



A.R. DRAGONFLY
VOLUME 1

1



ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

A cold wind howled through a dystopian cityscape littered with ruin. Overturned cars, broken glass, snapped light posts and copious amounts of trash littered the city streets as far as the eye could see. The sky was filled with dark, ominous clouds generating a cold wind that whipped around the corners of those buildings that remained standing.

In the chill of the wasteland stood a woman. She stood around five feet, six inches in height with a slender, yet, firm build. Her long, flowing black hair contained vivid purple streaks that easily stood out. Her hair only accented her violet eyes as well as her black and purple bodysuit decorated with silver armor. The details of the armor itself were immaculate. Small silver metal pads tightly hugged her shoulders, silver gauntlets protected her wrists, and silver footwear decorated with heroic emblems covered her feet. She also sported a silver belt which contained a holster on both hips, each containing a futuristic-looking black and violet pistol. While the silver armor was minimal, it highly accented her jumpsuit. The plated armor seemed almost unnecessary given the flexibility of her outfit.

The woman slowly scanned her surroundings, looking for any signs of life within the ruined cityscape. Realizing that she was truly alone, she turned her back and began to wander away but she was suddenly halted in her tracks by a faint “swooshing” sound. She turned to her side slightly and raised her right arm up as a brilliant yellow light clashed against her silver-plated gauntlet. Upon impact,

much like the atmosphere on a hot and hazy day, the air around her vibrated and distorted as the yellow light splashed and slowly dissipated into the air.

She looked over her shoulder and narrowed her eyes as a lone man who stood around six feet, four inches in height landed from out of the sky in a knelt position. He was clad in heavy black plate armor, decorated with red, glowing runes. His helmet contained black horns which accented a devilish skull mask that ended at the point of the nose. He looked as if hell itself had spawned him as he slung his black and red runeblade over his shoulder.

Bathed in the aura of a pale light, a petite, feminine mouth cracked a grin and let out a small “Hmph.”

“So, another chode wants ta dance?”

The armored man’s armor began to light up. All of a sudden, his entire body became bathed in a Purple Aura, completely clashing with the color of his armor. That same feminine mouth, now grinning from ear to ear, was seen licking her lips.

“Shadow Step, Dark Rising, Onyx Cleave.”

As soon as she muttered those words, the man in front of her disappeared in a streak of red and purple light, rushing towards her. The woman created an “X” guard with her arms as the man stopped mere inches in front of her. The aura that surrounded the man changed from

purple to yellow. He darted up into the air, leaving an afterimage behind to serve as a diversion. A split second later, his aura changed from yellow back to purple. He did a forward flip in mid-air and dove down with his sword extended, his body leaving a purple and red streak behind him in his wake. The woman simply sidestepped as her body became bathed in a Blue Aura. After the sword widely missed, the woman pulled out one of the futuristic-looking black and violet pistols. She cracked a smile as the man looked up at her, his eyes widening through the eye sockets of his demonic skull mask.

The woman, without hesitation or remorse, pulled the trigger causing a blue ray of light to pierce through one side of his mask and straight out the other. The man survived the hit and switched to his Blue Aura. His Shadow Step ability had a fifteen-second interval before it could be used again. Enough time had passed to where he used Shadow Step to dart backward, but it wasn't enough. The woman fired several more times, each shot connecting with the man and piercing right through his armor. She didn't let up until the man collapsed to the ground. Seeing him motionless was a sign that she had won the battle. A victory fanfare theme went off in the background and the words "Dragonfly Wins" appeared in the sky.

The cityscape digitized and faded away, almost as if the scenery had glitched out. After the city faded, we were brought to a battle results screen. Sitting in a chair, staring the results screen on a computer monitor was

a girl, twenty years of age. The girl leaned back in her chair, letting out a heavy sigh of disappointment. She was illuminated only by the glow of her computer monitor as her room was extremely dark, giving off the notion that it was the middle of the night.

