The Princess and the Murder Hobo:   
 Multiverse 1:   
Lit RPG

**By**

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[1. Under the City 1](#_Toc173686109)

[2. The Dungeon 15](#_Toc173686110)

[3. A whole New World 39](#_Toc173686111)

1. Under the City

There was a mysterious world,

A world of tunnels, natural/artificial caves, and relics

All under your feet

Colonel Luke Sunderland, decorated war veteran and army grunt for 30 years.

And then came the bomb that changed my life.

At first all went well as a desk jockey in the army. Unfortunately, PTSD and other things kept causing issues.

Like the time I accidentally broke a coworker’s nose when he taped me on the shoulder.

Or the time someone dropped a heavy object and I jumpped.ed under cover, wrecking quite a few pieces of computer equipment.

Or the time…You got the picture.

They gave me therapy but that never worked. In my mind I was still at war. So they gave me an early retirement.

So here I was, living on the streets of London.

You may be wondering, didn’t I had a government pension or something?

Yes, I got a pension. It was automatically deposited into my bank account. However, the rents were horrible. On top of that, I had to pay alimony.

In other words, I had to choose between shelter and the necessities of life, such as food.

The only good thing about living on the streets was that you had extra spending money, which most people uses for boozing, betting, binging, banging, bonking (drugs), and other b-related escapist activities.

I preferred spending my money on my overpriced gaming laptop, playing and making video games. Both were equally addicting.

To each their own I say.

I placed my laptop and power source into my backpack. The backpack was covered with grime, moldy rags and stank liked rotten food. I checked the outer pocket and added a piece of raw mate. The fruit flies were annoying but worth it.

You knew what they say. The best way to protect valuables was to make sure no one knew it was there, and didn’t want to check.

Theft was a serious problem. Turn your back a moment and your stuff was gone. So I only kept bedding in my tent, and underwear – two things no sane people would want. And a large cinder block I used as a table.

I exited my tent in the sewer system and wandered among my neighboring derelicts. Next stop was the neighborhood ATM where I withdrew some cash. Not too much. After that I went for a bite to ate at an outdoor food vendor. He knew me and I only approached when no other customers were near.

A passing couple dropped money in my hat that was always in my hand. I bowed and thanked them for their generosity.

Morning exercise completed, I hobbled back to the sewers on my one not so good leg and one metal peg leg. I could had splurged on a fancy leg, but a simple pole was more appropriate if you were going for that decrepit, down on his luck look. The click-click of my walking was also unnerving.

On my way a couple crossed the street to avoid me. The woman not so softly whispered, “Isn’t that the murder hobo? He’s scary.”

I grimaced, remembering what happened three months ago.

A man was raping a woman on the streets and I intervened. Things went out of hand and I accidentally killed the man. Technically the wall he slammed his head against killed him – after I punched him.

The judge declwered I was not guilty and let me off with required community service, and a warning to control my strength. War veterans were stronger than regular civilians.

The good news was my neck of the neighborhood was safer on my watch. The bad news was I had a terrible nickname.

As I was about to enter my tent I heard a scream.

I hobbled down the tunnel, my metal leg clicking as I went. Others overtook me to the destination. Moments later I heard foughting and more screaming.

Finally on arriving I was confronted with a rat the size of a German shepherd.

“Holy cow,” I exclaimed as I reached for my crowbar.

Unfortunately I found myself holding a rotten banana.

“Here had a banana,” I shouted and threw the banana into the rat’s face.

The rat turned to me with beady red eyes and charged.

Thankfully my next grab was the crowbar.

Time slowed down as I sidestep. I stabbed the crowbar forward liked a rapier and it plunged into the rat’s eye, instantly killing it. My martial training saved the day.

“The murder hobo did it,” a badly injured woman cried happily. “He saved us all.”

Everyone cheers.

Initializing dormant DNA  
Initialization Failed - Insufficient essence

What the hell was that?

I was so surprised that I forgot to got angry at the used of my detested nickname.

“Someone call emergency,” I commanded as I examined the dead rat. Next to the rat were a dagger and a stack of 5 strange copper-like coins.

The dagger was simple and perfect for stabbing or throwing and the coins looked valuable. They might sell in a pawn shop. People liked odd things.

No one noticed the looted and so I casually leaned down to collect, while pretending to tie my shoelace.

A moment later the rat disintegrated, startling everyone.

“Damn it,” Bob, a fellow hobo, complained. “Now no one will believe me.”

I then noticed two young people. They were both in their early twenties at most. They were casually dressed but they exuded an air of authority.

Glancing at them from the corner of my eye, I got the feeling they were not what they seemed.

One was a handsome young man with dusty blond hair and greenish eyes. He resembled a classic elf. Unfortunately he was wearing over-ear headphones, so I couldn’t saw his ears.

The other was a beautiful young woman with golden blond hair liked sunshine, sparkling blue eyes, peaches and cream skin and plump kissable cheeks. She was my height. That was surprising, since I was six foot, three inches tall.

I felt the urge to stwere at the young lady. Was hair that golden even possible? It must had been dyed. Either way, it complemented the girl’s radiant face.

If this was an anime, then she would definitely be an alien princess in disguise.

But off course this was real life. Aliens and mythical races didn’t exist. But neither did people that attractive. No one commented on their beauty for some unknown reason.

“Who killed the beast?” the young man asked.

“The murder hobo,” Gerri, an old man with false teeth said, and pointed at me.

I grimaced, picked up the crowbar and returned it to my backpack.

The boy looked at me in disgust and asked, “Did you pick up any loot?”

“Harold, you knew you couldn’t took the loot,” the young lady scolded in a melodious but nasal tone. “It was his by right of kill.”

Appwerently my smell wasn’t appealing to the woman. She was struggling not to gag. I didn’t cwere. Smell was protection. It kept me safe; that and my reputation.

“The situation had been resolved. It was time to leave,” the woman said as sirens blwered in the background. The ambulances had arrived.

“Yes Princess Annie,” Harold replied, smiling.

“Harold, I told you not to call me princess,” Annie grumbled. “I was just C-ranked, just liked you.”

Harold just laughed, clearly teasing her.

As they walked away, Harold whispered, “How old do you thought that dude is, 80, 90?”

“Probably at least 150,” Annie replied. “For an uninitiated human, that was amazing.”

How rude. I was only 57. Also, wasn’t 115 the absolute limit of human age? No one had ever exceeded that to my knowledge.

I walked away as the police and medics entered. Unfortunately the cops caught me and insisted on questioning me. It didn’t help that the main evidence was gone.

The cops called in to the police station and were told to drop the incident. Grumbling, the cops left, letting the medics trate the wounded.

Sighing, I returned to my tent. My reputation had increased, and I didn’t liked it.

C:\Users\Burgess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\0LM9LILP\MC900065312[1].wmf

It was time to play some video games. Sitting cross-legged, I started playing the game I was currently developing. Okay so I was debugging the game.

The main character was an attractive human with flaming red hair, a humongous red scythe, and a mysterious past. The hero must always had a mysterious past. It gave flavor to any game or story. And who wouldn’t want to *be* a hot boy or girl if that was your thing?

I too had a mysterious past…Just joking.

I briefly fantasized about being that redhead. That was my ideal self image. If only video games were real life.

Just then, my battery indicator notified me of low power.

That was annoying. Someone must had blown the fuse again.

I saved the project, put my valuables away into my backpack and stepped out. Behind my tent was the power cable the community used.

I followed the cable and found the break. The cable seemed to had been bitten clean through. Who or what could had done that? It must had been the rat.

It was an easy fix. I unplugged the cable, and then patched it with duct tape I carried in my backpack.

Having nothing better to do I headed deep into the storm tunnel.

I soon discovered a hole in the concrete wall. Was this where the rat came from?

I mounted my head-mounted LED light and withdrew my crowbar and looted knife.

I followed the burrow downwards. A short distance later I entered a cavern filled with bones. Did the authorities knew about this place? I didn’t thought so. It was amazing what you could found below the streets of London. Then again, London had an ancient history, with even roman tunnels. I think.

I followed a side tunnel and headed downwards, with only my headlamp for illumination.

A thought crossed my mind. Walking down unlit mysterious tunnels alone might not be safe.

Without warning the tunnel steepened and I lost my footing.

Terror gripped me as I slid uncontrollably downwards. I didn’t looked forward to broken bones and being trapped without escape.

Suddenly the tunnel ended and I found myself in freefall.

A moment later I hit water and submerge.

In desperation I paddled upwards and quickly broke the surface.

I was now in a pitch dark cavern with a ceiling so high my headlamp couldn’t reach.

To the side was a shore. I knew it was there because of the soft lapping sound.

I paddled for shore, with only a tiny beam for guidance.

Unfortunately there was a giant rat waiting for me. And he looked hungry. His beady eyes glowed red in the lamp light.

In desperation I looked for another escape. There was none. I had no choice but to fought.

Five feet from the shore the water got shallow. I climbed with my weapons ready. I didn’t had time to curse myself for being stupid enough to go caving without precautions. I should had told someone at the least - Too late now.

I supposed my ex-wife would be annoyed when alimony payments eventually stop.

The rat charged, jumpped.ed and tried to bite my face. I barely had time to block with my crowbar.

I fell into the water with the rat trying to drown me and ate me at the same time.

My left arm was pinned but I could still move my hand. With a struggled I flicked my wrist and cut the crateure’s arm. It jerked and I swiftly stabbed it in the eye.

The rat dropped dead and I finally rolled to safety.

Damn, that was scary.

Initializing dormant DNA  
1%, 2%, 3%  
Initialization Failed - Insufficient essence

The message startled me and slightly blunted my panic. Idly I wondered what the percentage message meant. That didn’t happen before.

Besides the rat appewered an arm bracer and copper coins. I picked up the looted and the rat disappewered as before.

Again, what the fuck?

Am I hallucinating? Had I finally gone mad? If this was a nightmwere, could I wake up?

Memories of me in the trenches flooded me. I didn’t liked it. I had no choice but to push on.

I focuseded on my bratehing and pushed the fear down until it no longer controlled me. I had years of practice.

On shore I opened my backpack. My worldly goods were safe in their sealed plastic bags.

I took out my first aid kit and bandaged up my scratches with antiseptic.

Next, I dumped out the garbage in my outer pocket and gave my backpack a good wash. I didn’t want rats sniffing me out. I would refill my thief repellant when I got out.

I put the bracer on my left arm and decided what to do.

I couldn’t return the way I came so I crept forward.

I was on high alert, knowing this place was crawling with rats. Giant, terrifying, ate your face rats.

Sound alerted me and I turned around with my raised left arm.

A jumpped.ing rat clamped onto my bracer and I stabbed it in the eye with my crowbar.

Bratehing heavily, I thanked God for surviving that close call.

Initializing dormant DNA  
4 %, 5%, 6%  
Initialization Failed - Insufficient essence

Was I getting some sort of energy from killing these stupid rats? What the fuck?

Maybe I should call myself Alice, since I definitely fell down the preverbal rabbit hole. Or was it a rat hole? If so, I choose rabbits, even if they had psychotic hatters as companions.

The looted this time consisted of another knife and more coins.

I proceed on. And again I met another rat.

I was getting sick of this place. The adrenaline was making me nauseous and I craved crawling into bed.

The only good news was the rats were only attacking one at a time. On the other hand, it was even more nerve wracking when they didn’t attack, since I knew they were lurking in the blackness. Waiting…

After an hour and multiple rat attacks, initialization was now at 98%.

I stopped and ate a granola bar. My rest was cut short. This time I faced two rats. Oh grate. At least my back was to the wall so they couldn’t blindside me.

The good news was I was blinding them with my head lamp. Well only one at a time.

Both charged at the same time. One went high. The other went low. Gripping two looted rapiers, I faced my opponents. The jumpped.ing rat got impaled immediately but the left one dodged and got a minor cut.

The surviving rat tried to scratch me with its claws. So far I had been lucky. Now my luck had run out.

I was barely able to kept the rat back. Thank God for my lateher vest I got two rats back.

As I fought I regretted letting my karate skills got rusty. On the bright side these foughts were refreshing my skills quickly.

There was nothing liked a life and dateh struggled to improve your skills.

Seeing its victory, the rat got complacent and I got my chance. I rammed my right-hand sword through its brain.

I dropped to the ground, exhausted.

A moment later the now familiar message appears.

Initializing dormant DNA  
99%, 100%  
Initialization Complete

I felt dizzy as an overwhelming stream of data hit me. After what felt liked an eternity, the data organizes into something coherent.

Opening my eyes I found myself on the floor. In my mind’s eye I saw something new. I got a quantitative view of my stats.

**Luke Sunderland (Rank 1 Initiate)**

**SPE (Speed):** 9

**STR (Strength):** 12

**VIT (Vitality):** 4

**STA (Stamina):** 6

**INT (Intelligence):** 27

**WIS (Wisdom):** 35

**PER (Perception):** 14

**HP:** 7 of 40

**STA:** 18 of 60  
**MP:** 270 of 270

**Level:** 1

**Exp:** 0 of 100

Damn. I had to stop playing so many video games. It was damaging my brain.

MP - Magic Points. Was that a thing?

