

## Chapter 237: The Fourth Terror

As the first draconic creature closed within twenty meters, Priam sidestepped and placed Promesse in its path. The beast's speed was nearly supersonic, too fast to alter its course and avoid the weapon. **[Kinetic Control]** froze the spear in place at the moment of impact, sending shivers through Priam's meridians.

A grin spread across Priam's face as he felt his pathways withstand the shock effortlessly.

Promesse absorbed the beast's momentum and bit cruelly into its scales, tearing through its neck muscles. With its trachea damaged, the winged crocodile-like creature collapsed, convulsing on the ground.

Before Priam could finish it off, the remaining monsters were upon him. He merged with his mist to evade their charges, reappearing a few meters away, eyebrows furrowed. How had the creature not been decapitated?

### **[Identification]**

**[Gaunt Amphiptere - Tier 1]** - *A draconic creature, distant descendant of a Primordial and a Dragon. With a serpentine body six meters long, two wings, and a powerful tail, it is a formidable physical adversary. Only the waning energy of a dying world prevents it from fully deploying its wings.*

*With its feathers, it looks like a Quetzalcoatl...*

The amphiptere was already rising, its draconic eyes locked on Priam. The young warrior felt his draconic heart race and his bloodline roar in his ears. Retreat would mean losing the Dragons' favor.

"I didn't plan to," he murmured, analyzing the rapid regeneration of the winged serpent. Its vitality was absurdly strong, and its constitution was insane. "Show me what else you've got..."

Cries drew his attention. The other three amphipteres were already banking sharply, coming back for another attack. Priam conjured hundreds of small ice spears imbued with his flames to greet them. The bullet-spears shattered against the monsters' bodies, creating a series of small explosions.

When the cloud of smoke and flames dispersed, Priam raised an eyebrow. His attacks hadn't caused any damage but had revealed a layer of semi-transparent scales overlaying the natural ones. They reminded him of his own scales, a draconic talent he had awakened through a Merit.

Bringing Promesse in front of him, Priam braced himself and executed a perfect thrust at the leading amphiptere. Micro and Spear Mastery fused with **[Unrelenting Thurst]** to create an unstoppable attack. The spear's point struck just below the creature's maw, which was

opening to reveal carnivorous teeth. Its momentum met Priam's skill, resulting in a terrible shock.

Promesse was repelled, and the draconic spawn collided with Priam. Activating **[Kinetic Control]**, the warrior tried to petrify himself to ignore the impact, but to his surprise, his skill was bypassed by the scales. Several tons of hide, claws, and teeth swept Priam away.

The world spun several times as his body ricocheted off the water. A massive wave engulfed him.

**[Tenacious Spirit]** kicked in as Priam's brain hemorrhaged. The warrior opened his eyes, Micro capturing the information transmitted by his optic nerve and relaying it directly to his mind. Regaining sight, Priam realized he was underwater and began swimming toward the surface. Torn muscles and a dozen fractures slowed him before the Hydra's power regenerated him.

A few seconds later, he surfaced. A cry above warned him of a new attack, and Priam rode his mist back to the sandbank.

His body finished restoring at the cost of some lifespan, and a smile spread across his lips.

"I got a bit arrogant, I suppose," he murmured to himself. His progress over the past weeks was terrifying, but underestimating draconic creatures of a higher Tier was the pinnacle of stupidity. He made a mental note to reexamine his scales. He had thought the talent weaker than his draconic lung, but perhaps he was wrong...

The swarm of amphipteres, now complete again—the beast he had injured had regenerated and rejoined its companions—shrieked upon detecting him. Stowing Promesse, Priam summoned a multitude of hybrid spears. Engaging in close combat with monsters possessing physical prowess far superior to his and equipped with draconic scales that could absorb and nullify his skills was not a good idea.

Priam fired his projectiles as the monsters charged again. The shell-spears exploded in a dazzling pyrotechnic display, lighting up the sky and boiling the ocean's surface. He replaced each destroyed spear with two new ones, bombarding the winged serpents with fervor.

His instinct roared, and Priam vanished, dodging a charge that shook the sandbank. He emerged from the mist fifty meters from the impact point, grimacing as he saw the creature take off after creating a crater beneath it.