Her skin was very pale, unlike her shoulder-length hair which was a wild rainbow of color. The right side of her hair was neon blue with neon yellow streaks while the left side was neon green with neon pink streaks. She had bangs which stopped right above her violet eyes. She wore a black hoodie that was open and unzipped, revealing a loose-fitting white t-shirt underneath. The front of her shirt had a picture of a grenade with a smiley face on it with arms outstretched accompanied by the text "Friendship Grenade."

Her head began to slowly slump down as she closed her eyes. She fought to stay awake but she could feel herself slipping away with each passing second. She realized that she was at her limit and shook her head to jolt herself awake. She reached forward and powered off her monitor, leaving her computer running. She slowly stood up revealing that she was wearing nothing but light gray boxers for pants. She pushed her chair under the desk and looked at her bed which was just a mere six feet away.

"Ugh... too far..." she muttered.

She looked down at the floor and noticed a rather large

pile of laundry. She let out a huge yawn as she reached behind and scratched her ass. She then shrugged and free fell face first into the clothes, almost instantly falling asleep upon impact.



Time began to elapse. Soon, the golden rays of the morning sun did their best to find their way through the room-darkening curtain she had covering her window. Her room became dimly lit as a result, revealing a room not typical of what you would expect from your everyday girl.

Bookshelves lined with Japanese manga, more bookshelves filled with video game cases, various video game and anime figures were littered about and a bed that was not-so-neatly kept painted the picture of a girl that was a pure geek at heart.

As time continued to pass, the room became slightly brighter. Suddenly, time stopped and that's when the girl was jolted awake by the sound of a doorbell.

Her eyes snapped open and her heart began to pound. "What the actual hell!?" echoed throughout her mind as she laid there amongst her laundry. The girl slowly pulled herself up off of the pile of clothes and stumbled around to try and gain her balance.

Like a zombie, she shuffled toward her front door with a random light pink sock stuck to the back of her boxers. She slowly crept up to the eyehole and peered through it.

Suddenly, she began to sweat nervously. Her breathing became rapid, yet shallow. Her hands quivered as she slowly reached for the lock. She slowly turned it and then

brought her attention to the doorknob. Right before her hand made contact with it, she gulped and took a deep breath. The handle rattled as her quivering hand grasped the knob and turned it. She slowly pulled the door open as the golden rays of the sun had finally found an entrance into her apartment. She leaned to her side and poked her head into the opening she created.

On the other side of the door was a man dressed in a brown UPS outfit. He looked at his clipboard and then up at the girl who was staring at him like a deer in headlights from behind the door.

“Hello, I have a package here for Amber Ryann?”

“Y-yes... t-that’s me...” she muttered nervously.

“Perfect! Sign here, please.”

The man pointed his electronic signature pad toward the door. Amber took another deep breath and opened the door wider so that she could grab the pad and sign for her package. She picked up the stylus and attempted to sign her name, but it resembled nothing more than a digital scribble. She sheepishly handed the pad back to the man who, in exchange, handed her the package.

“Thank you, ma’am. Have a great day.”

Just like that, the UPS driver left the vicinity. Amber quickly used her free arm to close and lock the door. She took a

few steps forward and arrived at her kitchen counter. She placed the package down on the white marble top and then made a fist with her hand, pounding it onto the top of the counter as hard as she could.

“Freakin’ normies! Gettin’ me up before my respawn timer could finish! My IRL stats are sufferin’ right now. What time is it, anyways?”

Amber glanced over at the clock on her microwave and noticed that it was 3:18 in the afternoon. Amber’s eyes widened and her mouth became agape when she saw what time it was.

“Are you freakin’ kiddin’ me!? That chode got me out of bed so early! Like... who the hells wakes up before five!? Uggs...”

Before Amber could finish her tirade, she was interrupted by the growling of her empty stomach. She shuffled over to her fridge and yanked it open. When she peered inside, a shocked, yet confused, expression came over her face.

“Who the hell grubbed out on my ‘za!?”

