

Undead 1071

Chapter 1071: The Logic-Defying Clash Across Null Remnants! (12)

Jerthrax was taken aback.

That purple-gold light...!

His mind quickly managed to define that his potent layer of shadows had been erased, but the manner in which it happened caused his thoughts to dash in many different ways at once.

How did this even happen? How was it too fast for him to even react?

What was that purple light? It had to be something special for it to strip him of his shadows. They weren't ordinary entities after all. They were a mark of the power he was given by the Deities.

That light certainly came from the nuisance above, right?

And above all else, the dragon couldn't help but wonder...

'The way my shadows disappeared. It's almost as if...as if they were forced to dissolve back towards the ground so fast that it took a moment for me to notice...' he thought, but the circumstances didn't allow him to casually try and wrap his mind around what was happening.

Eobald-Minobu had reached his chest, Divine energy blazing around him. He was targeting the area where the masked man had initially used Brunt Divide to remove the Herald's scales.

As it stood, everyone here understood that the shadows had been a great part of the dragon's protection in addition to his scales. Now that they were removed...

Eobald-Minobu was just a meter away from the dragon's vulnerable spot when Jerthrax's sword came flashing his way, intent on cleaving him in half. He and the sword were moving at the same speed, and as expected, they met in the middle.

However, instead of the sword carving through the special undead, he managed to do something Jerthrax hadn't expected. Unlike everyone else here, the Transcendent combatant grabbed a hold of the thick sword and killed most of its momentum immediately despite being shoved a short distance by its remaining force.

He grabbed the sword tight while in mid-air, preventing it from drawing back for another attack, at least momentarily.

This was all just raw might in play!

Eobald-Minobu then narrowed his eyes and spoke:

"Cast Undeath."

...!!!

Jerthrax was alarmed.

Like his spear, the doubled-sided sword also lost itself to Undeath, becoming wrapped in its influence!

The masked man had picked Eobald specifically to merge with Minobu because he wanted someone who was proficient in using Undeath without needing to be possessed by him. A worthy tool that could be moved around the battlefield efficiently.

And speaking of the masked man, while Jerthrax was stunned by the loss of his weapon, he had already raced toward the other vulnerable spot on the dragon's neck, jumping on the flying blobs which had been restored to scale the great height of his enemy!

Right now, he was fractions of a millisecond ahead of the dragon's perception and if he managed to play his cards right, he would be able to seriously harm it!

He had been soaring towards the descaled spot, readying his vast pool of undeath, not to mention what was in the second sarcophagi he had summoned from the Outworld Attic and stored in storage when....

The world shook again.

Everything changed.

There was one great difference between what was in the new dimension and all the others. Unlike the ones before, this one actually had native inhabitants.

A vast, nigh endless city of cobalt blue, littered with high-rising buildings – skyscrapers – highways, strange vehicles going over winding bridges and intricate roads of the same, abundant blue could be seen.

Indeed, it was that.

In every spot that wasn't occupied by the large, diverse structures, millions of humanoid creatures could be seen, some standing upright and some laying on the ground. There were millions more in the buildings which extended as far as the eye could see, illuminated by... nothing. There was only uncaring darkness in the sky above, but this... city, managed to look lit somehow.

As surprising as it was to find a Null Remnant with inhabitants, all the interest was killed with the realisation that everyone and everything, was encased in the cobalt. This cobalt wasn't mere colouring. It was a kind of hard plastic that layered over everything, freezing them in place and hiding their details. In essence, everything here was 'dead'.

It was only the amalgam who managed to look at the scene and not be stunned by its chaotic yet organised nature. He had seen it long before this and marvelled already.

Curiosity caught the eyes of all the observers. Even the Null Devil King was a little surprised.

The masked man lagged. His sure chance to attack was stolen by momentary shock.

What was this place?

What were all these things?

Just as thoughts rang in the heads of these players, the amalgam finally reached everyone from his fall. The Genuine Incarnation that had been assigned to kill him lost him for an instant because he turned into Levin and went straight past it towards his first target.

His first order of business was to grab the masked man's wrist and pull him towards Jerthrax's vast body.

The dragon felt the two land on his shoulder and his Incarnation immediately pounced with its great maw!

The necromancer wasn't sure what Prisma Vohnvolt hoped to achieve with this, but he easily escaped his grip by using Brunt Divide to split the amalgam's hand into six pieces.

However...

Another of Vohnvolt's two remaining hands stretched out and pulled back the masked man as he was about to flee by extending a chain from [Budgetary Tug-of-War]!

He then grabbed the masked man's wrist again.

The masked man frowned.

"What are trying to do here?" he asked a moment before a dark maw cast a shadow above them.

"You'll see," Vohnvolt said with a sneer.

The necromancer grunted and expelled a large amount of Undeath essence to prevent himself from being critically injured or worse by the incoming Incarnation... and the amalgam grinned.

He was partly engulfed by the huge volumes of Undeath too, but this was what he had been hoping for.

Right after the maw of the neon dragon fell on him and the masked man, Vohnvolt used his control of the space in the Null Remnant to escape into the skies.

He had gotten what he needed. Well, half of it.

'Let's apply it and see,' he thought to himself and a purple-gold light rippled through from his hand and covered his entire body. Then, one of the stumps of his arms which had been destroyed by Aurolio became wrapped in a great, reddish flame that spotted a greenish-black tint.

A shadow showed from within the flame, quickly growing to become something less vague and inconsequential.

It then manifested into a full arm. A full, bone arm.

The amalgam was finally able to replace his arms which he had found impossible with just simple regeneration; it was a result of the dense Voided Death Essence from Aurolio earlier.

However, this new arm he managed to restore, wasn't the same the one he had before.

No.

It had a familiar off-white color, and looked rather weak and brittle, at least when compared to the others the amalgam had before.

Another of his stumps also exploded with the same reddish energy and another arm came to be, same as the last.

An outline of coarse energy blazed around them.

It wasn't Null Life Essence.

It wasn't mana.

It was, of course, Undeath energy.

'Heh. No wonder you were so cocky, Red Rage. The [Blessing of Serenity] is way too good!' Vohnvolt thought.

It truly was a splendid gift to be prodigious!

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Vohnvolt had been doing three things ever since he hid himself, temporarily leaving the heated battle whose setting he had created.

For one, he had been observing.

Indeed, there were several dangerous foes here and it was pretty much a life-or-death battle, but since he had assumed the form he had now, the amalgam thought simply struggling bitterly to win against all the enemies would be waste. There was so much more he could accomplish before the timer for [Bringer of All] reached its limit.

Of course winning wasn't as easy of a task to begin with, as evidenced by how the Herald powered up and unleashed his hidden cards, how leisurely reactive the Null Devil King was being, and how easily the masked man was able to establish himself as a great threat to everything around because of the peculiar way he fought.

Thus, the amalgam decided to watch and learn. He had applied [Consecutive Realm Transmission] with the intent of adding environmental tension – if it could even be called out – so as to spurn his opponents into not holding too much back. He wanted them on their toes. After all, if there was anything worse than facing an unknown opponent, it was facing an unfamiliar environment.

So far, everything was working well for Vohnvolt. He had picked up a few tricks already, especially from the Null Devil King.

'Heh. No wonder you were so cocky, Red Rage. The [Blessing of Serenity] is way too good!' Vohnvolt thought as he flexed his new bone arms.

Just like him, the masked man had been able to escape the maw of the Genuine Incarnation, but just narrowly. Blood still leaked from the base of his mask, and he seemed a little exhausted, but that hadn't stopped him from working up a miracle.

That said, the necromancer was far from happy.

Naturally, as a very efficient Undeath User, he had sensed the Undeath energy blazing from the amalgam's arms.

The dark creature looked directly at him with a mocking grin, and he couldn't help but curse.

How was that possible?

Not only was the amalgam using Undeath, but bits of his own personalized version – the blackish-green variant of Undeath – were sparking amid the commonly seen red hue around his enemy's bones.

Actuass scowled.

Several meters from him, Jerthrax fell over the collection of massive skyscrapers, breaking them easily as he went on to skid on the streets between them.

He grunted aloud and then spoke:

"RESTORE MY LOYAL SHADOWS."

A Rule!

At once, the blazing shadows which had been burning over him seconds ago returned!

The Herald felt much safer now. However, he decided that the method of combat he had been using before, was inefficient as it didn't allow for the benefit of synergy. Perhaps that had just been because he had many enemies, all of them pressuring him some way, thus limiting how much he could coordinate different attacks, but still...

