

Undead 1131

Chapter 1131: Match Me!

The Null Devil King had succeeded in making Replicus think that he couldn't manifest the odd creatures he could summon wherever he pleased no matter how far away he was.

Perhaps this was his way of further showing greater battle intellect than the Warmoth's Progeny, after all, he had easily read the intention behind why Replicus had kept engaging him with a flurry of punches moments ago when it was clearly futile.

The Progeny had been hoping to find an opening for an attack with his two weapons while Caxellac was close and fully occupied. Of course, Caxellac had beat Replicus to the punch by cutting off his arm.

Now, Caxellac had caught Replicus lacking once again.

The Warmoth's Progeny was surrounded from all sides by massive, powerful, suicidal bulls who weren't afraid to crush him in the middle of their charge. Sadly, for Replicus, they had enough power to do just that.

When confronted with voluminous blasts of the surging wind up close, Replicus became sure that he was missing something extremely important.

There was no way he could be beaten by regular winds.

There was no way these odd bulls with hardly a speck of Null Life Essence or mana within them could kill him.

Something was up.

Thankfully, Replicus had regained speed enough to react even when ten of thousands of enemies moving at light speed were merely a few meters from him because of the [Null Life Demesne]!

He raised the severed arm wielding the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow, and had it jab the sharper end of the bow spear into the ground...precisely where his shadow was.

At once, the spear emitted a faint glow and then...

Inky darkness exploded out in every direction like a treacherous tide of black, blinding death.

It drank up light and filtered itself even into space.

The Warmoth's Progeny's shadow had come alive and it poured outward vengefully, masking all vision and counteracting motion in an explosive wave. Jerthrax had been the one to demonstrate such a unique power. Actuass had used it as well, after stealing a portion of the Herald's soul.

Replicus wasn't sure if the shadow was the answer to the stampede.

It seemed even something as vague as a sword slash wouldn't work. His attack with the Warmoth's Spine had been distorted and redirected elsewhere.

But what of the empowered shadow?

Replicus didn't wait to find out.

Manifesting a porous ball of purple-gold around his bottom right hand, he called upon the power of Maximum Catalyst with Reversion, infusing as much mana as he could for the activation.

A wide streak of purple-gold light, impossible to dodge, fell on Replicus and all the bulls in the vibrant shadow, drowning everything in its light for a fraction of miniscule time!

Replicus had made sure to target all the wind around the bulls. He would make it devolve to extinction, leaving the ruby red bulls bare!

Well, he had hoped.

Shocked, Replicus watched as Reversion failed him for the first time.

...!

Shards of broken light flew everywhere just when his great shadow – which had persisted even in the face of Maximum Catalyst's light – twisted and was ripped to strips and shreds that returned to his feet!

"What the—"

Just as Replicus shuddered, Caxellac appeared right in front of him and sent the Bastard Sword of the Hedonist piercing towards his chest along with a flurry of sharp, lethal slashes of Null Life Essence!

"How lukewarm, Warmoth," he sneered while great bulls galloped to crash into Replicus' back!

Replicus felt an intense wave of pain from the blunt impact, the slashes and Bastard Sword which pierced through the kite-shaped hole in his chest...but that didn't stop him from reacting promptly.

His shadow climbed onto him and covered his whole body like a rising, black liquid that issued out bursts of smoke!

Suddenly, the next slashes to whip into him, intending on ripping him to pieces lost their potency, merely shredding off pieces of shadow instead. The Bastard Sword, deadly as it was, was pushed away urgently, surprising Caxellac!

The rams from several bulls did the trick, though.

A massive chunk of shadow was blown away when another bull blasted into Replicus' side!

The odd beefy mounds' attacks were still effective!

The Null Devil King glared at Replicus just as he glared at him.

Then, as though the two had somehow reached a point of complete synchronicity, their hands whipped out, the latter's faster than the former's, and...

Perhaps because Caxellac was much better at using it than Replicus, it seemed to hardly matter that the Warmoth's Progeny had activated [Null Extraction] first!

An indescribable force erupted between the two and sent them both speeding in opposite directions at terrifying speeds!

Replicus felt himself collide with an endless series of bulls, his flesh and shadow getting ripped away almost completely.

He landed on his head, rolled and once again grabbed his severed arm which one of his phantoms made sure to remember to drag along.

Immediately, he knocked the Ju`wttas against each other, restoring himself, but to his great shock, his body felt an intense pull, and in less than a breath, he was right before the Null Devil King who grinned at his surprise!

"Match me!" he cried and Replicus felt, quite like his own, a great domain of Null Life Essence press forth from Caxellac, squashing him thoroughly and leaving him once again vulnerable to the Static Limbo!

A lethal slice then sped through Replicus' neck, severing it completely.

...!!!

The Warmoth's Progeny felt that his head could fall off at this very moment, but one of his hands rushed to keep it on his shoulders while another whipped towards the Null Devil King, ... and conjured something the Warmoth's Progeny had learned from the dragon Jerthrax.

Absolute Frost!

At once, everything before Replicus up to a hundred meters away turned dark, as though a deep void had swallowed it all.

Well, a void had devoured it, actually. A void of cold so potent, it overwhelmed common light and froze up mana, and turned everything to what might as well be cold ash.

This was the Rule-level concept Jerthrax had summoned against Replicus and Actuass while in the Null Remnants. The Warmoth's Progeny had learned it because of [Epiphany] and the [Nullmancer's Royal Raiment of Acclimation] which he had had on the entire time through the battle!

Wasting no time at all, Replicus clashed the Ju`wta together and restored himself before cladding himself in [Neutral Maximum] in order to leap safely into the cold and continue his assault.

BOOOOM!

Shock brimmed lividly in Replicus' eyes as a massive bull galloped from the cold darkness and smashed into him with so much force that he nearly thought he had exploded!

'They are immune even to that? What kind of ability even is this?!' Replicus thought right as he fell with an explosive crash.

Before he could recover, a dark greave slammed into his chest, as did the entirety of the Bastard Sword of the Hedonist!

Replicus gasped and grunted in agony.

Damn it.

The sword had finally plunged into him, and it didn't make him feel better to know that he had been right about its effect.

Caxellac snorted disappointedly.

"I suppose this is where it ends. A pity. You had me going there. I thought you were actually evolving. Adapting. I don't even need to know many of your weaknesses to defeat you.

Well, you seem well acquainted with the effect of this sword, seeing as you have been avoiding it so much. You know your end will be rather... embarrassing, I expect."

Replicus wheezed terribly.

...And then he smirked.

"Ah. I would have preferred to knock you off your high horse by myself, but oh well. I am a Nullmancer after all," he said with difficulty.

All of a sudden, the ground was dyed in shiny silver, like mercury, massive, thick scales visible from it.

A humongous maw then spread from this mercury, with teeth as large as the great mountains on Edagon.

It then appeared that Replicus and Caxellan were on a vast, mercury tongue that turned red as a beam of atrocious heat lit up from deep within the maw below them!

...!!!

Caxellan was dumbfounded, and before he could move, a great shadow gripped his greaves tight, making sure he couldn't escape.

Then everything burned.

Chapter 1132: Mercurian Long-Snout! (1)

Several minutes ago...

The Empyrean Bosom.

Replicus stood with all four arms crossed in front of his chest, looking at the gigantic corpse of Jerthrax, the Vision of Misery.

It still astounded him that he had managed to kill this behemoth right before Actuass could enslave it through the unique lifeform known as Eobald-Minobu. However, even more staggering than that, had been the fact that Sause had allowed him to keep the corpse of the Herald without taking any action.

Benzard had explained that Sause had let the Warmoth's Progeny take the corpse because of the Tie of Exchange that was made between Skullius and Sause all the way back then in the Labyrinth of the Yoke.

The Giant had assured Skullius that he would help him deal with any problem as long as he helped him escape the Labyrinth and spared Benzard. Of course, Sause only got to know Skullius' outrageous demand after he had established the Tie of Exchange: He was to help Skullius defeat an Arch-Lich... well, a High Lich now.

To do that, if Skullius, rather, Replicus, could find use in Jerthrax's corpse, that would be splendid, after all Sause wasn't confident that his strength alone would do against an Undead of such calibre.

"I guess we can begin," Replicus said while looking at Jerthrax's great snout and raising his hand.

"Wait," Serenity interrupted, swaying lightly beside him. "It's better if you utilise the Class Reinforcement first."

"The Class Reinforcement?" Replicus repeated.

