

## Undead 1161

Chapter 1161: Empyrean Bosom (1)

The abstractly designed, incredibly vast double doors – perhaps gates? – caused no small amount of shock with their reappearance over the ebony seas. They seemed to be no end to their width, as if one looked east or west, they couldn't possibly define where they ended with their unfathomable design. The same was true for the height of the doors.

They fed into the skies past the clouds, like the Sovereign's Peak.

A pair of giant eyes and tusks protruding aggressively from their faces were the only objects of design on the doors that made any amount of sense whatsoever, and they seemed to send hints of hostility to those that weren't the Warmoth's Progeny.

Replicus hadn't yet gotten used to seeing these doors, but he didn't gape and squeak like the Unlimited, and the young man who was undoubtedly Pherdanta's brother.

The Ju`wte flying off in every direction from the point Replicus' large, ivory key met the large the space before the large doors, seemed to threaten the entirety of Aigas, as did the loud, growl-like sound of the doors opening to reveal a slot wide enough for everyone to enter.

"Come on," Replicus told everyone and led the way.

The first to follow after him were Bassbion and Yagrina who had taken possession of a limp Yuyui.

Grim was next – quivering in a mix of both excitement and fear – then Araeyn who acted as though the doors were nothing unusual at all.

Pherdanta pushed her brother to his feet.

"Go," she said simply, and he, with an ashen face, gulped and walked forth.

Soon, the entire group had entered into the space beyond the doors and collectively, they marvelled at what they saw.

It was all way too beautiful to be humanely possible. But of course, there was nothing humane about everything contained within the Emyrean Bosom, a luxurious living estate of the Warmoth.

There was no end to the space revealed in everyone's sights, and shockingly, everything that could be seen seemed to be made for something that might as well have been as vast as the dragon Jerthrax... no, something much larger.

As the doors vanished behind the party, they were too lost in the attractive view before them, starting with an enormous, winding, paved pathway made of a material that was somewhere between gold, emerald and glass. It shone with such extravagant polish that some might have thought it was some kind of expensive mirror winding around the firm, dark grey dirt of this world.

No sound came when one stepped upon it with as much force as they could muster, and oddly, despite its appearance, it did not have the expected slippery quality.

This pathway branched up to a variety of sights, the most eye-catching of them all being the ginormous mansion up ahead, which, astonishingly, seemed to monopolise the sky in this place.

A limited, purple-blue sky with mammoth-shaped clouds within it was suspended on top of this mansion which was shaped like a giant egg with innumerable rectangular limbs protruding from all over it, some sinking into the ground and some rising into the limited sky, hoisting smaller, egg-shaped buildings.

The whole mass was dark grey in colour, with hints of stylish yellowish-red and black across its face, brilliant strokes telling stories and some adding some of the indecipherable designs seen on the double doors leading here.

In another spot, led by the unusual pathway, a vast body of blackish-red waters that spat out bits of frosty smoke from their surface could be seen. It almost looked as though Feinheath could fit in this... lake? No. It wasn't a lake at all. A closer look would reveal the thick, goldremeraldass blocks marking around it like some kind of a swimming pool.

In another direction, set on higher ground such that the vague sun, which was way above the limited purple-blue sky, seemed close enough to touch from there, was a relatively small building made of straw around which a few creatures not too dissimilar to vultures, but wreathed in Ju`wtte, circled.

Another branch of the pathway led, after climbing into the sky as though it were a very natural thing to do, onto a very vast, very strange field full of gold-green grasses upon which what seemed like large, glowing, mechanical balls were set. What seemed like drizzle was falling on this field, causing the grass to become wet, but also enhancing its beauty.

Of course, what truly made this particular view strange was how the entire field was inverted, standing and operating contrary to the gravity over the rest of this Empyrean Bosom. No other spot among the dozens that could be seen beyond the mansion had anything like it.

"What do you think?" Replicus said with a smile. "I'm still getting used to it myself, but..."

There was no immediate response.

Everyone was gaping at the place. Even Bassbion and Yagrina were stunned, and the former became the first to air her views.

"This is... impressive," she said, facing some of the sights to the right, which, and everyone could agree, didn't really make any sense. It was difficult to even explain what they were.

"Master... this is..." Pherdanta barely formed the words.

Grim's whistle withered as it came out of his mouth. He couldn't even spare a few compliments for this place.

Replicus chuckled.

"Follow me," he said, and tapped on the pathway with a foot.

At once, Ju`wte spread from where his toe struck the green-gold-glass blocks, rushed out in thin strips to the feet of all the Warmoth's Progeny's guests and soon, the group zipped forth along the pathway to stand right in front of the egg-shaped mansion!

...!!!

None of them, including the spirits, even registered that they had moved at all.

In terms of smoothness, the experience far outstripped Yuyui's movement using the Eye of Moving!

"Woow..." the lime-haired girl voiced as she looked up at the towering mass. It was broad.

There were three great sets of double doors on it, one at the bottom, one at the middle of the structure and one near the very top, all gleaming darkly as though made from the night.

"Try not to be too overwhelmed..." Replicus said with a sigh as he stepped forth towards the doors at the bottom of the egg-shaped mansion which were preceded by two beautiful gardens full of what might have been flowers... or lightning moulded into pretty shapes on either side of the paved path towards them.

The others didn't understand what Replicus meant by 'overwhelmed'.

Just being here was draining to the senses!

It was almost as though, to exist fairly in this place, one had to first comprehend it!

The meaning behind the Warmoth's Progeny's words became clearer when the dark doors opened and revealed six figures that marched with well-practised gait and posture towards Replicus.

These beings were spindly, human-shaped bands of concentrated Ju`wte with figures not too dissimilar to stickman doodles.

They didn't speak.

Two of them bowed before Replicus and the other four mysteriously wove a puffy set of ebony robes with four, thick sleeves that crackled with Ju`wte and assisted Replicus with putting them on.

No damage was dealt to these beings by being close to Replicus, and after the Warmoth's Progeny had worn the robes, they bowed like the rest.

The ebony robes seemed to have some kind of dampening effect, because upon donning them, the spiking Ju`wte spilling out from Replicus because of [Ju`wta Resounding Restoration] died immediately.

Everyone behind him were stricken with awe.

The former Penetrator turned to them all, donned a bright smile and said:

"Welcome to the Emyrean Hatcher."

Chapter 1162: Emyrean Bosom (2)

Replicus was astounded by how comfortable the puffy robes he'd been given were. He had taken them lightly at first, but as soon as he fully registered their soft, caring feel on his skin, his curved eyes shone bright with intrigue.

Besides the comfortable sensation that gave the distinct feeling of the warmth of a mother's touch – Replicus questioned from where the analogy came from within his own mind – the set of ebony robes were rather convenient.

They did not disrupt the conditions required for him to constantly have [Ju`wta Resounding Restoration] active – that is, they allowed his arms to touch despite all of them being slotted in separate, large sleeves.

'Sweet...' Replicus thought and he slid his free hand into one of the four pockets on the robes.

He then gazed at his guests who, unlike him, were gaping in awe at what was past the tenebrous doors into the Emyrean Hatcher. The Warmoth's Progeny had had the chance to look in on what this great mansion had to offer before he set off to Edagon, but everyone here was witnessing the magnificent grandeur of it for the first time.

Massive, black tiles, each with an abstract sprinkle of white, as though someone had simple splashed a dash of white paint on them, made the floor of the endless welcoming hall ahead.

What looked like hundreds of the same, Ju`wte-formed stickman figures that had hewn the Warmoth's Progeny's robe stood in two, neat straight lines leading forward, all standing at attention.

The other six from outside sealed the doors to the Emyrean Hatcher and joined the others.

Replicus walked on.

When he passed a pair of these figures on either of his sides, they bowed in an enticing fashion, in unison.

Replicus thought this was a bit much, but it couldn't be helped. These things did everything he asked – everything – except allow him to pass without them showing him the courtesy they seemed to believe he deserved. No matter how many times he commanded, they refused to listen to anything that disallowed them that privilege.

