

Chapter 144: Tyrant's Legacy

I woke up. It was a long, dreamless night, and I overslept a bit. I stretched in bed for a long moment, taking my time to slowly open my eyes. I took a deep breath, letting the first moments of the day come to me.

Still in my pajamas, I went downstairs, grabbed some breakfast, drank some coffee, and stared out the window into our drab but changing world. It was still grey, too grey for my comfort, but it was no longer the same. It shimmered with magical energy to my eyes, and that had to count for something.

Then, I flooded my mouth with Qi to kill any harmful bacteria in it.

Which was a bit of a strange sensation. It was like pressing soft metal through the gaps in them, like simultaneously flossing and brushing. But it was also fast, effective, and meant that my breath smelled clean. It was efficient, even if it felt a little weird.

When that was done, I read a bit on my phone until the others walked downstairs. Eventually, I called up the Gift, looking at my status.

[Name: Fiona Bellum

Class: Superimposed Paragon (20)

- Techniques
 - Spear Techniques
 - Spear Technique - Fundamentals (Inevitability)
 - Swift Spear (**High**)
 - Momentum Shift (High)
 - **Unyielding Metal [New!] (Basic)**
 - Qi Techniques
 - General
 - Aura Suppression (Intermediate) (Keeping your Qi contained inside your body allows you to appear perfectly ordinary)
 - Aura Sense (**Intermediate**) (Perceive your surroundings by being in touch with the energies suffusing them)
 - **Manifestation [New!] (Intermediate) (Summon and shape your powers, altering reality)**

- Golden Glass
 - Spear Spirit (**High**) (Your weapon - Astraeus - has resonated and fought with you. Now, it actively cooperates)
 - Weapon Unification (**Great**) (You and your weapon are one. You need not hold it to wield it.)
 - Inexplicable Reinforcement (**High**) (Your Qi makes your body incredibly tough, flexible, and fast. When in peril, you superimpose yourself over it.)
 - True Mirror (**Great**) (You and your Keeper work together. Manifest them and your gateway where your will reaches.)
 - **Parallel World Manipulation [New!] (Basic) (Infinite reflections, potential choices. Call upon their strength and make it yours.)**
- Stats
 - General
 - Strength: Greater (**Intermediate**)
 - Agility: Greater (**Greater**)
 - Endurance: **Novaic (Lesser)**
 - Resilience: Greater (**Superior**)
 - Manipulation: **Novaic (Inferior)**
 - Capacity: Greater (**Superior**)
 - Absorption: **Novaic (Inferior)**
 - Qi
 - Golden Glass
 - Purity (Perfect)
 - **Realm (Maelstrom)**
 - **Stage (1st Step)**
 - **Path (Soar through endless Freedom)**
- Disposition
 - Covenant
 - Familiarity (Your care comes in layers, always possible to rise or fall.)
 - Temperament
 - ~~— Impatient (Time ticks and you wish to be ahead of it.)~~
 - Disciplined (Your command over yourself is admirable.)
 - Iron Will (Your tenacity is incredible, even among the outstanding.)
 - Compassionate (You truly care. So you find joy, and you find suffering.)

- **Optimistic [New!] (See the good in others. Forgive and uplift, even the undeserving)**
- Talent
 - Slight Edge (Average is below your standards. Go above, even by a little.)
 - Single-Minded (Your focus is your strength. Once your mind is set, nothing will shake you out of it.)
 - Superimposed Experience (You can place another's experience onto yourself. See the world from new perspectives.)
 - Precipitous Wings (Growth lies wherever risk does. Find it, sprout wings, and soar through the sky.)
 - **Sparkling Nova (evolved Budding Nova) (Within you, the future burns bright. *You saw the stars, right? Stay kind to yourself.*)**

Current Status: Sleepyhead]

I took a deep breath after looking at it, and nodded. A lot had changed. My attributes had become novaic, partially, jumping up across the major realm gap. My techniques had become substantially more powerful - and my crude manipulations of energy were now powerful enough to be recognized as techniques.

