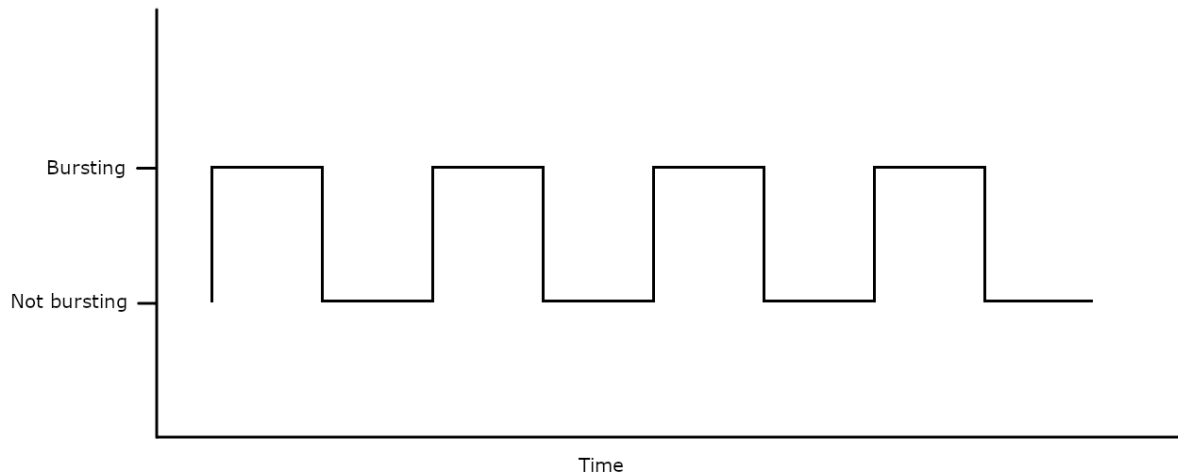To understand a complex problem, it's easier to simplify it first to see how changes affect things. Rather than considering every individual job, let's visualise the party as a whole and consider at any given moment whether they are doing burst damage or not.


Additionally, you can represent average damage over time by looking at the area under the graph. It should be linear in this example but a sine wave more closely represents actual in-game DPS, so I'm illustrating it with that.
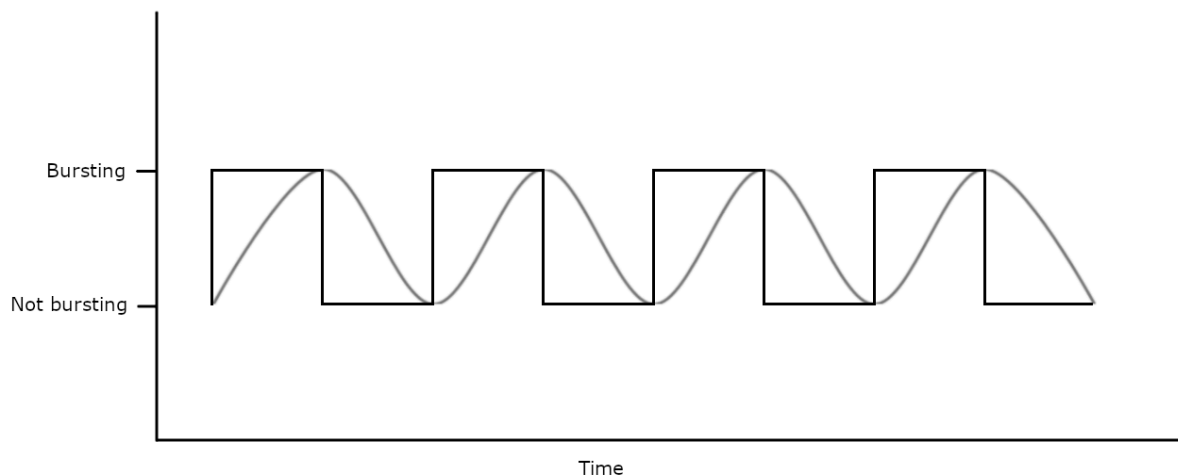

From this you can see that a party's DPS peaks at the end of a burst period, and is at its lowest point immediately before the next burst.

