

RPS

{ rock

paper

scissors }

a Game of High Strategy

{ Mason Norvell }

{ Corey Schulz }

an

RPS Strategy Discussion Club

Production

Foreword

This game, Rock Paper Scissors, can change people. A game with such stakes and such strategy cannot be underestimated.

This is a story about two young Strategists, fresh out of the Academy. This is a story about friendship, betrayal, love and deceit.

This is a story about RPS.

Mason: Turn 0

I throw egg equipped with eggshell and lay down 637 trap cards. 229 of which are in the external realm. I use hyper flash to increase my FSKRVRH value to 2115 and my GTD value to 3. Anyone think they can beat that?

Corey: Turn 0

Egg equipped with eggshell? Impressive strat, but I think I can manage a counter here.

It's time to duel.

I throw a water apparition into the External Realm and with it I send only four trap cards. We'll save that for later. Now, I sacrifice 25 LPPDDR to get a .75x increase in my LPDDDR, which allows me to summon a primal dreadwyrmling onto the battlefield. Of course, its special effect is that it drains 25.7 LP from me every turn. I counter that effect with my COUNTR_DRDWYRM DLC Trap Card, mitigating its effects entirely! I put it into attack mode, which automatically lowers your Eggshell'd Egg's FSKRVRH by 447, rendering it fundamentally useless. Since I summoned this turn, I can't attack so I end my turn.

@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell your move.

@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell unless you've chickened out of this fight. #ExternalRealm

Mason: Turn 1

@RPS Club President Corey Schulz Heh. Nice try.
A TRUE DUELIST NEVER BACKS DOWN
FROM AN RPS MATCH!!!

What you didn't see is that the eggshell's special trait allows it to conceal one extra small to medium sized void creature. I reveal my hidden Shadow Sort. Although that hit to my FSKRVRH makes this trickier, my Shadow Sort uses Merge Sort to recursively order your trap cards in just $n \log n$ time! Good luck using them now that they've been moved! My egg moves into yolk position and I end my turn.

Corey: Turn 1

Ha. Nice try @Club Treasurer Mason Norvell.
Reordering my trap cards does naught because my cards were -already- sorted! My dreadwyrms move to charge its ultimate attack, DRDWYRM_BEAM, and it'll be charged and ready to go in four turns. In the meantime, I activate my trap card to send your egg in yolk position to the External Realm. Good luck dealing with that, as we all know what happens if you go to the External Realm with a low HHDTTUF!

I end my turn.

Mason: Turn 2

@RPS Club President Corey Schulz argh now my yolk smash is rendered useless! I need a miracle... I believe in the heart of the cards... I draw a card from my Super Deck© DLC card deck..... YES! It's Blue Eyes White Dragoon. I use my Power Summon that I equipped prior to the game to sacrifice my egg to summon Blue Eyes White Dragoon onto the battlefield outside of the external realm! This activates 2 of my trap cards! Arena switch, which now makes the battlefield a desert, and Bug Storm which places three moths on the battlefield. I end my turn in frenzy-mode. Effectively doubling my AHWUVE-D. Heh. If Blue Eyes White Dragoon gets an attack in, your water apparition is toast!!!

Corey: Turn 2

@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell you've made a big mistake in thinking up your strategies this time.

You see, I would be afraid of your Blue Eyes White Dragoon, but upon changing the arena into a desert battlefield, you've activated one of my trap cards!

Water World, first introduced in the October 2016 patch, recently got an update in the April 12th, 2018 patch! Torrential rains overflow the desert, causing a flood making the ground wet. As we all know, dragoons attack using jump attacks. What dragoon can launch off of a battlefield that's now effectively mud? As part of Water World, periodic lightning strikes also plague the battlefield. One happened to hit my dreadwurm, but because of my DRDWYRM_ELEMENTL DLC, the worm now is imbued with the power of thunder! While still charging my ultimate strike, I send a thunderbolt down towards you Blue Eyes White Dragoon!

@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell Back in the External Realm, things are looking bad for your yolk, as my water apparition handily reduces its LPFTGORRRP to ZERO, rendering it unusable. The yolk gets sent to the Outer Realm as a side effect of my newly activated trap card, which activates any time an egg yolk dies in the External Realm! That, in turn, activates a trap card back in the battlefield outside of the External Realm! Any

lightning strikes that now strike my dreadwyrms now charge DRDWYRM_BEAM 1.007 times faster. I use a booster DLC to increase my UIEGG by 70046 and my LVJtF by a mere 40. I leave my dreadwyrms charging and end my turn.

Good luck countering that!

Mason: Turn 3

@RPS Club President Corey Schulz NNO TH-THIS CAN'T BE. *flashback of our training in the academy plays.* (Corey is sitting in the corner practicing his RPS strats and I walk up. "Hey, don't work yourself too hard" I say. Corey laughs and responds "how am I supposed to win the championship if I don't practice 19 hours a day?" We both chuckle and reminisce about our old days playing RPS in the streets. *flashback ends*. Looks like all that training paid off... How do I counter a Dreadwurm imbued with lightning? Hmmm. And with my yolk in the outer realm... WAIT. I'VE GOT IT! I use my Desperate Times© DLC bonus ability to sacrifice 15 life points in order to boost my GTRDF by 1.5 times! I use GTRFD to summon 14 placental mammoths. This activates my trap card, Mammoth Float© which allows them to navigate the wet ground with ease! They form a phalanx around my Blue Eyes White Dragoon and get in defensive position. "It's not over yet" I say under my breath.