The Gift took notice of my ability to manifest my Qi, probably shaped by the way I could use it to conjure a barrage of spectral spears, or wield a few of them floating around me. The technique combined with my novaic manipulation of energy for truly monstrous speed and power.

The other new techniques were [Unyielding Metal], one that relies entirely on martial masters to be unfaltering, and [Parallel World Manipulation], which I earned through my liberal use of alternate versions of myself - both fully and partially manifested, to swap places, heal wounds, and call upon their skill.

I breathed out, and looked at my temperament, finding that it deemed me no longer impatient. The line was struck through, fading and disappearing from my eyes, and a new one replaced it. I'm deemed [Optimistic]. It's funny, but at the same time, it makes sense.

After all, it takes an idiot like me to still give my parents another chance after everything they've done. They didn't deserve it, so they better live up to my expectations.

Finally, my [Budding Nova] became a [Sparkling Nova] which makes sense. The star in my chest that I saw was burning brightly, now, folding in and out in a cascading wave of colours. It glowed and fizzled, excited at the prospect of interaction, hungry for more.

With my path, I'd made my step towards greater power, and I was ready to take hold of it.

Finally, I looked at one more menu.

[Gateway:

- Strength: **79**
- Fragments: **87**
- Figments: **9**
- Manifestations: 1]

My gateway was even more powerful. I'd taken fragments from the avatars that attacked me, and from a few bosses in the gates, and it had continued to grow. I could feel my second manifestation close, just at my fingertips.

Not quite there yet, but soon enough.

Then, I closed that screen too, and took another deep breath. I got up, stretched a little, gave a big yawn, and looked around the others. "I'll be right back," I said, casually.

After another moment, I stepped forward, teleporting with the Wanderer's Key, and went to kill a man.

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Mr. Henney was not a good person. He had never been.

He was born into blood money, taught to treat others with contempt and use them for his purposes. From the very start, he'd been cruel and callous, seeing humans other than himself as no more than tools to achieve his purposes. He'd held Stella's - Eagleeye's, since tools didn't deserve human names - treatments over her head to manipulate her.

There were more than a few situations he'd swept under the rug where he'd had people "take care" of his competition. Bodies dropped into lakes, buried in the middle of dark forests, moved out of the way. He was and had always been cutthroat.

Zinnic was the biggest corporation because of that. Because exploitation was unbelievably profitable. He could light cigars with dollar bills and feel nothing at the motion. He'd cornered

not just one world but two, establishing his organisation to sponsor people over on Eden, bringing back resources and amassing power.

And when after all this time the keepers and usurpers were interested in Neamhan, he was who got approached to help facilitate the transition of their world into a magical age. He'd put out propaganda, manipulated the public into accepting things, made them look harmless. He'd decided where gates would open, which ones would break.

Thousands of lives gone when he decided to have a break in a city to create fear, just to leverage that fear into heroics by clearing it with Zinnic soldiers - and that was what they were. Not cultivators, not mages. Soldiers. His private military force, enough to topple the government if he wanted.

Not that he did so, of course. The government was useful. He left it alone, and they didn't bother him, in some kind of mutual respect. It was dirty, of course, as all business was, but he didn't mind. His own hands were clean, after all. He simply paid people.

And yet, as he read the newspaper, he could not believe it.

Simply put, it wasn't possible.

All three of his maelstrom soldiers, dead.

Wiped out by a couple whelps in the wellspring realm.

It was impossible. It never should have happened. And yet, there it was. Black on white, ink on paper. The usupers, the keepers, and all the overwhelming force he'd brought... crushed. Killed.

And so, when I found him, he was in the midst of packing. A suitcase in his hand, as he wheeled it towards the elevator to take it from his private suite down to the ground floor and with a flight already booked.

I can't properly describe his face when the world parted and I appeared in front of him, but I can say that his jaw dropped to the floor. For just a moment, his mouth opened, then closed like that of a dead fish. He dropped the handle of the suitcase, and the metal fell against a cold, unyielding wooden floor.