"They are called Strawlers. Apparently, there's an infinite number of them. They multiply according to the task you require them to do, but you often find them ready to do what you wish in places like this," Replicus explained, but it didn't seem like anyone was listening to him.

Their collective interest in the Strawlers had ended seconds ago and now, they were gazing up at the very distant ceiling and walls.

There were murals drawn all over them depicting things just as hard to comprehend as those plastered on the doors leading to the Empyrean Bosom. Despite them seeming to be hundreds of kilometers away, the depictions were so massive that it almost looked as though they were a few steps away instead.

This, however, was second note. What truly stumped the Warmoth's Progeny's guests, was what was below the ceiling and within the great walls.

The crew stupidly gazed upon the hundreds of dark stairways with yellowish-red railings rising upward from the tiled floor, leading up to... to...

"What... what... are those...?" Yuyui asked, her eyes shaking.

Replicus gave a small smile.

The abundant stairs didn't lead to obvious halls or rooms.

They instead led into great, spherical rifts bursting with silently squiggling Ju`wtte!

There were hundreds of these spaces littering all the way up the Emyrean Hatcher, but up to a point.

"They are what you might call sub-mansions – interesting how anything of the Warmoth's makes itself known to me at once. Each one leads to a different sort of shelter or resort, and believe me, there are some breath-taking views in some of them. You'd hardly think you're inside a mansion," Replicus said.

"This is the First Layer of the Hatcher, so these spots are considered... a preliminary luxury, I suppose. Though, you can't enter of these dimensional mansions without a pass from me."

"Damn... Boss, this is..." Grim said, shaking his head and running his hands through his white hair.

Pherdanta gave a deep, heavy breath while her brother seemed to be lost in the idea that all this... all this belonged to an individual whom he had deemed a common Faction Leader leagues behind his deceased leader, Warding Pride.

Replicus was amused by everyone's reactions.

"I haven't explored this place much. I'll allow you all to rest for a while. It's been a long day. You deserve it. Besides, I don't suppose any of you would enjoy exploring this place right now."

Before Yuyui could raise her hand and object, obviously showing her willingness to follow Replicus in discovering what else the Colossus Warmoth built, Replicus ordered the Strawlers:

"Take each of them" – he looked at Pherdanta and her brother – "except those two" – he looked at Yuyui, Bassbion and Yagrina – "and these three, to any one of the sub-mansions. Ah, make sure they check the options at their disposal first and allow them to choose which one they would prefer to stay in. Also, make sure to give them what they tell you they need."

The group was stunned.

Immediately after Replicus gave the order, they were unnerved to see Strawlers approaching them at terrifying speeds and gesturing towards the stairways.

Grim looked excited, as did Pherdanta, but the rest looked a little shaken.

"That reminds me," Replicus said as he raised a finger, and a blotch of mercury extended from his chest, a large scale on it opening to spit out Baddan who stood on his feet and looked around, only to become slack-jawed like the others in awe at what he was looking at.

The Sky Watcher had been safely stowed away within the Beyrmir by Replicus before he and Yuyui had begun their assault on the BoneTender. Baddan had been extremely exhausted after having to strain himself with opening his Territory thrice in the span of a few hours, thus Replicus had given him a pass on the upcoming fight.

Before anything else could be said, the Strawlers led the guests – in the same manner of shocking travel as Replicus demonstrated on the green-gold-glass paved pathway – towards the assortments of sub-mansions. Even Baddan, who only managed to see that he was still safe in Replicus' capable charge, was whisked away.

The Warmoth's Progeny smiled and walked forth.

His feet crackled with Ju`wtte and he streaked past the many rising stairways across the vast hall to reach a vertical beam of bluish-gold light that rose from the floor and fed upwards into the ceiling overhead.

Six Strawlers followed closely behind him.

Replicus had been about to walk into the light when he stopped, shrugged and closed one of his eyes with his free hand. His other unblocked eye shone brighter and then suddenly lost its luminance, becoming a dark socket.

Replicus hadn't lost his vision, however. It was simply somewhere else.

He watched from above as Grim was ushered into a mansion whose interior looked like a beach, the clear, pretty waters teasing the sands he stood on every few minutes. He was gobsmacked.



When the Strawler tending to him stripped him of his armour and decked him a set of comfy, fuzzy robes before he could realise that he had been absolutely naked at some point – likely a minuscule speck of time he couldn't define – Grim grinned.

He sank his feet into the sand and felt a pleasing warmth followed by a shocking cool from the waters splashing over.

To his umpteenth surprise, Grim found that if he wished, the sand turned into sand-textured tiling that he could walk over as he pleased, and the same was true for the clear body of water that spanned as far as the eye could see. If he so desired, they would become a water-themed floor that he could walk over, unaffected by the loose surface of the waters.

There was a purpose to this, it seemed.

Far off, Grim vaguely saw images of taller structures, paintings and stairs hanging in a proud blue sky. He could reach them in an instant if he wished, and he did.

Replicus smiled.

He then checked in on Pherdanta and her brother. He knew for a fact that they had yet to solve their issues, but for the moment, both of them were united in marvelling at the desert-themed interior of the mansion they had found themselves in. Tall dunes of bluish sand rose high everywhere, but there was no freakish heat.

Instead, there was a mild cool to this place and great, elephantine beasts made from the bluish sand approached them, on their backs what seemed like luxurious, open tents packed with thick cushions, goblets full of some kind of fresh liquid and odd sorts of food.

The two were hastened into the tents – one per each – by their Strawlers and as soon as they sat within them, they relaxed against their will.

The elephantine beasts then carried them towards a great pool that was somewhere kilometers away, hidden by several dunes.

Yuyui, Yagrina and Bassbion were in what looked like a sky-themed mansion. Winged creatures made out of the soft, pink edible clouds (Yuyui had already begun devouring them), were flying

around them singing in melodious voices that affected even the two spirits and forced them to sit down on cloudy beds that embraced them with fluffy arms and forced them to lie down.

Small, twinkling moons then flew down from the peach-coloured sky and plastered themselves on the three's skins, vibrating at just the right frequency to relax them all. The great, ship-shaped cloud that held the three flew on slowly, heading over to a castle of cloud where more of the winged creatures sang.

"Well, they should all be relaxed for a while," Replicus said as he watched Baddan crawl into the hollow of a large, argent-coloured tree that grew millions of huge, soft, yellow feathers.

How nice it must have been.

The Warmoth's Progeny then walked into the pillar of bluish-gold light and disappeared into the Second Layer of the Empyrean Hatcher.

Chapter 1163: Empyrean Bosom (3)

The Second Layer of the Empyrean Hatcher was not like the First at all.

Upon reaching it from the beam of erect light which seemed to be tearing through from the First Layer and onwards towards the Third, Replicus felt a bit of resistance all around him. Suddenly, it was as though he was swimming in the ocean, but perhaps water wasn't the exact consistency of whatever was around him.

It was slightly thicker and it could not be seen. Replicus could only discern the distortions it caused in this massive space, which was brightly lit. The walls and ceiling of the Hatcher could barely be seen, like in the First Layer, but they still depicted dense murals with messages hard to interpret.

Replicus was floating.

There was no ground to stand on, but he felt that if he wished to move upward or downward, he could do so very easily.

His six Strawlers had followed after him, and in two neat lines, they followed behind, awaiting a command.

Replicus looked around.

Understanding filtered into him. Unlike the First Layer, this place wasn't exactly for leisure, but what some might call wisdom. How such an idea was expressed, Replicus didn't know, but he wasn't so impatient that he couldn't explore this place and see for himself. He drifted upward. It barely seemed as though he was moving – because of the similar surroundings – but he knew he was.

From his right, he sensed a great degree of excitement and then saw a school of fish that looked a lot like pike swim around him, Ju`wte blazing from their fins and tails!

The fish looped around him and then swam away happily, puzzling Replicus.

