

# Undead 1101

Chapter 1101: Top of The Food Chain

[Six possible evolutionary paths have appeared!]

[Please note, the following species rank in the upper echelon of racial powers in the Null Verse:]

Replicus gulped.

That was some high praise.

What was he in store for this time?

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[Astral Draught Kestrel]

One of the most feared predatory creatures in the Null Verse with a long history of quick, chilling massacres. The Draught Kestrel is a regal, immortal bird that sometimes deceives its victims by assuming a humanoid shape with four great wings.

It has an unusually terrifying affinity with natural winds and has been known to gain authority over an entire world's gusts and airspace by the time it lands. Its control over winds is extraordinarily precise, and by infusing its Null Life Essence into them (winds), the Draught Kestrel can wipe out civilisations in a matter of seconds.

In its humanoid form, its wings each boast 250 long, sturdy feathers, each as powerful as high tier Mythical grade weapons and are imbued with supernatural, wind-inspired effects. The Kestrel sends out these feathers in the wind and can kill any desired target that is touched by a breeze or breathe of wind.

In its true form, it possesses a million of these feathers, all of which can be deployed to slaughter targets in one shot from as far as a light year away, or be used as conduits for the Kestrel's unique power set: GRAND and MYTH Runes.

The original Astral Kestrel wedded its kin to a powerful Elder Penetration Sage in order to learn the art of GRAND and MYTH Runes, which it then incorporated into the power set of its race.

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(Due to its unique powers, the Astral Draught Kestrel has inherited a flaw to balance its existence among the natives of different worlds.

The Astral Draught Kestrel is driven by a ferocious appetite that requires up to tens of millions of tonnes of flesh to sate every 100 days. If this requirement is not met, it will enter a Starved state where its body will rapidly wither away as its powers vanish.)

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-Choosing this race will enable you to continue using the entire Penetrator series power set.

-Choosing this race will grant a Limb-type Veneration art.

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<Stats>

ASTRAL BLIZZARD MOTION evolves into VOID WARP GATE

TRIGGER DEVIANT BUILD evolves into TRIGGER REFLECTIVE BUILD

PRIME PERPETUATION evolves into IMMORTALITY

+370,000 Null Life Essence

+700,000 Mana

## +2 SUBJECTIVE PHANTOM INFERENCE

<Runes>

-Rune of Beginning (GRAND).

-KILL rune (MYTH).

-ANTI-ESSENCE rune (MYTH).

-Rune of Sating

-Rune of the FIRST (GRAND).

-Rune of Immolation. (GRAND).

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[Timeless Adamantine 'Prodigy' Beetle]

Having its name etched in seventh place on the Universal Purge Banner, the Adamantine Beetle is one of the most feared and loathed creatures, recognised mainly for once conquering a fifth of the entire Null Verse.

The Adamantine Beetle is a species of large, green humanoid beetles with one of the toughest, and most unique exoskeletons known to Null Kind. It is well known for its astounding durability, and its ability to obtain an unlimited number of shapes.

When exposed to a hostile attack, the Adamantine Beetle unconsciously changes form, attaining a shape and traits that can counter the nature of the received attack; both its destructive power and the skill of the attack's user.

Its ability to master all forms of attacks and substances over time with this horrific ability is quite fearsome, and the fact that it changes into a different shape each time makes it difficult to identify. This uncanny power of the Adamantine Beetle pales in comparison, however, to its other unusual ability.

The Beetle passively generates an unlimited number of bacteria within itself when it matures, and they all rapidly grow to become micro versions of the Beetle, all fitted within it, and each granting the Beetle a significant degree of physical strength as they grow.

These micro-Beetles must be expelled from time to time, however, otherwise the Adamantine Beetle will explode from the inside, as production does not cease once it begins.

The released micro-Beetles grow with the same properties as the original except the proliferation of bacteria, and as they spread and grow, the original can siphon powers that they harvest, growing more powerful passively. There has been no recorded limit to the Adamantine Beetle's power as of yet.

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(Due to its unique powers, the Timeless Adamantine Beetle has inherited a Flaw to balance its existence among the natives of different worlds.

The Timeless Adamantine Beetle is fated to fight against its creations for as long as it lives. A majority of its unwanted spawn eventually return to kill the original so as to avoid being one of the many that get their powers siphoned and absorbed.)

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-Choosing this race will allow you to keep a majority of the Penetrator series power set.

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<Stats>

All states grow passively at an undefined rate, and there is no limit for growth.

<Skills>

-Legion Retention (Super)

-Unlimited Merging (Super)

-Hive Vision (Super)

-Hive Possession (Supreme)

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[Hallowed Marionette]

One family of pious souls once traversed the Null Verse seeking to learn all its secrets. Millennia later, they evolved into a race of hollow, gentle creatures that Divine Null Lifeforms took advantage of while offering THREE blessings for their service.

The Hallowed Marionettes are vessels stripped of innate powers. As beings that answer to the call of anything that has reached the level of Divine, they have no powers of their own and rejoice simply in being used by powerful beings who can't walk move among the minor realms within the Null Verse.

After a Divine being uses their bodies for their own goals, Hallowed Marionettes are given the general Divine powers of whomever they hosted for 50 days to do with as they please.

Divine power allows mortals to become impervious to damage dealt by a non-Divines; it allows for the creation of skills of their own up to the Supreme level; it allows the creation of basic lifeforms; handling Rule-level concepts, among other things, which is why the Hallowed Marionettes are happy to serve.

Serving Divines as vessels awards a Marionette with Blessings. Each multiple of 10 Divine beings served awards one of THREE promised blessings, which in ascending order are: Perfection, Unlimited Strength and Reincarnation.

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(Due to their unique powers, the Hallowed Marionettes have inherited a Flaw to balance their existence among the natives of different worlds.

While the Hallowed Marionettes have physiques that naturally catch the eye of Divine beings and Deities, their vessels must remain empty in order to gain the favour of said Divine beings. The contract imbedded in their bodies forces any Divines they deal with to give them rewards afterward, but marring their vessels with other skills and abilities erases their purity.)

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-Choosing this race means forfeiting access to all your skills permanently.

-Choosing this race means acquiring the CELESTIAL ALLURE PHYSIQUE, which attracts the favour of ALL Divine beings – though in varying degrees.

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<Stats>

Irrelevant

<Skills>

Irrelevant

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[Colossus Warmoth's Progeny]

The Warmoth is one of the extinct Terrors of the Null Verse that was once included on the Universal Purge Banner, six spots away from the deadliest ten. Nowadays, it is known as a myth, but many remember its exploits across the nigh boundless Null Verse.

In its days, the Warmoth was known as a highly intelligent Null Lifeform that kept to itself for hundreds of millennia while gathering information about countless species of Null Lifeforms only to emerge suddenly as a frightening being that was not only elusive, but horrifically mighty.

It challenged one of the Four Authorities in the Null Verse and won, reigning for nine million years before stepping down from the position of its own accord.

The Warmoth had an unusual, mammoth-like body with massive, pronounced bones that were said to be resistant to all concepts: time, space, gravity, vacuum, and even the supernatural heat of the hottest stars in the Null Verse.

It was also known for merging its flesh with a powerful artefact it created which allowed it to mimic the Levin of the Penetrators, only, its variant was far different from that which was known.

Ju`wtte, as the Warmoth called it, served as its very lifeblood, allowing it to prolong its life; passively and continuously increase the grade and potency of its artefacts and tools; enhance its physical and magical attributes; use as a means of travel; use as a conduit for a select number of GRAND runes; dismantle weak connections between concepts, among many other functions.

The Colossus is also said to have created three separate dimensions whose locations are still unknown. One is said to house a plague that can kill all life and Null Life leaving out those with Ju`wtte. The second is said to house the Warmoth's valiant armour, which has been sought after for many years even by the Four Authorities of the Null Verse.

The third is said to house the Warmoth's hidden domain, where he disappeared to for years at a time without a trace.

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(Due to its unique powers, the Colossus Warmoth's Progeny has inherited a Flaw from the Warmoth itself to balance their existence among the natives of different worlds.

The Colossus Warmoth's Progeny must observe the two-fold conditions its predecessor has left behind.

One, the Progeny must not allow the source of their Ju`wtte to be destroyed.

Two, the Progeny's granted FOND CALAMITY must remain in their grasp – equipped – at ALL times.

Failure to adhere to these conditions will result in instant death.

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-Choosing this race means forfeiting a majority of the Penetrator series skills and abilities.

-Choosing this race automatically grants the FOND CALAMITY, WARMOTH'S SPINE, (Pseudo-Transcendent Grade).

-Choosing this race automatically grants the WARMOTH'S LEGACY, THE SACRED KEYS.

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<Stats>

TRIGGER DEVIANT BUILD evolves into EMPOWERED TRIGGER DEVIANT BUILD.



ASTRAL BLIZZARD MOTION evolves into JU`WTTE BLIZZARD MOTION.

SUBJECTIVE PHANTOM INFERENCE evolves into PHANTOM OMNISCIENCE.

DUAL MANA-SOURCING FORCE evolves into DUAL CONCEPT-TRACING IMPACT.

PRIME PERPETUATION evolves into EMPOWERED PRIME PERPTUATION.

