

## Undead 1181

### Chapter 1181: Boron's Rise (2)

For what felt like an eternity, long after the world stopped quaking, there was a deafening silence as the two Deities, both inhabiting vessels, stared intently at each other. There was a greedy desire exploding unseen between them. Both seemed content simply drinking the other's presence, however hidden it was by the suits of mortals.

It was only when a quarter of an hour passed that Boron drew closer to Suzamete, and his massive hand was extended towards her.

Gracefully, Suzamete floated onto his palm and sat on it without breaking her gaze on him.

<I thought you would be a lot more furious with me?>

Her voice wasn't quite as profound as Boron's but it was clear and unnatural still.

<With you? No, my dearest. My rage is only for our companions; for what they decided. You couldn't have done anything against them if you tried. Not back then. The current you, however, is certainly a lot more competent... I think.>

Suzamete wore a smile and then broke into a fit of laughter.

<I'm glad to hear it – both your praise and your understanding, that is. I never would have imagined that is the first thing you'd say to me.>

Boron gave an amused sigh. Suzamete hugged her legs.

<I've had enough time to grow since they left. Perhaps I've grown more than even I realise. But still... this world has been difficult to manage on my own.>

<I can only dream of the hardship. My own confined prison cannot even be compared to all you've had to handle up here; all THEIR business.> Boron did a sweep of the world as he spoke.  
<Cowards, those two. They were so determined to run from me that they left you with all of this?>

Suzamete gave a weak laugh.

<You know that's not true, my love. Not entirely anyway.>

<What did they hope to achieve by leaving you alone here? Did they think that would change how I feel about this world? That I wouldn't unleash my children on Aigas still?>

Suzamete's visage grew stiff.

A crude, dull light in her eyes immediately displayed her conflicting thoughts.

Boron noticed.

<I haven't repented of my fury at all, my dearest. I will destroy every mark they have made in the void. Every single one. I am sorry. Not even you can and should stop me.>

There was a finality in Boron's tone that startled Suzamete. She had thought... she had hoped... but...

The unwavering gaze in Boron's dark eyes made sure she understood that there was no compromise. Not when it came to the fates of Quintess and Listafelle.

Fearing further discussion on the subject, Suzamete said:

<I finally met my son. He found a way here>

Boron's simmering wrath seemed to vanish at the words. It was the last thing he had expected to hear from Suzamete.

Unlike his three companions, Boron couldn't see anything that happened in Aigas. He couldn't see its future or past as he wished because he hadn't helped to create it.

He asked:

<You did? How did it go?>

Suzamete sighed and her eyes tore into the blameless sky.

<I knew from the moment he arrived here on Aigas that there was no redeeming our relationship. Nothing I said or did would justify how I left him on Faaminl to pursue my goal... our goal, in kind. If I told him I had no choice, he would have argued that I could have brought him along. That is valid. I was impatient. I didn't want him to weigh me down.

I feared dying early because of him. If I gave the excuse that I always knew he would follow and carve his own path, he would have called out my lie. I left him thinking... knowing that he would likely die. Well, but he didn't. Some mother that makes me. The weight of these powers I fought so hard to obtain has overshadowed more of me than I thought it would.>

Boron listened without a word. After a pause persisted, he then said:

<Well, the burden of realms beyond simple Divinity only show themselves in their fullness after you have reached them. That is something we can only live with.> He paused to survey Suzamete's bitter face. <What did you do with the boy?>

Suzamete gave a sorrow chuckle.

<Nothing. I allowed him his whims. I permitted him to commit atrocities. I allowed him to reach me one final time. I looked him in the eye and told him things I didn't fully believe, just like a Deity would. Then... I used the scars he left on Aigas to fulfil my duty.>

Suzamete would given a loud, self-deprecating laugh if she could.

Indeed, she had humoured Actuass' atrocities and used them to Aigas' benefit.

Actuass had split the world with Brunt Divide in an effort to split apart Suzamete's power. While this didn't destroy the world, eventually, it would have. Suzamete hadn't made an effort to fix this as soon as possible because she had known it would come in handy.

A stronger enemy than Actuass had risen after all, the Null Devil King, Caxellac.

Using his Serene Grace, he had wiped out the Rules around him, dismantling Edagon and a vast chunk of the ebony sea. This effect would have spilled over to even Feinheath and Opungale if it weren't for the division Actuass had made. Mors Serene Grace had been restricted to the northern portion of Aigas.

Suzamete's power to directly influence events on Aigas was much more limited than that of Quintess and Listafelle. She couldn't have used a vessel as frail as the one she was using now to defeat Caxellac. Replicus' presence had been liberating. Only after he beat Caxellac did she destroy the Rules he had damaged and repair the split world.

Boron nodded with what might have been sympathy.

<You were brave, my dearest. Acting accordingly in the situation you were in marks you as a true Deity. I am proud. Killing off the past is a strength many look down upon. You did well to move forward.>

Suzamete gave a sad smile.

<Yeah.>

A few more minutes passed in silence.

<If there isn't anything else you care for on this world, it should make what needs to be done easier. I cannot wait any longer. Allow me to do what I need to do and then you and I can start anew elsewhere.>

Suzamete gave Boron an odd look. Something was hidden in her eyes – desperation.

She stood up.

<Can you hold off for a little while?>

<Why?> Boron asked suspiciously.

Suzamete looked below.

<I'm sure you will appreciate this after having been locked in the Under for so long without a more... fulfilling source of entertainment.>

<Hmmm?> Boron was confused.

A shallow smile appeared on Suzamete's face.

<What might as well be the greatest battle to ever grace the surface of Aigas is about to take place. At least, let it be etched onto this world before you have your way with it. Let's watch together. I give you my word... how it ends will be even more spectacular.>

Chapter 1182: First Offensive

Two days later...

Agmold.

At the top of the headrest of a great throne in the throne room, a small, ordinary-looking bird looked dazedly ahead, where the majestic double doors leading into the king's stronghold stood proud. The bird wasn't, however, enthralled by the graceful designs of these mundane structures. Its vision, excitement, apprehension and eagerness were stolen by something else, something far.

To think Asthon was about to witness it...

"You...you still haven't told me anything about that trembling from two days ago! It was worse than last time!" King Royan who was seated on the throne below the ordinary-looking bird said with a nervous quiver. "We just barely managed to repel those black creatures before! What is happening now?! Why hasn't the Purity sent someone to explain anything to me? Where are the Houses?"

Will I... Will we be safe? Can you truly defend us still?"

King Royan looked nauseous with fear. He both pleaded and demanded from Asthon, the Truworth Bill, reassurance that even with a crisis as great as this, he would keep true to his promise and defend the king and his family.

Every other time King Royan had asked, Asthon had always responded positively. However...

"Silence!"

A powerful voice boomed from Asthon's tiny beak.

King Royan shook, nearly falling off his throne.

Asthon said no more than that.

This time, he couldn't answer Royan's concerns, not because he had measured and seen that he could not, in fact, protect Royan from the descent, rather, rise, of a Deity, but because he was too busy feeding his anticipation.

IT was already beginning and he didn't want any disturbances.

\*\*\*

Ashema floated high up in the sky.

His one good eye gleamed with a furious excitement and he couldn't stop himself from fidgeting awkwardly.

While it was true that a ferocious amount of power had been bubbling within him madly since Lord Boron had risen two days ago, it couldn't have been the reason behind his exhilaration.