The dragon's body shifted. His muscles and bones returned to being primed for a quadrupedal stance. Thus, Jerthrax stood on all four of his powerful limbs. His Incarnation was the one that retained a humanoid posture and fighting stance, its weapons of Aura and Divine energy in hand.

Jerthrax, like the masked man, turned his attention to the amalgam. He needed this bastard gone.

Unbeknownst to the two combatants, however, what was making them nervous about what had just occurred with Vohnvolt, had the same origin.

The amalgam was pleased to find that he had added to the tenseness two of his major opponents were experiencing.

'I'm just getting started,' he thought, as the purple-gold light particles glowing on one of his original hands changed form. It became akin to a porous sphere wrapped around the Null Lifeform's limb like a mitt. The many holes on it were shaped like triangles, and through some of them, it was easy to identify the handle within it which the amalgam's hand gripped tight.

This sphere, a product of Replicus' new concept – Maximum Catalyst – condensing to attain a physical form, was not a weapon. However, it did serve to direct the effects of Maximum Catalyst on external targets efficiently.

What were the effects of this new, Rule-Level Concept?

Well...

Prisma Vohnvolt delightedly gazed at the dragon, raised the sphere around his hand and swiped down in a relatively relaxed manner.

In contrast to his own slow motion, however, a thick, purple-gold mass of light barreled down from seemingly out of nowhere and smote the Herald!

Sadly, the Herald couldn't react to it.

He could barely discern that a purple light had even dropped onto him, after all, it moved at more than fifty times the speed of light... and was impossible to dodge because of the essences that had been used to make it!

Once again, the Herald found that his shadows... were gone!

Not even a second later, the world turned white and a thick, single-edged bolt of Levin that might have been a hundred meters long, exploded towards the dragon's chest; where his scales were removed!

[Nullmancer's Unforgiving Lancet]!

...!!!

Jerthrax was alarmed, but unlike the purple-gold light, he was comfortably able to react to this!

The weapons his Incarnation held crossed in front of the dragon and blocked the massive attack with little difficulty!

The amalgam smirked.

'Good.'

He could tell that the dragon was rattled.

He didn't need to say it aloud for his enemies to understand the message he was presenting.

Vohnvolt could use Maximum Catalyst multiple times!

This extreme concept allowed him to harness two overwhelming forces that he decided to call Reversion and Progression.

The Maximum Catalyst was made from the evolved versions of Ordinal Disruption, Spatial Lightning and Lambent Phosphor – All-Encompassing Transubstantiation; Inexorable Unveilment and Complete Omnipresent Registry.

The combination of these through the External Fragment of Realised Choices – the evolved Harmonic Ember – had created a mutated form of what Replicus had wanted. Something scarier than the ability to simply tear down techniques.

Reversion allowed the amalgam to pick a specific target on an opponent and wind it back as far as he pleased.

An instance of Reversion was when the amalgam used Maximum Catalyst on the dragon's shadows.

He didn't destroy the shadows or disrupt them. He simply broke them down, causing them to evolve backwards in a way. That was why Jerthrax had felt them recede back to the ground and become normal, just like they had been before he awakened them using his Divine powers!

The amalgam had also used Reversion unknowingly on the masked man's undead earlier. Since there were so many targets at the time, and he hadn't known how it worked – how to pick a specific aspect on all the millions of targets – Maximum Catalyst chose to affect the thing the undead all had in common; their Undeath energy,

The result right then had led to the amalgam to discover something interesting about Undeath, but that was for later.

For the biggest application of Reversion the amalgam had used, one could look no further than when Vohnvolt forged back his arms just now.

The amalgam had used Maximum Catalyst's on himself, targeting his arms specifically.

As Reversion could wind back the target as much as its user desired, the amalgam... was able to manifest his original, skeletal arms; the ones he had back when he was a lowly, Moronic Undead!

However, the reason and plots he had in mind for these two arms could wait.

For now, the amalgam wanted to mount the pressure on the dragon.

Thus, he activated Progression, targeting his vast pool mana.

Then, after cheating his way towards the dragon's vulnerable spot using his dominance over the Null Remnant, Vohnvolt pulled back his fist and sent it bashing into the dragon's rough skin!

However, it wasn't simply his raw might that applied, bolstered by the amount of Null Life Essence he had, the special trait of his Dual Mana-Sourcing Impact and several other skills.

No.

The massive volumes of mana the amalgam had also poured into his fist... and transformed into Nitros, making the ferocity of his strike much, much, more painful than the Herald could have ever imagined.

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The punch oddly felt like both a strike from a giant Warhammer and one from a giant spear to the Herald. If it was just the raw force contained within it, no doubt amplified by certain skills, he might have been able to stand his ground and stop himself from being sent skidding back, but unfortunately, too many other things were tacked on.

The amalgam's Dual Mana-Sourcing Impact targeted the enemy's mana and he could adjust the surface area of the power he delivered, even if his whole fist connected to the enemy. This was why his blow was able to embody both sharp and blunt properties.

A lesser foe would have been ripped to shreds by the nasty disturbance that assaulted their mana networks and ultimately, their cores, especially if it was paired with the over three million units of Nitros, which, at base could increase the battle power of its user by a minimum of 2,000%!

Jerthrax couldn't have felt more humiliated. A creature of his size being bulldozed away by something only a twentieth of his size was utterly unprecedented.

What was even worse about this whole ordeal was that since Vohnvolt was targeting his mana in his attack, Jerthrax couldn't mobilise it to reinforce himself properly. He had to rely on using Divine energy, and while it worked to dispel much of the damage, Nitros couldn't be countered completely by simply using Divine energy.

Nitros itself was a form of Divine energy!

The only reason it was able to allow mortals to create magical demesnes of their own was because it was sampled out of the powers that made the land, seas and skies of Aigas!

And thus, Jerthrax was left with a dark scar on his pale, tough skin.

'Yeah, this bastard won't be easy to break,' the amalgam thought as he dropped to the street bordered all around by torn, tall buildings. 'His skin is also very tough. The amount of strength I used just now is the least required to injure him meaningfully.'

The amalgam was surprised, but he expected at least this much from the dragon.

While he hadn't exactly hoped a simple punch like this would unsubscribe a Herald from life, he was yet to configure something that could surely kill the bastard if he was on guard.

However, he was optimistic.

Maximum Catalyst's Progression would get him there.

As expected, Progression was simply the opposite of Reversion. It spurned his target on a linear path of advancement, or rather, evolution.

Of course, for what he had just achieved, the amalgam had forced his mana to turn into Nitros as that was part of the natural progression of mana itself in the system created by Deities of Aigas. Beasts couldn't utilise Nitros in the same way humans did. They only awakened it when they earned the right to create a Majestic Territory, and it only worked for their Majestic Territories.

So, for the amalgam to be able to utilise Nitros like this...

'I'm almost there...' he thought.

It went without saying that the second thing the Bringer of All had been doing while in hiding was learning the ins and outs of Maximum Catalyst.

The one most interesting trait of the Rule-Level Concept, was that whether by Reversion or Progression, there was no limit.

That was to say, once Vohnvolt picked a target for Maximum Catalyst and used what he decided to call Maximum Reversion or Progression, there was really was no limit to how the target could change.

Even if it did not have any other paths for its evolution or devolution built into it, even if Progressing or Reversing further should logically lead to a state where the target didn't exist at all, Maximum Catalyst would create one!

The amalgam hoped to glean something truly magnificent with this.

A distance away, Jerthrax announced another Rule, restoring his shadows once again.

'I'll play along as much as you want,' the amalgam said and he rushed towards him. It was fun to have a card that no one could contest against for a change.

Maximum Catalyst couldn't be dodged.

Maximum Catalyst couldn't be blocked.

Maximum Catalyst didn't have a range limit.

It had other limits, just not the above.

Jerthrax's blue eyes honed in on the amalgam and they narrowed.

Opposite the multi-armed fiend, he also saw the masked man bolting in his direction over the skyscrapers, streets and vehicles. The charge of the two broke down everything that was unlucky enough to experience their chaotic powers as they moved.

Beyond these two anomalies, up above, the Null Devil King was watching without making any moves.

Once again, the dragon was turning into prey. His dominance from before had been diminished!

"HMMMMM..." he grunted.

In half an instant, a new spear appeared above him. His Genuine Incarnation immediately grabbed it.

This spear was longer than the dragon – both his upright Incarnation and his body standing on all fours. Instead of looking like it was made of solid material, it looked a rush of dirty air, contaminated by red, sandy bits.

The Genuine Incarnation immediately began spinning the spear around itself and its user and a devastating hurricane immediately formed around the two!

