

Undead 1111

Chapter 1111: Heading North

Red Rage descended from the skies like a formless ball of light to stand beside the Warmoth's Progeny, responding to the mental call he'd just received. Only after he became still, floating an inch above the corrosive ebony sea did his startling radiance begin to wane ever so slightly, revealing the handsome figure beneath it.

None of the Unlimited had ever met Red Rage, so it wasn't surprising that they weren't as astounded by the changes he had gone through, but it was still rather odd for them to see this strange creature.

Earlier, they had seen that Araeyn had changed as well. He was taller and more menacing. It was that strange to say that he seemed more... mature.

This shining figure, however, if they had known, had been quite a bit tame in terms of physical appearance. What had blabbered to the entire world about his eccentricities, was his bombastic personality... and maybe his freakishly long cape. Yet now, Red Rage resembled a human; a white-faced human with locks of silver hair, and adorned in a valiant, rough suit of stretchable fabric.

His sockets brimmed with a reassuring light, as did his entire body, which, now built with tough flesh, pressed against his heroic suit, branded with a diamond of blue and red.

Red Rage was no longer the Juvenile Pelvic Arbiter.

He was something two Tiers higher and much more powerful, not to mention skilled.

He was, the Hidden Antiquity, as ironic as it seemed (there was nothing remotely close to 'hidden' about him).

Replicus turned to him.

"Go back to the Bryne Estate. I'm sure everyone still needs your help there," Replicus said.

Red Rage looked appalled.

"Are you sure you do not require my services for your last battle ahead?" the Apostle said while bowing deeply.

"This is far from the last battle. Trust me. I need to ensure that Silrat and Stylla's father are safe. If those dark creatures are still attacking populated areas, they might be overwhelmed sooner or later," Replicus said.

Through Red Rage's memories from the merge, Replicus had been able to tell that Silrat was alright.

Oddly, it felt weird to think about Silrat now. It was almost as though he hadn't thought about him in a long time. The name even felt a little foreign to Replicus.

Red Rage contemplated a little and then nodded.

"Then, I shall take my leave, my lord," he said, and without a second wasted, he took to the skies at hypersonic speed, and started spinning in place, creating a glowing oval and then, with a silent flash, he had disappeared.

The current Red Rage had awakened a plethora of skills far removed from the Arbiter class, one of which allowed him to not have to brave the ordeal of the Reverse Clusters more prominent on the way back from this part of the world.

Replicus stared at the spot his shimmering Apostle had disappeared from before turning to Araeyn.

"You will stay with them here. Protect them until I get back," he ordered.

Surprisingly, after a second or two, the Apostle gave a light bow and...

"As you wish," he said.

The Unlimited were surprised. They hadn't missed how reluctant Araeyn had been about listening to Replicus before. Now, he seemed a lot more subservient.

Of course, this was because the Warmoth racial properties had forced Araeyn to acknowledge his master. But naturally, this wasn't a permanent and sure sort of obedience, as Araeyn's Flaw still remained.

Like Red Rage, he had also evolved twice through means that had opened up to Replicus when he reached the Fourth Tier, and was much stronger – which was why Replicus was trusting him to protect his crew – but his path hadn't changed all that much when compared to Red Rage's.

Pherdanta looked at Araeyn and the will to say something about following Replicus was purged. It really was better if she and the rest stayed.

"I'll be back soon," the Warmoth's Progeny said and with Baddan and Yuyui in his arms, he launched himself up with such great force that the sea as a collective layer, dug inward as though drained from below, yellow-red lightning spiking it from where Replicus had been a moment ago!

The three streaked further north like a shooting star, disappearing from view.

Only when the sea finally settled did someone make a comment.

"What a turn of events," Eaniss said with a smile before summoning her ship from her storage. It landed on the ebony waters and a few heads popped from its deck, looking down at everyone else.

It was evident that these were all the Head Faction leaders and a few of their subordinates that Eaniss was generous enough to welcome aboard after they lost their vessels before.

"We'll be off then," Eaniss said as the Bishop summoned her own vessel too.

Em-Sul emitted a low grunt and looked at Pherdanta who, sensing his gaze turned to glare at him.

"What do you want?" she asked.

Em-Sul laughed.

"I wouldn't bear such an attitude if I were you," he said. "Your lordship interrupted me before, but I'm generous enough to speak again. Warding Pride might have perished, but she didn't allow her

collection of followers to die alongside her. I happened to find them hidden away in a barrier above the sea. Do you know what I'm getting at?"

Pherdanta's brows shot up high and in the next moment, she leaped onto Em-Sul's ship.

A blink later, Araeyn was by her side.

Em-Sul was amused.

"Where are they?" Pherdanta asked with a stern face.

"Follow me."

A minute later, Pherdanta was looking at a handful of men and women who looked as though they had been sentenced to death. All of them turned their heads when Em-Sul, Pherdanta and Araeyn appeared.

At once, one of these few locked eyes with Pherdanta and she frowned deeply, as did he.

Replicus, Baddan and Yuyui were flying in a stream of thick lightning at bold speeds, but they were all unbothered by the vicious friction!

As odd as it may seem, Yuyui felt that they weren't moving quite as fast as they could be. In fact, she had been close to asking her master if she could use her Eye of Moving to make the journey a little less lengthy, but she held her tongue.

Of course, Replicus wasn't going at full speed.

He had a few things to sort first before he reached Edagon.

One of them was...

"This is as good a time as any, right?" he thought.

"Sure."

"Let's do it."

"It will give us more incentive to test out all of our working theories, including that one about mana."

"Can't wait to get started,"

Four phantoms all gave him responses.

However, they were no longer the same phantoms. After acquiring the Warmoth's powers, Replicus' Subjective Phantom Inference turned into Phantom Omniscience.

He no longer had small versions of himself swirling around him. Now, they were illusory versions of himself with the same dimensions following him everywhere. They were smarter and more prone to bringing forth objective conjecture rather than blabbing a thousand theories that were all false.

On top of this, these phantoms could hijack Replicus' body if they sensed that they could do a better job than him in a certain circumstance, after all, they all now represented different things.

One phantom dealt with Replicus' skills; constantly striving for ways to best use them individually and create perfect combination effects. Another focuses on Replicus' essences; mana and conceptual energies. Another was determined to maximise the use of his tools, and the last dealt with short and long-term planning for events exclusively.

The feedback from all these phantoms had led Replicus to finally prepare for real combat, and that all began with the activation of a skill known as [Mana Centurion].

Chapter 1112: Price For An Eye (1)

The skills from [Bringer of All], that is, those processed from the skill(s) that Replicus inputted into the skill in addition to the Apostles he wanted to merge with, were forcefully emboldened from the rank of their source.

For instance, back in Inhone City, Skullius had used [Bringer of All] in conjunction with [Mana Force] to obtain a bunch of new mana-related skills. They had all been very efficient against the threat at the time, the Galemonger, because they had been elevated generously by means that didn't conform to the logic of Normal, Special, Super or Supreme.

These skills were simply better than the original, and where Null Life was involved, Replicus could safely say this wasn't the first time he noticed his prowess breaking Aigas' power system modestly.

All this was to say [Bringer of All] was a cheat Class skill that allowed its user to gain and use skills several levels above what they should have.

This became even more true when Replicus chose to upgrade [Bringer of All] earlier. Now, it allowed him to use three skills as a basis, and he would earn a total of twelve more skills from each.

[Mana Centurion] was one of these empowered skills, which he retained even after separating from Red Rage and Araeyn.

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[Mana Centurion (Super) | Lv.1]

When activated, the user's mana reserves are quintupled while maintaining the quality of mana they produce. A 700% increase in mana regeneration is also granted to all mana cores.

