dimmed.

The demon staggered, molten fluid bubbling out from atop its cauldron as he landed two more blows. The other colossi swung for him but they were too late. His target's Aspect of Will shattered completely. The broken colossus went still and reacted no more.

Two maces whisked beside both Wei's ears, hair's distance away from striking him. It wasn't enough, and as he rolled between his current foe's legs, landing just as the Will-broken colossus dropped their mace. As he rose, he found them still just standing there, unmoving, devoid of **Will**.

His **Intent** snaked out of him once more, and this time he targeted another Aspect in the demon to his left: their **Constitution**.

Concept-Integrity of [Bearers of the Brazen Glory's Aspect of Constitution]: [8/8]

He exploded upward into a whipping kick just as they lifted their weapon high. His leg intercepting a falling blow at the wrist. Monochromatic force flashed through the demon, but Wei found himself flung aside. It was as if his strike had no mass behind it. No force. But as he recovered into a roll, cracks spread down the arm of the colossus as its structure began to destabilize.

Concept-Integrity of [Bearers of the Brazen Glory's Aspect of Constitution]: [0/8]

The demon took a step towards him, but then shuddered on fragile legs. Every step came with the accompaniment of a resounding crack. The third colossus came around from the right — forced to because the first demon Wei struck remained lifeless, broken of Will.

Another presence entered Wei's awareness. Five meters away, Ellena came running, her armored dress drifting around her, her Aegis of Arrogance coating her person just like it did these demons. Her eyes were wide, and she was breathing fast, typical for someone without martial experience.

No matter. Wei could handle these three creatures, but he didn't quite want to kill them just yet. No, there were other considerations he had to indulge. He wanted more Aspect Advancements, but more than that, Ellena likely needed to level up.

Ellena of Dawnrest: Level 1, Servant of Pride.

He gestured towards the weakened colossus. "Strike that one. I will resolve the last survivor." He didn't wait for her response. There was no time, for the third colossus lowered its head, and from the cauldron spewed out a glowing tide of heat.

Wei infused the substance with his **Intent**, and though it seared at his flesh, he felt himself himself capable of ignore some of the damage altogether.

Fortification [9] vs. [Molten Agony]

>Fortification Successful – Effects reduced

Source: [88/90]

Concept-Integrity of [Molten Agony]: [4/4]

Wei's fist impacted the Conceptual Structure of the searing fluid, and it shattered against him like glass, breaking apart in fading fragments of monochromatic luminosity. He stepped through, and his fist blurred forth in a cycling chain. Within a second, he shattered the **Constitution** of the colossus, rendered it fragile as well, and it was then that he finally heard Ellena cry out.

She swung her arm wide, and a shroud of force wrapped around the limb. She was using her **Aegis of Arrogance** as a cudgel. Wei wasn't quite sure how effective that would be. His answer came when the radiance protecting her impacted the already destabilized colossus like a hammer. The Bearer broke apart in a spray of fragments, and though a few droplets of searing magma rained down upon Ellena, they sizzled against her protection and never greeted her flesh. Ellena, however, stumbled over, thrown off balance by her sloppy attack. Wei winced at her poor form and found himself glad that she was classed.

This woman was fortunate. If her daughter had not been so powerful, and if she had not accompanied him into this portal, then there would be little chance of her surviving the ordeal of hell.

She stared at him on the ground, hands planted against the bald heads of the supplicants that made up the ground. Her Class level still remained at once. Before him, the last of the demons struggled and groaned. "Break this one too," Wei said, then he made for the Will-broken Bearer. Strolling to its front side, he saw that it lingered lifeless and sought its discarded weapon. The cudgel weighed as much as the young master did. His understanding of his weight manifested intuitively in his mind.

He channeled thin streams of **Intent** down its sides, carefully shearing sections away from the weapon's structure. Thereafter, he targeted its **Constitution** with a slight stomp, breaking its integrity. The desired portions fractured away, and he reached down, claiming a makeshift spear.

A surge of speed filled his body and time crashed harder against him, trailing as if a stream parting before a boulder. He tested his newest weapon by driving its blunt tip against the demon. Metal sang against metal, and his new spear left a massive dent in the demon's chest.

But even so, he found the impact wanting.

It took three more hits for him to deal any true damage. By then, molten fluid was leaking free, but the Bearer itself was still standing. Wei hummed to himself with satisfaction. It would have been annoying to face them without crossing the First Gate. Striking their Aspects was far easier than contending against force on force. Once more, he drew upon his limitless **Intent**, buried it deep into his enemy as if a dagger. Spinning the spear in his hands, he fell upon them like a storm, and Aspect after Aspect shattered beneath his onslaught.

Authority Advanced > 12

The demon crumbled, molten fluid burst free as a shower, which then slowed in the air, which then still entirely as the possibility of "Speed" was utterly lost to it. And when the last Aspect broke, there was nothing tethering it to this reality. It simply reverberated with a ripple of Source and left nothing thereafter.

Wei stared at the space his foe once occupied. Their unmaking so complete that this entire encounter could have been just imagined. Nearby, he regarded Ellena and grinned.

Ellena of Dawnrest: Level 2, Servant of Pride.

A second shattered colossus lay scattered at her feet. He stared at her, and she stared back at him. A silence filled the room.

Looking around, he waited for more threats to come. Perhaps an ambush. Perhaps the Knight of Lust again. But they were alone. Alone in this long hallway, with nothing more than the gate awaiting them.

"Are you well?" Wei asked.

Ellena nodded, trying to get her breathing under control. "I—they broke easier than expected."

"Yes," Wei agreed. "It helps that I can target their Constitutions directly."

"You can?" Ellena asked, surprised.

The young master just nodded.

The former queen looked up and her eyes widened. "It says that I have points I can distribute to my Aspects. And a new selectable Skill."

The young master stared at him with confusion as he saw nothing but open air before her.

"Where?"

"Right here," she gestured at nothing.

Wei paused and his Aspect of Enlightenment triggered. He remembered drawing Reference Circuits to access his Trespasser's Compendium. From within, drew his Platonic Scalpel and traced a line. "I'm going to try something. Let me take a look."