Though the change in the status quo had been clear to all when the world trembled, made all the more clear by how Ashema's body changed, growing larger and stronger in a manner of seconds, Skullius had been unbothered, quite unlike Azila, Soidon and Erlton.

The Carven remembered how Skullius had languidly turned in his direction when his body grew, his blood powers becoming unfathomably more potent, only to raise a brow and say:

"So, it's time? You look better human-sized."

This hadn't shaken Ashema at all.

He had grown used to how eerily confident Skullius always was no matter the adversity he was presented with. Even the coming of the Boron didn't faze him, apparently.

Ashema had laughed. His intrigue in Skullius grew in that moment, but it peaked when Skullius had given his signature daring, blank look again and said:

"Surely you aren't going to miss what's about to happen. I thought you'd accompany me for just a little bit longer."

And this was why the Carven was here, in the skies, chugging the blood in his gourd and looking down expectantly at Skullius who sat on the dry ground in the clearing within the Tremur Forest, where the Labyrinth of the Yoke was hidden, the great, towering mass of darkness, built like an imperial castle with over a hundred roofs, a dozen or so meters away from him.

IT was about to happen; the thing Skullius had mentioned more than a few times in their travels from Opungale, Maqi and then to Pelian.

Ashema wouldn't have dreamt of missing the battle against Skullius' other self.

Of course, what had truly decided whether or not he would stay and wait, was the fact that even though Lord Boron had risen from the Under, no doubt taking the Herald as his vessel, he had yet to call upon all the Carven to converge towards him.

If he had, Ashema wouldn't have been able to resist.

It seemed Lord Boron was waiting for something. He hadn't even exerted his influence on Aigas.

This worked in Ashema's favour.

'Now how long am I supposed to wait? This better happen soon. He said it would happen before long,' he thought.

Below, Skullius was having glimmers of similar thoughts.

He sat cross-legged, his eyes closed.

The [Heart of Revelation] shone brightly above him while the deep shadow under him made it impossible to discern where it ended and where his robes began.

The air was rather agitated around Skullius, mirroring his emotions. The great, towering construct he had formed seemed to express a similar level of frustration as evidenced by how its shadow squirmed.

The fact that the Hybrid Luman could sense a great degree of attention on him didn't quell his rising impatience either.

Azila, Soidon and Erlton had buried themselves deeper into the forest two days ago, but they were evidently watching him.

Karima, Dellan and the Aqua Ripper were also watching.

'Deities too?' Skullius asked himself. 'Annoying.'

There was another faint presence, but he didn't bother to check and verify who the tenth spectator was.

Skullius frowned.

'Only seven days remain till Doom Factor 2 starts to act up. How much longer will he make me wait?' he asked himself.

Indeed.

Seven days remained until the fact that Skullius existed as half a soul drove him mad; that was, after all, the stipulation of Doom Factor 2. It beckoned him towards Somanda once again so that he may retrieve the other part of his soul.



'If he intends to save—'

...!

But what whomever Skullius was referring to intended to save, would have to wait a turn to be addressed, because the Hybrid Luman was – all too suddenly – overwhelmed by a mighty force that seemingly spawned from thin air!

BOOOOOOOM!

The entirety of the Tremur Forest responded to the outrageous violence that had just landed within its singular, significant clearing.

Trees leaned back, some uprooted and cast away.

The solid, mana-sturdied ground broke and was blasted apart.

The native creatures which had been feeling a dreadful sense of foreboding since the last two days, shrieked in fright.

Skullius was stunned that he hadn't been able to sense the attack before it landed on him. It was way too fast!

But then again, it wasn't an attack.

Skullius' eyes bulged.

He found himself held down by a large, illusory hand that looked to be made of a collection of pretty particles of purple-gold!

It had come down with such ridiculous force that it dug Skullius into a vast pit.

The Hybrid Luman couldn't move an inch nomatter how hard he struggled.

The chattering of invisible blades slashing endlessly, futilely, on the illusory hand rang out deafeningly.

What was this?!

Skullius couldn't have known, but things were about to get a whole lot worse.

A flash of yellowish-red light then came from the far, far distance, beyond the Tremur.

Skullius didn't see it, but he did sense the absurd amount of mana that came with it.

There was a terrible, hoarse shriek from the direction of the light, and the sky was dyed in yellowish-red bolts of lightning... which then turned to a creepy shade of dark grey in the next micro-instance!

SHREEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

Whatever dark horror was brewing in the far north was devastating and it seemed to be imminent.

However...

Exceedingly fast – at fifty times the speed of light – and carrying the same hue as the illusory hand holding Skullius tight, a flash of radiance poured down as a great pillar from the skies and smote the Hybrid Luman before the gathering disaster of grey lightning could!

...!!!

It was only after this, that a terribly vicious dark grey arrow which stole the light and life from the surroundings sprang forth from far north, eradicating everything in its path as it flashed at over twice the speed of light!

Pelian trembled as the arrow, without a doubt, hit its mark.

---

## Chapter 1183: Damned Fake!

Only the great tower of darkness remained standing amid what looked like course, blackened, brittle gravel.

More than a third of the Tremur forest had been incinerated, leaving it full of large, unsightly craters, black soil and a pathetically feeble presence of mana.

All the nearby lifeforms had been killed instantly when the dark arrow had hit.

It had, after all, been an arrow infused with powers that overwhelmed the natural mana flow in the world, breaking it down and whatever was supported by it.

The inner portions of the Tremur, including the large path in which the dark arrow had streaked through, now resembled what could be dubbed a Deity-forsaken desert constantly hissing with toxic fumes and dark smoke.

No combatant on Aigas could have taken a hit from the arrow head-on and survived. Even the Herald Jerthrax would have fallen at once despite his proud scales.

From the path the arrow had come, two figures, partly obscured by the dense smoke, ambled towards what had been the clearing where Dellan had once erected his Territory, guarding Fulgardt's legacy.

Of the two, one was no taller than the average human, and the masking of the smoke would have had anyone believe that she was ordinary, but she was far from it.

Her attire, which was the most striking thing about her, was revealed to be a slim, dark armour with thousands of sharply vibrant stars sparkling on every inch of it. They were drowned in nebulous thickets of faint blue, red and yellow, which, in a way, made the suit of armour seem grander than perhaps intended. The poleyns and couters of the armour stood out like a sore thumb.

They were shaped like large, six-pointed, golden stars that pulsed from bright to blindingly bright every few moments. This shape could also be found on the armour's chest, making up a third of it, and dominating its pauldrons, which made their wearer look more imposing.

Indeed, Yuyui felt a lot more confident while wearing this armour.

Her lime green hair had once again grown long; so long that it nearly touched her knees. At some point, she had decided to grow it out, perhaps to remind herself of the darker parts of her story which she now embraced fondly.

Her skin was smoother and she looked a little older. Her eyes, both sparkling in a mesmerising light brown hue, different from before, seemed to have shed away certain constants; one of them no longer bore the burden of constantly adapting the Inhumane Eye, for instance.

On her forehead, which was exposed from time to time behind her bangs, a small, strange symbol was imprinted. It looked like a tree with four branches made of yellowish-red lightning. Each branch held a striking, tiny star at its end.

This too – the symbol – was one of the bases for Yuyui's confidence.

To Yuyui's right was a being that looked anything but ordinary, even with the obscurity included.