With this understanding, let's imagine that the burst is worth 2 and non-burst is worth 1; burst is twice as strong. Let's also assume that crits are worth 50% more, and there is an expected crit rate of 25%. Therefore you can expect the average increase of damage to be 12.5% (50%

increase happening 25% of the time). That means burst becomes worth 2.25, and non-burst becomes 1.125. Let's visualise that on the graph in green.
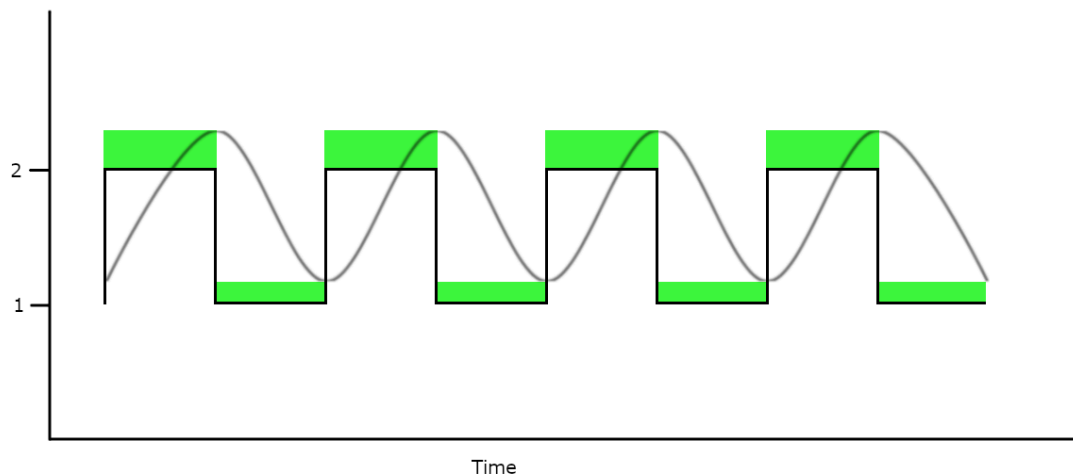
When balancing fights against expected DPS output, you should now be able to pick any point along that line and have that as the required DPS to beat enrage at that given moment. Let's pick an arbitrary point for enrage and required DPS and mark it in red.
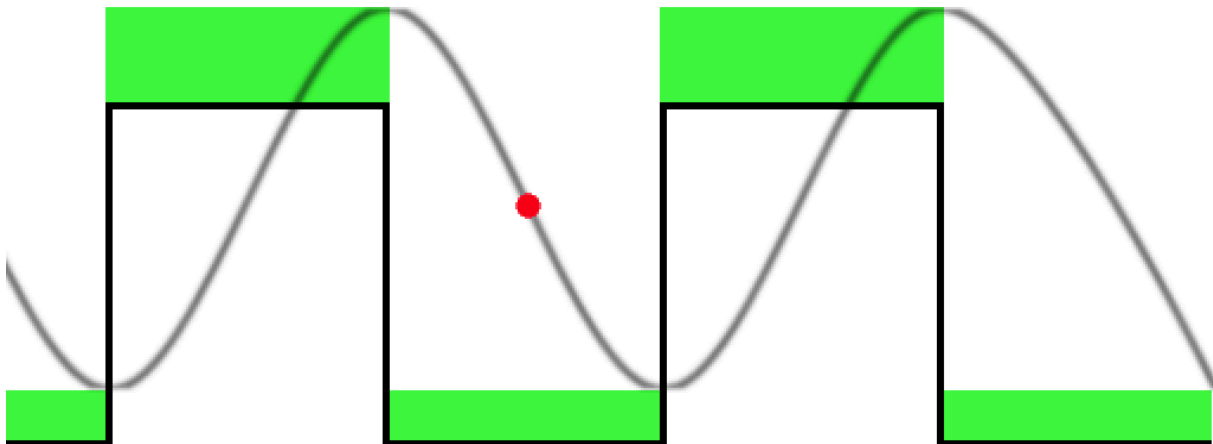
