

Volume 2 - Chapter 61 - System 102: Class Primer

“—as a result, I was ultimately asked to fill in as an expert, even if I’m officially retired still. But with so much on the line... I get it.

“So, I’ll be heading to the Iter sector in the coming weeks.

“By the time you get this, I’ll probably be halfway through the assignment already, if things go the way they’re supposed to.

“Anyway, just out of curiosity—and don’t read too much into this, because *I know* you just can’t help yourself—are there any new findings on post-Deterioration recovery in the last two decades? Is the general recovery period still around two months, or have there been any new findings on the matter? I haven’t really kept up with the literature, but it’s a topic I’ve heard a bit about recently and wanted to follow-up on.

“Also, thanks for the Assessment report. Great reading, actually helped keep me motivated while I was prepping for this little trip.

“But now you’ve got me curious about even more things.

“So, one last question, since I know you’re a busy man these days instead of that unruly brat I used to smack around to get your head straight:

“How’s my daughter doing, Atlas? She managed to make any friends? She’s always been... a bit strange, that one, but with the type of people the UHF pulls in every year with the Recruitment Drives, I figured she’d at least find a few who’d stick around.

“If even I managed it, there’s no way she won’t. I’ve put a lot of effort into making sure that she’s a better person than me in every regard, so... has she?”

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[Excerpt from private long-distance correspondence between (Clearance Level Insufficient) and a command-level personnel of the UHF Marine Corps — Author: (Clearance Level Insufficient) – PFC943]

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Professor Hirana rose from the comfy armchair with a quiet grunt of displeasure—which Thea could fully understand, since the chair looked downright illegally comfortable—before stepping back behind the podium and catching everyone’s attention again.

The conversations and the lively buzz in the room slowly died down.

“Now, I’m certain you’ve all had enough fun comparing yourselves to each other, so let’s get back on track with a few additional pointers regarding your PV,” she said, sweeping her gaze across the hall as if making sure every single Recruit heard this part clearly.

“First and foremost, *never* assume that it is a completely accurate metric for just about anything but a quick overview. There are myriad ways to inflate your PV without actually becoming a better Marine or combatant, so don’t assume that just because your PV is high, you’re the reincarnation of the Emperor himself.”

Half a dozen hands shot up immediately and she rolled her eyes.

“And no, the Emperor is *not* dead, as far as I know. It’s a figure of speech.”

All of the hands went down at once.

“Finally, let’s set a baseline for what you should be aiming for with your PV toward the end of the year. This will give you a rough idea of where you stand right now, and what kind of Maintenance and Faction Trait costs you can expect going into your first real-world deployments once you all become Privates.”

That made Thea sit up straighter.

‘I have no idea what anyone else’s PV looks like... but based on the pre-Assessment comparison with the rest of Alpha, I’d guess the average is maybe half or a third of mine?’ she thought, forcing herself to focus on the next part.

Lucas, beside her, seemed just as interested; their eyes met briefly, a shared spark of curiosity passing between them.

“Your average Recruitment Drive, at this stage,” the Professor continued, “meaning after the first Assessment and coming off the first day’s worth of Digital Missions—which I’m sure some of you have already dipped your toes into—is a good baseline for comparison. Most Recruits would now be around Level 4, with Alpha Squad and similarly exceptional Marines being closer to Level 6, or in very rare cases, even Level 7.”

A wave of excited murmurs and small celebrations rippled across the hall.

Thea, however, went still, then slowly turned to side-eye Lucas.

He was already looking at her with a smug, much-saying grin plastered across his face.

*‘That can’t be right... I know I overperformed during the Assessment, but... **seriously?** Three whole levels above the “rare circumstances” group?’*

Professor Hirana continued, while tapping her pen on the podium, “Now, based on the reaction that got, I’m fairly sure most of you are performing above the average—and frankly, that matches our expectations. You are what we consider a real bumper-crop of a Recruitment Drive. One of the most promising the UHF has ever had, across the board.”

That earned another round of excited murmurs.

A few Marines in Thea's view even high-fived each other.

A small smile tugged at the Professor's lips as she went on, "When it comes to PV overall, Recruits at your current stage would normally be aiming for the 250–300 range. But I'd imagine most of you are closer to 350–400."

Thea's brain simply stopped.

Lucas looked to be dealing with the same issue—mid-swallow, coughing like he'd forgotten how to breathe.