+480,000 Null Life Essence

+910,000 Mana

<Skills>

[Will be revealed once the LEGACY has been received]

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[Looming Soft Spawn]

The Soft Spawn are some of the few beings in the Null Verse with barely a book of study to their name. Few know about their existence as most of those who encountered them did not live to tell the tale. Or perhaps they did, but could speak no more.

These beings have been pegged as closer to being natural phenomena than actual, living creatures, and thus it is rare to find one that is highly intelligent. However, this does not detract from how powerful and dangerous these beings are. Looming Soft Spawn are ghostly, soul-like beings well-known for their complete immunity to any and all physical damage.

They have a form that can be termed as their soul, but many have deemed it too sturdy to be called that.

The Soft Spawn enjoy possessing worlds and slowly feeding on the souls of their inhabitants to strengthen their own forms. Some of the more prominent Soft Spawn to be found were said to be immune to all manner of soul attacks as well, and thus couldn't be harmed or influenced by a majority of the weapons and powers in the entire Null Verse.

Only terribly niche and powerful concepts can harm them, and even then, Soft Spawn recover astonishing quickly.

On top of this eerie quality, Looming Soft Spawn have the ability to define other souls once they mature enough. They usually perform artistic treachery with millions of extracted and tortured souls using their FOND CALAMITIES which all the look the same, and cannot be avoided or negated with the use of skills and armour once they touch the target.

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(Due to their unique powers, the Looming Soft Spawn have inherited a Natural Flaw to balance their existence among the natives of different worlds.

Looming Soft Spawn are incapable of storing Null Life Essence since they lack bodies and are normally incapable of obtaining them due to having immensely powerful souls. A lack of Null Life Essence means that even with their invulnerability, they may be susceptible to powers containing Undeath and Voided Death Essence.

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-Choosing this race means forfeiting your body and all your skills.

-Choosing this race automatically enhances your soul a thousand-fold.

-Choosing this race automatically grants the FOND CALAMITY, SOUL'S NIGHTMARE.

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<Stats>

+5,000 Soul Integrity (NEW)

+200 Soul Pods (NEW)

+800% Soul Recovery (NEW)

+160 Soul Source (NEW)

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[Canon Man]

The Canon Men were a species that was once revered as the masters of fate. At one point, they were designated as the most powerful race out of all the beings in existence (the Null Verse), but were all wiped out by the combined force of the Four Authorities of the Null Verse and their armies. The Canon Men were a race of individuals capable of warping reality by dictating how events would flow.

In the beginning, they were merely prophets sworn to the Four Authorities who helped prevent catastrophic disasters from cascading down and destroying the Null Verse, but a mysterious, unknown Null Terror corrupted them.

During the heights of their fame, the Canon Men wrote calamitous disasters into existence and swooped in to save the victims of said disasters... after wiping the memory of these victims so that they thought the Canon Men were their saviours.

To manipulate reality in what they called an Episode, the Canon Men needed to define a disaster, its victims and the abilities they would gain to counterattack this disaster and save the day.

The Canon Men could define a disaster as an existing living entity, and this was how they had prevailed over generations of Four Authorities who tried to put an end to their antics. A few Canon Men widely respected for their expertise even evolved to be able to manipulate reality without needing all the elements of an Episode.

While limited, they could simply grant themselves boundless luck, boundless strength or an unnatural capacity for comedy which left all their enemies laughing their lungs out instead of battling them.

The Canon Men are also known as the only beings to have ever escaped the Null Verse, but they were dealt with by &%@#! before they could cause too much trouble.

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(Due to their unique powers, the Canon Men inherited a Curse to balance their existence among the natives of different worlds.

A Canon Man's META TOME is limit to only ten pages. Each page can only be marked by an ink made using 10,000,000 units of Null Life Essence per grammatically correct sentence.

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-Choosing this race allows you to keep half of your race-specific skills.

-Choosing this race automatically grants a META TOME.

-Choosing this race automatically grants two Ocular Veneration arts.

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<Stats>

+1,500,000 Null Life Essence

+1,500,000 Mana

x5 to Physical Stats.

<Skills>

-Episode Generation (Supreme)

-Looking Cool (Super)

-Hero's Care Package (Super).

-Episode Cheat: Contrivance (Supreme)

Chapter 1102: Too Many Risks, Too Many Rewards

Replicus had made his decision to choose Hybrid evolutions over the pure Penetrator series without much hesitation. As much as he liked the Penetrator series, he had seen that it didn't have much in the way of variety and once the guidance field presented to him that it was rather average when compared to other racial series, he quickly decided to do away with it.

The fact that few Penetrators ever reached the peak of the Null Verse also made his decision much easier.

If there were greener pastures, who was he to stroll past them and choose a more treacherous path instead?

When reading the long list of evolutionary paths, Replicus and his phantoms felt a series of deeply varying emotions.

It seemed the Null Verse was a rather messed up place.

All the species presented to him were either predators or world ending catastrophes. With the current state that Aigas was in right now, Replicus had no doubt that the Astral Draught Kestrel, for instance, could wipe out Feinheath and Opungale before the Heralds could slow it down.

Worse yet, they might not even be able to do that as the Kestrel was said to be capable of attacking from a vast distance – a light year away, to be exact. It could attack from the dark void with its feathers.

Speaking of the Kestrel...

"I think this is actually a viable option," Replicus said to himself and Serenity gazed at him curiously, wondering about why he thought this. "I suppose the Kestrel is allowed to live and pillage as it pleases because there aren't any Rules protecting worlds in the Null Verse?"

Serenity let out a sigh.

"Yes. That's right. That is not a common practice in the Null Verse. Most worlds don't have Deities governing them. They form on their own," she said.

Replicus nodded.

He wanted to know more about the mechanics of the Null Verse, but he didn't have that luxury. Not yet. He could ask all about that later.

"If it wasn't that hard to invade worlds, I would probably have considered the Kestrel more closely. It should be able to travel outside worlds easily with its bird form. It even has knowledge of runes on top of its affinity to winds and its feathers."

The part about the Kestrel learning about Runes from an Elder Penetration Sage intrigued Replicus. He had once been offered to evolve into something similar during his second evolution, but had decided against it because he wouldn't be able to use skills anymore. The Kestrel, on the other hand didn't have such a limitation. If not for its Flaw...

(A/N: Refer to Ch.489).

Replicus clicked his tongue and moved on.

'These collusions between Null Life creatures are interesting.'

The Timeless Adamantine 'Prodigy' Beetle also caught his attention, much more than the Kestrel, in fact.

The fact that each attack it received actually changed its physical form and gave it attributes that countered said attacks, was terrifying. From how it sounded, it immediately mastered the elements of the attack and the skill of the attacker too!

'I can just imagine being able to master the Herald's powers just by being struck by them once. That dark fire breath, the effects of the Rules... This is similar to what a combination of my [Nullmancer's Royal Raiment of Acclimation] and [Epiphany] can accomplish over time...' the Penetrator thought with sparking sockets.

On top of this, the Beetle had the physical attributes to back its supernatural ability to copy other powers. Apparently, an unlimited amount of bacteria that rapidly grew into miniature versions of the Beetle would be born inside it, and each one produced raised its strength!

There was no limit!

'If only these bastards didn't come back to try and kill me. Since they take on a new form after every attack, I might not even recognise them when they come for me. They could even work together to do this,' Replicus thought, but with the interference of his phantoms he slowly started to consider countermeasures to the Adamantine Beetle's Flaw.

"This might not be that bad, actually. Serenity, are the Beetles produced by the original born with the original Beetle's class too?"

Serenity folded her arms.

"I'm not too sure, but I doubt it. A class has to be chosen. That's how it works in the Null Verse," she said.

Replicus nodded. That made sense.

In the back of his mind, he also confirmed that Serenity really didn't know everything about the Null Verse despite having control over it. Curious.

"I was thinking, if these Beetles don't have a class like mine, I could easily create countermeasures. With the Nullmancer Class I could even make some of them my Apostles after they grow. Besides even that, among the Beetle's skills, there's one that allows it to see what they are seeing – [Hive Vision].

With my phantoms I could constantly keep a lookout," Replicus said, but then he sighed, or attempted to, at least. "Living my entire life while constantly looking over my shoulder... That's not ideal. But well, it's better than the Hallowed Marionette."

Replicus absolutely despised this race.

Despite the benefits they got after selling their bodies to Divine bidders, Replicus couldn't imagine becoming such a thing.

Perfection?

Unlimited Strength?

Reincarnation?

These Blessings only came after wooing Deities and Divining beings and serving up to 30 of them!

"Flesh that," Replicus shook his head and moved on. "Now this..."

The Colossus Warmoth's Progeny had a very mysterious and enticing story behind it. A mythic figure that shook the Null Verse, governed it and then disappeared when he deemed himself satisfied. That was fascinating.

Replicus wondered how large the Warmoth was. Its description made it a point to express how massive it had been. Colossus wasn't a tag given to just any regular, fat Joe.



On top of its bones being resistant to all concepts, the Warmoth also created its own version of Levin called Ju`wtte. In Replicus' opinion, it sounded much stronger and much more versatile just from the few examples of what it could do.

'It can even passively increase the grade and potency of artefacts... That's ridiculous,' he thought.

On top of this, there was also the Warmoth's Legacy. Three dimensions that no one in the Null Verse had ever managed to reach.

'Curiously, the guidance field, or rather VOW seems to know what's in each of them. Yet, at some points it seems as though VOW is referencing rumours. What's going on here?'

