The Unknown

Ra'azel Equinar was perturbed, again. He did not anticipate his target being powerful enough to destroy his cage, which had put him on guard. Even then, he had been thrown around hard, his body ached from the impact with the ground even with the protections of his armor.

What he expected the least of all was to recognize his target. The little visitor to his jail cell, the one who released him from both his prisons, it was as if fate itself was playing its jokes on them all. He could do nothing but laugh at it, they were in an infinite world, and yet it seemed so small.

He could feel his opponents will like it was a physical thing, oppressive and looming over everything around them. He had not felt this from any of the others, it was perfect. He had to capture him, he needed time to observe how a person's body and soul interacted with the world around them. What mechanisms were used to accomplish it.

He would not underestimate his opponent, not after being thrown like a piece of wood in a storm. He had already escaped a cage that Ra'azel had thought was sufficient to hold anyone. They were too close to the city for his comfort, any battle here would be noticed, and others would come. The unknown was the greatest danger to Ra'azel, and he was not about to risk his existence against people and things he was ignorant about. This had to be dealt with quickly. If he could not hold him, then he had to disable him. Limbs were not necessary for his tests, nor was consciousness, for now at least. He reformed the armor around his head and his opponent equipped a white armor.

The man kept his eyes on Ra'azel, his body tense and waiting, his will held back as if it was an ocean waiting to come down on anything its wielder wanted. He reached into his storage spaces and pulled out his weapons. Suddenly, he was surrounded by two dozen of his new flying constructs. He had incorporated many ideas that he had gotten from the cthul into his own designs. It was easy for someone as old as he was. What

they had done were simply new ways to apply the same concepts, like their drones that patrolled the streets. Each of the barrel sized drones was powered by Essence Crystals and runes that drew energy from the air around them. The two pistons mounted on from started to glow and immediately they fired.

Lances of concentrated light struck at his target, lasers as the cthul called them. Each lance was capable of cutting through most materials Ra'azel had encountered. The light flashed and then froze for a moment, his target blinked away, and Ra'azel's visor flashed as the sensory runes on his armor detected the spatial vibrations and showed him where he had gone. The drones reoriented without pausing, the runes linking them to his armor sending the information automatically.

Ra'azel reached out to his creation, the blade that was the man's arm. He touched it with his will seeking that which was his and found himself repelled. He grimaced, but it was to be expected, after he had used it to escape the Ethereal. Something had scrubbed clean the traces of his soul in it.

Ra'azel flicked his wrist and summoned a bulky device in his hand, he hefted it and pointed it at his target as the drones fired at him, closing in quickly. As the lasers came close to him, it was as if they were just frozen in space. Just for a few moments, but enough for his target to fly away. He had wings on his back, and Ra'azel could tell that the wind around them was picking up again.

A rune on his armor triggered, and he was anchored on the ground, the wind unable to pick him up as it threw his drones in the air around, crashing them into each other. They were sturdy enough that they weren't destroyed immediately, but a few had gotten cut apart by the lasers as they had been thrown in the way.

Faster, Ra'azel knew that he had to be faster, his armor was detecting new arrivals coming to this location. His opponent dove from high above, dodging his drones and heading straight for Ra'azel who raised his cannon and aimed then fired. The gravity shifted and his target slammed

into the ground. His armor plussed a rune erupting into light as he sacrificed a portion of his soul to overpower it. A wave ripped out of him, stilling the space around them and preventing any rifts or teleports from happening. He dropped his weapon and dashed forward, he was not a close fighter, he relied on his constructs but there were moments for everything. He swung as he called a new construct. A two handed hammer taller than he was appeared in his hands, made from the body of a destruction spirit, covered in runes.

His opponent suddenly sped up and Ra'azel missed, he frowned his armor was detecting strange readings, the sensations fed directly to his soul, but he did not understand them.

This was why he hated going against things that he didn't know. His opponent lashed out with his sword, power in the blow evident. Ra'azel's armor wrenched to the side on its own, dodging the blow.

The noise of metal being cut open filled Ra'azel's ears as he felt the wound on his shoulder open up. He grimaced and saw the gash on his armor. Impossible, he had dodged. He didn't have the chance to think on it, his opponent advanced. Chains snapped out of the ground to surround him the very space around him held him as if he was frozen and unable to move. The man charged, his blade and sword ready.

Ra'azel carved a piece of his soul away, and charged it with his will. A rune on his chest exploded in light and a wave spread from him, hitting the man and making him shake his head, he stumbled and lost his footing, dazed from the attack. His armor wrenched itself, breaking the chains and he moved. He swung his hammer again, this time connecting. The runes on the hammer activated, shattering his target's armor into pieces. He saw blood flowing from tiny cuts as he drove him into the ground. He dismissed the hammer and pulled out an orb crafted of the dreams of spirits, that should be enough to incapacitate him. The storm of wind raged around them as he leaned down.