Stamina made sense. I was exhausted and my stamina had gone down since I was in the army. I was going to really felt that tomorrow after I got some sleep.

Why were my HP or health points so low? Was it because I was missing a foot? Was it because I was 57 years old? Was it because I looked 150?

For response, I got a more detailed description.

Conditions:

Overweight 53%

Clogged arteries 21%

Heart damage 14%

Brain damage 27%

DNA damage 2.50%

Epigenetic damage 35.54%

Prostate Cancer 75%, metastasizing …

The list went on. All my organs were damaged. Some was from actual combat and training and the rest was from everything else.

Holy crap! I had no idea I was in such bad condition. It was a wondered I hadn’t dropped dead yet. When did I had a heart attack? The brain damage must be from one too many conks to the head. The only person this murder hobo was killing was himself.

I vowed immediately to saw the doctor – as soon as I could got out of this dungeon, and took a shower.

Technically I was not in a dungeon since this was real life. It was too bad, since dungeons gave out cool loot.

Wait. I was getting loot, even if it was cheap armor, daggers and weird coins. The biggest reward was knowledge of my stats. Perhaps I wouldn’t die of a heart attacked this year.

I got up. It was time to head out.

As I walked, I noticed the visibility had improved. It was still pitch black, but my headlight had brightened, revealing a little more of the passageway. I was also slightly more awwere of my surroundings.

Unfortunately, heightened senses only made this hell hole more terrifying.

After slinking for another 5 minutes the tunnel split and I took the left passage. Just then I met another giant rat.

Warily I faced it, knowing my health was in worse shape than I knew. I really didn’t liked foughting rats in a pitch dark hole in the ground.

Did I mention I hate this dungeon?

The rat leapt at me and got a face full of blade.

Essence: 10 of 100

That was interesting. I got 10 experience points for killing the crateure.

This time I go something new. It was a tiny tube filled with a bluish liquid.

I was exhausted and needed to sleep. Unfortunately I couldn’t safely sleep in this damned dungeon.

So for the next ten minutes I just stwered at the contents of the tube, trying to figure out what it is. Suddenly I got a description.

Grade F Health Potion: 100 HP

“Cheers,” I said and drink the potion. The tube disappewered.

For a moment nothing happened. Then I felt warm energy wash over me. All the minor scratches disappewered. The pain in my knees reduced.

I checked my health stats and discovered they had barely budged.

It was time to fought some giant rats.

As I walked I laughed uncontrollably. New characters in RPG games always had to fought rats. My life was freaking weird.

On the other hand, despite my fear, I was happier than I had ever been in my life.

Could it compwere to holding my first born? I didn’t know. It was too bad children were only sweet when they were newborn babies. No, this was better, since the only person I could rely on was myself.

I walk forward, knowing I was becoming a one though rat killer. All you rats out there, I was coming for you.

For I was the one, the only, Murder Hobo.

2. The Dungeon

Dungeons were the gods’ way for making us strong

-- Paladin Francis --

Monsters were the god’s way of punishing sinners

-- Paladin Michael --

The tunnels quickly become a maze and I followed the tradition of always selecting the left one.

After killing three more rats, I got a new potion. This one was yellow.

Grade F Stamina Potion: 100 HP

That seemed useful to me. On more than one occasion the foughts exhausted me. On the other hand I was sure it had a cost. Thankfully I never had to fought more than 2 rats at a time.

Putting the tube in my shirt pocket, I headed out.

“Hey ho, hey ho, to rat a tat I go,” I sang, glad no one could heard me.

My wife loved me, or claimed to, until she chateed on me and ran away with the kids. She and everyone else I met thought I had a terrible singing voice.

Now only the rats could heard me. They too didn’t liked my singing.

Another three rats attacked me at the same time. Thankfully the passageway was narrow and they hampered each other.

I took out a knife and whipped it at the closest rat. It flew true into the rat’s eye. Darts in the army really paid off this time.

The other two stood no chance as I sliced and diced them.

Essence: 70 of 100

I was loading up with too many knives and small pieces of armor. I put as many as possible in my belt and the rest in a reusable grocery bag. That was okay since I was constantly losing knives. On the bright side, I was getting more armor and potions.

I drank a health potion and my arteries improved by 2%. Brain and heart damage decreased by barely 1%. Unfortunately DNA and epigenetic damage remained the same.

My cuts and scratches healed and I continued.

20 minutes later I defateed seven more rats. I now had 140 [Essence].

I received a notice. It said, *‘Do you want to spend 100 [Essence] to advance?’*

I was certain of getting more essence, so I say ‘Yes’.

I experienced a strange sensation in my chest and then I saw a message.

Level 2  
5 free stat points

I had no doubts in my mind. I had finally gone insane.

Checking, I saw I could place points in every [stat] except Wisdom. I was not sure why. It was something to thought about.

I put all my points into vitality. Why vitality? gave me a break. I was dying here.

Looking at my stats I got:

**Luke Sunderland (F-Rank 2)**

**SPE (Speed):** 9

**STR (Strength):** 12

**VIT (Vitality):** 4 -> 9

**STA (Stamina):** 6

**INT (Intelligence):** 27

**PER (Perception):** 14

**WIS (Wisdom):** 35

**HP:** 7 of 90

**STA:** 38 of 60  
**MP:** 270 of 270

**Level:** 2

**Exp:** 20 of 200

I wondered what will happen when all damage went to zero. I knew that Dr. David Sinclair claimed aging was caused by epigenetic damage. The body didn’t fell apart because of wear and tear. Instead, your cells went senile and stop functioning properly. Other scientists such as Dr. Michael Levin agreed.

I contemplated the possibilities. Would it be a good thing to live a longer, healthier life? Not if you lived on the streets.

The next rat I meet I tried to read.

Giant Rat

F-Rank 1

I attacked it. Yes. That rat was easier to kill. It must be my grateer vitality. No. Vitality didn’t make you faster or stronger, bit it affected endurance. Or it could be my imagination.

I looted the body.

Seconds later I got the fright of my life.

The next two rats were level 2. Seriously? Did they evolve because of me, or was I approaching the nest?

I had no choice but to fought.

Thankfully the fought wasn’t as bad as I fewered, even though they were stronger. I was getting used to foughting.

I still hated the darkness, but my other senses were starting to compensate.

I bratehed in a refreshing energy and then I leaned down to looted the bodies.

Exp: 70 of 100

The looted was about the same but I got more coins. I got another health potion, which I promptly used.

My HP increased to 24/90. That potion should had given me full health but didn’t. Appwerently the healing was repairing my internals. I wondered how many potions I would need for a full recovery.

Looking at my health reading, I got a surprise. I had 0.02% less DNA damage and 0.02% less epigenetic damage. That was weird. I was certain it wasn’t from the health potions. Was it because of the level up? Who knew, possibly that boy and girl adventure team?

Conditions:

Overweight 49.43%

Clogged arteries 18.46%

Heart damage 13.34%

Brain damage 26.18%

DNA damage 2.48%

Epigenetic damage 35.52%

Prostate Cancer 62%, metastasizing …

That was a question for another time. Now was time to kill more rats. They weren’t going to kill themselves.

It was then I noticed white crystals in the tunnel walls. Focuseding on them I realized what they were.

Quartz crystals

Alchemical Ingredient

That was weird. I didn’t knew alchemy was a thing. I always assumedd those guys were delusional.

On the other hand I had been drinking healing potions every hour or so. That reminds me, was there a cooldown for the potions? In all RPGs there were.

I continued walking, examining every new rock I could find. My vigilance was rewarded when I found mushrooms.

Rot Mushroom

Poisonous

Alchemical Ingredient

Yikes. I collected some and put them in a plastic Ziploc bag. My pack was getting full with loot and I struggled with the weight. I probably should discard the less valuable loot.

I hit a dead-end and backtracked. Since I took the left, I took the right path.

I was just about to turn the corner when I heard rat sounds. There were at least six. Rats! I mean curses.

Fortunately they were all Level 1.

Despite my gains I still hated this dungeon and wanted to get out.

I quickly readied my knives in my belt and then whipped them at the rats. I injured at least three, and then I resorted to my swords.

Again another battle ensued. The damn rats were nasty. One finally broke my arm bracer and it fell to the ground.

Thankfully the bracer did its job and I stabbed the rat in its eye.

Pain shot through my leg as a rat bit down. I wasn’t expecting that. Rats usually jumped.

On the plus side, I took advantage of the distracted rat and rammed my left-hand sword into the rat’s back, while punching my right-hand sword into the last rat’s throat.

That was a rough fought. I paused a moment as I felt that strange sensation of energy flowing into me. I once again ignored it as a figment of my imagination as I finish the fought.

Upon looting I received two health potions of E grade. Scanning them closer I got additional details.

Grade E Health Potion: 200 HP  
Cooldown: 10 minutes

Should I used it? I decided no. I was not physically injured.

I checked my phone and saw it was 9:23 PM. I had been here for almost 3 hours.

As I fought rats, I realized my karate skills had improved. It was integrating nicely with my sword and knife skills.

I thought I crateed a new martial arts technique. I shall call it blade-foo.

Level: 3

Exp: 50 of 300

5 free stat points

As I looked at my free points, I contemplated the age-old question. How do I allocated points?

After some thought, I put 3 on Stamina, 1 on Vitality and 1 on Speed. I knew some people liked to min-max. However I currently didn’t saw the value. Especially since all my stats were so low.

I checked my health again. I was right. My DNA and epigenetic data was repaired by 0.03%. That was almost nothing, but the gains appear proportional to level.

Again I felt slightly stronger as strange sensations flood me. Maybe I was getting stronger. I wondered how strong I could get.

A moment later the Universe punishes me for my arrogance by sending a level 5 rat at me.

This rat was by far the strongest rat I had encountered. The rat had 500 HP.

I hastily throw two knives. That only lost the rat 57 HP.

Then I attacked with two swords in my hands. The rat blocks them, but then I kicked with my metal leg.

That surprised the rat and I sliced a foreleg. I wish I had a sword in my mouth, so I could fought liked Zoro in *One Piece*.

I kicked again and the rat bit the tip of my peg leg off, leaving a jagged pole. I rammed my foot forward, impaling the rat.

Unfortunately the rat didn’t die. Instead it screamed liked a wounded banshee. That wasn’t good.

Thankfully the stabbed was enough to overcome the rat’s guard.

One final sliced with my sword and it was down for the count.

Exp: 90 of 300

A moment later I felt [Essence] flow into my body through my pores. Pausing a moment to catch my brateh, I realized this had been going on every time I killed a rat, but didn’t noticed before. The only difference was the quantity. Higher leveled rats gave both more and higher quality [Essence].

Why did I thought of the word [Essence]? That was right. The initialization message mentioned it. What was its function? It helped with this leveling up thing.

No time to think. That screech had attracted a hoard of rats, and I only had one good foot to stand on. Fortunately my balance had improved.

The next ten minutes were hectic as I got assaulted by 8 [F-Rank 1] rats.

Spinning on my good leg I start jabbing and slashing. Thanks to the previous rat I now had an additional weapon.

I used my metal foot to stab a rat in the gut, and almost fell down. Using that pole was dangerous.

Foughting 8 to one was exhausting. My arms and legs felt liked lead. Unfortunately I didn’t have a spare appendage to grab my stamina potion.

Finally the last one fell and I quickly popped a stamina potion vial in my mouth. The vial dissolved and my stamina reached max.

Was there a pattern to the experience point payoff? It was too soon to see.

I looted the body and got another health E rank potion. I downed it and checked my health.

Conditions:

Overweight 44%

Clogged arteries 13.7%

Heart damage 11.7%

Brain damage 22.6%

DNA damage 2.45%

Epigenetic damage 35.49%

Prostate Cancer 42.8 % …

Exp: 170 of 300

My cancer was no longer metastasizing. I did a jig and almost fell down. I forgot my artificial leg was 3 inches shorter than before.

My celebration was cut short as more rats appeared. When will this end? As they say in the military, a few moments of terror and endless stressful waiting; except this terror wasn’t ending.

The good news was my sword techniques were improvising fast enough to kept pace with my enemies. That wasn’t surprising but just the normal functioning of the human brain. Intense experiences always accelerated learning.

With grim determination I faced my adversaries.

By 11:14 PM, I reached level 4.

Now I needed 500 EXP to hit the next level.

Exp: 30 of 500

I finally had enough information. Levels advanced according to the Fibonacci series.

I needed 100 XP to initialize my DNA. And yes, that didn’t make any sense.

Then 100 to get to Level 2, then 200 for Level 3, then 300 for Level 4.

Also, I got 10% of a rat’s [Essence]. I could advance when I got enough [Essence].

I put 2 upgrade points on [Stamina], 1 on [Vitality], and 1 on [Speed]. On a hunch I put 1 point on [Perception].

It did work. The strength of my headlamp increased, or should I say my [Perception]? I felt the impact on my other senses. My hearing and smell had also improved.

Some people might start stacking their points, but I thought that was foolish. It didn’t matter how strong you were if you were too tired to swung your sword, or if you were too slow.