Corey: Turn 3

@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell Gah-- the one weak point in my stratagem, exploited, because of my rival's Strats. *flashback to Junior year Academy finals* "You... beat me by just .0067873 points, my rival. Expertly played! Next time will be different." But, as I said that, I could see the anger brewing within Mr. Norvell. He wants revenge. To win. To be uncontested.

flash forward to the middle of senior year "You okay, Mason? I've barely seen you out of your room any more. Do you need anyth--" "Shut up. Leave me to my Strats."

end flashback I should have seen this coming, Mason. We... used to be friends. Now, we're separated by all this... DLC. RPS used to be pure between us. What... what happened? That's why. That's why I must win. To regain our friendship!

@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell
I activate my trap card, which only activates when four or more prehistoric animals are summoned to the field! The field freezes over, and a large meteor sets its sights on the RPS Field(c). In addition, my DRDWYRM_BEAM is almost finished charging. To aid to that, I play a charge beam enquicken

DLC! Next turn is when it all ends. Unless you do something drastic, friend, I'm afraid that I will claim this victory, just like all the others!

Mason: Turn 4

@RPS Club President Corey Schulz Heh. You still think this is about friendship? Those days are gone. THE MASON YOU USED TO KNOW IS DEAD. *flashback to summer after junior year* Corey has just beaten me for the 10th time this week. "I'll never be as good as him" I say as I walk back to my home in the slums. "It just makes me so angry. I know I'm destined for something greater. My parents died so that I could attend RPS academy, and if I can't even beat my own friend than it was all for nothing!" I exclaim. Suddenly a shady figure appears nearby and says "RPS you say? I can improve your strats..... for a price." A wicked grin spreads across his face. *end of flashback* these childish strats won't stop me Corey. Nothing can stop me now. Not you. Or anyone. I spend 34.58 GAWDT to place one additional trap card, which triggers my trap card trap card that activates upon the placement of any additional trap cards in the second quarter of the game.

It suddenly opens up a temporal vortex which transfers my dead yolk from the outer realm back into the playing field. My placental mammoths quickly move to consume it, increasing their AKEBRY58"&&×AH by 15 horsepower. Now they get into spiral position and move to block your dreadwyrms blast! With their additional

horsepower, they can decelerate the beam, lowering
it's attack power by 79. YOU'RE DEAD NOW!

Corey: Turn 4

THE @Club Treasurer Mason Norvell I KNOW IS STILL ALIVE SOMEWHERE IN THERE!

MASON! YOU KNOW... you know that your Strats have overtaken you. Would your parents have wanted... this!? I know they wouldn't because... they're still alive. They are my parents too. We're brothers.

flashback to Mason's childhood

"Goodbye... sweetie. Good luck at the Academy... "

"M...mom!? NO!" "We'll always be here for you, not in body anymore, but in mind..."

"I'll... be alone?"

end flashback

But, after Mason left, they regained consciousness. See, they did this for you. They left you to live your life in the slums outside Academy City so that one day you could rise up and take the RPS Throne for yourself, a self-made man. They didn't want... this. They didn't want what you've become. They certainly didn't want the harm you've caused to so many others to get where you are today. So, my Rival, I WILL stop you! For OUR parents!

I activate my Trap Card, ENRG_DRDWYRM to enrage my dreadwurm, increasing LSKDJTT by 4777! That causes a chain reaction, causing a 1.002x increase in the monster's UUWDC. You know what that means as well as I do! This battle is as good as won for me. I move my Water Sprite from the External Realm to the Battlefield Outside of the External Realm, and use its FRZ ATK on the placental mammoths! This causes their Horsepower to halve, resulting in only a 39.5 decrease in my DRDWYRM_BEAM attack! Speaking of attacks, it's time for this one to hit! A beam of light rushes from the sky to hit your Placental Mammoths and your Blue Eyes White Dragoon, wiping out the Placental Mammoths and your Blue Eyes White Dragoon lost 556 LP!

But wait. That's not all! Remember the meteor that was charging towards the planet as a result of my trap card earlier? That hits the playing field in the far distance, coating the entire field in a dust that's probably... pretty hard for your Blue Eyes White Dragoon to breathe.

Do you see now...? Brother? THIS is why I have to win today! For our parents! And... for you!

I also put down two trap cards.

Mason: Turn 5

YOU LIE COREY! THERE'S NO WAY THAT MY PARENTS ARE STILL ALIVE! I watched them die... I've lived my whole life scarred by the moment... AND YOU? MY BROTHER? IT CAN'T BE...

flashback to freshman year

(Corey and I are sitting in our clubhouse with our 3 other friends)

"...and THEN I used my ice pick reversal DLC to circumnavigate her attack and cryo-beam her phantasmal potato peeler, winning me the match." I say. Corey chimes in "Don't lie! Her sun mirror was hiding around the corner and then you lost 142 TTDPEQS, which decreased your FFTTSS by 3 calories. I saw you lose that match!" I respond, "Okay fine, I MAY have lost." Everyone in the clubhouse laughs as we all recall our RPS matches from that day.

