# Illithid’s Eidolon Ramblings

### Eidolon Difficulty Tier List

| **S**  (Really Fucking Hard) | Abyssal  Reflective  Punishment |
| --- | --- |
| **A**  (Difficult, but manageable) | Blurred  Fundamental  Stable  Tempest  Synchronous  Canopy |
| **C**  (Not that hard, but could be an issue for some groups) | Sacrificial  Rancorous  Labyrinthine  Screaming  Adamant  Marine  Enceladian  Gaze |
| **F**  (Very Easy) | Purity  Siege  Agony |

### Foreword:

These are all of the Eidolon layers from Wallflower Part 1, ranked by difficulty. This is all my opinion, based on anecdotal experience taken from playing with my own groups. The primary factors that I used to decide difficulty, beyond how well my players did against them in the 2 campaigns I ran with all the layers being fought once, are as follows:

* Damage/Heat Output
  + How much damage the layer does. Many layers have guaranteed or unavoidable damage.
  + Some layers have scaling damage that increases every round or every time it uses a weapon or system.
* Mechanical Difficulty
  + This assumes that you are reading the suggested hint text from the layer description and not some intentionally obtuse bullshit like I tend to do sometimes (See Other Stuff for more info).
  + How easy it is to brute force the layer by just killing it and not interacting with the mechanics.
  + How punishing the mechanics are if ignored.
  + How difficult the mechanics are to interact with.
* Survivability
  + How hard the layer is to kill, either by brute force or when utilizing the mechanics.
  + Some layers cannot be killed without interacting with their mechanics.

### Adamant

* Difficulty
  + Pretty easy to deal with, but can hit pretty hard, especially if fighting at close range.
* Good Against
  + Close-range characters
  + High armor
  + Deathball party compositions
* Bad Against
  + Burn and AP damage
  + Characters that make lots of attacks
  + The Shredded condition
* My Thoughts
  + A good, well-rounded layer with intuitive counterplay.

### Blurred

* Difficulty
  + Lots of CC and high evasion make it very difficult to deal with if you don’t have a hacker.
  + All the damage is save-based or guaranteed.
* Good Against
  + Low agility saves
* Bad Against
  + Hackers
  + Smart weapons
* My Thoughts
  + Spamming stuns isn’t fun. Like half of the party will be stunned at any given time.
  + Somewhat dangerous, very annoying. Knocking it out with hacks and murdering it is very cathartic.

### Fundamental

* Difficulty
  + This layer can become more difficult if there are a lot of shards from previous layers.
  + All the damage is hull save based
* Good Against
  + Low hull saves.
  + High mobility parties that like to split up
* Bad Against
  + Forced movement resistance
  + Deathball party compositions
* My Thoughts
  + Fun puzzle layer that has enough damage and CC to still be a threat.
  + The TTRPG equivalent of assembling IKEA furniture, with all the good and bad that implies.

### Marine

* Difficulty
  + Can be brute-forced, but playing with the layer mechanic is pretty easy for most parties.
* Good Against
  + Melee characters
* Bad Against
  + Hackers / Heatgunning
* My Thoughts
  + Well-balanced layer with lots of counterplay.
  + Having your mech get vored by a kaiju is pretty cool. Getting thrown at your friends as a projectile weapon is also cool.
  + Hard-counters melee characters, but its E-def is so low that even something like a Blackbeard can still try to hack it if they lose all of their weapons. Improvised Strike is also a thing.

### Enceladian

* Difficulty
  + Depends on how many players in the party like to play with heat.
  + Scary if your only way of generating heat is overcharging.
* Good Against
  + Characters that don’t use heat.
* Bad Against
  + Reactor criminals
* My Thoughts
  + This layer is very interesting for characters with low heat caps and no heat management. Having to choose between potentially stressing yourself or getting the shit beat out of you is very fun and engaging.
  + For characters that manage heat, this layer lets them go all out, overcharge every turn, and make John Creighton Harrison proud.

### Gaze

* Difficulty
  + Pretty easy, the save-based damage isn’t that hard to deal with and the zones don’t hurt that much.
* Good Against
  + Low mobility
* Bad Against
  + Terrain creation
  + Defenders
  + Mobile strikers
* My Thoughts
  + Very easy to brute-force, and it might be the best option depending on shard placement and terrain. Discourage/give free workarounds for this by having shards detonate on top of players if you feel like it and the opportunity presents itself.

### Rancorous

* Difficulty
  + The real difficulty of this layer comes from the layer after it. Anyone that gets hit by anything is probably going to brace and/or have to immediately stabilize, so people are going to be caught in very bad situations for the first round of the next layer.
* Good Against
  + everything
* Bad Against
  + nothing
* My Thoughts
  + A very fun and cool layer. It makes people panic and creates a very tense and memorable moment.