This was just a passing thought, though.

Replicus focused on the Warmoth's Flaw. No, it was a Flaw given to the Warmoth's Progeny by the Warmoth itself.

"If I can get a Pseudo-Transcendent artefact just by accepting the condition that I must never ever drop it... I'm inclined to consider this," Replicus said, much to Serenity's amusement.

Indeed, the Warmoth Progeny would receive a Pseudo-Transcendent Relic, the Warmoth's Spine!

Replicus had never seen an artefact graded beyond Mythical+ and so he was very excited.

This was extremely attractive.

However...

"Letting the Spine to leave my hands apparently means instant death though..." he thought as a cold chill crept up his spine. He imagined some vague powerful figure kicking away his weapon... and triumphing against him immediately.

On top of this, he would also die if he allowed the source of his Ju`wtte to be destroyed, whatever that meant.

All these stipulations brought Replicus to a halt. He moved on.

"Here's another thing I probably don't even want to give a second thought," he said.

The Looming Soft Spawn was not even an option in the eyes of the Penetrator. Between it and the Marionette, he would rather go with the latter.

Choosing a race that couldn't fight Undeath or Voided Death Essence was the dumbest thing he could do.

Or was it?

When he thought about it...

'Could my soul getting empowered a thousand fold potentially free me from Somanda's grip? Or if that isn't enough, could devouring millions of other souls make the half soul that I have whole and therefore get rid of the need to acquire the other part? That way, I wouldn't need to interact with Undead at all,' the Penetrator thought.

But...

'No,' he steeled himself. 'That wouldn't be fulfilling. I want to be whole and I want to do it in the way I've been wanting to do it from the beginning. By fleshing Somanda up.'

Replicus then considered the last option.

"Hey Serenity," he said as he read. "If these... Canon Men, were this powerful, who stopped them after they managed to escape the Null Verse? Was it you alone?"

Serenity couldn't show it, but a grimace showed on her face. This was one of the greatest blemishes to her name, but she was thankful that it hadn't ended up causing too much trouble.

Right when she set to speak...

'If you so much as mention HIS name, I swear I will kill you, Serenity!'

A voice blared in Serenity's head.

She shook slightly but remained composed.

'Don't worry, Wyrrim. I'm not stupid, and neither am I that bold. I wouldn't compromise your safety or mine in such a way,' she reassured.

Chapter 1103: A Penetrator No More

Serenity turned to Replicus after settling the matter in her head. The latter didn't even realise that his benefactor had been in a conversation just now.

"I had a few friends that owed me favours. They helped me out," she said simply to Replicus' question.

In the name of not digging into rabid holes of information too deep for the continually shortening window of time left in the Outworld Attic, Replicus simply nodded and started to think more on the Canon Man as an option for evolution.

"This race sure is powerful. At higher masteries you don't even need to conform to the Episode creation. You can simply give yourself abilities without needing to create a disaster first. That is very handy. No wonder these guys gave everyone a run for their coin," Replicus said as he paced about, jumping over large fissures that were constantly spreading after every tremor.

"It would be great if I could call upon a disaster in Deadmanland, make all the Undead there – except for Bonet and the others – the victims, and then give myself the power to stop it. Of course, I wouldn't rescue the Liches."

This was fun to imagine. It likely took a while to develop his powers to the point where he could create disasters that could harm Divine beings though; as Somanda had become one some time ago, but still!

Of course, there was the Flaw. No, the Curse. These Canon bastards had actually been cursed to have only have limited space in their Tomes – the devises they used to write their rewrite reality. On top this, to write one sentence, a Canon Man needed ink imbued with 10,000,000 units of Null Life Essence. A single sentence!

"Yes, I made sure this was a Curse not a Flaw, so that the Canon Man didn't try grow powerful enough to escape again," Serenity answered after Replicus' inquiry.

The Penetrator nodded.

That seemed fair. Fair enough for him to not consider the Canon Man as an option.

The Canon Man were one-trick ponies and their one trick was severely limited. The only saving grace was that if Replicus chose this species, he'd be able to keep half of his Penetrator powers, meaning he wouldn't be entirely reliant on these reality warping abilities, but still... no.

"So, it all comes down to the Astral Draught Kestrel, the Timeless Adamantine Beetle and the Warmoth's Progeny, huh? All of them have some really enticing powers – the first two more so – and some, really deadly Flaws. Well, I don't have to put all my eggs in the race bucket. I have other channels of growth. So..." Replicus said and made his choice.

At once, the guidance field reacted.

[You have chosen 'Colossus Warmoth's Progeny' as your race!]

[Your race being upgraded, changes in progress...]

Right then, Replicus' body jerked as though shot through by a sonic spectrum. It quivered violently, and then unlike how this evolution process normally went all the times before, Replicus lost control of his body and his vision went black.

He felt nothing.

He saw nothing.

It was as though he was trapped in a world of darkness where he was able to vaguely define his own existence.

'This is new...' he thought.

The promised Tier had to have some special effects, it seemed.

Or maybe it was so painful to assume a Fourth Tier racial evolution that he was put him in a coma?

Maybe. Maybe not.

Right then, the guidance field appeared in the darkness, represented in a massive screen before Replicus that proudly announced several changes he hadn't seen coming!

[Because you have elected to touch upon frightening heights even among Null Kind, your formerly basic skills as a Null Lifeform have been amplified greatly]

[Null Extraction's range now encompasses up to the boundary of any inhabited world]

['Unbound' is now usable on other animate entities]

[Static Limbo is no longer confined to a single target a time]

...

If Replicus had eyes, they would have bulged, and if he had body, he would performed a triumphant dance Fractures had taught him 951 years ago!

'[Null Extraction] is... [Unbound] is whaaa... [Static Limbo] can...'

Replicus was stumped.

This was...

This was ridiculous!

Just the implications of being able to use [Unbound] on others, and being able to use [Null Extraction] across an entire world were...!

'Flesh me now!' Replicus thought.

He couldn't hear the buzzing of his phantoms now probably because he didn't have a body, but if they were here... He wouldn't hear the end of it. Heck, he couldn't even stop his own mind from falling into a chasm of possibilities.

However, before he could sink too deeply in it, Replicus' vision of the world was restored.

It was much... higher than he remembered, though.

Notifications began spraying him right after he made an attempt to look at his body.

[Congratulations, you have evolved into Tier 4, becoming the 'Colossus Warmoth's Progeny']

[You have gained 'EMPOWERED TRIGGER DEVIANT BUILD']

[You have gained 'JU`WTTE BLIZZARD MOTION']

[You have gained 'PHANTOM OMNISCIENCE']

[You have gained 'DUAL CONCEPT-TRACING IMPACT']

[You have gained 'EMPOWERED PRIME PERPETUATION']

[You have gained +480,000 Null Life Essence!]

[You have gained +910,000 Mana]

The Penetrator was no more.

The first evidence of this was a thin streak of yellowish red lightning Replicus saw zipping past his face, then another and another.

At once, he could tell that this was Ju`wtte.

Different from Levin, it was not silent.

Starkly different from Levin, it was much faster.

Replicus took a breath.

He wasn't a skeleton anymore. He had a full body.

He stood upright as a spindly, four-armed creature with a height of 3.5 meters.

He was quite thin, his figure very lanky – especially his arms which seemed to desire to meet his knees with ease – but his body was extremely well defined and sturdy, not to mention smooth.

The Progeny's entire body seemed to be made of what looked like shiny, ebony ceramic. His arms portrayed the beauty of this a lot more than anything else, as each contour they had barely registered without the presence of shadow.

Deep within this new ebony body, veins of yellowish red could be spotted from the outside running through him like blood vessels. This was on top of the bolts streaking over Replicus skin in wildly mind-boggling numbers, illuminating the Outworld Attic intensely.

Ju`wtte loved tracing every inch of the Warmoth's Progeny every chance it got, but without overwhelming what his figure should look like without the brilliance.

The source of the Ju`wtte, as Replicus soon found out, were two thick, long brass bracers on two of his arms, each marked with three large runic markings. These markings had a jarring yellowish red radiance that somewhat frightened the Progeny.

'This is the source the Flaw meant, I see,' he thought looking at the two bracers. They had a weight to them that took some getting used to.

Replicus' torso was bare, allowing for all to see the strange, deep, kite-shaped hole in his chest. Its purpose was yet unknown, but Replicus noted the grooves – root-shaped – growing from it to mark his upper shoulders and his upper arms.

'What this supposed to be?' the Progeny asked himself as he looked below his waist.

A pair of baggy pants seemingly made of very rough, twilight fog fur covered his legs. The separation between each pant leg was almost invisible because of how low they sagged, but surprisingly, they didn't hinder the Progeny's movement at all.

"How do I look?" Replicus asked Serenity.

Serenity was amused by the question. She looked at his face.

It came only after a rather long neck extended from Replicus torso, also marred by the grooves from the kite-shaped hole he had.

It was smooth, beautiful and unchanging, much like that of a sculpture.

Two large, curved slots rested on the Progeny's face, spewing out faint smoke and an eager yellow light. These were of course, his eyes.

He also had a wide mouth that seemed to extend past his face and wind around his entire head.

A patch of hair nestled the top of his head – indeed, hair – only, it looked more like the light, twilight fog fur that made his pants.