He saw more of them swimming around in the distance. There was a wide variety, some Replicus found familiar, and some that he didn't. They all blazed with Ju`wte all the same, and some seemed to wave to him with their fins.

This reminded him of the cheerful, ignorant dolphin guardian, Fuwin, who had been guarding the Temple of Unlusted Tears.

As much as Replicus received a consistent stream of knowledge for everything related to the Warmoth, there seemed to be some kind of barrier to some of the finer details he should know. For instance, it was revealed to him that these fish were not exactly real, living beings. They only existed in the Empyrean Hatcher.

In a way, it was kind of like how an Incandescent Stager could manifest objects and living things within their Territory, but of course, these things would vanish when the Territory was dispelled.

Where Replicus' comprehension failed him was when he tried to understand the exact composition of these creatures. He knew that he could create creatures like the ones he saw now, here in the Empyrean Hatcher, and the method to do so was available yet blocked in a sense.

Perhaps it was because he wasn't the Warmoth, but instead, its progeny that caused such a problem.

Replicus continued still to climb higher and higher. Oddly, the higher he climbed, the more it seemed like the unseen substance around him restricted his speed and ability to rise. For now, he didn't yet feel enough force to stop him, thankfully.

Everything around him seemed to grow brighter and more radiant, even though there was barely anything other than the fish in sight.

Replicus had begun to wonder when he would meet something he could interact with, when a thick, rolled-up scroll suddenly appeared – with a sliding transition – above him.

Several more appeared around the Warmoth's Progeny and all of them at once, like curtains, began to unfurl, dropping long sheets of pristine white paper down below to the unfathomable depths.

Voices called softly from the scrolls and Replicus, after a closer look, saw that there was writing on the sheets of paper they unfurled. It was all large, dark and incomprehensible, but Replicus soon realised that the soft whispers he heard were all narrating what was written. Unfortunately, he couldn't understand what the whispers meant with each sentence they expounded either.

Replicus sighed.

What was he to do here?

Once again, the theory that he might be missing some key elements in order to comprehend some of the things here, got a bit more validation.

How was he to proceed then?

Another scroll appeared above him and unfurled, the sheet of paper it bore streaking right in front of Replicus as it fell below.

This sheet was blank. No writing could be seen on it and no voice came from it.

Replicus frowned, an idea swimming into his head.

He reached behind him to one of the Strawlers, and before he could give the order, a large, stylish quill pen had formed in his hands; it was evidently one of the Strawlers' doing.

'I knew it. So that's what this room is all about, huh?' Replicus thought and drifted closer to the blank sheet, hesitated only for a moment, and began writing on it.

The moment his quill touched the paper, it seemed as though a switch had been turned on in Replicus' head.

At once, he found himself – with the help of his phantoms – scribbling with fine, exhaustive detail about Maximum Catalyst, its Reversion, its Progression and its Neutral. He wrote about the process in which he received it and he wrote about the ways in which he had thought so far to improve it as a wildly valuable concept with immense versatility!

It all came gushing out and his hand didn't stop moving!

He kept scribbling furiously!

He wrote about [Neutral Acumen] explaining its merits and demerits, and when his mind arrived at this point – where he was currently facing a bottleneck with his application of Maximum Catalyst... it galloped ahead, driven by an unnatural force that inspired Replicus and his thought phantoms!

Over the several meters worth of writing he continued to cover on the sheet, expanding more on the potential applications and nuances of Maximum Catalyst, Replicus was both flabbergasted and awed.

A voice began to leak from the scroll, his own voice, speaking in hurry, and then...

[You have learned 'Maximum Reach'!]

[You have learned 'Neutral Impact'!]

[You have learned 'Maximum Constant'!]

Replicus pulled himself from the scroll at once, and found himself to be panting.

His arm was aching, as was his entire body.

'What in the...'

It appeared that Replicus had understated and underestimated the effect of this Layer.

He had initially thought it was simply a place to write down ideas and hear them constantly get read in order to maximise focus, but no. This Layer allowed one to get such a staggering dose of inspiration that could awaken skills and applications of certain, complex concepts with apparent ease!

All the other scrolls he saw likely belonged to the Warmoth and he had written on so many, expanding on ideas he had and perhaps even actualising them into tangible strength!

This was...

This was... ri...

'R-ridiculous!'

To top it all off, Replicus, as he looked up, saw more and more scrolls, still shut tight, further beyond the wall of open ones.

His phantoms, ever shrieking theories, moulded the idea that perhaps.... That maybe... the effect he had felt just now... intensified the higher Replicus went in this Layer. The different heights of the scrolls – of which he was floating around the lowest one – could represent the levels of inspiration he could gain.

This thought didn't remain a theory for long.

Replicus saw that the scrolls settled several wide notches above the plenty he could see blazed with different colours and effects. They seemed to be holding fantastical, terrible mysteries and powers that the Warmoth had created; they remained shut and out of reach.

Replicus attempted to float up to their level.

Immediately, he sensed another surge in the resistance around him. It was as though he had switched from swimming in a pool of citrusy pulp to swimming in wet concrete!

He mustered all his strength in an attempt to rise further up, but he only moved several inches before remaining completely still.

He stopped trying a moment later.

The open scrolls continued to mutter their secrets, inviting him.

'I guess I really was right. I'm missing a lot,' he thought as he looked at the open scrolls. 'I'm sure at some point I'll be able to read or hear what these scrolls are saying and maybe even learn the secrets the Warmoth scribed onto them.'

Indeed, this much was now clear.

This was what the Warmoth had left behind and it was all now Replicus' to claim!

Replicus donned a grin.

He drifted down to his own scroll.

Scribbling on it was quite exhausting for some reason. When he did it, caught in a frenzy, it seemed as though every bit of his strength was converted into fuel for his mind.

'I can't scribble for long too, can I?' he thought. 'Another one of my limits, no doubt.'

But Replicus' grin didn't disappear.

This was immensely pleasing. His choice to pursue the Warmoth's legacy was showing a lot more returns than he expected.

Chapter 1164: Empyrean Bosom (4)

Replicus would have wanted to keep scribbling on the scroll, but the fatigue seemed too great for him to attempt to break past his limits and see if he could get enlightened enough to learn anything more about Maximum Catalyst or anything else that was as open-ended as it was.

He withdrew from the scroll and watched as its long sheet of paper sprang up and rolled around itself snappily. It then hung lower than the rest of the scrolls around him, which, to Replicus, signified that what he had just written so far... was in a lower class when compared to the bottommost tier of scrolls in the entire Second Layer.

'Just what is contained in those scrolls?' Replicus thought with a mix of excitement and frustration.

He did his best to disregard whatever techniques or cosmic knowledge might be stowed away in the scrolls for now, though. There was nothing he could do about it anyway. The obvious best alternative choice was to explore the rest of the Empyrean Hatcher.

He needed to see what was on the Third Layer and ultimately, what the other keys beyond the ivory one he had just used – the green to the Pestilent Vault and the gold for the Treasury – could show him.

He was quite excited for the Treasury in particular, after all, he pretty much already knew what was in the Pestilent Vault and it didn't seem like something one should really be giddy about.

He wondered just what kind of treasures he would find in the Treasury, and whether or not he could use them.

'I'm getting ahead of myself,' Replicus said. A Strawler behind him gently took away his quill pen, recognising that he was done with his writing.

Replicus then drifted lower and watched as the scrolls above him vanished from view. The denseness of the unseen substance around him lessened significantly as he descended, allowing him to move much quicker than before.

Once he felt free again, he floated towards the vertical pillar of bluish-gold light and swiftly shoved himself through it, his Strawlers following along.

What was in the Third Layer?

The First was a complete paradise, the Second was, in a way, a library on steroids. What could possibly be the theme behind the Third Layer?



As Replicus was devoured by the light, he was gripped by intense anticipating... until his body was forced to stop.

Something cold and absolute had swum into every fibre of his being, bringing his flesh, soul and mind to a complete halt.

The Warmoth's Progeny couldn't think. He couldn't move. He couldn't feel.

