

Speaker

Kaeliss Cloudwrought woke. The pain and the agony echoed in his mind, and yet... he could tell that they were just that, echoes in his head. He felt... balanced, as he had never been before. It was almost laughable just how different he was. His mind which had always been filled with a struggle of trying to calm himself and find tranquility was now... peaceful.

He was lying on the ground, looking at the pale and uniform light above, no sun shone down on him, no source of light at all. Slowly he stood up and saw the changes, his body was different. His turquoise scales were replaced by orange ones, the claws at the tips of his fingers were red. His once colorful feathers were now pure white. The wings on his back were orange, framed by white feathers. It did not elude him that those were the colors of the two spirits that his teacher brought, he knew what he planned on using them for but he didn't expect... this. Then he remembered.

"Rem?" Kael called, he felt nothing where his companion used to be.

"Sacrifice."

Kael turned and saw his teacher standing to the side.

"You... was it really necessary?"

"The Framework is... touchy when it comes to adjusting souls of its chosen. Your soul weapon was the only conduit I had, an anchor for your ascension."

Kael closed his eyes, he knew sacrifice well. Too many had died already, but he would not make their sacrifices be in vain. He looked down at himself, felt... his power.

"It worked then?" Kael asked.

"The Framework interfered, obviously. It could not stop what I did, but it... adapted. So, you tell me, what do your screens say?" Ra'azel asked in turn.

Kael met his teacher's eyes, and noticed that he was... shorter? No, Kael was taller now. He glanced at the water in the pool and saw his reflection. As a child of a karura and a drake, his features had always been... strange. His body was that of a drake, covered in scales with

feathers growing unevenly over his body. His snout used to be narrower and beak-like than ordinary drakes. His eyes were the eyes of a karura. Now, he was changed, but was just as strange. He had small antlers at the top of his head, as pale as moonlight. He had feathers around his wrists, and on top of his head, all white. His snout was slightly wider now, but still retained the beak-like shape.

He turned to his screens and looked at what he now was. His titles were all still there, with no changes. He had wondered if the Framework would brand him a heretic or something like that. Next, his Class, it was still there, intact. His teacher had told him that he wasn't going to touch it, that he didn't understand it enough. His skills remained as well, that focus his teacher seemed to respect, at least somewhat. The last thing was his Cultivation, and he turned his eyes to his two Paths. They remained as they were, unchanged. It seemed like his teacher was right. He had found two spirits that were compatible enough, as Kael hadn't wanted to lose his Paths. He knew them, knew how to use those techniques and how to fight with them. He didn't want to need to learn something new. So he turned his eyes finally at his Cultivation perks, and saw that all of them had been changed.

Perks	
Tranquil Fury Qi; Tranquil Dream and Flaming Fury (Aspect Perk)	The Qi of balance, of fury and tranquility. You are directly connected to the Origin Plane of Tranquil Fury it passively enhances you with the concepts of Tranquil Fury. You are in perfect balance; all your stats are counted as 1.5x their value when used for offensive powers. You are immune to any outside emotional impact effects. You are highly resistant to all madness inducing mental effects. All previous mental influences are removed. Any attacks against you will trigger the Tranquil Fury state which increases all base stats by 10%. +50% to intelligence and wisdom.

<p>Mind of the Dream Weaver (Path Perk)</p>	<p>Your mind is wrought from the mind of the Lapareu and is connected to the plane of Tranquil Dream. Any mind invasions will be pulled into the plane of the Tranquil Dream. +500% to all mental defenses. +40% to intelligence.</p>
<p>Ashen Dream Core of Tranquil Fury (Path Perk)</p>	<p>Your core is forged by the cores of two spirits, each at the height of their power. Together they draw upon the Essence of Tranquil Fury. Your core is tied to the Essence Origin plane. Your Qi regenerates at the rate of 1% per second. Your Qi speed is increased by 150%. Your Qi draws meaning from the Origin plane, increasing the effectiveness of your Qi on your techniques by 35%. +70% to wisdom.</p>
<p>Conduits of Weaving Trails (Path Perk)</p>	<p>Your Qi conduits are crafted from those of Lapareu and Infaarg, they provide you with great control over your Qi. Your conduits are immune to any adverse effects of channeling too much Qi. You are able to use six techniques at the same time. Your Qi conduits are nearly indestructible, and highly resistant to any powers that seek to harm them. Your Qi is manipulated with grace and rage of the two spirits, nothing leaks out. Gain +350% to Qi speed, your control is based on wisdom. +55% to wisdom.</p>
<p>Aura of the Moon and the Sun (Path Perk)</p>	<p>Your body naturally exudes the aura of the Moon and the Sun. Based on your desire it will enforce the sense of tranquility or fury on anyone in your presence. The effect of tranquility is stronger at night, and the effect of fury is stronger during the day. You may manifest your Qi in a physical form, filling the area around you with the aura of Tranquil Fury. The aura's influence clears any mind control effects and increases all targets control. +40% to wisdom and intelligence.</p>