He had earned four benefits other than racial evolution as a reward for reaching the Fourth Tier: Personal Configuration, Flaw De-demonization, Class Reinforcement and In-Verse glimpse.

Replicus had already used the first two options and now two remained.

Class Reinforcement was rather straightforward. Replicus' Class, the Vehement Bone Nullmancer would be augmented in some significant way. The Warmoth's Progeny gathered that this would have an effect on his Apostles too, which was why Serenity suggested that he use it first before making Jerthrax his Apostle.

Thus...

"Alright," Replicus said and had the guidance field commence with the Class Reinforcement.

At once, notifications popped up before him.

[Class Reinforcement in progress...]

[Your 'Vehement Bone Nullmancer' Class has been augmented significantly!]

[Your Class evolves into the 'Nullmancer']

[Processing...]

[Class relevant skills have been awakened through odd channels! Bonus evolutions apply!]

[Existing Nullmancer skills are being significantly upgraded!]

['Apostle Armament' and 'Apostle Summon' have been merged...]

['Apostles' Liege' has been created!]

['Apostles' Liege' evolves thrice!]

[...]

[User has awakened all ten summoning slots for 'Apostles' Liege'!]

[User's newly summoned Apostles can immediately evolve to the Fourth Tier with a plethora of high-quality evolutionary options opened up to them]

[All User's Apostles will be granted the 'Blessing of Serenity'!]

[All User's Apostles can share their Liege's skills, including restricted Class skills!]

[All User's Apostles are granted Null Cores upon summoning]

[Processing...]

[The Nullmancer's available Apostles evolve thrice!]

Replicus was gobsmacked!

He couldn't believe what he was seeing.

Before he could utter a word though, Red Rage and Araeyn, who had been curiously staring around the Empyrean Bosom, suddenly jerked and began to change, notifications of evolutionary options opening up before them.

Red Rage seemed pleased. This wasn't his first time choosing his own evolutionary path. Skullius had been surprised to find that he could do that, surmising that it was likely because he was a bit more... free-spirited.

Araeyn, on the other hand, simply stared at the guidance field either unsure what to do, or disinterested in it altogether.

Replicus was looking at the two, watching the slew of options his Apostles had been offered, which were mirrored onto the panel before him.

'Interesting! This was a lot bigger of a boon than I thought. My Apostles... All of them...' Replicus couldn't find the words to finish. His phantoms did, however. They made so much noise that it became impossible for him to continue zoning out.

He looked at Serenity and then at the many benefits offered by the new skill [Apostle's Liege].

No wonder Serenity insisted that he wait for this before making Jerthrax an Apostle.

This must have only been part of the reason, though, because Replicus saw that notifications about his Class skills – [Nullmancer's Unforgiving Lancet]; [Nullmancer's Royal Raiment of Acclimation]; [Epiphany]; [Wealth of Spoils]; [Depths of the Core] – were practically festering, but he was only focused on the Herald's corpse right now.

None of these skills would affect his summoning of a new Apostle, so they could wait.

Thus...

Replicus walked up to the massive snout of the massive dragon and touched it.

"Summon," he said while activating [Apostles' Liege].

Immediately, the already stacked stack of notifications grew, announcing very good news!

[Congratulations! You have summoned your fourth Apostle!]

[A carcass of impossibly high quality has been detected! High chance bonuses as well as original ability and skill retention apply!]

The Empyrean Bosom trembled.

[Class Evolution bonuses apply]

[A fitting list of evolutionary options at the very top of the Null Verse have been selected due to the quality of the corpse]

Replicus' curved eyes shone as he saw what was presented.

Soon, he wore a treacherous grin, pleased.

He was immensely pleased.

A great flame exploded upward with about as much force as a hundred thousand geysers bursting their ferocious, scorching, steamy load into the sky.

It attached itself to everything, rapidly and wildly expanding its influence with what might have been a true, living will.

Both its great force and its greedy proliferation was even more terrifying when one realised that this vicious flame... was hardly visible.

If not for the twists in space (which was also burning) brought on by its crushing heat, it would be impossible to notice its wisps and warps!

Even though both Replicus and Caxellac had been in the direct line of fire, only the latter met the full brunt of the vengeful flame.

He was tossed skyward, spinning like a top as his armour rapidly began to melt, as did his skin and bone in barely a breath's time!

"Arrrgh!" Caxellac roared before summoning a great bull with whipping winds around it and settled on its back amid the conflagration.

This kind of flame...

He could have sworn he had experienced it before.

It had to be Clear Fire!

Soon, the stream of scorch came to an end.

Everything looked as though it had turned into a mirage after the blast, but strangely enough, other than Caxellac, nothing else showed any signs of being harmed by the fire.

Replicus churned.

The Null Devil King had been blasted away with his sword upwards, and thus he was free to stand.

His two feet supported him on a great mercury tongue deep within a great maw that rose from the ground.

This maw started to emerge further up, and then a great head showed itself.

It was abnormally vast, so much so that Replicus, on seeing it for the first time, had wondered if the Colossus Warmoth could have been its match.

Riddled with hundreds of thousands of mercury scales, the new Apostle's immense, partly illusory body, cast a dark shadow over Replicus. Its massive feet, six in all, settled on Edagon and the ground turned to mercury which boiled intensely over vast regions.

Its four terribly colossal wings gave a uniform flap, and even the clouds flitted away as fast as they could, as did everything that was idling below and around the great tail behind the behemoth when it swayed harshly.

The Mercurian Long-Snout Legend have arrived on the battlefield.

Chapter 1133: Mercurian Long-Snout! (2)

And a long snout it had indeed.

The new Apostle had all the draconic features one would expect, but its long snout was rather surprising. It gave the impression that the Mercurian Long-Snout Legend had at some point in time been involved with a crocodile – a massive version of it in the Null Verse, perhaps.

Two great, gleaming eyes with a greenish-gold colour took up a little more than a third of the space on the creature's face. The pupils were quite large and shaped like rather pointy, black eight-point stars that turned abruptly spun clockwise or anti-clockwise.

The Mercurian Long-Snout Legend didn't blink and it would never.

Its focus was on the Null Devil King, as was that of its master.

Replicus sighed.

He let go of the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow, and it suddenly got pulled over above him to one of the Mercurian Legend's great scales which opened up and devoured it before attaching itself to the rest of the body again.

Behind each of the new Apostle's scales was a Storage Unit, after all, and some of these were already occupied.

Replicus watched as Caxellac dropped from the sky and landed far, far away before healing his body and armour with Null Life Essence, albeit not as quickly as he had done before.

He narrowed his eyes and then felt for where he had been stabbed.

'The Bastard Sword of the Hedonist...' he thought. 'If its anything like the Grand Sword of the Hedonist, which I acquired back then, then it works particularly well against male opponents. The Grand Sword practically castrated the goblins back then. The Bastard Sword on the other hand... it completely paralysed me and all my energy reserves after it dug into me. That could have been the end right there.'

Two minutes had barely passed since the [Rune of the FIRST] had been evoked, and it really irked Replicus that there had been several points where the Null Devil King could have put him down.

Well, perhaps that wasn't too shocking.

Caxellac was one of the Four Authorities of the Null Verse. Even while weakened, he was still extremely skilled.

'Hmm. Skill...' Replicus thought.

He had four arms, two Transcendent grade weapons and a new element in Ju`wtte and Maximum Catalyst.

All this should have been more useful until now. Well, he had thought so, but...

'I've only had all these powers for barely an hour, and I haven't had time to properly master them. I don't have a proper fighting style, and I've only been desperately using each clumsily. For now, I'll have to depend more on Beyrmir rather than commit to pride,' Replicus assured himself.

Beyrmir was his new Apostle's name.

Just like Araeyn, Replicus had thought of a name from the deeper dialects from Feinheath which he knew because of the memories he extracted from bandits and brigands before.

Beyrmir meant 'Crusher of the Vast' or 'Weight of the strong'. Replicus had deemed it a fitting name for the former Herald.

After receiving a name, Beyrmir acquired the [Blessing of Serenity], and because of the quality of his previous body, he retained some of its aspects.

For one, Beyrmir, had been summoned with six Class slots, much to Replicus' befuddlement.

The Warmoth's Progeny had never quite taken the Classes of his Apostles seriously. The only one who used his very efficiently was Ferex, but for Red Rage, it seemed more like an option. Replicus hadn't yet chosen one for Araeyn given how much power his racial properties alone gave him.

For Beyrmir, that was different though.

Replicus had filled every single Class slot, and he would soon find if this was as great of a boon as it seemed.