...

"Fascinating. I had my doubts, but it really happened as he said it would," a voice said curiously.

There was a pause.

"Is this really all there is?"

The voice came from a gigantic being who, quite like the Strawlers, was made entirely out of Ju`wtte, but with finer, more defined, more realistic details.

This being had a rather wide face with a large number of radiant white eyes – ten in all – arranged in a T in the middle; there was almost no room for his button nose and narrow mouth.

He didn't seem to be clothed. His body seemed muscular – it was hard to tell because the details were concentrated on portions of his body that would have been deemed as highlights – but there was no emphasis on more... intricate body organs.

His hair was comprised of thick bolts of Ju`wtte that shrieked madly, violently, in all directions.

"He seems rather wounded. How long has it been since he inherited the Jan`ind's powers, I wonder?" he asked himself as he revolved around Replicus' stationary figure. "He seems decently powerful. Was he chosen, or was it an accident – a coincidence? Oh, the struggle..."

The figure gave a loud sigh.

"I have no choice but to try and see if he is worthy, don't I?" he said and looked at something in the far distance with a sense of longing.

An exasperated look then appeared in the figure's many eyes and he flicked his finger in the air.

At once, Replicus was torn out of the state of suspension he had been stuck in.

He looked ahead of him.

His reaction to the massive figure floating in front of him was quite... mild.

"Wow..." he said, sizing it up with his glowing, curved eyes. "Everything really is plus-sized here, isn't it?"

The great figure didn't provide Replicus with any reaction. He almost seemed to have not heard him.

He merely floated in place staring intently at the Warmoth's Progeny.

The look... the tenfold look was rather unnerving. Replicus couldn't maintain eye contact. He, instead, looked around him to see the details of where he was – the details of the Third Layer.

It was an odd, deep purple space littered with great, world-sized swirls of grey, black and red, almost innumerable in number. They looked perfectly still in the purple canvas, some close and some so distant that they hardly gave off the hue they should.

There was something else in addition to this bizarre view, however. It took Replicus by surprise, really.

It was a set of truly vast, shiny, silvery rings embossed with great runes that sparked with Ju`wtte, about nine in all, enclosing around a rather magnificent, colossal chair that looked like... like it was made of a material not unlike white chintz. It spun within the rings, while, around it, smaller versions of it, much less extravagant and clean-looking, followed along, orbiting around it.

The view was completed by a harsh halo that had been wrestling with Replicus' ability to see what he was looking at clearly.

"Enticed, are you?" the brilliant figure before Replicus said, a tone of annoyance livid in his voice.

"Intrigued, yes. Enticed, not quite. I don't really know what I'm looking at," Replicus said calmly, his vision settling on this being again. "I sense an unwelcoming tone here. What is it that I have done to offend you already?"

The brilliant figure gave Replicus a sharp look.

He noticed a note of sarcasm in his words. He didn't like it.

"Indeed, I'm not so keen on welcoming one who intends to succeed my Jan`ind while being so... lacking in nearly every aspect," he said. "This is a very sacred space, one greater than even his Treasury. As I see it, one such as you is yet to even deserve to take a whiff of the hallowed, ancient breath my Jan`ind left behind.

And I..." he gave a pause, a cold, satisfied smile creeping on his face, "...am allowed to send you below until you become someone I can learn to serve without needing to hear the crude rubbish bursting from your mouth."

There was a flick of a finger and in a blink, Replicus found himself floating in the Second Layer once again.

Chapter 1165: Warmoth's Treasury (1)

"Did I... did I just get kicked out?" Replicus said to himself, a dumbfounded look on his face.

It appeared so.

He had been evicted from the Third Layer on account of being... underwhelming. Apparently, he did not meet the bare minimum requirements for a successor of the Warmoth, even in terms of his presence for instance, which was handled by one of his racial skills that empowered the air he radiated. The state it was in, was abysmal according to the creature he had just faced.

Of course, Replicus wasn't at all fazed. He had already begun to doubt his current prowess as the Warmoth's Progeny since fighting Caxellac, noting that there was a great sense of disconnect

between his new arm configurations, his transition from Penetrator to Warmoth and his new weaponry – the Warmoth's Spine in particular. He had hardly used it.

He needed a lot more practise to synchronise and even understand how Ju`wtte fully worked. Replicus recalled that the evolutionary description for the Colossus Warmoth's Progeny explained many uses of Ju`wtte, most of which he had yet to even apply with his basic ejection of Ju`wtte with the Ju`wtta.

So, indeed, the fact that he was lacking was no surprise, but the means to overcome this dire sense of lacking was what he needed to find.

It was yet unclear how he was supposed to improve.

Short of meeting the Warmoth itself, he wasn't sure if he could learn enough in time to face Skullius confidently.

Replicus sighed and looked up as though hoping to catch a glimpse of the being who had so rudely rejected him.

'I'm unworthy of taking even a whiff of the air the Warmoth left behind, huh?' Replicus thought.

He wondered, what was that thing?

It appeared to be some kind of super Strawler, capable of speech and not so willing to submit to him like the others. It also addressed the Warmoth as Jan`ind, which Replicus assumed meant something akin to 'Master'.

'Well, I guess my hopes got the better of me. Should have known there are going to be a few hicks,' he thought and looked behind at his Strawlers who remained stationary, keen to hear his commands.

Replicus, seeing no reason to stay in the Empyrean Hatcher any longer, went down to the First Layer and exited through the great, black double doors.

He looked closely at the exterior of the building. The great, rectangular protrusions coming out of it, hoisting great mansions on their tops seemed completely disconnected from the three Layers inside.

Replicus wondered – with mild interest – what purpose they served, but then, with his mood having been soured by the rejection from the Third Layer, he quickly lost the drive to explore these things and the rest of the Empyrean Bosom right now.

Quite like his Unlimited, Yuyui and Baddan, Replicus had been drained mentally by the battles he had powered through today.

He had orchestrated the plan to isolate Em-Sul in order to retrieve the Harmonic Ember. He had then had to fight the Bishop and Warding Pride on his own.

Replicus had then participated in the battle across the Null Remnants, which had been extremely taxing as he had had to adjust to a new body, fight multiple different opponents and construct a multi-pronged plan to steadily learn a new concept and develop it rapidly in order to earn a victory.

Last, but certainly not least, the Warmoth's Progeny had had to fight the real Null Devil King.

The weight of the revelations he had just heard from Sause was also quite weighty on his mind..

'Yeah, I need something geared more towards a muscle-brain. Primal excitement,' Replicus said and he extracted a large, golden key.

He, along with the six Strawlers following after him streaked along the beautiful paved pathway of green-gold-glass, moving a decent distance away from the Empyrean Hatcher and then he pressed the golden key into the open space.

Ju`wtte flew in all directions wildly, though it didn't seem to cause any damage to the surroundings whatsoever unlike when it sprang forth in Aigas.

To Replicus' surprise, a colossal set of pristine white double doors, riddled with bold, dark writing appeared before him. They were quite the ones Replicus was used to in terms of dimensions. Instead of a pair of large eyes and tusks, however, they had two large copies of Replicus' Ju`wtta protruding from each door, crossing in the middle.

'Wow... ' Replicus thought.

He didn't even attempt to read what was written on the doors. Again, it was incomprehensible, obviously.

With a great groan, the doors opened and Replicus eagerly walked into the bright space that was teased between them.

The first thing he identified upon feeling a clear transition from the Empyrean Bosom, was the limited space.

The Treasury looked like an old, worn-out underground cavern made entirely out of rusting, yet dense metal.

Of course, it was by no means small by average standards, but when compared to where Replicus was coming from, it might as well have been a cupboard.

There were high, massive platforms which featured scraps of broken metallic objects and pools of molten material aglow because of the intense heat to the side. Replicus had to fly up to view these things. It was almost as though he'd entered the workshop of a massive being.

Above these tall platforms, on a wall, were a plethora of colossal tools lit with runes, looking to also be extremely worn but functional.

