

Mother of Learning - The Sovereign Gate JumpChain

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Fifteen centuries before the Cataclysm, the fertile plains of Xlotic were a fractured patchwork of tiny kingdoms and city-states, constantly warring and bickering with each other. Salaw, the valley of the Umani-Re river, was no exception. Among the many city-states that vied for control over it, Ikos had assumed the preeminent position; inevitably, it would have soon reached for more, and just as inevitably, others would have resisted and dragged the conquest out for as long as they were able.

But the gods had other ideas.

As the date of the planar alignment grew close, a man by the name of Shutur-Tarana Ihilkush was given a great gift. An ancient Gate - an inscrutable black cube with a doorway marked with a triangle standing on a line - and a Key made to his design, five artifacts that would aid him on his journey and later come to be associated with his reign. Thus did he open the Gate and step into a world not unlike his own, one where time and age had no sway on him, and spent eleven lifetimes there learning and growing.

When he emerged, not a moment had passed in the real world; the only change was in him.

Nobody could resist the armies of Ikos as he led them in conquest. No one could stand up to his mighty spells and profound insight. The united Salaw bowed to his rule as he proclaimed himself the first Emperor of the Ikosian Empire, and its mark on the world has eventually eclipsed that of any other known civilization.

And the Gate was stored in the royal vault, to wait for a worthy successor who would lead the Ikosian Empire into ever greater glory - a time that would never come, as the Ikosian Empire ended fifteen centuries later.

The Key has been lost piece by piece in the following millennia. The Sovereign Gate has fallen into disuse, its safeguards fraying and its flaws laid bare by history. But every four hundred years, when the planets come into alignment, the pathway to great power and knowledge is once more ready to open...

Your time here will only end when you have lived for a month and a day outside the loops. Take **1000 CP**, Jumper, and remember: *only one may enter, and only one may leave.*

Background

Did you chance across the opportunity, or did you seize it with your own hands? Choose the outline of your history and decide on the state of your marker below.

Agent can be taken as a **Drop-in**.

You can enter during any possible opening time. The Sovereign Gate had been regularly used for an unknown time before Shutur-Tarana, and never since; the main story takes place 2400 years later (~900 years after the Cataclysm), and the gods had fallen silent a thousand years ago.

Ruler (500): Like Shutur-Tarana, you held the Key and touched the Gate on the day of the planar alignment. Now inside the copy of the real world, you take your first step towards greatness of the kind that rewrites history...

Agent (300): A mysterious force has appeared to open the Gate for you - whether an angel pursuing its duty, a god looking for entertainment, or Jump-chan, who's very used to doing just this kind of thing for you. However, such great gifts rarely come without strings attached...

Bystander (free): You are an anomaly. Used to be just one of the copies of a real person, you somehow acquired an incomplete soul marker which the Gate recognizes as permanent. With an unexpected opportunity comes existential danger, for the Guardian of the Threshold will never let you out - you'll have to make your own exit if you wish to survive.

Pawn (free): You've *made* yourself into an anomaly. You struck a bargain with whichever primordial the Gate has twisted into a toy this time, and it granted you the same privileges as the Controller. You'll have a mission to accomplish after leaving, and the price of failure is death.

Perks

Discounts halve the price.

Magic (free): You are educated in the fundamentals of magic, appropriate to your time period; this doesn't give you any unique insights or abilities on its own, but you are no worse than average by default. Choose your mana magnitude anywhere between 5-25.

Self as the Universe (free and exclusive Pawn): When the primordial incarnates you outside the Gate, it will give you an ability similar in potency to Jornak's. The exact nature of this ability is up to you, but it's likely to either follow the primordial's theme, or include a hidden world inside your soul. Your new body will also be healthy and unnaturally strong.

If taken with **Soul Continuity**, it will let you cheat death once per Jump by creating a new instance of you in a safe location. Yes, this bypasses **Death Pact**.