### Labyrinthine

* Difficulty
  + The layer mechanics are really easy, but the scaling heat gain will start to hurt eventually if the puzzle isn’t solved somewhat quickly.
  + At higher tiers, anyone that didn’t level engineering will have to stabilize pretty much every turn to avoid stressing.
* Good Against
  + Low heat cap
  + Players that are bad at elementary-school puzzles.
* Bad Against
  + High heat cap / good heat management
* My Thoughts
  + Playing rock paper scissors is fun, doing a roll-off instead cheapens the experience and destroys the wackiness that makes this layer unique. If you are using a VTT, have someone count you down while both parties enter it in the chat at the same time or something.
  + This is the only thing in the game that actively breaks the 4th wall, and I fucking love it.

### Agony

* Difficulty
  + The shards solve the layer’s gimmick for you. Shaking them off is only necessary if you have lots of them and don’t want them all to die when you get hit by the beam.
  + If there is cover and terrain features on the map, this layer is even easier.
* Good Against
  + Low mobility
* Bad Against
  + Terrain creation
  + Drone spam
  + High mobility
* My Thoughts
  + This is probably the easiest layer.

### Punishment

* Difficulty
  + Lots of CC and decent damage. This layer hits hard and is tough to deal with.
  + Is immune to half the party’s damage at the start of each round.
  + Unlike many layers, you can’t just ignore the mechanic and win by brute force
* Good Against
  + Low mobility
* Bad Against
  + High mobility
  + High single-target DPS
  + Well-coordinated parties
* My Thoughts
  + This layer is consistently difficult, but beating it feels really good. It forces teamwork and the payoff is awesome.
  + (insert some bullshit about “the power of friendship” here)

### Purity

* Difficulty
  + The DPS check is pretty easy to pass, especially if you kill the shards first.
  + The chip damage is minimal, but can add up.
* Good Against
  + Low damage per hit and many attacks
* Bad Against
  + High single-hit damage
* My Thoughts
  + I question the party composition of any group that has trouble dealing with this layer.

### Reflective

* Difficulty
  + Depending on how many energy/burn focused strikers you have, this can easily become an unwinnable fight.
  + Has the potential to shit out a ton of shards, like more than is easily manageable. Combined with the mind control, it is easy to get tarpitted.
* Good Against
  + Any party with people that use energy/burn.
  + Bad systems saves.
  + Characters that don’t like making attacks.
  + Low armor
* Bad Against
  + Good systems saves
  + Strikers without energy/burn
  + Anyone with 2+ armor
* My Thoughts
  + The mind control thing is kinda unfun for anyone that isn’t a striker.
  + Can massively spike the difficulty of the next layer depending on how many shards get created.

### Canopy

* Difficulty
  + Not hard, just annoying.
* Good Against
  + basically nothing, it hates everyone equally
* Bad Against
  + AOEs
  + lots of small attacks
* My Thoughts
  + This layer is a fucking slog to get through at higher tiers. It spawns 1d3 shards per turn, so once you’ve killed all the pre-existing shards, you can only do 2\*2d3 or 2\*3d3 damage to it per round assuming all shards are killed every round. This means it will take roughly 4-5 rounds to kill just this layer at T3. This number drops significantly at lower tiers.
  + I would not recommend running this at T3, and would only run it at T2 for a fight with less than 5 layers.
  + This layer adds like an hour to the play time of the fight by itself.

### Sacrificial

* Difficulty
  + Between the linked character getting resistance and the shards focusing on them, it tends to kill itself faster than it kills the players or the players kill it.
* Good Against
  + Squishy characters
  + High single-target damage
  + Paracausal Weapon
  + High evasion
* Bad Against
  + Tanky characters
  + High single-target damage
  + Low evasion
* My Thoughts
  + Rivalry is pretty funny, especially if you make the glass cannon players hit each other.
    - Improvised Strike is a thing. Don’t point this out unless prompted or you feel the need to be nice for some inexplicable reason.
  + If you are mean, never use Rivalry on someone currently linked with Share Pain. Make the players choose between hitting each other to avoid stun and hitting each other to kill the boss.
  + Not too difficult, but still very fun and memorable.

### Siege

* Difficulty
  + Pretty easy. Players can ignore the mechanic and be completely fine.
  + The shards are honestly meaner than the Eidolon itself.
  + The shards do the layer’s gimmick for you to an extent.
* Good Against
  + Grapple/ram enthusiasts
  + Controllers
  + Drone spam
  + Terrain creation
  + Deathball party compositions
* Bad Against
  + Long-range characters
  + Parties that can spread out effectively
  + High mobility
* My Thoughts
  + This layer has the same issues as Agony, but to a lesser extent, so I like it a lot better.

### Screaming

* Difficulty
  + Pretty easy layer. The guaranteed damage hurts, but the lack of damage mitigation makes the fight pretty short.
* Good Against
  + Reaction-dependent characters
  + Low-mobility ranged characters
* Bad Against
  + Close-range characters
  + Forced movement resistance
* My Thoughts
  + This layer is pretty much just a DPS check.
  + The slow long-range players are going to take a bunch of damage.