"W... *What?*" Thea whispered, and Lucas nodded through watery eyes, fully agreeing with her shock.

'At least I'm not the only one thinking this feels insanely low,' she thought, feeling a small rush of relief. *'I'm more than four times the average Recruit in PV...? Does that even make sense?'*

She thought back to the pre-Assessment, where she'd already been at 411.

Then again... she *had* been placed in Alpha for a reason. She'd done well in the Cube Trial.

She hadn't lazed around after Integration either—she'd trained, made sure her equipment was fully prepared and decked out, and filled out her Abilities long before the Assessment had even begun.

And during the Assessment itself, she'd realized she had gotten absurdly lucky with her squad, the paths they took, and the situations they had ended up in—even if she hadn't survived any of it.

Lucky or not, she'd still earned the Two-Star Crysium MVM award and landed relatively high on the overall leaderboards.

*'Maybe it isn't **that** strange after all... Statistically, the very top of the Drive being several times higher than the average is normal—especially this early. More than four times might be pushing it a little, but I have essentially already reached the cap. The gap will close after the next Assessments since I can't level anymore or reliably increase my Attributes right now. All my Ability slots are also full, so... yeah. I guess it tracks, after all.'*

Lucas had finally caught his breath again, though his expression had quickly shifted into deep concentration by the time Professor Hirana spoke up once more.

"Now, for the end of the year—going into Tier 1—you'll want to aim for an average PV of around 1,500. Normally, we encourage Recruits to shoot for 1,250, but since you're all part of a bumper-crop Drive, we'll be expecting a *bit* more from you, naturally."

The teasing lilt in her tone earned a round of chuckles and a few confident shouts of "You got it!" from the audience. Professor Hirana nodded approvingly, smiling faintly.

"I'll hold you all to that."

Then, with a small shift in posture and a spark of anticipation in her voice, she moved to the topic Thea had been quietly waiting for the entire time. She had to consciously stop herself from literally bouncing in her seat in anticipation.

Much to her surprise, Lucas looked just as eager, his previous concentrated expression having immediately been replaced by visible interest as she sat up straighter—as if he really needed to tower over Thea any more than usual.

“Now,” the Professor began, “with our discussion of Maintenance, your Faction Trait—which will have an entire course of its own later this year covering more specific and nuanced examples of its uses and the Upgrades available for it upon Tier advancement—and your PV goals and standings out of the way, let’s move on to our final topic of the day. It’s one that always gets the most attention, which is *exactly* why I saved it for last—to make sure all of you stayed awake until now.”

That earned a few groans, but mostly laughter.

“Let’s talk about *Classes* in the Albright System,” she said, her voice lifting slightly with enthusiasm. “They’re the foundation of your future progression beyond basic Levels once you reach Tier 1. I’ll only be giving you a primer today—there will be plenty of in-depth lessons on this later—but I think it’s important you understand what you’re actually working toward this year, and what kind of possibilities might be waiting for you when you finally get to the graduation ceremony and the following Class-selection period...”

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By the time the next break rolled around, Thea was practically panting, barely able to contain her excitement about everything they had just learned about Classes.

Her mind was spinning in every direction at once, so fast it made her feel light-headed.

“Hmm... I’m really hoping the future classes will give us more to go off of. This was a bit too broad to be useful,” Lucas muttered beside her—more to himself than to start a conversation, but Thea’s brain grabbed onto the words like a lifeline.

Something to anchor on and focus her thoughts towards.

“She already gave us so much though!” she burst out, startling Lucas with the sheer enthusiasm—and the slightly too-loud volume that thankfully blended into the hall’s ambient chatter.

“She... she did?” Lucas asked.

“She *did*! There was *so much* in there, Lucas! I don’t even know where to start. Or how. I—I’m trying to think straight here, but it’s hard right now,” Thea admitted, forcing herself to take a few deep breaths to settle down.

She hadn’t been this excited to learn something in... honestly, maybe ever.

Lucas, patient as always, let her take her time. He shifted toward her a bit, giving her his full attention, clearly ready for the lengthy conversation he knew was coming.

And, mirroring their earlier conversation—where Lucas had enthusiastically broken down the vehicles for her—Thea tried to return the favor by breaking down the Class rundown for him.

He *clearly* wasn't seeing the sun for the stars and she felt obligated to try.

It wasn't so she could voice her myriad thoughts into the ether, so her mind stopped spinning—definitely not.