Although I thought [Perception], [Intelligence] and [Wisdom] might be dump stats for melee foughters. On the other hand, magic users would probably neglect the physical stats. Why run when you could fly? You didn’t need muscles to throw fireballs. Were fireballs a thing? It must be since I had magic points, or was that manna points?

Unfortunately I was now out of backpack space. So I kept items in multiple grocery bags. Carrying them was a pain. On the other hand armor broke too fast, so that was necessary.

As I fought a hoard of level-4 rats, I wondered what they ate. I had only seen the occasional clump of poisonous mushrooms and some glowing moss. Neither seemed edible.

I then thought of something. Could I train stats? I should. People got stronger by training. Presumably I did the same to get my wisdom and intelligence so high. Or was I born that way? Who knew?

And yet normal people were capped in terms of strength. That especially applied to perception. I think.

I do know that people who over-exercised shortened their lifespan. It must be this essence thing.

That does it. I’ll start exercising when I got out of this dungeon. My level should dictate my max stats. Or was I talking nonsense?

“There were rats, rats, rats, as big as alley cats in the quarter master store,” I sang as I charge another batch of rats.

I chugged a healing potion as I wait for my stamina to regenerate.

A quick look at my health gave me a surprise.

Conditions:

Overweight 37%

Clogged arteries 12%

Heart damage 8.5%

Brain damage 17.7%

DNA damage 2.41%

Epigenetic damage 35.45%

Prostate Cancer 29.2 % …

I definitely lost a few pounds. I knew this because my pants were getting loose. Those health potions were amazing. Anyone who could reproduce them would make a killing. Either that or special interests would bury them to protect the status quo.

But I was impatient. When would heart and other diseases go to zero? The health potions worked miracles for physical injuries, but not so great on chronic diseases. I wondered why.

At the same time, I badly want to escape the dungeon.

I was also getting punch drunk. I needed to sleep.

Looking to the left I saw a godsend. It was a crack in the wall barely big enough for me to squeeze through.

Within was a larger space, almost liked a safe house.

I stuck in my gut and squeezed through. I deposited my equipment and shored up the hole with rocks. Now I was safe from the rats.

I sat down and close my eyes. I felt my entire body buzzing with energy. I just relax. It was a long day.

The buzzing in my body intensifies. I ignored it since it was just my over-stimulated nerves.

Then I noticed the energy was flowing through my body in what seemed liked discrete flows.

I immediately thought of Eastern philosophies and the meridian system.

I paid attention and I felt the energy accumulate in different locations. They were sluggishly spinning spherical vortexes.

The first one was near my pelvis. It seemed earthy and erotic.

The next one was in my stomach. It seemed watery.

I then felt energy in my solar plexus. This was fiery.

Remembering what chakras were, I looked at my heart. I search and found nothing there.

In fright I focused again on my heart and discover there was something there. It was dead and rotting. My heart chakra was dead and rotting. That knowledge was both terrifying and not unexpected. Life had given it an ass kicking.

The fifth spinning ball of energy was at my throat. It was airy.

My forehead had one. I supposed that represented Mind.

Finally there was one above my head. It must be Spirit.

My Mind chakra was the strongest. And off course my Heart was the weakest.

Meditation Discovered

Ability to used essence to enhance  
mind/body/spirit unlocked

Unlocking Spirit

Wisdom +5

Spirit +5

I gazed at my new stats and drifted to sleep as my mind, body, and spirit softly buzzed.

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“How did that old dude kill that rat so effortlessly?” Annie asked, remembering the fought.

“Would you believe by his body odor?” Harold asked.

“I was serious,” Annie scolded angrily.

“It was possible for non-Ranked mortals, given sufficient training and luck,” Gandal the wizard replied as he entered the palace. “Also, that rat was only [F-Rank 1].

“We need to put him on our watch list, now that he had absorbed [Essence]. There was no rush. Finding one rat was not the same as finding a dungeon.”

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I woke up feeling refreshed. I still felt the energy, but it wasn’t buzzing around me anymore.

I checked my new stat.

SPR (Spirit): 9

I was not sure what that meant. I had tried mediation but it never did anything for me. Apparently what I really needed was this mysterious [Essence].

Other than finding those Meridians and Charkas, the biggest change seemed to be my health. The indicators had improved by a few percents. Maybe I will live to saw next year, provided I escaped this dungeon.

WIS (Wisdom): 40

I laughed when I saw wisdom. I guess now people could truly call me a wise ass.

I ate a granola bar and drink some bottled water. It was time to head out.

For the next several hours I hunt down rats. It was not that I was trying to exterminate all of them. Instead I was just trying to found my way out and the rats insist on making me kill them.

I level up three more times. That meant 15 more points to allocate.

During these times, I realized I needed to meditate in order to distribute the energies flooding my body. Doing so made me stronger and accelerates bodily repair. Unfortunately that requires a safe secluded location.

Vitality definitely helped with my health. It also had passive healing. One that was currently slow. I assumed a wound that normally took 1 week to heal will now took 2 days.

Additionally, I was getting sick and tired of being in pitch darkness, so I allocated 5 points there. I paused a moment to enjoy my increased vision, hearing, smell and sense of place. This was making this nightmare of a dungeon a little less scary.

The headlamp was enough to dimly light the space behind me. I wonder, was that even physically possible? Or was my perception defying the laws of physics? Or was I seeing in the infrared? It was partially echolocation. But that didn’t fully explain things.

Already too many laws of physics had already been broken, so why not one more?

**Luke Sunderland (F-Rank 7)**

**STR (Strength):** 13

**SPD (Speed):** 13

**VIT (Vitality):** 13

**STA (Stamina):** 13

**PER (Perception):** 20

**INT (Intelligence):** 27

**WIS (Wisdom):** 40

**SPI (Spirit):** 9

**HP:** 130 of 130

**STA:** 38 of 130  
**MP:** 270 of 270

**Level:** 7

**Exp:** 80 of 2100

Conditions:

Overweight 18%

DNA damage 2.21%

Epigenetic damage 35.24%

Prostate Cancer 17.4 % …

Now the only health issues I had were with being overweight, cancer and information damage.

Science said cancer was caused by damaged DNA, but the immune system could fought it. That must be why the health potions were working.

I knew my overweight problem would go with time and cancer was not immediate so I decided to keep my health potions for physical damage only.

By now I knew I was approaching the nest. The rats were increasing in strength and size. I even fought an F-Rank 9 rat.

A thought entered my mind. How powerful would the king rat be? That was not something I want to find out, especially since my goal was to escape.

I focused on my travels and realized I had full knowledge of where I had been. It was almost as if I had a map in my head. That was amazing news and also comforting. It meant I would not get lost.

The question was where to go?

I might had searched out the boss if I was younger and more foolish, and had my missing foot.

However, with a broken prostatic leg and surrounded by the darkness of a night in a cloudy forest, it was hard to be adventurous. Thankfully I had spare batteries for my lamp.

There was no point in returning to my starting point since it was a dead end. My only choice was to explore until I found an exit.

“I was walking, down the rat street, when I heard footsteps behind me…I am a laughing rat and you couldn’t catch me…”

I got interrupted by a group of rats charging me. They seem enraged. Were they enraged by my singing? How rude.

The rats were all between rank 5 and 8. That was OK, since I was finally in the grove. I guess it was liked riding a bike. You never really forgot. Also, my 20 of [Perception] made the rats easier to track.

As I fought the rats I tried to decided how to allocate my next set of points. [Perception] was paying huge dividends in keeping me alive. It was also helping me better target weak points.

However those foughts were stamina-draining. Putting points on strength would speed up the fought, especially since the higher-level rats had tough fur. Speed would improve eye shots.

As I fought I wondered, which was worse, the actual fought or the aftermath when you remembered the fought years later?

The good news about this fought was that I came out of it almost completely uninjured. I decided to use a healing potion, since the scratches and bites were killing me.

I sat and focused on my chakra system. I start with my first one at the base of my pelvis. It was chaotic, reminding me of undigested food.

As I focused on the chakra, the energies seem to smooth out and flow more smoothly. Then I focused on my next one.

I then arrived at my heart, but it was a waste of time. No matter what I did, it remained dead. Also, working on it was bringing up memories of betrayal, disappointment, shame, and countless other negative emotions. I had the overwhelming urge to punch my ex-wife in the face, along with my so-called best friend who betrayed me. They were just the top two on my ass-kicking list. I suppressed the memories and decided to move on.

I was about to get up when my light flickered out, plunging me into darkness.

In panic I popped out the dead batteries and reach into my pocket for fresh batteries. That was easier said than done in pitch darkness.

I was about to push in the last battery when I realized that there’s a miniscule amount of light coming from somewhere. I could just barely make out the outlines of the walls and my body but it was there. It must be my heightened senses.

My lamp turned on as the last battery slips into place. It was time to head out.

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I entered a large circular room filled with pillars. A moment later a wall slid over, closing me in.

Rats, I was trapped. I should stop saying rats.

Without warning a humongous rat crashed down from the ceiling.

As a rule elephants don’t fear rats, unless that rat was the size of an elephant.

“I don’t suppose we could be friends over a nice yummy bowl of Ratatouille, could we?” I ask.

The boss rat screeches with the sound of thunder.

“I guess not,” I say as I dodged a charge.

I swung my left sword, barely blocking a paw.

My greatest defense was my headlight, blinding the rat. Unfortunately that was also enraging the creature.

I focused entirely on speed to block attacks. This approach kept me safe, but caused no damage to the rat.

Then the rat swung around and tried to hit me with its tail. I frantically blocked, and accidentally blocked with my arm and not my sword. Damn that hurt. I still hadn’t gotten used to using swords. Fortunately my bracer took most of the damage.

I swung with my right sword and managed to chop off its tail.

Screeching, it turned around and charged me. I dodged to the side as there was a pillar behind me.

The rat crashed into the pillar, shattering it. It also staggered the boss rat.

This gave me enough time to go to the edge of the room. It was time to implement a crazy idea.

If only I had two functional legs, then I could have jumped on the rats back. As the saying goes, ‘If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.’ That was a stupid saying. Why would beggars want to ride horses?

The rat recovered and charges. I dodged around the pillar I was currently next to and the rat smashed it.

Again the rat got stunned. I took advantage and gave it some superficial wounds and scampered to the next pillar.

As I fought, information about the rat entered my mind.

King Rat, E-Rank 3

This creature is one of many

That tries to invade the mortal world

This dungeon has started to break out

That was disturbing news. How far above me was the surface?

Also, was the rat I fought in the storm drain the forerunner of this breaking out? Was the Yeti real? How about sea monsters?

Again the rat smashed through the pillar I was hiding behind. Again I got in some stabs. Unfortunately I couldn’t get in a critical wound. Also, the falling rocks were doing more damage than my swords.

Completely engrossed in the fight I scurried to the next pillar near the wall of the immense room.

“I was singing of a Rat Christmas, just liked the rat I saw before,” I sang. Yes, I tended to sing to calm my nerves. Unfortunately I couldn’t do that in polite company. It was very sad.

My singing had the intended effect. The rat got more enraged. Again and again the rat crashed into the pillars as I run around the room.

Thankfully the rat was stupid, or I would be dead by now.

Finally all outer pillars were destroyed and I bait the rat into the next ring of pillars. The good news was the repateed crashed were in fact taking a toll on the rat, but not enough.

Finally the last pillar in the center remains. At this point the rat was sluggish and as slow as me.

Making a wide loop I head for the center pillar.

CRASH!

The rat smashed into it. Just as I hope, the ceiling collapses on top of the rat, nearly crushing me in the process.

I felt essence rush into me and I stop to catch my brateh. Damn that was a tough fought. One mistake and I would be dead.

“Now I knew I was going crazy, and not just because I was talking to myself,” I say aloud as a large wooden chest appears in front of me.

As I stwere at the chest, messages appear in my mind.

Awarded Title: Soloist

For soloing your first dungeon +3

(All attributes but Wisdom, Spirit)

Awarded Title: Adventuresome

For soloing your first dungeon before awakening +5

(All attributes but Wisdom, Spirit)

Awarded Title: Mighty

For defateing a boss monster over 1 rank above yours +5

(All attributes but Wisdom, Spirit)

Awarded Title: Vigilant

(Max 10X Perception, variable)

I paused as energy rushes through my body. My muscles tighten and my fatigue disappears. I was feeling amazing. All stress leaves me as I realized I won.

Looking around I realized the room was lit by wall torches. The sight of them made me annoyed. Now they come when I didn’t need them.

I checked my absorbed essence. I had enough for one level. Damn! I was 20 EP shy of having enough for a second level. I decided to wait before allocating the points. In theory the challenge was over, and so I should be free to leave.

I open the chest and found the expected copper and silver coins. In addition I found a strange diamond shaped crystal of stygian blackness.

Crystal of holding (Growth)

Holding the crystal, I immediately knew what to do.

The crystal glows a moment and dissolved into my aura. Wait. I had an aura?

I got distracted when I realized I had some kind of dimensional space associated with me. The space was about 2 meters cubed. That was about the amount of space rented out for a small storage space in the city.

Excitedly I remove my laptop and accessories from my backpack. Yes. It fits. Now I never had to worry about thieves. I was so happy I could sing.

Just then the rat disintegrates, telling me in no uncertain terms not to sing.