Amber turned and looked back into her room where she spied an empty pizza box laying on her bed. It suddenly hit her that she was the one who had finished off her pizza. Then again, there wouldn’t be anyone else who would have since Amber lived alone. Coming to that realization, she palmed her forehead rather harshly. The impact

caused her to stagger back a couple of steps.

“Oh, right...” muttered Amber. “I wonder if any places are open this early? Uggs... this wasn’t the way I wanted to start the last day of my ‘cation.”

Amber picked up the phone and went to call a pizza place to order more food but she remembered that ordering a pizza would mean more social interaction. When she thought about interacting with the UPS driver a few moments ago, she decided that it was enough social interaction for one day. She caved in and decided to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich instead. Once she finished making it, Amber scooped up her package and headed back toward her room, carrying the sandwich in her mouth like a cat bringing a dead animal to its owner.

She made her way over to her computer where she plopped down in front of it and turned the monitor on. With the sandwich still hanging from her mouth, she sat the package on her desk and proceeded to make her normal rounds around the internet by checking her E-Mail and social media websites. Finally, she took a bite of the sandwich and placed it down on her desk. She began to spin her chair around, seemingly bored.

“Gods... why am I still up!? Like... nobody’s gonna be on Blaze Auras this early. Like... what am I s’posed to do? Go chow down on some after school scrublebs? I guess I could use the practice for the upcomin’ Legacy of Champions tourney, but pssh... not likes I needs the

luck or anythin'. Although, t'would be nice if could win this tourney and use that sweet G.P. cash to pay a few bills. It's only 'cause there ain't enough tourneys around here for me to win that I gotta work some pleb job. I really don't wanna go back t'morrow night... wish I could just sit here an' game."

Amber stopped spinning around in her chair and then took a moment to survey her room. She scratched the side of her head as if she were trying to figure something out.

"Who the hell am I talkin' to!?"

Amber spun around once again until she came face-to-face with her computer. She spied the package sitting there on her desk and realized that she hadn't even opened it yet. She didn't even know who the package was from since she hadn't ordered anything recently. She grabbed it and looked at the return address. It was from a place she didn't recognize. Amber grabbed her sandwich and took another bite before she decided to go ahead and open it.

"Probs filled with anthrax or somethin' Welp... only one way ta find out."

Amber grabbed her house keys and used them as a knife, slicing open the packing tape.

"Aaaand this is how I die," she muttered as she slowly opened the lid.

The box was filled with packing peanuts. She tilted her head to the side as she tried to make out just what could be buried beneath them. She slowly put her hand in and felt a cardboard box. She slowly pulled it out and noticed it was a gaming headset. Amber was quite puzzled by this, but she decided to dig her hand back into the box where she found a piece of paper even further down. She pulled it out and noticed that it was a letter from the creators of Blaze Auras, the game she was just playing the previous night. She began to read the letter out loud.

“Dear Dragonfly. We wanted to congratulate you for making it to the top of the Blaze Auras leaderboards and becoming the first winner of the Legacy of Champions tournament. While we already rewarded you with the money for taking home the grand prize, we wanted to show you another token of appreciation for continuing to play our game. If you decide to take part in our second annual tournament in a few months, we would greatly appreciate it if you could wear our branded headset during your matches! Thank you for being an integral part of Blaze Auras and we look forward to your continued support.”

“Yo, I just got hooked up!”

Amber then shrugged and tossed the headset onto her bed and dropped the box on the floor at her feet.

“I’ll wear their headset if I decide to go back to this year’s tournament. I’ll stick with my own until then.”

With that business settled, Amber immediately double clicked the Blaze Auras icon on her desktop and launched the game. When the game loaded, she hovered over her character name which was listed as Dragonfly. She thought about clicking it, but then a devilish grin lit up her face.

“Nah... I gots a better idea.”

Amber clicked the button to create a new character from scratch. Her eyes drifted off to the up and left as she put her index finger up to her chin. The most excruciating moment of a gamer’s life had presented itself to Amber. She was trying to decide what to name this new character. Amber then shrugged her shoulders and typed in the first name that came to mind. With a few ticks of the keyboard, “Plebchomper” was born.