Replicus saw the bull Caxellac had summoned and he was once again reminded that even Beyrmir's powers may be rendered moot if he had to fight Caxellac amid those odd beasts.

Thus, begrudgingly...

"Serenity, what kind of power is this guy using? Nothing works on his summoned creatures," he asked.

Serenity answered promptly from within.

"It's Force-mancy. It's a power that allows the user to merge emotions or sensations with an element and a living creature."

Replicus frowned.

"Merging emotions with elements? How does that completely nullify all kinds of attacks? Even Maximum Catalyst isn't working," he said.

"Forcemancy takes the notions surrounding a sensation or emotion and empowers them unreasonably. The same happens with the elements used. In some cases, when an emotion, an element and the living creature of choice are very compatible, abnormal effects may occur. In this case, I think Caxellac infused fury into wind. The result seemed to be a furious that wards away all kinds of supernatural attacks.

How this combination is so potent is likely tied to how familiar Caxellac is with the Class. He has been alive for more than a million years after all. Even without a majority of his raw power, he still retains his skills."

Replicus was astonished.

Furious wind, huh?

It seemed the observed behaviour and notions around anger and wind were given a more supernatural form by Forcemancer. Anger or fury was often unreasonable and empowered its host to do extraordinary things rashly. Wind on the other hand, was usually known for casting things away. Perhaps this was the perfect blend, especially when a bull was mixed in.

A perfect blend indeed.

"I see," Replicus said.

So that was it.

Serenity was pleased to find that Replicus wasn't dissuaded or discouraged.

She could have told Replicus all this from the beginning, but she thought he needed to grow far beyond the power he had just acquired. Well, the fact was, Replicus too wanted to grow on his own, which was why he waited until now to ask what Caxellac's deal was.

Right then, Replicus pointed at Caxellac with one his hands while another opened as though to receive something.

"Beyrmir."

"YES, MY LIEGE," the Apostle said in a voice that was heard all throughout Edagon in a deep tone, and another one of its scales opened up to reveal a giant pair of crude, mercury scissors that sped into Replicus' free hand. They had a ghostly appearance to them, and steam continuously poured out as though to emphasise how severely hot they are. The air and space grew extremely restless.

"Now," Replicus said, still pointing at Caxellac.

Beyrmir growled and astonishingly, a cubical pillar of solid mercury fell from the sky and onto Caxellac before he could even imagine how it happened!

...!!!

It was way too sudden!

By the time Caxellac was flattened to the ground, Replicus was already upon him. He had gone around the bull Caxellac had summoned, and in one swift action, he was clipping into the Null Devil King's neck while he was weighed down!

Chapter 1134: Mercurian Long-Snout! (3)

The heat condensed into the sharp edges of the scissors turned out to be way too great for the Null Devil King to ignore. It was several times hotter than that which he had just been exposed to by Beyrmir's Clear Fire, a kind of fire that only focused on one subject, intensifying on said target according to its rate of spread everywhere else.

In essence, there was no limit to how hot it could become.

Despite being caught off guard, Caxellac gritted his teeth, and just when he felt his neck start to get destroyed in a mix of melting and slicing, he summoned a lengthy, mosquito-like insect with crackling green lightning seething along its brownish carapace.

The thing smacked hard into Replicus, knocking him away with a great bash.

Caxellac healed the wounds on his neck as he rose, and was about to use [Null Extraction] on Replicus before he stabilised from his flight when...

Despite the fact that his [Static Limbo] was active, Caxellac was alarmed by the great winds bellowing so aggressively in every direction.

Beyrmir, the Mercurian Long-Snout Legend, had raised his front leg, balled its end into a fist, and dropped it as a blur with unreasonable might!

His impressive size, coupled with the reinforcement from his mana core, Null Core and the strength of one of his Classes, the Tempered Skull Hegemon – a Class focused mostly on physical strength and endurance – ensued that each one of his strikes would be cataclysmic.

BOOOOOOOM!

Beyrmir never intended to strike the Null Devil King directly, but he might as well have.

Just the sheer shockwave released when his balled hand dropped on Edagon was too great for the continent to endure, much less Caxellac who didn't manage to escape as well as he had thought.

He tried to escape into the spatial tunnel he used to bolster his speed, as Replicus had surmised, but that didn't seem to matter because just as everything within a two-hundred-kilometer radius of Beyrmir's fist exploded, crushed to nothingness in an instant, such that a lake was instantly formed, the same occurred to the surrounding space.

It shattered, rippling as an unnatural vibration ran through it and caught up to Caxellac who felt his skin get shredded, his bones fracturing painfully despite the shielding of his armour!

'That's no ordinary physical blow!' he thought as he spun and tried to find his footing amidst the odd, dark colours around where space was attempting to fix itself. 'I really should have known he

was a Nullmancer. He inherited that dragon's corpse and summoned it as an abomination ranked on the Universal Purge Banner. The thing is even capable of performing advanced feats with a Hegemon Class. Hmph!

Just as Caxellac glared at Beyrmir who was far too fast to commit to a staring contest with him, he felt the approach of the Warmoth's Progeny from behind him and instantly turned.

The first thing he noticed before he caught sight of Replicus was that his [Null Life Demesne] was active again, shielding him from the influence of his [Static Limbo]. His speed, at least reflexively, was likely back to being hundred times the norm.

Thus, upon seeing the Progeny, the Null Devil King attempted to demolish his [Null Life Demesne] as he had done before using his own when...

...!!!

All of sudden, the vast shadow cast by Beyrmir vanished, and Replicus, storming towards Caxellac with the Spine and scissors still in his hands...suddenly exploded into a vast pool of boiling mercury!

Of course, this was only how it appeared to Caxellac.

Yet still, when he saw the massive maw of Beyrmir spill towards him and once again open to send forth a wild jet of Clear Fire, he was dumbfounded!

Belatedly, after his entire front was scorched and seared to something darker than black, he summoned a hundred of the brown carapace mosquitos with green lightning livid around them!

These creatures weren't invulnerable to all phenomena like the wind-covered bulls, but they were astonishingly fast and infinitely more destructive!

They hurled themselves through the clear flame despite turning crispier with every second and then...

ZWWWWP! ZWWWWP! ZWWWWP!

They exploded with ripples towards the mercury form of Beyrmir, disrupting the beam of fire and turning the Apostle's face into a hole-ridden mess that splattered all across the skies.

...But only for a moment.

The messy mercury stopped splitting off and gathered back together, revealing the unharmed body of Replicus which had been hiding behind it!

The Warmoth's Progeny grinned, and in a shocking exhibit of the Mercurian Long-Snout's versatile racial properties, he transformed it into a large, scaly ball that he tossed before him, readied, and struck towards Caxellac with all his might using the Warmoth's Spine!

The ball turned into a fierce, elongated blur that Caxellac didn't even see until it had smashed into his body and nearly borne through it as though it were a sheet of paper!

It felt like his innards were flattened in that instant, the sublime impact obliterating everything behind and around him. The giant mercury ball bounced off Caxellac and soared into the sky just as Replicus dived towards the Null Devil King!

The Warmoth's Progeny, of course, wouldn't let up.

With his large, crude pair of scissors, he zipped towards the debilitated Caxellac and once again went for his neck, intent on cutting it.

The searing scissors had begun to melt Caxellac's bone and flesh like butter when a burst of Null Life Essence so solid that it might have been a tangible sheet of magically-empowered steel coated the Null Devil King at the last second!

In the next moment, Replicus felt a crushing [Null Life Demesne] overpower his, leaving him susceptible to the [Static Limbo] impeded space again!

Caxellac then healed himself with Null Life Essence, albeit a little slower than before, and without uttering a word, he conjured a thousand great, wind-kissed bulls, and two thousand carapace-shielded mosquitos with green lightning around him!

The mosquitoes sprang towards Replicus at shocking speed, and the Warmoth's Progeny's upper right arm was immediately torn off, along with several bits of his torso!

Yet Replicus wasn't too concerned.

'He doesn't know about my Flaw! He's simply trying to get me to stop healing by assuring that I get distracted by losing an arm of mine with a Ju`wtta,' he thought. 'Still, I should be wary of both my Ju`wtta getting destroyed. If that happens, I'm dead.'

Indeed, this was Replicus' new Flaw. If he lost the source of his Ju`wtte or lost possession of the Warmoth's Spine, his Null living privileges would be revoked.

But Caxellac wasn't aware of this. At least Replicus thought as much.

Just as more of the deadly mosquitoes smashed into him and exploded, dealing great feats of damage and making Replicus lose his pair of searing scissors, his only free hand opened, expecting to receive something.