He was over three meters tall and each of his steps left an impact on the crunching gravel.

Over everything else that covered him, he was adorned in a large, fantastical set of fluttering robes that looked as though they were made from countless, loosely-joined, tiny diamonds and yellowish-red dust. They hardly looked material. Their large sleeves had no trouble accommodating the Warmoth's Progeny's four arms.

They didn't obstruct even their slightest motion, which included, of course, how one of them rose above the rest to hold what seemed like a stack of giant shadows over the Progeny's shoulder.

Below these robes was an unreal set of armour that might have been the perfection of the concept of 'silver'. It shone with more than just the beauty of polish, but as though multiple lens flares layered themselves over it, giving a sharp sting to adoring eyes every so often.

It was simple, but effective.

The helmet had one long, horizontal eye slit which was crossed by two vertical ones. A sharp, yellow light gleamed where the slits met, giving an ominous presence to the entity hidden in the armour.

Replicus' domineering presence, projected outward by [Warmoth's Emyrean Ambience], could almost be seen. It would have crushed the wills of nearby creatures, but alas, his arrow had decimated them all.

All, except for one.

Replicus and Yuyui stopped just as they were about to reach the grand tower of darkness.

"Well, this is a bit concerning," Replicus said in a deep, brutish voice.

Yuyui wore a frown.

Several dozens of meters away in a great crater that had been a mere pit seconds ago, the Hybrid Luman could be seen. He was still kicking.

The [Heart of Revelation] above him highlighted his mutilated body.

Half of it had been melted into something like bubbling glue and the half that hadn't, was charred and scabbed, leaving the Hybrid Luman looking rather pathetic. His hair was either sizzling, flaming or gone. His exposed bones spat juices that shouldn't have been exposed. Bits of him fell apart and crumpled into ash, and thick smoke billowed from him profusely.

Yet... he grinned widely, nastily.

Replicus loathed that grin.

He had never quite managed to forget it ever since he had first seen it through Riba's impressive Divination.

(A/N: Refer to Ch.816).

Indeed, it was a sinister grin.

Replicus scoffed in response to Skullius' expression, but inwardly...

'How the flesh did he come out of all that with only this much damage? None of his skills should have been able to counter Reversion or my arrow,' he thought with a frown. 'And worst of all... where is his soul?'

Replicus was sure of it.

He had used the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow just now to launch a soul arrow decked in Ju`wtte that was fuelled with Inverted Mana. Such an attack on Skullius, who didn't seem to wear any protective gear, should have dealt extremely lethal damage. (Of course, Replicus had prepared measures at the ready to prevent Skullius from dying.)

However, the feedback from the strike told him that Skullius' soul... his soul, was not within the body he was looking at right now!

This simple fact was even more bizarre than the unknown reason behind how Skullius had resisted Maximum Catalyst.

According to what Replicus heard from Serenity, Skullius had no Supreme Skills.

Barring the extreme speed from applications of Maximum Catalyst, guarding against a Rule-Level concept like it required Supreme skills at least.

What had Skullius used then? A Transcendent grade treasure? A new Rule-level concept? A Rule?

Replicus frowned.

He saw Skullius rise as darkness piled onto his damaged body, inflating his large robes.

A blink later... he was fully healed.

Replicus' lip twitched.

That shouldn't have been possible either. Not when Inverted Mana was involved.

Skullius' lustrous auburn hair was restored and he pushed it back with grace. He tugged the edges of his robes and faced Replicus with a look unbecoming of someone who had just taken two extremely heavy hits.

"As I thought. You really have learned a few tricks," he said, his broad grin growing wider and more sickening. "Not bad for a damned fake."

Replicus gave no retort.

For a few moments, only the crackling of the scorched ground made any sound.

Yuyui looked at Skullius with great concern.

Back when her master had split, she had developed a habit of seeing both parts of him as different individuals. This time, it was no different. This habit seemed even more warranted now.

The man robed in darkness was far different from the towering, four-armed monstrosity she stood beside.

"Don't you have anything to say to me? Or hahaha – this would be precious – was the light show just now the extent of everything you came to express?" Skullius said.

Replicus' eyes flashed.

"Far from it," he hissed. "It's a shame that I have to make a case for myself... against myself. That was only a warning shot. I hoped it would allow you to see a bit of reason. Or at least bash some semblance of it into you."

"Evidently, that didn't work, did it?" Skullius said brightly and he sat back down on the ground. "Remind me again. What case do you want to make for yourself? What does a lowly fake – a replica, as I fittingly named you – even have to say that is worth my attention?"

"Well, seeing as you can't simply snap me away with the [Brisk Storm Avatar] skill, that means I have earned a bit of your fleshing attention, haven't I?" Replicus retorted.

Skullius' taut grin slackened a little. Replicus scoffed.

"As I thought. You really intend to destroy me, don't you?" the Progeny said with hints of disbelief. "You don't want to merge back."

Skullius said nothing.

Replicus was emboldened.

"I see. The part of you that is lost to Fulgardt is scared, isn't it?" he said with a cruel laugh. "The thought that I, the REAL Skullius, will drive away your WILLS once we merge back together terrifies you, doesn't it?"

Skullius' grin devolved into a small, agitated smile.

"Terrified? Real? Those are rich words for a fake to spout so carelessly. Need I really defend myself though? You know almost as well as I that it won't matter soon enough. I suppose your confident front is hiding the thumping of whatever you have for a heart," he said with a leer.

"You know that when I assume my Penetrator form, you won't exist any longer."

Chapter 1184: You Are Not An Undead

High above the clouds of Aigas...

<What was that? The activation of that odd lightning component – an arrow, it seems – I'm sure it didn't utilise mana. Not all the way, at least. You saw it too, right?> Boron said while looking past the cover of clouds with narrowed eyes.

<I did, yes. Though this isn't the first time I've seen it. That anomaly has used it before. Turning mana into an opposite version of itself is a rather complex fair. The means with which he used to be able to carry out such a thing is beyond me. Even when I saw it, I couldn't comprehend it entirely.> Suzamete said.



Her eyes were also fixed upon something way beyond clouds.

<Hmmm. It's potent. Dreadfully potent. It crushed the integrity of the land and air easily; everything held upright by mana. No living thing can contend against him if he can wield this... Polar Mana. Well, with the exception of his... counterpart.

Now I understand why you said this... Skullius, just might be a great threat, even to us; a two-fold threat>

Suzamete turned to Boron.

<My words will only ring true following the outcome of the battle.>

<Which you know but won't tell?>

Suzamete did not meet Boron's suspicious eyes.

<I think it's best if you don't. Even if only for the sake of entertainment.>

\*\*\*

Skullius was pleased to see that Replicus didn't have an immediate retort.

This naturally meant that he had succeeded in making the damned fake understand how fickle his lifespan was.

[Brisk Storm Avatar] was a skill from the Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator which allowed for Replicus to exist. It had created a copy of Skullius – Replicus.

Skullius was able to destroy, or rather, deactivate [Brisk Storm Avatar]. However, there were a few caveats.

The first was that Skullius couldn't use [Brisk Storm Avatar] while in his Hybrid Luman form.

Since his entire relevant arsenal was in his Hybrid Luman form, he hardly ever used his Penetrator form (Skullius currently held the Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator race, different from Replicus.) He would simply wait for the three-hour cooldown of [Greater Celestial Counterfeit] – the skill responsible for his flesh form – and assume his Hybrid Luman form immediately without expanding on his Null Life powers.