"So... just from what she told us, I can already tell this whole Class-system is a lot like some of the games I played back on Lumiosia. In the arcade," she began, watching Lucas's eyes widen a little as he caught onto her meaning immediately.

"In particular, it mirrors a lot of what *Ashes of Centuries* did with perks and specializations, and also how *Krillson's Paths* handled Classes—minus the parts that leaned more toward Psyker stuff, of course. And *Invictus Fall*? That one's probably the closest to how the Allbright System seems to work with Classes overall. If you mix all three systems together, and maybe toss in a few ideas from other games like *Onegate*'s level-up rules, it's extremely obvious Terra has been easing people into these concepts for ages!"

Lucas stared at her, blinking slowly before giving a very deliberate nod. "Right... *very obvious*... Mind explaining what that means for the rest of the Recruits in the room? Since *they* are clearly not as smart as the two of us and wouldn't know what that all means..."

Thea didn't have the mental room to get annoyed at the teasing and clowning tone in his voice; she was too busy trying not to explode from sheer excitement. "It means the whole damn Class system is basically what I've been using my entire life to make builds, Lucas! This stuff is second nature to me!"

She slid her datapad closer to him, tapping and scribbling across the screen as fast as her hands could move, drawing lines of numbers and little arrows.

"Look—what the Professor said is that there are three main things to consider when choosing a Class, right?"

Lucas nodded.

"First, you've got the Base Growth Rate. That's a flat bonus to certain Attributes every level. Think of it like extra Attribute Points you don't get to choose—whatever Attributes the Class boosts, you *will* be getting boosts in them. Like, say a Class has a BGR of 4 split between Finesse and Resolve. That's +10% in both every level, on top of whatever you invest normally."

She marked the example in red on the datapad, labeling the Attributes to give him a clearer picture.

“So... we want the BGR of the Class we want to take, match what we'd naturally focus on already, right? Like Vitality and Strength for me?” Lucas asked, rubbing his chin as he studied the numbers.

“Yesn't!” Thea said immediately, her voice bubbling with enthusiasm.

Lucas gave her the most unimpressed look she had ever seen on a human being.

“Because,” Thea went on quickly, “we still have the other two parts to factor in! The second one is the Variable Growth Rate. And like the name says, it works like the BGR—but instead of being tied to specific Attributes, it just hands you a chunk of points you can toss wherever you want.”

“That's just straight-up better, then,” Lucas said.

“Yesn't!”

“If you do that again, I'll pick you up and put you on top of a tall cupboard in the dorms,” he said calmly.

Thea froze. “W—What?”

That was *Lucas*. *Lucas* threatening to stash her on high furniture like a toddler.

Her height—an above-average blessing for an undercity girl, mind you—did *not* deserve this level of slander.

“T-That was a joke, right?”

Lucas just stared at her with a completely blank, serious face.

To distract him from his brutally violent tendencies, Thea quickly elaborated on her earlier point.

“S... So, when it comes to choosing a Class, you don't just look at one of the aspects. You have to find the one that gives you the best *overall* benefit for what you're trying to do. Well... Saying that you just go for the overall benefits is also... That's not *entirely* true—there can be specialist builds or very specific tactics that change things but—actually, *never mind*. I'll just talk about the last point and then give an example,” she said, cutting herself off before she could drift into another full-blown rant.

It was a bad habit, one she'd tried to kill for years, but the moment build-theory came up, it always clawed its way back.

“For the third aspect, we kinda need to wait until the break is over and the professor shows us the actual examples, but if they're anything like Terra's games, then this might end up being *the most* important part. It's the Unique Ability Portfolio the Class gives you.”

Lucas nodded. “Yeah, I can see that being massive. Just seeing some of the Abilities out there during the Assessment and yesterday’s DM was... eye-opening. I really need to figure out what Abilities I’m actually aiming for before I even think about picking something...”

“Exactly!” she said, grinning and pointing both index fingers at him. Finally, he got it!

“Especially since, like the professor said, the Class Ability Slots don’t interfere with the ones you already have. So if your whole build leans on something like Stamina, Focus, and Recovery, then picking a Class with a huge Unique Ability Portfolio—one that gives a bunch of extra Abilities—could be way more valuable than just raw Attribute bumps.”