Nearly a thousand of these platforms with their heated material stretched forth on either side of the space. What came next was blocked by a partition that blocked Replicus' view.

Somehow, unlike the indifferent feeling he got from seeing these platforms, obviously meant for forging a slew of different artefacts, he felt a pulse of excitement for what he was about to see beyond the partition.

He quickly flew over, eager to see what came next.

It didn't disappoint.

A great hall, longer and smarter than where he was coming from stretched out before his eyes, spotting a plethora of shining and lustreless weapons, armours and artefacts of different kinds.

They were too many to count and each pulled on the eyes of the Progeny.

Where to start?

What to scrutinise first?

...

...

Replicus almost felt himself gulp audibly.

His eyes were quickly stolen by something shimmering at the very end of the hall, its size greater and its appearance way too complex and beautiful for common and even advanced minds.

Even a Deity would have been swallowed by the desire to claim this prize.

It appeared the legends echoing in the Null Verse were true.

There was indeed a treasure that the Warmoth possessed which was worth scouring for his belongings, his legacy, for millions of years!

Chapter 1166: Warmoth's Treasury (2)

The guidance field had revealed to Replicus that the Warmoth's three dimensions – those unlocked by the three keys – were known to some degree by the inhabitants of the Null Verse. It seemed that some, probably the Four Authorities, knew aspects of what was inside. The guidance field had mentioned that in one of these dimensions, there was a valiant armour that even the Four Authorities sought for.

This – and there was never reason to doubt it – was obviously true.

The Warmoth's Progeny was looking at this highly sought after armour right now.

Its size was immense.

The armour sat over a massive stool of dark metal, leaning against the wall at the end of the exhibition hall.

Replicus was forced to take a breath.

He had no words.

Without thinking, he used the Warmoth's Spine – which had been in his upper hand all this time, 'sheathed' – to increase his size so that he wouldn't need to feel so minuscule in this gigantic space.

It also helped him appreciate the masterpiece in front of him in a way different light to just a few seconds.

The only words that could finely describe the armour, were that it embodied both a humanoid shape and an inhuman one.

There was nothing else one could say that could explain its entire likeness very well.

Perhaps, one could reference the chilling darkness leaking from the visor on its helm, and the creepy, foam-like darkness shrouding it like soapsuds.

Replicus found that it was this darkness that caused the fibres of his existence to tremble as much as they did right now.

Serenity confirmed it as well.

"Be careful with your approach. Some of the greatest treasures from the Null Verse are extremely hostile to anyone but their owner. I'm sure you are aware of how magical objects can develop consciousnesses. That concept becomes especially treacherous with the grades of artefacts of this level," she warned.

The Warmoth's Progeny didn't offer a direct gesture to show that he had heard her. He merely gave another deep breath of appreciation.



His eyes remained glued on the treasure.

He could feel an immense sense of greed creeping within him.

He used the guidance field to check it immediately.

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[???

-???

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A nervous chuckle came from Replicus as he saw this.

Of course.

An item like this, desired by beings that were on par with Deities – the Four Authorities – it couldn't possibly be measured with the same criteria for mortal artefacts. It was way higher in league.

Replicus couldn't see its name and description either, a fact that pronounced additional feats of lacking in his overall power as well. This turned a bit sullen.

This reminded Replicus of the External Fragment of Realised Choices which he used to create Maximum Catalyst. It had refused to be appraised, choosing instead to introduce itself to him.

'Well...' Replicus said, frowning.

It seemed rising in strength in Aigas was inconsequential in the grand scheme of things.

The Warmoth's successor walked through the middle of the hall and did his best to finally tear his eyes from the armour and start looking at the other treasures displayed on both his sides.

Not all of them were huge. Some were small, some impressive-looking and others otherwise. Others bore familiar shapes, others ones he couldn't even begin to explain.

Strangely, quite like the scrolls on the Second Layer, the displays began from the bottom of the walls and rose up the high ceiling, and the higher one looked, the fiercer the presence he sensed from the items he saw. For the ones placed at the topmost rows, Replicus didn't even have to rely on his senses.

He saw faint or bold smoke-like, aura-like colours rising from them, affecting the space around them.

The Warmoth's Progeny used the guidance field to check some of their names, grades and descriptions.

Most reacted the same way as the grand armour at the end of the hall, refusing to be appraised.

There were few, however, whose names appeared, along with portions of their descriptions, but never their grades.

Replicus clicked his tongue.

'Do you mean to tell me that all these things are beyond the Transcendent grade?' he asked himself in shock.

"Not necessarily," Serenity answered his thoughts. 'I believe most treasures at that level are uncomfortable being prodded and judged. They may simply reject to be appraised depending on how powerful and self-aware they are. This self-awareness can be brought about by the one who forged them. In this case, well...The same is true for living things.'

You just haven't met individuals who can actively resist being appraised yet."

'Really?' Replicus asked. He was astonished that this was a thing. 'Wait... Do you mean the Warmoth was aware of the Voice of Worlds and the guidance field?'

"Yes. It wouldn't be surprising. I'm quite sure that there are beings recognised by the Voice of Worlds on Aigas as well, but who just aren't bearers like you. Recognition by the Voice of Worlds isn't as rare a thing as you might think and it doesn't always come with a guidance field."

...

"I see..."

It appeared Replicus never quite understood the full functionality of the Voice of Worlds. Could anyone blame him though?

The wider reality outside of Aigas was rather convoluted and complex.

Replicus stroked his chin as he stopped and stared at a kite shield with four intricate jewels branded to its centre. It was made from a material similar to that which formed the paved pathway in the Emyrean Bosom.

He then turned to a black scimitar with a milky-white edge; a canary-yellow horned-helmet that produced a subdued hissing noise; a pair of serpent-shaped greaves with Ju`wte crackling from their soles; a full set of armour that was open at the chest, as though inviting attacks upon its user; what looked like a cherry-coloured cloak with half a hood.

There was great variety in shapes and designs, but Replicus remembered Serenity's words and refrained from getting too intimate with the items just yet.

It could be dangerous.

The temptation remained, though. Replicus soon found himself once again looking at the armour at the end of the hall.

He had travelled up to two thirds of the way to it by this point. He wanted to get closer and inspect it some more without touching it.

But...

"Stay... away..." a voice hissed softly.

Replicus shook.

He knew at once.

It was the armour speaking.

"Stay... away... Jan`ind..." it said. "First... you must become HIS echo... Stay away..."

Chapter 1167: Timemould Mirror Box (1)

"Stay... away... Jan`ind..." it said. "First... you must become HIS echo... Stay away..."

Replicus was perplexed and he immediately stopped moving.

He had expected that at least half of the artefacts in this hall had a voice and a consciousness, and it was obvious that the mysterious armour in front of him had to have the strongest and most keen of all, but he did not think that he would be warned against drawing closer to it even when he didn't have the intention of touching it.

"Stay... where you are..." the voice came again, much deeper and even more commanding. "First... become HIS echo... Then... you may approach."

Replicus couldn't go any further.

Besides the verbal warning, he felt and saw the brimming of the dark bubbles, like soapsuds frothing from the armour get even more intense, hissing dangerously in response to his presence. He took a step back, unsure of what could happen.

It appeared he was being threatened rather than warned, and he had every reason to believe that the armour would harm him if he didn't heed.

'It's calling me what that super Strawler was calling the Warmoth...' Replicus thought.

Unlike the being he had met on the Third Layer of the Emyrean Hatcher, the armour at least recognised him as the successor of the Warmoth, and despite its threat, it showed its recognition by telling Replicus how exactly to move forward. Well, it gave a clue.

'Become his echo?' Replicus thought.

What could this mean?

...!

Replicus eyes suddenly widened. His phantoms had hurriedly combed through his entire arsenal of abilities and produced a theory that seemed to spell out the meaning of the grand armour's words.

"Yes! We have a plethora of skills, you know! We have one called [Bloodline Awakening: Warmoth's Return], remember? It's an odd sort of skill. It must have ties to the Warmoth's Spine."

