Once I saw the card magic system as an option listed in this game, I couldn't help but somewhat give up on my ideas of winning. Not because it made me less confident in my chances, but because I felt the urge to experience what the card magic would be like once it reached a level usable in the games. More to the point, I felt like Udona's testing may not have been completely accurate.

The idea of the values that she explained to me originally made sense at first, until I began to think about it more deeply. After all, that would mean that only two second tier cards could be combined before it became third tier. And what about third tier cards? Each one would make it jump several levels.

No, I felt like there was something else about how the values worked instead of simply adding them on during the fusion. So, I added the Card Law and Card Magic options to my character, which brought my attention to another feature of this little game. At the side of the screen was a slowly filling vertical bar.

Below the bar were the two words 'Power Level', meaning that this was probably a rough measuring of overall power. It hadn't reacted at all when I gave myself the ability to use ki, mana, and chakra, but had shot up slightly when I added in the card powers.

Still, everything added together was less than five percent of the 'Power Level' meter. Which brought me to the next window. Now that I had assigned the systems that I wanted to use, I had to adjust the attributes of my body. There were various buttons to increase my strength, speed, and everything else.

Since I planned to use the Thousand Arms, Ten Thousand Threads in this fight, I increased my mana and ki. I wasn't sure how much exactly I was giving myself, but by the time I was done the power meter was at fifty percent. Going back to the previous window, I gave myself a ki path that specialized in defense, that way my more frail physical body wouldn't be too much of a weakness.

Finally, I went to my 'inventory' window. Here, I could choose whatever weapons, armor, or artifacts I wanted to take with me. As I had expected, this also included magic cards once I gave myself that system. And it was here that I found out where the root of Udona's misunderstanding came from.

From what I understood, Udona had been working with the first tier fusion cards, and may have even expected that was all there was. However, in the list of cards I saw, the fusion cards went all the way to rank seven. *Rather than the spell cards themselves having a limit, the fusion cards should have a limit to how much they can fuse.*

With the window pulled up, I checked how much time I had left… still over five standard minutes before the preparation phase of round one began, so ten minutes total. I began grabbing

various magic cards, combining them into different spells. Some I discarded when I saw the finished product, and others I chose to keep. Each one raised the power level by a small margin, until finally the bar had been filled.

Strangely enough, I found that only fourth tier spells had a significant impact on the power bar. Each one alone increased it by between five and ten percent, while third tier spells barely made a dent. *I guess that means that normal Keepers will generally have a lot of third tier powers available to them, and just a few fourth tier…*

This game was actually giving me a surprising amount of insight as to what I could expect from the future Keeper games. Between this and the Keeper's Cards game, I actually felt like I might have an idea of what I was doing… for the first time in a long time.

Shaking my head, I went over the items that I had granted myself. Only one was an actual weapon, though it had been enchanted through the card magic as well. I still had a few minutes left, but I felt fairly satisfied with the arrangements that I had made so far.

Looking across from me, I saw that my opponent was still looking through the system, seeming to be having trouble deciding what he wanted to use. Seeing that, I gave a small sigh of relief, feeling like my chances for the first round were improving. After all, if I was up against someone else who didn't know what they were doing, then at least it wouldn't be so bad.

Like that, the minutes passed by while I waited for the tournament to begin. Thankfully, the character I had set up wasn't wiped when the preparation phase started, so I did not have to go through and make it all over again. Instead, once the final countdown finished, I felt a familiar light encompass my body.

The sensation was similar to what happened when I descended, so I was not too worried. And surely enough, once I opened my eyes the landscape had changed. I was no longer in a large room filled with Keepers, and had instead moved to a large mountain, standing just before the snowy peaks. The chill invaded my body, yet caused me no harm.

In the corner of my vision, I saw a timer counting down from one hundred seconds, no doubt the time until the fight began. Since I had some time, I looked over the items in my belongings. My outfit had not changed after coming in here, still being the same t-shirt and jeans I typically wore in the Admin Room. The only thing different was a small black box that had been attached to my waist.

This was the container for my various cards, which I quickly pulled out. Something I had realized when I was going through the spell cards to prepare myself was a critical weakness of this magic system. Unlike a magic system that relied only on the user's understanding, this one required you to find the card you wanted to use each time you cast a spell. This added several unnecessary seconds to the casting process.

Thankfully, I wasn't the only one who noticed it. The weapon that I chose to grant myself for this fight was an item designed to overcome this weakness. It took my only a moment to find the right card in the deck, which quickly expanded to reveal a silver gun.

The barrel of the gun was smooth, having a rectangular shape with a thin slot to fire from. Where one would load a magazine, there was instead an opening to insert cards. One by one, I began placing the spell cards that I had brought with me into the gun, at which point I would be able to mentally call out which spell I wanted to trigger.

By the time I was done, the countdown was almost over, so I let out a long sigh, raising the gun up towards the sky. The instant the last second ticked away, I pulled the trigger. *Detect lifeforms.*

A green light shot out from the gun and into the sky, before spreading out in a wave in all directions. I wasn't sure how the previous two fighters had managed to find each other so quickly, but it was likely that everyone selected some kind of detection ability. Mine was a radar-like spell that could cover a massive area. Since there were only two living creatures in this world, it would make it easy to find him.