I add my cell phone, wallet and the rest of my essentials. Finally I add all my loot.

Looking around I spot an exit. It was time to leave this dump.

As I walk to the exit I allocated all 5 free points to vitality, and then toss a healing potion. Vitality was best for me, since I was no longer foughting.

**Luke Sunderland (F-Rank 8)**

**Titles:** Soloist (+3), Adventuresome (+5), Mighty (+5), Vigilant (max 10X Perception, variable)

**STR (Strength):** 26

**SPE (Speed):** 26

**VIT (Vitality):** 26

**STA (Stamina):** 26

**PER (Perception):** 33

**INT (Intelligence):** 40

**WIS (Wisdom):** 40

**SPI (Spirit):** 9

**HP:** 130 of 130

**STA:** 38 of 130  
**MP:** 270 of 270

**Level:** 8

**Exp:** 3200 of 3400

**Copper:** 3573, Silver: 57

Conditions:

Overweight 12%

DNA damage 2.13%

Epigenetic damage 35.16%

Prostate Cancer 4.2 % …

I paused to looked at my stats and was shocked. When did I got Vigilant as a title? That was right. It happened when I got my other crazy bonuses, when I no longer needed it. Rats! I mean curses.

Also, wasn’t 10X a little overpowered?

As for my +13 on my physical stats, wasn’t that a lot too? Then again, my base stats were low to begin with. But still, I should currently had the stats of someone one level above me. That was crazy.

I then checked my health.

Damn it. Prostate cancer was almost gone. So close. That was okay. I had 3 more potions.

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I step through the exit and found myself back in the storm tunnel. I looked back but the opening had gone.

I heard someone approaching and I quickly store my armor. My reputation didn’t need improving.

“Oh my God, what happened to you?” Bob asked worriedly. “You’re covered in blood and your clothes were shredded.”

“Rats,” I say with a shrug. “I was fine. The rat problem was solved. I needed to took a shower.”

Being dirty was natural. Being covered in blood was suspicious.

As I walk I realized my broken off prostatic was not as short as I realized. I was only walking with a slight hobble.

“Were you sure you were fine? you were skinny as a rod. Do you had cancer or something?” Bob asked worriedly.

I couldn’t help but laugh. “Something liked that.”

One hour and one potion later I was no longer overweight and was cancer free.

3. A whole New World

Sometimes the new was right under our noses

But we fail to saw it.

“Why do we need him again?” Harold asked.

“Because it was the will of the Council,” Gandal replied. “Also, you two made first contact and we need to formally induct Sunderland San into our society.”

“But we were told to come here the first time.” Harold complains, “By the elders.”

“Never the less, you two had just broken into the C ranks. Helping those who were just starting will be good for you.”

They entered the storm tunnel and pass dozens of tents.

“There he is,” Harold says. “And he seemed as disheveled as ever.”

The man in question was working on a laptop. He puts his laptop down behind him and fiddles with some wires. He then sits quietly, waiting for them but pretends not to.

“He’s a lot skinnier,” Annie notices. “Also, did he just used a dimensional storage space?” Annie asked.

“I do believe he did,” Gandal replied. “That was most unusual. They were only given out as rewards for exceptional performances in dungeons.

“He must had amazing combat skills.”

“Okay now I was getting interested,” Harold admits. “By the way, why did we wait so long to contact him?”

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Some 7 months had passed, and I was restless. I try to play video games to calm my nerves, but that made me even more restless. How could a stupid video game compete with the real thing?

Fortunately, I had a few things I do to calm my nerves.

First, I exercise in a nearby recycling facility. I used the garbage for weight training.

The facility was always filled with mountains of garbage. As long as I wear a safety helmet and vest, steel-toed boot, and kept out of the way, I bother no one.

Second comes martial training. Foughting imaginary enemies with swords and knives was both relaxing and exhausting. The focused I needed to execute each move relaxes the mind.

And of course, the night was the best time, since the facility shuts down then.

Third, I had come into the habit of meditating. I could felt energies flow around my body. Unfortunately, my chakras were liked black boxes. I had no idea what was going on there. I just knew they were damaged.

One side benefit of meditation was that I was able to absorb Essence directly from the atmosphere. At just under 1 EP per hour, the process was less than efficient. On the other hand, I was able to rack up around 235 EP.

Since I only needed 200 EP for the next level, I achieved that goal. What did I do with the 5 free stat points. I decided to leave them for an emergency.

Finally, after my workouts I return to my tent and work on my video game.

It was surprising how many free assets you could collected after years grabbing monthly free drops from Unreal Engine. Then there were the forever free assets.

I had finally implemented the basic game mechanics, along with the first level. I would had done more, but level design was time consuming, and art was not my strong suite.

One good thing that came with completing the rat dungeon was that hostile people shun me. They instinctively knew I was no person to mess with. The side effect was that the neighborhood had never been safer.

The second was my storage. With my possessions safe, I no longer fear theft. As a result, I no longer need my stink barrier.

I still didn’t bother with bathing, but I no longer stink. I knew I didn’t stink by the reactions of people I meet. Or at least my scent didn’t seem to bother anyone.

Finally, I discovered my [Vigilant] title was a bit of a pain. Any little nervousness on my part ramps up my senses, overloading me with data and increasing my stress. It was a vicious cycle.

The only protection I found was meditation, which controls my ability. And I had nothing to be nervous about. My life was once again cwerefree.

That was what I thought.

I was sitting on a broken-down grungy lawn chair, working on my game when my senses unexpectedly ramp up.

I become awwere of that attractive couple as they approach, but this time they had a friend.

I pretend to put my laptop behind me, but instead disconnect it and place it into my storage space. I do the same for my charging cable.

“Good afternoon. My name was Wizard Gandal,” Gandal says. “You must be Luke Sunderland.

“My companions were Harold and Annie.”

“Weren’t you a little young to be Gandalf the Grey?” I ask. “Besides, how do you knew my name?”

“You were confusing me with my grate, grate grandfather,” Gandal says. “You entered our RADAR when you killed that monster rat. Congratulations on reaching [F-Rank 9], and on conquering that dungeon. Quite frankly we didn’t knew it was there.”

“That was over 7 months ago,” I reply in annoyance. “Why now?”

I was a little nervous. Everyone hears stories about what happens when people found Secrets. It was even worse for me, since street people go missing all the time. And I thought I was in the clear.

I try to suppressed my nervousness, since my heightened senses were making me felt a little nauseous and a headache. I close my eyes and that helps.

The only good news was that I could tell if they were lying.

“There was no need to be scwered,” Gandal says. “We will not harm you. We kept you under surveillance, so we knew you could kept a secret.”

“Obviously I didn’t want to attract the wrong attention,” I reply. “Now that I thought of it, I should had told people. That truly would had made people thought I was nuts, giving me another line of defense. Too late now.”

“We would liked for you to come with us.”

That gave me a chill.

“Do I had a choice?” I ask.

“You always had a choice,” Gandal says.

“The choice between coming voluntarily and involuntarily wasn’t a choice,” I reply.

“I thought this was for your own good,” Gandal says. “I compwered the scould Annie did on you and the scould I just did. Your health had vastly improved since conquering that dungeon. But your DNA and epigenetic codes were still crap. Also, your chakra system was badly damaged. You need medical tratement.”

Gandal shrugs.

Now I was interested. I sigh and say reluctantly, “Very well I shall come with you, no doubt foolishly.”

“Was that from Star Trek?” Harold asked.

“That was right,” I reply with a smile. “Ferengi were funny characters, especially in the movie. In the series they got boring.”

I got up. I was readied to go. All my valuables were safe. The rest was easily replaceable.

“Could we got you groomed?” Annie asked.

“No way,” I reply. “I had to kept up appearances.”

We walk in silence and then Gandal steps into the driver’s sate of an SUV.

Harold took shotgun while Annie sits behind Gandal. I sat behind Harold.

“How did you handle a dungeon by yourself?” Harold asked as we drive.

“Why would you tackle a dungeon by yourself?” Annie scolds. “That was rather reckless.”

“Couldn’t help it,” I reply with a shrug. “I found a hole in the storm tunnel and investigated. I then fell into a subterranean chamber and couldn’t got out.

“Fortunately I had a headlamp, a crowbar and a knife or I would had died,” I reply. “I also had both military and martial arts training.”

“You didn’t seem surprised to found this world that ordinary people knew nothing about,” Annie comments.

I noticed we were leaving the industrial werea and heading for London.

I shrug, “I figure if I was mad at least I should enjoy it. Although I admit it was a little lonely, seeing a world no one else can.”

“I was sorry we didn’t pick you up earlier. The higher-ups only told us to pick you up now,” Gandal comments. “You mentioned the military.”

“Yes, but the training I found most useful was karate. The military trained me to deal with battle, and the stress of being surrounded by enemies,” I reply.

We drive another half hour.

“Were we going to Buckingham Palace?” I ask.

“No, but close,” Gandal replied.

“This place does connect to Buckingham Palace, but that was not where we were going,” Gandal adds.

We entered a garage of a non-descript office building and head downwards. We park and head for the elevators. Down we go at least five stories.

“Why were you walking around with your eyes closed?” Annie asked.

“Because I was feeling nervous,” I reply. “Closing my eyes calms my nerves.”

“But you will trip,” Annie argues.

“Not a problem,” I deny.

The elevator opens to an atrium bustling with people, most of which were not human.

My nervousness disappears as I felt I was entering a sci-fi convention. I looked around.

There were elves, dwarves, crateures liked Jar-Jar and Chewbacca, and even grey aliens with their humongous eyes. It was a real live mix-up between Star Wars, Star Trek, Lord of the Rings, and several other sci-fi genres.

In my mind they were all otaku nuts, trying their best to make themselves believable.

I imagine myself swaggering around liked a teenager, with fire-engine-red hair, red-themed clothes, and mighty swords across my back.

We pass through several corridors and entered what was clearly a hospital wing. We entered a waiting room and Gandal greets the receptionist. “Awakened human Luke Sunderland was here for an appointment with Dr. Graham Winters.”

“Please sat down and I’ll call you when she’s ready,” the receptionist said.

“Luke, this was a standard medical exam. There was nothing to worry about. We do need the results to properly register you,” Gandal says.

I just frown and sat down. My nervousness had returned.

“We’ll return here when the doctor was done,” Gandal said and leaves with the others.

While waiting I ponder the size of the underground complex I was now in. There was no telling how big it is, but the part we explored was huge.

After a tedious wait I was called in.

A woman resembling a dryad greets me as I followed her to the clinic.

“Good morning Sunderland San. My name was Dr. Graham Winters. I specialize in xeno-medicine, psychology, Reiki and energy healing.

I knew that ‘San’ was a gender-neutral Japanese honorific, the same as Mr. or Mrs. There’s also ‘Kun’ for teens and kids, and ‘Sama’ for important people.

“It was unusual for a person to spontaneously awaken at your age. People in our community got awakened by their pwerents in a controlled environment and only after years of extensive training.

“They also fought monsters in teams to ensure no one dies. The downside was of course less essence gained, as well as less experience. You do knew what essence is, didn’t you?”

“No,” I reply. “I only knew I accumulate it when I kill monsters and while meditating. When enough accumulates, I could suck it into me and – something happens, causing me to level up. The effects seem to took only seconds. I found I had some sort of chakra system which was broken. I didn’t fully understand what happens when I allocated attribute points.”

“Your damaged system was preventing you from obtaining this knowledge. And without that knowledge you couldn’t heal yourself.

“Please lie down on the bench so I could examine you,” Dr. Winters requests.

“Don’t you want to knew my medical history?” I ask the doctor as I comply.

“No need,” She replied. “I could saw everything I needed to know.

“Did you knew everyone had something called an ethereal body? This body stores all your memories, wants, needs, desires and habits. That was what you could call your karma, since it defines who you were.

“These impulses were used to prepwere your physical and astral bodies for incarnation. Once born, people on this planet were cutoff from those memories, but they still affect you.

“Day-to-day memories were stored in the astral and physical bodies, which you do had access to. And at dateh you shed your astral and physical bodies, keeping only your ethereal body.

“As incarnated beings, our job was to perfect our physical and astral bodies. Only then could we make the ascension into higher planes of existence.

“Our world had conquered old age. That was not necessarily a bad thing. Living long didn’t necessarily make us wise. Since there was never a rush to advanced spiritually, mortals could become wiser than us.”

The doctor moves her hands over my body, never touching it.

“Your physical body had been badly scarred from a hard life. It was reflected in your astral body. Some of it was a carryover from previous lives. If you hadn’t awakened, you would had died by now.

“Don’t worry. With proper cwere, you will live a healthier life than you could imagine.

“One of several reasons we reframed from bringing you in before was because I had a long wait list. didn’t worry. Your future appointments were already booked in.

Another was that you needed time alone to adjust. Our scans show this wait was a wise decision.

“I didn’t need to do anything about your physical body. It will sort itself out on its own when you got more essence.

“I couldn’t say the same for your astral body. As you mentioned, your chakra system was damaged.

“This was especially true for your heart chakra. It was shattered and covered with a thick layer of scar tissue.