"That's right. The Spine itself is only a Pseudo-Transcendent grade artefact, but since it's a Fond Calamity, it has a release state – an awakening of sorts that we are still not able to use yet. I believe while in that state, it's actually something that's beyond the Transcendent grade."

"I recall that. Then... could [Bloodline Awakening: Warmoth's Return] actually be a skill that can only be used after we figure out how to use the Spine or vice versa?"

As it appeared, Replicus hadn't bothered with using [Bloodline Awakening: Warmoth's Return] because it was an unusable skill at the moment.

~~~

[Bloodline Awakening: Warmoth's Return (Supreme) | Lv.1]

???

[Locked]

~~~

Even though Replicus had managed to refine two of his cores into the gold quality – the highest quality core there was in Aigas – which was the only way to active the strongest brand of skills – Supreme skills – the skill remained locked. He couldn't use it yet.

However, his Warmoth's Spine had a similar restriction preventing him accessing its full state.

During his fight with Caxellac, Replicus recalled the Null Devil King attempting to release his Fond Calamity, the Bastard Sword of the Hedonist, but he had managed to interrupt him. All Fond Calamity weapons had a release state which bolstered their powers, and Replicus was sure that the Warmoth's Spine was similar, only.

The key to doing so was likely how he could get access to [Bloodline Awakening: Warmoth's Return], or it could be the other way around – it was nearly impossible to know.

In any case, this is what he and his phantoms deciphered from the grand armour at the end of the hall when it said, "Become HIS echo."

If [Bloodline Awakening: Warmoth's Return] allowed Replicus to actually become the Colossus Warmoth...

'But... does that mean the only way to become strong enough to be recognised by that Strawler and this armour is to become exactly like the Warmoth? To become its second coming?' Replicus wondered.

The idea didn't sit right with him.

He looked at the grand armour again, watching the darkness almost spilling from its visor.

How would this be any different from when he, as Skullius, inherited the powers of the Insurgent Magnus and Fulgardt's will – the very reason he was having to fight his original body?

Would the Warmoth take him over?

Would he be forced to follow in its footsteps?

'No. I can't make that mistake again...' Replicus thought as he imagined a particular feeling.

Fulfilment...

He recalled how Allora died, without so much as a regret written on her face.

Replicus wasn't content merely becoming a copycat of the Warmoth.

He wanted his own fulfilling way of growth.

He was already different in appearance to the Warmoth – he imagined – so why should he carry himself the same? He was supposed to be the Progeny, not the clone.

'Caxellac adored the Warmoth and wanted to create a dying legacy for himself that would be remembered in the same way the Warmoth was – as this mysterious behemoth that wormed in and out of worlds as he pleased and without leaving a trace. I don't want to follow the same path,' he thought, still staring at the beautiful armour.

'If that means I won't get recognised by the Warmoth's treasures and servants, that's fine. I already have my own loyal subordinates after all, and I can create my own treasures now.'

A smile bloomed on Replicus' face.

Sure, he was far from being as strong as the Warmoth, but he could become so in his own way.

He had the creature's powers. He just had to revamp them and mix them with his own inventions.

Replicus turned and walked out of the hall.

He gazed with a twinge of longing towards some of the treasures. He could probably take some of them when he got strong enough.

As he reached the partition dividing the display hall and the forging hall, he couldn't help but think that there was no way this was all there was to the Warmoth's Treasury.

Sure, there were thousands of powerful weapons including the fabled great armour, but still...

That was it?

He stood at the partition and frowned.

There was no way this was all there was.

But it really looked this was all there was to it.

What else could there be?

Replicus retrieved the gold key and was about to use it to create an exit when his eyes met the floor.

"Hmmm?"

There was a large – even when compared to his increased size – hexagonal shape on it right in the middle of the partition. It was in the form of a groove that was easy to miss, if one's attention was stolen by something grander, as was what had happened to Replicus when he moved from the forging hall to the display hall.

"What is this?" Replicus said to himself.

He crouched down and touched the grooves.

The moment he did, Ju`wtte flew out from under the sleeves of his robes where the Ju`wtta were hidden and traced along the hexagonal shape with vibrant yellowish-red!

The floor then seemed to vanish from under Replicus' feet and before he knew it...

Chapter 1168: Timemould Mirror Box (2)



Replicus felt the floor disappear beneath his feet and before he knew it, he was devoured by a boundless darkness.

He hadn't expected what had followed the ejection of Ju`wtte from his Ju`wtta, and despite knowing that it couldn't be an attack, Replicus had still gotten wary enough to summon both the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow and the porous wheel of purple-gold that allowed him to use Maximum Catalyst on external targets.

Contrary to his expectations of an unfathomable depth, however, Replicus landed on solid ground only a few seconds later. There was still a broad darkness that refused to be breached by his enhanced vision – which reminded him of the interior of the Sovereign's Peak – and he couldn't see anything.

However...

BAH!

A great noise echoed and flash of light from above illuminated the room, then another and another...

As far as Replicus could see, lights exploded forth from the very, very high ceiling and lit up the seemingly infinite space ahead of him, which, quite like the two halls he had just visited was made of dull, dark metal.

What was this place?

There was no answer as of yet.

There wasn't anything of note to point to. It was just a vast, empty space.

Replicus had been wondering about this before, but now he found it bizarre.

Usually, when interacting with mysterious entities, the guidance field alerted him in some way, but it was different ever since he began his trips into the Warmoth's estate.

The only time he had gotten a notification about anything was when he had learned new skills from the Second Layer of the Empyrean Hatcher.

It was odd.

Was the VOW unaware of the elements hidden here?

No. That seemed unlikely.

Perhaps it was simply the fact that, as Serenity had said, some treasures could refuse appraisal – which meant rejecting the influence of the guidance field – because of the power wielded by their creator.

Perhaps the Warmoth had VOW's influence here limited. He certainly seemed to be strong enough to do that.

Replicus didn't know how Deities judged their strength above that of others, but if the Warmoth's prowess was to be judged – with reference to Caxellac's as a base – he was likely in a league of his own.

"What's so special about this place? Is there some kind of way to bring out its properties... or do I not qualify to even see what it can do?" Replicus said sulkily.

He paced forth, looking for any detail that could reveal to him the mysteries of this room or even its name.

There were none. None at all.

All there was, was a strange feeling of emptiness and disconnection. As Replicus continued to walk ahead, he felt this strange feeling creep into him and make him feel as though... as though he didn't belong anywhere.

It was an odd sort of sensation – an exaggerated feeling of loss.

'Why does this feel so familiar?' Replicus thought, frowning.

He had had a recent encounter with this feeling. Very recent indeed.

He had felt as though he was disconnected to the wider reality, as though he was drifting without destination in an odd, dark vacuum.

...!

A moment later, a phantom of his made him recall when he had felt this.

"It's when Caxellac destroyed the Rules, Prime! He destroyed space, gravity and time. This was how we felt back then. There doesn't seem to be time here. Or rather... it's sort of... jumbled perhaps?"

"That's right," Replicus said to himself, his hand scratching his face.

Right.

So time was compromised in this place?

But... what for?

Replicus suddenly stopped and looked at the floor.

"Everything in these places seems to have traces of Ju`wtte. Ju`wtte seems to answer most of the questions here. Perhaps..." he said and sent a string of Ju`wtte into the floor.

As soon as the yellowish-red strip touched the cold, metallic floor, the room seemed to groan with life.

A portion of the ground flipped and before he knew it, Replicus was looking at a pair of simple sets of silver armour.

"The flesh?"

He looked at them with a great bit of suspicion.

"What are these for?" Replicus said.

He couldn't feel any kind of super complex power wafting from the armour sets like those in the hall, but there was something... something ominous about them. It seemed as though these two sets of armour were moments away from lunging at him with the intent to kill.

After a few minutes of scrutinising and contemplation, Replicus shrugged and sent Ju`wtte flowing into one of the armour sets.

"Since it's how everything seems to work here..." Replicus began when...