The second caveat lay in the fact that Skullius was unable to do anything to Replicus if he wasn't in range of the skill's extra features.

The only thing that could be shared between Replicus and Skullius when they were outside the range of the skill was experience. (This wasn't automatic, of course. They both needed to actively decide to share EXP.) They couldn't communicate and they couldn't share memories.

(A/N: Refer to Ch.563&564).

As such, this meant Skullius was disallowed a harsh degree of free control over his copy.

Because [Brisk Storm Avatar] sapped energy automatically to maintain itself, thereby fuelling Replicus' existence while they were apart, Skullius couldn't have simply stopped supplying mana to the skill even while in his Luman form. It seemed the skill was still powered by his Penetrator core even when he was the Hybrid Luman.

But perhaps if he truly tried, Skullius could have found a way around seamlessly getting rid of Replicus. Perhaps he could have employed some tactic, some trick, but he didn't. In all honesty, Replicus' existence was as much of an opportunity as it was a nuisance. A copy of him so powerful it could rule Aigas, had its uses.

He wanted to kill it, of course, in the end.

He would be able to do that soon enough. As soon as [Greatest Celestial Counterfeit] went on cooldown, it would be game over for Replicus. Skullius would be able to deactivate [Brisk Storm Avatar].

As it were, Skullius was sure that Replicus, through the guidance field, could tell that only an hour and twenty minutes remained till he was forced to assume the Eternal Veil Penetrator form again.

The Hybrid Luman cackled.

"Looks like you've got everything planned out," Replicus said with a sigh.

"As a matter of fact, I do," Skullius said calmly.

Replicus leered behind his helmet.

"I assumed our goal was to merge and become strong enough to storm Deadmanland and retrieve our soul from Somanda. Perhaps as you are now, you think you possess such strength, but I am left to wonder..." he paused, "...do you even want to retrieve the other part of our soul anymore?"

Skullius gave a bark like laugh.

"Goodness, Replicus. We came into this world as undead. Soon after, physically, we stopped existing as such lowly creatures. We were proud of it. New powers. New connections.

However, before not too long ago, I realised that I... we, hadn't shed the mindset of an undead; a drone whose path was steered and piloted by their master. A foolish, ambitionless minion. Somanda showed us that bit of our soul we are missing twice, and each time, it's driven us more voraciously towards – as you must know – returning to him.

I, Replicus, have shed that filthy thought, that stupid desire. I am free," he said with a look in his blank eyes that told of no lies.

Replicus couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"What about deciding to discard your past as if it never existed proves that you are free? Accepting who you are in its entirety, good and bad is what makes a living being free. Running from it only makes you a coward. I'm disgusted to see that I have become so spineless, hiding that cowardice behind flashy ideas," he hissed.

"As am I," Skullius replied. "I can hardly believe that the replica I sent to scour the world and build up our strength only managed to trap himself even deeper within the palms of scum like Somanda. I have evolved beyond such narrow-mindedness. Perhaps you really don't remember. Let me remind you then, how twisted our former master was, yet also brilliant.

He caged bits of our souls so that he could watch us all, Bonemen, yearn for them so much that we created feeble brotherhoods between each other. Powerless skeletons that did his bidding while suffering from eternal desire! He enjoyed our suffering! He knows just how much you yearn for that soul and will use it against us! Oh, it's funny!

You desire so terribly to enter the domain of undead gods just so you can obtain the memory of a girl you barely know!"

"Her name is CAMILLA! And all that matters is that she is a part of us we need to reclaim!"  
Replicus barked.

"And how long did it take for you to learn her name? A millennia and some? Where is the significance in that? She is long dead! What difference does her pathetic existence make to us?! What do we gain by learning what colour shirt she used to like?"

"It is more than clear that she holds significance, Skullius! We have memories of her wi—"

"A single significant memory! One! Believe me, when you were away, I saw much of her! More of her! Perked on that snowy hill, naked and angry! Just that one memory is all we have of her, and it can't even begin to decide if she was ever worth anything!

It does not justify falling into the hands of that blasted Lich again!"

"You—"

"Choose freedom, you imbecile! For once, choose whom you want to serve rather than to fall for the twisted ploys of false gods! You, my dear, DAMNED fake, are NOT an undead anymore! Own it! Believe it!"

"I AM NOT AN UNDEAD!"

"Prove it then! As powerful as you have become, has it not occurred to you that you can gain enough power to simply render Somanda's hold over you irrelevant? Who would care if you lack half a soul when you have far transcended the power of Deities?! You could remake your own soul! I'm sure you have come across powers of such kind as a Null Lifeform! Think, you fake!"

"ENOUGH!"

A fierce light shone from Replicus' eye slits.

He was enraged.

All this talk about him following an undead mindset...

What utter fleshing garbage!

"So, this is the epiphany Fulgardt helped you see, is it? That being whole is a sin, or perhaps a plot by higher beings?" Replicus said scathingly, and a mocking laugh left his lips. "I don't need a lecture from you. I have met Divinity itself in the face and it doesn't strike me as the sort of thing capable of judging me and forcing my path! I've met Divinity and killed it where it stands!"

It is no longer a height that is too far out of reach. You, Fulgardt, Skullius, Festos, or whatever you call yourself now, are the one underestimating just how much I understand about higher powers. I have no one shackling me anymore – be it my mind or body."

A frightening presence exploded from Replicus as he spoke.

It was indeed a presence befitting of one who had slaughtered a Divine being seven days ago.

"Before I retrieve my soul, I will bring Somanda to his knees. I will make him see that the little skeleton he toyed with is no more; the one whose soul he split to cause pain is long dead. It is all for vengeance. I will make him sorry for stripping me of what is mine; regaining the other part of my soul is simply a graceful bonus. I will raze everything Somanda brought up to the ground.

I'll strip away all his treasures. And only when I've given him as much despair as he gave me for the last thousand years, will I make him taste Death as he was meant to taste it! THAT is my FREEDOM! Don't presume to think I intend to go back to Deadmanland with a bunch of flowers or coin, begging for my soul."

Replicus was seething. His silver armour hissed of steam.

"If you see the path forward any differently, then you are worse than that little Moronic Undead who fled from Somanda on that day those months ago."

Chapter 1185: Deadline

It pained Replicus to admit it, but despite his firm stance now, previously, he had thought about ways to simply replace the part of his soul he was missing.

He had thought the Supreme potions would work, but was greatly disappointed when he discovered that they could only heal the user basing on what was considered their full health from the point immediately preceding their use of the potion. Essentially, a Supreme potion couldn't heal the damage to Skullius' soul which was done a thousand years ago.

Its current state registered as whole to the potion, likely because he functioned quite well despite his condition.

Replicus had also thought about the viability of solving his soul problem by becoming a Looming Soft Spawn – one of the evolutions he was presented before.

(A/N: Refer to Ch.1101).

Of course, this had only been a passing thought, but his phantoms agreed that if he became a Looming Soft Spawn, he would probably be able to get rid of Doom Factor 2 by growing his soul fully, naturally.

But that hadn't floated well with Replicus.

There was no satisfaction in that.

There was no...FULFILMENT.

It pleased the Colossus Warmoth's Progeny to see Skullius' determined face turn sour at his words – at his stance.