At once, from the mercury ball far overhead, a crude white hot steel flute sped into Replicus' hand. He instantly placed it on his lips and played a constant tune.

To Caxellac's surprise, the temperature around everything in sight increased and then...

The thousands of summoned, lightning-coated insects that had been having an easy time turning Replicus into Swiss cheese were suddenly unable to reach him.

Around Replicus, details of the environment obtained an odd, white tinge and then they kept expanding, expanding, and expanding some more.

No matter how fast the flying enemies darted towards the Warmoth's Progeny, they would never reach him unless he stopped playing his unamusing tune.

Chapter 1135: Mercurian Long-Snout! (4)

There Mercurian Legend was far more than just a fire-breathing, mercury-moulded behemoth.

It was also a symbiote. As long as it had a host, it could exercise all the outrageous abilities inherent of its race; of course, all its offensive abilities would not harm said host.

It was capable of taking many shapes because of its composition, switching from solid to liquid on a dime. Additionally, Beyrmir could expend mana or Null Life Essence to generate as much mercury as he desired.

On top of this, the Mercurian Long-Snout was made of three parts: two other full bodies like the one everyone could see now, but in two other separate dimensions, both of which were linked to two of the one hundreds of thousands of Storage Units found behind its scales. Essentially, the form of it that individuals like Caxellac saw, was only a third of it.

This meant that even if the Mercurian Long-Snout was obliterated in this space, it would still have two other forms of itself left.

Above all this, the Mercurian Long-Snout Legend was capable of manifesting any effect or phenomenon related to intense heat, crafting crude weapons imbued with these effects for its master to use!

Of course, this was only half of the what Beyrmir was capable of with his racial powers.

...

As Replicus played his crude flute, he couldn't help but be pleased with its effect. The heat it expelled was borderline divine, allowing him to expand the space around him to a nigh infinite degree. One would argue this went beyond simple heat, as what was required to quite literally extend ambient space was more than just a fiercely hot flute.

Nevertheless, this overpowered phenomenon was what the crude flute could create and Replicus was determined to abuse it until he healed.

At the moment, he could keep the Null Devil King's projectile mosquitoes at bay.

In the meantime...

Caxellac – surrounded by the large, wind-kissed bulls – managed to fathom what Replicus was doing, however surprised he was, but he couldn't dwell on it.

A vast shadow was cast over him as Beyrmir's form changed from the large ball of mercury that had hurtled into him just now, to the colossal dragon with six limbs and four wings. Beyrmir reared his head, his large eyes staring at the Null Devil King along with everything else around him.

A sense of indignation was abundantly vivid from Caxellac's glare. Beyrmir paid in all the mind he could afford.

An instant later, Caxellac whipped his hand into the air and clenched a fist.

...!!!

Suddenly, the influence of his [Static Limbo] grew immensely.

The Mercurian Long-Snout felt space attempt to constrict his movements even more than it had been before.

The Null Devil King hadn't bothered doing this before against Replicus because he thought he could manage without handicapping the Progeny even more. Besides that fact, he had a limited amount of Null Life Essence reserves, and unlike his enemies, mana wasn't really an option for him.

Now, using this card seemed worth it.

He saw hints of success when Beyrmir turned a little stiff. His surprisingly brisk movements despite his size, slowed.

'Got you,' Caxellac thought.

But get Beyrmir, he didn't.

The Apostle's front leg pointed down and the former dragon spoke magisterially:

"[Static Limbo]."

...!!!

Caxellac was alarmed.

What?

Immediately, he felt an influence similar to his own worm its way through space, attempting to establish a rigid hindrance to his movements just as he had been doing to everyone and everything else!

But... how?

Worse yet, Caxellac wondered how the dragon was doing it so well!

Replicus hadn't bothered to try and fend off Caxellac's [Static Limbo] with his own because he figured he didn't have the skill to do it as proficiently, and thus wouldn't make much of a difference, but Beyrmir managed to.

The reason was simple.

The [Blessing of Serenity]!

This unique power allowed the Apostles to learn things quickly, and with Replicus' Class Reinforcement, all his Apostles inherited this power!

Of course, Caxellac didn't know this, and unfortunately, he wouldn't get to learn quickly enough why, after this first shock, his body was suddenly dragged into the sky at breakneck speed!

...!!!

'[Null Extraction]?!' he thought in horror as he neared the massive body of the Beyrmir.

The Apostle could also use Null Extraction at this high a level too?!

Baffling as it was, Caxellac wasn't to be underestimated. The second he was dragged upwards, his entourage of bulls galloped through the sky at light speed and were soon surrounding him once more.

The Null Devil King, livid, then brandished his Bastard Sword of the Hedonist, and growled in a sinister tone:

"Fond Calamity, Releas—"

But he broke off.

Before he could finish, his massive opponent... suddenly vanished from sight!

The dragon that was so huge it might as well be a fragment of the sky, just disappeared.

...But it wasn't gone.

Caxellac learned this the hard way when a familiar, cold vibration ran through his flesh, bone and soul, along with a world-shattering blunt force that he felt rip his wind-coated bulls into something finer than atoms!

There was deafening BAM in the heavens and Caxellac went shooting like a comet!

Edagon rapidly became a small dot in his vision; whatever was left of said vision, as he soared, tattered like a rag.

His mind reeled.

'That...That was without a doubt a Spirit Walker's ability! This Apostle has a Spirit Walker's Class too?!' he wondered, concern creeping in to him.

There was no way that Apostle could have completely erased his presence like that otherwise!

Caxellac's reserves of Null Life Essence were finally starting to bottom out, and thus, when he used them to heal, he wasn't as thorough or as quick.

While vigilantly looking around him – in the skies where Reverse Clusters started to pop up – Caxellac searched for a sign of the Mercurian Long-Snout.

Yet, he couldn't have sensed that it was only a kilometer away, its keen eyes on him as it followed.

One of Beyrmir's scales opened up and a certain luminous bow spear sprang out, engorged to fit in one his limbs perfectly!

Because Beyrmir was attached to Replicus, as long as the Warmoth's Progeny allowed it, the Apostle could obtain permission to use his Mythical grade and above tools without issue.

Thus, while wielding the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow, Beyrmir activated one of its skills.

Divine Blessing Creation!

10,000,000 units of Divine energy were immediately expended from the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow and, according to Beyrmir's specifications, a Divine Blessing was forged.

A Blessing that gave him complete control and awareness of all nearby purple Clusters and below!

The moment the Blessing was granted, Beyrmir felt the presence of all the genuine Clusters in the vicinity, and sensing the most powerful ones among them, a particularly dark purple Cluster below the ebony sea under his limbs with an interesting race of beasts, he gave a command for all the creatures within it, including the Cluster General, to be expelled and transported to the surface!

The moment thousands of odd beasts with funny masks for faces, all of them donning dirty silk cloaks or ones made of straw emerged, the Null Devil King spotted them.

What could this be?

He wondered.

Every single one of them, by this world's standards seemed immensely powerful, but one among them had a particularly nasty presence. One of them stood out.

This particular creature was just as confused as the rest about how and why they were suddenly summoned to this odd place, but not for long.

A streak of mercury fell from the skies and burrowed into its head, then into its brain.

It jerked its head and huffed in a breath of air.

Right then, this Cluster General became the second host of the Mercurian Long-Snout!

It was a Tier 47 beast with an odd Class; a Mage Class called the Fundamentalist Mage.

The moment the Null Devil King saw the influence of the mercury, he raised his guard immensely, but he never expected what followed.

The masked creature in its straw cloak suddenly had its power jump to an outrageous degree.

In the blink of an eye, its Tier jumped to 77, and just as Caxellac gaped, realising belated what this meant, the Cluster General had zoomed towards him and expelled a flood of Nitros!

Chapter 1136: Mercurian Long-Snout! (5)

An annoying thought rang in Caxellac's mind as he felt the power of the creature in front of him surge dramatically.

This... this had to be the influence of yet another Class in the Mercurian Long-Snout's possession.

He didn't know which Class it was specifically, as there were several that had that basic effect of increasing the power of subordinates or vessels, but the matter still stood.

Wary and livid, Caxellac attempted to move as quickly as he could to defend while using his depleting Null Life Essence reserves as efficiently as possible, and at the same keeping a keen awareness of any changes to his environment.

These layered strains made sure he wasn't faster than the Sallow Face, however.