<p>Sun and Moon Amalgamation (Path Perk)</p>	<p>Your body is wrought out of Spirits of the Moon and the Sun. Your physical attributes are increased by 50% while in the Ethereal Realm. You are highly resistant to fire-related and dream-related effects. Your body's masterful and allows you full control over all of its functions. Your will power's effects are increased on skills that warp the environment.</p> <p>During the day your physical stats are increased by 25%, during the night your mental stats are increased by 25%. The first time you are hit by a movement restricting special attack at night, you are immune to its effects, subsequent hits are 80% less effective, then 60%, 40%, 20%, and finally are fully effective against you—can occur only once per day-night cycle. The first time you are hit by a physical attack during the day, you are immune to its effects, subsequent hits are 80% less effective, then 60%, 40%, 20%, and finally are fully effective against you—can occur only once per day-night cycle.</p> <p>The first time you suffer damage, you gain a stack of Fury, each stack increases all your stats by 1%, at 25 stacks you gain Flaming Fury, and increase your physical stats by an additional 25% for an hour. Stacks reset every day-night cycle.</p> <p>Your presence influences your surroundings, all image effects are 250% more effective.</p> <p>Gain +40% to all stats.</p>
<p>Ruler's Eyes: Moon's Dream (Path Perk)</p>	<p>You hold the eyes of the Dream Weaver. You can put those who meet your eyes in a dream like state. They will be transported to a dream of your choosing. The effect depends</p>

	on the target's willpower and intelligence stat. You gain +30% to strength, +30% to dexterity, +30% to wisdom, +30% to intelligence.
Stamina of the Ashen Trail (Path Perk)	Your body is built for long hunts, your stamina regenerates at the rate of 1% per 5 seconds. It burns with the fury of Infaarg, increasing the effectiveness of your powers by 10% when it is spent to power them. +60% to endurance and vitality.
Immortality: Echo of Spirits (Path Perk)	Your body is made of spirits, and as such upon suffering too much damage you will return to the Ethereal Realm as a spirit to recover. You are barred from all afterlife realms. Gain +50% to wisdom and +50% to intelligence.
Evolved Form: Dream or Ashen (Path Perk)	Assume the form of either of the spirits whose parts now make your body, gaining their full power. Moon Spirit transforms you into Lapareu, and changes your Aspect to Tranquil Dream, it increases your mental stats by 250% and grants you a 200% bonus to all special damage you deal. Sun Spirit transforms you into Infaarg, and changes your Aspect to Flaming Fury, increases your physical stats by +250% and grants you +200% bonus to all physical damage you deal. +50% to strength and +50% to wisdom.
Domain: Tranquil Lake (Path Perk)	Summon your Realm into the real world, bringing the calmness of a tranquil lake into your surroundings. +40% to intelligence and +40% to wisdom.
Manifest Power: Dream Weaver-Ashen Trails (Path Perk)	You may manifest the core principles behind your power. Allows you to summon spirits related to your Aspect from the Ethereal. +30% to wisdom.
Ascended State: Spiritual Ascendancy (Path Perk)	Enter your ascended state which increases all your resistances by 10x, your overall speed by 15x, and all regeneration effects by 5x for a

	short period of time. +40% to wisdom and +40% to intelligence.
Soul and Spirit (Path Perk)	Your soul is bound to your physical form, all soul defenses are increased by 800%, all soul regeneration effects are increased by 150%. While your body is uninjured your soul regenerates 200% faster. +25% to strength, +25% to endurance, +25% to intelligence.
True Name (Path Perk)	You've delved deep and discovered your true name. You hear any instance of it being spoken no matter the distance, you may listen in on the area where it was spoken, and once every three months you may step through reality to reach the spot where your name was spoken. +20% to all stats.

Some things he had lost, some were joined together, others remained the same. But his teacher had done as he had promised. He had given Kael power, had fixed the problems that his Cultivation had. He looked next at his notifications, and saw a slew of errors and corrections. He saw the adaptation that the Framework did. The Spirits had already been part of the Framework, so what his teacher did wasn't completely forbidden. There were Paths and Classes out there that did similar things, consume other beings to gain power.