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At once, Replicus felt his purple core spill out similar mana cores, just as it had done when he first assumed his amalgam form before. However, unlike last time, the effect of [Mana Centurion] did not only apply to his main core, it also extended to the Nature-Bound Malleable Form Core, creating five more of it as well!

This hadn't happened when he was Vohnvolt, because when he activated the skill, the Nature-Bound Malleable Form Core had had its shell removed. Replicus had been busy trying to ensure that this core worked best with his newly acquired concept, Maximum Catalyst.

And so, Replicus now had thirteen cores.

Six purple ones.

Six Malleable Form Cores for Maximum Catalyst.

One for Null Life Essence.

The Progeny's Ju`wttā – the bracers around two of his arms – turned livid and spewed more than a hundred times more Ju`wttē passively, turning Replicus radiant both inside and out.

Thankfully, because of his other mana-related skill [Resource Vault], Replicus didn't have to worry about mana expenditure as much, after all, the skill drastically improved his efficiency with using mana for skills. Most of said skills, when [Resource Vault] was activated, only required 30% of their original cost to cast!

"Good!" one of the phantoms said. "Now we can look towards doing that thing we discussed, huh? With all this mana and such a crazy degree of efficiency, we won't have to worry about the cost of using Reversion to accomplish it, right? Using Progression to turn mana into Nitros wasn't that draining, so this probably won't be all too energy-consuming either."

Replicus sighed.

'Calm down. Using Reversion to try what you want with this is likely going to warrant creating something new altogether. That's probably where the cost lies,' he told his phantom.

"You reckon this kind of thing doesn't exist anywhere else beyond the void? I highly doubt it," the phantom argued.

"Master..."

Right then, Replicus' debate with his phantom was interrupted by Yuyui who called to him meekly. She couldn't have known he was busy talking to... himself.

"What is it?" Replicus asked.

He looked at her drooping eyes exposed by the Ju`wtte radiating around them. She looked sad.

"About Stylla... I'm sorry I allowed her to get snatched away. I didn't see it coming. I should have seen it coming," she said, accusing herself.

Yuyui had wanted to mention this when Pherdanta was bawling out about Allora's death earlier, but hadn't gotten a chance. They were still battling the masked man then, after all.

Replicus sighed.

"You're starting to overestimate yourself. You have tremendous potential Yuyui, but you have yet to embody it all. I never imagined you to be able to take on an enemy even I wasn't sure how to beat before. The Null Devil King, or I guess, the BoneTender, is a formidable foe. You're no match for him as you are now.

Maybe when you awaken all twelve eyes, you'll be able to beat the likes of him, but not now," he said to her.

Yuyui wore a weak smile.

Since arriving on the battlefield, she had taken up a role for herself that she hadn't quite understood. She felt so confident in her new eye that after saving Replicus and the others, she felt that she had become a component so crucial, that its minor glitch would cause the collapse of not only her master's ideals, but everything and everyone he had built up.

This really was exaggerated. Yuyui was indeed a very part of why Replicus had gotten to this point, but she didn't need to continue shouldering such a burden. At least that was what Replicus felt.

Instead of continuing to try to hammer this truth into her, though, Replicus switched the subject.

"You never told me. How did you earn your third eye? I know you were reluctant to engage in physical altercations before. You were so sure this kind of life wasn't for you. To earn your eye, you must have been willing to do something you didn't think you could. My words to you before leaving Deign couldn't possibly have been your only drive, right?"

Before leaving Deign, Replicus had told Yuyui that he would need her help against Skullius. He didn't think saying something like that would have sparked so much drive in Yuyui in the short term. Or could it?

Yuyui smiled.

"Your words were... a large part of it," she said. "Hearing you say that you needed me in the near future finally pushed me to do something I should have done a long time ago. I might have been hesitant to fight, but I also wanted to live up to your expectations. But... just that wasn't enough. You know my emotions are one of the ways in which I receive my powers.

Nothing could trigger them more than my lost memories."

Replicus sockets flashed.

"You finally remembered?" he asked.

Yuyui nodded.

"Yes. I finally did. I had wanted Ferex to be the one to do it before, but... he was gone before I knew it, and I had drowned in guilt. But then, I went back to Bassbion and Yagrina. They wrenched those memories out the only way they could after I gave them my permission."

"Wrenched?" Replicus asked suspiciously.

"Yes," Yuyui smiled bitterly. "The only way they could help me, was by bringing me to the brink of death and partially extracting my soul. If they killed me instead, the Inhumane Eye would simply restore me. So, I had to try this rather painful method."

Yuyui looked up at Replicus and a tear streamed down her face.

"I remembered it all. It was bittersweet and a lot more... ordinary than I imagined."

Chapter 1113: Price For An Eye (2)

"You know, master, it's pretty ironic. On the morning when I decided to tell my parents that I wanted to go to the Belvion Union to look for a famous musician popular at the time, I asked my mother why my hair was such a strange shade of green. It was different from hers. She always said she forgot, or that the secret was hidden somewhere in our family books. Haha.

I discovered in my years of solitude in the Temple that there was no epic story. I just had lime hair," Yuyui said with a fake smile.

Yuyui had been trapped in the Temple of Unlusted Tears for many years. Over a century. She had had time to think about her life and so much more, at least before she got so tired of dying that her memory started to turn fuzzy and ultimately broke.

There were things her Inhumane Eye couldn't save.

It took thousands of deaths for her mind to stabilise again following her acquisition of a Special skill called [Broken Mind]. One could only imagine what Yuyui went through to get that skill.

"I remembered everything after Bassbion and Yagrina partly extracted my soul. That morning, my father had been urging me to choose something of substance, something I could use to protect myself. I told him I wasn't much of a fighter, that music was all I wanted. He gave in and said he'd arrange a carriage for me to go and follow my dream," the girl said. "It was raining that day, but it was peaceful.

I looked forward to my future. I had so many expectations. I imagined myself as a famous bard with many friends in a renowned place like the Belvion Union. But well, it didn't work out as planned."

Yuyui wore a ridiculing smile.

"Master, I thought... No, I hoped remembering how my parents died would urge me to fight. That it would change me. Ever since that day I awakened the Eye of Dispersal, I imagined that the glimpses of the past I remembered would reveal that... that they had been killed by the necromancers or even the Evenfall cultists. I hoped for it. I wanted a drive for revenge. But, at the same time, I was scared.

For as long as I can remember, I've always been... me. Even my parents knew me as this good little girl who wouldn't hurt a fly. I was afraid I would change for the worse... Both things turned out to be true."

Replicus sighed. Yuyui puckered her lips.

"My parents were killed by common bandits, master. People even I could crush easily now. They helped me escape while they fell behind and met dark, cruel deaths. In that moment, when I heard their screams from afar and hid to not be seen, I had cursed the Class I chose. I wished I had been a Mage or Warrior instead. But I wasn't.

I could only hug my lute and pray that the monsters who ruined my family wouldn't find me," she said with a difficult expression.

Back in Genhuis City, Yuyui had gotten flashes of this tragic memory, leading to her awakening the Eye of Dispersal in a very public place. She had exposed Replicus as the skeleton he was, for a few moments.

Remembering all about her parents now, instead of those flashes; how they died, what she did afterwards and all, had caused her Eye of Moving to awaken as well when Bassbion and Yagrina returned her soul into her body.

Yuyui hadn't felt too good after that. She had spent hours huddled on the floor of the Ground of Communion, bearing how sick everything made her feel.

Replicus sympathised.

"I'm sorry, Yuyui," he said. She only nodded.

If only she knew that her story spiked some dark thoughts in Replicus' mind.

It was unexpected.