He had asserted his reasoning and it was clear that he would not change it.

He indeed was disgusted with what Skullius had become.

The influence of Fulgardt went beyond far, far beyond the Immoral's powers, it seemed.

It was clear that Skullius and Fulgardt had come together to create a new being – a product of those damned WILLS that Skullius hadn't given enough thought ever since they began popping up in the Temple of Unlusted Tears.

Yet...

'I think it is possible. If we merge together, I think I can drive those WILLS away. In terms of will, I believe I stand on equal footing with this new Skullius...Festos. Somewhere deep within, perhaps the remnants of my true self are struggling against this too. When we merge, thoughts and all, we can regain complete control,' Replicus thought.

That was easier said than done though.

Besides the fact that Replicus only had barely an hour and a half to beat Skullius, there was another issue he had to deal with.

Skullius also seemed to know this even though he hadn't brought it up.

Despite his displeasure with Replicus' retort, he didn't rage on about his new ideals any further.

"A pity. I really thought I could convince you. I thought, unlike the masses of Aigas I tried to save back then, you of all people would understand; connect with me. But you've decided instead to let the little tricks you have learned – guided by that glorified bonfire, no doubt – to get to your head. You are delusional, and I must kill you," he said, and unmistakable bloodlust poured out of him.

"Master, please wait!" Yuyui suddenly cried.

She looked deeply into Skullius' eyes. She had seen no shift or twitch within them as he and Replicus were arguing.

It pained her to think about it, but there was likely no way to resolve this with words.

Twelve days ago, Replicus asking for her help with Skullius had driven her to work towards earning the Eye of Moving and arriving on the battlefield north of Aigas to save him when he had been about to die to Jerthrax.

Yuyui was thoroughly convinced that she couldn't replicate a miracle like that with Skullius on her own, but she had kept up hope. That was why she had begged Replicus to bring her along even though she hadn't finished her training, just like everyone else they left behind in the Warmoth's Treasury.

"Master, the past gives us strength and, in more ways than one," she said with desperation livid in her voice. Her eyes kept staring into Skullius', hoping for a reaction. "It worked for me. I was something like an undead too when you found me. And it was only through you that I became something I didn't even imagine I could become. I don't have a great story behind me or anything.

In fact, remembering where I came from didn't give me much happiness or any sense of accomplishment. But it completed me still. It granted me new abilities and a different perspective. Is it a bad thing to want that? You can still move forward even after taking a moment to look back. It's worth it."

Skullius gave Yuyui a look that nearly made her dive behind Replicus.

The Hybrid Luman then grinned, completely ignored her and swiftly turned back to Replicus. Yuyui's heart sank.

Her words hadn't reached Skullius at all.

"You have an unreal amount of confidence, fake. I wonder, say you beat me. Say you crush my resolve and my powers. How exactly do you intend to make me agree to merge back with you? The way I see it" – Skullius appraised Replicus with the guidance field – "you don't have the [Brisk Storm Avatar] skill anymore."

And there it was.

The greatest problem of all.



Replicus lost most of the Penetrator series powers by evolving into the Warmoth's Progeny. If he had retained [Brisk Storm Avatar], he would have only needed to use it himself after beating Skullius, but now...

'I need to make him submit, wait until he reverts into the Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator form and force him to use [Brisk Storm Avatar] to merge us back together. With how much stronger he appears to be now, that doesn't seem to be as easy as I initially thought it would be,' Replicus thought.

He appraised Skullius with the guidance field.

Oddly enough, the only thing he could see from it, besides the superficial details of name, race and all, was the [Greatest Celestial Counterfeit] skill and its details. No other skills showed.

'He's capable of manipulating the guidance field against me?' Replicus thought with chilling dread. He recalled now what Serenity had said about other beings with the power to tweak the guidance field. No doubt, it was Fulgardt's expertise making this possible.

The Warmoth's Progeny clicked his tongue.

'And here I promised everyone this wouldn't take too long.'

Indeed, Replicus had reassured Pherdanta, Grim, Baddan and the others that this was a minor problem he was going to deal with on his own. He had even jested about how they didn't even need to so much as spectate as it would be over in a jiffy.

'Damn it.'

Replicus patted Yuyui's shoulder. Being completely ignored by Skullius was a blow she had taken unguarded.

"It's alright, Yuyui. You did what you could. It's enough that you are here supporting me. Now stand back. I'll handle this the way I knew I would have to," he said to her.

The lime-haired girl looked up at him, gathered her emotions, and gave him a firm nod.

"I know you will, master," she said and then flashed away to a safe, distant spot.

Skullius chuckled.

"How touching. I would have thought she'd offer her condolences," he mocked.

Replicus shook his head.

He spread three of his arms wide, and within his palms, an outrageous amount of Null Life Essence burst out in thick, bulbous torrents that rose into the sky violently!

The details of the charred land and cleared sky became blurry as a result of the dramatic volume of power.

Replicus' point was made in the next second. It showed in Skullius' vision.

[The effect of the 'Rune of the FIRST' has been applied on you who has been struck by the first blow in your clash against the Warmoth's Progeny, 'Skullius']

[Due to the effect of the 'Rune of the FIRST', the Warmoth's Progeny, 'Skullius' has all his abilities increased and accelerated by 620%]

[A timer has begun]

[Due to the effect of the 'Rune of the FIRST', if you cannot defeat the Warmoth's Progeny, 'Skullius' in thirty minutes, you will lose half of all your abilities and stats permanently]

(A/N: Refer to Master Index Ch.1173 for details).

...!

Skullius' face contorted in shock.

"You thought I was the only one with a deadline? I'm afraid you do too. Trust me, I don't much care if we lose most of the Insurgent Magnus' powers at this point. I am strong enough for the both of us," Replicus declared.

While he had indeed thought the combination of [Maximum Reach], Reversion and the soul arrow earlier was enough to incapacitate Skullius, that hadn't stopped him from making backup plans.

He had made it a point to strike first so as to use the [Rune of FIRST] to his advantage as Caxellac had taught him.

Abundant strength bubbled through him ferociously.

His mana.

His Null Life Essence.

His physical stats.

His skills.

Everything was amped by the collective 620% boost!

The Warmoth's Progeny glared at the dazed Skullius.

"I'll show you courtesy this once. You may strike first," he said, his arms still spread wide.

...

Skullius said nothing.

His expression of surprise vanished, replaced by eerie mirth once again.

He laughed.

"Colour me stricken aghast. I didn't see that one coming, Tricks upon tricks upon tricks," he said, smacking his lips and, a nasty grin grew on his face. "But you don't really expect me to come and face you head on, do you? No, no. I know you are vastly superior in physicality. A simple look at you makes that all too clear.

Brawling ceased to be my forte long ago. However..."

Skullius cackled and then muttered in a voice so soft that it might not have reached Replicus:

"DHYIESMYK BLACK, |Eminence|."

Suddenly, space seemed to fold outward as a great, lopsided shape of darkness bubbled madly, forcing its way into Aigas!

This darkness then cracked and shattered like black glass, revealing something it had been hiding in its tight, vast mass.

Something humanoid and bulky, in a brawler sort of way, now stood beside its dark-robed master. It was shiny, tall and frightening. It was nothing to take lightly.