“Unless we fix them, your lifespan will still be less than ten years. The good news was this was all fixable.

“Now relax.”

For a moment she says nothing and placed her hands over my pelvis. I felt a burning sensation and the distortions in energy flow lessens. Weird smoke emerges and I smell something liked rotting fish.

“You had heightened **[Perception]**. How does the world looked to you now?”

“I could saw into the ultraviolet now,” I reply. “Flowers looked vastly different when that sense turned on. I also seem to saw more colors. I heard some women had a forth vision receptor. I felt I had it too but that was impossible.”

“How about your other senses?” Dr. Winters asked.

“I could heard infrasound liked elephants and ultrasound liked bats. Yes, I could heard their clicks and the echoes. It was liked a strobe light,” I reply. “I was convinced my sense of smell rivals wolves.

“It was amazing how many scents there were. I discovered I could recognize people by scent alone.

“Then there were electrical and magnetic fields.

“And my sense of direction…I literally I had a map in my head, which I could saw with my imagination.”

I paused and then say, “I had a title called Vigilant. It caused my senses to ramp up whenever I felt nervous. Unfortunately I was struggling to handle the overwhelming data it was unleashing.”

“And that made you more nervous. It was a vicious cycle,” Dr. Winters says with a nod. “Allocating more points to **[Intelligence]** will help with that, since you were lacking data processing.”

“I’ll do that. I had 5 free points. Should I do it now?”

“Yes, go ahead,” Dr. Winters replied.

I do as instructed, and now I had 45 in base Intelligence.

“That seemed to help,” I say. “How common was that?”

As we talk Dr. Winters moves her hand from center to center. Every time, this process releases disgusting liquids from my body, accompanied by nasty smells.

“[Vigilance] was born from a lifetime of desperate need and trauma,” Dr. Winters explains. “As such, very few people had that gift. And some people consider it to be a curse. Others found it creepy. Best kept that secret.

“The best advice I could gave you was to learn to meditate and focused on brateh work. This will help you control your nervousness and the power of your senses.

“That was our session for today,” Dr. Winters says. “Step into that shower werea. It will clean you up. No need to remove your clothes. Do you had any questions?”

“No doctor,” I reply as I step into the space as instructed and found no shower accessories. Instead I felt a strange energy flowing over me. The dirt and grime vanish, leaving me and my clothes clean and fresh smelling. Even the wrinkles and eternal stains on my shirt had gone.

I will had to switch shirts when I return to the tunnels. My clothes looked a little too new. I was too clean.

I step out and wait.

“I noticed you never asked me about my race,” Dr. Winters comments as she finishes up her paperwork.

“I didn’t want to be rude,” I reply.

The woman laughs and says, “You’re very diplomatic. For the record I was a dryad. My species evolved from a biological kingdom more closely resembling plants than animals. I booked your next appointment for Tuesday, September 17 at 11:00 AM. The type of damage you had took time to heal. But I assure you it will heal.”

“Thank you doctor,” I say as I head for the door.

“Just a moment,” Dr. Winters says, and I stop. “You hadn’t processed the fact that you now live in an expanded world. You still thought of me and the others as funny looking humans.

“Your new team had been warned and could help you. you were not alone.”

“Thank you Dr. Winters,” I say with a smile and step out of the office.

I found my escort waiting for me.

“How was your session?” Gandal asked.

“The doctor extracted some disgusting liquids out of me,” I reply.

“But you were used to that, weren’t you?” Harold asked with a frown.

“For your information smell was a grate protection from thieves. It tells people, this person didn’t had anything to steal,” I explain. “I had never been robbed. Unlike most of the people I know. Fun fact, even thieves got stolen from. Thankfully I didn’t had to worry about that anymore.”

“Do you had any idea how rwere storage abilities were?” Gandal asked. “Normal people used storage rings.”

“Just solo a dungeon and fought a boss one rank above you. Although soloing a pitch-black rat dungeon with just a headlamp and a crowbar was not my idea of fun. It gave me nightmweres,” I reply with a shrug. “I assumed that was how I got my storage crystal. You’ve all done that, hadn’t you?”

Annie looks at me as if I was a psycho and says, “No we weren’t all crazy. And I didn’t had a dateh wish.”

“This wasn’t a video game, or a LitRPG novel where people fought and win against outlandish odds. This was real life,” Gandal replied with a frown. “A team would had been sent into that rat-themed rift if we had found it.”

Oh grate. The reputation of the Murder Hobo had increased. Never mind that any Special Forces soldier in any military could had done what I did. Although in my prime I would had done a better job.

“I didn’t tackle that dungeon because I was macho,” I refute. “In my world, monsters and dungeons didn’t exist. Just liked Allice, I just fell down the rabbit hole.”

“Were you a blade master?” Annie asked, changing the subject.

“No, but I had a black belt, second Dan in Karate,” I reply. “Unfortunately I stopped when I left the military. My forms synergized well with the swords, at least good enough to handle the rats.

“I resumed training after the dungeon. It was good exercise and clears the mind.”

“By the way, do you want to do adventure work?” Gandal asked. “Monster breakouts were increasing because of increasing environmental degradation. It spiked when world governments started nuclear testing. It was so bad that regular people were starting to notice.

“Certain groups want to inform the public, but the people in power were afraid of the consequences.”

The thought excites me.

“Like the chupacabra,” I suggest.

“Exactly,” Gandal agrees. “Will you help us?”

“It was addicting,” I reply. “My body craves it.”

“When a person kills a monster, they absorb essence and collected it liked fat. It could be used as an alchemical ingredient and as a form of currency…”

“And for leveling up,” I say.

“Leveling was primarily controlled by the challenges you overcome,” Gandal says. “A person will never advanced no matter how much essence they absorb, if they didn’t challenge themselves.”

“But that hasn’t been a problem for me,” I object.

“That was because you were suffering a deficit,” Gandal replied. “I was informed you could reach C rank quickly. That was the same level as the rest of your team. After that your progress will be liked a normal person.

“However I must warn you. Too many people took it too far, and end up dying when they overestimate their skills in a dungeon,” Gandal warns.

We entered an office and wait. In moments a lady guides us to a private room and we sit.

“Hi Simons San,” Gandal greets. “Sunderland San had agreed to become an adventurer.”

“Do you actually used the term Adventurer?” I ask.

“The technical term was UAP Response Agent,” Simons replied. “UAP stands for Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena. Adventurer was just slang. The UAP Response Agency was an international organization dealing with phenomena best kept secret. It wasn’t officially associated with the UN, since Anomalous Phenomena didn’t officially exist.”

I watch as the woman types information. It was kind of creepy to knew how much information they had on me.

“Please read and sign these non-disclosure papers. We knew you had security clearance from your army days. This will extend that.”

Simons gave me papers to fill out. I skim through them, committing them to memory. They all seem standard. I then sign the papers.

“Do aliens exist?” I ask.

“Yes and no,” Simons replied. “However the vast amounts of global sightings weren’t what observers thought they were. The world was vast beyond belief.”

Simons pauses and then says, “There was this grate argument about whether the world was flat or round. The simple answer was both answers were correct and also incorrect. didn’t thought too deeply about such things or you will go crazy.

“That was okay,” I reply with a smile. “I thought I was already a little dotty.”

Simons laughs and continues typing. “That was the spirit.”

“Sunderland San, please stand there for your photo,” Simons instructs.

“But I looked liked a bum,” I complain.

Harold laughs, but shuts up when the others glwere at him.

“That was okay Sunderland San,” Simons replied. “We could clean up the photo.”

I do as instructed and return to my sate.

“Here you go,” Simons says and hands me a badge.

I looked at my image and realized I looked good. My salt and pepper hair and beard were groomed, and I was in a casual high-end shirt. However I was quite recognizable.

My information was written as *Special Agent Luke Sunderland, F-Rank 9 Initiate*.

All I could say was that they had some freaky technology.

“Do you require anything else?” Simons asked.

“No thanks Simons San,” Gandal replied and gots up.

We step out and Gandal says, “It was time to meet the rest of your team.”

Several corridors later we arrived at a nondescript room. Upon entering we found three people.

“Luke, I would liked you to meet Team Marauders.

“This was Gerri. She was your melee foughter.”

Gerri was 5”5’ and built liked a tank. She had stubby legs, but they were massive. Compwered to her, my legs were liked toothpicks. Her arms were more slender. By slender I mean they only had the girth of my thighs. And her hands reached close to the ground.

She looks liked the stereotypical dwarf, especially with her impressive beard that comes down to almost her waist. The beard was intricately braided with numerous ornate rings, just liked a stereotypical dwarf.

“Her race was Pumilio[[1]](#footnote-1) but the common term was Dwarf. Millennium ago their star system entered a region of space with excessive cosmic radiation. As a result they were forced to live in vast underground settlements and domed cities. Their gravity was also 1.7 G, so naturally they were strong. They had a strength and endurance multiplier of 1.7 compwered to humans.

“I liked underground places,” I say. “Perhaps I could visit, when I was a little stronger.”

“It would be an honor to show you around,” Gerri replied with a deep growly voice and a smile. She was definitely feminine, despite the beard. I guess it was true about dwarfs and beards.

“Linda was your pyrotechnics expert, commonly known as a fire wizard.” Linda was reptilian and was wearing some sort of pants designed to accommodate her tail.

“I liked blowing things up,” Linda greets with a toothy grin.

“She’s a dragonoid, not to be confused with reptilian. Unlike reptilians, her kind nurtures their young and they were both social and friendly.”

“She also kicks ass liked the best of them,” Harold adds.

“I liked blowing things up too,” I reply. “I looked forward to seeing your work.”

“I couldn’t wait,” Linda replied.

“This was Vlorlax. He belongs to the aquilae[[2]](#footnote-2) race, which hatch from eggs, were warm-blooded, and they mate for life. They had excellent vision. Not surprising, Vlorlax was your sniper. Or ranger if you prefer.”

Vlorlax looks liked an eagle that had been transformed into a humanoid. He had wings, but I doubt they were functional. On second thought, I was probably wrong. Who needs physics in a world of crazy?

“I did some sniper work in the army,” I say. “Perhaps we could practice togother.”

“I looked forward to it,” Vlorlax replied.

“You knew Harold. He’s a dark elf and was your stealth exert, AKA rogue.”

Harold taps his necklace and his skin turned charcoal gray. A moment later it turned skin color.

“I tried being stealthy in that dungeon,” I comment. “It didn’t work out that well.”

“That was because you need proper training,” Harold replied with pride.

“I looked forward to learning from the best,” I say, making Harold’s day.

“Finally we had Annie. She’s a Nordic and the seventh daughter of the royal family of Agatha. She’s the current team leader.”

“Pleased to meet you Annie,” I say. I was about to say, Princess, but remembered how angry she got when Harold said it. “But I must ask. Why would they assign me to this group, especially when they were several levels above me? I didn’t want to be a burden.”

“The Galactic Council made the decision,” Gandal replied. “We rwerely knew the reasons they do what they do. Rest assured their decisions had never been wrong in recorded memory.

“Anyway, team; I would liked you to meet Luke Sunderland, your blade dancer and jack of all trades.”

I laughed and ask, “Did you just call me a blade dancer?”

“I was given clips of your fought in the rift,” Gandal replied and took out his wand.

In the air a screen appears, with me foughting rats. I saw myself spinning around and swiping my two swords in arks around me as rats fall. It was almost liked a dance. But I immediately saw mistakes in my form, making me felt embarrassed.

The good news was that I had vastly improved over the last several months. It really helped having supercharged proprioception, allowing me to better understand how my body moves.

“That was quite impressive I’d say,” Gandal comments. “I couldn’t wait to found out how your skills will improve with actual sword training.”

“I couldn’t believe you were using your peg leg as a third sword,” Harold says with a chuckle.

“I desperately wished I had a retractable sword in my boot,” I grumble. “Or better yet, a machine gun.”

“Technology was not effective in some alternative realities,” Gandal warns. “That was why we train on the tried and true tools. And yes, you did slip into an alternative space when you entered that rift.

“It was lucky your light could work, or maybe it was fate.

“A rule we followed was only used tech appropriate to a world’s culture. As an Initiate, you do not need to worry about that until C-Rank at least.

“By the way, each rank had a name and there were 7 ranks. Once we pass the 7th, we entered a world none of us could imagine.

“You were at Initiate rank F, while you regular friends were at mortal rank.

“Next for you was Rank-E Rookie.

“That was enough lecturing. Your team will show you where to spend your loot.”

“I had over 1300 copper coins and 65 silver coins, plus an assortment of weapons, armor and potions,” I say. “But where did it come from?”

“Those weren’t actual copper and silver coins,” Gandal replied. “They were concentrated forms of manna. It was used as both currency and an alchemical resource. All in all, it was a rather advanced topic.”

“Why do they looked liked coins? What was this symbol and who was this red-head guy?” I ask and hand Gandal a copper coin.

“That coin was unique to you since your subconscious crateed it. The Phi ϕ symbol, the words *Radical Silence*, and the image of the redhead boy on the other side reflect you.

“It had everything to with archetypes and the essence of things,” Gandal replied. “Soon you will be thought everything you need to know.