It seems reasonable. If you mess up your rotation at any point in the fight, that's your fault and if that means you fall below the red dot, you hit enrage. But this is in an ideal scenario where all of your crits fall evenly across all of your damage. What does it look like if you crit all your burst? Let's visualise:
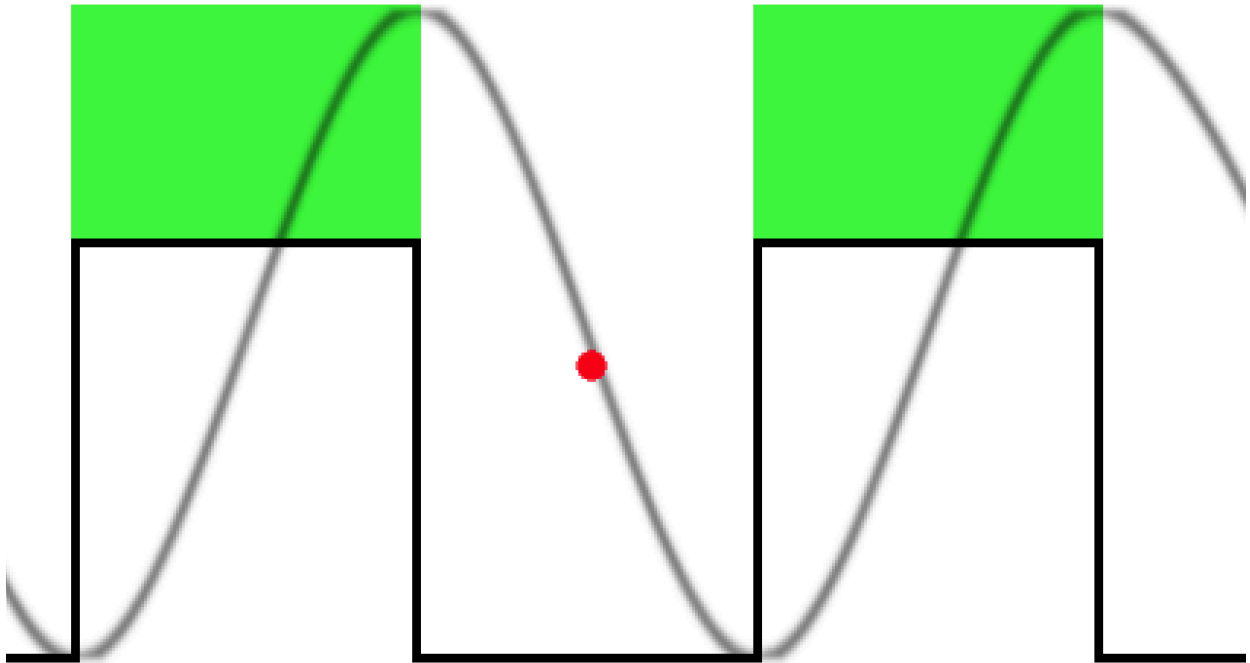
If you look closely, due to the fact that crits on burst are worth twice as much as non-burst, by being lucky with where you crit, this puts you above the enrage point. And what if you only crit your non-burst?
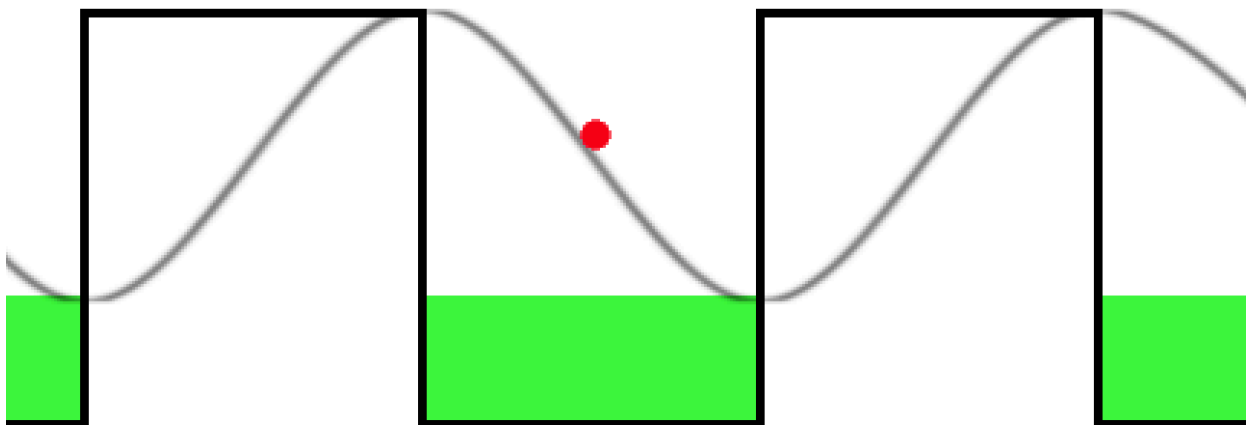
You fall below. So now we understand that even if you play exactly as expected, there is an element of RNG which determines whether you pass or fail. This isn't inherently a bad thing.