The Incarnation's free hand then pointed forward, and it spoke:

"O REGAL EARTH, CHURN YOUR LANDS BETWEEN. BURN WITH FURY AND DEVOUR THE HEATHENS ON YOUR HEAD!"

...!!!

Both the masked man and the amalgam were alarmed.

'A Blessing!' they both thought.

The area between the masked man and the amalgam was suddenly engulfed by furious heat and it sank inwards.

This occurred around Jerthrax as well, rings of the streets which held buildings, the frozen humanoids and various vehicles melting and digging down below where pools of dark blue flames hissed with scalding promises!

'He still has more trump cards, huh?' the amalgam thought as he looked at the dragon. It certainly appeared so.

As the dragon counted as a combatant, one with six classes, a core and Stages, it also stood to reason that he would have blessings like Incandescent Stagers, though in his case, it was much more extreme.

The Herald, raised with Divine energy, had moulded his own Blessings. While they weren't at the same level as the Paladin Champions' Blessings, they were stronger than those of the average Incandescent Stager.

'That spear...' the amalgam thought as he looked at the whirling hurricane which seemed to be siphoning the heat from the great depressions on the earth and adding them to the fierce winds

around its user. 'It's making the area around the dragon hard to approach. Every time it spins, some kind of energy leaves a trail that I probably don't want to come into contact with.'

The masked man, who was a few tens of meters away, standing still while gazing at the dragon seemed to have realised this too.

He gave a sigh and then...

"What's your goal here? I find it hard to believe that you and that other fellow allied with the Severed Union just to commit to the 'righteous' goal of stopping me. We are not really supposed to be bastions of order, you know?" he said.

Vohnvolt turned to him and gave a laugh.

"I guess I finally became worthy to earn a sentence from you," he said. "But you're right. I'm not here because I particularly care what happens to Aigas."

"Is that so? Are you here to find what makes Aigas a Rich World then?" Actuass asked.

Vohnvolt's sockets blazed.

"What?" he asked, confused.

"Nevermind then," the masked sighed again and summoned the sarcophagi from earlier. "You are also correct. I didn't really think much of you until moments ago. However, I should warn someone with such a brittle soul like yours to tread carefully. Being acknowledged by me means I'd feel better if I kill both you – well, semantics – and the dragon. Don't let me touch that soul of yours."

Vohnvolt's frown was vivid through his partly hardened skin.

"If you do manage to touch me, make sure that marks the end of me. If not, I promise that will be the last regret you ever have," he warned.

Right then, a dark light highlighted the two from beyond them. Another beam of black fire had erupted from the Herald.

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Jerthrax had felt the fourth jolt within his body.

The masked man's influence was still cranking up his power significantly, and right now, his overall strength had just shot up by roughly 55% percent!

This was unsettling.

To think that the masked man was so vicious and confident that he was able to endure having this happen to him each time he had to face an opponent.

The reward for actually defeating an enemy who was juiced up the longer it took him to defeat said enemy must have been tremendous.

But then again, the Herald had noticed that the Null Devil King, the amalgam and that other masked fellow didn't seem to be smitten by this effect.

"HMMMM..." the dragon mumbled.

But that didn't matter for now.

Jerthrax had decided to switch up his fighting style into a less physically-oriented one.

And thus, he began with a dark dragon breath.

The fire that gathered in his mouth was quickly expelled, but unlike before, it didn't cover everything in sight. It condensed into a thin laser that was much faster than an all-encompassing outpour!

...!!!

Both the masked man and amalgam had prepared for it, though.

While this beam looked more lethal, it had a slightly longer charge time than its predecessor. Thus, as the dragon sent the laser forward and even turned his head to have it sweep across, the two anomalies – one with his sarcophagus – had already leaped up, barely evading the dark scorch which erased not just the structures in this odd city, but space itself!

The amalgam looked at the narrow, black crack below him, mark of the disturbed space.

This black fire...

However, his focus was stolen back by another surge of power from the dragon. He wasn't letting up.

"THIS WORLD IS THE DEEPEST PIT OF FROST!" Jerthrax declared.

A Rule!

Before both the masked man and the amalgam knew it, the world around them turned dark and they simply... froze.

The world became so cold that the cold part didn't even register anymore.

Everything was forced to a stop.

The amalgam could barely feel that he had a body. If he had organs, they would have all perished instantly. But even though he didn't, this kind of cold was really bad. Though it happened a little slower than to his body, Vohnvolt felt his mana cores and the mana within them, freeze over. Of the five solely dedicated towards his purple quality mana, two had already died, in a way. They were cracking.

The most resilient among them, was the one that bore the effects of Maximum Catalyst – the Nature-Bound Malleable Form Core.

Even worse than this mana-freezing, was the fact this became one of the few instances where the amalgam felt his soul. It too, was freezing.

Red Rage and Araeyn didn't have souls. They only had Sources, so the distinction was easy to make for Vohnvolt.

'Damn it!' he thought.

His dominance over this world was rather hard to rely on at the moment. Everything was frozen, even space itself, thus even if he desired to travel beyond this world, it would be useless.

He could have managed to reverse the state of this world with Reversion, but the amount of mana needed for such a feat was enormous. With some of his cores gone, the amalgam felt that he barely had enough to manage. If he reversed the effect cast on the world, he would be at risk.

He had skills that replenished his mana quickly, but it would take time, and he wasn't sure he would be able to handle remaining completely defenceless for a few seconds.

But then again, time was running out.

The amalgam felt another of his cores freeze over and die out. Then another.

'Damn it!'

His only hope was...

...!!!

The amalgam vaguely felt himself get seized by something.

At once, he imagined that the dragon wasn't going to take any chances now that he was actually stalled!

He must have been grabbed!

'Well, it's now or never!' Vohnvolt thought and forced his remaining cores to fuel Maximum Catalyst as best they could.

Precious little of it was amassed when compared to before, but that would have to do.

The amalgam felt bits of him go missing. He was probably being destroyed, shattered like glass!

Thus, he pushed all his efforts desperately, activating Maximum Reversion and Maximum Progression at the same time!

His body was suffused in an overlay of crystal-shaped particles, some of them gold, some of them purple. They seemed to ripple, interchanging hues every second, and creating a beautiful look over the amalgam.

Right then, all sensation returned to Vohnvolt, and at the same time...

[You have successfully created the skill 'Neutral Maximum!']

Vohnvolt would have worn an appropriate expression for the occasion, but his body was still frozen solid. Half of it was shattered, starting with his horned head, and his torso which was barely intact. His original arms were destroyed and only the two he had restored by assuming his Moronic Undead properties remained.

'It will probably take a moment for me to unfreeze,' the amalgam thought.

While appreciating how much of him was left, he couldn't help but be glad that he managed to learn this application of Maximum Catalyst in time. It was all thanks to his blabbering thought phantoms.

It seemed the Reversion and Progression – which were merely effects of Maximum Catalyst and not skills – were freely granted as soon as one mastered the concept, but [Neutral Maximum] was different.

Funny enough, it had the properties that Replicus had originally wanted from Disruption.

By combining Reversion and Progression together – which used a ton of mana – the result was a steady state of stasis.

In simple terms, the user became immune to change other than that which they themselves allowed, meaning all attacks and influences that came their way, were immediately negated!

Vohnvolt immediately set to use [Brilliant King's Adoring Stars] to heal, but something sped his way and attempted to crush him!

It looked like a large, green tongue when illuminated partially by the light coming from [Neutral Maximum]. The amalgam allowed it to strike him, and it effectively dealt zero damage. It didn't even manage to push his body!

'I see. I thought it was the dragon himself who had decided to attack while I was frozen. I guess I was wrong.'

Several creatures decked in large scales and dark shadows were charging at the amalgam.

It seemed that right after he was frozen, the dragon had summoned creatures he made contracts with and sent them through the cold, protected by his shadows to finish him and the masked man off!

To the amalgam, this spelled the fact that the dragon was probably blinded as well by the darkness induced by the cold, and was wary still of him and the necromancer.

And speaking of the necromancer...

Right then, a powerful sphere of light suddenly appeared a short distance from Vohnvolt.

The light from it was unusual, quite like that which came from his Maximum Catalyst as it lit up the world again, albeit to a limited degree.

It only managed to illuminate its source, the masked man, and roughly ten meters around him.

Said masked man... looked to be in rough shape.

Blood kept pouring from behind his mask.

Him copying Jerthrax; using Divine energy to create Rules, was taking a great toll on him. This was how he had managed to survive the cold.

That was how he had managed to survive being eternal cast in stone before as well.