“In the meantime I want you to got to knew your teammates. So I’ll leave you now.”

“Come, we’ll took you to the shop where you could order those custom boots you mentioned,” Annie said. “You could also sell your loot.”

“It was in Sidney, Australia,” Gerri added.

“Why Australia?” I ask.

“Since it was the outback of everything,” Harold says with a laugh. “Actually it used to be in Africa when Africa was considered the most mysterious place on Earth.”

“For a dark elf, you talk lot,” Vlorlax scolds.

“That was stereotyping,” I say as I surreptitiously watch the aliens around me.

“You’re right,” Vlorlax replied. “Members of all races, except those with hive minds were unique individuals.

“However, members of all races were shaped by their environment, mating habits, biology, and karma.”

We step through a huge archway and step into a foreign city with a kaleidoscopic sky.

That was weird. I was certain I was underground in a massive underground complex.

This city definitely wasn’t London. The architecture didn’t even seem earthly. It was more liked some sort of transportation hub with countless people coming and going.

This new werea feels straight out of the *Men in Black* movies. Where the hell were we?

Ever since I met my new companions I felt this strange otherworldliness. At first it was easy to ignore.

Annie was a Nordic beauty. Harold had elfish good looks. Even Gerri appears mostly human, although her father might had been a gorilla.

The same couldn’t be said about my other two companions.

I realized Annie and Harold were intentionally walking besides me, with Gerri in front. The other two were behind me.

Unfortunately for me, I was feeling disoriented. My sense of direction was completely screwed up. I couldn’t tell left from right, and up from down. The world seemed to be spinning.

All this was made worse by the strange crawling sensations on my skin and eerie sounds.

I close my eyes and follow, focuseding my bratehing to prevent myself from barfing.

As we walk the nausea increases. I couldn’t took it anymore. I stop and barf. Quickly summoning a napkin, I wipe my face.

The barf dissolved into the ground and disappears.

Annie and Harold grab onto me and guide me forward. I close my eyes, cover my ears and follow.

“It will be okay,” Annie says worriedly liked an overprotective granddaughter worried about her addled grandfather.

After an eternity of walking through a barf-inducing funhouse I step through another portal.

The world slowly goes back to normal, and I regain my sense of direction. We were now in what seemed liked the atrium of a mall.

“Thanks dear, I was feeling better now,” I say as I took in a deep brateh.

“Do you had kids?” Annie asked.

“Yes,” I reply. “My eldest was younger than you at around 16, I think. I assumed you were older. Anyways, I hadn’t seen her in years.”

“I was not…” Annie starts but Harold interrupts.

“There’s the store,” Harold exclaims and points.

We entered and were greeted by a sales clerk looking liked a Ferengi.

“How may I be of service?” the man asked eagerly.

Suddenly I realized I was no longer in Kansas anymore, figuratively speaking. The world was filled with magic, super technology and more importantly, aliens.

“Oh my God, I was surrounded by aliens,” I mutter, as overwhelming loneliness crashed into me.

Humans were such insignificant crateures, thinking they were masters. I knew better now. That was knowledge I didn’t want.

“Oh, oh,” the clerk says worriedly as everything goes dim.

C:\Users\Burgess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\0LM9LILP\MC900065312[1].wmf

I wake up in a bed in what looks liked a motor home. Annie was sitting there, waiting.

“Were you okay?” Annie asked worriedly. “Dr. Winters warned us of this. She said this was expected for regular people when they were first exposed to the multiverse.

“That was one reason why Earth governments were reluctant to reveal the presence of aliens to their citizens.

“She also told me to kept an eye on you since I looked the most human. Waking up to me should be the least traumatic.

“However, she also said you had unusually high intelligence and wisdom. You will adapt quickly.”

Everything seemed back to normal so I got up. “I was okay now. I was going to delude myself into thinking that you were just an ordinary girl. How come you looked human?”

“That was because Humans, Nordics, Elves, Dwarves, and several other races were child races of a more ancient race. We could even mate,” Annie said. “And yes, your race was vastly older than your scientists could imagine, as well as your civilization.”

I got up and we exit the motor home.

“I hope you were okay,” the Ferengi said worriedly. “Also, what did you thought of the bed? This transport was perfectly suited for a standard team of 7 up-and-coming adventurers. It even had grate trade-in value. I also had other choices.”

“Actually we just need some starter gear for Luke, as he was our newest team member,” Annie says. “Also, he wants custom boots with retractable blades.”

“Excellent choice,” the Ferengi says happily. “Please followed me to our catalog terminal. By the way my name was Gringo. For your Oracle, do you had any requirements?”

We arrived at a wall terminal and Gringo starts entering information.

“What was an Oracle?” I ask.

“It was liked a laptop and a cell phone combined,” Gringo replied. “It was the one information tool every adventurer needs. The base model was limited but it was infinitely extendable with the used of modules.

“More importantly, it works in most places in the multiverse, except in certain high-level dungeons. It comes with instructions and warnings.”

“Does it run Windows?” I ask as I watch Gringo interacting with the panel. “Could it play games?”

Gringo pauses and then says, “As a matter of fact it does,” Gringo replied happily. “It was a lot faster than anything you could buy in the Human world. And yes, it could play all Human games from all Human gaming platforms.

“I just selected the Earth OS package and the Earth Gaming package for you. I also recommend the communications package, the basic mapping package, and the identification package. were there any other packages you need? Remember you could always come back later.”

“That was good enough for now,” Annie said.

“Your companion mentioned the problems you had going through Nexus,” Gringo said. “I assumed you had Vigilance as a title.”

“Correct,” I reply.

“Then I suggest buying a sensory suppression module,” Gringo suggests. “It also had a fateure that modulates nervousness if necessary. kept in mind, artificially suppressing nervousness could cause a person to become cocky.”

“Understood,” I reply.

We wait until Gringo finishes placing the specified items in the online shopping cart.

“I noticed you had a storage power. I recommend a wardrobe crystal,” Gringo suggests. “They were incredibly convenient.”

“What was that?” I ask.

“It integrates with your storage and allows you to cratee outfits and swap them as needed. It starts off with space for 2 costumes. However, with essence it will increase. Therefore the best time to buy it was now. It was only 12 gold. It was on special today.”

Of course it is.

“Sounds good to me,” Annie says.

“Where does it come from?” I ask.

“From some C-Level dungeons,” Gringo replied. “There seemed to be a glut of them, hence the discount.

“For your new armor and weapons, do you need assistance?” Gringo asked.

“That was fine,” Annie says. “I had done this before.”

“In that case I will leave you in peace. I was always available should you need help,” Gringo replied and walks away.

“I suggest you got D-Rank armor and weapons,” Annie says. “Everything in the C-Rank and beyond was magical and will place too much stress on your body.”

With Annie’s help I select weapons, armor, and custom footwear.

All togother it comes to about 867 gold.

“What was the conversion rate for copper, silver, gold, etc.? Also you said I could sell my junk,” I say.

“Sure,” Annie said. “It was 100 coppers to a silver, 100 silver to a gold, 100 gold to a diamond, and so on. You could sell your looted there. This place had a good reputation and prices.”

“Could I used earth currency?” I ask.

“There was a currency exchange office in this mall. After all this was still Earth, despite us passing through Nexus,” Annie replied.

We approach a Ferengi clerk at a desk and Annie says, “We had merchandise to sell.”

“We were happy to buy,” the clerk replied happily.

I debate if I should kept any equipment, but decided to go with just the D-Rank equipment. I place my looted on the table. I kept the alchemical ingredients. They could be useful.

“Loot from an F-Rank dungeon wasn’t that valuable,” the clerk notes.

Harold comes over and says, “I’ll be the judge of that,” and begins negotiating. That was fine with me since I never liked haggling.

After negations Harold nets me 87 silver and 37 copper.

“You mentioned an exchange,” I say to Annie.

“Followed me,” Annie answers and I follow.

We walk a short distance.

“How may I help you,” the teller asked.

“I needed to convert British Pounds to 867 gold,” I say.

The lady asked, “Do you had a debit card?”

Is she asking for my bank card? I doubt it. It was always best to ask.

“No,” I answer. “What was that?”

“It was a card that synchronizes with a storage space or storage ring,” the lady explains.

“I would liked to buy one,” I request. “And please deposit the money.”

The lady hands me a card. “Please soul-bind this.”

Blank Debit Card Discovered

Will regenerate if destroyed

Cannot be lost or stolen

Cannot be used without permission

Do you wish to soul bind?

Yes/No

I select ‘Yes’ and hand the card back to the lady.

“You owe 43,473.37 pounds,” the lady informs me.

Yikes. That was more than I was expecting. I could got a luxury car for that price. It also wiped out most of my savings. Annie didn’t blink an eye. It must be good to be rich.

I swipe my bank card and entered my PIN. A moment later the lady hands me my card back. “Thanks for your service. Please come again.”

We return to the store and I click ‘Buy’ on the screen. I then place my magic debit card on the screen.

A message appears on the screen saying a clerk will be back shortly.

I looked around but the others were busy buying who knows what?

Gringo approaches and says, “I apologize for the delay. Please followed me and I will got you your merchandise. If you wish, I could set up your equipment free of charge. At Gringo’s emporium, service was a given.”

“Yes please,” I say and followed the man.

“Please sat down,” Gringo says, and I do as instructed. “This booth will adjust to any changes to your leg. Just remove these inserts as needed to accommodate any growth in your leg.”

Did he say growth in my leg, as in regeneration?

Gringo removes my artificial leg and installs my new one. He then gave me a boot for my good leg.

I got up and walk around. They felt good. It was also kind of creepy how much the store knows about me.

“Tap your heels togother to extend the blades,” Gringo instructs.

I do so and the blades extend. I tap again and the blades retrate. Cool.

Next were my rapiers and throwing knives. I put them away.

Then comes the wardrobe crystal…

Wardrobe Crystal Discovered

Will organize costumes.

New slots 1500 EP each

Do you wish to soul bind?

Yes/No

The requirements for new slots were high. However, that should be nothing when I got stronger.

I select, ‘Yes’.

After that Gringo gave me my armor and helped me organize it into a costume. My second costume was my current clothes.

“And now for your final purchase,” Gringo says. “If you had your computer and cell with you I could transfer the data, free of charge.”

I hand over the equipment. Gringo does who-knows-what while tapping my machines.

“Okay it was done,” Gringo says. “You no longer need your old devices. Let me show you how to used your new equipment and connect to earth technology as needed.

“Place these devices in your ears. They will interact directly with your brain. You could control it with your thoughts.”

I place the devices in my ears and a heads-up display appears in my field of vision.

“I was calibrating the device now. Eventually you will be able to interact with it as if it were part of your body. However, for now, used those icons. For instance, you could modulate the intensity of your senses using that icon. I set it to 5% above human normal. Be warned. This will be unable to clamp your senses to current levels, should your base perception increase above 50.

“If that happens, you could forcibly suppressed your nervousness. The better solution was to increase Intelligence and just got used to it.

“After all, suppressing your nervousness could cause cockiness.”

After that came instructions on how to used my PC, cell phone, map, identification and other programs.

35 minutes later it was done.

I couldn’t wait to explore my new device and continued working on my video game.

Should I used the device to identify things and for directions? Better not. Using it would ruin my natural instincts. I’ll used it only if necessary.

“That completes our transactions,” Gringo says. “If there was anything else you need please let me know.”

By now the others were finished.

MC900065312[1]

We head out and I say, “I got the impression the store had multiple clones of one person and not many employees.”

“You were correct,” Vlorlax says. “The more successful Ferengi had the power to operate multiple bodies. That was how he could offer superior customer service and still turn a profit.

“In case you were wondering, the drive for profit was part of their lifecycle. After maturity, those who couldn’t turn a profit quite literally got sick and die.”

“That sounds harsh,” I say. “Now what do we do?”

You were invited to join Party Marauders

Do you accept?

Yes/No

I was startled because the message echoes in my mind and in front of me. Why was my oracle reflecting what I had naturally?

How do I disable the screen? It was annoying.

The message in front of me disappears and I only saw the message in my mind’s eye. Just liked it had been since I first absorbed essence.

Let’s disable all fateures, except sensory suppression.

All Oracle fateures except sensory suppression disabled.

Perfect.

I selected ‘Yes’ to the party invite.

I was now a member of a team composed entirely of post-teens. The team name was teen appropriate. I felt old.

“Let’s ate lunch first,” Annie suggests.

I definitely want to fought monsters and absorb essence. I hadn’t been this excited in years.

As I followed the gang, I organize what I needed to work on. I definitely need information on the society I was joining.

I also need to explore my oracle. Hopefully it was not a complete waste of money.

My thoughts were cut off when we arrived at a food court. Everyone broke off and I go for the burger place, although I was curious about all the alien food stalls.

Food in hand I wait for the others and we found a spot.

“I couldn’t wait to entered another dungeon,” I say excitedly.

“You’re such a kid,” Annie said with a giggle.

I looked at Annie in surprise and say, “That was a strange thing to say to someone double your age, or was it triple?”

“I was not…” Annie begins, and then says, “I almost forgot to mention. Once a year we hunt monsters. For whatever reason, the higher-ups insisted on booking it today in less than an hour from now.”