One of Replicus' phantoms said sombrely:

"This could easily be us too, you know? We are here fighting to remember our past, but what if it's nothing too significant? What if it's another half of nothing, and doesn't really build anything in us?"

Is it perhaps wiser to leave the past as it is? Unlike Yuyui, what if our past doesn't really give us anything.

We may just be like Actuass instead, digging deep for closure's sake and to rid ourselves of Somanda's hold over us, but without much more to gain."

Replicus (Prime) immediately disagreed.

'It's not about whether or not the past is significant. We have to own it. Even if I could replace the other half of my soul, I don't want to do it while compromising in some way. Someone did this to us. We can't simply leave it at that. We're not taking different paths or routes.

This is it. Beating Somanda is how we do it!' he declared. 'If even Yuyui can do it despite being afraid, then what would that mean for me who stands as her master if I chose to hide away and seek an alternative?'

No phantom deigned to disagree.

Replicus sighed.

Yuyui's parents weren't the only thing she remembered, of course. She continued.

"A few years later, I ventured to the Belvion Union. I found it hard to simply ignore my dream. I had to fulfil it. So, I searched for the musician I had heard so much about, but instead, I landed in bad company. I was naïve and clearly fresh. I, along with a few other slow girls were invited to an inn for work.

A warm welcome for newcomers to the Union, they said to us. I stupidly believed this would be a great startup for me, but in the end, I found myself getting whisked off to someplace under water with forty other girls."

"The Temple of Unlusted Tears is... was a place tailored for women to try their luck at gaining the Hidden Class I now have. Before the Class was acquired, no man would be allowed to enter. The group of women who kidnapped us wanted to ensure that the many trials to come would be attempted by us – the captives – first to see the level of difficulty. Fortunately for us, things didn't work out that way.

The Ground of Communion – where Bassbion and Yagrina were – drew us all in at once. Then the slaughter began. I only remember that I was the last one left standing after it all, smothered in blood. I hadn't even participated in the fighting. I had frozen through it all. Bassbion meant to finish me off too, but Yagrina stopped her."

"She said that since there hadn't been a challenger for four hundred years before my group came, it was worth giving me a shot to continue towards the Legacy. There were still two more trials after the Ground of Communion, after all."

Replicus remembered this.

After fighting and defeating Bassbion on her own terms, he was faced with a place that had luxurious armour and riches. Sila had warned him against touching any of them. The piece of soul had known about the Temple too, after all.

The last trial was unclear. Replicus remembered that after the tricking treasures, that was when he saw Yuyui trapped inside an odd array.

"I wasn't so stupid as to touch the sparkling gems and treasures. I passed that trial easily, but the next... It was all about mental fortitude. I had to survive five years without food and keep my sanity intact while I was at it. An array kept me trapped inside during this trial, and it would also keep me from dying or sleeping or losing consciousness.

I remember that singing songs kept me lucid most of the time, and I think I did well. After all, that was when I awakened the Inhumane Eye."

Chapter 1114: Expelling A Territory Is Easy! All You Have To Do Is...

"I see..." Replicus said.

He had heard a streamlined version of the last bit of Yuyui's story long ago, but frankly, because of the pressure of the Premium Age Royale, and how casual his and the girl's relationship had been then, he had frankly never really cared for it.

What he had cared for was the fact that she couldn't die and was thus a fantastic guinea pig for all sorts of experiments.

Now, though, he took her story to heart.

"You have so much to be grateful for. Your parents weren't wrong. Perhaps they saw some fight in you. You proved them right by fighting insanity for five years; claiming a power that many failed to obtain since the Grand Wars; by being indispensable to my cause, which mostly involves fighting for dear life, and by facing your own demons through great pain.

You should take pride in that," Replicus said.

Yuyui smiled. There was a genuineness in her smile that showed her internalising what Replicus said. She had battled things the original version of her would never have. Staying in her parents' warmth, to some degree sheltered and shelved her potential instead of allowing it to be tested by dire, dark trials.

Yuyui was tempered like steel now.

She felt herself worthy of mentioning for her master.

That said, she couldn't help but wonder about something else.

When Yuyui first went to a Temple and spoke to a Priest, he told her these exact words:

"Your Direction will tremble and spill a dramatic change in your path when you sing from the heart. A song of great pain. A song of happiness. A song of great triumph. It may be in this order, or it may not, but the Deitess Listafelle will be with you."

Apparently, Yuyui would experience life-changing things, depicted by songs she would sing.

In her mind, she had already met one of these hurdles.

A song of great pain.

Yuyui remembered singing a rather dark song about great pain through her ten thousandth bout with starvation. That was the exact moment when she met Skullius.

Her life had changed dramatically from then on, starting with the fact that she wasn't supposed to leave the Temple until she awakened her third eye, but still ended up doing so because Skullius had summoned Sause who did him a favour.

However, since then nothing else happened. Yuyui had yet to meet a circumstance where she sang another song and had something that made her feel triumphant or happy occur.

Perhaps this divination by the Priest had changed? Or had it just not happened yet perhaps?

Who knew?

The subject on this ended just as swiftly as it had begun.

Baddan had been immensely uncomfortable when it started. He had no way of participating in the conversation.

Thus, when Replicus finally spoke to him, he was delighted.

"Baddan. I would like you to tell me how exactly you formed your Territory. I figured learning from a human would be a big mistake since the nature of how humans do it is vastly different from how beasts do. I assume you and beasts from Sacred Forests earn your Majestic Territories the same way," the Progeny said.

Despite having different origin points, Cluster beasts and normal beasts developed their Majestic Territories similarly.

Unlike humans who grew threw Tasks and Trials to eventually earn the right to use Nitros, which was crucial for casting Territories, beasts, through evolving from race to race, tempered their bodies to eventually be able to use Majestic Territories. Usually, when a beast reached Tier 10, they would be legible for it, but some Tier 9s could do it.

Of course, the Tier wasn't all that was required for a beast to cast a Territory.

It was universally regarded as impossible to cast a Territory with a white core.

Thus, beasts had to also work on their cores. To do this, they had to find places with thick, pure mana. Replicus had learned this from Timmit, the red stork he shared the island Deign with. The centre of a Sacred Forest often had mana so dense it could be seen and felt even without a mana-related skill.

"Well, I don't think there's anything that can stop a beast from using a Territory after they reach the ripe Tier," Baddan said after some thought. "As long as they can produce Nitros, there really is no problem. I don't believe I had any trouble in creating my Territory back in the day. I didn't even have to think on what details I wanted. I just willed it to happen and it did.

All my other fellows did the same. The only challenge there is for a beast is that before they fully master their Territory, it is hard to use Nitros for basic combat, like the humans do. As you may already know... even a high tier creature like me can only use Nitros for other purposes if I can manage to convince myself that I'm only releasing it for a Territory."

Replicus narrowed his curved sockets.

"Is that so?" he said.

Now that he thought about it, most of the beasts he fought never really used Nitros unless they were about to expel their Territory.

This fact contributed greatly to their defeat, after all, one of the only reasons Incandescent Stagers were so hard to fight was because it was nearly impossible to harm them with powerful skills when Nitros was guarding them, cancelling out mana and even Aura-powered skills!

"So, it's that simple, is it? I suppose humans could never fully replicate all that comes with Territories from beasts," Replicus said.

"Can you produce Nitros, master?" Baddan asked solemnly.

"Yes. That's not a problem at all."

Replicus then went on to ask Baddan about how to toggle a Territory from dormant to active like beasts from Sacred Forests could do, among many other things.

When he felt that he had absorbed as much knowledge as he could on this, he finally turned to Serenity within him. This was the main reason he was riding slow towards Edagon.