"Good morning, Mr. Henney," I greeted the old man.

Another moment passed, and then, with practice, he gathered himself. To his credit, he was stoic for those last seconds of his life. His mouth twisted into a thin line, a faint frown, and his eyes narrowed at me. "Ms. Bellum. We can talk about this," he said.

I smiled, pleasantly. "Please, talk."

"Do you want money? Your family will be cared for. I can pay for your father's treatment, make sure your sister lives in a nice place, that your brother has all the equipment he wants. I can-"

To the very end, he didn't get it. Didn't understand the simple fact that money wouldn't buy me. That there was no price he could name to make me do his bidding.

My spear lashed out and cut through his neck.

There was a horrid wrenching noise, and the cut sewed itself shut again. Mr Henney gasped, his eyes bulging like a fish as he doubled over, clutching his neck. He was panting for a moment, then vomited, staining the precious hardwood floor. Bile joined the spilled blood.

I looked at him, at the way the world had Echoed when I cut him. There was something there, some other secret. "How did you do that?"

My question was enough to give him hope, and I saw light ignite in his eyes. "Well, Ms. Bellum," he started. "We can talk about-"

No.

Instantly, his slimy, grating nature was too much. I cut again, and the world lurched. Echo gathered from the man, resonated with my Qi, and made it brittle and decay. His neck snapped close again, but he looked pale from blood loss. The trick was costly, and I felt it poke at my skill with parallel worlds.

Now, his gaze turned to fear. "W-What do you *want?*!" he demanded. Hopeless clinging to the thought that there was something to save him.

With a sigh, I answered. "Nothing," I said, quietly. "There is nothing you could give that would make me less angry. Nothing to spare you. You committed one too many wrongs, and I'm okay with destabilizing the world a bit if it means getting rid of a parasite like you."

"No," he stammered like some cliché villain. "You'll be just as bad as me, a killer!" I stared at him. "There will be a power vacuum, someone worse will take my place. You won't know when the keepers will attack and where the gates will open, you won't-"

The metal of Astraeus glinted in my hands, lashing forward, right through his heart. This time, I left it there, not pulling back. The world lurched, as if to teleport him backwards, but I contested it. The Echo flared, trying to break my hold, and I beat it into submission.

Blood started running from Henney's lips, and as he opened his mouth to give a wheezing gasp, a torrent more flowed out. It stained his precious suit, his precious floor with all the blood that it already should have been stained with.

His words suffocated in his chest, even as his hands weakly closed around Astraeus' blade, trying to pull the weapon out. His heart and lungs were pierced through, his fingers bleeding as they scrambled against the sharp metal without finding purpose.

And then, when he was dead, I flourished my spear to get the corpse and the blood off, and flooded the area with enough Qi to incinerate the blood. Then I left. A tyrant's end was bloody and swift. None of his begging amounted to anything, in the end. As a corpse, he was just the same as anyone else. No better.

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News reports flashed up about a death from heart failure.

Two days later, there was a funeral, and almost no one came. Just me and Chris. They wanted to see our customs.

Some official read off his list of accomplishments, and his very short list of acquaintances. One son, Richard Terril. One estranged daughter. None of his competitors visited. No friends. A few bodyguards and hitmen, and a few government officials to deal with the will.

They shovelled earth over the coffin, and then we called it done. The only person to speak was his estranged daughter. "My father was not a good man," he said. "For all his faults, I can call him determined, I suppose. May his remains remain untouched."

And that was the nicest thing anyone said about Jonathan Henney. His grave read: "CEO of Zinnic Inc." A company that would disappear like the rest of his legacy.

His son looked at me, and I looked back.

Richard Terril, the same man who had come to threaten me before, now stood in front of his father's grave. His shoulders now slumped. "All assets shall go to my son, Richard," an official read out. "Who, hopefully, shall keep Zinnic's name alive, keep my legacy alive."

I looked at him, for a long, silent moment, and he balled his fists, then nodded, eyes closed.

The next day, the company changed its name.

And the world moved on.