...!!!

The armour set suddenly grew as tall as he was, sprouted four arms and obtained a smooth ceramic texture that was tinged with yellowish-red Ju`wtte within!

A terrifying presence sprang out of the armour... which now looked exactly like an uninjured Replicus!

At once, the earlier feeling the armour had given him prompted Replicus to prepare for battle, but the armour set – now having donned his appearance – remained still.

"What in the world is this?" Replicus said after realising he was safe still. "Is this some kind of... training room?"

Replicus walked up to the replica and analysed it closely.

"Do you communicate instructions using Ju`wtte in all these spaces?"

That seemed to be the case.

The Empyrean Hatcher was pretty much the same.

"But how do you give concise instructions?" Replicus said.

With squinted eyes, he sent another string of Ju`wte into the replica after – as he thought he had – infusing his will.

The instant the Ju`wte met the morphed armour set, a voice no different from Replicus' sprang from its mouth.

"I accept the challenge, sockethole!"

...!!!

Before Replicus could gasp and ask, "Who are you calling a sockethole?" a stream of Ju`wte thin as wire smashed into his chest and sent him streaking into the far distance!

Replicus groaned as he flew, but he felt Ju`wte streak behind him along with the figure of the replica of him and it created a staff of Ju`wte that it used to ruthlessly slam into his back, sending him flying up into the high ceiling!

The Warmoth's Progeny was in disbelief.

He was getting his vague ass handed to him by... him?!

"This has to stop!" he thought.

With his free hand, he sent a string of Ju`wte flying into ceiling with his intent – despite not knowing if this would work – and the lights within the massive space flickered for a split second.

At once, the enemy Replicus returned to being a casual, simple silver armour set and fell gracefully to the floor where it stood on its feet and became still.

Replicus sighed.

"It worked," he said as he landed. "As long as I infuse what I want with Ju`wte and send it into the room, it will cooperate. That's handy."

Replicus gave a cautious look to the set of armour that had just attacked him. It really wasn't moving anymore.

Good.

"Now, what's with the time here? How does it work?" he asked as he sent another burst of Ju`wte flowing into the room.

Without a moment wasted, Ju`wte sprang forth from the walls and formed, in front of the Warmoth's Progeny, strings of writing in a complex language.

Thankfully, this wasn't anything like the writing on the doors leading into the Treasury and thus, like most communication models Null-related, Replicus didn't have a problem comprehending it.

It read:

Current Adjustment –

None

--

Available adjustments and repercussions –

1 day : 2 day

No repercussions

-

1 day : 1 week

In exchange, user(s) will be detained in the Timemould Mirror Box for 25 hours.

-

1 day : 1 month

In exchange, user(s) will be detained in the Timemould Mirror Box for 50 hours.

-

1 day : 1 year

In exchange, user(s) will be detained in the Timemould Mirror Box for 100 hours.

...

...!!!

Chapter 1169: Timemould Mirror Box (3)

Three hours later.

One by one figures accompanied by Strawlers popped into the vast, endless-seeming space while gaping and marvelling.

Yuyui, Bassbion, Yagrina, Pherdanta, her brother, Baddan and Grim had been dragged away from their collections of paradise at Replicus' command and now they found themselves faced with his massive form as he looked at a menagerie of suits of armour and odd tools.

Upon sensing their rather silent arrival, Replicus turned and transformed back into his original size, his free hand scratching his face.

He had sent the Strawlers that had been following him to bring his people here. To his delight, he had found that he could give the Strawlers his keys, delegating the duty which he hadn't been so keen on doing himself.

Perhaps the regular Strawlers were considered extensions of him, or perhaps, the Warmoth's powers in general, progeny or otherwise.

"Woow. Boss... what is this place?" Grim said while tightening the strap around his robes, an excited look on his face.

"It's quite bright," Pherdanta said, squinting at the sources of light way overhead.

"Brrrr. What's this strange feeling I just got?" Yuyui said while shivering and going pale. Baddan's thick fur quivered, exposing the fact that he felt the same sensation as her.

"This is the Timemould Mirror Box. It's a kind of like a simulation space with multiple uses," Replicus said, much to the surprise of his audience.

"Simulation space?" Yagrina asked.

"Yes. That's the best way I can explain it," Replicus said with a nod and marched up to one of the thirty-six silver suits of armour he had manifested over the last few hours. "This place allows us to surpass our limits by mirroring ourselves onto the objects that can be found here. Primarily, we can have these suits of armour to copy our appearances, abilities and even our minds. Perfect replicas."

The group oohed at Replicus' explanation and the Warmoth's Progeny, keen to explain his findings – as he had been actively abusing this place – moved towards what looked like a large, wooden block with cube-shaped grooves in it which he had caused to manifest from the room.

"We can even imbue certain bits of our abilities onto these objects and test out their theoretical limits. I have been trying to see how far I can push this trait with my own powers and so far... there doesn't seem to be a limit," Replicus said.

"No way..." Grim said and he rushed towards one of the suits of armour and looked at it intently.



Recognising that the idiot expected the armour to immediately don his appearance, Replicus sent a stream of Ju`wtte into the armour and it leapt to life, attaining Grim's rising white hair and vibrant red eyes. It even wore his robes.

"Wow! It's me!" Grim said with a wide grin.

He immediately began poking and prodding the replica while muttering things like "It's got the right skin texture" and "I can feel its well-defined muscles! Well, my well-defined muscles!"

Replicus shook his head and sent Ju`wtte streaking into the other suits of armour which immediately began taking on the others' appearances.

Yagrina and Bassbion were startled by how they were, once again, not excluded from the experience. Their replicas were also Spirits, donning the same kinds of armour they did!

"How is this even possible? I've never seen anything copy the likeness of a Spirit before. We only reside in the Yormuness and nowhere else," Bassbion said moreso to her replica, which gazed ahead without a particular expression than to anyone else.

Baddan seemed to admire the look of his own replica which adopted the ceremonial attire he refused to substitute for better armour.

Replicus was pleased by everyone's reactions.

"Funny enough, there's technically no limit to the number of replicas that can be made even for one individual. I was quite startled when I realised that each of these replicas can actually grow the same way we can in combat – like they are linked to our future paths or something.

Emotion, determination, resolve, if I will it, I can give it all to them and they could be ten thousand Pherdantas marching around."

...!!!

As Replicus expected, this information floored everyone.

No limit to the replicas created?

The replicas could grow just like their original?

But...

"Boss... boss are you serious? You're telling me I could fight ten thousand of myself if I wanted to here?" Grim asked with a bizarre look of fear, as though he had just imagined that particular scene.

"Yes. And they all wouldn't be stagnant. The more you overcome them, they'd grow and learn both from how you are developing and how they themselves recall past events and all."

"But... that's unnatural, I have to say," Yagrina, who was usually reserved with her reactions said. "That's only something I'd expect from—"

"A Deity? Yeah. I know. The one who made this place stands in the same tier as Deities if not higher," Replicus said, and breathed out a sigh. "And that's why this place is also equipped with a twisted essence of time. In here, I can control time to a degree – make it so less time passes in here than on Aigas and vice versa."

...!!!

Yuyui clapped her hands onto her mouth and the two spirits shook. Baddan and Grim looked made Os with their mouths.

"Time..." Pherdanta said in a quiet voice and she looked at Replicus as though she were seeing him for the first time.

To think...

To think her master had achieved such a level of power now that he could control time...

"Of course, this kind of power only works in here," Replicus said before anyone started bombarding him with questions. "Everything I described is limited to the Timemould Mirror Box. Also, when it

comes to warping to time – if I want to make it so that one day outside is equal to a month here, for instance" – there were gasps of surprise – "there are repercussions.

After warping time, everyone who has used this place will have to remain here for a set amount of time in exchange. At first, I thought it was mere punishment or something to balance out the absurd benefit, kind of like a Creed, but I realised its actually for our own benefit – well, beings who aren't quite as strong as the one who built this place.