The masked man opened the sarcophagus he had retrieved before, and a shrivelled corpse was revealed.

Before the amalgam got to see what the masked man would do, a shivering of the ground, a wave of explosive heat and the glow of an awry reddish-purple light in the distance, against the cold and its induced-darkness, tore his attention.

Sparks of the flame as it struck something massive shot outward.

That flame was directed towards the dragon!

The Null Devil King was finally making his move!

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The glow of the flames in the distance was suspiciously familiar to the amalgam. Through its luminance he saw the figure of the Null Devil King attacking the Herald, and the latter actually looked to be pinned down by the fire which worked more like a drill in this instance, spinning and digging down against the efforts of his Incarnation to stop it.

The Bringer of All could not understand the Null Devil King's behaviour at all.

He was rather lax. He paused from time to time to just watch the battle even though it seemed like he was quite determined to kill the dragon.

Besides his sudden activeness now, the only time he had shown a strong reaction to anything at all, was when Yuyui took away Stylla.

Why was he keeping her around?

Amid the calm air of questions in his head, a note of caution arose in the amalgam's head.

A surge of energy was bustling from the masked man. Under his soft light which warded away the dark, he touched the corpse in the sarcophagus and it suddenly trembled as though electrocuted. Its shape rapidly changed, becoming less of a humanoid mummy and that of a... whip?

The amalgam was taken back.

The whip had the same color as the mummy, and was littered with sharp spines along its length. At its end, it featured what looked like a long, black, erect blade.

'What is that?' Vohnvolt thought.

The body in the sarcophagus was similar to the one the masked man had used to create Eobald-Minobu. It was one of the corpses of Fulgardt's Chosen from the Second Grand War.

This wasn't common knowledge, but the bodies of the Chosen were strengthened by Fulgardt somehow. Back in those harrowing times, one of them had been captured, but the captors hadn't been able to do a single lick of damage on his body. This fact was even more tragic in battles. No attacks left significant damage on the four unless they were delivered by vessels of the Deities.

Their bodies were nigh impossible to break.

That was why, the only way that could have possibly ended all of them, except Quilforg, was by using a Transcendent artefact, the Otherworldly Synchrony Spear, which wove the souls of the Chosen together with those of a few volunteers from the resistance.

The toughness of the Chosen's bodies remained after their deaths, and the masked man had been especially interested in it.

No one could have known, but just now, he infused a part of his soul into the mummy and forcibly changed its shape. After all, the soul learned from the body, and the body learned from the soul.

Actuass then continued on his course: learning from the dragon.

A vibrant, blackish green Incarnation appeared above him, made from both Perfect Aura and Divine energy.

It first assumed a form similar to his before it was rapidly absorbed into him, leaving obscure marks on the masked man's skin as the only evidence that it was still in play.

To achieve the 1,000% boost in overall strength, Masters had to reach the peak of the Master Stage, where they would be able to merge with their Incarnations.

This was what the necromancer had done.

Soon, he bolted through the cold darkness, the light he had conjured following after him, but barely visible because of his tremendous speed.

'Damn it!' Vohnvolt cursed.

His body was yet to thaw out and all efforts to manoeuvre through space were hampered by the cold. Yet, he had to go after the masked man.

The only option left was...

Vohnvolt once again drew the large cloth which was formerly Red Rage's cape.

He sent it flying ahead to wrap around a building and then he had it pull him along.

Of course, moving about wasn't going to be easy.

The dragon's summons were everywhere. Some even attempted to cut off his cloth.

Because of the burning shadows decking them to ward off the atrocious cold, the creatures were pretty much impossible to kill through normal means. Even approaching them was dangerous, but thankfully, because of [Neutral Maximum], the amalgam was safe.

He immediately activated [Brilliant King's Adoring Stars].

His body started regenerating, and just when one of his dark arms fully formed, the porous sphere of Maximum Catalyst appeared in his hand.

An impossibly quick flash erupted from it, targeting all the shadows around the summons.

In less than the most fragmented fragment of time, the creatures were left defenceless and the creeping cold immediately devoured them whole, freezing them!

'Damn. Using Reversion and Neutral at once just chugged down a massive amount of mana. I really only have one mana core left aside from the Malleable Form...' the amalgam grunted in displeasure. Save for his Null core, most of his mana cores were gone because of the exposure from the cold before.

This curiously enlightened him on why his [Nullmancer's Royal Raiment of Acclimation] hadn't frozen along with his body before also.

The skill that multiplied his mana before, couldn't be spammed, unfortunately.

When his legs had fully regenerated, Vohnvolt started bolted at top speed after the masked man who cut through his own swarm of summoned creatures.

His method of getting through them and their defence... was terrifying.

He swiped with his whip, which was barely visible. It moved even faster than he did, creating vague, dark curves around him before it bolted in a straight line toward a target.

The amalgam watched it head straight for a large, gecko-like creature and pierce straight into its head.

The blade at the end of the whip ignored the shadows!

...Well, no it didn't.

As the amalgam watched closely, the blade didn't really reach the shadows or the gecko at all. It stopped inches away. However, the creature it was targeting... died instantly.

Huh...

The masked man leaped over hundreds of the summons and landed in the middle of a dozen of them. He swung his whip chaotically. The spines on its long body protruded out, but again, Vohnvolt was sure they never so much as grazed their victims, but... they died anyway.

The amalgam jumped towards the masked man. He had to understand what was happening here.

As he approached, the masked man dashed ahead, leaving him in the dust.

As Vohnvolt closely followed, he saw a figure rushing past the masked man and going ahead of them both towards the dragon!

It was Eobald-Minobu!

He seemed relatively fine despite being cast in the cold all this while. The masked man didn't seem to have needed to use a Rule to protect him at all!

'Tsk!'

Soon the three were before the catastrophic clash going on between the dragon and the Null Devil King.

The latter was decked in a storm of the same flame that the dragon's Genuine Incarnation was trying to ward away as it simply continued to grow, whirling and bellowing in the cold. Evidently, the fire was resistant to the chill, and that was why the Null Devil King had yet to fall.

The Null Lifeform looked at the approach of the three hostiles. This prompted him to make a more meaningful assault.

He swiped with one hand and a streak of the reddish-purple flame exploded on the ground just before Eobald-Minobu who led the charge, forcing him to slow down. The fire then spread, towering upwards and sideways to wall off any channel that could lead to dragon for the three!

...!!!

The amalgam was stunned.

This flame. It really was familiar!

He had used it before!

It was the Ungodly Flame of Debauchery, a flame that usually caused its target to be smitten with lustful passion!

However, this version he saw was way scarier.

It was hotter.

It was fiercer.

The amalgam stopped for a slowed down a bit as many thoughts echoed in his mind.

However, unlike him and Eobald Minobu, the masked man didn't stop.

He leapt into the flames while increasing the output of his Undeath, Aura and Divine energy!

The Null Devil King narrowed his hollow sockets at this.

Jerthrax grumbled and raised his arms for an attack. Those of his Incarnation were preoccupied, after all.

However, the Null Devil King wouldn't allow it.

He extended his hand towards the dragon and like before, the Herald was tugged towards him, this time with a greater pull!

Once again, the Null Devil King was drawing the Null Life Essence from his victim even though he was still alive!

However, whatever he planned to do afterwards, was interrupted.

A long, dark whip with lengthy spines shot from the Ungodly flame.

Both the dragon and the Null Devil King saw it approach... but only when it already close to the shadows covering a specific spot around Jerthrax's chest.

At that moment, Vohnvolt, who had just sped through the fire, saw IT happen.

The blade at the end of the whip stopped just before it encountered the burning shadows. And then...

"RAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRR!"

Jerthrax let out a cry of immense agony that took everyone aback!

What in the world...?

How had the Herald been injured?

...

"The soul..." the amalgam finally understood.

This masked bastard was aiming at the soul!

No one else seemed to be able to catch onto this until now!

And worse yet, that wasn't all.

Something travelled from Jerthrax and into the whip the masked man had made.

Something pure, something powerful!

It fed into his body, and all of sudden, his presence became all the more heavy, all the more lethal!

"PARASIIIIIIITEEEE!" Jerthrax roared wrathfully as he swatted the whip away, his body roiling chaotically in the dark.

Yet, the necromancer could care less about his rage. He took a deep breath and unbeknownst to all, he wore a relieved smile.

Then, he spoke with a crisp voice that all could hear.

"Majestic Territory..."