Randomness is a part of the majority of games (both video and board) and sometimes you have to deal with bad luck. The question is: What can you even do about bad luck? This brings into question Square Enix's choice to embrace a 2 minute burst cycle as their standard for job design (among other things, more on that later). By default, everything aligns correctly. You press your own buttons every 2 minutes and that will naturally align with everyone else doing the same thing. That means that the best anyone can do is play exactly as expected, as shown in the above graphs. Burst when you're supposed to, don't when you're not.

This has the illusion of being convenient for the average player. It's less complicated than the unsynced buff timers of 60s, 90s, 120s and 180s (not including random exceptions). That means you don't have to do anything unusual like holding your 2 minute buff at 8 minutes to line up at 9 minutes with the 3 minute buffs. But… what if you didn't *have* to? What if the DPS checks were tuned such that the expectation was that everyone just presses their buttons on cooldown, whenever it is ready? At that point a 90 second buff is functionally no different from a 2 minute buff. You press it when it's ready, and it will align with others whenever it naturally aligns.

Sure, everyone being synced up on 2 minutes by default makes it seem like it's easier to coordinate with your team. But by everything being on 2 minutes, this coordination is now no longer a choice, but a *necessity*. It feels like the devs are now tuning DPS checks expecting perfect buff alignment, because it is the default, as opposed to the pre-Endwalker era where the default was imperfect buff alignment. Imperfect, yes, but not wrong. The choice to hold buffs for better alignment was something additional you could do for extra damage, and helped make up the difference for running sub-optimal party comps. And that brings me to my next point.

Weak jobs. Warrior, Paladin, Machinist, to name a few. When DPS checks are balanced around a set expected way of playing, weak jobs become worse, and good jobs become better, and with everything standardised to 2 minutes, there's nothing you can do to make up this difference. So how do the devs balance around this? Do they set the DPS check expecting a full meta comp of maximum damage? Do they use a mix of weak and strong? Regardless of what you choose, there will be a group of 8 jobs that are simply objectively better than any other choice. This has always been the case as there will always be a best and a worst, but in Endwalker the job and fight design has removed the ability to make up the difference.

Now let's look at the latest patch notes for 6.21 and explanation of changes.
(https://eu.finalfantasyxiv.com/jobguide/battle/#battleaction)

Paladin

Although paladin has difficulty dealing high levels of burst damage when compared to other tank jobs, they excel at maintaining high sustained damage even when handling battle mechanics, by way of their ranged attacks.

However, recent duties have been designed to include features that reduce stress on tank and melee DPS jobs, such as significantly larger boss targeting circles. Because of these design choices, the unique advantage of paladin's high sustained damage loses its impact.
Using Abyssos: The Eighth Circle (Savage) as an example, there are prolonged periods where the enemy cannot be attacked, as well as mechanics that grant increased damage to players, further emphasizing the value of burst damage. In such situations, the job's incompatibility with the duty becomes more readily apparent.

To substantively resolve these issues, we believe a full re-evaluation of actions is required. That said, waiting for such an evaluation would mean prolonging the unfavorable state of paladin. For this reason, we have elected to increase the potency of their actions in Patch 6.21.

As more significant adjustments to action mechanics will require more time, such changes will be implemented from Patch 6.3 onward. For now, we have elected to adjust actions that will improve the job's burst damage.

Allow me to pick out some phrases:
- "*...they excel at maintaining high sustained damage…*"
- "*...the unique advantage of paladin's high sustained damage*"

These things are **good**. This is job identity. This is varied gameplay. This is being situationally better than other jobs depending on circumstances. These are not things which need "*a full re-evaluation of actions*". And, heck, if these are the reasons why people enjoy playing this job specifically, and not others, why would you take that away from them?

One more quote: "*there are… mechanics that grant increased damage to players*". Forgive me for being blunt, but if that is causing an issue with job balance, how about… don't? Don't point the finger at job design because one particular mechanic in one particular fight that granted increased damage caused there to be a larger discrepancy between job DPS when you can very easily just simply not put a double damage buff there and adjust the HP accordingly.