It was long, soft and wavy, sometimes draping over the Progeny's eyes, sometimes falling back; it had no fixed style.

"You look... edgy," Serenity said. Replicus laughed.

He felt immense strength brimming within him.



He was a lot stronger than just seconds before. Much, much stronger.

But this wasn't the thickest of it.

Beside him, space seemed to explode with frightening bolts of Ju`wte spreading like webs, and then...

[You have received the Warmoth's Legacy, the Sacred Keys!]

...!!!

Right when Replicus felt something attach itself to the rim of his pants, the Outworld Attic started to quake without ceasing. From the pooling, vigorous Ju`wte that sounded a lot like millions of crabs clacking their claws, a massive construct struck the ground beside him.

It was fearsome.

It was mighty.

It was five times the Progeny's size.

[You have received the Pseudo-Transcendent Fond Calamity, Warmoth's Spine!]

Chapter 1104: The Warmoth's Spine

What appeared beside the Progeny was something... odd.

Despite the shockwave which had rolled out when the thing met the ground, emphasising its immense weight, at a glance, it was hard to see how this... thing, could even influence its material surroundings.

Replicus tilted his head in confusion.

The only thing he could see clearly were the bolts of Ju`wte crackling around the space this... thing, inhabited. As for the actual item, what was certain was its height. It stood at roughly sixteen meters, towering massively over the Progeny.

However, it looked like an unfinished drawing, a draft of sorts. Without paying attention, one would only see many soft shadows tracing an image that was all but unclear.

But this was only a consequence of looking at it with the eyes.

The thing's presence was unfathomable. Replicus had almost forgotten to breathe when it landed with a great thud that shook his very core.

Was this the Warmoth's Spine? Something so abstract?

He spent a few more seconds staring at the wavy, unsettled, disjointed shadows rising upward until he was interrupted by Serenity's voice.

"I think... I think it's sheathed," she said.

"What?"

"This weapon. I think it's sheathed, which is why its features are so vague. Touch it," she said.

Replicus hesitated a little before drawing close to the oddity and trying to reach for one of its shadows.

The instant his hand rested upon this shadow – which seemed to be solid – a wild gust blew over the towering mass before him, and as though a layer of invisible sand was washed off from it, the true image of the artefact was revealed.

As its name suggested, it was indeed a spine.

Large segments of stacked vertebrae in an ivory hue formed its mass, with a large, black handle protruding from the end, which was facing upwards. The bottom of the weapon, the Fond Calamity,

was what was digging into ground, making it groan. It was formed by the largest vertebrae, with the others following after it scaling down in size to the back handle.

Replicus' curved eyes sparkled.

The thing was roughly as wide as he was tall!

What's more, six, unnaturally sharp bone protrusions – like blades – came from the left side of the stacked vertebrae, all long and curved. Their edges actually shone as though smoothed and carved to leave devastating cuts.

(A/N: They are exaggerated versions of a spine's spinous process.).

A dark presence wafted from the Warmoth's Spine and it resonated with the Warmoth's Progeny tremendously. For a while, he was lost in the feeling it gave. It gave him the impression that as long as he was wielding it, he would be invincible.

And perhaps that was true.

[The Warmoth's Spine has acknowledged you as its master]

As the notification from the guidance field flashed in Replicus' eyes, the Warmoth's Spine seemed to invert, its handle, which had been pointed to the sky appearing in Replicus' grip while its other end now took its turn to point defiantly at whatever was above!

'Wow...'

Upon wielding the weapon, Replicus felt his already surging powers surge all the more.

He felt himself get imparted with a presence that he alone couldn't exude.

His back straightened.

His eyes sharpened.

This weapon, fixed his posture?

Replicus soon discovered that what he felt from the Spine was conservative.

When looked to his Apostles, he saw that both of them had bowed down on one knee and hung their heads, as though they weren't worthy of looking at him.

....?

Even Araeyn was showing a degree of respect without being coerced.

[+50 Favourability with Araeyn]

[+80 Favourability with Red Rage]

"Oh," Replicus jerked. He hadn't seen that in a while.

He looked at the Spine again. To think this thing had such kind of power to make even a rebel like Araeyn submit!

But this was not all. Far from it.

Despite the Warmoth's Spine being five times his size, its handle much too large for his hand, Replicus felt that his grip on the weapon was firm. The handle drew in his hand as though afraid of parting with it. A closer look would reveal that Replicus' hand had sunken in as though it was welded into it.

To add to the convenience provided by this artefact, Replicus also found that the Warmoth's Spine weighed... nothing.

If he were to be blinded, he would have thought he wasn't holding anything at all.

The sensation made him grin and before he knew it, he was tempted to swing the Spine to see its full might when...

"STOP! Don't do that here!" Serenity warned. "You might not feel like it has a weight to it, but it does. A simple swing from that thing might destroy this whole place."

Replicus immediately desisted.

"Right. This is a Pseudo-Transcendent weapon after all," he said.

Oddly enough, on top of not feeling its weight, the Progeny didn't feel its effect on the surroundings. Apparently, everyone else could, though. "Let's see."

At once, Replicus used the guidance field to check the properties of Warmoth's Spine.

~~~

[Warmoth's Spine]

-Pseudo Transcendent-

Made from a miniaturized section of the Warmoth's thoracic spine, the Warmoth's Spine is an artefact bearing a portion of the true essence of the Colossus Warmoth. It is naturally resistant to the effects of all concepts and is especially generous to all those who carry the will of the Warmoth through its Legacy and the Ju`wta.

-Damage-

1,890,000-3,000,500

-Durability-

975,000-990,000

[Special Effects]

-Weightless to the user

-Allows the user to adjust their size

-Gives the user a fragment of the Colossus Warmoth's regal aura

-Can veil itself when needed, limiting its interaction with the material world

-+500% to Ju`wtte production and Ju`wtte skill efficiency

-+500% to all energy reserves

-Each swing applies triple the maximum attack speed of the user

-Each attack has a chance to deal 500% additional damage

-Each attack contains 100% Crush and Shock damage

-Each of the six vertebrae blades (spinous process) can be used separately from the Spine with just the user's will.

---

[Skill: Honoured Lacerance]

By infusing 500,000 units of Null Life Essence, the user can unleash a vertical slash that WILL NOT fail to cut through any foundation or entity existing within the dimensions of a world and below.

---

[Skill: Full Spine]

For a limited time, the user can unleash the full length and girth of the Warmoth's Spine, amplifying its powers. Usable only once a day.

---

[Skill: Warmoth's Peal]

By infusing units of 100,000 Null Life Essence, the user can unleash a devastating sonic and Ju`wtte blast.

---

[Full Release: Locked]

~~~

Replicus sighed, overwhelmed.

This was definitely the strongest weapon he had seen so far!

So many powerful skills. Not to mention just its special effects were also ridiculous!

The attack speed, the increase to reserves...

'I can even manipulate my size, huh? I kind of wish that applied to the weapon too though,' he thought, but was not disappointed in the slightest.

As his eyes scrolled over all the skills and the mysterious [Full Release], which was apparently locked, Replicus suddenly shook, realising something.

"Right. I can't put it down..." he said aloud. The Flaw!

If there was anything to put a damper on his mood, it would definitely be this.

'I had thought this would be fine since I have four arms, but... Even if its not simple to let go of the weapon, the fact that one of my hands will constantly be occupied is still a bit inconvenient.'

"It's not that big of a deal. Be thankful this is all just a mere inconvenience to you. It's better than starving or having to watch out for assassins you made yourself," Serenity said.

Replicus shrugged.

Well, she wasn't wrong.

"You should check your other gift," Serenity added while pointing at Replicus' waist.

There, on the rim of the Progeny's fur pants were three keys, each the size of his forearm, bound together by a ring.

Chapter 1105: The Sacred Keys

Replicus had felt the appearance of the keys right when the Spine had appeared, but his attention had been stolen by the insanity the Pseudo-Transcendent artefact represented.

The subtle mystery behind the ivory, green and gold keys hanging on his pants couldn't have compared, but now, it was their turn to spill their secrets to the Warmoth's only successor.

Replicus took them by the ring that kept them together, and as he did, the guidance field hurried to announce more goods news!

[You have received the Warmoth's Legacy!]

[Compiling skill set...]

[...]

[You have gained 'Unrelenting Ju`wtte Chain']



[You have gained 'Warmoth's Empyrean Ambience']

[You have gained 'Warmoth's Fortitude']

[You have gained 'Ju'wttta Resounding Restoration']

[You have gained 'Bloodline Awakening: Warmoth's Return']

[You have gained 'Rune of the FIRST']

[You have gained 'Rune of the Immolation']

[You have retained 'Fulgurous Virulence' from the Penetrator series]

[You have retained 'Veneration art, Violent Bond' from the Penetrator series]

At once, Replicus felt new skills being branded into his body one by one, some of them Super and some of them Supreme!

His ebony body showed glimpses of these powers getting engrained within him and at the same time, different from how it happened before, the information concerning all these skills flowed into the Warmoth's Progeny's head like a flood; all about their purpose, the full extent of their usages and their properties!

Replicus' yellow eyes shone vibrantly, his four hands balled into fists. Soon, he let go and took another breath, his humanoid torso expanding as he did and contracting when he let out all the air.

"Warmoth... just what in the world were you trying to do with all this power?" Replicus said with a flabbergobgastersmacked frown.