Chapter 1076: The Logic-Defying Clash Across Null Remnants! (17)

The masked man hadn't planned to use this card until he was assured of victory, but while he was growing stronger through learning how to actually utilise Divine energy properly, the truth was, the Herald still held the largest advantage. His reserves of energy were massive and were only continuing to grow because of the effect of the Undeath Class which the masked man had imposed earlier.

Such an advantage was further emphasised by how he had nearly ended the battle with his last imposed Rule; the absolute frost. If the masked man had been a second late in countering with his own Rule which kept him safe from the cold, things would have gotten pretty bad.

That said, on the matter of Rules, the masked man had noticed that they had similar limitations to Creeds, the major one being that if the gap in power between the user of a Creed and his target was obscure or worse – in the target's favour – it was hard to affect them directly.

Rules worked the same way.

Jerthrax and the masked man weren't able to simply call for a Rule that caused the other to fold or die. Their case mainly wasn't because Actuass was on par with the dragon, but simply because he had the power to counter Rules with his own through Divine energy brimming within him.

Strange as it was, the amalgam's Rule-level concept Maximum Catalyst worked in a similar manner. He was unable to target finer concepts on stronger opponents. He could only chip them away one at a time, like with Jerthrax's shadows.

All this was to say, all the combatants here had limits and they knew what they were, the masked man especially.

Thus, he whipped out one of his trump cards, the whip, and attacked the dragon's soul.

The blade at the end of the whip was a ruse. The portion of the masked man's soul in the weapon extended past the tip of the dark blade and the spines on its long body, hidden from even Jerthrax's keen eyes.

When the masked man bit into Jerthrax's soul, it had not been a simple feat owed only to his prowess. He only managed this because the dragon was distracted, the spear he had whirling above him occupied with something else.

What could be attributed to the masked man's prowess, was him using his own soul as a weapon to strike at the dragon's own, which was vast and sturdy. The experience was rather painful for the masked necromancer.

And thus, he only managed to deal that one, heavy blow while also simultaneously extracting a large amount of Divine energy from it before the dragon swiped away his whip.

With each use of a Rule, the masked man had been feeling himself grow weaker, but this stolen well of energy rejuvenated him extensively.

He had set the situation in his favour in an instant, and with that advantage still pulsing, he made a gesture with both hands and called out...

"Majestic Territory Expulsion, Deathward Maw."

...

The amalgam had been on the receiving end of Territories before. He had faced many of them, some impressive and some rather bland.

He always felt the violent bubbling of Nitros whenever a human Territory caster called out the name of the Territory. It was usually the prompt for Creeds to be used to double their reserves and enable them to cast their Territory.

However... this felt different.

When the masked man's Territory exploded out, there was a weight to it unlike any other he had felt.

Nevermind human experts, Vohnvolt wasn't sure even Azila's or the Grinning Jester Fox's could compare!

And this was all before the Imaginary GeoScape of the masked man's Territory was even established!

A canvas of dark green encased everything in the next instant, and then titanic, yellowing fangs started to spring up rapidly from above and below, bordering the area where Vohnvolt, the massive figure of Jerthrax and the Null Devil King were in!

The Territory was humongous!

This was especially emphasised when textures and details of dozens of carcasses of great, fallen mythical creatures yet to be seen by ordinary eyes in Aigas, some close to being as large as Jerthrax, some even more majestic than him, sprang up from the rugged ground, which almost felt like a dark tongue!

These dead behemoths, some merely reduced to bones, exposed large, tainted mana cores that reeked of Undeath. They acted as the only light source in this doomed space, adding onto its already potent eeriness.

Droplets of what seemed like green liquid fell from above, emitting unnerving plops every now and then as they hit the ground while a particularly forceful storm of suffocating energy pressed on everyone.

The amalgam gnashed his teeth.

'I need to act fast!' he thought, and his already activated layer of [Neutral Maximum] was fuelled by all the mana he could spare from both the Malleable Form Core and his remaining purple core!

Normally, Territories cut off the supply of mana, but because [Neutral Maximum] was already in effect, protecting Vohnvolt's body from the influence of the Territory, he was safe as long as he didn't let the skill get disrupted even for a second.

The Primary assault function was coming, and the only hope he had at the moment was to maintain this skill!

Jerthrax had a similar idea.

Because he had been disrupted by the pull from the Null Devil King, and most importantly, the stabbing pain from his soul, he was milliseconds late in reacting to the masked man's Territory in any way. The trembling of his eyes showed his agony. Unlike his body, his soul, which he had never had to worry about, wasn't so guarded.

When he set to respond by casting his own Territory, the eyes of the masked man, who was yet to be seen within the designs of his Deathward Maw, shone bright.

He had been ready to ensure that this wouldn't happen.

And that's exactly why, instead of using Creeds to erect the territory, he used a Rule instead to empower his Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary functions!

Thus...

"Ordained Reverent Machination."

The Primary assault function was immediately applied.

Everything instantly became blurry as though vibrating at tremendous speeds!

Vohnvolt saw the scattered corpses of mysterious beasts start to appear doubled in his vision.

But worse than that was the hammer-like pressure that pushed against his [Neutral Maximum] with such ferocity that he felt even more of a burden to his expenditure just by trying to keep it up!

'URGH...'

Vohnvolt knelt down as the pressure mounted, but he didn't buckle. The collection of purple and gold crystal-like shapes embossed over him held as well as his will!

The same couldn't be said for Jerthrax though.

The Primary assault function caught him before he could even mobilise energy for a Territory.

If Ordained Reverent Machination was like a giant hammer on the amalgam, then it was like a five thousand of them to the Herald.

After all, the masked man apportioned its power; 20% for the amalgam, 20% for the Null Devil King and 60% to the dragon!

And, contrary to expectations, Ordained Reverent Machination did not prompt the dragon to shriek in pain or topple over.

He simply... staggered and froze as he stood on all fours.

...!!!

Vohnvolt was stunned.

What did this Primary assault function do exactly?

Subtle, unclear attacks were more terrifying than straightforward ones.

With such anxiety mounting him, Vohnvolt couldn't help but attempt to strengthen his [Neutral Maximum] again. He had a really bad feeling about this. If he was hit, he didn't feel he could escape whatever these effects entailed.

The masked man finally revealed himself, appearing out of nowhere to stand before the docile dragon, his whip in hand. Beside him, Eobald-Minobu also appeared.

The masked man took a breath.

And then he looked back at Vohnvolt who hurried to clad himself in Null Life Essence on top of [Neutral Maximum].

The necromancer then pulled on the sleeves to his eerie, green robe.

"Now, you have all my attention," he said. "Until my Secondary attack comes, that is."

Vohnvolt scowled.

A Secondary assault...

Just thinking of it when he was already close to keeling over from the Primary...

"Why do you sound so triumphant? You still have me as your enemy."

The Null Devil King, like the amalgam seemed to also be unaffected. He gave the masked man a hollow look.

Vohnvolt wasn't sure how the Null Devil King was once again able to resist some of the ridiculous attacks both the masked and the dragon through.

He was shrugging off the Territory too?

Well, Vohnvolt couldn't have known because of his special circumstances, but the souls of Null Lifeforms were heavily guarded. Only Null Life creatures could truly harm and take the souls of other Null Life creatures. The amalgam's soul was bare, half of it even being owned by Somanda. Perhaps Skullius would have understood the mechanics of this due to his dealings with Aurolio months ago.

In any case, the amalgam decided to worry about himself first.

After all, in the next instant, the bold figure of the Transcendent Stager Eobald-Minobu blasted towards him while the masked man headed for the Null Devil King.

Chapter 1077: The Logic-Defying Clash Across Null Remnants! (18)

Vohnvolt was wary of the mysterious Primary attack function that had cut off the dragon's consciousness subscription – supposedly. In another, more common scenario, the masked would have explained exactly what this attack did, but such an answer never came. As it were, not explaining what were you doing was terrifying for your opponents, especially when you held the advantage.

Beyond that, the amalgam wondered why the masked man wasn't just finishing off the dragon now that he had suddenly lost his ability to resist.

Was it because he really couldn't muster anything else other than his Secondary assault function to do that effectively?

Or was it...

...!

'Is that thing about the powers of the people he goes up against increasing that significant? Is he actually waiting for that?' Vohnvolt couldn't help but think.

He understood that this power from the masked man didn't work on someone like him who didn't have life energy. This went into what the amalgam now knew about the relationship between life energy and Undeath.

'Damn it...'

Sadly, Vohnvolt didn't have the luxury to continue theorizing about this right now. He left that to his phantoms while he focused on the speeding assailant who reached him a second later, his body blazing with ripe energy.