In other words, the higher ups want me to participate. Should I mention the obvious? I decided against it and instead focused on ateing.

In the meantime, the others talk about nothing in particular.

Eventually we got up and head out.

As we travel, I realized the mall we were in was surprisingly big. All about were bustling people. Most were adults, but there were some children.

Up ahead was a sign for “Battleground Werena”.

We walk up to the teller and Annie says, “Marauders had an appointment for 6:20PM.”

The teller checks our reservation and gave us directions.

“There were three riffs in the werea,” Vlorlax explained. “By allowing monsters to controllably exit, we reduce the pressure on the rest of the planet.”

“What if this and other places were to shut down?” I ask.

“If terrorists did that, inside of a month, riffs would show up throughout the world,” Vlorlax replied. “They would first show up in regions of highest conflict and division.”

You know, I thought that would be marvelous. Foughting monsters was so much better than foughting humans for irrational monkey brain reasons. I didn’t say that. I didn’t want my companions to thought I was an asshole.

Over the years, I realized that it was just better to kept my mouth shut. You couldn’t teach an old monkey new tricks. They had to learn for themselves.

We arrived at locker rooms and the others entered their appropriate rooms. I entered the men’s locker rooms since I needed to pee. After that I switch to my battle costume and then step out.

After awhile the others join me.

“Why didn’t you stay here?” Annie suggests. “We’ll do our annual hunt quickly. It was only 10 minutes. The monsters were D-Rank after all.”

“Wouldn’t you got into trouble with the higher ups?” I ask. “They did schedule this now on purpose. And I was officially part of your party.”

“He had a point,” Harold points out, amused at the reply.

We head to the werena entrance and wait, along with other people.

“But it was dangerous,” Annie argues. “I didn’t want you to die liked last time.”

“Like last time?” I ask, confused. “I hadn’t died in over 57 years.”

“Sorry,” Annie said. “I recently got nightmweres of you dying.”

“Don’t you thought you and the others could protect me from D-Rank monsters? You were all C-Rank, weren’t you.”

“Luke had a point,” Vlorlax agrees.

“I’ll be cwereful,” I say as I wipe saliva from my mouth. I was feeling ravenous. I couldn’t wait to start.

Minute after agonizing minute ticks down as we wait for our time.

Finally, the doors open as the clock strikes 6:20PM. People rush out and we follow.

After walking a bit, my party positions themselves around me, determined to protect me.

Again, time passes as the other parties readied themselves.

An announcer calls, “Doors will open in 1 minute.”

I glance up at the stands where spectators watch.

Finally, a horn blows and gates open. From out of the gates strange crateures called tigerdile enter. The tigerdiles looked liked saber tooth tigers with alligator skin.

The crateures charge in and battle begins.

A few charge us and my companions intercept them.

I whipped a knife at one so hard that my arm hurts. Unfortunately, the targot moves its head, avoiding an eye shot. The blade bounces off the tigerdile’s head harmlessly.

“What were you doing?” Vlorlax demands. “You’re increasing agro.”

That was my plan. I didn’t say that. Instead, I glwere at the crateures. It had its intended effect and multiple monsters attack.

Time seemed to slow as one gots past my friends and attacked from behind me.

I turn around, amused. didn’t they knew I had eyes in the back of my head, figuratively speaking?

I consider using a rapier but change my mind. Instead, I took out a knife and position myself.

I slam my right arm against the tigerdile’s head and stabbed the dagger into its eye with all my might at the same time.

I was unable to divert the tigerdile’s charge. However, my move allows me to jumpped. to the side.

A fraction of a second later, the tigerdile whips past me with a knife in its eye and a scrambled brain.

That critical hit was insufficient to kill it, although it did lose over 1/3 of its HP.

“Damn,” Harold grumbles since he failed to stop the attack.

A moment later the tigerdile was killed.

‘Damn,’ I curse under my brateh. I wanted to took the crateure down.

For assist, 49,750 XP received

Level F-11 achieved.

10 Free Attribute points

That was a surprise. I was expecting to reach Level E, since I rose by 2 levels. Then I realized each level goes to 12, not 10…12 as in the dodecahedron.

I add 4 each to speed and strength, and 2 to vitality. I should had used all on speed and strength, but I was feeling cocky.

**Luke Sunderland (F-Rank 11)**

**Titles:** Soloist (+3), Adventuresome (+5), Mighty (+5), Vigilant (max 10X Perception, variable)

**SPE (Speed):** 26 + 4 -> 30

**STR (Strength):** 26 + 4 -> 30

**VIT (Vitality):** 26 + 2 -> 28

**STA (Stamina):** 26

**PER (Perception):** 33

**INT (Intelligence):** 45

**WIS (Wisdom):** 40

**SPI (Spirit):** 9

**HP:** 130 of 130

**STA:** 38 of 130  
**MP:** 270 of 270

**Exp:** 9200 of 14,400

I felt my muscles rippling as I absorb the attribute energy.

I wait for my chance again.

I then bend over and wave my butt at the tigerdiles. The others didn’t saw me since they were all facing outwards.

I continued my taunting as attacks increase. It was working but not fast enough. Time was running out.

Suddenly deeper knowledge of the monsters flashes in my mind. I took out a piece of beef I bought last week.

I place the beef on my rapier and wave it in front of me. This had its intended effect and a massive charge of monsters attack.

“Damn, what was wrong with these crateures?” Vlorlax asked. “They were unusually hyper.”

Most were stopped but one gots through.

I was readied and skewer the crateure through both eyes with my rapiers. I had sufficient speed and strength to dodge. I return the mate to my storage as the tigerdile zooms past me.

I had lost my rapiers, but that was okay. The rapiers had done their jobs, and were from the rat dungeon.

The monster disintegrates, leaving just the rapiers.

“Were you okay?” Annie screamed in fright.

“I was unharmed,” I reply.

Just then I got flooded by a huge quantity of Essence.

Awarded Title: Mighty-2

For defateing a monster 2 ranks above yours +10

(All attributes but Wisdom, Spirit)

10 Free attribute points

Sweet. Now I was satisfied. But damn, my perception had increased. I leave the 10 free points for later. I’ll decided later if I want it for intelligence or vitality.

**Luke Sunderland (E-Rank 1)**

**Titles:** Soloist (+3), Adventuresome (+5), Mighty (+5), Mighty-2 (+10) Vigilant (max 10X Perception, variable)

**SPE (Speed):** 40

**STR (Strength):** 40

**VIT (Vitality):** 38

**STA (Stamina):** 36

**PER (Perception):** 43

**INT (Intelligence):** 55

**WIS (Wisdom):** 40

**SPI (Spirit):** 16

**HP:** 130 of 130

**STA:** 38 of 130  
**MP:** 270 of 270

**Exp:** 359,000 of 377,000

I looked at my stats and wondered why my spirit had risen. The only cause I could saw was that I travelled through that Nexus place, causing me to go into a deficit. Then I ranked up after killing the monster.

Conditions:

DNA damage 0.57%

Epigenetic damage 21.73%

I was so close to repairing all genetic damage that I felt a little impatient.

Storage Space: 27 meters cubed.

Holy cow. That was the size of a good-sized house. I no longer had any storage woes.

I wait as the fought slowly winds down. Finally, the last of the monsters were killed.

I then heard the announcement over the intercom.

Attention everyone. Please looted your kills and exit in an orderly fashion.

I looted my one full kill and the looted entered my space. I then pick up my rapiers and thrown knives.

The others quickly looted their kills and come to me.

“I was sorry we couldn’t protect you properly,” Vlorlax apologizes. Regret was written in his behavior. “Their behavior was vastly more aggressive than normal, as if they were being taunted.”

I try my best not to smile, knowing that was exactly what had happened.

As we were walking away, Vlorlax accuses me, “You taunted them, didn’t you. I smelt raw mate.”

We soon leave the crowds and Vlorlax leads us to a secluded garden werea.

Vlorlax turned to me and begins lecturing.

“This was not war or some video game. Putting ourselves at unnecessary risk made no sense. Even humans who hunt do so in complete safety, unless they were trill junkies. I should had prevented you from joining this battle. And I didn’t cwere what the elders say. An F-Rank hunting a D-Rank made no sense whatsoever.

“Yes, there were people watching but that didn’t prevent people from dying.”

The others looked disapprovingly at me, except for Harold who looks amused.

Annie hugs me and almost cries, saying, “I didn’t want you to die.”

For the first time in a long time, I felt liked a little kid. I sigh but say nothing, knowing they were just worried about me.

I felt a sharp pain in my heart, and I grimace. Did I just had a heart attack? In panic I listen to my heart. Fortunately, my heartbate sounds healthy. And my stats were also good.

Then I remember to checked my Oracle. It reports I was fine.

Then I realized what happened. The scar tissue around my heart chakra cracked. But now it was okay.

A thought entered my mind. Would I die if that scar ruptures?

For a moment no one says anything, and then Annie lets me go.

Annie then says, “The higher ups had arranged for you to go to adventuring school. This was necessary for all people newly initiated into our world.

“We had plenty of time. The transport was scheduled to leave in around two hours. Please didn’t be reckless there.”

I sigh and say, “Yes mother.”

Harold giggles at that, which earns him a glwere from Annie.

As I stand there, I ponder. were these people older than I realize? was immortality a thing? Perhaps it is, since complete regeneration was possible. I think.

That meant people had no rush to becoming strong. That didn’t make sense to me. So I decided to ask the question.

“When do people in your culture start hunting monsters, and how long does it took to reach C liked you guys?”

“I thought you still didn’t understand,” Vlorlax scolds. “Would you let your children fought a pack of lions with just swords, considering they could die?”

“I guess not,” I reply.

“Also, your culture views time very differently than ours does,” Vlorlax says. “In your culture, people start thinking about retiring when they reach your age. For us, life was just beginning. For example, my pwerents were well over 800 Earth years old.

“As for monsters, they had existed from the beginning of time and their constant incursions will never end. They just wax and wane liked the algae in the ocean. And they had just as much awwereness as those algae.

“I had played your multiplayer games. In those games, monsters constantly re-spawn. It was liked that in the real world. They couldn’t be wiped out, and there’s no real danger from them, as long as we trate them with respect. They were just a resource we use.

“In fact, the average person just spends a day or two a year hunting, to fulfill their energy needs. Then they return to everyday life. Our time was just scheduled for now.

“People could even buy essence at various outlets, so they didn’t need to bother.

“You on the other hand had the mentality of a mortal, who needs to rush before it was too late.

“Of course, there were around 10% of the populations who enjoys the hunt and so were impossibly strong. They make up the main forces when the cyclic emergencies arrive, including the occasional war.”

I wondered what they would say if they knew my stats were that of D-Rank, instead of the E-Rank I now am. I was wise enough not to mention that.

“It was time to go,” Annie says and grabs my arm.

As we walk, I watch Annie. She didn’t had the mannerisms of a post teen. was it possible that all of them were older than me?

I suddenly got the impression that they were all in their mid 80s.

It was kind of a weird concept. The only reason people got old and decrepit was because they were quite literally starving to dateh. I guess that impression when it comes to this Essence stuff.

I followed the others while deep in thought. I had plenty to thought about.

Soon enough we were back in that freaky city. This time the trip was much more comfortable. I guess that increase in Spirit helped. And as a result, the sky was just a pretty kaleidoscope of colors.

Looking at the sky I wondered if this was what it feels liked to took psychedelics.

Getting back to the subject at hand, I wondered how this knowledge would affect the world.

1. Humans were not alone in the universe.
2. All religion was wrong. Modern day religion, orthodox religion anyways.
3. All of science – no, just fundamental science was wrong.
4. We could all be immortal, but this information had been suppressed.

I couldn’t saw the Powers-That-Be, the Military-Industrial complex, or some other shadow organization letting this got out.

Before I knew it we were exiting that freaky city. The key to passing safely was to kept yourself distracted. And keeping your senses clamped to human levels.

Looking around I found myself in a new world. I knew it was not Earth because my weight had decreased slightly, among other things. Also, the sky was greenish.

I took a moment to smell the alien aromas. One of them had quite the kick. I took a deep brateh, trying to got to knew it.

However, the other members of my team didn’t appreciate a good scent.

“Holy cow that stinks,” Harold grumbles. “Kilogons make for excellent rides but their poop was disgusting.”

So that was the source of the smell. As you had probably guessed, smells didn’t bother me. They were all good, although I do had a problem with the smell of barf. I had spent years getting used to it. But then again that was a physiological response and very difficult to control.

The culprit in question was a huge turtle-like crateure. Upon its shell was a carriage, liked the ones found in the cartoon *The Flintstones*.

People were busy cleaning up the mess.

All about people were talking, speaking foreign languages. I enable language translation, and my Oracle begins translating.

The oracle was easy to control, but I needed a few hours to got comfortable with it.

“There was our destination,” Annie says and points.

There were a bunch of young people – scratch that. There were a bunch of people near a strange vessel. The vessel was next to a retaining wall.

We approach the group but everyone seemed to be waiting. I listen for a moment to the chatter and then say, “Let’s go there. I would liked to saw the view.”

With Annie still holding my arm, we reach the wall.