He was genuinely surprised.

In all honesty, the powers of the Spine had almost made him forget that he had yet to receive his Warmoth's skills yet. Now that he had them, he couldn't believe just what they did.

[Warmoth's Fortitude] was a Super skill that passively granted the Progeny a 300% boost to his Ju`wtte's efficiency and power. It also strengthened the durability of the Ju`wtta, which were the brass bracers around two of his arms – the source of his Ju`wtte.

On top of this, it directed his Ju`wtte to his counter incoming attacks automatically, and if Replicus was using any other artefact, it would passively be empowered by 250% at once and then receive a permanent boost of 10% per day!

This was insane!

More shocking than this was [Unrelenting Ju`wtte Chain], another Super skill.

Replicus could designate up to 10,000 enemies at once and have his Ju`wtte create a chain that linked them all together and bombarded them with its flashes of condensed Ju`wtte. Apparently, if the enemy resisted the attack, the 'voltage' of [Unrelenting Ju`wtte Chain] would continue to increase after every hit and wouldn't stop until all the enemies were turned to crispy dust!

Even if Replicus ran out of energy to supply the skill, it would look for its own channels to continue building up a charge until the enemy was eradicated!

How intolerant to failure!

It was through this skill that Replicus discovered the meaning of Crush and Shock damage referenced from the Warmoth's Spine before.

Apparently, every time Replicus attacked a target in whatever fashion, Ju`wtte would automatically release miniature explosions that went off around and within the target in a trillionth of a second. These explosions, while small, applied damage that had its own different flavour – Crush damage – and their shockwaves were also rather vicious, designated as the Shock.

Another ridiculous skill was [Ju`wtta Resounding Restoration]. By knocking the bracers around his arms – Ju`wtta – together, Replicus could restore his body from any amount of damage done to him while also dealing a considerable degree of damage to enemies in a ten-meter radius!

While it cost an astronomical amount of mana, this skill was way too good. There was no cooldown or duration for using it. As long as he had mana, he wouldn't have to fear anything!

"I'd say I chose the best option out of all of them there. Some of those options might have been more powerful, but this... this is the one for me," Replicus said with a grin.

Serenity was happy that he was satisfied.

Letting her champion choose his own powers ended up being the best choice after all.

As odd as it was, it wasn't Serenity who decided the evolutionary options that Replicus was provided with every time he achieved the requirements for an evolution. Most of the time, especially before now, when she wasn't able to communicate to Replicus, it had been frightening.

To be honest, this whole ordeal was frightening for her.

This was her first time choosing a bearer of Null Life Essence after all, and unlike the others, she wasn't used to trusting someone with her powers outside the Null Verse. Well, in fact, she hadn't even been the one to give Replicus these powers. It was VOW. While she could have taken them away back then, she let Replicus keep them, keen on seeing how this odd fellow would do.

This was certainly better than watching Somanda, who had intercepted them, tinker with them endlessly, trying to find their secrets.

Replicus raised the three keys – the Sacred Keys.

The guidance field gave him brief descriptions of each.

~~~

[The Empyrean Bosom Key (Ivory)]

-???-

A key to unlock the Warmoth's isolated home.

---

[The Pestilent Vault Key (Green)]

-???

A key to unlock the vile concoction the Warmoth's designed for his enemies.

---

[The Treasury Key (Gold)]

-???

A key to unlock the Warmoth's Treasury.

~~~

Replicus' eyes narrowed.

So simple yet so efficient.

It seemed what the previous description of the Warmoth among the evolutionary options was right. There was indeed a plague, a vault with something the Warmoth considered precious and a simple home – as simple as simple could get where the Warmoth was concerned at least.

"I wonder what other treasures this guy had. The guidance field said it was some sort of armour that even the Four Authorities of the Null Verse desired. I wonder, will I be able to get it?"

Now that he thought about it, the Warmoth's Spine had things he could use yet – the Full Release.

What were the chances that anything in the so-called treasury were things he could utilise at all?

As Replicus pondered sombrely, the world suddenly shook, and parts of it started to sink inward as though being slurped by some hungry abomination below.

"It's time to leave, Skullius," Serenity said as she used her finger to pull the casing trapping Actuass' soul. "Let's finish everything else in one of the Warmoth's dens. Whichever."

Replicus nodded.

The Outworld attic wasn't going to last even a minute longer at this rate.

With a little confusion and hesitation, he held out one of the keys, grasping its end with all of his fingers.

'How does this work?' he asked himself as he jabbed at the air with the ivory key.

At once, Ju`wte sprang out from the open space before the key in outrageous branches that spread outwards, frying the air and burning the ground!

Then, as though a veil had been stripped from the fabric of space, a truly colossal set of arched double doors appeared before the Warmoth's Progeny, a vicious gust of wind announcing the intricate might held within them!

...!!!

Replicus was so stunned that he took a few steps back.

His eyes opened wide.

"How..." he began before shutting up.

This was inconceivable!

He couldn't see where the doors ended on either side or above!

They were... vast!

The Outward Attic seemed to crumble all the more. Its vast space couldn't contain the size of these doors!

An abstract design was branded onto them, too convoluted for any normal, sane individual to understand. All Replicus managed to define, were two large eyes depicted by thousands of packed, golden scribbles and of course, the humongous tusks protruding from each of the two doors!

GRRRRRRRRM!

In the next moment, the doors began to open, allowing a soothing, white light to wash over Replicus, Red Rage, Araeyn and Serenity.

"I...I guess that's our cue," Replicus said shakily, before taking the first step into the Empyrean Bosom.

Chapter 1106: Sacrifice

Feinheath.

EverSword Mansion.

Rearren sat on a comfy chair while drinking a glass of red wine. Finally, after four days of constant harassment, he could find peace in his alcohol and daydream about the things to come.

The whole nation of Feinheath hadn't taken kindly to the revelation that he was aiding a group of evil necromancers in a vile act of terrorism.

The Premium Age Royale had first come to the general populace of Pelian as a pleasant surprise, appealing to their base, carnal desire for seeing bloodshed while filling themselves up with food and drink. It had been a magnificent few months for those that couldn't afford to dine on such luxuries like whole, roasted beef, chicken, lamb and fine, aged wine every two days.

However, even the commonfolk had started to get suspicious with how people started dying in streets, all having been branded with the Creed Seal that allowed them to participate as witnesses in the Premium Age Royale.

The swift end of millions had finally come when Actuass deemed everything ripe.

The series of Creeds he made in order to bring forth the event successfully dictated that all who relished in the privileges – food, protection and transport – granted to the witnesses would become vulnerable and open to his Undeath Concept, Reverent Soul Undeath, and thus wouldn't be able resist when he extracted their souls forcefully.

The process wasn't perfect, however. Not everyone was thrilled to be in that stadium. Not everyone didn't have a lick of suspicion from the very beginning about this sudden, event of the century. Not everyone dined merrily like the rest.

But still, those who resisted were few and far between.

Millions of souls and blessings were harvested on that day.

Rearren sipped his wine and savoured it.

The other powerhouses of Pelian, the five Houses had come knocking on his door, using various means to attempt to break into his mansion which floated above a great lake.

No means they used could have broken through though.

Rearren had been prepared for the consequences of the Premium Age Royale long before it began. He had spent years applying his own Imagining Technique and using countless Mythical grade treasures to protect the mansion and his family.

"Haaa..."

Rearren looked up at the painting on the wall.

It would be a lie to say that he hadn't doubted himself all those years back when he first met Actuass.

The man had come to him with a ridiculous story about being a reincarnated soul from a distant world.

At first, Rearren couldn't have believed it, but as time passed, and as he saw the vast pool of knowledge of high entities and ideas Actuass had, he had decided to entertain him despite lacking full belief.

The masked man had enticed him, telling him that rather than staying on Aigas as a famed legend that is constrained to the whims of the Royal family and supported only by the achievements from the past, Rearren and his family could become something more. He could see the world outside the one he knew and carve a new path among the stars instead.

This was especially attractive to Rearren.

He had a broad imagination, a product of his technique, and he could only dream of desires beyond the mortal man's capabilities.

But now he could live them.

The more he bought into Actuass' story, the more he bought into his ideal as well.

It was a waste to die young.

Death was only to be met when one had lived their life to the fullest, exploiting every path and pleasure they could find.

Rearren believed this with all his heart, but his wife was more concerned with the safety of their children instead. She had no interest in it and neither did she have a burning ambition for a larger life.

Rearren pushed on anyway.



Using his authority and his immense resources, he facilitated the Premium Age Royale.

Actuass desired only this from him.

'There is something... someone I must meet just once before we leave. Help me to do this and I will honour my word. However, should that fail or perhaps not go as planned, do remember what else you promised me of your own accord,' the masked man had said.

And thus, millions of souls were sacrificed.

Rearren couldn't care less.

He and his family had lived a sheltered life caring for nothing but themselves. Why would he care if the Pelian population was downsized a little?

It was all worth it.

A few days ago, Rearren had sent Rias and his wife Milissa away to rendezvous with Actuass' right hand people.

He would follow shortly.

The attention of the Houses was on him for now, but it was dwindling. The whole ordeal with the sprouting towers was wreaking havoc around Pelian. The Houses had to come out of hiding and deal with it. Most of them were no longer paying much attention to him.