After an evening of laughs, all of our friends leave one by one until it is just Corey and I hanging out in the clubhouse. "Man... life sure is good." I say to Corey. "I may live in the slums, but I can always return to this clubhouse when I'm feeling down." A few seconds pass, and Corey responds with "So, I've been coming up with this new experimental

strat, but I could use some help fine tuning it.” I perk up at the sound of the word “strat” and say “sure, what’ve you got so far?”

Corey proceeds to spend the next 2 hours explaining the intricacies of his newest strat, and when he finally finishes I say. “Wow, what a steaming pile of garbage. If your opponent owns the broccoli crunch dlc, then your whole plan in the fourteenth quadrant will fall apart. You would need to activate 13 trap cards, and complete 12 summons in the first quarter in order to gain an extra GTDTDFDTGTDTD point. Then you could carry this point to the third quarter, effectively doubling the horse power of your goblins.” Corey responds “but what if there is a Blue Eyes White Dragoon in the center of the playing field?” We both pause for a moment, before we simultaneously shout out “The meteor in the distance will create enough dust to reduce the Blue Eyes White Dragoon’s breath points by 3!” We both burst out laughing. “I feel like we’re long lost brothers or something Corey, we always finish each other’s...” Corey chimes in “strats!”

END OF FLASHBACK

(A tear forms and falls down my cheek). **THIS IS A NEW LOW! EVEN FOR YOU! I’VE DONE WHAT I’VE HAD TO DO TO CREATE THE BEST STRATS IN THE OMNIVERSE! I’M NOT**

GOING TO LET YOU MANIPULATE ME INTO ANOTHER VICTORY!

I slowly look across the battlefield, checking for weakness. I draw from my Deck of Supreme Beings DLC deck and roll the required 28 six-sided die that go with the deck. Come on... come on... YES! The card I drew is the legendary Gargantuan Gorilla Glue! And the sum of the die is 103, which increases the glue's stickiness by five hundred quadrillion sticky points! This die roll is also fortunate, because it activates my summation trap card, which is located in the external realm, which activates upon the sum of any die rolls being greater than 101, but less than 110. I bet you were wondering why my Placental Mammoths consumed that Yolk, but left the eggshell unharmed? Well, I knew that you would see through my plan if I reequipped my eggshell, so instead I used the mammoths as a ruse! You have fallen directly into my trap! Now, watch how a true strategist acts when backed into a corner!

My external realm summation trap card spawns one lightning rod near my Gargantuan Gorilla Glue. Your lightning storms are helplessly drawn toward it, and we all know what happens when dirt in the air is near a lightning strike! The dirt increases the static electricity of the lightning strike by 14! But that isn't all... The lightning rod is infused with phantasmal ectoplasm that chemically reacts with

the statically charged lightning strike! This reaction would normally be grounded by the grass on the surface of the playing field, but it is instead amplified by the damp nature of the mud! Heh. You can't even comprehend the power that I've attained! If my parents could see me now... they would understand what I've done!

The now chemically activated phantasmal ectoplasm tears a hole in the fabric of reality. A portal is opened that is unlike any other... yes, it is the legendary vorpal portal! As you know, the vorpal portal can take any three creatures of any power rating and fuse them into a superior being. The portal absorbs my Gargantuan Gorilla Glue, Blue Eyes White Dragoon, and lastly, the remains of my eggshell.

These three creatures are merged and after a brief moment... the legendary Organic Gluten-Free GMO-Free Rubber Cement Eggshell Coated Blue Eyes Ultimate Dragoon emerges! Its legendary special ability recovers all of my life points upon being summoned. You see Corey, while you were busy chasing girls and making friends, I was mastering my strategies. While you were throwing parties, I was mastering my strategies. While you were mourning our dead friend, I was mastering my strategies! And now it has caught up with you. Nothing can stop me now! I will destroy you, and everyone else who gets between me and my strats!

flashback to RPS elementary “I choose rock,” I say. “I choose paper,” Corey responds. “Gah, you win again.” I say. We continue to play RPS for the rest of recess. Finally, the teacher calls everyone inside and I say to Corey “I know that we’re going to be friends forever because you’re the only one that can beat me at RPS.” *flashback ends*

For a brief moment, I see my choices flash before my eyes. My first RPS match, my first friend, my first girlfriend, my family, the clubhouse...

NOT ANYMORE! I MOVE MY ORGANIC
GLUTEN-FREE GMO-FREE RUBBER CEMENT
EGGSHELL COATED BLUE EYES ULTIMATE
DRAGOON INTO ATTACK POSITION AND
BEGIN CHARGING ITS ULTIMATE ATTACK.
AFTER NEXT TURN NOTHING WILL MATTER
ANYMORE. THIS HAS BEEN COMING FOR A
LONG TIME COREY. JUST LIE DOWN AND
DIE!

Corey: Turn 5

@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell I see you have not learned anything. You may win the RPS match on this day, but your parents... They'd not be proud of you.

flashback to second grade, four years before abandonment

Mason: "Ha! Check out the new Strat, my rival!" I said, "Mason, you've thrown Scissors the last seventeen RPS matches! How many more Scissor Strikes(TM) must you throw before you give up!?" "NO! JUST WATCH ME! IT'S TIME TO DUEL!" "Fine. Let's duel."

...