Bloodline (free/200): For **free**, you can have any weak bloodline that gives few to none benefits besides making your family stand out. Strangely colored hair, mild resistance to a specific toxin, always giving birth to soul-bonded twins, et cetera. For **200 CP**, your bloodline is undeniably useful, although still requires training to truly shine: being psychic, having an affinity for an element, having a keen magic perception and the like. Keep in mind that the more powerful a bloodline is, the more of your mana reserves it ties up.

Of High Standing (200/400): For **200 CP (discounted for Ruler and Agent)**, you're a member of the local nobility. Your House has a significant amount of power and connections, if not enough to single-handedly sway the wider politics of your homeland. For **400 CP (discounted for Ruler)**, you stand significantly higher: either a member of the ruling family, or the head of one of the most powerful Noble Houses (or the equivalent thereof).

Charismatic (400, discount Ruler and Agent): Your personality is a bonfire that draws people in like moths. It's easy for you to befriend people, to put them at ease and persuade them to help you; this effect becomes much greater if you actually do something for them in return.

Liar Liar (200, discount Bystander and Pawn): You are uncannily good at obfuscation and misdirection. If you don't want something to be known, only outright mind reading or vastly superior social experience have a chance of prying it out of you. You also have a knack for spinning up cover stories on the fly, if improvisation is more your thing.

Unconventional Solutions (200, discount Bystander and Pawn): Yours is a creative and flexible mind, capable of approaching the problems before you from a surprising variety of angles and making connections between disparate events. You can quickly adjust your thinking to the circumstances and won't get stuck in a habit.

A World of Shadows (200, free Ruler): And you are alone, so alone. It would be easy to start thinking that nothing matters, to see others as tools and puppets, until your connection to your humanity is hopelessly twisted and doomed to stay this way beyond the loops. Thankfully, your heart is far more resilient than that. You know yourself and what you stand for; no temporary circumstances, no necessary evils will stain your soul unless you wish to change.

Divine Blessing (400, discount Agent): To aid you in your task (or for some other strange reason), you were given a boon. By default, it takes the shape of a stabilizing frame around your soul that doubles your mana reserves and

regeneration without hurting your shaping skills in the slightest, but you can opt for a different blessing of similar usefulness. This can be bought multiple times for different blessings, discounted for everyone beyond the first.

Healthy Suspicion (200, free Bystander): Is not so easy to tell apart from paranoia, but at least you won't be blindsided by something you had a reasonable cause to suspect. You have a keen sense for weak points in plans, potential ways in which any person you know can screw you over, and the like; even non-obvious failure states are easily apparent to you if you give it some thought.

The Lever That Turns The World (200, free Pawn): You of all people are clever enough to know that the scale of the challenges before you is too vast for a person to accomplish alone, no matter their skill. That's why you turned *your* skills to the task of using leverage to make others fall in line with your goals. You're an expert negotiator and a consummate politician with a particular eye for the large-scale consequences of your choices - something that would greatly benefit from the knowledge available in the loops...

Pretty (100): You'd be surprised how much impact appearance has on people's first impressions of you. Yours is exceptional in some way, chosen now: maybe you're dashing and handsome, maybe you radiate dignity and authority, or maybe you have a soft beauty that has broken many a heart.

Fitness (100/200): For **100 CP**, you're quite fit and athletic, and start the loop in excellent health. For **200 CP**, your physical condition is nothing short of impressive in every possible way - from strength and flexibility, to reflexes and resistance to disease - and you can function perfectly well on as little as four hours of sleep per night.

If taken with **Soul Continuity**, you can choose to grant any instance of you any bodily improvements or abilities you have possessed in the past; this is automatically used to keep you in peak form unless you choose otherwise. You can't heal your own wounds with this alone.

Teacher (100): What use is it to stand alone at the peak? With this, you're a naturally gifted instructor, with keen insight into your students' potential and the best ways to bring it out. This also slightly improves your patience.

Discipline (200): The simplest, yet most vital requirement for someone stuck in a time loop. You have both the willpower to keep working towards your goals even as your physical progress is erased month after month, and the patience to keep retreading old ground when it's necessary.