'You owe me a lot of information. You promised I would get all the answers about the Null Verse at the Fourth Tier. That still stands, right?' he asked.

"Of course," Serenity replied.

"Then, I have something to ask first. Maybe that could be the best way to approach this," the Progeny said. "During my battle with the necromancer, I used my Reversion to gain access to Undeath energy. I then mixed Undeath and Null Life Essence together and the result was me and that man's lives or maybe souls bleeding into each other. I saw a bit of his life, he saw a bit of mine.

Before that, I used Reversion on a few million Undead. Their Undeath energy – which turned out to be the target of my Maximum Catalyst – turned into life energy. How do these two energies work – Null Life and Undeath? Let's add Voided Death to the mix too. I need to know."

Serenity seemed to take a second to think.

"I suppose the best part to begin when explaining all this to you is... Void, Emmae and I were siblings. In the beginning of our story, we never thought that we would come to loathe each other and part ways with the ideas we had once collaborated to create. Ideas that were different, but tightly bound to our kinship still..."

Chapter 1115: Against Extinction

Serenity, Void and Emmae were siblings in a past time eons ago when there was only one world floating in the translucent infinity, as it was known as back then.

Serenity had held a different name then, as did her fellow sisters.

Void was the oldest, followed by Emmae and then Serenity.

The world they resided in was modest when it came to the degree of magic it adopted compared to even Aigas. There was barely anything astounding about its power structure, and of course, this drove the living things born from this world to strive to find ways to empower it.

There were many factors that could have caused the wild desire to improve.

It fell on everyone like a sickness.

During that time, those who took it lightly called it the Frenzy.

Overpopulation.

Starvation.

Diminishing resources.

One or all of these might have been the cause for the sudden surge in the desire to break through the common and reach beyond what was unknown. Perhaps the unknown had abundance, and only those who didn't fear it would taste it. That was the sentiment then.

Each person on this world was determined to make the discovery of the century where magic was concerned. Even greater than such a local goal, some hoped to explore the world outside and traverse it, becoming the first to usher in a new age.

Serenity, Void and Emmae were also caught in the Frenzy as well.

They were close and unlike many, they shared ideas without holding each other back.

Also, unlike most others, the three were guided by something... someone whom they had known since they were very young.

Wyrrim, also known as the Voice of Worlds.

Because they came to know this entity when they were merely toddlers, the three never bothered to ask why Wyrrim only catered to them three. Perhaps having their own sort of 'magic' that no one else had access to made them wary about asking too many questions.

They were special, and that was enough.

Wyrrim helped the three sisters whenever she could. She warned them about dangers when she could and protected them when she could.

She was loving and caring, far more than the three sisters' biological parents who were rather irrelevant in their lives. Wyrrim made sure they were.

All the girls had to worry about in this world, was growing and improving. That was what Wyrrim constantly reminded them. The idea stuck, of course. The girls did as they were told.

They grew confident and intelligent.

When the Frenzy occurred, they amassed their collective knowledge to look toward a path no one else was looking towards.

In their world, what was even more stunning than the crime rates, housing costs, inflation and so on, was the death rate. There were more reasons to die than otherwise. Many took the initiative to end their own lives, especially after the Frenzy inspired them towards a goal only for them to fail miserably or when couldn't find the resources to begin their research.

Others fell prey to the dark, more ambitious desires of others, and this, in no small degree, cut down the population of the world.

Quite morbidly, this 'purge' was viewed as a positive to come out of the high levels of social evil by major authorities. There were many lives to sustain.

Serenity, Void and Emmae took to studying death and finding ways to make it an asset rather than the form in took as a dark, natural force that only devoured without giving back much.

The three spent sixty years developing their research and attempting it through the most moral paths they could find.

After many years, they had found the first signs of success. Positive projections.

However, it was then when an event that Wyrrim never warned them about came to pass, changing the course of their lives and trillions of others.

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Serenity recalled all this, but she would never tell it to Replicus as it was.

It didn't really have anything to do with Null Life exclusively, after all.

However, the relation she told about her siblings shocked Replicus. He almost exclaimed loudly enough for Yuyui and Baddan to hear.

'You have siblings?! Wait! Void... Void is related to that guy, Aurolio, right? And this Emmae...'
Replicus thought – to Serenity – and recalled the face off between Serenity and Somanda months ago.

Who had Somanda referred to again?

The Eminence of Undeath?

"Yes," Serenity confirmed Replicus' thoughts. "Void created the power called Voided Death, Emmae, who now calls herself the Eminence of Undeath, created Undeath. We three formed different iterations of how a living thing could dodge the natural force that is death. At first, it wasn't a contest. It was simply... an experiment, but that changed wildly. Rapidly, in fact."

Replicus didn't miss the tone of sadness in Serenity's voice. She didn't bother to hide it.

He didn't dare to interrupt her.

"Emmae was the first of us to actualise her interpretation of what could be haven from the permanent end that was death. She wanted to remove the 'extinction' part of death, I should say. She didn't think it in itself was an evil. What she ended up creating, she called Undeath. But that wasn't the ideal name she wanted, nor was it the power she desired. Emmae wanted to create immortality.

In her eyes, life was pure, but so was death. Her original idea laid in reverse engineering death to create a soft, pure version of permanence. However, this failed. Her research turned corrupted. It worked, but it was impure. The kind of power she attained was unfriendly to both life and death."

Replicus reeled.

One of his phantoms immediately began screaming.

"I remember this! This is exactly what the Voice of Worlds said when she introduced us to Null Life! Maintaining the purity in death? That's what this Emmae wanted. She wanted to create Null Life, but created Undeath instead! Right?"

Replicus shared the sentiments of the phantom.

He was actually right. That was how VOW said it back then.

Serenity continued.

"I took after Emmae's ideas. A state of permanence that was soft, or rather, serene and yet also pure caught my interest. However, if I followed the same methods Emmae used, I would have ended up creating Undeath too. So, I went about it differently. When we each began our research, we tempered with the lives of small creatures to test out our findings.

I felt that perhaps this was where our mistake lied. To some degree, Undeath was... ordinary. It was this way because it was forced to co-exist with the death and life in a universe that had its own rules. That's why I created my own pocket in this universe – the Null Verse – bound by its own rules and terms and then began trying out many theories.

I made many sacrifices to accomplish this, but it was all worth it in the end, though it also meant I couldn't bring out the creatures I made outside my universe – my treasure easily. Hmm. I remember Emmae got a little jealous and tried to replicate it."

Replicus would have raised a brow if he could.

'Deadmanland?' he asked.

"Yes," Serenity said with a chuckle.

Replicus grimaced.

This all made a lot of sense, but it was hard to take in all at once.

These concepts that had been so broad that he didn't know if he would ever comprehend them, seemed so... normal now.

Speaking of broad...

'What about Void? How did she create her variation of powers?'

Serenity once again took on a sombre tone.

"If Emmae could be described as a jealous and bossy sister, Void would be greedy one. She wasn't always like that, but she devolved into such a state when... She didn't know how else to interpret death. To avoid extinction. Thus, she decided to tap into the concept of abundance that everyone I knew all those lifetimes ago sought for. In abundance, there was vanity.

When there's literal infinity, there tends to be less of a meaning to anything. In a way, too much of something, is simply emptiness, and in a way, that is a more devastating form of death. To escape the impermanence that came with extinction, Void became an endless entity that couldn't be taken away or killed. You can say she truly is immortal.

After all, she makes up the void all around us, all around each and every single world."

Chapter 1116: Ultimate Expressions

'The void?' Replicus thought. His phantoms mirrored both his intrigue and his suspicion.