He activated the orb and saw his opponent raise his head and look at him, his eyes clear. Ra'azel frowned, and then shadows around him

snapped out, grasping him tightly and crushing his armor. A thousand knives struck all over the surface of his armor, enhanced by a will that was barely detectable, but somehow always present. He had missed it. The shadows all around them darkened and the light of the sun above dimmed.

Knives pierced his runes, destroying them utterly. His space block rune cracked, and a shockwave ripped out of his armor as he screamed at the destruction of the part of his soul. Ra'azel's soul cried out as his armor was peeled away from his skin, the failsafe activating.

He blinked back through space, to safety, but the space froze, a will of an ocean holding it back and not letting him go far. He dropped on the ground, blood marring his clothes. He raised his head and saw his opponent on his feet, covered in blood as well, a second person stepped out of his shadow.

"Two?" Ra'azel said, more to himself than them. Both had a great will, and now he realized why they had been so much brighter when he searched. He detected not one but two wills so close together that it seemed as one.

Both were suitable for his purposes, but he couldn't hold both. Too many unknowns, as had just been demonstrated.

"That armor was a prototype," he said slowly as he straightened.

"Why are you here?" His opponent asked, not advancing. "What do you want?"

Ra'azel narrowed his eyes. "Secrets and truths," he said, then pulled out his older armor around him. Hide of dead spirits surrounded him, and power rippled out of him.

He pulled out his constructs, rods fashioned out of skulls stabbed into the ground and lighting ripped through the air, heading for the two. They both blinked away, one through shadow other through space. Ra'azel raised his hand, rod appearing in it carved out of bleached bone. The rune

carved into its side sealed the power of a spirit of frailty within in. He unleashed it on the two as they reappeared.

Two wisps of white light struck his targets and both bowed in pain. Perhaps he would be able to get two test subjects after all. He advanced. And that was when the ground rumbled, when it heaved and exploded outward. Vines and roots ripped through the ground and caught his form, squeezing tightly. A giant armored wolf landed next to him, and the air turned to frost, the plants froze fully as did his armor, trapping him within. The landscape around them changed as something was brought into the world. What was destroyed forest turned into a snow covered plain, the sun's rays above turned frigid and cold.

The wolf raised its head and a white moon appeared above its head, it felt like pure frost. Familiar even, like what Ra'azel had gazed at once before. The frozen plants turned to blue ice, the storm of wind itself froze and stopped, space and time, everything halted as that power manifested itself.

The wolf opened its mouth, and a blast left it with a roar. The plants that were frozen shattered, ice hail whirled around him carving into his armor, freezing it through all of its protections. The runes carved in his soul screamed as he pulled out a sphere of a refined spirit Essence and detonated it.

A blast of heat expanded, warming him instantly and turning the expanse around him from frozen to boiling in an instant. The Fire erupted and washed over the wolf as the scales of its armor rippled to red. The blast sent everything around him away and he stumbled forward on ashen ground. The moon was dispelled, and dirt turned to glass, the air was on fire.

He glared around as he saw his two targets next to each other some distance away through the shimmer of the heat in the air. A red headed man stood near them plants growing all around him that seemed to absorb the heat. The wolf that should've been nothing but ash was

stumbling to its feet, its armor glowing red. His eyes narrowed on it, the armor had done something, he could tell.

Four now, he debated leaving, the risk was no longer worth it. But now, now he was angry. He had lost two of his armors, and two of his targets he didn't need alive. He straightened, and glared.

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Zach's nerves were on fire from whatever it was that Ra'azel had hit him with. He looked at the scorched earth where just a moment Anrosh's **Domain** and **Power Manifestation** had stood. A part of him wanted to tell them to run, that they could do nothing—what he knew about this opponent told him that they were in grave danger—another part that had seen his armor destroyed twice and his blood flow said that they had a chance now. Ender had a tier 9 Class, and Anrosh was Peak Ascended, with Zach and Naha, they had enough power to stop anything. But a tiny part of his mind rebelled at that thought.

He watched as the yeti glared at them, and then narrowed his eyes. A new armor surrounding him and orbs of all kinds appearing all around him.

"The two of you," he started. "I don't need."

A moment later he struck a hand out toward Anrosh, a symbol glowing in the air. Black lightning lashed out and struck her in the side. Her armor peeled off and her body burst into a shower of blood and bone that disintegrated into black dust and was blown into the wind.

"And now," the yeti whispered, the orbs orbiting him whirled and symbols started to light upon them. "I'm angry."