Her voice kept climbing in speed and pitch, excitement bleeding through every word. “*And!* When we Tier-Up at the end of each bracket, we actually *keep* one of the Abilities and bring it into the next Tier! It just gets moved into our normal slots, exactly like the professor said! It’s literally just like in *Krillson’s Path*, Lucas! We can mix and match our own Class over time, across all the Tiers we’ll be hitting!”

Lucas raised both hands in a quiet “ease up” gesture, leaning closer so he wouldn’t have to speak loudly. “Thea. *Breathe*. People are starting to stare.”

She froze, then clamped her mouth shut and nodded way too fast, cheeks heating as she forced herself to sit back down properly, not knowing when she had even gotten on her feet.

A few curious glances from nearby Recruits drifted away as she did so.

Once Thea seemed less likely to rocket out of her chair, Lucas lowered his hands again.

“Alright,” he murmured, keeping his voice even as if any show of enthusiasm in the topic could set Thea off again—which, *fair*, “you said something earlier—about different build options. That you can’t just look at the three numbers and pick whatever is highest. That’s... not obvious to me at all.”

He tilted his head slightly, eyes narrowing in thought. “From where I’m sitting, it seems like you just pick the Class with the highest mix of Base Growth, Variable Growth, and an Ability Portfolio that seems good. Highest overall value wins, right?”

Thea shook her head vigorously, her excitement returning—but this time more contained.

“No, no. That’s the trap, you see? It’s not about the absolute numbers. It’s about *what you’re trying to do* with your build. Your end-goal determines the value even at the start.”

Lucas frowned slightly. “Explain.”

Thea took a deep breath, then pushed back into the explanation from earlier.

“So, when it comes to build theory, there’s this really common misunderstanding that you should focus on one of two things: Either you maximize for the short-term or you maximize for the long-term. Like... you either grab every early advantage you can so you can snowball hard, or you sacrifice your early power to get some huge payoff down the line.”

Lucas stroked his chin, nodding along.

“But that’s *factually* wrong. You *really* don’t want either of those to be the foundation of your build,” Thea said, shaking her head so firmly it was almost aggressive. “What actually matters is having a clear goal—knowing *exactly* what you want your build to achieve—and focusing only on the pieces that help reach that goal. Nothing else.”

She pointed at the datapad, drawing a simple line under her next words. “Say your focus is T1 Battlefields. What’s the point of picking a so-called ‘long-term’ Class that gives tons of BGR, but completely tanks your VGR and Ability Portfolio? You’re never getting another Tier-Up within T1. Those sacrifices never turn into anything. But that’s obvious, right? So what if we just focus short-term, because we’re only getting one Class? Just take as much BGR and VGR as possible and call it a day? But then you’re missing out on any Unique Abilities forever. So short-term gain is not an option there either.”

She drew three examples neatly onto the datapad: T1 focus, T2 focus, and T3 focus.

“If you’re targeting T2 Battlefields, you get a *little* more room to play around, since you’ll switch Classes at the Tier-Up. The stuff you gave up in T1 *might* finally pay off. But even then, you might have been better off choosing a Class with a very strong Unique Ability Portfolio instead, since you’d get to carry one Ability into T2 and stack it with your new Class.”

On the T2 example, she added two diverging paths, each one ending in a question mark—unknown results waiting for the right combination.

“Finally, if you’re focusing on T3 Battlefields, the most obvious choice would be long-term gains in T1 and T2, with short-term benefits in T3. But that still doesn’t make much sense when you look at the bigger picture of progressing through each Tier. If you dump the first two Tiers just for long-term returns, what guarantees you’ll even *reach* the third? And what if there’s an incredible Unique Ability Portfolio in T1 and T2 that would pair *perfectly* with a Class you want at T3? You’d be throwing that away just because you picked the “low-hanging fruit” options that seem smart on the surface.”

Thea drew out all the corresponding decision lines and marked them with different colours as she continued to speak about the topic, drawing a rapidly growing, interconnected web onto the datapad.

It grew surprisingly quickly into something that was hard to even keep track of.

“So... in the end, what *really* matters is information. First and foremost. You want as much info on all the Classes, from all Tiers—their BGR, VGR, and UAP—as you can possibly get. Then you compare everything across all the Tiers, match it to what *you* want out of each Tier, and look at the whole plan from both a macro and micro perspective. Don’t sacrifice an entire Tier or you might get stuck there, but don’t blindly grab the biggest short-term perks either. Now, if the information is *not* available, you have to make balanced decisions in each Tier, instead. Choose UAP’s that seem broadly synergistic with a lot of potential options out there, while keeping your BGR and VGR varied enough to not tank anything.”