A lance struck its wings without causing damage, and Priam had to face the truth. The scale layer covering their serpentine bodies allowed them to ignore all attacks below a certain threshold. The protection absorbed kinetic energy, and the skin underneath seemed fireproof. *Not surprising for a draconic species, but it's still annoying.*

Priam dodged another charge by merging with his mist and gathered his strength before striking the nearest monster's neck with an ice spear. The hide and scales resisted the blade, and the vertebrae withstood the blunt force; the summoned weapon shattered despite

the protection of **[Kinetic Control]**. Propelled forward, the monster shot him a nasty look as it regained altitude.

“Micro, Spear Mastery, and Conquest Aura couldn’t penetrate the hide reinforced by their scales,” Priam grimaced. It was the first time he encountered an opponent so resistant to his kinetic-fire build. The amphipteres could tank his physical attacks, and their scales interfered with his aether and Concepts.

Watching the monsters circle above him, Priam considered using a Breath to try overloading the scales' protection. *Even then, I'd struggle to hit all four simultaneously. Pyro might be able to consume their scales, but it would cost me my aether, and the chances that I have more energy than these four combined are slim.*

A cry interrupted his thoughts as the creatures opened their mouths.

Priam's eyes widened, and he rode his mist. The next moment, the sandbank was engulfed by four Breaths. A hundred meters away, Priam cursed as he saw the destruction caused by the amphipteres. “Fuck.”

The sand had vanished. When the attacks ceased, the water filled the hole, but not before Priam saw a mass of vitrified quartz fifteen meters below sea level. Their Breaths were less powerful than his but still capable of vaporizing him. Worse, the draconic fire didn't react to his Fire Concept or Pyro. If Priam got hit, he would die.

“If these creatures find the rift...” The consequences would be catastrophic. Priam's eyes hardened, and he decided to use drastic measures. He had progressed too much since the Reunion to be humiliated by flying lizards.

Flexing his aether reserves, Priam used **[Moon Mist]** to create a titanic wave of mist. Within seconds, a cloud formed, obscuring the ocean. The amphipteres shrieked in surprise, rising to escape the fog, and Priam smiled, satisfied with the first step of his plan.

Absorbing thermal energy within his Domain, Priam took flight. Three heartbeats later, he broke the sound barrier and overtook the amphiptere swarm. The creatures followed, their cries inaudible. Surpassing Mach 1 allowed him to ignore their screeches.

Priam quickly reached the first natural clouds and continued to climb. As he approached Mach 2, he was surprised to find the creatures keeping pace. Their scales gleamed, and Priam activated his own to test their effect. Instantly, air friction mostly disappeared, and the young man groaned at his own stupidity.

*Lvl Up: [Friction Resistance] lvl 17, 18*  
*AGI +2*

Moments later, his incredible speed made him forget his mistakes, and he burst into laughter. Dragons were not the lords of the skies for nothing.

Only when the atmospheric temperature turned frigid did Priam slow down. His bloodline warned him that the amphipteres were lagging. The pressure was so low their wings struggled to find the air needed to ascend. If the aspiring Dragon continued to rise, he would lose his opponents, and that would be considered fleeing.

*No matter, this is enough.*

At nearly fifty kilometers high, Priam summoned his mist and began creating icicles. Assisted by the frigid temperature, he expanded them, transforming them into blocks of ice and then into long spears. Priam was soon surrounded by ten projectiles nearly thirty meters tall. Each had a volume of about two cubic meters and a mass of almost two tons.

Seeing the four draconic creatures struggling to catch up, Priam grinned. "Let's get back to basics."

The next instant, he dove, mentally guiding his ice spears. In a heartbeat, he passed through the amphiptere swarm, delivering an ineffective kick to one that enraged the beast.

Laughing, Priam plunged toward the endless ocean beneath him. Valaryth might be a fragmented world, but it was huge.

Several kilometers below, Jasmine and others looked up at the bizarre spectacle. A young Homo Elysian hurtled toward the ground, followed by four winged serpents and ten gigantic spears.

As they dove, the group reached Mach 2, then Mach 3. Air friction eventually slowed the lances, which reached their terminal velocity, and Priam decelerated as well. This allowed the amphipteres to catch up, and an aerial battle ensued.