And sure enough, only a few moments later I felt a mental ping from the spell, showing me the location of my opponent. Closing my eyes, I began to spread out my chakra threads, preparing for the coming battle. It was now that I noticed my mana and ki levels, both of which were far higher than normal. *So this is what it will feel like…*

I shook my head to clear away the distraction, before firing off the gun again. *Step through space.* This time, the light that exploded out from the gun only moved a short distance before stopping, turning and covering my body. A moment later and I was high in the air above the other Keeper, who suddenly turned to face me from below.

Judging by his body, he had not modified his appearance as well. Though, I did not know what abilities he would have, so I wanted to play this safe. Before giving him a chance to release one of his attacks, I aimed the gun at him and poured a massive amount of mana into it. *Meteor call.* A yellow and red portal appeared in front of the gun, which then grew further and further until it seemed to cover the world beneath me. This was my most powerful spell that I had prepared, one that by itself had taken ten percent of the power allotment. From the portal, a giant flaming rock descended upon the world, crashing into it and causing a shockwave to spread out. Fire and ash filled my vision once the portal disappeared, rocks spreading across the horizon.

I cast my detection spell again, and abruptly turned towards my side, raising my left arm up reflexively. The grey-skinned Keeper must have teleported or something, because he was now in the air next to me, lashing out with a powerful kick. Even with my ki focused on defense, I felt something crack inside my arm, pain shooting through me.

Physical combat type… I mentally assessed what he had to have chosen based on what he showed, even as my body was sent flying away. Thankfully I had defended with my free arm, or I might have lost my only weapon.

Spreading my ki out around me, I used it as a curtain to catch the air, slowing myself down and eventually allowing my to stop. Already, the other Keeper was charging at me again, giving me just enough time to activate another of my spells before he arrived. *Intangibility.*

A soft blue glow appeared on the body of the gun just as the Keeper appeared in front of me again. When his fist, clad in the yellow glow of ki, slammed into my chest, it quickly passed through me. The sudden unexpected change sent the Keeper off balance long enough for me to lift my gun and trigger the second attacking spell.

In total, I had prepared three attack spells. The first was the meteor spell, for wide area destruction that could level a small country with ease. The second was specialized for dealing with supernatural defenses, turning them against their user. This was the third one, a pure, focused destruction on a single target. *Annihilate.*

From the barrel of the gun, mere inches from the other Keeper's face, a sickly green energy shot out. When it made contact with his head, the light in his eyes faded. A black spot formed at the point of contact, quickly spreading across his body. As it spread, he seemed to burn away, his body breaking apart into bits of ash that fell to the ground one after another.

Once the last speck of ash was blown away, the blue light surrounded my body once again, returning me to the stage. Across from me, the grey-skinned Keeper looked completely dumbfounded, as if he never understood how he lost like that even until the final moment. "How… what was that gun?" He asked, clearly figuring out that the gun I used played the largest part in my victory.

"Card Law with Card Magic." I told him the basic systems needed for the gun. "The gun was the Mage Pistol." Glancing around, I saw that only a few of the other fights had ended by now, with most still ongoing. That wasn't a surprise at all, seeing that I had managed to end mine rather quickly.

Leowynn, are you alright? I couldn't help but ask inwardly, part of me still concerned.

I'm fine, father. She answered from within my spiritual realm. *What happened? I saw you preparing to fight, and then it was over.*

You weren't able to watch what happened during the fight itself? That part surprised me slightly. I had expected her to just be sealed away in my spiritual realm unable to interfere. Instead, it seemed like she had just been locked out entirely.

No, I wasn't. Was it interesting? I could feel the curiosity in her tone as she asked that, as she had never seen me fighting with my full power before.

A soft chuckle escaped my lips while I shook my head. *I'll give my character spiritual energy next time, so you should be able to watch, at least.* If that didn't work, I'd have to try to find some other way to get Leowynn to watch the fights.

Looking around, I saw the various projections above the stages, showcasing each of the fights. Through most, I saw melee combatants, but there were a few that had gone for a more magic approach like myself. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the melee combatants could shatter a mountain with their strikes… because I saw someone do just that. On the other hand, the magic users had powerful spells.

At one of the fights, I saw that the two people hadn't actually met yet. Both of them likely chose a magic type, and were simply sitting in a meditative position at their starting point. Just as I began to wonder what they were up to, one of them abruptly opened their eyes and slammed their hand onto the ground.

The projection zoomed out to show the entire world that the two were fighting on, where a visible ripple could be seen flowing through it. The farther it moved, the larger it became. And when it arrived at the other Keeper on the far side, the planet itself exploded.

Is that what a fifth tier attack spell looks like? I asked myself in amazement. The only way that I could imagine that working was if they tried to cheat the system. Instead of using third and fourth tier powers, they got a fifth tier planet-busting attack spell. Given how long the two of them waited to build up their power for it, it took well more than half of their power total just for that one spell.

Of course, a strategy like that wasn't a viable one in the long run. After all, I had already finished my fight by the time he launched his attack. If I found either of them before their attack was ready, the fight would be over before they had the chance to move...