It was going to be difficult to battle against this bastard while also suffering from the weight of Ordained Reverent Machination. It still bore down on the amalgam cruelly, after all.

However...

'Well. For now, I'm going to have apply everything I'm left with...' he thought. And indeed, that was all he could count on... until THAT was ready.

While the masked man was waiting for his Secondary assault to charge, the amalgam was also waiting for something... and hopefully, like the masked man hoped to do now, it would end this whole battle.

'Just about a minute. I have to hold on for a minute...'

Vohnvolt held his ground and put up four arms to guard.

A crushing fist came flying towards him from Eobald-Minobu, bearing a savage amount of raw power.

...!!!

'Oh, flesh this!'

At the last second... the amalgam barely managed to enter the Astral Blizzard Corridor and get out the way!

While he was confident in his [Neutral Maximum], it was taking too much right now, and because of his dwindled mana reserves, he was likely to be overwhelmed, and if that happened, even for a moment, he was done for!

To the Bringer of All's relief, the air within the Territory crackled and exploded where the punch of the Transcendent landed!

The impact was so outrageous that the masked man glanced at his thrall.

That blow could have destabilised his Imaginary GeoScape!

'I was right after all...' the amalgam thought as he appeared a distance behind the Transcendent.

However... in the next fragment of time, the amalgam felt the bastard behind him and before he could react, two arms gripped him so tight that he couldn't budge even an inch.

What was with this immense strength?

It was so outlandish for any humanoid!

No beast or human he had encountered so far had such ridiculous power, and that was even counting some in the Severed Union.

The world of Aigas, since the Second Grand War, had met a decline in the overall quality of combatants. The main factor was, of course, the Ashing of Time which forever tainted the abundance and quality of mana and the flow of time in the inhabitants of the world.

The regression continued in this manner until Incandescent Stagers became the summit of power. Only a handful of Transcendent Stagers existed now and they were rarely seen, usually because they were old hermits who struggled to even reach such a level, which was so daunting, as Transcendents had been abundant four millennia ago.

No one, in the modern Aigas was even capable of reaching the Beyond the Veil Stage anymore, the last and final Stage which the world's strongest from the old times, Rayn and Fulgardt had reached, with the latter even surpassing it!

Vohnvolt grunted as the Transcendent Stager started to attempt to crush him.

It was happening!

While [Neutral Maximum] deleted possibilities for his body to change from the state it was in unless he wanted it to, it was still a skill that needed to be fuelled to work. It also could be overwhelmed, and that was why a consistently high input of energy was required!

The raw might of Eobald-Minobu was comfortably making sure he was losing his advantage.

A Transcendent Stager wasn't too different from an Incandescent Stager if the huge difference in raw physical prowess was put aside. In terms of the tools at their disposal, they were mostly the same. After all, the Stages led one to Divinity, and past the Incandescent Stage, all that remained was to refine all the traits and abilities earned before, especially one's Territory.

Once that was done successfully, the effects of the Territory began bleeding into the user even if they didn't use it.

One such benefit was explosive strength that scaled to the power they used to form their Territory!

Vohnvolt's coat of [Neutral Maximum] dwindled.

This wasn't going to fly. He was going to get crushed.

What he needed was... a gamble.

He performed said gamble in the next instant.

Because every part of him, including his storage was coated in [Neutral Maximum] as well, he was able to expel the long cloth from Red Rage's cape.

Instantly, it too was covered in the tiles of purple and gold to allow it to function inside Deathward Maw. It was, after all, also a storage artefact.

Two things were immediately expelled from it and simultaneously covered with [Neutral Maximum] despite the severe drain Vohnvolt felt afterwards!

Of the two to come flying out, one instantly leaped up, and keenly stared at the amalgam strangely.

After the creature looked like it finished verifying something, it pointed at the amalgam and the Transcendent and in the next instance... the two swapped positions!

'Heh!'

Vohnvolt grinned.

Without wasting any time, he used [Null Life Demesne] to expand an area of Null Life Essence and then he gathered all the Null Life Essence he could spare around his fist, shaped it into a drill and then punched Eobald-Minobu right below his armpit!

The Transcendent flew a short distance before landing on his feet. Divine energy and Undeath wrapped his body immediately.

Vohnvolt hissed flames from his mouth in annoyance.

His full strength, which had been enough to decimate millions of high-level Undead couldn't even injure one Transcendent.

'Well, at least I have allies now... Though they won't last long,' the amalgam thought as he strained under the constant crushing effect of the Territory.

Indeed, he had invited two beasts from Red Rage's excess reserve in the cape to help!

One was a tall, goblin with an aggressively sculpted physique decked in a rough Legendary armour. This was one the goblins from the Cluster Red Rage and Skullius had raided months ago, where the latter eventually ended up killing Hobbu Gobbu and Hobbu Gogo.

The goblin was Tier 9, which was severely underpowered for this fight, but his Advanced Class was useful... to some extent. Switching the positions of things you can see was a powerful ability, but against someone who was on guard using Nitros or Perfect Aura or even Divine energy, it was useless.

The amalgam sighed.

His other ally was a tiny pale fly whom Red Rage had named Buzz 4. This fly had the ability to predict what would happen two seconds into the future, which was could have been immensely helpful. Red Rage had been able to tap into the vision of the Buzz series creatures to see these futures.

This would have been useful... if it worked inside the Territory. As it turned out, Buzz 4 wasn't able to use this ability in Deathward Maw.

Vohnvolt sighed again.

These were the best units available. The rest were in the Bryne Estate.

'Alright. I just need to hold on for thirty more seconds...' the amalgam thought. He was going to have to make do with this.

Vohnvolt glanced at the battle going on to the side.

The masked man was clashing against the Null Devil King.

'Good,' he thought. 'When THAT comes, he won't know what hit him.'

The amalgam was about to launch an offensive against the Transcendent first when...

DUUM! DUUUM!

Thunderous steps rang from the side and...

RAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRR!

The Herald had awakened!

He roared wrathfully and his large head turned in the direction of the masked man!

'What the...'

Vohnvolt was shocked.

What was happening?

Had the masked man's attack not worked after all?

The dragon's mouth filled with dark flame as he spoke.

"RETREAT FROM MY MASTER!"

Vohnvolt reeled.

"...Master?" he mouthed before realising what was going on.

Once more... dark flame exploded from the dragon as a thin beam which headed not for the masked man, but for the Null Devil King!

Chapter 1078: The Logic-Defying Clash Across Null Remnants! (19)

The Null Devil King had been a little slow in reacting, not because the beam that streaked toward him was any faster than he could handle, but because the masked man sent an impeccably timed kick to his head that knocked him off balance, delaying his mobilisation of a proper defence.

When the shocking beam came, the Null Lifeform once again caused his Null Life Essence to surge and had it spin around him viciously, similar to how a hamster wheel would!

Unlike before, the effect of this application on the powerful streak of heat was quite vivid. The dark flame bounced off the spinning Null Life Essence and sprayed in many different directions, leaving the Null Devil King completely unharmed!

It did, however, sent him flying into the distance from the force, a side-effect of him just barely reacting in time.

Vohnvolt was awed as he witnessed this.

However, what offered a morbid sense of fascination to him wasn't the dark flame or how the Null Devil King had responded.

It was the fact that the Herald was under the control of the masked man now!

Ordained Reverent Machination was an attack based on Actuass' Undeath concept, Reverent Soul.

This was an application of Undeath that the masked man rarely used. As of now, he had only used it on two occasions.

Once against the Paladin Champion Revia, in Evic, and the last time, when he harvested the souls of the millions of witnesses and contenders at the end of the Premium Age Royale.

Reverent Soul was an ability that forcibly made all its targets' souls bear reverence towards anything that represented Undeath. However, the masked man bore a heavy, physical burden if there were too many targets, as though weights were added to his body each time he tempered with a soul in this manner.

Ordained Reverent Machination, activated through Deathward Maw, was an extension of Reverent Soul which allowed the necromancer to finely overwrite and input a target soul's information with specific details.

The stronger the soul, the longer it took, and it should have taken him longer or flat not worked on the Herald, but because he strengthened his Territory with a Rule, in addition to weakening the dragon's soul with a whip beforehand, it all worked out.

'So, that's what he was aiming for?' Vohnvolt thought, confused. Somehow, this didn't seem right.

Was this really what the masked man was aiming for all along?

Jerthrax thrashed about, and then flapped his wings. He shot forth towards the Null Devil King with as much grandeur and heft as before, and the masked man retreated from the ensuing clash.