The warrior focused on dodging. Any contact with a creature nearly impervious to his attacks and many times stronger than him was a bad idea. Whenever an opportunity arose, he tried to blind the monsters, but their agility and dexterity far surpassed his.

Forced to merge with his mist multiple times per second, Priam grimaced as his aether reserves quickly dwindled. He endured until they reached the cloud whose peak was a hundred meters above the surface. Then, everything happened very quickly.

At his speed—nearly a thousand meters per second—he would hit the water in a tenth of a second. Using his formidable draconic vivacity, Priam multitasked. Part of his attention slightly adjusted the trajectory of his spears to target the amphipteres and another part dissipated the mist in a small radius around him.

The creatures were physically powerful but lacked intelligence. Seeing their enemy below them, they continued to follow, unaware of the ocean hidden by the cloud. Their instincts might have warned them if a parallel thought of Priam hadn't used **[Homo Elysian Predation]** to silence them.

A fraction of a second before hitting the water, Priam merged with his mist, dispersing his kinetic energy in the process. The amphipteres didn't have the same ability and crashed into the ocean.

At a certain speed, Newtonian liquids, such as water, don't have time to deform and react like solids. In those conditions, the collision against water was akin to hitting concrete.

The impact was disastrous, and the ethereal scales of the winged serpents exploded from the shock.

The next moment, each received two oversized ice spears at nearly three times the speed of sound. The second blow was as spectacular as the first. The sea churned before turning red. Without draconic protection, the serpents' bodies weren't enough to stop the projectiles targeting their heads.

Priam watched through his mist, spotting the creatures sinking. Three were dead on impact, and his draconic bloodline roared with pleasure and glory. The last amphiptere, the largest, clung to life and began regenerating. With a powerful tail swipe, the winged serpent started swimming, racing to the surface.

As Priam prepared to dive in and finish it off, a shadow passed beneath the water. The draconic creature vanished from his sight. *Did it merge with a Concept?*

The warrior's eyes narrowed as he tried to anticipate the next attack. His caution saved his life when the ocean parted to reveal a monster lunging to swallow him whole. Its gaping maw alone was large enough to swallow a large fishing vessel, and Priam's eyes widened, paralyzed by primal terror.

His add-on took control, activating **[Kinetic Control]** and recharging the two remaining spears hovering above the cloud. Priam had kept two munitions in reserve in case one of the amphipteres survived the first assault.

The projectiles accelerated to three times the speed of sound in an instant, targeting the depths' Lord. As it opened its jaws to engulf Priam, the spears struck its snout. The double attack did nothing but push the creature back into the ocean, yet it saved Priam.

*Lvl Up: [True Will] Lvl 9*

*WILL +18*

*CHAR +9*

The level-up helped Priam avert his gaze. The mind control diminished, and he sought to ride his mist... To no avail. His Mist Concept resisted as the cloud, air, and himself were drawn toward the monster's open maw. Without hesitation, the warrior used his kinetic reserves to soar into the sky.

Priam ascended to the first cloud without looking back. When he glanced down again, confident he had put enough distance between himself and the monster, his cloud had vanished. There was nothing but a roiling ocean. No corpses, no remnants of the sandbank, no shattered ice chunks.

Only a notification confirmed to Priam that the confrontation hadn't been a dream.

**[Identification]**

*[Charybdis' Descendant - Tier 1 - Marquess] - The Fourth Ocean's Terror. The Devourer is the failed result of an ambitious experiment. Its atrophied soul saved it from certain death during Valaryth's fragmentation.*

Lvl Up: **[Identification]** Lvl 15  
MEM +1

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“Impressive,” Jasmine applauded as Priam set foot on the beach near the rift.

“Did you see that?” he grimaced.

“Not everything, but we felt the vibrations all the way here!” she exclaimed, narrowing her eyes. “Is there a problem?”

Priam made a face, glancing between Jasmine and Myuri before sighing. “I lost the amphiptere corpses—the winged serpents I was fighting. If I could have consumed their hearts, it would have been a boon for my bloodline.”

“They sank?”

“No, they were devoured by a monster.” Priam shivered, recalling the bottomless maw of his last adversary. “The fourth Terror of the oceans.”

Jasmine squinted. “How do you do that?”

“Do what?”

“Grimace and smile at the same time.”