'Thankfully, our King is about as useful as a dull kitchen knife,' Rearren scoffed inwardly.

The King probably couldn't care less about his people either.

As he took another sip of his wine, Rearren saw a flash of greenish black light that caused his eyes to dart in its direction.

Before he knew it, Rearren raced towards the book shelf to his right, and pulled out a large, black book.

It gleamed green and black, its cover and pages glowing ominously.

The sight of this book packed Rearren with grief and the slightest hints of regret. His eyes watered, and he sniffled.

He knew what this meant.

However, rather than the shallower symbolism of it; the fall of the masked man, he was more depressed by its deeper meaning.

All that time ago, when he first colluded with Actuass, Rearren had been so enthralled by the idea of travelling outside Aigas that he had pledged his children as objects to Actuass' service.

Reon was supposed to recruited and inducted into the desires of the masked man, but he had fled from the family and gotten himself killed.

Now, Rias had willingly taken his place.

He was to be the masked man's conduit in whatever shape it took.

This would have meant simply being an agent of Actuass before, but now...

Rearren frowned and put on his cloak.

He had to honour his word.

He had to honour his dreams.

In the broad daylight and in the shade of many anti-Divining Mythical grade treasures, he set off to give the strange, dark book to his son, sacrificing him to the whims of the odd necromancer he had pledged to serve.

## Chapter 1107: Voyager With A Dream

Maqi.

Three beefy women wearing clean, shaggy beast hides that had a sweet scent to them escorted a man adorned in a fine robe of darkness.

Perhaps the word 'escort' gave the impression that the man in the robe was being given a graceful courtesy, but this was far from the truth. The women around him, while pretty and blissfully underdressed by normal standards, showed not even a lick of respectful regard to the man.

Their only desire was to rip him to shreds should he make any movement they deemed out of line.

The man didn't mind the hostility.

He figured the women escorting him had grown even more wary of him since he hadn't featured the miniature, glowing jewel above his head or the constantly squirming, star-shaped shadow under his feet half an hour ago.

He grinned mildly.

Skullius was escorted into a massive hall.

It too featured a wide variety of women, some not as buff as the ones escorting him, but some even more visually appealing, all lining the far ends of the wall while exuding controlled pressures at the Incandescent Stage.

The hall was magnificent.

Skullius could have sworn it was made of a... classier type of mud, one so smooth and polished that it might have been glass. It adopted a dark chocolate brown and white colour in artistic swirls and bold lines.

The hall had three layers, or perhaps platforms; the first, where the roughly forty female Incandescent Stagers were stationed, another, making up the other half of the hall, where sixteen

more powerful experts were standing while glaring at Skullius, and the topmost, occupying a third of the floor, where a great... bowl was placed.

In this bowl, was a dwarfish, fat tree, not dissimilar to a baobab, and a large man was sitting in front of it.

The First Horn.

Unlike everyone else, he merely looked at Skullius with indifference.

The women escorting Skullius pushed him to kneel right before the elevated second platform, but he chose to sit in a lotus position instead, a small smile on his face. They had been about to harass him into showing the First Horn his much-deserved respect when a voice stopped them.

"Leave him."

The First Horn's voice was mighty.

Even Skullius had to do admit, it rattled his flesh and bones.

'He certainly matches the standards of a First Horn. I'm impressed. He wouldn't lose to that old bastard from back then in a contest of presence,' he thought.

The First Horn appraised Skullius for a full minute before speaking again. He paid a high degree of attention to the glow above his head and the unfathomable darkness below his crossed legs.

"I heard you were desperate to have an audience with me. So desperate in fact, that you killed some of my men guarding the coast," he said.

Skullius smiled.

"Well, one must attract attention somehow. You wound up giving in and placing me on a waiting list, right?" he said.

The First Horn had to raise his hand up to put his devoted guards at ease. They were deeply disgruntled by Skullius' tone.

Skullius had felt the sharp rise in the pressure from these experts.

If they had been sent to Opungale instead of that ordinary band of riffraff that accompanied the Ode, things might have turned out very badly for the Sif.

"Can you give me reason enough to spare you when you casually strolled into my land while having turned my son into a vegetable. I hear he won't recover for a while," the First Horn said without the slightest hints of emotion. "Is there anything you can say to soothe my grief?"

Skullius laughed aloud, garnering another sharp burst of killing intent.

"Oh, First Horn, I know no one here takes kindly to a genuine loss. I believe that old hag told you, didn't she? Your son challenged me to KUTHMUK and lost even with her help. None of you here have the right to judge me because of that, if you value tradition, that is. I reckon you must be feeling a twinge of joy that that brat was put in his place for once.

You can thank me when he grows out of his arrogance and actually tries to reach the heights an Ode is meant to reach," he said.

The First Horn retained a stone-like indifference while gesturing for his guards to relax once again.

"Umbett was right, it seems," he said. "Are you really Fulgardt?"

Skullius' smile disappeared and he adopted a dark, stern visage.

"I am not Fulgardt. I am his echo, Festos Dawn. I share his belief, I share his powers and I share a smidgeon of the same drive he had," he said firmly. "I know there's more than just bad blood between you and m-... Fulgardt, but rest assured. I am not about to go on a murder campaign, recruiting and destroying. No.

I am not even interested in Aigas."

The First Horn showed hints of emotion for the first time. He squinted his eyes.

"Then what it is that you want?" he asked.

Skullius wore a small smile.

"First, I would like my two companions to be freed. I believe we were separated as a condition for me meeting you," he said before once again turning serious. "Second, I only desire to meet the one who stands above all, The Wanderer Who Seeds."

The First Horn rose from his seat and took a few steps forward.

"Fulgardt, according to legends, said the same thing to our forefathers before he descended into madness. We rejected him when he said he only wanted to make Maqi greater by enlightening our ignorant minds to our true place in the world," he said.

Skullius frowned.

"I know what I- he said."

"He said, by using Maqi's strength, his goal would be achieved without much bloodshed and suffering and implored us to join him for the greater good."

"I know all that!"

"He said there were no gods, no Deities, no one above This Wanderer and only after accepting him would we all find salvation."

"THAT IS THE TRUTH!"

The First Horn had reached Skullius by now, great, rough blue flames burning around him while the Hybrid Luman had become so incensed that his whole figure was devoured in darkness save for his blank, luminous eyes.

The pressure the two expelled turned the hall into a domain where light and darkness nearly achieved a perfect harmony.

Skullius took a deep breath to relax.

"As I said, I don't care if you don't wish to join me. I am simply looking for those interested in embarking on this journey with me. A voyager like me would much prefer to travel with powerful men full of ambition. That is why I came here. The worlds outside our own aren't all fragile and constrained. The void has a great many horrors that even Deities fear to get close to.

I can't handle it all alone," he said.

"I don't need you to believe my truth right now. I am not recruiting believers, after all. This is a transaction. I will give you something in return. Something for every citizen of Maqi if you so wish as well."

The First Horn frowned.

"What could be possibly give us when you have just admitted that you aren't strong enough to even journey towards your own ambition?" he asked.

Skullius scoffed.

"For someone who claims to know of Fulgardt's legends, you truly lack a lot of important details," he said. "Did you never wonder why my- Fulgardt's Chosen had such unbreakable bodies? You all had to resort to tying their souls around those of others to kill them. Fulgardt granted his Chosen the gift of nigh invulnerability. He granted them their wildest desires. That was the basis of their loyalty.

I, Fulgardt's echo can grant you all what you desire. All in due time of course."

A cunning light sparkled in Skullius' eye. Before, he had questioned the veracity of this when he read the plaques Fulgardt left behind, but now that he was 'enlightened', he knew it was very much possible. All he needed, was for his affinity with both [Just Light] and [Evil Darkness] to rise to its highest – to S.

Only then would he become able to grant the wildest of wishes, but only to those he deemed fit.

Chapter 1108: Last Salvation

Everyone was panting.

Everyone was bleeding.

Eaniss had a part of her neck gouged out and she was trying to heal it, which wasn't too difficult with the flaring of her power still ongoing.

The Bishop had just revived after using her Cathedral for the third time, and her underling, the Ardent Curse, Hope, had lost most of his arms, his wands and nearly a third of his body.

Pherdanta, Baddan and Grim were panting exhaustedly. They had nothing left in the tank, and were just heaving in deep breaths while trying to make sure that their efforts had borne some fruit.

The key players in this battle against the rest of Actuass' undead and the Transcendent Eobald-Minobu, were none other than Yuyui and Benzard.

The sudden disappearance of Vohnvolt and Actuass had only stunned everyone for a moment before they continued their assault. The fate of those two would hardly matter if the struggle left here persisted, and thus, while hoping for the best, everyone had soldiered on.

The Transcendent Undead Eobald-Minobu was rather vicious. He led the charge of exploding undead against the ten who remained, and he done some incredible damage.

Only the expulsion of the Bishop's and Eaniss' Territories had finally smothered his options while giving Yagrina and Bassbion the chance to beat the ever unliving essence out of him. That hadn't been enough though. It seemed Actuass hadn't cut corners when making this strange variant of undead with his Rule.

The body in which Eobald's consciousness thrived in belonged to one of Fulgardt's Chosen after all. It wouldn't break even under the absolute cold Jerthrax had conjured, much less hundreds of heavy physical blows.