### Stable

* Difficulty
  + The players decide the pacing of the fight. If they hit hard, it will be quick, if not, it will be slow.
* Good Against
  + Low evasion
  + Mixed-damage type parties
  + Controllers
* Bad Against
  + High evasion
  + Damage mitigation / Defenders
* My Thoughts
  + This has the potential to be a slog if your party has all 3 damage types with little mixing. If only 1-2 people can hurt it each round, things will take a long time.
  + It also has the potential to end in a single turn if someone hits it really hard with one weapon, then hits it with a bunch of small attacks immediately afterward.
    - This happened to me. I’m not mad, just disappointed. Fucking Cannibal Raleighs.
  + Improvised Strike is a thing if your big hitter is the only one that does kinetic damage.
  + Someone might get one-shotted, and that’s okay because funny.

### Tempest

* Difficulty
  + All save-based and conditional damage
  + Requires careful positioning
* Good Against
  + Deathball party compositions
  + Terrain creation
* Bad Against
  + Mobile characters
  + Manticore lightning gun
  + Close-ranged characters.
* My Thoughts
  + Photon Diadem is really cool, but I can see some GMs not liking it. You have to think a bit to use it to its full potential.

### Synchronous

* Difficulty
  + Fair and balanced. Ignoring the mechanic hurts, but isn’t insanely punishing.
* Good Against
  + Ranged strikers
* Bad Against
  + Melee strikers
  + Tanky characters
* My Thoughts
  + MMO-style aggro mechanics are cool.
  + Rewards teamwork and communication.
  + A very good layer.

### Abyssal

* Difficulty
  + This layer is really hard and not fun. Literally play it as written and it will be one of the worst things you do to your players and probably yourself.
* Good Against
  + Low mobility
* Bad Against
  + Drone spam
  + High mobility
* My Thoughts
  + This layer is infamous for a reason. Don’t use it unless you hate your players and yourself. It is difficult in very unfun and frustrating ways as a player, and a massive pain in the ass to set up and run from the GM side.
  + If you are here because you asked “Wallflower Part 1 what do I replace Abyssal with in the Beggar\_One fight?” My answer is Punishment. It maintains the themes pretty well and keeps the difficulty high without being anywhere near as bad as Abyssal.

### Other Stuff

#### Mission Design

Most of the Eidolons I ran were 5-layer fights as the final combat of a 3 or 4-combat mission (see my stuff in the Wallflower Part 3 folder when I finally proofread and post it). I never had a party wipe during an Eidolon fight. As long as they go into the fight with 3-4 structure and stress and all their weapons, they should be fine. If you want to make the combats before the Eidolon fight harder/more numerous, reduce the number of layers to compensate.

#### Maps

Don’t make cluttered maps. Keep them simple, with lots of wide open areas and a few pieces of cover scattered around. Having too much cover will make certain layers incredibly easy to deal with, so be especially careful when making maps for those. The fight has the potential to be complicated enough without having to worry about a complicated terrain situation.

#### Eidolon Weaknesses

Most layers are very vulnerable to the Shredded condition, Paracausal Weapons, the Worldkiller Genghis, and any other ways of ignoring Resistance that you can think of. These make brute forcing them completely inconsequential. The Enkidu can kill every Shard on the map at Tiers 1-2 by popping Bifurcate.

#### Hints

Make your hints creative and flavorful, but remember that a player burned an action to learn this information in a game that prides itself on well-balanced tactical combat. The information from that Scan needs to actually be useful to justify the action investment. There is no shame in just reading the text verbatim. If you are going to spout some flowery bullshit when someone Scans for a hint, only do that the first time someone does it. Any Scan after the first should have additional information that further clarifies previous hints. This is especially important on more difficult layers that can potentially wreck the party if they don’t figure out the mechanics quickly.

#### Potential Changes

Some of the layers feel a little too easy to brute force for my liking. Below are detailed a few changes that I would make to rebalance some of the layers and make it more necessary to interact with their mechanics.

* Marine
  + Immune to all damage until it overheats instead of just having resistance. This is completely fine because everyone can invade and it has 6 E-def.
* Gaze
  + Immune to all damage from players not standing in a Void Zone instead of just having resistance.
  + All Shards explode into a Void Zone on death, not just the single shard destroyed with Strip Matter at the beginning of every round.
* Agony
  + Attached Shards no longer interrupt BEGONE, instead granting resistance to the damage.
  + Attached Shards no longer inflict Shredded, but the 2 Energy damage dealt per shard is now AP.
  + Unattached Shards still interrupt BEGONE as normal.
* Abyssal
  + Remove the permanent Invisibility from the Eidolon.
  + Remove Conjure Shade.