Indeed, the masked creature before him, adorned in a cloak of straw, acted quicker than him, expelling a massive burst of Nitros. Because it was a Cluster General, it possessed immense reserves of mana enough to keep its Cluster stable, and thus, when its volumes of white Nitros manifested, they appeared as vast as the seas!

The Null Devil King anticipated how he would deal with the effects of the Territory that was coming.

He had the BoneTender's memories.

While a Territory couldn't hamper his use of Null Life Essence or touch something like his soul because of Serenity's influence on all Null Lifeforms – evidenced by how even Actuass' Territory failed to do so – it could still harm his body.

In the position he was in, he couldn't afford to be trapped in some treacherously disadvantageous environment while fighting an invisible dragon, a high-tiered Cluster beast and Serenity forbid, the Warmoth Progeny as well!

Luckily for Caxellac, his concerns appeared to be unwarranted, but that didn't mean he was safe.

The Nitros that exploded before him did not condense into one Majestic Territory.

No.

With the Sallow Face's influence, it all turned into hundreds of thousands of miniature white orbs that gathered around him and then condensed into hundreds of thousands of miniature Majestic Territories!

...!!!

Caxellac was alarmed.

He couldn't understand what kind of attack this was meant to be, much less fathom the sheer briskness in the way it was executed.

But that was the least of his worries.

The plethora of tiny Territories expelled strings of pale lights that smashed into the Null Devil King in the same fashion any normal kind of light would. But of course, it couldn't have been that simple.

...!!!

The Null Devil King was shocked when he saw his skin's properties start to change, as well as those of his armour!

They were turning to emerald!

Slowly yet surely, Caxellac's body was attaining rough, green, rocky properties!

As he cursed, it was only now that the Null Devil King managed to act.

He soared through a corridor of unfamiliar space, rushing away from the layer of Territories, but not before efficiently manifesting a swift, lightning-bathed, carapace-covered mosquito and sent it shooting towards the Sallow Face. At the same time, he created a grey, red bull that huffed while expelling great winds beside him.

Unfortunately, neither of these actions by Caxellac deterred the Sallow Face's own.

Its figure vanished just as the zipping, lightning-coated insect sped through it, and it flashed behind Caxellac, a dark, spindly, muddy, arm shooting out from under its cloak.

Said spindly arm was suddenly slathered in hot mercury and it extended like a silver pole towards Caxellac's face at shocking speed.

The Null Devil King was alert.

He dodged despite having the protection of his bull.

The incoming attack, as he feared, somehow swept past his bull's furious winds and shot inches from his head, but a split moment later, Caxellac realised...

'It's not real?'

Above him, another attack like the last rushed towards him. Another Sallow Face appeared and cast an elongated mercury fist towards him. Instinctively, Caxellac dodged, but as the attack rushed past, he confirmed that it too indeed was... an illusion.

Tens of these illusions began to appear every half a second for the next minute, multiplying with each manifestation.

It was odd.

Caxellac gathered that it was a tactic to confuse him. And he was right.

Just as he grew annoyed by the flashing illusion, the hundreds of thousands of tiny Territories sneakily moved towards him, surrounding him, hidden in-between the countless illusions!

The intensity of the light coming from them worsened, but of course, the bull Caxellac had summoned endured, warding their odd effect away.

'This is all making me uneasy. What's the point of it all?' Caxellac wondered as he held out his Bastard Sword and infused a large amount of Null Life Essence into it. 'It's a waste of a significant amount of mana, I imagine. Illusions. Miniature Territories.'

And indeed it was.

However, the payoff was well worth it.

Caxellac couldn't have anticipated what came next.

The hundreds of miniature Territories, unbeknownst to him, were expelling the effect of the Sallow Face's Primary assault function, which was a form of extreme Transmutation Magecraft that turned any materials to emerald, down to the molecular level!

Normally, this was impossible to do as a Territory's attacks were limited to the borders of its Imaginary GeoScape, but the Sallow Face had been imbued with inspiration.

As per a few moments ago, it had been promoted to the second host of the Mercurian Long-Snout Legend, Beyrmir, and shared his abilities and memories!

The Apostle Beyrmir in turn, had access to Replicus' memories, and he remembered an odd sort of Territory the Warmoth's Progeny had once seen the Ardent Curse Dander perform, where the Territory borders were miniaturised, and its effects applied outside of it, instead of inside!

Thus, using advanced Magecraft to split its Nitros into hundreds of thousands of portions, the Sallow Face recreated this unusual phenomenon.

However, there was an added twist.

...!!!

Caxellac scowled when he found himself looking at a hundred thousand four-armed, ceramic-skinned creatures leaping at him from the vast number of miniature Territories around him!

At once, he recognised how screwed he was.

The illusions flitting around him persisted, and he couldn't tell them apart from the copies of the Warmoth's Progeny!

Was this really happening?

How was it possible to create so many copies of so powerful of an entity?!

They were all not even weak judging by any metric!

'Curse you!' the Warmoth Progeny thought hatefully as his face was bathed in a blinding yellowish red light; Ju`wte poured from the clones of the Progeny as they all gathered their fists to pummel the Null Devil King!

It was a treacherous predicament, but it was only made worse when a thunderous noise exploded from the open skies above.

A great, transparent flame bore down and drowned everything in sight in its vicious scorch!

...

Caxellac hardly recalled exactly what he had felt in that moment.

He did remember, however, that the Ju`wte he saw from the copies of Replicus wasn't the real thing and neither were the copies.

That said, it seemed to him that Beymir and his master had exploited the weakness of his Forcemancer Class: brute force.

Even if the copies of the Warmoth's Progeny were not even half as strong as he was physically, their combined physical might was more than enough to overcome the ability of one wind-kissed bull. Well, their might plus the Transmuting effect of the Territories and Beymir's fire.

Caxellac had many thoughts in that moment when the force of so many blows struck him at once.

He could have attempted to summon even more bulls, but he knew that's what Jerthrax wanted. He and his master wanted to make him use up his reserves of Null Life Essence and constantly spamming his Forcemancy, which took an absurd amount of Null Life Essence each time (Caxellac was sure Replicus also figured) was a sure way to do it.

Thus, the Null Devil King weathered through the physical attacks using the resilience of his armour and instead poured all his focus into defending himself from Transmuting effect and the Clear Fire.

After a full minute of fireworks bombarding the open space and skies, Caxellac's form emerged from the wreckage – the shattered sky, the blotched space and the evaporating ebony waters.

He stood on the corrosive sea, looking rather pitiful.

A dim, furiously cold sort of Null Life Essence coated his body which was partially Transmuted into emerald. His right arm was missing and his face hissed of dark smoke.

The ethereal hair of Null Devil King looked lousy at best. It seemed to have turned mortal, attaining traits of simple, blonde strands.

Caxellac sighed and then he laughed.

"You're formidable. Formidable indeed," he said.

"I wouldn't say that, considering you almost killed me more than a handful times."

The one to answer was Replicus, who was standing fifteen meters away.

Caxellac hummed in amusement and then, just as he attempted to raise his hand and say, "Null Extraction", Replicus beat him to it.

Of course, the Warmoth's Progeny knew Caxellac didn't intend to use [Null Extraction] on him.

He aimed to use it across Aigas to extract all the Null Life Essence available.

Replicus had been anticipating this since the beginning and was ready.

Because his [Null Extraction] had been upgraded since his evolution, it now worked on a global scale!

In an instant, Replicus absorbed all the Null Life Essence from freshly dead living creatures all around Aigas, all of it bounding toward him as a vast unit that fed into him.

Caxellac chuckled.

"Well, there goes my ticket," he said before standing up straight. "And here we are."

Chapter 1137: One Last Exchange

Caxellac hadn't really been too keen to rely on extracting the Null Life Essence within this world because it was much too little to make too much of a difference in the grand scheme of the fight; where it was currently, that was.

While it was indeed in the billions – meaning Replicus couldn't even store it all in his body and had to cast the excess in Beyrmir's Storage Units – the damage Caxellac had taken, mainly from having his very cellular make-up altered to emerald, his armour, in particular, would require a significant amount of that reserve to fix.

His brand of healing was only simple when he didn't have to reconfigure his entire anatomy after all, and that of the complex armour.

Said armour was the main reason Caxellac had been able to avoid certain death from Replicus' attacks – from the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow to the Ju`wte-enhanced punches – as well.

It was efficient against soul attacks and any damage dealt to him was transferred to the armour, most of the debilitating effects that came with that damage forced to rapidly disperse. The armour also improved the Null Devil King's efficiency when expending Null Life Essence beyond his own capability to do the same, which was why he had been able to make do with the little amount he had.