As of right now, he only knew superficially that there was a cascade of darkness around the many worlds in existence. He was sure it was far different from Stagnant Space. It wasn't a channel one could use for travel with enough mastery or tinkering with it by the use of a mere skill.

The Deitess Suzamete, Actuass' mother, had said something ominous about this dark void. While belittling Replicus' need to avenge Allora's death by punishing Actuass, she stated that the dark void contained things that even Deities feared. Natural and unnatural phenomenon alike.

So, this whole boundless, dark space was actually the embodiment of Serenity's sister?

'Doesn't that make her the most powerful of you all? I mean, even Deities fear her,' Replicus said.

"You could say that. But it's not really about how strong we are, Skullius. Void might be boundless, her body forming phenomena that sometimes even corrupts the natural flow of reality, but that doesn't matter. There's a reason we try to find bearers of powers instead of exacting our influence directly.

We each exist above Divinity, above the Deities, but we are by no means the ceiling of might in our reality. There are others that dictate how we should conduct ourselves. Forces that go beyond primordial, like us."

Replicus took a few moments to think. He guessed that since Serenity didn't give him an answer to who these beings above even her were, he must be able to figure it out on his own.

'Is one of them the Voice of Worlds?' he asked.

"Precisely," Serenity said. "The Voice of Worlds dictates us and our chosen bearers. Well, it also chooses the qualifications that determine whether or not someone is worthy of bearing our powers. Though, I suppose that's where Emmae has an advantage."

Replicus was visibly puzzled.

'How so?' he said before his phantoms eagerly produced an answer for him. 'Right. You said Undeath is kind of ordinary compared yours and Void's power. Is that it?'

Serenity was pleased that Replicus caught on.

"Yes. Since Emmae's power is merely a corrupted form of death, she isn't really restricted like us. She has a lot more freedom. Her creatures in Deadmanland also have more freedom since it's not really like my Null Verse. Her powers exist within the bounds of the laws of existence.

You can think of it like this: bread can be fresh and available, and it can also be expended until there is nothing left – by eating it, of course."

"However, that same bread can also get rotten; mouldy. While the fact that it is rotten is a bad thing, and is by all means undesirable and repulsive, it isn't exactly an unnatural thing. That's how Undeath is. It is simple an undesirable power that exists. However, using that same analogy, if food is capable of duplicating itself without reason until it has no limit, that is unnatural.

In that sense, Void's powers break the norm, and so do mine. Thus, they must be regulated."

Replicus got the gist of it, though he would be lying if he said even his phantoms got a grip of everything.

Serenity's answer made him wonder...

'So, is Emmae not on your level then?' he asked.

"She is," Serenity answered succinctly, and didn't elaborate. She was hesitant to delve deeper into her story. She couldn't afford to spill details she didn't need to, and this question could force her to do just that.

"What did you think about Void's bearer?" she rapidly changed the subject.

Replicus noticed, but he didn't pursue the matter.

'Yeah,' he said. 'I saw that he's like me. He also has a true form. A race of his own that isn't human. It makes it all clear that the masked man was different from us.'

Replicus remembered Aurolio shedding his human form to reveal his true racial properties.

'He had odd powers. He could bypass some of my skills and match me in physical strength. He could even hit me with attacks I couldn't sense. Just what kind of power is that? It all started when he got this strange gold mask. I think he called this power something like Void Gate or something.'

"Yes. That's right," Serenity said. "Void's powers lie in her infinite wealth of ideas. She can grant her bearers the boundless interpretation of a certain concept. I believe the one you fought manifested Strength in multiple ways."

Replicus frowned. That was busted.

However, this ability didn't stop Aurolio from getting beaten by Jerthrax. So, these powers had to have a limit.

Serenity seemed to sense Replicus' conclusion.

"This is not exactly something unique to Void, you know? All our powers – the Existential Parallels – have ultimate forms of expression. Quite like how the powerful creatures on Aigas have Majestic Territories. You will eventually master your own," Serenity said.

'Oh.'

Replicus was intrigued.

Ultimate expressions, huh?

What did the ultimate expression of Null Life in a high Tier Null Lifeform look like?

He had been about to ask this question when Edagon sprang into view.

...!

'As I expected,' Replicus thought while his curved eyes narrowed.

He had known. Well, it was obvious really. A land of the Giants which was formerly inhabited by dragons, as the modern texts said, was of course, never to be compared with the likes of Feinheath.

Edagon was humongous.

If Replicus had to give a rough estimate, he'd say it was at least five times as large as Feinheath, which had three large human nations, all with more than five billion humans in total. Replicus couldn't imagine how many Giants lived on...

"Wait..."

Something immediately hit him right then.

There was something else that Suzamete said that he hadn't gotten a chance to process when it was spoken.

A lot of things had happened afterwards, making it slip his mind.

<Who are you to interject and decide what happens to him? He bested you, the caravan of glorified thieves that Herald forged, another anomaly and the last Giant...>

This was what Suzamete had said. Obviously, she was referring to Sause, who was 'bested' in his attempt to save Jerthrax's life from Deathward Maw, Actuass' Territory's effects.

As Replicus began dipping down from the sky as Edagon accelerated into view, he couldn't help but think...

'Is Sause really the last Giant?'

Chapter 1117: Land of the Giants

Edagon was yet another curious place on Aigas.

Aside from its size, there were several things about it that marked it as unique from each of the other continents: Feinheath, Opungale, and of course, Amanas.

For one, around its coast, the sea, which continuously purified itself of the corrosive, ebony traits the closer it got to this land of Giants, turning fresh and colourless once again, was a shade of gold. It was thick and viscous like some kind of glue, and thus it rarely rose in waves.

Edagon also had a complex geographical structure. It was characterised by an abundance of enormous mountains, many of which rose so high that their tips were lathered in snow and ice.

An absurd number of gorges and ravines could also be seen, and part of the continent looked as though it had borne through from the east by some colossal oceanic monstrosity, as the golden,

viscous substance from the sea bled in through the lengthy crack made into the very heart of the continent.

The last thing of note, and probably the most outstanding thing of all, was the fact that not a single one of the cities on Edagon was located on the ground. Some of them were built on thick, squat mountains, and some on ones that sank into the Aigas sky, hiding in the clouds. In all, there were 24 cities, great and small.

All were uninhabited, strangely.

Curiously, not only cities could be found on the highs of glorified hills. Ancient shrines could be seen too, some looking to be no more than a week away from crumbling into nothingness or succumbing to the cruel gusts of the season.

There was a significance to these shrines.

There was a time when they were the centre of attention for all the Giants on Edagon. Yet now, most of them had become irrelevant. Because the Giants had become irrelevant.

Before the largest shrine in all of Edagon, perched atop a vast and tall mountain that surpassed even Jerthrax in size, Sause stood with a dark visage.

The circular wall of great, red jade bricks, enclosing three massive, white, faceless statues; two with a masculine physique and the last with a feminine one, held a deeply awe-inspiring divine presence. From their appearance alone, one could designate this series of constructs as consecrated in some way.

It wasn't hard to locate either.

A shrine couldn't, or rather, wasn't supposed to be hidden.

This fact had worked against Sause.

His enemies had been drawn to the shrine soon after they reached Edagon.

Before him stood the crowned, pale, wrinkly-faced, false Null Devil King, Stylla by his side.

Aurolio was to the Giant's left. He still assumed his true Deathform appearance. White hair still cascaded from his head, and instead of eyes, there was a glowing, purple slit in their place. His skin was now firm and pale, like hard plastic, and his jaw was like a segmented plate of steel running from ear to ear.

The Deathform was extremely intrigued by the shrine behind Sause.