"NOT AGAIN!" "Mason, there's more to the game than Scissors... Watch... watch this: *Corey throws a Mudpool Pauldron Splash with a DDLKGJT of 7894 and a HHT of .0664*"

Mason: "Wowzerz! You sure are good at this game! I want to Get Good(C) too! Can I be your Rival?" "You have to prove it first. If you become the Rock(R), you may one day be my rival." "Then I train!"

Past that day, I didn't see Mason — my future Rival — for the next eight years.

flash forward to our first day at RPS Academy

"I haven't seen you in a long time. Let's play."

"Mason! That's right! We went to elementary school together! Sure! I'm up for a match. If I didn't accept, what would be the point of coming to RPS Academy? I'd not be a Duelist!"

"I've trained so long for this day! Remember last time? I start by throwing down a Scissors Strike!"

"Ha. Last time that happened, my Strats easily overcame you." I countered with a water apparition crossed with an onion. Moved to attack, and...

"W—what!? My moves aren't working on your Scissors!" "Ha! I've got WaterGuard AND VegetableGuard equipped, your Strats were flawed from the outset, Corey." With that, he moved to attack and for the first time, beat me.

FLASH FORWARD TWO YEARS

"Hey, Mason? Why do we do what we do? All these Strats... what's the point? I'm beginning to have doubts about being an RPS Master when I get out of the Academy."

"Well, we do it to protect the ones we... love..." his voice trails off into the distance.

"Something on your mind?"

"It's just, my parents... Ah, never mind."

"No, tell me."

"They died before I entered the Academy, and before I met you. I lived in the slums before getting accepted into this school. But something always felt off. I can't put my finger on it, but I feel like they're still out there, watching over me."

"That must have been hard. It's a good thing you play RPS! It's a good thing WE play RPS!"

"You got that right, Rival! Let's have a duel!"

FLASH FORWARD TWO YEARS

— walking down the hallways of the Academy dorms, I see Mason's door. "Man, it's been ages since I've seen him. I hope he's okay. Why did we ever grow apart? I'll go visit my Rival!"

"Mason? Are you in there?"

"GO AWAY. I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOUR PETTY STRATS. YOU ARE NOTHING COMPARED TO ME. UNLIKE YOU, I HAVE TO STUDY. FOR MY PARENTS. SO I CAN BRING THEM BACK."

"SNAP OUT OF IT. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO. TO BRING THEM BACK!"

"YOU'LL SEE. I'LL BRING THEM BACK AND BURN SOCIETY TO THE GROUND FOR ITS WRONGDOINGS AGAINST ME."

"THIS PATH YOU WALK. VENGEANCE. IT WON'T BRING YOU ANYTHING... t—trust me."

"Wh— WHAT DO YOU MEAN? THIS IS THE ONLY WAY."

"Five thousand years ago, there was one who played RPS. Nobody could top his Strats. He was the best in the Realm. After a time, nobody could even stand to challenge him. He was undisputed. But, the only reason he got that far up to the top, was because he was relentless. Every person who challenged him to a match of RPS, and lost, was sent to the External Realm, never to be heard from again.

Eventually, the only people who were not purged into the External Realm were the impoverished who knew not how to play Rock Paper Scissors. There was a flood that ravaged the land, leaving naught for infrastructure. A lot of people died. But that man, he sat high in his tower, watching the world burn. He caused the calamity. And watching it, he

felt nothing. He may have started playing the game for fun, but it turned into his life. He did not realize his mistakes. He gained power, sure, and many riches. He had it all. But there was nobody to love him. He started to Duel because he wanted to revive... his parents... When he finally was able to bring them back, society was but a shell of what it once was. And after seeing this, his parents left him, abhorred of what their child had begun. And so, in retaliation, this man sent them, too, to the External Realm.”

”How.. how do you know all this, Corey?”

”Mason, I’ve been alive for the past five thousand years. That story was not a story. That was reality, and that man was... it was me. You’re starting down the same path that I walked all those years ago. It’s a mistake.”

”Please, leave. I need to think.”

”Okay. But do not make the same mistake that I did. It’s too easy, and too unsatisfying.”

END FLASHBACK

”My Rival, why didn’t you heed my warnings!?
There was a time when I, too summoned the
Organic Gluten-Free GMO-Free Rubber Cement

Eggshell Coated Blue Eyes Ultimate Dragoon. It was the final battle that I needed to win before I could bring my parents back. BUT I'M TELLING YOU THIS RIGHT NOW... Don't do this. Please. Your parents are still alive. SO WHAT WILL THIS GET YOU!? Revenge!?"

"Yes. And it will be so worth it. YOU'VE HAD IT GOOD ALL THIS TIME WHILE I WAS LIVING IN THE SLUMS. EVERY DAY I HAD TO FEND FOR MY LIFE. WHY? WHAT WAS THE POINT? WAS THERE A POINT? GODDAMNIT! I'M NOT STOPPING! YOU'LL SEE WHY I'M RIGHT! I... I HAVE TO BE RIGHT!"

I implored him to the best of my ability to stop, but of course he did not heed.

"Fine. Then I just have to win this Duel!"

Your transformation activates one of my trap cards, allowing me to send one choice monster to a Realm In-Between This Realm and the External Realm for one minute, so I'll send my Dreadwyrn. We'll get to that in a minute. I sacrifice 66334 of my SDJGTLTUODGGT points to summon thirty-seven rocks and that activates two trap cards that, in unison, allow the rocks to levitate in the air. Keen Strategists may see where I'm trying to go with this.