Now that a significant portion of it was turned to stone, he had to fix it before most of its powers could be restored, which was quite an expensive affair.

As the massive form of Beyrmir flew down, the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow in hand and the Sallow Face following after it, Caxellac wore a broad smile.

He looked at the masked creature.

"A rather fascinating creature. I confess, I was taken aback by that last attack. It defies most of what I think should be possible with just mana," Caxellac said.

Replicus chuckled. As the shadow of his Apostle was cast darkly over him, he obtained a monstrous sort of regality. When he explained the mechanics behind the Sallow Face's feat of creating duplicates of him, he expelled the air of wise hegemon.

"It's simple, really," he said. "A Majestic Territory allows its user to create tangible matter within it. It's not impossible to create minions, like you do. This beast simply conjured versions of me infused with as much power as it could muster, mimicking my abilities as best as it could, and expelled them from the Territory.

You wouldn't know, but Mages are some of the most terrifying beings in this world, and this guy just so happens to be an accomplished one."

Caxellac nodded with an, "I see" and then proceeded to sit on the ebony waters below.

"I was right in the end," he continued. "I truly needed to get away from the world I knew. I know all there is to know about the Null Verse. Well, what's important, at least. When I was younger, doing my best to hone my skills – simple skills, really – in hopes of becoming an Authority, I was filled with so much ambition and curiosity.

Obtaining the powers that I did – those that gave me Dominion over most things in the Null Verse – was a curse I never truly cured."

"There's a sort of ignorance that comes with age and a kind of enslavement that comes with power. It got to me, and made me start losing interest in the worlds I reigned over. I started losing interest in power because I had so much of it. Even though so many things have happened in the millions of years I've been thriving, I can't help but feel like I was never truly a part of it. Haha.

Why am I even sharing this with you, I wonder?"

Replicus narrowed his curved eyes.

"Earlier, when you said to Serenity that many people have scoured the Null Verse, looking for remnants of the Warmoth's powers... You were one of them at some point, weren't you? It took me a moment to realise it, but you didn't just get grouchy because someone like me dared to face you, right?

It just bothers you that someone outside the Null Verse got the powers of a myth you and many others idolised," he said.

Caxellac didn't reply. His facial expression didn't change either.

"Is that the real reason why you postponed your death?" Replicus added.

He had confirmed his suspicion when the Null Devil King had cried, "Match me!"

Time ticked by.

It was only when the fourth minute chimed that Caxellac spoke.

"It has been a widespread tale – a myth, really – that among the few who are believed to have escaped the Null Verse – other than a particular race of tome-wielding, corrupted seers, of course – the Warmoth was among them. It was rumoured that one of his hidden demesnes allowed him to escape the boundary of Serenity's treasure from time to time. I believe it.

Ever since I took the seat that the Warmoth left behind, I also wanted to leave a mark in history by choosing to die... elsewhere, like him. To become a potent mystery to all."

Replicus reeled.

What?

One of the Warmoth's three dimensions, his legacy, led from to the outside world from the Null Verse?!

Serenity didn't seem to believe this piece of information. Replicus heard her harrumph from within.

"Is that so?" he said to Caxellac who looked up.

"Indeed. You'll find that old ones like me rarely have especially ambitious goals, haha. However, I would be remiss if I allowed myself to win or lose because of a mere time-limit," the Null Devil King said.

The timer prompted by the [Rune of the FIRST] was still active.

In truth, while it was still a strategic play that Caxellac hoped would work for him in the end, he never intended to rely on it. He only desired the boost it offered so that he could bring himself as close to his full power as possible in the battle.

Now that things had reached this point...

"I doubt you're satisfied with this result either. You yourself expressed a bitter distaste for having to rely on your Apostle instead of beating me on your own. Of course, it's well within your right to use your Class, but I'd rather you face me alongside your minions," Caxellac said.

Replicus nodded.

"You're right about that. What do you propose then?" he asked.

The frosty Null Life Essence around Caxellac dwindled.

"One last exchange. A brief one. If the mighty Warmoth defeats me, I will die an infinitely better death. If he loses... well, let's hope he doesn't perish at least," he said, and the Bastard Sword of the Hedonist emitted a harsh, red energy like a thick, oily paint.

Replicus readied himself.

He had noticed earlier that the Null Devil King's sword was a Fond Calamity – a sort of Null Life weapon bonded to its user indefinitely.

Caxellac had been about to unleash its full power before, but had been interrupted when Beyrmir dragged him up with [Null Extraction].

Now, however...

"He's about to use it..." Replicus heard Serenity from within.

"What? The sword?" he asked.

"No. Caxellac is about to use his trump card. The most severe expression of Null Life Essence – the pinnacle of power a Null Lifeform can obtain through nothing but sheer skill in manipulating Null Life Essence," Serenity said. "He's sacrificing the Bastard Sword to acquire enough Null Life Essence to perform it."

And indeed, as Serenity said, the Bastard Sword in Caxellac's hand started to disintegrate, and bits of it fed into him.

Of course, Caxellac didn't use whatever power he received to heal, even though Replicus felt his reserves of energy start to fill up to at least a third of their full capacity.

"The pinnacle of Null Life Essence, huh?" Replicus said, his four arms surging with mana.

Serenity had mentioned about this on their way here.

"Yes. Be on guard, Skullius," Serenity said. "But don't miss this chance to see it for yourself and experience it. I would prefer you retreat and lose to Caxellac's [Rune of the FIRST], but..."

"I know," Replicus said. "Growth. I can't grow without taking risks. My entire life here on Aigas has taught me that. Behind every tribulation is a lesson in strength, if I can survive it."

Serenity would have smiled if she could, despite knowing the immense amount of danger incoming.

If this was the Null Verse, Serenity would have expected to see a few more than two hundred worlds obliterated at the hands of what Caxellac intended to unleash right now.

It was that potent.

Caxellac took in a deep breath while facing Replicus and his pasty, burnt and petrified face turned serious.

Then he chanted:

"Mors, Serene Grace..."

Chapter 1138: Ending the Tender

The BoneTender was raging.

He was infuriated and it was all but clear that he had gone insane. Despite Benzard punishing him with strikes livid with red lightning, he kept whirling in the sky, bellowing the same thing over and over again.

"TELL ME WHERE IT IS!"

His form, like a long cloak, barely seemed to change at all from the damage he took. As a matter of fact, the only damage the BoneTender seemed to have taken, was mental.

Yuyui, decked in Replicus' Hollow Dusk Prison, was also zooming through the skies, aiding Benzard in his attempts to both harm the Null Lifeform and keep him away from Sause.

'It's not working,' Yuyui thought frustratedly.

Her Eye of Dispersal wasn't working on the BoneTender.

It didn't work on anything Null Life related, it seemed.

Quite like the basic effect of a Territory, it wasn't equipped to deal with an energy beyond the natural bounds.

Null Life, as Serenity had explained, along with Voided Death Essence were in a higher tier than Undeath, which was somewhat... ordinary and could in fact be dispersed by the Eye of Dispersal.

Sause remained on the mountaintop where the shrine the BoneTender had thought was the key to reaching what made Aigas rich, was located.

He kept studying the movements of the Null Terror, a contemplative look on his face.

"He's gone mad," he heard Aurolio say from across the giant, gaping hole Replicus had made with an arrow from the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow. Stylla still lay unconscious near him.

"A few minutes ago, I thought the same of you,ahaha. That's the same sort of face you wore when you thought you had what you were looking for in your grasp," Sause mocked.

Aurolio scoffed.

He didn't really have the energy to argue.

Edagon shook vehemently, like a ship on the turbulent ocean.

Sause could have sworn he heard the groan of the ebony sea around the entire continent. The massive landmass had actually shifted tremendously or perhaps rose only to clap on the surface of the sea.

There were deafening crackles from the sky far away, and everything turned a little darker for a moment before returning to normal. Then another great boom ensued that would have left people on Feinheath thinking the coming of the Deities was nigh.

The mind-boggling battle between unreasonable monstrosities yonder persisted, but Sause didn't pay it much attention.

Aurolio did though.

There was a sour look on his face. Recalling how his body had instinctively bowed towards Replicus earlier crushed his pride a bit too harshly.

Still, even he didn't tear his eyes from the conflict directly above him for too long.

It was unwise to ignore the presence of an enemy that was invulnerable to most forms of attacks.

Sause was unsure what deterred him back when he invaded the soul of the BoneTender. Perhaps it wasn't so easy to dismantle the creature's soul, as he had hoped.