Replicus reeled. He appraised it at once.

~~~

[Name : Stolen Angel (Preeminent Attegoth)]

[Tier : 1,000]

...

Chapter 1186: Let's Etch History On Aigas!

Deep in the Tremur Forest...

Karima's Territory.

Karima was glaring at what looked like a huge, box-shaped mirror with edges that spat out golden sparks; these sparks were excess bits of Divine energy. On the face of the mirror, the aerial image of a four-armed humanoid in a dazzling silver armour and diamond robe facing off against a man in a black robe could be seen.

The bat-faced guardian beast's face was contorted – more than it already was naturally – with rage. His eyes drank in the sight of the blackened forest which was depicted sparingly on the mirror.

He couldn't believe how much of it was obliterated in such a short span of time.

"The gall!" he barked with veins throbbing on his temples. "How dare they use our home as a battleground?!"

"Calm down, Karima," Erlton said with a strained face. "What's more important is the safety of all the beasts that reside in the forest. You can always relocate."

"Easy for you to say! This serves your goals, doesn't it? Now I have no choice but to wander and look for another home and, in the process, make concessions with other guardian beasts!" Karima hissed and spat on the dark, hard-to-define floor of the Territory.

Erlton didn't have a retort for this. He hadn't exactly foreseen all this.

Dellan, the Grinning Jester Fox, growled with hatred at the image of Skullius depicted on the mirror. The spot where his eye had been had healed, but there was no new eye in the socket.

Soidon pretended as though he couldn't hear Karima's outrage. He kept his eyes fixed on Skullius and Replicus.

He didn't know much about what was happening, but he felt that he was about to see what he had been denied two days ago – a glimpse of the deepest bits of Skullius, the man from whom he had smelt the scent of Undeath.

Karima huffed.

"Just how many tragedies must befall Aigas in such a short span? Aren't you Heralds supposed to be stopping these things from happening?!" he barked and turned to Erlton whose face hardened instantly.

He had – perhaps – been about to defend himself when Dellan cried:

"Look! Th-THAT THING! THOSE EYES...!"

The fox was too flummoxed to speak clearly. Everyone turned to the mirror and saw darkness pool beside Skullius and then reveal an unnerving monstrosity with two, extremely familiar eyes!

\*\*\*

"I confess, I wasn't sure if I would make it in time – before you arrived, that is. But as it seems, luck is on my side," Skullius said as he pointed to the large humanoid creature that had fallen out of the prison of darkness. "One of the things I was most wary of about you, was that damned set of robes. Ah, they've gone through some development, as I anticipated.

I can't afford to fling attacks carelessly now, can I?"

The Hybrid Luman chuckled.

He had indeed feared that Replicus' [Nullmancer's Royal Raiment of Acclimation] which had evolved to become [Unbridled Wisdom of the Ascended Nullmancer] would render his attacks meaningless.

And judging by how the Null powers developed, he knew that even attacks that were lethal to Replicus would be made irrelevant eventually because of [Epiphany], which was now a part of the diamond robe the Warmoth's Progeny wore.

This and many other precautions and predictions by the Hybrid Luman were the reason behind the creation of the Stolen Angel.

The creature, standing tall and still beside its master at a height of just over four meters, looked as though it was made of immaculately wound, glossy, golden white vines. They created the illusion of perfect, thick limbs, and forged the wide, sturdy torso of the creature, which was wrapped up in a pristine white shawl that nearly hid all of its face.

Rings of glaring light, like large bracelets, circled the creature's wrists, neck and ankles and above its head, a second [Heart of Revelation], glowing much, much brighter than Skullius', could be seen.

From a slim gap in the creature's shawl, two, large, sharp orange eyes could be seen, looking unblinkingly at the Warmoth's Progeny with a surging, demented eagerness.

These eyes were the exact same as the one Dellan had had!

Replicus was unnerved.

He felt as though the creature was staring straight into his soul despite the protection of the Transcendent grade armour he was wearing.

'The Stolen Angel?' he thought. 'And it has a Tier too? What in the world...?'

"That's it. It's the same object he erected to hold all his skills. He has somehow given it a different form. One tailored towards combat, I imagine," Serenity finally made a comment.

Replicus' gaze hardened.

The Preeminent Attegoth?

It was now a mobile unit with all of Skullius' skills AND a combat sense? The information Serenity had given him about the Attegoth before had quickly turned obsolete.

This didn't bode well.

Skullius sensed Replicus' unease.

He laughed mockingly.

"No need to be so shaken yet," he said, and he began casually walking towards the massive tower of darkness. The Stolen Angel followed after him. "Since you decided to make things a bit more interesting with that little time-limit, how about I spice things up as well? No reason to not enjoy this, right?"

A pair of sheathed swords, one very long and straight, the other shorter and curved, appeared on Skullius' left side. He tickled the longer scabbard with his fingers.

"I invoke KUTHUMK," Skullius declared as he continued on towards the dark mass, a carefree, toothy grin on his face. "I will dictate the venue... venues, rather, of our conflict. Every floor in this tower and every heavily populated place on Aigas will be the ONLY places we will be allowed to do battle.

Each time we find ourselves 'out of bounds', we will be transported back into this tower as the default battle ground. How does that sound?"

Replicus felt a vague force press on him momentarily. It seemed whatever Skullius said just now had been actualised by some magical effect.

The ritual of KUTHMUK was not entirely unknown to Replicus. One of the undead he had faced while on the voyage to Edagon had used it on him.

A KUTHMUK ritual was a Maqian construct used to create more meaningful purpose behind conflict – the venue for the battle and a goal, or a reward for the victor could be determined. KUTHUMUK could be enacted even without the other party's consent, wherein it would be considered half-invoked.

In this case, the user could dictate the area in which the battle would take place, but would be unable to dictate the winning conditions of the battle, like the Ode had done with Skullius in Opungale.

(A/N: Refer to Ch.912).

"Why choose such a bizarre set of venues?" Replicus asked and followed behind Skullius.



The Hybrid Luman scoffed.

"Beyond your foolish desire to go back to Somanda, I want to see just how much has changed about you. What did your travels teach you? I can learn that as we fight. Besides, the best battles are the ones that aren't limited to one spot. Before I leave Aigas, I want to leave one large mark on it. You can help me do that before you tragically meet your demise, I think," he said.

'Leave Aigas?' Replicus thought skeptically. 'Just what in the world has he been doing?'

Skullius seemed to sense his clone's thoughts.

"I have many, many great plans. The likes of you can't even begin to imagine. And sadly, nothing you do can stop the progression of these plans. Even besting me will not change the course I have made," he said as they reached the great doors into the tower, which opened at once.

The two stood side by side by the doors, Replicus mulling with a great feeling of uneasiness over what Skullius had just said.

The Hybrid Luman grabbed the hilt to the Bashful Abomination and turned to Replicus.

"Let's etch history on this godforsaken world," he declared.

Chapter 1187: The One Left Standing (1)

Replicus and Skullius walked through the wide-open doors into the towering building and were instantly met with a wide, cubical space with a floor that was made of large black tiles. Each individual tile was emphasised by the faint light that shone from the points where it met other tiles; it was almost as though the collection of tiles was plastered over a large beam of light.

Aside from the great chandelier of pure, solid golden white light hanging on the ceiling, and the two dark staircases with golden white railings on either end of the floor, both leading up the path into the next floor, nothing else could be seen.

The two, no, three versions of the Moronic Undead who had escaped the Arch-Lich Somanda what seemed like so long ago, were the only things to give a livelier appeal to the vast floor.