While the monsters who had been clashing for four days before this current battle even begun butted heads, he set his sights on the amalgam.

Vohnvolt didn't miss the attention.

'I see. He's going to let the dragon fight that body stealing bastard while the Secondary assault charges. That way, he can reserve more of his strength and then eliminate us all in one fell swoop,' he thought.

The amalgam laughed at himself.

This wasn't good.

If he at least had more options to work with, he would have been confident, but...

'Twenty-four seconds,' he thought. This at least, was reassuring.

The Transcendent Eobald-Minobu advanced towards him while the masked man came for him as well.

He teasingly swung his whip

"Pretty nice Territory you have here," the amalgam said to the masked man.

The necromancer didn't answer.

Vohnvolt chuckled.

"I guess this is part where you try to touch my soul?"

"Keep talking," the masked man said and before Vohnvolt knew it, the dark whip had already sniped its way towards his chest!

At the same time, a blaring force came from his opposite side; from the Transcendent who ignored the presence of the goblin and the fly.

Both attacks were tremendous, each exerting so much force on the amalgam's body that his [Neutral Maximum] just couldn't handle it!

'URRRRRRRRGHHHHHHH!' the amalgam roared in pain as he felt the initially jab of the masked man's whip on his soul.

However...

Because so many versions of himself were whirling around his head, the amalgam could still think quickly and act!

In fractions of an instant, he had the goblin substitute itself in his place before the damage he could receive turned fatal!

It happened as he desired. A shattering explosion sounded from where the amalgam had been.

His [Nullmancer's Royal Raiment Acclimation] whipped out as he landed on a relatively safer patch of ground (tongue?). However, the stinging pain he felt was tremendous. It was akin to a searing, stabbing itch that he couldn't scratch or ease.

But pain was good. It announced that he was still alive.

Better yet, the amalgam realised that he actually learned something from this pain.

WHOOOP!

Barely a microsecond after he had successfully managed to escape, the amalgam felt the whip storm towards him again.

Damn!

While inside the Territory, the masked man was even more monstrous physically!

The amalgam didn't stand a chance.

...But that didn't mean he would just die like that.

Once again, his phantoms urging him, he expanded Null Life Essence as quickly as he could and had it form a large, glass-like frame around him, as the Null Devil King had 'taught' him!

BOOOOM!

The Transcendent, who had also been coming for him, knocked against it, and so did the whip, but once again, the amalgam felt a small sting in his soul, as though the soul of the masked man protruding beyond the whip's blade was just shy of stabbing fully through him.

Right then...

[You have successfully learned 'Reflective Null Cage']

...!!!

A newly earned skill?

Any other time, the amalgam would have been happy to see this, but unfortunately, it was only a temporary solution. After all, he felt the erect Null Life Essence cage crack as the Transcendent kept pushing against it. This cage had been able to tank a sword strike from Jerthrax but now...

To add fuel to the fire, the masked man, who hadn't moved from his spot from before burst towards Vohnvolt, his body exploding with Undeath!

If he charged through, he would be able to break the amalgam's [Reflective Null Cage]!

But Vohnvolt had already considered that. That was why, before the masked man set to rush towards him, he had started running in his direction from within the breaking cage!

He felt his soul get pinched one more time when he bolted forth, and the stinging pain registered again.

'Again...' the amalgam narrowed his eyes.

What he felt just now... for a second time, beyond just the pain...

His soul trembled and scrunched up with each hit it. And now...

[You have successfully learned 'Soul Resistance']

[You have successfully learned 'Soul Sense']

That was right!

Scraping against the masked man's soul attack and surviving twice, allowed the amalgam to be able to feel the boundary of his soul through the pulsing pain and consciously strengthen it!

Indeed, the amalgam had received a lot of soul injuries before. Some through Divining, some from a Spirit Warden. As matters relating to the soul were much harder to perceive than those of the body, it wasn't easy to learn about the soul in the same way you could a normal application of mana.

However, what finally allowed the amalgam to obtain a power relating to the soul on his own... was the combination of the [Nullmancer's Royal Raiment of Acclimation], [Epiphany], and Red Rage's [Blessing of Serenity]!

Vohnvolt met the masked man in the middle. He had drawn back his whip and instead, as the amalgam expected, he shattered through the cage easily simply by ramming into it with his coat of Undeath Essence.

Vohnvolt, on witnessing his viciously speedy figure, raised two of his arms; his bony, Undead arms and clasped them onto two of his dark hands!

'Here goes nothing,' he thought.

Chapter 1079: The Logic-Defying Clash Across Null Remnants! (20)

The amalgam's experience with Reversing Undeath energy into life energy had taught him something significant about the two.

It seemed, unlike the other two Existential Parallels, Undeath was the direct opposite of life. The amalgam wasn't sure how Death itself related to Life energy, but his Reversion had allowed him to learn this fact, along with the properties of Undeath, which differed heavily from those of Null Life Essence.

Unlike Null Life Essence, Undeath was rather blatant, bold and easily noticeable, especially to living things. If Null Life was akin to a powerful yet reserved expert, it would be a bloodthirsty, uncaring commander.

Additionally, Undeath was also, strangely straightforward. This was especially prominent in the way summons differed between Undeath and Null Life. Undeath summons were usually obedient and simple-minded, or at least incapable of showing shrewdness.

However, the amalgam had all the experience with Null Life summons. They were anything but disciplined and one note.

There were more differences, but the amalgam had yet to figure them out. It was what he had learned so far, and a desperate need to survive that spurred him into action.

'Here goes nothing...' Vohnvolt thought as his Undead arms blazed with Undeath energy while his other arms exploded with Null Life Essence.

When he had been exposed to the masked man's Undeath energy earlier, he had gotten reacquainted with how Undeath felt within the body of an undead creature and had even attracted a portion of the necromancer's potent energy.

Vohnvolt remembered how Undeath had felt like back then. Unfortunately for the old him, because of his lack of knowledge and power, he had been unable to use it even though it was always flowing in his bones as an Undead's basic form of power.

But it was different now.

Now, not only was Vohnvolt controlling it, he was mixing it with Null Life Essence to see if... to see if what his crazy phantoms were hypothesising was true.

Was the combination of Null Life Essence and Undeath energy anything significant?

When the opposing glows of power were forced to interact, everything seemed to stop.

The amalgam had no idea what was going to happen, but he doubted it could be worse than what the masked man was about to do to him if he managed to capture him.

Thus, he focused a massive amount of Null Life Essence and dunked all the Undeath energy he could muster, even if it was incomparable to the volume of the former.

The masked man hadn't been sure how the amalgam was able to wield Undeath.

It was only now, when he took a deeper look at Vohnvolt's soul that he realised that it was... odd.

Not only did it look... cheap, but deep within it, was a signature of Undeath that was so faint that even he hadn't been able to notice.

Of course, the masked man couldn't possibly have known how complicated a creature the enemy he was facing was, given that one part of him wasn't even the real thing, thus why the details of his soul were so bare bones, but he couldn't have thought too much about this either.

The taboo the enemy was committing with the energy around his four hands was what was more pressing.

The amalgam got really absorbed in what he was doing, so much so that he began to become aware of the microscopic collisions between the Undeath and Null Life at their most minute and fundamental scales!

Right then, the amalgam felt the masked man's whip stab into him, and the pain he felt was immense.

Yet... it paled in every regard when compared to what occurred next.

The red and greenish-black Undeath, and the bluish Null Life essence merged... and vanished.

'...'

'...'

...But then the masked man and the amalgam were suddenly pulled towards each other!

Their bodies sped like light and smashed into each other, but there was no physical collision. What bombarded viciously, mixing and melting finely, was everything other than their flesh.

Actuass was fed into the amalgam and the amalgam was fed into Actuass.

Actuass saw a vast, rapidly spreading sheet in his vision that showed countless, moving images of skeletons, gems, goblins, humans, a naked girl, a familiar cackling Lich, a temple and so much more!

The amalgam also saw a similar sheet.

He saw a vast, noble estate under an unfamiliar blue sun; a woman with a radiant smile, her face appearing over countless spreads of this rapid sheet; blood; a priest in unfamiliar garb; fire; darkness, a deafening, chilling scream of something more than physical agony and then...

'DON'T LEAVE ME HERE!!!'

The coherent shriek blared so loud that the amalgam was compelled to scream aloud as well.

What he saw almost seemed to span over a lifetime, but also, it felt as though it appeared and disappeared in a second, only to leave him feeling the ground beneath his feet again.

The same was true for the masked man. No, Actuass.

Strangely, the two appeared to be standing back-to-back, a few meter's distance between them.