As he had expected, there were no mentions of his power over the runes. What his teacher taught him was outside of the current Framework, even though the basis for it still remained. He didn't have powers like his teacher had that allowed him to use runes more effectively, but just like you didn't need skills to learn things, he had learned runes. He simply didn't have any bonuses for it.

He bowed his head in his teacher's direction. "Thank you," Kael said.

Gaining more power was welcome, but what Kael was most grateful was being truly balanced. He could see now just how much of his previous life was a struggle between madness and calm. Between purpose and control. Now he was finally free.

“Of course,” Ra’azel said. “Now, it is time for you to fulfill your part of the bargain.”

Kael nodded. “Tell me what you need me to do.”

“I need you to find a man, a human. His name is Zacharia Gardener, and I’ve left something with him, a... contingency, in case that I didn’t find a way out of this realm on my own.”

Kael didn’t recognize the name, though it did sound familiar. But he had a big network of people, he would find him.

“And once I find him?” Kael asked.

“Then, all you have to do is touch his right arm, and cast a Ka-shi-ou rune on it. That is all,” Ra’azel said.

Kael blinked. “Ka-shi—that is... space? No, in that configuration, it’s transport? No, no... translocation, swap?”

Ra’azel smiled, but didn’t answer.

“Is there anything that I should know about him?” Kael asked.

“We met a while ago; he wasn’t nowhere as strong as you then. But, he survived the dungeon where I found you, so I would be... cautious,” Ra’azel said. “You don’t need to kill him or even fight him, just activate the rune, and our bargain is done.”

Kael nodded his head. “It will be done.”

“Good,” Ra’azel said. “Now, it’s time to get you out of this place.”

His teacher turned and led Kael out of the forest glade that had been his only home for a long time. Kael didn’t even look back. His time here was just a stepping stone. He passed through the spatial door behind his teacher. They stepped onto a mountain top, a churning red sky above them.

“We need to be quick, the damn dragon will notice me doing this, and he will try to stop it,” Ra’azel said.

Kael knew only a little about his teacher’s enemy, a some kind of powerful dragon spirit. If it had enough power to oppose Ra’azel, then it was dangerous indeed. He readied himself as his teacher started carving runes all around him with his pick and hammer.

Kael closed his eyes and let his other senses take in what Ra’azel was doing. It had taken him a long time to learn how to feel souls. And now he could follow along, almost see how Ra’azel tore away tiny portions of his

soul, bound them with will and runes, to create an effect. To make the Essence obey.

Rune carvings strength didn't come from stats, or even from will, it came from the users own soul. It was a sacrifice, an offering to the power itself. Kael had often wondered if there existed a Class or a Path that would allow someone to do what Ra'azel did, but within the Framework. Perhaps it did, perhaps that was why the Framework didn't step in and stop him.

Ra'azel had told him that the power was the same as it had been in the last version of the Framework, the one that he came from. That the only thing that changed were the tools that were given to the chosen to utilize it.

The runes settled into the very fabric of the Ethereal Realm itself, and then Kael felt a tugging.

"Be ready!" Ra'azel yelled, and then everything changed.

"Curses," his teacher moved faster than Kael thought was possible. More runes flashed all around them, just as something hit them. A will so large and so fast that it shook the mountain. What followed was heat, and bright green flame that sought to consume everything. Runes shaped a shield around them, protecting them. And Kael looked at the conflict in awe. Even if he wanted to help, he didn't even know how to approach it. This was so far beyond him that he would be swallowed up in an instant.

Ra'azel grimaced, then raised his hammer and yelled. He slammed it on his pick and a rune flashed bright white. Then, the tugging became a pull and Kael flew away, pushed through something. He felt the will of the one that attacked them, he felt it try to crush him, but his teacher was there, protecting him.

And just as fast as it started, it was over. Kael was thrown out, shoot through a crack in planes as he arrived in the Real Realm. The world around him shook and Essence went wild at his arrival, the echoes of the battle in the Ethereal Realm slipping through. The entire forest where he arrived turned into a blaze that consumed everything in an instant, leaving only ash and scarred ground.

Kael remained on the ground, in a crater that he caused on impact. His body was smoking, his scales glowing from the heat. He didn't move

for a long while, taking the time to recover. Hours later, he finally stood and started walking, picking a direction at random, hoping that he was close to Claimed Territories. It was time for him to fulfill his part of the bargain.