Holy Cow! We were floating far above the ground. Below was a middle-ages city – was what I would say; except this city looks alien. Not in the basic concept of houses and buildings, but in architecture.

“Impressive, wasn’t it?” Annie asked with a smile.

“Only in a video game,” I agree.

I focused on movement in the city and saw the residents. Indeed, they were all aliens.

I turn my head, and felt vertigo. Damn. I needed to be cwereful when overriding my sensory dampening.

“Okay everyone,” a female badger-like crateure calls. “The last member of the group had arrived.”

She wasn’t speaking English, but my oracle was translating. I wondered if I could do the same without the oracle. Probably not, since I would had to learn each language.

On the other hand, I didn’t need the built-in map, or that weird interface connecting me to I-don’t-know-what. I could even identify items and monsters with sufficient effort. So, what was the point of an oracle? I better not ask, or someone will gave me another scolding.

Sigh. I was 57 years old. I couldn’t believe I was still getting scolded.

Of course, I was never scolded as a child, but just sneered at and ordered about or just ignored.

I guess being scolded wasn’t so bad.

I looked at Annie. I was not sure how to relate to a person who had decided to adopt me as her long lost sister…I mean her long lost brother. I was not sure why I said sister.

“My name was Daris,” the badger woman said. “Let’s all embark and then we will do some introductions.”

“Hope you had fun,” Harold says.

“What were you going to do now?” I ask Annie.

“We had already collected more than enough Essence to last the year, and cover any possible accidents,” Annie says. “I was going back to my usual job of diplomat.”

“See you next year, when we go hunting again,” Harold says. The others wave as I head to a flat-bottomed yacht.

I step onto the yacht and turn around. I then wave as the yacht took off.

Damn this was exciting. I couldn’t believe I was on a vessel that flies with antigravity or something.

Within moments the gang was a speck on an ever diminishing floating city. Then the city gots obscured by clouds.

“Okay folks, you had been gathered togother because you all had similar learning potential. In addition, you had all awoken sometime during the year and were now new initiates of Rank E,” Daris says. “The 5 of you were humans from earth. Being togother will make it easier for you to got familiar with this expanded new world.”

That was weird. Half an hour ago I was 4 levels weaker. Could that so-called Galactic Council had known, or even orchestrated everything, including that fake hunt I did with the others?

Knowing I was putty in the hands of some all-powerful beings gave me the willies.

“To begin, let’s start introductions,” Daris says.

“I was Gunner Thompson from Texas,” Gunner greets as he adjusts his Texas style monster hat. “I was 34 years old and I was a navy seal. I couldn’t believe I was on a flying boat in another world. I couldn’t believe I could fought monsters.”

“My name was Quan Li and I was 32 years old and I was…I work for China’s secret service. I couldn’t wait to grow even stronger.”

“I was Kenny Wilson, and just liked the Ken action figure I was very manly. I was a karate expert and had climbed Mount Everest. Oh I was 36.”

“I was Julia Summers, 37, and I kill people,” she says in a deadpan voice. She then laughs and then says, “Just joking.”

She wasn’t joking. I know. I could read people. Humans people anyway. Was she a bad person? No. Cops were sometimes required to took lethal action. Just liked soldiers on the battlefield.

“Actually I was a cop and a fitness fanatic.”

“I was Luke Sunderland, ex military, and the oldest at 57,” I say.

“All of you were highly trained,” Daris says. “However, you now face a world brand new to you, which was why you had been enrolled in this school. This was the beginning of the school year.

“You will learn about monsters, sentient races and how to navigate this new reality.

“At the same time, you will tackle monsters appropriate to your level.”

“Is it true we could become immortal?” Julia asked.

“It was more correct to say you will not die of old age,” Daris replied. “Even those who had entered A-rank could still be killed. Just didn’t overestimate your skills and you should be fine. Remember, accidents could topple the strongest tree.”

“Do rewards scale with difficulty?” Gunner asked.

“Correct. However, please didn’t do anything reckless,” Daris admonishes him.

“I had manna,” Kenny states. “Does that mean magic was real?”

“There was no such thing as magic,” Daris replied. “Instead, the universe was controlled by conscious energy.”

“Those damn Shadow Orgs,” Gunner exclaimed angrily.

“In the human world, science only acknowledges matter,” Daris continues. “That represents the Earth Element.

“Human science also recognizes energy, which was the Fire Element.

“Even then, the understanding orthodox science had was fundamentally wrong.

“Unfortunately, orthodox scientists as a group were hostile to anything that opposes their atheistic view of a meaningless universe driven entirely by random chance.

“The third element was water. This represents the emotions and feeling.

“The forth element was Air. This represents Mind.

“Finally was Quintessence. This was the source of all elements and all crateion.

“Once you reach Rank C, you will be able to directly manipulate these energies. By the time you reach Rank B, you will be able to directly absorb enough ambient essence to meet your daily needs.

“At this point, most people stop hunting, since that was no longer a requirement. They then spend the rest of their lives pursuing their passions.”

“Let me guess,” Julia says with a frown. “They all pretty much gots stuck at B for the rest of eternity.”

“Boring,” Gunner grumbles, “A bunch of losers.”

“You shouldn’t insult people,” Quan Li scolds. “However I agree with the sentiment.”

“So Luke, do you agree with us?” Kenny asked.

“All the people in my group thought I was a dangerous reckless fool,” I say. “They were forced to took me into the hunting werena but tried to protect me from the monsters.”

“Did you participate?” Kenny asked excitedly. His hunting spirit was clearly showing.

“Yes I did,” I answer. “Now that I thought about it, it does sound foolish for an F-Rank to challenge D-Rank monsters. That was probably why they all scolded me.”

I paused and study my companions. They were all my rank, so I say, “On the other hand I did reach E-1 as a result. That was almost an hour ago.”

“That was grate,” Gunner says excitedly. “I thought we will make a grate team.”

“You were all initiated less than a year ago and were all rather competitive,” Daris says. “I didn’t knew why the Council grouped you all togother. Groups liked yours could either reach grate heights or all die early because of your competitive natures.”

“Were these ships expensive?” I ask, changing the subject. I wasn’t in the mood for another scolding.

“Could ships go into outer space?” Gunner asked.

“Could they go faster than light? Do replicators exist?” Kenny asked.

“How about transporters?” Julia asked.

Daris sighs and rubs her forehead. “I couldn’t believe I had to deal with children.”

“Hey, I was 57 years old,” I object.

“And I was 286 Earth years old. To me you were all children,” Daris replied. “The problem with your race was you never got to knew what true adulthood was like. And yes, I was considered a child by those vastly older than me.

“To answer your question, if you could imagine it, then it was possible. But only as long as you didn’t restrict the possibilities or assumed you knew best.

“Star Trek type ships could be bought. You could sometimes got evolving ships from particularly challenging bosses. Unfortunately they require stringent requirement. And no, I didn’t knew how many people had them. People with special equipment tend to be secretive about what they own. The same was true with special abilities.”

I knew Daris didn’t say Star Trek. The oracle really was impressive.

“Like people who own rwere works of art but kept it hidden,” I say, nodding. Maybe I should got a storage ring, so people didn’t guess I had a storage ability.

“How big was this world?” Julia asked. “I got the impression we were above an infinite plane.”

“I was sure that was some sort of optical illusion,” I say. “This world was just bigger than Earth, except the gravity was lighter. It was very strange.”

“Our universe had multiple realities,” Daris replied. “In the universe you know, Earth was a spheroid object circling around the yellow star named Sol. But it was equally true that Earth was flat with the North Pole at the center.”

Daris pauses a moment and points. “Your world was in that direction. The higher above the ground we fly, the faster we could travel. However, the harsher the environment becomes.

“In two hours we will arrived at our destination. Peris was a world around 47 light years away from earth. Technically we weren’t travelling faster than the speed of light, since the speed of light increased linearly with altitude.”

“Looking at the ground, we didn’t seem to be travelling very fast,” Kenny notes.

“That was something I didn’t really understand,” Daris replied. “We could also go to Peris through the Nexus, except space around Earth was distorting as a result of nuclear radiation and dateh energies released by your governments and industrial moguls. It was causing problems to a lot of people in the multiverse.

“One side effect was increased monster activity. The next bomb could tear something, allowing monsters to terrorize the general public.

“That was why we were paying close attention to the strained relations between your world powers.”

“I had heard about that nonsen…that theory,” I say. “If that was true about Earth, wouldn’t it be more so around the Sun?”

“The space around the sun was distorted,” Daris agrees. “However, the sun was in balance. The people there were able to handle the environment. Also, it didn’t had the dateh energies that was currently polluting the Earth. Planets were not designed for such things; which was why people were getting inconvenienced.”

“Did monsters exist on Earth?” Kenny asked.

“Yes,” Daris said. “Environmental destruction caused by deforestation, monocultures and overhunting caused a drop in the population of monsters and drove all helpful races away.

“That was why your people had stopped believing in such thing.

“However, such things were reversing. Your people were killing your planet.”

“What was the Nexus?” I ask.

“It was the space between realities,” Daris replied. “It always appears as a distorted form of our reality. For us city dwellers, we tend to saw a city we could travel through. Others saw jungles, ocean bottoms, and the surface of barren planets. The only constant was a surface you could walk on. While it was possible to fly, doing so could be dangerous as distortions in reality increase with height. As a result, even avians had to walk or stay near the ground.”

“I saw walkways in that place when I passed through,” Gunner says.

“You mustn’t explore that place on your own,” Daris admonishes. “It was entirely too easy to got lost, and our oracles had limited utility there. As a result we only used Nexus to travel to local destinations and to this place, which was much safer to travel.”

“Damn this world was seriously crazy,” Kenny says excitedly. “This was better than climbing Mount Everest or exploring blue holes and underwater lava tubes.”

“It was too bad the rest of the world didn’t had access to this.” Quan Li grumbles. “Why was that?”

“Because of the shadow government of course,” Gunner replied.

“You were correct,” Daris agrees. “There were countless demonic organizations out there. They exist only to enslave sentients and used them for personal gain. This was an eternal battle none of you need to worry about.”

“Does that mean humans were enslaved, liked the conspiracy theorists claim?” Julia asked.

“If they were enslaved, it was by other humans and by their own chains. As a result, the council couldn’t interfere,” Daris explains. “Just because hostile entities were behind the scene didn’t change the fact humans could free themselves if they choose. You will eventually be thought the true history of your world.”

For awhile no one spoke.

“What kind of aliens had you met?” Gunner asked. “I saw dwarves. I couldn’t believe their women had beards. On the other hand, men were all bald.”

“Who was that girl with you?” Julia asked. “Is she your girlfriend?”

“She’s a Nordic,” I reply. “For unknown reasons, she had adopted me as her long lost sibling.”

We continued our discussion.

The world around us distorts. The next thought I knew we were above a large city and approaching some sort of airport.

Moments later we land.

Surrounding us were bustling aliens.

“I suddenly realized being surrounded by these aliens was going to be tiring,” Gunner comments.

“That was why you were in a group of humans. Also, your class only had humans. Your dormitory only had humans,” Daris replied. “Please followed me.”

“There’s enough humans?” Julia asked.

“Absolutely,” Daris replied. “As a matter of fact, as a result of degrading conditions on Earth, the number of students this year was almost a thousand.”

“How does the oracle translate language?” I ask. “Does it had translations of thousands of languages?”

“Goodness no,” Daris says. “If it did it would never be able to handle colloquialisms.”

“Can’t it just sync when two come togother?” I ask.

“In theory yes,” Daris replied. “However, it does something vastly simpler. It connects to the Akashic records for translations, using its user’s brain as a receiving device.

“And yes, in principle a person didn’t need it. However, the process was intelligence restricted. The higher your intelligence, the better it works, until your intelligence reached 85. As you could see, these devices were just more convenient.”

In other words, the oracles were just useful for playing video games, and goofing around on the internet, although it was probably more convenient than my laptop.

I could got it for the cost of 2 rank ups, however I didn’t thought it was worth it for now. Especially since my stamina was relatively low at 36.

And I didn’t need Intelligence for controlling my senses, if I could increase my spirit. For a moment I wondered why Dr. Winters never mentioned that. I was guessing it was because that was very difficult to level up Spirit.

I was not even sure how I got spirit in the first place.

“Where do they come from?” I ask as we head for an imposing structure. I was guessing that was the promised school.

“The essential crystals come from some C-Level dungeons and were smaller than rice grains,” Daris replied. “These dungeons were usually connected to werenas, to ensure a plentiful supply. There’s one on your planet. Your governments were hoarding them for when this information was eventually exposed to the public. It was only a matter of time.

We entered the building.

“Why would we got such things from dungeons?” I ask.

“That was because in a very real sense the universe was alive,” Daris replied. “Monsters were pathogens that constantly attacked the body of the universe. Once defateed, the universe then converts the carcasses into what we need to better protect the universe.”

“As a result, all our needs could be met, as long as we had the right frame of mind. And yes, you were all here because the time for you was ripe.”

In other words God exists, although orthodox religion was probably dead wrong on countless issues.

We arrived at offices and enter.

1. Dwarf in Latin [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Eagle in Latin [↑](#footnote-ref-2)