Skullius parted from Replicus and with a relaxed smile walked towards the staircase on the left end of the floor. Replicus walked towards the opposite one, but the Stolen Angel walked on as though it was oblivious to the direction its master had gone.

The doors to the great building closed, turning the space a lot darker.

Replicus was still considering what Skullius had just said.

What did this bastard mean by 'leaving Aigas'? What exploits did he have in mind within the void?

And what did he mean when he said even if he was defeated, all the plans he had set in motion would still continue?

This was the most disgruntling thing about this whole affair now, Replicus thought.

'It's almost as annoying as the fact that his reasoning for not retrieving our soul – at least when it comes to self-preservation – is based on the Wanderer Who Seeds.'

Replicus was sure that Skullius believed that through this Wanderer Who Seeds whom Fulgardt preached in the past, the Doom Factor wouldn't be a problem for him even if the deadline was reached. The way he had been talking about powers beyond the Deities heavily suggested that this was his rationale.

With what Replicus had learned on Edagon and from Serenity, it was only natural that he would come to this conclusion.

But was this Wanderer Who Seeds... an actual being?

Who knew?

The Warmoth's Progeny ascended up the stairs. Skullius did as well.

As he rose, he noticed that opposite the railing to the stairs, where a wall should have been – marking the end of the building – there was darkness the kind of which he wasn't convinced was solid at all. He felt that if he were to jump at it, he would sink.

He turned his attention away promptly and gave the Hybrid Luman a keen look. It seemed the eerie human-Luminant mix was doing the same through more 'sensitive' means.

"Will this flimsy building be able to handle it if we go all out?" Replicus asked.

Skullius chortled.

"Don't worry about that. I used a fair number of Creeds to ensure it would last long enough," he replied.

Replicus would have raised a brow if he could.

'Just how many Creeds could you possibly have obtained a little more than a week after you became an Incandescent Stager?' he asked Skullius from within.

A deathly silence followed as the two continued to rise up the stairs.

They were nearly halfway up when Skullius sleekly pushed the hilt of the Bashful Abomination such that three inches of the chipped blade of the zhanmadao were exposed from its scabbard.

The blade, still attached to Skullius' side, reflected the light from the chandelier, and instantly caught the attention of the Warmoth's Progeny.

A cry not unlike that of a banshee blared from the sword before a vicious set of disembodied slashes, invisible yet potent, shot towards Replicus at a speed terribly close to that of light!

Replicus didn't move to defend himself.

Instead, thin streaks of yellowish-red Ju`wtte sprang from his body without his consent and whipped violently at the incoming slashes, casually redirecting them towards the ceiling and floor!

SHIK! SHIK! SHIK! SHIK!

The slashes struck the interior of the dark building with enough power to torture natural space, but it remained sturdy.

Skullius' grin broadened.

Of course. It was never going to be that easy, was it?

The Hybrid Luman gave an amused "Ha!" and suddenly, he bolted ahead along the stairs towards the second floor. Replicus did the same, Ju`wte trailing behind him.

Both combatants reached the second floor at the exact same time – in far less than a microsecond – and when they turned to look at each other from opposite ends, both with a readied attack, a thick bolt of vengeful Ju`wte connected them for but a fraction of a millisecond!

Skullius hadn't expected it!

A thick yellowish-red bolt sent forth from Replicus' finger was already burrowing into his chest before he had sent out a slash with the Bashful Abomination, and while illuminated intensely, he was sent shuttling into the boundless darkness that marked the end of the building!

At almost the same time, the Stolen Angel sprang up at Replicus through the floor as if it were one giant pool of dark water, and sent its large fist hurtling towards the Progeny's face.

Once again, Ju`wte stormed out of Replicus without his order, and it whipped out to entangle itself around the Stolen Angel's arm tightly, binding it and killing its momentum. Replicus' arm blurred and he casually smacked the large humanoid assailant in the chest with the back of his hand and... it was blown apart like a balloon!

Just as bits of the Stolen Angel flew high, Replicus felt a mighty surge of mana and an instant later, he sensed another bombardment of slashes zipping through the air towards him from where Skullius had been sent flying. These slashes seemed stronger than the ones from before, but they were course-corrected by strings of his Ju`wte rather easily as well.

'Hmm. They are powerful. I can imagine not many Incandescent Stagers would be able to deal with these, not when they are powered by a skill at the Super tier,' Replicus analysed with the help of his phantoms.

He had learned of Skullius' new Super skills [Infinite Sword God] and [Greatest Antiphon of Malignance] from Serenity and had been expecting them.

A portion of Replicus' attention was immediately turned towards Skullius' location, but...

Strings of Ju`wte hurried to his left and caught something that had been about to strike at him again.

The massive fist of the Stolen Angel had approached the Warmoth's Progeny once more. The creature had fully healed its entire body in an instant!

'I knew you wouldn't be knocked down just like that,' Replicus scoffed inwardly.

While making sure to scour for Skullius on this floor, he grabbed the restrained Stolen Angel's head and ran Ju`wte through it violently.

The Stolen Angel exploded into nothingness after its body ignited in spark and flame, but Replicus didn't turn away this time. Because he didn't, he managed to witness it – a monstrous healing factor that was even superior to that of Yuyui's Inhumane Eye!

The Stolen Angel reformed not a second after after it burst apart.

'Well, that's concerning,' Replicus thought.

Right then, Replicus sensed Skullius emerge as though from thin air behind him, a sharp, evil presence rushing from him to clash with the boundless regality of the Warmoth which he (Replicus), exuded.

"You're the perfect match," Skullius hissed excitedly.

In the next instant, both the Stolen Angel and Skullius were consumed by copious amount of potent Perfect Aura which quickly formed into Genuine Incarnations!

But that was not all. Far from it!

The Stolen Angel immediately began to exude a formidable light and eight, large wings of light sprang from its back as [Greatest Antiphon of Malignance]'s active powers were put to use.

'There it is...' Replicus thought cautiously.

Skullius, on the other hand, was suddenly engulfed by an unfathomable darkness that made him almost meld into the dark interior design of the tower.

He had activated a skill that was unknown to both Serenity and Replicus.

Chapter 1188: The One Left Standing (2)

Replicus, while using [Sorcery of Essence] had long sensed the massive purple core in the Stolen Angel's body. It didn't perturb him that the core had nearly eighty million units of mana, but the fact that an organism with a Tier could produce Aura did make him question just how exactly Skullius had put this thing together.

Beasts couldn't produce Aura, after all. The closest Replicus had come to meeting such a contradiction, was Jerthrax, a beast who utilised the human, Sif and Giant power system.

This was insignificant for now, though.

What mattered was that Skullius was ramping up his attack strategy, choosing to start with Aura rather than Nitros for some reason.

The Stolen Angel, in addition to using [Greatest Antiphon of Malignance], had manifested a Genuine Incarnation and merged with it, quite like how peak Masters did to achieve the full 1,000% power boost granted by their Stage. The entity didn't look all that different from before except for the fact that its shawl was now black with sigils of [Just Light] printed on it.

Skullius had merged with his Incarnation, which had been a set of red beads strung into a necklace. Now they looked like red tattoos around his neck. The shadows around his body became deeper, as though he had become a sketch with heavy hatching.

Replicus didn't miss the fact that this was likely the effect of the skill he had activated just now.