I move my water apparition out of the External Realm and onto the battlefield. Because of the SevereClimo add-on I equipped before the match started, the water apparition starts to turn into an ICE apparition. But, as it's freezing, I have it fly into each of the 37 rocks that are levitating in the air, imbuing it with both the power of ICE and Rock.

Now comes the time to pull my Dreadwurm out of the Realm In-Between This Realm and the External Realm. You see, time passes differently there and my dreadwurm has had the opportunity to undergo five years of training in just one minute. But wait, that's not all. I move to form the two into one monster, and they do. This would not have worked had I not merged the water apparition with 37 rocks, as we all know.

HA. I'VE GOT YOU NOW MASON. I've now formed The Winged Dreadwurm of Oceania - Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 Ultimate, one of the strongest RPS Summons ever made! I move my Winged Dreadwurm of Oceania - Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 Ultimate to charge its ultimate attack, which should be set to launch by the time your Blue Eyes is ready to attack. Another special ability that's worth noting, is that my Winged Dreadwurm here can attack any time during an RPS Match, not just during my turn. So good luck destroying my Winged Dreadwurm now! You can't hit him.

With that, I'll have to end my turn. Mason, I know it can be hard. And the road ahead is long. It won't be an easy journey to the end. But know that, what you're doing right now is not sustainable. Please. Stop this. You still can.

@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell Your move.

~Interlude~

One month passes while Mason Strategizes on the battlefield.

“@Club Treasurer Mason Norvell My rival! It's time for you to stop stalling so we can... finish this. For your parents. And for the world,” says Corey

“@RPS Club President Corey Schulz Typical... always so impatient!” shouts Mason.

flashback to RPS elementary

"Just make your move already!" Corey exclaims.

"But I'm thinking!" I respond.

"We don't have time to wait for your strats Mason." Corey replies.

"Fine."

I proceed to make a rushed move that ultimately loses me the game.

"You only beat me because you rushed my stats!" I say to Corey.

"Heh. Better luck next time." He responds.

End of flashback

“NEVER AGAIN! I'm not falling for your tricks Corey. I'll make my move when I'm ready.”

Flashback to RPS Elementary

"SURE. I'M IMPATIENT, BUT LOOK AROUND YOU. ALL YOUR CLASSMATES HAVE DIED. We've been standing in the same spot, not talking to each other for more than a month while you formulate your Strategies! There has to be a better way to do this!" I said...

"Heh. I don't care about their pitiful lives; I WANT TO WIN. TO BE UNCONTESTED. THE COST DOESN'T MATTER BECAUSE EVERYTHING I'M DOING IS FOR MY PARENTS. I WANT TO MAKE THEM PROUD. I WANT TO WIN. I WANT TO WIN. I WANT TO WIN I WANT TO I WANT TO WIN WIN I WANT TO" said Mason in a haze I'd not seen him in before.

Internal Monologue

This was the first time that I'd seen him like this. And it would foreshadow who he would become. Who he really is. I only wish that I would have done something earlier. Damn it. I KNEW what would happen to all those people. To the world. And I did

nothing. This time, this battle... will make
everything right.

end internal monologue

Mason: Turn 6

@RPS Club President Corey Schulz Time to end this.

I stare out at the battlefield, and for the first time realize the magnitude of the strats that we are dealing with. My Organic Gluten-free GMO-free Rubber Cement Eggshell Coated Blue Eyes Ultimate Dragoon is sitting coolly on the battlefield, ready to launch his ultimate attack. But The Winged Dreadwurm of Oceania – Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 Ultimate also stands at the ready. If I remember correctly, the latest patch upgraded The Winged Dreadwurm of Oceania – Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 Ultimate's POW to 1337, and its DEFX to 43, and changed its flotation type to partial. This complicates things. It won't be able to kill my Organic Gluten-free GMO-free Rubber Cement Eggshell Coated Blue Eyes Ultimate Dragoon, but when their blasts clash the damage will be incredible.

“You sit there on your pedestal of morality, but we both know that you care not for these people. How could you? A creature such as yourself that has sustained life for 5000 years through pure strategy must just be a shell of their former self. I know that you miss your old ways... The feeling of sending your opponent to the morgue with a well-placed

trap card... There is nothing like it! IF THIS MATCH CONTINUES, MILLIONS OF LIVES WILL BE LOST WHEN OUR MONSTERS CLASH! If you really cared about them, you would have just let yourself die. You could've been an RPS martyr. Heh. It would've been fitting. You always liked the spotlight. You can't stand the thought of someone else being better at RPS than you! I'll never forget how you laughed at my scissors strikes back at the academy... You may have taken me in and helped my strats, but we both know that it was just so that you could help yourself sleep at night."

Then I notice the damage done to my body from Corey's past few RPS moves. My clothing is ripped and tattered, there is a gash on my forehead, and there are scratches all over my body. Blood drips down my forehead and falls from my cheek to the floor. My hands are beaten and callused from all of the advanced formations that I've been making. The damage would put any normal strategist in the hospital, but I barely feel it. I then realize that my amulet is exposed! I quickly grasp it in my hands and cradle it, examining its swirling colors and feeling its power course through my veins. The orange light radiating from its power crystal dims as I put it back under my shirt and out of view. I wouldn't want Corey knowing that I've been using an Illegal strat-enhancing amulet.

flashback back to summer after junior year

“I can improve your strats..... for a price.” The figure says wickedly.