Perfect Memory (100/200): You'll never forget what you wish to remember. For **100 CP**, your mind is a steel trap even for the smallest detail, and if you learn mind

magic, you'll find that you have ten times as much space for information within your mind. For **200 CP**, it's a hundred times instead, and you'll additionally find your mental resilience greatly enhanced, to the point where even a vastly superior mind mage would find it hard to edit your memories.

If taken with **Soul Continuity**, the first level additionally makes you immune to confusion and disorientation from having any number of disparate experiences, and the second level makes your memories completely immune to tampering without your consent.

Courage (100): Making the best out of the loop will often require you to risk your life, but getting too used to death may kill you for good once you're back in the real world. With this, you have the combination of fearlessness and good judgment to know when to push forward and when to withdraw. As a bonus, your simulacra will find it easier to sacrifice themselves for the good of the greater self.

Insight (200): You don't need mind reading to know who you can trust. You have a keen instinct for social dynamics and an insight into people's true character after only a short interaction with them; you can also understand how other people see you much more easily than most. There's nothing supernatural about it; you're just that good.

Lucky (300): What if Zorian never settled in Knyazov Dveri? What if he walked past a cranium rat before he learned to protect his mind? The timeline teetered on the brink of disaster multiple times, yet in the end, the most important choices made were the right ones. This is now guaranteed to happen to you. No matter how ignorant you are, as long as you put any effort into solving your problems, the path you go down is very likely to lead you to where you need to be.

Quick Learner (200/400): For **200 CP**, you are clearly above average in most fields, mundane and magical alike. Nothing too impressive on its own, but just a little hard work will let you stand out from the rest, and fields of study too arcane for most people would still be perfectly accessible to you. For **400 CP**, you are an actual genius.

Passion Project (200): Like Zorian with spell formula, Kael with alchemical cures, Zach with combat magic, or Jornak with destructively rearranging the political landscape, you've got *something* that you're particularly good at and that brings you joy. You have a respectable amount of skill in this already, and will never tire of practicing; even if it's something boring or stressful for normal people, for you it's invigorating.

Soul Continuity (600): The self is a nebulous thing. Does it matter whether you are a copy or the original, if you cannot tell the difference? With this perk, it doesn't. You are you. All sufficiently close copies of you become part of your continuous self,

retaining all memories and non-physical abilities. Even a break in continuity will not kill you: as long as at least one instance of you exists by the time the Jump ends, you count as having survived the Jump. This perk also modifies some others, as seen in their descriptions.

Items

Wealth (100/200): It's so very convenient when your savings refill every month... especially if you do have some savings worth leaning on. For **100 CP** (free with **Of High Standing**), you have a significant amount of wealth; enough to hire a sizable contingent or mercenaries, finance a dedicated stream of alchemical experiments with moderately expensive ingredients, and other things of similar scale. For **200 CP** (discounted with **Of High Standing**), your wealth is sufficient to raise armies and hire archmages.

The List (100/200): Like Kael and Xvim (and, to be honest, many people in this world who have acquired rare or impressive skills without time loop cheating), you know a variety of powerful and/or knowledgeable people. For **100 CP**, this list includes most specialists on a specific kind of magic in a wide area; for **200 CP**, the scope is much broader. You can choose whether your local self has met these people before, unless you're a Drop-in. In future Jumps, you can set the theme and area of the list at the beginning of the Jump.

The Key (100 per, all free for Ruler): Five divine artifacts of the Ikosian emperors, imbued with an additional function only available in the time loops. You can have either the originals or perfect copies in your possession, whichever makes more sense in your circumstances. The artifacts are as follows:

The Crown: Regal and studded with purple gems, this is a mana battery which keeps the mana in it from losing attunement. It can hold the equivalent of 1800 magic missiles as cast by a beginner mage. Inside the loops, it can be used to bestow temporary markers that last for six loops.

The Orb: Looking like a simple glass orb with a palace inside, this is a pocket world - a portable pocket dimension that can be deployed and folded back into an orb at will. Inside the loops, it also has a memory storage with a truly vast amount of space.