She finally stopped talking and took a much-needed breath, glancing back up at Lucas—only to find him staring with raised brows and wide eyes.

Heat crept up her neck as she winced.

She had *definitely* overdone it.

But before she could mumble an apology, Lucas' expression softened into deep thought... and then split into a broad, toothy grin.

"I'm so damn glad to have you as our Official Build Advisor, Thea," he said with a chuckle, and her head snapped up. "You're insanely good at this. I wouldn't have thought of half of what you just explained—and I'm guessing that was just the easy, surface-level version, huh?"

Thea blinked, surprised he wasn't teasing her for info-dumping like a maniac.

But he wasn't wrong about the surface-level part, so she quickly nodded, cheeks warm.

His grin broadened. "That's *awesome*. You're amazing, Thea. I'll *definitely* be checking with you before I pick anything... I just feel bad for the rest of the Drive, that they won't have you to consult on a regular basis."

Lucas leaned back in his seat a little, still wearing that lopsided grin that made it hard to tell whether he was impressed or just amused. "Seriously, the rest of the Drive has *no idea* what they're missing. If everyone got breakdowns like that? Half of them would probably break out in tears of joy."

Thea let out a tiny, breathy laugh at that, rubbing the back of her neck.

"Maybe... maybe it wasn't too much, then," she muttered, more to herself than to him.

Lucas shrugged and chuckled. "It was good. Detailed, yeah, but very good to learn. Kind of a bit like I hope you did earlier with my whole vehicle talk, eh?"

That thought hit her harder than it should have.

Because... *right*.

That *was* exactly what Lucas had done earlier—gone off about treads, armor ratings, maintenance quirks, the whole nine yards.

And she hadn't felt overwhelmed or annoyed or anything even close to it.

She'd actually *liked* hearing him talk about something he cared about.

It had been very nice. Relaxing, even.

So maybe he felt the same way now.

Maybe most people weren't silently judging her every time she got excited and went all-in on a topic.

Maybe they were just... learning from her.

Enjoying it, even.

She'd have to ask Corvus later—he was the social expert and he'd give her a direct answer, even if it stung—but the more she mulled it over, the more it just made sense.

Lucas hadn't overshared earlier. He'd just *shared*.

And she hadn't felt pressured or annoyed for even a second.

So why assume he felt any differently about her elaborating on something he had specifically asked for in the first place? How did that make any logical sense at all?

Finally, Lucas leaned forward again to study the chaotic tangle of lines Thea had drawn on the datapad, tilting his head here and there like the picture might suddenly make more sense from a variety of different angles.

"I still don't think I really *get* it, you know? Like, intellectually I understand what you said, but I can't put my finger on anything concrete yet... I might need a few more direct examples," he admitted, fingers automatically drifting to his chin again as he mulled it over. "Hmm... Maybe we should ask the rest of Alpha to hit the arcade with you, and you can walk us through your thinking using one of those games you keep mentioning? *Ashes of Centuries*, *Krillson's Path*—whichever fits best?"

Thea's eyes went wide.

"That's a great idea! We totally should!" she said at once, already making a mental note to bring it up with Corvus—and to ask him about that earlier thought too.

A strange, strangled squeal sounded from behind her and to the right.

This time, after hearing a few similar noises during her whole rundown for Lucas, she finally turned to look.

She caught only a flash of ebony-black hair ducking beneath a table.

'*Did they drop something...?*' she wondered, narrowing her eyes slightly. From this angle, lower in the hall than the other Recruit, she couldn't even tell who it had been.

Before she could think on it further though, Professor Hirana's voice pulled her attention back to the podium.

"Welcome back from break, everyone. I hope your discussions have been fruitful and you've had some time to digest what I've said about the Classes so far. Let's get to the truly fun part and look at some examples of potential Classes you can expect to pick up toward the end of the year, shall we?"

The datascreen behind the professor split into two sections, each displaying the details of a Class.

Thea's eyes widened instantly, trying to absorb every word at once.

"For the first example," Professor Hirana said, "we'll start with what is considered among *the most* popular Class among UHF Marines. A classic all-rounder—excellent upward mobility into the higher Tiers thanks to solid foundations in BGR and VGR. The UAP is a bit lackluster in the higher Tiers, admittedly, but you really can't go wrong with a strong baseline like this. At the very least, the Unique Ability will make it easier to get to those higher Tiers, hence the popularity of the Class."