Once her “alt” was created, she went to head into the game but it was there that her face had a dumbfounded look on it. It was then she realized that she couldn’t enter a match because she never disabled the option to skip the tutorial. Amber palmed her forehead hard when she realized that she had been sentenced to sitting through a tutorial that she had no interest in listening to. One of the nagging features of Blaze Auras is that unless it’s disabled in the options menu, there was no way to exit or cancel the tutorial once it began. What made the situation worse was that the tutorial had a horrendous role-playing voice over.

“WELCOME MY NEW ADVENTURER! We must make haste and have you take up arms and fight for the realm of Nara! Nara has been under attack by evil forces and we need heroic warriors like you to don the power of the BLAZE AURAS!”

Amber continued to sit there, mouth agape and eyes widened at just how bad this voice acting was. When she first started playing Blaze Auras, there was no such thing as a tutorial. This was a complaint among many casual fans as they felt that the game was a bit too hard to learn just by being dropped into it. The tutorial wasn't patched into the game until much later so this was the first time Amber was seeing this for herself. Still, she couldn't believe that her beloved game would put out something this cringe-worthy.

“FEAR NOT BRAVE HERO! We won't just cast you into the wastelands of Nara unprepared! Sit back, relax and grab a slog of local gruel and we'll have you in tip-top fighting shape in no time!”

Amber tilted her head to the side as if she were trying to comprehend just what a slog of gruel was or why the game even suggested such a thing. She even went as far to tap the ESC key a few times to try and get out of this torturous situation, but alas, nothing worked.

“Before I can recognize you as a champion of Nara, we need to get you working on the basics! Look to your interface young warrior and take notice of the bar in the

upper left-hand corner of the screen! This bar is your energy meter! Each time you use a skill, your energy meter will deplete! Use it all up and you'll have to find cover until it can recharge!"

"Next up is something known as recharge time! Using certain skills is tough to do, even for the beefiest of warriors! Sooner or later, the mightiest champion will become the slothful lollygagger if they overuse their skills! It takes time for some skills to become useful again! Keep that in mind and make careful choices out there on the battlefield! We need our heroes to stay alive to put up the good fight!"

"Of course, there are some skills that you can use without needing to wait for them to recharge but they do very little damage! However, even the weakest skills can be a powerful weapon in the right hands! You can chain these weaker skills together and form combos! Just imagine obliterating the enemy forces and earning prestige among the ranks of your fellow warriors by showing off those flashy combo skills of yours!"

"With me so far young warrior? GOOD! Because I'm about to BLOW YOUR MIND!"

At that point, Amber leaned back in her chair as if to gain as much distance away from her monitor as possible. She couldn't believe that the creators of Blaze Auras; a game that heavily relied on skill to be even remotely competitive, stooped so low to produce this living abomination of a

tutorial. She even began to think if they went overboard on purpose to scare casual people away from the game. It certainly wasn't doing anyone any favors. Even though this was mind-numbingly horrible, she realized that she was already down the rabbit hole and her morbid curiosity began to get the better of her.

“What if I told you that you can use THREE different skill sets!? These skills sets are contained in something called AURAS! Every character starts off with a Blue Aura with the most basic skills. When a character gains enough experience, they will level up. At level 10, they gain access to the Yellow Aura skill set. Finally, when a player reaches level 25, they gain access to the all-powerful Purple Aura skill set! Now, here's the part where I BLOW YOUR MIND! You can switch between different color auras AT WILL AND AT ANY TIME!”

Amber simply nodded her head as if she were simply agreeing with the narrator fearing physical harm if she went against the grain.

“Isn't that handy, young warrior? We're giving you the freedom of choice in your power so you can vanquish enemies with ease! Here in the realm of Nara, we want cool, unique warriors so that's why we don't just give you an etched-in-stone set of skills to play with. Instead, we give you an entire swimming pool FILLED with skills to choose from so you can build your character the way you want to! Play your playstyle! Kill, maim, and ravage enemies with your own personal flair! You can even

combine two of our different hero classes together and create something TOTALLY AWESOME! IS YOUR MIND BLOWN YET!? It should be because if it's not, then I must wonder whose brain matter that is all over my floor!"