Let's also assess paladin's place in the above graphs. Paladin is not a burst job by nature, by SE's own explanation. They do sustained damage over time. Lower highs, but higher lows
.
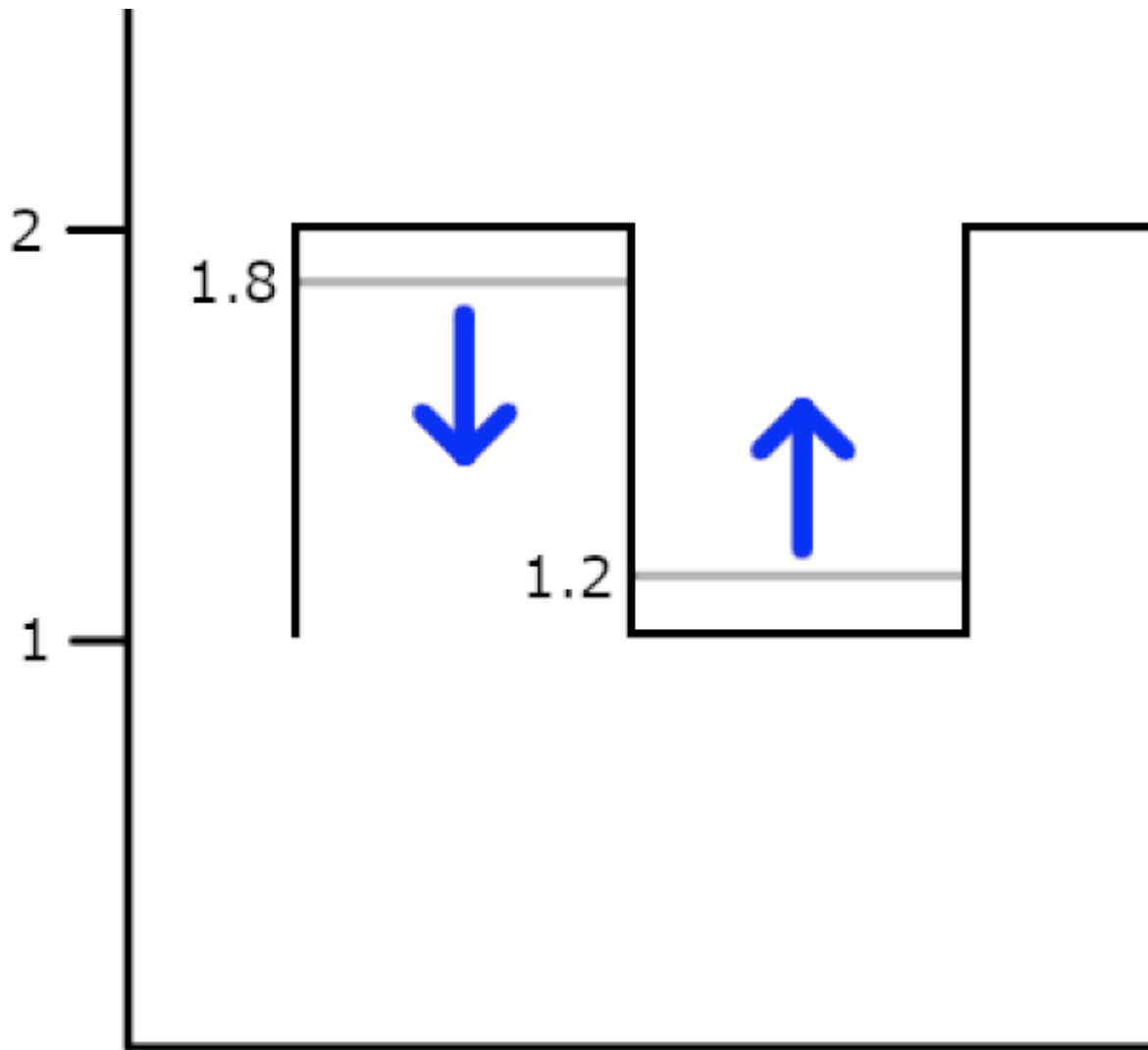
As an example, let's assume paladin's burst is worth 1.8, and their non-burst is 1.2. Before, we gained an average of 0.25 on burst, and 0.125 on non-burst, adding together for a total of 0.375 extra damage from crits. If we apply the same formula to the new numbers, we get 0.225 from burst, and 0.15 from non-burst. This also adds to 0.375, so what's the problem? This is where we break from our simplified example and consider the actual game. The existence of fully synchronised buffs every 2 minutes makes everything that everyone does during their burst window stronger. For other jobs, their total of 2.25 (base damage + crits) is being amplified, while at the same time paladin is only amplifying a total of 2.025.