Messing with time to absurd degrees can cause harm to the body and soul if we are immediately introduced to a different flow of time. The detainment afterwards helps our bodies slowly adjust."

Indeed, this was what Replicus had discovered in his hours of looking into everything to do with the room.

Thankfully, the Ju`wtte writing he had seen earlier could be manifested to explain a lot of things concerning the Timemould Mirror Box, and that was how he had gotten to know a lot about how place.

When it came to time, the upper limit – Replicus wasn't sure if this was the limit of the Box or his limit – was making it so that a day in Aigas was equivalent to four years in the Box or vice versa. The lower limit was doubling the value of a day between the two places.

The repercussions of the former were monstrous and the latter did not have any at all.

As for the other elements within the Box, they were just as Replicus had explained, though, how they were all possible were beyond him. He was still reeling from the fact that he could actually manifest a replica of himself with all his skills, memories and personality and could hit just as hard as he could.

It was rather wild.

But that wildness was exactly why Replicus was excited.

Chapter 1170: Exciting Prospects In Twisted Time!

"I have devised a plan on how we going to use this room to our advantage. Your Tasks, Trials, skills and cores, we are going to fine-tune them to their limit here. This place can show you your limits and exactly how you can overcome said limits. Nothing is as enlightening as watching a version of you use your current arsenal to do things you've only ever dreamed of, after all," Replicus said.

His words and the matter of replicating living beings did, however, carry some degree of irony considering that, indeed, he himself was going to be joining in on the training he had devised in the last few hours in order to learn how exactly he was going to win against Skullius.

Serenity had knowledge about Skullius' new moves and powers, so creating a replica with that kind of knowledge wasn't going to be difficult.

"Some of the limitations I had have been removed, so in addition to what this place has to offer, I'm going to be adding to your move sets as well. We'll find ways to complement your current abilities and enhance them," he said.

Baddan was the first to react to this. He had been the latest individual in receiving an ability from Replicus.

"I thought you couldn't give abilities so freely, boss," Grim said with a bit of sulking voice. "I remember I told you I wanted that skill which would allow me to sq—"

"I know," Replicus cut off Grim. "I'm able to do so now."

"Really?" Pherdanta said with a look of disbelief, albeit one which paled in comparison to the one she had worn just moments before. "The whole reason you made the Granted Armament armour series was because you couldn't grant abilities like Aggrante and Granted Restoration to our bodies. How did you discover a way to circumvent what stopped you from being able to do so?"

Replicus looked at Baddan.

He had been able to give the Sky Watcher the Incarnation of the Six Wild Exigencies technique because several factors aligned.

One, Replicus, through experimenting with newborn creatures, had realised that he could use [Wealth of Spoils] – a skill that gave and took away skills and even stats from inanimate objects – to grant living creatures skills by having them absorb the skills through their brains while they were still developing. This wasn't as foolproof as he would wanted, but it worked to a degree.

In Baddan's case, Replicus had conjured the six beast he used for the technique and made them manifest in Baddan's mind. Baddan had had to battle the creatures and win their loyalty, which would allow him to summon them at will.

This tied into the second reason Replicus had been able to grant Baddan the unique technique. It was the fact that the way the beasts were summoned lined up with the abilities Baddan had possessed before – using clouds as a medium to conjure different kinds of creatures. Thus, it wasn't really that hard for him learn to summon the Null beasts that he had now won over.

Now, however...

"It's a bit long-winded," Replicus said. "Someone revealed to me how I could give abilities. Two individuals, actually. It's simple. All I need to do is reach out to the soul of the individual I want to give abilities to."

Pherdanta, Grim and Baddan's eyes shot up.

"The soul?" Yuyui said in surprise, and immediately, she thought about the masked man, Actuass.

Her inference wasn't wrong.

It was because of Actuass that Replicus managed to acquire abilities that allowed him to sense and protect his soul, but it was Serenity who helped him see that he could use his new awareness of the soul for far more than he had initially imagined.

"On top of this," Replicus said, "I have another ability that can allow me to directly enhance other aspects of you that aren't skills."

While everyone looked at him, confused at what he could possibly mean, Replicus smiled.

[Unbound] was now capable of affecting other living individuals – a product of him reaching the Fourth Tier!

Just like him, Replicus could use [Unbound] on their individual stats, mutating them into more... unusual forms!

The Warmoth's Progeny was eagerly awaiting what would be born in his subordinates.

However, before all that, he had to address something... someone...

He looked at Pherdanta's brother.

"I suppose I can't ignore you any longer. I'm giving you only one choice and this is all for Pherdanta's sake. I have no qualms with having you join us, but I will need a certain degree of assurance that you really are on our side now," he said while watching the young, pale man with blonde hair and wide-set brown eyes beside Pherdanta.

His eyes trembled at Replicus' stare but he didn't respond.

"I killed her, you know?" Replicus said and the young man quickly looked up. "Warding Pride died by my hands, and it wasn't pretty. You can either learn to live with that or you can walk."

The young man, after flaring his nostrils at Replicus' confession, gave Pherdanta, who was glaring down at him a dark look and then he gritted his teeth.

His eyes were turning bloodshot.

"Heh, I see. She really despised you. I'm sure she felt the same even until the end. I would never betray her feelings. I'd rather carry on bearing the hatred she had for you," he hissed at Replicus and once again turned to Pherdanta. "Say what you will about her, but she cared for her subordinates.

She even cared for you back when you and brother were loyal. That's why I'm alive right now."

Replicus scoffed.

Well, there was his answer.

He hadn't actually expected this outcome. Despite what the blonde young man had seen, he was still not going to keel over to Replicus' might and offer his servitude, it seemed.

In a way, that was commendable.

"Well then..." Replicus began.

"You're wrong," Pherdanta suddenly interjected, her body flashing white with mana. "You're alive right now ONLY because master desires it. Now, however..."

Pherdanta's hand swung elegantly across her brother's neck and in the next second, his head dropped to the floor.

Without giving the corpse a second look or thought, Pherdanta gave a stern look to Replicus.

"I meant it before, when I said I didn't care for his fate. I am proud of where I am and what I have become. I don't need anything else to wear me, and in turn, you, down," she said with a voice so resolute that Bassbion gave a whistle.

Replicus smiled.

"I never doubted it," he said and he flicked his finger, the body of Pherdanta's brother disappearing in the next instant. "Now that that's sorted, let's get started. But of course, there's one more thing..."

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Deign.

Kenno, looking exhausted but unharmed, gave a deep breath.

The large red stork by his side scoffed.

"Why do you look as though you've been fighting for several days straight?" it said.

"Because I have, Timmit. And I must say, thanks for your help in clearing literal hundreds of enemies trying to get a foothold over OUR island," Kenno said sarcastically.

"Hmph! I saw you set up barriers and all. I imagined you'd be able to fend for yourselves against those... those... what do you call them?" the stork said.

"Factions?"

"Exactly! Factions!" Timmit said while flapping his wings and jumping repeatedly. The trees around them swayed from the force of his flaps. "If the pressure was that immense, why did Bright Storm leave you alone with protecting this place?"

Kenno looked at the sky which was partly vignetted by treetops in his vision.

"Because he trusts me and my strength. I desperately wanted to meet those high expectations. I think I'm doing a pretty damn good job."

"Pat yourself on the back, will you?" Timmit scoffed again. "When will that ba—"

It never became clear what Timmit had been about to ask because the island suddenly shook at the same time a set of impossibly vast doors appeared. The doors opened wide with an ear-splitting groan, a burst of radiant light gushing from them.

...!

Kenno and Timmit were alarmed. They grew tense and set to see what was going on, but the island of Deign suddenly jerked, pulled in the direction of the doors.

As though all this wasn't enough to strike the Unlimited and the beast guardian aghast, hundreds, no, thousands of cracks in space – Clusters – suffused with different colours, flew from all around them, hurtling towards the bright light issuing from the open doors.

A few moments later, the great doors were gone... along with the island that had once stood on the fresh waters as a base for a mighty Faction.