"Now then, brave young warrior. Now that I've filled your blown mind with the power of knowledge... GO FORTH AND CLAIM VICTORY!!!"

A fanfare theme played and Amber was brought to the skill selection screen. Despite being released from that torturous hell, she couldn't bring herself to do a single thing. She had been completely stunned silent by that tutorial just now. When Amber finally decided to move her arm, she slowly reached up and pressed the gear icon to bring up the game's settings menu. There, she quickly navigated to the General Options section and disabled the tutorial. She then closed out the game and slowly turned her monitor back off.

Amber rose up out of her chair. The clingy pink sock finally released itself from the back of Amber's boxers as she sauntered over to her bed. She tossed the empty pizza box and her shiny new headset onto the floor and looked back at her computer.

"I'm... just... gonna go back ta bed and face hump my pillow. When these eyes open again... we're gonna pretend that didn't just happen. Yeppers."

With that, Amber hopped into bed and pulled the covers

up over her entire body, instantly wrapping herself up in a blanket burrito. Just a few seconds passed before those covers flew off her bed and she hopped back out of it.

“Screw it, I’m over it. I’ve got plebs to wreck.”

Amber sat back down and turned her monitor back on. She relaunched Blaze Auras and took another bite of her sandwich as the game loaded back up. She clicked on her newly created Plebchomper character and went to set her skills but she hesitated for a moment. She quickly went back to the game settings and made sure that the tutorial was turned off. When she confirmed that it was, she quickly assigned her skills and entered the matchmaking system. After a few moments, the system found a match.

A versus screen came up displaying two very generic-looking characters. One of which belonged to Amber, the other was named Tacklebox8271. Amber rolled her eyes and instantly profiled her opponent, silently judging them in the most stereotypical way possible.

As the match began, she noticed her opponent standing out in the middle of the battlefield in plain sight. He instantly took notice of Amber and charged directly at her. Amber snickered and then busted out laughing. Right when her opponent got close, she tapped the 1, 3, 5, and 2 keys on her keyboard. The first key used her instant skill “Defense Up.” The second key followed that up with the “Sacrifice Defense” ability, draining her newly applied Defensive Shield and adding its value to her attack pool.

That ability had a ten-second recharge duration so it should only be used when you know you're going to have the upper hand.

The third skill went off right as her opponent was in melee range of her character. "Rising Fist" was a pop-up attack that knocked her opponent up into the air. Then, the 2 key pulled out her pistol, which was pretty basic at that point, and fired a quick bullet into her opponent, striking him in mid-air. Since, at level one, a player's health is so low, the extra attack power she boosted her character with enabled both of those attacks to take 80% of her opponent's life away. Amber just stood there and watched her opponent fall out of the sky. Upon hitting the ground, her opponent took fall damage which drained the remaining amount of his life.

The victory fanfare theme went off with the words "Plebchomper Wins" appearing in the air. Amber was still laughing hysterically at what just happened. She even let out a little snort amongst the hysteria.

"He just... he just ran right in. O-M-G. He ran straight in! Your mom buy you a 'puter for Christmas, broski?"

Amber composed herself and backed out of the match. She quickly re-entered the matchmaking system and leaned back in her chair, wiping the tears from her eyes after laughing so hard.

“Maybe the last day of my ‘cation is gonna be fun after all!”

This was the life of Amber Ryann... an elite pro gamer who survived off of a combination of tournament prize money and a supplemental income from a part-time job. When she wasn't working, she was home playing her favorite game Blaze Auras. She was at the top of the leaderboard and nobody could touch her. After winning the first-ever Legacy of Champions tournament last year, a tournament created specifically for Blaze Auras, she gained massive popularity within the online community.

Little did Amber know that soon, all of that fame and confidence would end up painting a rather large target on her back.