In truth, he had been working rather quickly when he attacked the BoneTender, Aurolio and Stylla before. That was why Aurolio recovered quickly. As for why Stylla remained unconscious... Sause himself was not sure.

Aurolio, on the other hand, was sure he could deal some damage to the BoneTender if he used potent Voided Death Essence attacks, but he had sucked himself dry when he used his Mastered Void Gate.

He didn't even have enough Essence to keep his basic technique active.

All these reasons were why only Yuyui and Benzard were attacking the raving BoneTender.

The former kept shifting Benzard around with her Eye of Moving, making sure every sudden movement the Null Lifeform made would be met with a brisk response. However, so far there was no progress, and it really seemed as though there was no true way to get the BoneTender to react to anything they were doing.

Thus, Yuyui, while furrowing her brows as she shifted herself higher into the sky, cast away the helmet to her starry armour, leaving her lime green hair flying out in the wind, and her keen eyes – one of which was the Inhumane Eye – staring deeply at the BoneTender.

"Hey!" she screamed to get the Null Terror's attention.

At once, the fiery globe that was the BoneTender's head turned to Yuyui.

Yuyui knew that the BoneTender had to have recognised him. Not just now, but even before, when she had first arrived to save Replicus and the Unlimited.

He hadn't had any reaction then, but right now...

"You..." the BoneTender said scathingly.

"Yeah, me. You remember who I am, right? And what you did," she said as she shifted herself higher into the air to temporarily postpone her fall to the ground.

The Null Terror seemed to scoff, offering no response. He simply darted her way quickly, but she got out the way before he had even made the decision to do so.

Yuyui grew increasingly tense. She was vastly outmatched in terms of physical prowess and her instinct was what kept her from dying more times than necessary so far.

"You're holding someone captive. Someone who should be here instead of you," she said.

When the BoneTender made a sharp turn towards her, Yuyui moved Benzard directly before her figure, and thankfully, the Incandescent Stager was ready for an attack.

"OUT OF MY WAY!" the BoneTender screeched as it attempted to swat Benzard away.

Thick bolts of red lightning exploded from the swordsman, warding off the BoneTender's advance.

Yuyui used the chance. She immediately moved herself over to the Null Terror's head.

"You lost. You failed. My Master beat you and you were tricked by the person you trusted. There's no room for you here! So just get lost already!" she screamed as she used her Eye of Moving in a manner she hadn't managed to before.

Because her eye was like Brunt Divide, manifesting any meaning of the name it embodied no matter how far-fetched, Yuyui tried to conjure a extreme repulsive force that would force the BoneTender away, like a vicious blast of wind.

Well, that was what she intended to do.

What actually happened was that her Eye of Moving caused the particles – molecules and atoms – surrounding the BoneTender to start moving, bouncing against each other rapidly. Unconsciously, Yuyui made these particles bond to the Null Terror... and then they zipped away at tremendous speed with the BoneTender in tow!

The BoneTender crashed aggressively somewhere far, where the land had been eaten away by Replicus' Ju`wte.

As he lay sprawled on the ground, he felt that his body had actually taken a fair bit of damage now.

Whatever that green head had done... it actually harmed him.

Yuyui, bleeding from nose and looking rather exhausted, appeared in front of the Null Terror, Benzard in tow.

The latter propped up his hands and made a gesture, his mana turning to Nitros in the next instant.

The BoneTender knew what he was about to do and because Yuyui was here, he didn't have the option to escape.

However...

Far away, the Null Terror sensed a certain redhead he had acquired a month ago stir awake finally.

Finally...

Chapter 1139: Extreme Measures

Indeed, the purpose of Stylla for the Full Deck BoneTender, had been to use her to get acquainted with Aigas so that he could easily find the source of what made it a Rich World. Enthralling her with his ability served to ensure that Stylla wouldn't resist and would accompany the Null Devil King on his quest.

Of course, a few minutes ago, the Null Devil King had been led to believe that he had found what he was looking for, only to discover that he had been tricked and that it was all a ruse.

The thought of this filled the BoneTender with rage, but he wasn't done yet.

He had panicked when he realized that Stylla had been smitten unconscious.

Other than scouring Edagon inch by inch, she was his only ticket to find the true worth of Aigas.

Sause, Yuyui, Benzard, Aurolio...

All these others wouldn't work.

They all recognized him as an enemy and did not have even a semblance of an opening for the BoneTender to use to trick them with his innate powers.

As Stylla's eyes opened wide, the BoneTender bellowed as loud as he could:

"COME TO ME!"

At once, the awakened Stylla stormed his way, her wings livid with crackling Nitros!

She was by his side a moment later, her eyes brimming with life.

Yuyui's face fell upon seeing this.

She had a terrible feeling about what was about to happen, and she was right in thinking so.

Benzard by her side didn't hesitate. He expelled his Nitros in order to manifest his Territory.

The BoneTender didn't make any moves to flee or disrupt him. He was quickly ensnared in the gathering Nitros, and soon, an Imaginary GeoScape began to form around everyone who was near Benzard.

Still, the BoneTender was unfazed. His long arm whizzed towards Stylla and gripped her body tight.

Naturally, she didn't resist.

The BoneTender was about to do something unlike anything he had ever done.

The Null Terror's abilities revolved around granting the desires of others through a deck of seventy-two cards that he stored within his body. Each card held a fate – a power to change whoever gained it – but it was usually rather twisted and undesirable.

By asking two cryptic questions, the BoneTender could incite his victims into selecting a fate for themselves, but he had trump cards of his – four cards that balanced out his powers which hardly gave him any direct benefit.

Of them four, was one called the Royal Ace, a card that allowed the BoneTender to manipulate the desire of another to suit his own needs. At least, it had the highest chance to do so.

The BoneTender had used this card to bring the Null Devil King into Aigas, but he hadn't used it again since. His desire to find the source of Aigas' value was much too broad to exploit through the desires of another. After all, desires were too many and too varied. It would take luck to find someone with a desire closest to what he wanted.

However, the BoneTender thought to use the Royal Ace on himself and attempt to bring out his own desire!

Of course, if it was that simple for him to grant his own wishes, the BoneTender would have been able to leave the Null Verse anytime he pleased.

And thus, he had another strategy planned.

While Stylla was in his grip, he felt the pulsing of her soul and her flesh.

She was from Aigas and she was deeply rooted in his command.

Even though it was a long shot, the BoneTender thought to use her in order to source out the deepest depth of Aigas. The three Deities created Stylla's soul and body. The BoneTender could use whatever traces of them within her very existence to find where the depths of their power was strongest here on Edagon!

That... that would have to be what he was looking for!

The Null Terror had had, at the back of his mind, a thought to use Jerthrax, but since it was hard to defeat him, he had given up. He hadn't thought it would be too hard to find what made Aigas Rich upon reaching Edagon then.

"That's right! I haven't failed yet! I will not let Caxellac ruin everything! I will find the precious nature of this world and lay it at Serenity's feet! Then she will have no choice but to look me in the eye and see my worth!" the BoneTender convinced himself.

Indeed.

Then Serenity would have no choice.

Thus, he pulled out the Royal Ace – a card with the depiction of a complex, glinting symbol that seemed to embody boundlessness – and he gazed upon it.

"Do I wish to gamble on it?" he cried, "Glorious empty bliss that may last for all undone time?"

The moment Yuyui heard those words, she turned deathly pale.

"NO!!!" she screamed.

She had heard this before.

She had been there in the Belvion Union when the BoneTender decimated a city simply by asking the common civilians their desires.

She had seen how some of them had gained great powers, others great misfortune.

What would the BoneTender gain?

What would become of Stylla?

Recalling just how important Stylla was to Replicus, Yuyui jolted into reckless action.

Strings of red lightning coiled around everywhere within the Territory as it formed, like a net, yet Yuyui surged ahead at top speed, much to Benzard's surprise.

As the owner of the Territory, he could ward away its effect to render all mana useless from allies, and thus, upon seeing Yuyui driven by something a lot more profound than desperation, he only hoped she had a plan.

But Yuyui did not have a plan.

The Royal Ace shone like the sun while in the BoneTender's hands and he declared his desires, hoping against hope that he, a creature Flawed with endless desire would get what he wanted most.

Stylla's body was engulfed in a grim, faint glow, and she suddenly let out a howl of agony, her face contorting like paper.

...!!!

Yuyui grit her teeth.

What was she to do?

How could she stop this?