Thus, in the end, the two Spirit guardians had ended up restraining him while Yuyui and Benzard dealt a lethal blow.



Right now, Eobald-Minobu was kneeling before Benzard who had a crushed eye and a torn lip. Benzard had his sword at the undead's chest, but only half an inch of it had managed to dig in, and even then, it hadn't broken into his skin.

This was enough though, because his sword featured an icy blue eye with dark sclera along its flat length.

The Eye of Dispersal.

This was one of Yuyui's eyes, capable of dispersing supernatural effects. Though this eye was capable of resisting even Jerthrax's Heraldly presence, it wasn't all powerful. It was not something that could defy Rules and the highest echelon of the powers in the world.

It couldn't undo the perfect merge between Eobald and Minobu's body, but it could dispel the immense reserves of Divine energy protecting his soul!

This allowed Bassbion and Yagrina to subdue said soul. Finally.

Yuyui stood beside Benzard with a golden, detail-less sword.

Using the Eye of Moving, she could move her other eyes onto different bodies and have those bodies carry the eyes' special effects. She was glad that this ended up working, but she was at her limit. Blood kept pouring from her eyes and nose and she felt dizzy. She soldiered on still, though, to keep the Eye of Dispersal active.

There was a reason why Yagrina and Bassbion had yet to extract Eobald's soul and end this madness.

It was because of Benzard. Through his one eye, Yuyui saw a look of hesitation and pain.

"He must have meant a lot to you," she said.

Benzard took a deep breath, his hands, closed tight around his sword's hilt twitching slightly.

"He did. I trusted him. I fought him. I hated him. Seeing his corpse back then filled me with rage. I had wanted to talk to him some more before deciding what sentence he deserved.

To ask him why he had even joined this band of necromancers. Now I have that chance, but..." Benzard scowled.

He had hoped there would be some way to talk to Eobald, but his soul, much like his body was under Actuass' spell. He was not himself.

It pained Benzard to know that Eobald, whom he thought to have already passed, had not known peace. He had been preserved as a card to use by the masked man all along.

"Look at him. He used to be beloved. He lacked nothing once. He could have lived as a valiant hero!" Benzard growled and gnashed his teeth.

But there was nothing for it.

He looked to Yagrina and Bassbion and nodded stiffly.

"I'm sorry," Yuyui said solemnly.

"Don't apologise. It's because of you that he's able to be saved once more. Hopefully."

Right then, the two Spirits drew on Eobald's soul. They had expected some resistance, given that Actuass had shown himself to be a master at manipulating souls, but it turned out to be easy. Did this mean the masked man didn't have a hold over this soul anymore, even remotely?

As if to prove them correct, Eobald's soul, once divorced from its body, streaked upward and vanished towards a trajectory that the two Spirits recognized.

Yagrina turned to Benzard.

"He's free. He's headed towards the Yormuness," she said reassuringly.

Benzard smiled bitterly and watched as Eobald's body turned limp and dropped. He caught it.

"It's waning," a voice suddenly said behind the five. They turned.

Eaniss was looking at her hands curiously, as though she had never seen them before. She then took a deep breath and felt deep within.

"I don't feel as if my soul is swollen anymore," she said.

"Me neither," the Bishop confirmed.

The two were free from Actuass' unusual power to strengthen his enemies!

Yuyui noticed the same right then. She had been too focused on her task to note this change before.

They were right!

"I think something happened to the necromancer," Yagrina said.

"And maybe to that master of yours too," Bassbion said with a scoff to Yuyui who frowned.

Just when the lime haired girl was about to chastise her subordinate for saying such a thing, the groan of a large vessel was heard as it pushed against the ebony waters.

It was one of the vessels given by the Emissary.

Everyone looked at it curiously, wondering who could be riding it.

When it drew closer, a figure popped up on its bowsprit. A large figure, nearly three meters tall, glinting and glistening with a myriad of shimmering colours.

It was a large suit of armour with a strangely vibrant force of life.

It looked to exist somewhere between the boundary of solid and ethereal, radiating an ominous type of beauty. A Mage stood at its side, one that Pherdanta, Grim and most of all Baddan, found familiar.

Eaniss was the first to identify the arrivals.

"Em-Sul?" she said with a raised brow.

The suit of armour gave an odd, clanky laugh before speaking.

"In the steel."

Indeed, it was Em-Sul.

Perhaps because no one gave him the type of reaction he desired, Em-Sul laughed some more and looked at Pherdanta, Grim and Baddan before boasting.

"You almost succeeding in having me part with that gem before I could use it as I desired. I commend you. However, nothing you could have done could have stopped me from starting on my journey to a life unhindered by mortal limits," he said as he raised his thick hand, which was a magnificent gauntlet.

"My soul is bonded to this artefact and just from binding these two elements my strength has reached a new level. I dare say, in terms of physical properties, I might have already surpassed the limits of the Incandescent Stage!"

Indeed.

Em-Sul had been keeping the Harmonic Ember on his person so that he could siphon out his soul slowly and safely until the time was ripe for him to merge with the vessel he had found.

By the time Allora had risked her life to snatch it from him, it had been too late.

Pherdanta balled her hands into fists.

Her face turned red with rage. If Allora hadn't been deathly injured in their battle against Em-Sul, she could have been revived like she had when Actuass killed her!

Thus, she couldn't look at Actuass with anything less than vicious hatred and guilt.

Grim patted her shoulder when he saw that she had been about to lunge at the Faction Leader.

Em-Sul saw the aggression and scoffed.

"We could have used this newfound strength of yours, you know?" Eaniss said exasperatedly.

Em-Sul laughed.

"You did fine on your own, didn't you?" he said, brushing off Eaniss' comment. He turned back to Pherdanta. "I seem to recall that you had a person of interest in Warding Pride's camp. Sadly, I recognise that she is no longer among us. But well, she left—"

A sudden flash of yellowish red lightning cut Em-Sul off in his speech.

It was so bright and so loud that everyone was forced to grimace and squint.

However, these superficial details paled in comparison to what came next.

A gargantuan set of arched double doors suddenly appeared a fair distance away from the group.

Their size staggered everyone and left them all slack-jawed.

Whether up, left or right, none could see where they ended!

On top of this, the odd, complex design of them was rather chilling, especially the massive tusks protruding from them!

The doors' appearance caused the ebony seas to turn restless, however, their opening to reveal a furious blast of sweet gale and a pulse of soft white light turned the waters chaotic!

Things only seemed to begin to relax when the figures of three individuals came out from the small gap between the doors, all of them unusual, yet also domineering.

Chapter 1109: Is He Dead?

From the double doors, three odd individuals came out.

One, oddly enough, took to the skies and shone so brilliantly that none could see what he looked like beyond the vicious, golden radiance. A warm air cascaded from this figure, almost making everyone looking on relax and be filled with relief.

Almost.

When this figure shimmered several meters above ground, however, the golden sword Yuyui was holding violently extricated itself from her grip and rushed towards this it!

Another one of the three figures was an unnaturally tall creature with pasty, pale skin, and hollow sockets. His hair was as pale as his body, but rather long – reaching to his jaw.

He wore a suit of armour glowing at the chest plate from the glow of his name branded onto his flesh and exuded a mighty, indifference presence that gave the impression that he was some sort of sealed calamity simply waiting for a command to release its uncaring wrath.

But.

But...

Both these individuals' powers could not be rated the same as that which wafted from the figure between them.

The attention of the observers was plastered on him, and some found it hard to breath when looking directly at him.

The rhythm of his steps on the slowly calming sea resounded fantastically across a wide range, dictating how everyone should act, feel and think.

Every other sound seemed to be dampened by his existence.

His features, on the other hand, were frightening... or perhaps so enthralling that none dared to so much as squeak.

Standing at three and a half meters, the creature looked as though it was made from a pale, ebony ceramic material that vaguely allowed for onlookers to see the yellowish red charges building within its thin yet defined body. A kite-shaped hole was borne into its chest and it spread grooves like branches through the creature's skin that reached up to its long neck and shoulders.

The creature wore a set of baggy, furry pants that matched its long, wispy hair that refused to stay in place.

The curved, smoking, yellow eyes of the creature pulled the onlookers in, but something other than all these features stuck out the most to the audience.

The creature had four arms, and one of them, cradled... odd stack of shadows and faint colour that rested over its shoulders? Whatever it was, it was huge, and it contributed to the striking pressure the ominous being already had.

On top of this, in another one of the creature's hands, what looked like a five-meter-long javelin with a dull, luminous, soul-like blue glow could be seen. It was doubtful what shape it truly embodied though, as some could have sworn there was a shiny thread attached to it.

The ambience of the whole scene was suddenly disturbed by the gargantuan doors behind the creature and its followers closing and disappearing as though they had never existed.

...

Replicus massaged his long neck with one of his two free hands.

"Looks like things went well on this side," he said.

His audience remained rooted to the... sea, for another few seconds. It was only after Yuyui spoke that everything seemed to gush with life once again.

"M-Master?" she said in disbelief.

"Master?" Pherdanta looked at Yuyui strangely, and then turned to see that... indeed, by that four-armed creature's side, was a familiar, wrinkly face, but he looked so different. This could only mean...

"Boss, is that... is that really you?" Grim said, bewildered.

Replicus sighed.

"Right. I'm going to have to get used to this, I suppose," he said as he walked closer.