He and the Null Devil King had soared from the earlier battlefield towards Edagon immediately, with Sause following seconds later, but to their surprise, the Giant had beat them to the punch.

It seemed he knew exactly what they were looking for, and when the two were finally drawn by its presence and headed towards its position, they found Sause there, ready to defend it.

'To think he's holding us off all on his own...!' Aurolio thought and frowned slightly. His body had still borne a significant amount of damage from Jerthrax's black fire. He only survived it because his definition of strength also extended to a profound defence, but that alone hadn't been enough to leave him unscathed.

As a matter of fact, Aurolio would have perished if not for Replicus using Reversion immediately after the Herald had turned everything to brimstone.

However, this didn't diminish Aurolio's value as a combatant, after all, the technique etched into his body – one that disallowed him from being defeated – played a role in this. Defeat had many interpretations too, after all.

Aurolio's 'eyes' shone sharply.

"You know..." he said to Sause, "...I was under the impression that what made a world Rich was something a little grander. I have been dying to know for a long time. I had had the thought that whatever it was, it would probably be here, but to think that silly idea was actually validated."

Sause did not answer.

Aurolio scoffed.

"Aside from those statues peeking out, what else is inside the shrine?" he asked.

"Come closer and maybe you'll find out,ahaha," Sause said, adopting a smile for the first time since he appeared.

His figure, which towered over both the Null Devil King and Aurolio looked even more menacing with his declaration, and his presence became a lot more solid.

Of course, neither the Null Devil King nor Aurolio were fazed.

The only thing hindering them from launching relentless attacks and getting past Sause was the barrier he had erected. It was invisible to the eye and it warded off all attacks easily. At least that was how it seemed to them.

In reality, Sause was taking a gamble.

The barrier was made using a special artefact, and it had the ability to ward off any ONE type of attack ONCE. This meant that if the aggressors tried to attack the barrier twice with the same ability or method, they could pass through, but the Null Devil King and Aurolio were yet to realise this.

Not a lot of time had passed since they had arrived on this mountain, after all. It had taken some time for them to get in range of its alluring pressure and find it amid the countless series of mountains piercing through the sky.

The Null Devil King's eyeless sockets keenly pressed on Sause's figure.

"It impresses me that a world can be so Rich. This is exactly what Lady Serenity needs..." he said and raised his hand to point it at the space between himself and Sause.

The Giant grew tense.

He too, like Jerthrax, had been told of the power of anomalies; those born of Existential Parallels, and thus, he couldn't help but react viciously when he noticed the tone of seriousness in the Null Devil King.

Nitros spiked from the Giant and it formed a great hand, one larger than his entire body, and Sause sent it whipping towards the Null Devil King.

It moved so fast that Aurolio hadn't even gotten to see that it was a hand. In his eyes, it was a white blur!

As impeccably timed as Sause's attack was, however, it was met by hundreds of greedy monstrosities that devoured it whole before it could touch the Null Devil King!

...!!!

Once again, the false Authority of the Null Verse was using the powers of a Class befitting the status the body he was inhabiting embodied.

The Forcemancer!

Chapter 1118: Against One Giant

Hundreds of what looked like black, flying locusts the size of fists spawned around the Null Devil King and devoured the hand-shaped Nitros Sause had sent as an attack to the Null Living foe!

The Giant's attack was fast, so fast that Aurolio had missed it, but it was erased with just as much alacrity, much to Sause's surprise.

The uncomfortable noise the wings of the hundreds of creatures made, made him uneasy, as did the view of the locusts gathering together like some of kind of cloud of soot.

Sause didn't quite understand what these creatures were or how they had fended off his last attack, but he didn't stop to gawk.

Ten more large hands of Nitros whipped out from him at once, all shooting at breakneck speed towards his enemies. An additional one he conjured shot towards Aurolio, and the Deathform found himself firmly restrained in its grip, flying off the mountain top and into the clumps of clouds around it!

This only lasted for a few moments, however.

Aurolio was one acknowledged by the Voice of Worlds, and he had a guidance field. Because his Patronage Rank with the unusual, universal system was high, he had earned a benefit to using the guidance field called <Quick Spawn>, which allowed him to teleport wherever he had placed a <Marked Spot>, a marker that noted a position where he wanted to remember the coordinates of.

Luckily for him, he had marked the mountain the instant he set foot on it.

As soon as he thought to teleport, Aurolio was back on the mountain top and he instantly bolted towards Sause again.

The Giant, on the other hand, had just frowned at seeing the swarm of locusts devour his ten Nitros manifestations just as easily and swiftly as they had done his last one, when he noticed Aurolio's return.

He cursed inwardly.

Aurolio cocked back his arm and sent a terrifying punch livid with Voided Death Essence into where he predicted the invisible barrier Sause had created to be.

There was a crackle and a boom.

The barrier had received this exact attack from Aurolio before, and was unable to stop it a second time. It shattered, and Aurolio whooshed towards the Giant, his body getting encased in more vibrant, purple Voided Death Essence.

The energy ran deep within him as well, fuelling his technique, Unbeatable Trigger!

Aurolio pointed his hand forward and a stream of condensed Voided Death Essence shot towards Sause's face.

The Giant wasn't foolish enough to attempt to block this, though. Thus, he ducked.

In the time he did, Aurolio bulleted past him, intent on reaching the shrine, but to his surprise, Sause flashed to his side, grabbed him by the torso and flung him towards the stagnant swarm of black locusts!

Aurolio clicked his tongue and used <Quick Spawn> to warp to safety – where he had been standing before this all began.

Sause's eyes returned to the swarm of black. He considered the Null Devil King to be the greatest adversary here. The fact that he was hidden by the army of conjured creatures unsettled him greatly.

...!

Right then, a figure shot out of the swarm of locusts.

It was a certain redhead with vibrant wings, a cold visage visible on her.

She shuttled quickly towards Sause and unleashed her own Nitros which flared and exploded to cover the entire mountain top in a gush, not dissimilar to a flood!

For an instant, Sause was blinded and overwhelmed.

That instant worked against him.

Stylla had been taken advantage of by the Null Devil King or rather, the BoneTender, in Genhuis City. She had been lured into having a wish of hers granted – having the power to cure her father – but in exchange, she became the BoneTender's slave.

The power she attained rivalled that of an Incandescent Stager, and with it, she had extracted the curse that kept her father comatose.

The curse remained in her possession. As messed up as it was, she stored it in the deformed vessel of the one who cast it on her father: her brother, Setkh.

In the instant when Sause made an attempt to ward off the raging Nitros from Stylla, he found that she was above her, a great, odd, dark brown jar that seemed to murmur in great pain in her hands. She tilted it, and from its open mouth, a dark misty substance poured onto Sause's head!

It was the curse!

Sause immediately flung what looked like a ring towards it, and much of the curse that had left the jar was sucked into the ring. Stylla saw this and retrieved the jar into whatever storage she had immediately, then she dove down to hurl a fist into Sause's head.

Sause was quick enough to block the attack.

The raw might of an Incandescent Stager was nothing to him. After all, he himself was a Transcendent Stager!

Aurolio joined the fray.

He would have rushed past the duo if he didn't know how quick Sause was. He needed to disable the Giant if he was to safely reach the shrine. Thus, he burst forth, his Voided Death Essence coagulating in his hand to form a Warhammer that he used to strike at Sause's knee!

BOOOM!

Aurolio frowned. The Giant's leg didn't so much as budge!

It was suddenly encased in a stellar light that seemed to depict an unusual environment, as though a world was forged in Sause's leg.

Aurolio couldn't have known, but Transcendent Stagers were capable of boosting their physical prowess with the effect of their Majestic Territories, even if they weren't actively using them!