The Staff: Deceptively plain and unadorned, this staff made of dark wood can place up to six teleportation markers and recall the bearer to them at most once per day per marker. They persist inside the loops.

The Ring: Made out of solid silver with only a few faint lines and sigils on its surface, only visible upon close scrutiny. This ring gives the wearer soulsight, and within the loops can place a tracking marker that will persist through the resets.

The Dagger: A pitch black dagger that can cut spirits and break through any defenses short of the divine. Inside the loops, it can be used to erase living beings'

souls from the template, so they are recreated as soulless bodies at the beginning of the loops.

The Sovereign Gate (500, requires the full Key): Your very own time loop. It can be activated once per Jump, giving you a thousand resets; as this one draws power from fiat rather than a bound primordial, it will not be hijacked nor otherwise deviate from its functions. Death within the loops does not end your Chain, and staying inside until the restarts run out will end with you being harmlessly returned to your body outside.

Guardian Beast (200 per, discounted with the matching piece of the Key): Bound to a plain black knife and given powerful abilities, these beasts are unshakably loyal to whoever secures their allegiance with the help of the respective knife - in this case, you. Only two have survived to present day: the teleporting hydra that guards the palace orb, and the flying sandworm that guards the ring.

Companions

This choice will work a little differently than with most Jumps. Any imported Companions will only gain their past memories upon becoming permanent loopers or after the loops end, whichever happens earlier. Newly created Companions are as much a part of this world as any other person.

Old Friends, New Friends (50 per): Create or import a Companion with **600 CP** to spend on their own choices (including suitable Drawbacks). They can choose different backgrounds, but those would only influence their local history and discounts, as they are not time travelers by default.

Mentor (100): You will meet a powerful person who will either be directly interested in you or will agree to teach you quite easily. You can choose what exactly they will be a master of, and it can be either a mundane or magical discipline.

Stowaway (free): Anyone who consents to go with you on the Jumpchain of their own free will can become a Companion at the end of this Jump.

Drawbacks

Epilogue (0): You can stay for as long as you want after completing the Jump duration. Dying in this period will simply send you onwards on your Chain as if you had chosen to move on.

This Is Your Story (0): Take the place of any canon character (or Akoja from the Fourth Looper AU) at the time when they first acquire their permanent marker.

Shifted Timelines (0): Instead of canon, you'll be dropped into a version of this world from a specific fanfic of your choosing, or from a generalized genre of fanfics, or otherwise changed from the default storyline. Cheesing this is discouraged.

Different Perspectives (0): You can combine this Jump with any other that takes place on Ersetu, receiving a total of **1000 CP** with both sets of choices. In case of conflicting origins and stories, fanwank the most thematically coherent history

Morning, Morning, MORNING! (+100): Something unpleasant always happens at the beginning of the loop.

Loner (+100): It's not that you hate people, but you'd really rather prefer they poked you less. You tend to be rather unsociable, slow to warm up to new people, and might find keeping in contact with more than a couple friends a chore.

Tactless (+100): Like Taiven, you tend to just say what's on your mind, and more often than not it comes off as rude and oblivious to other people's feelings. You might mean well, but communicating that isn't easy for you.

Tempestuous (+100): You tend to express your anger rather freely, and find it hard to restrain yourself from violence in the heat of the moment.

Ball of Anger and Resentment (+100/200): For **+100 CP** you're touchy, easily annoyed and know how to hold a grudge. For **+200 CP**, your heart is filled with hatred for those who wronged you, hatred that only grows to encompass more and burn hotter the more you learn about humanity's sins.

Unstable Bloodline (+100, requires Bloodline): Something went seriously wrong. Whatever ability you have is still with you, but it's prone to going out of control, potentially hurting yourself and/or others, depending on its nature. Fixing it will take a substantial amount of work, but at least your condition won't deteriorate further with your body periodically resetting.

Trusting (+100): We're all friends here, aren't we? You tend to assume the best of people, even when it isn't warranted, *especially* when it isn't warranted. You'll need to get burned plenty of times, or have incontrovertible proof that someone means you harm, before you learn not to trust them.