“Do I?” Priam laughed, releasing his frustration. “Maybe. The first time I came here, I almost died against its sibling, the seventh Terror. This one is even more powerful, and just remembering its gaping maw makes my head spin. Yet, my draconic heart has never beaten faster than during our brief encounter.”

“Is it a draconic creature? Are you interested in its core?”

Priam just smiled. He would let his actions speak for him.

“Myuri,” he said, turning to the young woman. “I'm glad to see you. Jasmine told you I'm looking for an administrator for the outpost in Valaryth?”

The young woman opened her mouth slightly, looked down, trembled, glanced at Jasmine, then clenched her fists. Taking a deep breath, she nodded and whispered, “Yes.”

Priam made no comment on her behavior. From what Rose and Jasmine had told him and extrapolating from Esmée's speech, he knew she had a tough life. The scars covering her

face told a story. His Domain also detected various burns and other marks scattered across her Empyrean body. Thinking of the royal family that had inflicted this on her, Priam felt his French blood boil.

“Are you willing to be this administrator?”

“Yes.”

“Perfect. I’ll be around for at least a day to explore the nearby ruins. Between me, Jasmine, and soon Kazuki and Esmée, there shouldn’t be any defense issues.” Priam was relieved to see Myuri didn’t react to the mention of Esmée. She didn’t seem to have any complaints about the princess. “You have about a day to prove you can supervise the construction and work with my father, his future artisans and Oasis to build an outpost. You good with that?”

“Yes,” repeated the former slave, staring at the ground, her hair hiding her face.

“Every job deserves a wage, and you’ll be paid,” Priam continued, opening a small passage to his internal world to retrieve a pill. “Honestly, I don’t know how much—it will depend on you. I’ll decide after the construction but I think an advance should show you my sincerity. Do you know what this is?”

Gathering her courage, the young woman raised her eyes to look at the item Priam held in his right hand.

“Sorry.” She shook her head as if ashamed.

“It’s...” Jasmine’s eyes widened before she smiled. “A Hydra Pill!”

Priam nodded. “In exchange for some lifespan, it will rebuild your body. It’s particularly effective combined with a race change.”

Seeing Myuri’s eyes widen, Priam smiled. “I see you understand where I’m going. Myuri, may I be frank with you?”

The young woman hesitated, surprised he asked for her opinion, then nodded.

“You’ve been mocked, belittled, abused, terrorized, and beaten. I don’t know you well but I want you to know that when Esmée entrusted you to me, I took you under my protection. I won’t let anyone hurt you anymore,” Priam vowed.

Myuri listened in silence, but the sound of her beating heart was deafening.

Priam extended the pill to the young Empyrean.

“You’re the only one who can heal your traumas, but I can give you an opportunity. From what Rose and Jasmine have told me, you’re strong enough to seize it. Today, if you want, you can take a first step to rebuild your body, your ego, and your future.”

The young woman trembled as she met his gaze. In her eyes, hope mingled with fear—the hope of a fresh start and the fear that this was another trap set by a man.

Priam activated his charisma to help the former slave forget he was a male. It might not have been necessary because Myuri bit her lip before stepping forward to take the pill. She was wounded, but the Empire had never managed to extinguish the fire that burned within her.

“There will be no problem with the outpost,” she promised in a firm voice.

“I’m sure,” Priam smiled.

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*Status:*

*PHYSICAL:*

*Strength 707*

*Constitution 1 105*

*Agility 617 (+3)*

*Vitality 1 040*

*Perception 760*

*MENTAL:*

*Vivacity (D) 570*

*Dexterity 652*

*Memory 832 (+2)*

*Willpower 1 159 (+25)*

*Charisma 677 (+16)*

*META:*

*Meta-affinity 780*

*Meta-focus 403*

*Meta-endurance 608*

*Meta-perception 339*

*Meta-chance 274*

*Meta-authority 210*

*Potential: 13 527 (+7)*

*Tier 0*

*Sun points: 1 464 878 (+76)*

*[He Who Eludes Death] charge: PRIMED*

***[Tribulation]: Five Tribulations pending.***

***Future Tribulations delayed until:***

***Time: 156 days 15 hours 22 minutes 14 seconds.***

***Next thresholds: 12 attributes > 600 / 6 attributes > 900 / 1 attribute > 1 200***