While Stylla sent a series of punches streaming towards Sause's face, the Giant blocked each with one hand, and with the other, he scooped up Aurolio who attempted to fire off another streaming jet of Voided Death Essence to his face and flung him away.

Of course, Aurolio returned just an instant later and stubbornly bolted forth.

Sause grew annoyed.

While fending off the two enemies, he didn't forget that he still had the false Null Devil King to deal with. He kept his senses keen in case the bastard was using Stylla to divert his attention.

'Might as well...' Sause thought, and in the next second, he made the decision to detain his enemies in a world where everything followed his whims.

"Majestic Territory Expulsion..." Sause began.

...!!!

Stylla and Aurolio were shaken.

The former couldn't hope to clash Territories with Sause even if she could cast her own Territory, while the latter had exhausted the usage of his trump card, the Mastered Void Gate in the previous battle.

Thankfully for him, though...

The hundreds of locusts suddenly became hyperactive and soared as a vicious force towards Sause and his bulging blob of Nitros which was intent on trapping everyone!

Shockingly, the dark creatures were lit up in a pinkish flame that zipped from one locust to the other, seemingly burning them all alive!

Sause's eyes bulged.

A moment later, he found all the Nitros he conjured to expel his Territory gone.

It was devoured by the ravenous creatures which radiated a terrifying heat that he couldn't defend against with just his body!

'What kind of power is this...?' Sause began to wonder when a hand only as big as his Adam's apple planted itself on his chest.

"Get out of my way," the Null Devil King's chilling voice came and Sause felt something in him obey whatever command came from the Null Lifeform's gesture!

His knees plummeted to the ground.

He felt heavy, but he could have sworn it was neither his body or soul that was causing this.

This was something else.

Before the Giant knew it, hundreds of burning locusts swarmed him and rapidly began eating away at his flesh!

Chapter 1119: Reflections

Sause felt much of his flesh get seared off relentlessly, but much more of it was also chewed off to the bone disturbingly quickly!

The pinkish flame was rather atrocious in its burn. It melted the snow on the mountain quickly.

The principles behind it were too bizarre, as was the fact that he (Sause) was restrained by some odd force from the false Null Devil King, acting on something deep within him.

Sause roared in agony.

The Null Devil King who was with him within the buzzing of locusts and the heat, scoffed and walked past him on his way to the shrine of red jade.

The BoneTender had made a great effort to gain full control of the Null Devil King's body. The four days he had spent fighting Jerthrax helped him familiarise himself with the King's powers, mostly his physical prowess, but they only just barely allowed him to grasp using the Forcemancer Class.

The art of Forcemancy revolved around entangling concepts like the elements, with sensations – like emotions or moods – and animate creatures.

The art had many variations of course, some of which focused more heavily on the elemental part, but true Forceancy was all-encompassing, which is why the Null Devil King's Class didn't have a prefix at all, like the Forceancer Class Replicus had been offered back in the Tremur Forest.

Forceancy was considered a primal Class in the Null Verse.

Quite like how history unfolded in Aigas, where in the Age of Patkmas Yugji – in the First Grand War – humans gained inspiration to create powerful Classes and abilities from the beasts and phenomena in Sacred Forests, the Forceancer Class also had environmental roots.

The false Null Devil King – the BoneTender – had just now entangled fire with the universal sensation of hunger, giving it its pink hue, and then moulded this fire into locusts he conjured through the power of the Class.

As a result, the locusts, driven and empowered by ravenous hunger, were capable of devouring anything thrown their way, be it an essence or concept, which was why Sause wasn't able to expel his Territory.

The more in-tune with the Forceancer Class one was, the stronger the creatures they could manifest to merge with an element and a sensation, but these creatures couldn't be too complex.

At the moment, the BoneTender was capable of creating simplistic creatures and fitting them with simplistic sensations. Thankfully, because the summoned creatures were extremely durable, this Class was very effective even at a rudimentary skill level.

This was how the Null Devil King had remained unscathed after Jerthrax used his dark, all-devouring breath earlier.

While the Null Devil King dealt with Sause, however, Aurolio had already been on his way towards the shrine. He had reached the walls and was scaling over them. Stylla had used the chance to head for the shrine too, and she flew ahead to see what else was within it besides the faceless statues.

However, both she and Aurolio suddenly stopped when they felt a sturdy tug from behind them.

Surprisingly, even the nonchalant BoneTender stopped as he felt the same thing.

Attached to all three of these individuals, were thin threads of different colours, their origin coming from somewhere deep within the swarm of burning locusts!

These threads only lasted a second longer than expected, however, as they too could be chewed through by the locusts.

Yet... that second had proved more than enough as a window of time to act for Sause.

Even though he couldn't move his body, the Giant wasn't completely helpless.

A spark of gold shimmered dully from his prison in the pink conflagration and loud chatter of wings, and in the next second, Sause appeared before Stylla, Aurolio and the Null Devil King!

However, he didn't stand before their physical forms.

He stood within the Reflections of their Souls, forcing them to interact with him!

Aurolio was stunned.

One moment he was just a second away from peeking beyond the wall of the shrine and in the next, he was standing in a pitch-black void littered by suits of armour and weapons, some new and some worn. The boundless darkness covered everything, and it seemed to whisper to him endlessly.

This was the Reflection of his Soul, and Sause stood right in front of him, a dark look on his face.

"You are too greedy," he said, and he dropped his fists onto the shocked Deathform, flattening him into the dark, undefined ground!

There was figure that was rushing their way, but it was too late. Sause had made sure that it wouldn't make it in time.

Stylla found herself in a large, luxurious hallway where countless people with the same kind of faces passed by her, some going ahead of her, some behind her. The current, thrallled version of her

couldn't have known that all these people were her father, her sister, her brother and her mother, but she couldn't have bothered with them either.

This was the Reflection of her Soul, and Sause stood right in front of her, a curious look on his face.

"I pity you. You fell prey to quite the troublesome foe," he said, and he crushed Stylla under his foot.

The BoneTender found himself in a familiar place, a cove preceded by a giant body of white waters that housed creatures with long bodies covered in robes and great balls of fire for heads, quite like how the BoneTender looked in his original form!

He had taken the Null Devil King's body, after all, and the only one to have ever seen how he looked and 'lived' afterwards, was Yuyui.

The cove the BoneTender laid in held a great many treasures, but none of them, even to the BoneTender's current thoughts interested him.

'No! Why am I here?!' the BoneTender asked.

How could he be in the Null Verse right now?

Wait. He wasn't!

Just as he rationalised, he found a Giant standing right before him.

"So, this is what you actually look like, ahaha," said Sause with blatant mirth. He was delighted to see how confused the BoneTender was, along with the fact that he had a soul that he could reach.

Rarely did living beings ever find ways to protect their souls of their own volition. It was hard for most creatures to even interact with their souls. The BoneTender was not so different.

Sause rushed to attack immediately. He wanted nothing more than to crush this glorified blanket into nothingness before his physical body could be destroyed.

However...

THRUM...

THRUM...

The BoneTender's Reflection of the Soul trembled suddenly.

Sause shook.

He had begun to think that the BoneTender had a powerful guardian in his Reflection of Soul, but after seeing the Null Terror tremble in fear as well, he knew that wasn't the case.

Even if there was no face on him to ascertain the emotion that he felt, his body gave away a lot!

"It can't be!" the BoneTender suddenly screeched and rushed deeper into the cove!

Sause was stunned. He looked back.

THRUM...

The white sea and the cove shook again. The BoneTender shook along with them as he screamed, "No! We... w-we had an agreement!"

What was going on?!

An instant later, Sause found himself forcefully pushed back to his flesh body.