Poor Reputation (+100): For some reason, people tend to not think much of you. Exactly why that is depends on the rest of your choices, but this'll make getting help and convincing others of your prowess unreasonably difficult.

Allergy to Books (+100): Not literally, but you have no love for reading, and find it difficult to absorb information this way. You'll have to go out and practice to learn.

Orphan (+100): Your parents are dead or otherwise completely out of the picture. While this makes hiding how much you've changed easier, you lack the most immediate source of support.

Family Troubles (+100/200): For **+100 CP**, your family is problematic in some way. Abuse, controlling behavior or outright neglect, unreasonable expectations, et cetera. They're not fun to deal with, but they won't be a major impediment. For **+200 CP**, your family is either poised to disrupt any plans you make, or is in major trouble themselves, or is merely problematic as above but also impossible to avoid dealing with for the duration of the loops.

Sickly (+100/200): You are not doing too well. For **+100 CP**, you either have the physical conditioning of a shut-in, or start the loop at the height of an illness that'll make you weak and miserable for the first few days. For **+200 CP**, you can have both of the above, or a heightened version of one, or be crippled in some significant way.

Escort Mission (+100): You know, or soon will meet, a person who'll suffer a tragic fate during this month unless you save them. You'll feel bad for them, and the rescue will pose some challenges.

Premature Start (+100): Something has gone wrong, and the Sovereign Gate was activated before the ideal time. Instead of lifetimes' worth of restarts, you have less than a single century.

Coward (+200): You have a very healthy self-preservation instinct. One that won't be lessened by the knowledge that almost any harm you suffer will be erased, nor by the urgency of your task. It will take a supreme mental effort to put yourself in harm's way, and working through it will take a long time and plenty of repetition.

Slacker (+200): Because you have all the time in the world to get that assignment done, right? You are not a particularly driven person, prone to distraction and procrastination; you don't much enjoy improving your skills for their own sake, except for perhaps a hobby or two. Actually getting things done will require a constant effort to impose discipline on yourself.

Ignorant (+200): Because a mystery isn't interesting when the main character already knows everything, is it? All your knowledge about the Sovereign Gate and its functions has been erased. Any outside sources on the plot of Mother of Learning are likewise inaccessible.

Death Pact (+300, mandatory Pawn for no points): You knew this was coming. There is a task you must fulfill by the end of the month outside the loops, and failure will end your Chain. This will be something that is within your ability to perform... if you take full advantage of your time in the loops and put all effort towards fulfilling the conditions of the pact.

Scenarios

The First Emperor (requires Ruler and 1500 BC)

It's you who was given the gift, and it is you whom the gods watch with great interest. Your task is simple: to rise up to their expectations.

Learn from the depthless well of knowledge before you. Train until no one can stand before you. Create a legacy and destroy all who dare oppose you. To complete the scenario, you must accomplish in your life no less than Shutur-Tarana would have, judged upon the moment of your death.

If you fail after surviving for longer than ten years outside the Sovereign Gate, you will move on to the next Jump without anything you earned here. If you succeed, choose **one** of the following:

- The Ikosian Empire will follow you on your Chain, along with all the land it has and all it conquers.
- Take the **Sovereign Gate** for free.
- Take all of the **Divine Beasts** for free.

End

Go Home, Stay Here, or Move On.

Notes

With enough drawbacks, you, too, can be Veyers! :D

The other three **Guardian Beasts** are:

Crown: Large lion. Can mentally paralyze people who meet his eyes and has an ability to erect an impervious force field around things for a short time.

Staff: A pair of snakes joined together with divine magic. If one is killed, the other can resurrect the other, even if they have to recreate their whole body from ashes.

The snakes can cure diseases and heal wounds by biting people. The bites still hurt like hell.

Dagger: A large octopus that seems to have no issue traveling on land. Can camouflage itself so effectively it's permanently invisible when it wants to be. Knows how to wield melee weapons in its tentacles and is unnaturally proficient in them, capable of wielding one in every tentacle with no loss of dexterity.