What paladin is in this example is what every job used to be pre-Endwalker. Rather than strong bursts being every 2 minutes, they happened exclusively at 0, 6 and 12 minutes into a fight (12 could be moved to 9 with some buff holding). The "non-burst" period in-between was actually a whole lot of mini-bursts. That means that you could afford to make mistakes, you could afford to

have bad crit luck, because perfect synchronisation was less loaded with potency. Giving jobs super high potency abilities mainly introduced in Shadowbringers (400 used to be a lot in Heavensward, for perspective) and making it all happen at 2 minutes in Endwalker means those burst windows are all-important and whatever happens in-between is relatively meaningless.

Basically, in Endwalker, the devs have standardised so many jobs to 2 minutes that any jobs that have any remaining individuality and don't fit into this cookie cutter get left behind. And what is their solution? It's not to reevaluate their design choices, it's to push even more damage into these burst windows, which compounds the issue of crit RNG being an ultimate deciding factor on whether you pass or fail a DPS check. This design philosophy can be summarised as "make every job burst at 2 minutes and balance all jobs so they do the exact same damage. If a DPS check is too RNG dependent, lower it until it's not".

In Shadowbringers, they moved towards making every raid boss a "dummy fight", which was a stark contrast to design in the prior 2 expansions and ARR. What this means is that the boss fight is effectively the same as hitting a training dummy because it doesn't require any disengaging for melees. This takes away from the situational advantage that ranged jobs, and also paladin, had over their counterparts. In Endwalker they also made it easier, and expected, for everyone to synchronise their raid buffs and burst damage.

Raiding is now a game where everyone is able to press their buttons with near 100% efficiency with relative ease, and the devs expect this when they tune DPS checks. Who this affects the most are your average raiders that don't play long hours, they don't tryhard and they make rotational mistakes sometimes. If you drift your 2 minute buff, that's it. You're desynced for the rest of the fight. And while that didn't used to be the end of the world because there were still 60, 90 and 180 second buffs to play around, desyncing a 2 minute buff is now way more punishing, because those 2 minute windows are *everything*. It is the majority of the damage a party is doing during a fight, and it has been compromised.

DPS checks now have to be tuned low enough to account for mistakes rather than being tuned for average play with room to do even better. You may disagree with me but I think this is just straight up bad design. In the past if you made a mistake, someone else could make up for it. The fight designs themselves can still be fun, but the act of clearing them has become more frustrating. I have never personally seen so many people either quit the game or quit raiding after a raid tier as I have right now. The only other time you could say this happened was Gordias during Heavensward. And I don't think it's just due to a poorly tuned DPS check. The DPS check being bad is a symptom of the underlying design issues around jobs and raids.

So what is my proposed solution? Honestly, just go back. Revert buffs to their original unique timers. Leave the ones at 2 minutes that it makes sense for, but don't do it to everything. Reduce the size of hitboxes to give some room for melees to improve above what is expected, and **squash the potencies of abilities**! An ability doesn't have to be 1000+ potency for people to get a dopamine rush from critting it. If your average button potency is 250, then critting a 400 or 500 potency button is still going to feel good, but it won't feel nearly as bad if it doesn't crit. As

it is right now, high potency abilities are the main culprit for 2 minute burst windows being so important. If you even out the potencies, every job becomes more oriented towards sustained damage over time, with burst being an addition to your damage, rather than the majority of it. That also means that sustained damage over time specialists won't stick out like a sore thumb. They just burst less, but that's OK in this environment. Lastly, nerf crits. Remove crit damage scaling from crit stat, and rework that into direct hit instead. Direct hit existing alongside crit is just another multiplicative layer of damage variance on top of current 2 minute bursts. Big numbers will still be big numbers for those that like that, it's all just relative.

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