He looked miserable. Barely half of his flesh remained, and all of it was blackened, crusty, flaky and smoky!

However, the locusts that had been feasting on him drew away.

If the flesh and bones around the Giant's neck were still intact, he might have voiced his confusion.

Stylla dropped to the ground, convulsing. As did Aurolio.

Sause's expertise with the soul was nearly unmatched. In a desperate attempt to both save his life and stop anyone from reaching the shrine, he had used illusory threads, a product of his Class, to expand the influence of his soul on the Null Devil King, Aurolio and Stylla.

His uncanny use of these threads had shone brightest back in the Labyrinth of the Yoke, when he used them to find Reon, Benzard and Skullius, but their functions were more diverse than that, evidently.

Unfortunately, his gamble at the moment, hadn't paid off as much as he would have liked.

While he had managed to stress the BoneTender enough to force him to release the locusts he had thrown at him, the bloody Null Lifeform was still standing!

He was trembling, shaken, but he still had his senses and consciousness intact.

He looked back at Sause with his hollow sockets.

"W-was it you? What... what did you do?!" he barked.

Sause frowned. He didn't know what exactly he was being accused of.

However, something happened next that made him frown even deeper.

Above the hysterical, false Null Devil King, a relatively short figure in a starry armour suddenly appeared!

Chapter 1120: That One Arrow

The figure in the starry armour not only garnered the attention of Sause, but that of the Null Devil King as well. It had appeared so suddenly that it might as well have been vomited by the blank space above the snowy mountain top.

The armour looked rather sturdy, with two horns growing from the helm, both keeping the stellar aesthetic.

'Where did he come from?' Sause wondered.

The BoneTender, still livid and shaken, made to direct the locusts he had temporarily lost control over just now, towards the figure in the starry armour, but...

Just as quickly as it appeared over him, the figure flashed down, zipping noiselessly behind the Null Devil King and putting him in a double shoulder lock!

...!!!

"NOW!" a voice came from behind the starry helm of the mysterious arrival.

Surprisingly, it was feminine!

Unfortunately, the slight surprise at this detail didn't stagger Sause or the Null Devil King as much as what came next.

From a hundred kilometers away...

No, no... far more than that... perhaps ten times the distance, in fact, a cold presence far more chilling than the cool on the mountain top and the clumps of clouds surrounding it exploded with a domineering intent!

Wherever its exact source was didn't seem to matter in that moment, because its target was all but clear.

...!!!

Sause and the Null Devil King froze.

It was unclear what the nature of the oncoming attack was, but both felt terribly mortified just by thinking about it!

The false Null Devil King made to struggle free from the shoulder lock he was subjected to. It would have been the simplest thing to do with his overwhelming physical strength, but alas...it was too late!

Edagon seemed to sing a sad hymn with its rumbling when whatever horror of an attack announced its ferocious approach!

The snow on the mountain top melted and flared like flame as though as it had become a flammable substance, and the temperature rapidly shot up to an insurmountable degree in the span of a less than a thousandth of a second!

The false Null Devil King sweated. His and Sause's figures were illuminated as the clouds parted from the east, where a thin, yet lengthy ray of ghostly light emerged, firm and focused.

That was all anyone saw, however.

BOOOOOOOM!

In the next instant, a portion of the mountain top exploded violently, and a fraction of a microsecond later, it was revealed that two figures were missing!

"ARRRRRRRRRRRGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!"

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!"

Both the false Null Devil King and the figure in the starry armour, screaming at the top of their lungs, had been sent flying hundreds of kilometers at a little more than twice the speed of light!

The thin, ghostly ray of light was casting an array of vicious sparks on the black armour of the false of Null Devil King, and with a closer look, one could see it sinking deeper and deeper against the armour's solid integrity!

Right when the two passed the six-hundred-kilometer mark, the thin ray vanished.

Soon after, the armoured figure and the BoneTender fell to the ground, nearly landing in one of the many gorges on Edagon. They landed with a great distance between them, the former bouncing on a small hill before sliding along its slope, and the latter rolling on a plain a few meters from the aforementioned gorge.

The figure adorned in the starry armour, the Hollow Dusk's Prison, was Yuyui.

She heaved in several heavy breaths. Despite being protected by her master's Mythical grade armour, the force of the attack that had rammed into the Null Devil King had rattled her bones, flesh and her very soul.

Because of the recent incident – recovering her memories with Bassbion and Yagrina's help – she was rather sensitive to the activity surrounding her soul, and thus she could feel that it too had been harassed even though it hadn't been the target of the attack just now!

Yuyui looked up to check the condition of the actual target.

The false Null Devil King laid on his back, dark blood spewing from his mouth like a playful fountain. If he had eyes, they would have been showing much of the agony he felt deep within his flesh and soul.

He groaned, grunted and gurgled, his shaking hand touching the spot on his armour that kept fuming as though someone had just doused a bonfire that had been lit there.

Yuyui frowned.

'No way! He's still kicking?!' she thought, distressed.

Her role in this strategy was to be a beacon.

Ever since he evolved, her master no longer needed the Hollow Dusk's Prison, but he kept ownership of it for now. This allowed him to keep track of it, as it remained as his possession.

Yuyui, who could move rather quickly with her Eye of Moving had been sent forth as both a sentry and a beacon to alert her master of the exact position to send his overwhelming attack from a distance!

Using a surprise attack had been the goal, but surprisingly, the enemy had survived.

This fact had baffled Yuyui so much because the nature of the attack was...

...

Sause couldn't believe the huge sizzling, flaming gap left on the mountain top. It stood between him and the shrine, around which Aurolio and Stylla were still lying unconscious.

He couldn't wrap his head around what had just happened, but he had gleamed what kind of attack it was that had passed right in front of him, knocking into the false Null Devil King.

'An attack tailored towards eradicating the soul at such a level...' he thought, his eyes twitching. 'That kind of thing... it's no different from undoing the Divine process of creating a soul in the first place!'

Right then, yellowish-red Ju`wtte screeched beside him, and a tall figure appeared.

...!!!

The presence he radiated was so broad, so regal and so vicious that Sause nearly staggered to his knees on instinct.

Aurolio, on the other hand, was smitten awake by the pressure and was dumfounded when he recovered his senses, only to see his body bowing before the four-armed creature on the other side of the massive chasm on the mountain!

Stylla quivered but remained unconscious.

"I... I see. So, it's you," Sause said when he recognised the vibrance of the soul in the tall creature of smooth, ebony ceramic skin and odd lightning, bearing in its hand and on its shoulder a huge stack of shadows, and what looked like a long, blue, glowing spear.

Replicus looked down at Sause with his smoking, yellow, curved eyes.

"I didn't think you would recognise me. Curious sight you have," he said before extending his blue, glowing spear forward with one of his long arms. "I didn't get a chance to say this, but... It's good to see you again."

The Warmoth's Progeny then did something unthinkable.

He planted the bottom end of his five-meter-long spear in the ground and pressed it with his bare foot. While the whole spear was still standing erect, its other tip pointing at the sky, he drew viciously on a barely visible string attached to the shaft of the spear with another one of his free hands.

The string strained and sang, but the Warmoth's Progeny continued to draw on it until it the spear bent like a bow. Well, it was a bow in the first place – at least part-time.

A cold feeling then pressed against everything around Replicus as a long, thin, bright arrow appeared, nocking itself on the string he had drawn so far that it was a miracle that it hadn't snapped!

Sause was shocked.

This arrow!

The power behind it was astonishing. No. It was devastating!

What kind of a tool was the creature before him using?!

It wasn't Legendary!

It certainly wasn't Mythical!

So, it was...

Before Sause could think of the correct answer, the Warmoth's Progeny loosened the arrow!