“Listen man, I don’t have any money, so go beg somewhere else!” I respond.

“I don’t want your money, and I assure you, I’m no beggar. I’ve helped countless kids like yourself unlock their true potential.”

“Oh yeah? And how do you do that?” I retort.

“I used to be quite the strategist myself, but let’s just say... I didn’t play for sport. Come into my shop and I can tell you more.”

“I don’t know about this...” Just as I was about to walk away, I felt my phone vibrate. I pulled it out and saw that I had a new message from Corey which read “lol beat u again. PS get better strats next time idiot.” I grip my phone tightly in anger and look up at the man. He is holding the door open to what looks like a back alley antique shop.

“If you can improve my strats... I’ll do whatever it takes!” I scream. I proceed to walk into the shop, and the man sits me down at a large black table with a small red chest on it. In the light of the shop, I can

finally see the man's face. He is almost skeletal, with a large scar across his eye.

"Improving your strats is simple." The man says. "All you need to do is have the right equipment."

"Everybody knows that!" I respond. "The right combination of equipment slots and trap cards can increase your number of possible moves exponentially."

"I'm not talking about in-game equipment." A grin spreads across the man's face, and he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a black thorny key with the words 'The key to victory' engraved on it. He uses it to unlock the chest, and he pulls out an amulet from it. The amulet is ancient looking, with an orange power crystal in the center.

"Whoa there. Those have been banned from RPS for as long as I can remember." I say in a surprised tone. "If you're caught with that, the RPS police could revoke your strategy license!" I get up and start to collect my things as I am interrupted.

"WAIT!" The man says almost furiously. "Don't you want to at least try it? I assure you, your strats will never be the same after using this amulet. Right now, you're weak. Your strats won't even qualify you for the RPS district championship. When

people see you, they laugh. Your friends don't respect you, and if this keeps up you'll die an embracement to your dead parents. Pathetic."

"SHUT UP." I respond. A tear begins to fall down my face. "How do you know all of that? Who are you?"

"I am a man who hates wasted potential. I see that you can be something greater. Someone that shatters the barrier of strategy. You can be the first man to beat Corey Schulz in an official RPS tournament. You can be... unstoppable." As he says this, I feel helplessly drawn to the amulet. I carefully reach out and grab the amulet with both hands. The moment it touches my skin I can feel the strategy course through my body. It is unlike anything I've felt before. I can see the full implications of every turn, and I suddenly know the stats of every monster. "Feels good doesn't it?" The man says. "RPS academy isn't a place for unconventional students such as yourself. Books and practice matches will only slow you down. With this amulet, you won't need to practice against those fools anymore. You can draw power from within." The man pauses. "There is a price however. You will need to win an RPS match against someone new every week to fuel the amulet. A small price to pay for such power."

After many moments of careful consideration, I decide to take the amulet. “What’s the worst that could happen?” I think to myself.

flash forward to many months later

I sit in my room, shaking, and looking at the collection of trophies on my wall. The screams play back in my mind again.

begin another flashback

“What have you done to me!? Ever since you beat me at RPS I haven’t been able to beat anyone! It’s like you drained away my strategy! I’ll kill you!” I try to run away, but the man grabs me by the back of the shirt and punches me in the face hard. I try to fight back, but he’s brought his friends, and they beat me to a bloody mess before the police arrive and take them away. I wake up in the hospital, and see Corey sitting there next to me.

“What kind of RPS games have you been playing Mason? I think you need to take a break and do something else with your life.” Corey says to me.

“Typical of you to show up just to kick me when I’m down. I’ll be fine. It was just a little fight. I need to get back to my strats.” I respond.

“You could’ve died if I hadn’t shown up and called the police Mason. This isn’t a game anymore. You need serious help.”

Ignoring my wounds, I sit up and get out of the hospital bed. “I’ll see you at the tournament.” I say coldly. “Hospital bills will be the least of my concerns once I win that championship.”

end of that flashback

The visions of the people that I’ve hurt continue, and the cries of angry losers drown out everything else. Finally, I let out a scream in futility. “I just need to get back to my strats. The championship is coming up.” As I try to get into starter position, I feel an intense pain in my hands. They’re bloody and beaten from 18 hours of practicing. I reach into my drawer and pull out another bottle of painkillers and proceed to ingest a handful of them. As soon as I am completely numb, I get back to my practicing. Soon after however, I attempt a particularly tricky move and end up knocking over my dresser.

“AUGH.” I scream out. But then I see that there was an old photo under my dresser... Of Corey and I in our old clubhouse.

All of our friends are there. We’re all smiling and playing RPS together. I remember those days. Back when I was weak. Back when I was... happy. Before I can stop it, tears are falling down my face. I sit there for 10 minutes staring at the photograph

and remembering... Until the amulet that I am wearing detects that I haven't been practicing in 10 minutes and shocks me. Although I wish that I could go back, I know that my fate is sealed. Back to practicing...

end of flashbacks

Even drawing from the amulet's power, I can see that there are no more moves to make. Corey and I have reached the limits of strategy. The two most powerful monsters in the current patch, The Organic Gluten-free GMO-free Rubber Cement Eggshell Coated Blue Eyes Ultimate Dragoon and The Winged Dreadwyrms of Oceania - Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 Ultimate, are both on the playing field. Nothing could possibly get around their defenses. "This has been coming for a long time Corey. I don't care how old you are or what you have to say. You say that I've changed but look at yourself. You've become so obsessed with vanity and success that you've forgotten about your friends. You think that everyone can just be perfect like you, but that just isn't possible. I'm done living in your shadow." I command my Organic Gluten-free GMO-free Rubber Cement Eggshell Coated Blue Eyes Ultimate Dragoon to unleash its ultimate attack!

