

# MIDNIGHT AT THE A&E

*Be a player.*

BY TAIK HOBSON

**HAVING A BAD DAY?**

Out the window from the 37th floor I fall, facing towards the heavens, arms stretched out for the divine deliverance I know will never arrive. Not a half second following my ejaculation, out hop the Minions of Bhenvul (#3: *Fear of what others might think*) in mad choreographed glee, their smiles small half moons against the starless night. I count one, two ... seven demons. Most of them will end up as demon guts on the asphalt but what difference will that make? I am one and they are minions. Stay on it! Taking aim, I activate both my RighteousRevolvers and the sky starts to rain demon blood; each shot a musical thunderclap in the key of C, true as its name[CP+5+5+5+5]. My head is still swimming from where I was struck earlier; poison of unimmortality working into my faculties, weakening my hold on the handle. And this isn't even the big boss.

**ON A GUILT TRIP?... AGAIN?**

I tell myself I might still make it. Using all my Confidence Points I PURCHASE: GodHand[Grapple][CP-20/0]

**CAN'T KEEP THOSE NAGGING INSECURITIES AWAY?**

GodHand is go! With seven floors to spare, I get a hold and break my fall through one of the windows, landing in a dark, empty office room sprinkled with pieces of glass. Outside I hear a cascade of demon laughter ending in a succession of splats. They think it's so funny; they don't have a clue. You try asking Emma Sophine out for a date. The thought alone invites paralysis.

I really shouldn't be thinking about this right now. Bringing up my worries is a potentially fatal slip of the mind; like a signalling beacon it attracts them. Tells them where I am.

**AT THE A&E, WE CAN HELP**

Too late, I think, as the walls begin to morph. I'm out of the window just as shattered pieces of the original partition becomes a living maw, crystallized canines scraping up against my back and I know I'm in trouble. Resorting to a vertical dash, it's all I can do to concentrate on each footstep as I try to keep a better watch on my thoughts. The Null Devourer, Spawn of Nefrul (#2: *Lack of self worth*) is a pandimensional entity that becomes the antithesis of everything thrown at it. If I don't kill it now, I will be haunted by its bulbous visage for weeks to come.

Warped face in my morning cereal, corrosive odour in my sweat. Watch your dreams turn into nightmares!

Somehow, you always get more than you bargain for at the A&E. I wonder if that's why I keep coming back.

**FACE THOSE EMOTIONAL BLOCKS ONE ON ONE**

I'm storming up the side of the building, dispensing Righteousness left, right, centre and just about anywhere I can, the whole structure having turned squishy and flesh-like. To hit the Devourer I'll have to move onto something smaller, but for now the strategy is to stay alive. Take that, oviposterior!

of unworlly halitosis, “— meet Null Devourer.”

**SHOW THEM WHO'S IN CHARGE**

Commands get scrambled thru the shock of the electrified grapple line/half-morphed Devourer, wreaking havoc on my handle and firing off stray, half-baked signals. I'm screaming. Somewhere, I can smell spit sizzling off an overheated interface ... console ... the experience is ... the experience ... what ... experience ... what am I doing ... am —

**AVATARIZE**

— doing?[CP+50] —

**THEN EXORCISE**

... Avatarize ... then Exorcise. The A&E ...and ... thank god for in-game commercials. My first thought when I come to is that I'm hanging by the ledge of an open window, handle realigning itself by the tips of my finger. Think. Emma Sophine. That's why you're here. So-deep-Phine-breath.

And then I see her. Ijana, Queen of Horns (#1: *Fear of rejection*). This is it. Big Boss time. The one final barrier between me and bliss. I feel my stomach seize as my handle braces for action. Deep breaths now. In less than 10 seconds she will be directly beneath me, another 20 she'll have moved into centre position, reconfiguring with her hive, making her virtually invulnerable. This is my chance. Kill her now and I can finally ask Emma out for a date. Kill her, and I will be holding That Hand.

PURCHASE: SoulSword[Blade][CP-30/20]

It's funny, the things we do to avoid facing the real thing.

I unsheath my SoulSword and jump. I have exactly no tricks left up my sleeve. The distance closes and the Queen looks up from the sound of my screaming. For a half second I forget why I do this, when I see Ijana move her own crown of horns out of my way, leaving me with a clean shot at her forehead. And the third eye embedded in there.

“DIE, DEMON! DIE!”

**THIS HAS BEEN A WORDED ACCOUNT OF AN IN-GAME SESSION. FOR OUR SPRING CAMPAIGN, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE. HAVING A BAD DAY? AT THE A&E, WE CAN HELP. ■**

*Having sworn off computer games in favour of a normal life, Taik Hobson lives in Japan.*



“GYA-HA-HA-HAAAAW~!”

I look up in time to catch a falling minion in the face, a late addition to the previous mess, the pair of us thrown into a complete free fall from the impact. With my revolvers lost it takes every ounce of concentration just to keep the demon's paws of wild electricity from brushing against me. In one of our twirls I register rows of lidless eyeballs where the building windows once were, moving in unison, tracking us hungrily. There's nothing sophisticated about this Devourer; it's just going for the one thing that's keeping me alive at the moment. Case in point: I blink and the building that was a writhing overfed larva a second ago is now plain bricks and mortar, whereas the line from my grapple — the GodHand that's keeping me from hitting the pavement — begins to swell and pop scales. This is too much. “Demon —” I man-age under the stench

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