Pherdanta, Yuyui and Grim rushed forth while everyone else remained frozen. Baddan didn't know whether to join them all or not.

The eager three soon found that approaching the Warmoth's Progeny wasn't so simple.

The closer they got, the more the Ju`wtte around him sparked dangerously as if warning them.

"It's alright. You'll be fine," Replicus reassured, and the trio found the courage to approach once more, though slowly.

"How... How did this happen?" Pherdanta asked while looking up at him. Her master was huge now!

"Long story," Replicus said as he patted her head gently. It fit in his hand easily with plenty of room left to spare.

Grim walked around Replicus, surveying him.



"Boss. This is..." he began but couldn't find the rest of the words to say.

"Odd, I know," Replicus said as he walked on, prompting his Unlimited and Yuyui to follow.

The trio gushed and gaped.

They had been so terrified at first by the pressure pouring from Replicus but after discovering that it was him, it was as though the menacing presence faded, leaving them talking to a trusted, four-armed friend instead.

This was especially odd still, though. Normally, unless their master used mana, he didn't really expound a vicious presence at all. That ship had sailed, apparently.

Yuyui had gawked for a few more seconds, trying to process all this when she finally found sanity enough to ask a pressing question.

"Master. What happened? With the necromancer, I mean," she asked worriedly.

Replicus' curved eyes narrowed.

"About that..." he said, but didn't continue.

They had reached where the rest of the group and Em-Sul's vessel were.

"Bright Storm?" the Bishop said in awe, clapping her hands over her mouth. "And I thought I was ugly. What did you do? You were so beautiful before! You looked like the night skies. Such a shame!"

Replicus would have rolled his eyes if he could.

Eaniss interjected with a chuckle.

"You never cease to amaze. I'd assume that you wore that creepy armour to hide all this, but it all seems new," she said while eyeing Replicus' subordinates. "You gave us a bit of a scare there. We just got done fighting one monstrosity. We're not really in the mood for another."

"Luckily for you, I'm not the enemy," Replicus said while looking down at Eaniss calmly. "On the other hand..."

With the swift activation of his storage space, something fell before Eaniss and floated there, bloodying the ebony waters.

It was the corpse of the masked man, ruined cherry hair, lightless, bloodshot hazel eyes and all.

Everyone shook at the sight, especially Replicus' subordinates.

Eaniss and the Bishop were a bit stunned.

"I believe this covers what we agreed on before. I appreciate your choice to lend me a hand. I wouldn't have survived in his Territory alone," Replicus said.

Hearing him say this when he looked the way he did and expelled the presence that he did was somewhat comical for everyone who heard what the Warmoth's Progeny said.

Eaniss and the Bishop could tell that the current Bright Storm was not someone they could touch. He even acted in a way befitting such power.

Luckily for them, he seemed to value something more than just power, though, otherwise he wouldn't have even bothered with staying true to the deal he had made with both of them back when the battle across the Null Remnants had been burning fiercest.

He had agreed to hand over Actuass' corpse if the two helped him defeat him and was staying true to that promise.

Eaniss smiled and appraised the corpse.

She then looked up at the Warmoth's Progeny again.

"Is he dead?"

Replicus didn't answer for a few seconds.

He merely kept staring into Eaniss' unwavering eyes. Then...

"I wish I knew for sure."

Chapter 1110: Resignation

The news made Eaniss sigh.

She couldn't say it came as an absolute shock, but it wasn't what she had wanted to hear either.

The masked man, despite floating in the waters before her, could still be at large, apparently.

It wasn't unusual for someone who was supposed to be dead to be alive somehow. Treasures and skills alike could facilitate such a thing.

The Bishop, for instance, could revive herself several times with her cathedral, and even Yuyui had a similar ability.

However, the masked man's version was different. It was particularly odd to Replicus who had been with Actuass in his last moments and had even dealt the final blow. Worse yet, he had even forged Actuass' soul into the luminous, lance-like weapon in his hand, but still... he felt no degree of guarantee that Actuass was actually gone.

What had he said again?

'We'll probably meet again. Soon.'

"Well, that's not reassuring at all," Eaniss said as she closed her eyes and scratched her cheek. "I doubt we will be getting that prize the Emissary promised if we caught the necromancer before he reached Edagon, but if that necromancer surfaces again, we can taunt him with his corpse at least."

She immediately stored the body in her spatial storage and sighed.

Replicus hesitated a little and then decided that it was probably best to tell everyone all that happened.

"The necromancer..." he said, "He was not from this world. He reincarnated from another world and began a new life here on Aigas."

...!!!

Everyone seemed to gasp at the same time.

"Reincarnated?!"

"From another world!?"

"That's possible?"

"Was there bread on his world?"

Barring the Bishop's comment, every other one seemed to imply that most of the people here had never actually conceived that the idea of someone crossing from one world and being born anew in another one was possible. Especially if they hadn't reached Divinity.

Em-Sul finally found his voice again. He was staggered by this truth.

"Is this really true? How did you come to know of this? And why would one even flee their home world if they aren't terribly powerful?" he asked in a mechanical voice.

Replicus turned to him and he flinched slightly. Thankfully for him, the Progeny wasn't in the mood to address the conflict the had spurned between his and Em-Sul's Faction.

"It's true. How I know this relates to what the masked man was after in the first place. You'll have an even harder time believing this, unfortunately," he said. "The necromancer's aim was to meet the

Deity Suzamete. Apparently, the Deity you've known and revered all this time, was the masked man's mother."

...

Silence ensued.

Only Baddan didn't quite understand the heaviness of the revelation Replicus had just revealed. While he was brought up to speed about this world, different from his Cluster, he couldn't start caring about the Deities or the total population of denizens on Aigas in only four days.

Thus, when Pherdanta stammered as she looked at the Warmoth's Progeny with more than a little shock and said, "Master... are you sure about this?" Baddan couldn't say he felt the same deep feeling of betrayal.

Replicus went on to explain all the details that happened in Suzamete's domain, but he left out the most of what happened in the Outworld Attic.

The more he spoke, the more his audience grimaced and shuddered.

"You actually... met a Deity, boss?" Grim asked and a shallow smile that displayed a conflict between awe and confusion pressed on his face.

Replicus wished he could have been dazzled by the mere fact that he met a Deity. In another time, another world, it might have been a momentous occasion he would have kept close to his very soul, and even cherished, but that wasn't the case.

He couldn't forget how Suzamete sounded proud of Actuass besting him, everyone here and even a Herald; a vessel for the Deities desires and powers sworn to serve them.

He couldn't forget how she behaved nothing like how the Priests and Grand Priests hoped she and the other Deities would.

Even Actuass had pointed it out.

The strength of the Deities was truly astounding, but they were not as far removed from mortality and humanity as they made their subjects believe.

To some degree, Replicus was happy Actuass wasn't impressed by what his mother had become.

Now that he thought about it, Actuass seemed a little like... Fulgardt.

"Unbelievable..." Em-Sul said.

"Indeed," Eaniss chuckled hollowly with her hands on the sides of her waist. "I wonder if the Emissary will enjoy hearing of this. Even if we didn't manage to kill the necromancer before he did what he wished – of course, you ended up killing the Herald instead, Bright Storm – we learned some valuable information. Staggering information.

Hope you don't mind me being the one to deliver the news to the Emissary."

Replicus shook his head.

He couldn't care less about that anymore. He had been hoping to earn that prize before, but after acquiring the Sacred Keys and getting a taste of the Emyrean Bosom, the Warmoth's home, he didn't think anything the Herald behind the Emissary could offer would be valuable to him. He had yet to even open the Warmoth's Treasury.

In all honesty, all of the Heralds lost their mystique and aura in Replicus' eyes.

"I don't mind it, Eaniss," Replicus said. "However, consider this my parting gift. As of today, I am no longer a part of the Severed Union. But, I wish to keep my assets."

"I see," Eaniss said with a smile. "I couldn't stop you even if I wanted to."

Replicus nodded and turned to the Bishop who pouted her lips.

"I killed your men. You can take all the spoils I was supposed to receive from all the Faction leaders I killed in the last few days."

The Bishop adopted a rare serious visage and stood upright.

"I suppose that concludes our little arrangement then?"

Replicus nodded, and gave a last sharp look to Em-Sul whom he instantly deduced to have become what he was now because of the Harmonic Amber. He was revolted. He then turned back to his subordinates.

Without a word, he expelled Allora's body from his storage and held it in his two free hands.

The sight of her filled his team with deep sorrow.

No one felt it deeper than Pherdanta.

"Don't you dare blame yourself, Pherdanta," Replicus said sternly. "She died fulfilled. She played her part and it wasn't for naught. Her effort, yours..." he pointed to Grim, "yours..." he pointed to Baddan, "and yours," he patted Pherdanta's head, "It all gave that damned necromancer hell. Trust me."

A twinge of relief bubbled within the group. Replicus handed Allora to Grim.

"Keep her safe, will you? I need to finish something before it's too late," the Progeny said before pulling Yuyui and Baddan towards him.

"What?" Pherdanta said, surprised.

"I need to save my Apostle and my friend. I wish to deliver her to her father. That man needs to know he still has a child left, a reason to live. For that, I need Yuyui. As for Baddan," he said as he looked at the confused Sky Watcher, "I'm going to need his expertise in a certain category. The sooner I get started learning it, the better."