They also appeared to be standing opposite to where they had been standing before this extremely-out-of-pocket experience occurred!

Of course, they couldn't have known, but they had quite literally bled into each other like liquid and separated again!

Only Eobald-Minobu had witnessed this.

The amalgam clutched his head and nearly stumbled over.

'What in the world was... that...?' he asked himself. Everything he had seen mashed together and became incomprehensible. But then, his mind started to piece up and deconstruct it all rapidly.

...!!!

At once, Vohnvolt turned back to Actuass in shock, only to find that he too had turned to him, the glow in his hazel eye striking, livid with similar emotion.

No words were exchanged between the two, but the energy between them was perfectly in synch.

"So, that's who YOU are!" they both seemed to say with their accusing eyes.

Whatever the combination of Null Life Essence and Undeath did, left them temporarily feeling as though they knew each other more than anything else in the world.

And it was for that reason that both of these combatants realised...

'His Secondary assault...!' Vohnvolt thought promptly.

He knew, as Actuass did, that it was ready!

But also...

'I should have known he had something like that planned...' Actuass thought as he sensed outside of the shell to his Territory.

He knew, as the amalgam did, that help had finally come. After all, the world outside was no longer cast in impossible cold!

Right then, Deathward Maw trembled viciously, as though a mountain had knocked into its side. No, not one, but two mountains!

Actuass scowled.

Just a second later, the walls to his Territory were ruptured when two radiant wells of Nitros burst through, challenging his authority!

Two Territories were attempting to bring down his own, and they weren't failing, after all, their casters were being empowered by his own traits!

Chapter 1080: Surprise Motherfu-

"Have at me, heathen!" a shrill cry came from one of the unformed Territories which proceeded to inch forward through the design of massive teeth around the area the masked man and everyone was!

The cry came from none other than the Mad Bishop who wore her signature demented look as her massive pools of Nitros constantly ate through the integrity of Actuass' Territory!

On the other hand, Eaniss could be seen, opting to instead siphon her Nitros silently instead of making such an attempt to grab the attention of the masked man. Her eyes first pinned on the masked man's Imaginary GeoScape, then the masked man himself, and then finally... the amalgam.

Vohnvolt looked to Eaniss as well and without wasting even a moment, he bolted towards her and leaped into the enclosure of her Nitros.

He then drew a few mouthfuls of air and locked eyes with the masked necromancer again.

Both individuals were still rattled by what they had experienced, but both were experienced enough to not let such a thing convince them that they weren't enemies in the heat of battle.

To think that combining Undeath energy and Null Life Essence produced such an odd result...

The two's lives had flashed before each other's eyes and both could attest to the fact that as this happened, it had become difficult to not humanize their opponent if only slightly, after all, they were both humans once; humans with normal lives, cares, and ambitions that didn't implicate the whole world.

Actuass scowled and then his fingers locked together.

...!!!

At the same, Vohnvolt's socket flames furiously blazed in his sockets.

He remembered!

He remembered a crucial piece of information he had gleamed from the masked man; from the tail end of the sheet that displayed every event in his life.

"Eaniss!" he called to the Head Faction Leader. "He's preparing to use his Secondary assault! Don't let him activate it!"

The amalgam had sensed what it could do, and pieces of the masked man's intent also registered in his mind.

What the masked man had said to the amalgam a few minutes ago continued to prove relevant as a meaningful warning with more than just a single meaning.

'...Don't let me touch that soul of yours.'

"Dammit!" Vohnvolt cursed so hard that Eaniss gave him a strange look.

"It's that bad, huh?" she said.

"Very bad," the amalgam replied with urgency in his tone. His [Neutral Maximum] immediately vanished at his will and he thought of many ways to stop the masked man who was already beginning the motions for his attack.

Eaniss sighed.

Her Nitros exploded out all the more, as did that of the Mad Bishop who cackled loudly. The degree of space they both occupied against the masked man's Territory expanded and his Imaginary GeoScape began to suffer all the more.

With the space Deathward Maw inhabited breaking, it started to look as though all these combatants were inside a well decorated glass ornament which had just been punctured through by bursts of solid white light.

"Hurry!" Vohnvolt cried.

The third thing he had been doing when he hid himself away earlier, had to do with the Mad Bishop and Eaniss. The former couldn't be killed through conventional means and the latter was a complete anomaly whom he wasn't sure was as helpless as she made everyone in this current situation feel.

Thus, after taking the [Nullmancer's Unforgiving Lancet], Vohnvolt knew the Mad Bishop would still be alive, and the same was true for Eaniss whom he had pulled deep into the cold waters of the Frigid Pools. In his absence from the thick of the fight, he had placed them in separate pockets of space, like Yuyui, and conversed with them, making a deal with them in exchange for their help.

What the masked man was concerned about was not just the masked man, but the addition of the Null Devil King who had been playing at his own pace all along.

Furthermore, the amalgam had known he would be vulnerable when Territories came into play. The ones to be unleashed in a fight of this calibre were definitely going to be ones he couldn't contend against without some kind of assurance.

"We'll force him into a clash. Our powers have still been growing since that necromancer explained how that bizarre power of his works. If we push hard enough, his Territory will be forced to counter ours only with its Primary assault," Eaniss said. "He'll lose."

This was true.

When multiple Territory clashed, what decided which would remain standing, was the Primary attacks of each.

The one with a more physically-oriented attack mechanism would emerge victorious, and as Eaniss had gleamed, the masked man's Primary attack wasn't a physical one!

Her's and the Bishop's Nitros expanded once again, chipping away at Deathward Maw.

The masked man still remained with his hands clasped.

It was starting to become suspicious why it took so long for his Secondary attack to activate, when...

...!!!

The dragon, Eaniss and the Mad Bishop suddenly bore faces of agony!

The sensation of their life energy compounding within them... had finally grown to edify their overall power by a complete 100%!

Their strength exploded out abundantly!

Their physical attributes, their mana reserves, the potency of their Classes. Everything.

Everything... including the strength of their souls!

Vohnvolt noticed this only a second after the masked man's eyes gleamed with maliciousness.

'I was right!' he thought in horror.

With his newly acquired skill [Soul Awareness], he had sensed the sudden increase in power in the souls of Eaniss, the Mad Bishop and most obvious of all, Jerthrax!

Suddenly, it all made sense!

"Soul Yield!"

As the masked man announced the name of his Secondary attack, a most bewildering scene followed.

The large, clamped-shut, yellow teeth which had marked the boundary of the masked man's Territory, started to separate. They opened while trembling, making it seem as though the colossal beast whose maw everyone was trapped within, was opening its mouth for a breath of fresh air!

Piercing reddish-black light streamed in as the massive teeth opened, dyeing everything in a most unfavourable fate!

When the light gushed in and washed over the contending powers from the Severed Union trio, their Nitros immediately dwindled to a fourth of their full expression!

The power behind the red light was atrociously overwhelming!

The masked man was an Incandescent Stager on a similar level to Eaniss and the Bishop, and even though their powers were doubled, his Territory still managed to overpower them easily!

The fact that the two felt treacherous pain from their souls becoming too strong for their bodies also acted as a factor that derailed their focus, further leaving them susceptible to the masked man's crushing might!

Vohnvolt clicked his tongue.

In less than a second, when the Nitros protecting him was chewed away, he and Eaniss were going to perish.

However, Jerthrax was already halfway through that process.

Soul Yield was an attack that unconditionally fed the souls of whoever was highlighted by its reddish-black light within Deathward Maw to the masked man!

Its potency increased tremendously as the maw it casted continued to open.

The masked man had already begun to devour Jerthrax's soul, which had been made twice as powerful by the power of his Undeath Class!

The dragon had fallen to the ground with its face stiff. The vivacious power from his soul travelled as bright golden mist into the body of the masked man, unhindered and undeterred!

The masked necromancer had created several options for himself toward his goal of usurping Jerthrax's power.

The scales he ripped out from the dragon had been one, but the fact that the dragon was also able to protect himself with shadows had made him slowly begin to draw away from using this as a viable method to triumph against the Herald.

Better yet, he had made everyone think this was his only way to beat the dragon, when it wasn't. His Territory was his other, most effective method, but he had had to make sure he could use it at the best moment.

Now, he had gotten to the final stages of what he wanted with barely any hitch.

Or so he thought.

...

One of Jerthrax's massive scales suddenly peeled open on its own and a human figure bolted out from the space behind it to reached the masked man before he could respond.

BZZZT!

In the next instant, crimson lightning coating a sword stormed towards the masked man's clasped hands and ripped them from his body!