The blast is blinding, and for just a moment, as it travels toward your Winged Dreadwyrms of Oceania

- Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 Ultimate, time stops. Just before the blast reaches Corey's monster, it unleashes a blast of its own and the two beams clash. The shockwaves decimate the building around us, instantly killing everyone who is watching. The explosion continues to grow, and both of us realize simultaneously that if this continues, the earth will not survive.

The man who gave me my amulet appears beside me, clearly pleased by the events that have transpired. "You have learned well my student. Everything you've ever wanted is within your grasp. Your parents would be proud! Finish him!"

His words spark one of my oldest memories...

begin flashback

I walk into my house. "Look Dad, I found an RPS strategy guide in the gutter outside our house!"

"Really? Let me see it." He takes the guide from my hand and begins to read a couple of pages.

"I was thinking that with this book I could learn RPS and maybe one day go to RPS academy with all of the other kids."

"Is that right?" My dad responds. "Well RPS has changed a lot since I was a kid. Back in my day

people just played it for sport, and there certainly weren't schools for it. I guess I really am getting old, hah!" He thinks for a moment, then says "If you want to go to RPS academy it's going to take a lot of studying. Do you think you're up for it?"

"Yes!" I exclaim.

"Well okay. I'll ask your mother." As he says this, he flips to the back of the strategy guide and sees that there are RPS cheat codes written in the back. "What's this? Cheat codes? Son, there is nothing worse in life than a cheater. I know that some things feel like impossible tasks, but cheating is never the answer. If we send you to RPS academy, you're going to have to promise to never cheat, okay?"

"I promise!"

"Alright, well you go outside and play now."

End of flashback

As I watch the carnage unfold on the battlefield, I realize the error of my ways. This amulet... its strats aren't really my strats... I've been... cheating this whole time. I've failed my parents... I've failed my friends... The countless lives that I've irreparably damaged... NO! It's not too late. I can make this right. I firmly grab the amulet around my neck with my bloody right hand, and I rip it off. As

the amulet breaks off and flies across the room, the man who gave it to me looks in horror at what I've done.

“Okay Corey! These may not be the best strats in the omniverse, but they're MY strats.” I cancel my Organic Gluten-free GMO-free Rubber Cement Eggshell Coated Blue Eyes Ultimate Dragoon's ultimate attack, which activates one of my trap cards in the external realm. The card allows me to use one additional attack upon the cancellation of any legendary creature's attack. The effects are limited from the external realm however, and because of this, I will only be able to play a non-dlc attack. It'll have to do. As the smoke from the blasts clears out, I hold out a scissors strike. I look at my rival and say. “Your move.”

Corey: Turn 6

flashback to 300 years ago

"The world isn't going to last much longer. I can feel it. One day, not long from now in the grand scheme of time, there will be a duel. A duel between two great Strategists. The duel will be charged with so many scattered emotions that need to take form. But they're repressed emotions, dangerous to allow to take shape. But they will take shape nonetheless, and the world will pay for it. This game. RPS. It changes people." — RPS Researcher, 2nd Era Expansion Patch 7.3

flashback to 16 years before starting at RPS Academy

"What's that room over there? Even though I live here, I've never seen it opened."

"Don't worry about that Mason, honey. It's just an old storage closet. And besides, we lost the key a long time ago."

"Oh, okay!"

Ever since I was a child, I was locked away. My parents doted over Mason, but I was kept in an old

storage closet with only about 8 square feet of living space.

My father, every morning, came and told me: "Son, you'll be the best one day. But you **HAVE TO PRACTICE TO MAKE IT**. I always wanted to be the best, but couldn't. Now you will. I want at least 19 more hours of RPS Strat practice before you go to bed. You know what'll happen if you stop, right buddy?"

"Yeah, dad. I won't get food for a week, the shock collar will activate for 72 hours straight, and you'll kill my brother, Mason," I said.

"That's right. Now get back to your Strats."

"Yeah."

I've always had a life on my shoulders. Depraved of a childhood, I didn't have any friends. But I knew that, some day, I'd leave that closet. Until that day, I trained. There was nothing else I could do. I had to protect Mason. Though I'd never met the man, I knew that one day he'd be my Rival. Someone that would challenge my Strats. So I stayed in the jail cell my parents put me in.

Occasionally, I'd look through the keyhole and see my parents and Mason sitting on the couch, happily talking about their days, their lives, and their

feelings. I was envious. All I wanted in life was to be in that room, not in this closet.

end flashback

—A single tear ran down my cheek as I remembered our childhood. Now, on the battlefield, Mason stands across from me, Scissors Strike(TM) in hand.