[Class Information]

Class Name: **Frontliner**

Rarity: **Iron**

Base Growth Rate: 4 - 2/1/1 - Strength/Finesse/Vitality

Variable Growth Rate: 2

Unique Ability Portfolio: 1

Unique Class Ability: (Passive) [Frontliner's Luck]

[Passive (Iron** - Class) - Frontliner's Luck - Level 0]**

Description: *Automatically redirects a potentially devastating hit slightly to the side.*

Devastating Hit Threshold: Lethal - Redirection Range: 5mm - Cooldown: 15 Minute(s)

Growth: Devastating Hit Threshold (Lethal -> Grievous -> Debilitating / 10 Level) -

Redirection Range (+1mm/Level) - Cooldown (-30 seconds/Level)

"Now for the second one, I figured I'd show you something from the opposite end of the spectrum—more of an aspirational reward for some of you," the professor continued, shifting everyone's focus to the second Class on the screen.

"This one is a rare pick, usually only within reach for Alpha or Beta Squad members, unless some of you really push yourselves. But who knows? Maybe seeing it here today will motivate you to work a little harder in the future DMs and Assessments, yes?"

[Class Information]

Class Name: **Deadeye**

Rarity: **Gold**

Base Growth Rate: 3 - 1/2 - Finesse/Perception

Variable Growth Rate: 2

Unique Ability Portfolio: 2

Unique Class Abilities: (Active) [Deadeye's Lock-On], (Active) [Deadshot]

[Active (Gold** - Class) - Deadeye's Lock-On - Level 0]**

Requirements: Line of Sight

Description: *Allows the Deadeye to lock onto a target within line of sight after a short focus period. Once locked, the target appears outlined to the Deadeye, even through walls or other obstacles up to a certain Material-Tier. The outline lasts for the full remaining duration of the Ability, the maximum number of locked-on targets is exceeded or until the target dies, whichever comes first.*

Cost: 50 Focus + 50 Stamina - Lock-On Timer: 15 seconds - Maximum Locked-On Targets: 1 - Material Tier Limit: 1 - Ability Duration: 5 minutes
Growth: Lock-On Timer (-0.5s / Level) - Maximum Locked-On Targets (+1 / 10 Level) - Material Tier Limit (+1 / 20 Level) - Ability Duration (+ 30 seconds / Level)

[Active (Gold - Class) - Deadshot - Level 0]

Requirements: Line of Effect, Deadeye's Lock-On OR Equivalent Ability

Description: *Allows the Deadeye to loose a perfectly accurate shot at a locked-on target within a set maximum distance. The shot will pierce through any obstacles in its path up to a certain Material-Tier without impediment, striking the target's vital point with guaranteed precision.*

Cost: 100 Focus + 100 Stamina - Distance: 3km - Material Tier Limit: 1 - Vital Point: Heart

Growth: Distance (+ 350m / Level) - Material Tier Limit (+1 / 20 Level) - Vital Point (Heart -> Brain -> Faction Trait, if applicable / 10 Level)

Thea's breath caught as her eyes ran down the list of Abilities—*real* Abilities, not hypothetical examples or vague descriptions.

Actual, *concrete* powers that a Tier 1 Marine could wield.

Her heart thudded harder the longer she stared.

*'This... This is a T1 baseline? This is what **basic** Classes can give you?'*

Her eyes traced every line of the Frontliner and Deadeye's toolkits.

Attribute boosts. A guaranteed survival against a lethal strike every few minutes. Target marking through walls and everything. A penetrative, vital-point strike that ignored practically everything between her and the target, regardless of weapon type; that, based on its wording, could even lengthen the normal shot distance of a weapon.

A strike that could even auto-target Faction Traits at max level?!

It was downright overwhelming.

Not frightening persay—but overwhelming in the way standing at the edge of a vast, new frontier was.

She swallowed hard.

'If this is what even starting Tier 1 Classes looks like... What the fuck does the rest of the ladder look like? What about Tier 2? Tier 3? Higher...?'

An almost electric excitement crawled up her spine.

Lucas let out a quiet, impressed whistle beside her, but Thea barely heard it.

She couldn't tear her eyes away from the screen, even as she furiously copied everything word-for-word and number-for-number onto her datapad...