It was only when Stylla's body started to twist and jerk, breaking down like sand and then into what must have been its most primal form before the powers of the Deities gave it an individualistic shape, that Yuyui was blasted with inspiration.

Her Eye of Moving on her palm, she pointed it at Stylla and drew a deep breath.

...

Suddenly, it was as though the lime-haired girl was sucked into a terribly violent tornado. She felt herself moving at an atrocious speed towards a distant, bright something, and then a second later, her momentum died down.

Breathing heavily, Yuyui looked around and was stunned by what she saw.

She was in a large, luxurious hallway where countless people with a fixed number of faces passed her, some going ahead of her to one end of the hallway and others moving behind her.

Yuyui recognized some of their faces.

Some of them were Stylla's little sister, Terese, and others were her brother, Setkh. The rest had to be her father and mother.

Yuyui looked around.

She immediately knew she couldn't interact with all these figures who bore stern, cold looks. These people, walking in single file on both her sides didn't seem to even register Yuyui's presence.

This was only natural, though.

This was, after all, merely a Reflection of Stylla's soul.

Chapter 1140: Broken

Yuyui knew a thing or two about souls now.

Given that having her soul drawn out was the means with which her memories had been recovered, and that she remembered the experience, the complexity and nuance of souls were something she had grown to appreciate.

Beyond that, Yuyui had gotten quite close to Ferex after Skullius 'exiled' her, having her travel with Replicus and Kenno's crew instead. Ferex was particularly knowledgeable about souls. He had abilities that allowed him to interact and manipulate them – like [Spirit Walk]. These abilities worked even on high-level creatures.

A good example was what Ferex had done with the Cluster General, he, Skullius and Yuyui had fought on the assignment Skullius had chosen from the Guilds Association back in Genhuis City.

Ferex knew a great deal about the soul and Yuyui had seen him use his abilities to vex enemies firsthand.

Never before had Yuyui thought she would think to all these memories with Ferex and get a dose of inspiration.

In the heat of the moment, Yuyui had used her Eye of Moving to transport herself into Stylla's Reflection of the Soul.

Admittedly, she hadn't known what exactly she was doing and what she would even accomplish, but here she was.

When faced with the bizarre nature of Stylla's Reflection of the Soul, Yuyui was stunned.

It was unnerving.

Yuyui didn't know what to do, but a part of her was convinced she could find Stylla here.

The Stylla she had seen following her arrival on this side of the world, was definitely not the real one; the one she knew had to be hidden away.

Thus, Yuyui walked forward, following a trail of the individuals neatly marching in single file.

She had only taken a few steps when a patch of white smoke appeared before her and formed a vague, feminine shape. The shape had a rather somber face.

"You... No. You are not the one. Then are you in league with that creature who invaded here earlier?" the figure asked indignantly.

Yuyui had no idea what the figure was talking about. At first, she thought the odd shape was referring to the BoneTender, but that didn't make sense.

She couldn't have known that Sause had been the one to attack Stylla.

Nevertheless...

"No... I'm here to help Stylla. She's about to die. She's being used to... Please help me save her!" Yuyui cried.

The figure turned sullen.

"I'm aware," it said, its voice softening. "But I'm afraid there's little that can be done. Stylla is... She is broken."

"Broken? Huh?" Yuyui asked, her face churning. "What do you mean?"

"Follow me."

At the figure's words, Yuyui followed after it when it turned and glided quickly along the hallway.

Looking at the back of the figure, Yuyui couldn't help but wonder if this was what Ferex had referred to as the guardian of Stylla's Reflection. Because it was merely a more interactive form of this place, it bore the same name.

"Stylla has been conscious. She has seen everything she has been doing since that monster corrupted her. She saw what she did to her brother. Foul work, turning him into a jar to bear the curse she retrieved from her father. Well, this among other things. She hasn't been the same since.

She tried to take control of her body, to resist what it has become, but..."

Yuyui wore a sad look.

"I see."

She could only imagine what that was like.

Being trapped inside your own body, forced to watch yourself perform atrocities. According to the information she was fed, Yuyui knew Stylla had been missing for more than a month. To think she had to endure this.

"There," the odd, white figure said, pointing ahead of them where someone was lying flat on the floor, huddled like a ball.

"Stylla!" Yuyui screamed.

However, right then, the great hallway started to tremble, parts of it collapsing.

"It's begun," said the Reflection.

Yuyui gritted her teeth and knelt beside Stylla. She had her face turned against the floor, her long red hair covering most of it.

"Stylla! Wake up! We need to—"

"Go away!" Stylla snapped and she further coiled into herself.

Yuyui panicked.

What could she even say?

What could she even do?

Could she even save Stylla?

A myriad of thoughts bombarded her brain and then...

"Your sister. She died. She and Daggs. They were killed in the Premium Age Royale. I don't know much, but I do know that your father would be devastated if he were to find out he lost you too, Stylla. Did you save him just so he could watch all his children die?"

Yuyui had been told these details by Replicus, but she hadn't known she would be using them in this situation.

There was an immediate reaction from Stylla. She sobbed lightly, but she didn't say anything.

Yuyui grew impatient.

The hallway was cracking.

"Stylla! Don't waste away like this! Are you really so depressed that you can't even find the courage to try and see your father again? Do you know you're about to be used to do something even worse than what you did before? Why are you still lying there?!" Yuyui screamed.

"Give it up," the Reflection of Stylla's soul said. "She won't budge. I believe she has been wallowing in her self-pity for so long that she's starting to get comfortable in it."

Yuyui couldn't accept it.

No way.

She knew a thing or two about losing oneself. She couldn't believe Stylla wasn't willing to take the chance to save herself, even at a moment like this.

Yuyui had done it eagerly when it was her time to be saved.

She had taken the chance when Skullius found her in the Temple of Unlusted Tears.

Suddenly, the lime-haired girl's eyes sparkled.

That's right!

She grabbed Stylla by the hair and pulled her from the floor.

"Now's not the time to whine! Do you know my master, Festos, is in more or less the same boat as you right now? Hmm? He too has to fight another version of himself, an impostor! Someone who knows him so well it might just be impossible to beat him!" Yuyui cried while looking at Stylla's pained, bitter face. "My master has a high opinion of you, you know?"

It was thanks to you that he got so strong. You helped him when he was in need. You took him into your family and helped him grow. Now, he's come to save you and you're going to thank him by dying off like this, making things worse for everyone?!"

Stylla jerked.

"It's not... It's not about me! It's about—"

A crisp slap struck across Stylla's face.

"Dang right! It's not about YOU!" she screamed.

The hallway started to crumble. It was becoming a mess of rubble.

Yuyui sweated.

She glared at Yuyui who bit her lips.

"If you knew what I did..."

"You can tell me when you're not about get erased from existence!" Yuyui barked.

She saw Stylla wither a little. A glimpse of defeat flickered in her eyes.

That was all Yuyui needed.

*

The Null Terror was extremely pleased that his gamble had paid off. He watched as Stylla's body folded in on itself and was reduced to a glowing orb of some of the purest energy he had ever seen.

Divinity truly was a stunning thing!

The BoneTender cackled.

This was it!

'YES!' he thought.

However... he was dumbfounded when he saw something flicker out of the glowing orb, which had previously been Stylla.

It was a certain lime-haired girl, in her grasp a luminous soul that looked to be sound asleep.

"NO! What did you do?!" the BoneTender screamed hatefully, completely staggered.

The orb he had in his grasp lost most of its luster. It looked dead!

The BoneTender grew mad.

What did that insignificant pest do?!

Yuyui was bleeding from every orifice on her face, and to be quite honest, she barely felt alive. Every inch of her body was aching. She nearly dropped the luminous soul in her hands, but Benzard immediately appeared beside her and supported her.

Yuyui looked at the BoneTender.

He had shuttled towards them at a terrifying speed, but a net of red lightning barred him from getting close!

Yuyui smirked.

She had done it.

She had thought about it in the heat of the moment.

Ferex had told her that extracting souls was a dangerous affair. Forcefully removing them was extremely detrimental for weaker individuals, and handling them in any way – for allies – required consent if anything productive was to be done.

That was why it had been essential for Stylla to be willing to be saved, otherwise there was no point.

She chuckled at the outrage of the BoneTender.

Now, all that was left was...

BOOOOOOM!

All of a sudden, Benzard's Territory was destroyed after a treacherous noise from the far distance resounded!

Everyone was flung away violently by a phenomenally powerful force!

Far off, way beyond Edagon, towering, dark grey bolts of lightning danced up to the skies, but so did a disgustingly beautiful, colossal entity that inspired serenity... silence.