”You don’t know how hard it was, getting to this point, Mason. Don’t you want to win? To be undisputed? You talk of myself and my pedestal of mortality, but you think the battle can end this easily? I was built. Synthetically built. By father. To win any battle. When you played as a kid, I was trapped in that closet, practicing my Strats for 22 hours every single day. If I ever stopped, it was your head on the chopping board. So... IT CAN’T END HERE, YOU HEAR ME? DON’T GIVE UP BY THROWING THAT SCISSORS STRIKE. MY WINGED DREADWYRM OF OCEANIA - HYPER MODE X V. 1.337 ULTIMATE COULD KILL YOU JUST BY THINKING ABOUT IT. DON’T YOU SEE? WE’RE PAST PLAYING GAMES.”

”I always knew there was something fishy about that closet. I... had no idea what you went through as a kid. But it was hard for me, too. I honed my strategies on the streets, forced out into the world at

too young an age. If the idea of the Academy wasn't driving me towards my future, I'd have lost everything."

"So it was hard for both of us."

*flashback to our Freshman year at the Academy,
day 2*

There was a line of 76 people, all lining up to battle Mason in RPS outside of the classroom.

"Second day, and you're already popular, eh, Mason?" I said to deaf ears.

"TAKE THIS. ULTIMATE FINISHER!
SCISSORS STRIKE! —Gah!? Another loss? Fine.
I'll win next time. I can't lose forever. Next
challenger, step up and take on the boss! Ha.. Julie?
Pathetic. Come and face my ultimate Strategies. I'll
start.

HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA.
SUPER OPENING MOVE. TAKE THIS!
SCISSORS STRIKE! D—damn! I lost again..."
said Mason.

"H—have you been only throwing Scissors Strikes this whole time? During every battle? It's no wonder there are so many people lining up to face you, Mason. With these Stratagems, you'll lose every single time!"

"No! With enough resolve, any match is winnable!"

"Logic like that will lose you the match. Every time. Trust me..."

End flashback

"I guess it was hard for both of us," I said.

flashback to the 73rd day of our Freshman year at the Academy

"H—hey! Will somebody play me in a friendly match of RPS? Anyone?"

"Mason. Stop. You cannot win with Scissors Strike alone."

"Corey? How do you know? One day, it might win me the match. I need to hone each and every move to perfection. Once I feel like I own the move Scissors Strike, I'll move on to the next. Then the next. And the next. Eventually, I'll master every single move in the entire universe!"

"Y—you'd need to practice at least 22 hours per day to do that! Otherwise, there just aren't enough hours in a lifetime. It's impossible to become the perfect Duelist. For any normal person, at least." I said, with a heart full of regret.

end flashback

”Heh. So you’ve resorted to the same strategies you tried to use all those years ago. Pathetic. You just handed me the Battle. I can win this in an instant. I need to teach you a lesson, Mason. **YOUR ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES.** Winged Dreadwurm of Oceania — Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 Ultimate, attack Mason’s LP directly!”

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The Dreadwurm moves to attack an already tattered Mason. Likely, from the impact, he’ll die, and half the world will be taken with him.

internal monologue

”Damn. I’m putting a lot of faith into Mason’s skills here. If this fails, both he and the entire world will be lost. Please... Mason... Please tell me you’ve mastered Scissors Strike(TM)!”

end internal monologue

BOOM.

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As the dust parts, I see a shadow in the distance. It falls over, and I rush to its side. Except... I can't move. There's a large gash in my chest area that wasn't there before. My Winged Dreadwurm of Oceania - Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 Ultimate is nowhere to be found. I'm able to walk, but I can tell that, surprisingly, I've lost the match. Ah. The gash in my body is nothing other than a Scissors Strike(TM). How did it hit me? Hey, the world's still alive. It worked. Mason perfected Scissors Strike(TM) so well that it felled the Winged Dreadwurm of Oceania - Hyper Mode x v. 1.337 and saved the world from destruction. I can move just enough to hobble, so I move towards Mason.

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Two hours pass and I'm finally able to reach my Rival.

"You really did it. You won the match. Congratulations, my Rival. You've earned it," I say honestly to Mason.

"Thanks. I'm just glad it's over. I made mistakes, sure, but I think that I've learned a lot from this and I'm ready to make positive steps towards becoming an RPS Master. A true RPS Master, one who wins every match by the strength of his Stratagems, and not by some artefact. I've perfected one move, but now it's time to move on to the rest. I can't rest on my laurels now, can I?"

"No. We'll both move forward together, and become the best RPS Strategists we can be. I promise."

"Yeah. And one day, I'll be able to consistently beat you, Corey!"

"Heh. Not if you never even get a chance to make a move," I jest.

"Ha! Yeah, right! The RPS rules from the July patch state that each player has to take at least one turn, otherwise the match is forfeit to the player

who didn't take the move. Everyone knows that!"

Mason retorts.

"Hahahahahaha! It's been too long since we've joked like this. Remember when RPS just used to be a game to us? Those were the days." I said.

"Hey... Let's take a trip to the old clubhouse before we continue our training. It'll be just like old times."

"Indeed it will. Hey, I've got this new Strategy I've been thinking up. You see, it starts with a folded piece of paper. The trick is the specific type of fold, and the weight of the piece of paper. If you get that right, it can combine with the ethereal trap cards in the External Realm to..."

Mason and I talked the whole way back to the club house, talking Strategies and joking. It was just like old times. The world was saved, in the end. For now. A lot of people died along the way, but the game is changing. This isn't the RPS we used to know and this last match between Mason and I proved that.

END.