What could it be?

Before the answer could find him, however, Replicus quickly found himself in the midst of a hard assault.

The Stolen Angel threw a fist towards his face, but with infinitely higher speed than last time. As it did, its body swelled with blinding light!

Replicus was unfazed, but he was a little surprised when he found that the Ju`wtte which reacted to the attack spontaneously, was unable to reach the Stolen Angel. It was repelled by the bright light!

Replicus had no choice but to block and swipe away the Stolen Angel's fist.

'Why is it so... heavy?' Replicus wondered when he felt the creature's hand. 'Could it be...?'

From the back, Skullius' zhanmadao left a series of dark afterimages as it aimed for Replicus' neck, but before it could touch him, tens of extra slashes had already been released against the Warmoth's Progeny which his Ju`wtte responded to successfully.

The Stolen Angel cast a flurry of deadly punches at Replicus, but he blocked them all easily with one hand despite them moving faster than the speed of light. They could not be compared to those of Caxellac, after all. Not by a long shot.

Skullius kept sending a series of slashes with his sword that kept Replicus' Ju`wtte busy and didn't seem to intend on stopping any time soon.

The look of focus that had suddenly formed deep shadows on his face concerned the Warmoth's Progeny a little.

Thus, with his three free hands, he launched his offensive.

After blocking the brutal storm of fists from the Stolen Angel with one hand, he conjured a large blot of Distorted Gravity behind the Stolen Angel with another, and before the entity knew it, it was pulled sharply backward, losing its balance in the process.

By the time it recovered, a large hand made of purple-gold crystals had already grabbed it, seemingly resisting the repelling effect of the light it expounded!

This was an application of [Maximum Catalyst] Replicus had learned from the Second Layer of the Empyrean Hatcher known as [Maximum Reach]. It worked the same way as [Neutral Acumen], but instead of offense, it worked as a support ability that allowed Replicus to grab distant objects and enemies before they could even fathom what was happening.

Replicus then conjured a sliver of the Rule-Level concept Absolute Frost, and froze the Stolen Angel at once. The creature was instantly into a pure white icicle.

The Warmoth's Progeny then turned to Skullius who continued to hack away at his protective Ju`wtte almost dementedly.

Replicus' hand shot towards Skullius at once.

However...

...!!

A detail that would have been easily overlooked met Replicus' senses just as a wide array of nigh-infinite, thin, dark red threads exploded from one of Skullius' swords, and stormed towards him!

His Ju`wtte reacted promptly, catching the majority of these thin, crazy sharp threads, but...

Seemingly without the activation of mana or any energy for that matter, a rapid sword slash was sent forth by Skullius amid the strings of dark red Mortal Ruin towards Replicus head!

The slash came with a brilliant, short-lived flash of light!

POW!

It was unthinkable that a sword slash could carry about as much grace as that of a whip's swing. Replicus was surprised when the force behind the attack actually forced him take a few steps back!



His silver armour hissed of smoke and a long, thin, angled, scratch rang along it from the helmet to the right side!

Skullius let out a subtle laugh of happy surprise. Before his darkened vision, notifications sprang up one after the other.

[You are HYPED!]

[You are HYPED!]

[You are HYPED!]

[You are HYPED!]

...

Replicus didn't like this. Not one bit.

Almost instantly, he darted towards Skullius, fully utilising his Ju`wtte Blizzard Motion – which allowed him to temporarily enter an alternate spatial tunnel that accelerated his movement – and sent Ju`wtte smashing into the Hybrid Luman's head from above!

Before it landed, however, Replicus had grabbed Skullius' arms with two of his hands, and with a third, he threw the meanest straight punch right into his chest!

However, the punch went straight through Skullius seamlessly, and as the Ju`wtte Replicus had sent towards his (Skullius') head hit, it was revealed that what he had bound was no more than a... ghost. It dissipated like smoke!

But the Warmoth's Progeny was undeterred. With [Sorcery of Essence], he immediately deduced Skullius' presence and stormed towards it at full speed!

In a fraction of a moment, he had grabbed the Hybrid Luman's neck and was crushing it, but the vile grin on Skullius' face told him that this too... was a fake. And it indeed was; it vanished from his hand like a ghostly dust.

Replicus turned urgently.

He saw thousands of Skulliuses flitting about at frightening speeds around him. All held the presence of mana Replicus recognised with his skills to be Skullius', and all were completely indistinguishable from the other.

What was more, all of them seemed... real.

A dozen of them hurled themselves at Replicus, but before they all could swing their swords or release slashes, the Progeny knocked his Ju`wtta together. There was a loud clang and a terrible storm of violent Ju`wtte that boomed, crackled and shuddered, completely obliterated most of the like-faced assailants!

"There was an unwanted Prince once, you know?" Replicus heard a voice behind him. One of the Skulliuses had flashed behind him.

He sent a bolt of Ju`wtte to kill it instantly. It dissipated after it was hit.

"He took in the darkness of the world when all the cowards in their civilised shelters and those in their luxurious forests fled from it, terrified, when the night came."

Another Skullius had stormed towards him from the side. Replicus struck it at once. It dissipated.

"This Prince was blessed by the darkness," another said with a chuckle.

"As long as he carried a shadow and was embraced by the dark, he would never know any harm. He would never die," another added.

"Is that so?" Replicus challenged and he called upon the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow into his hand.

"Indeed," one of the remaining Skulliuses said, right as a brilliant mark appeared on his forehead; it was a half a skull mark!

...!

Replicus frowned.

Before he knew it, something black and humanoid escaped from the Skullius who had just spoken.

It was a dark outline of Skullius, perfectly shaped like him, quite like a shadow!

At once, Replicus realised what this was! It was Crude World Projection!

Skullius had projected himself as an entity of darkness with his consciousness that could move freely in the world.

Whenever he used this ability, his body was usually left limp like a corpse... but not this time.

As the Projected Skullius reached Replicus and made a clawing gesture with its hands, the Warmoth's Progeny saw the body it had just left behind, clutch the hilt of the Bashful Abomination and lower itself in a frightening stance!

The mark on its forehead grew brighter!

Perhaps because of the influence of the Projected Skullius and his gesture, the light from the chandelier above vanished and everything became dark, so much so that all the other Skulliuses who had been flitting about, disappeared from Replicus' view.

All turned dark.

The Warmoth's Progeny was left in a soundless, lightless, substance-less void in that moment. He could hardly tell if he was standing on something solid or not.

'Dammit!'

Replicus immediately made full use of [Sorcery of Essence] at full throttle, anticipating an attack while he was blinded like this.

But he couldn't judge the surging of mana or any kind of energy from anywhere.

There was none.

However, that didn't mean no attack came.

A crisp, metallic whistle loudly blared in the dark space at the next instant, and...

### Chapter 1189: The One Left Standing (3)

The silver armour Replicus wore was a Transcendent grade item, but sadly, it was the most ordinary object to have such a high grade that he had ever seen. What gave it its grade was simply its high stats; it didn't have any unique skills or powers like the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow or the Warmoth's Spine.

The only thing that could be considered remotely unique about it, was the fact that if Replicus willed it, he could turn it into an insubstantial illusion, which allowed him to strike his Ju`wta together for [Ju`wta Resounding Restoration] freely.

As much as it lacked personality though, Replicus had equipped this armour because it was still a product of the Warmoth's Treasury, one of the few that he didn't have to fight a battle of wills with in order to earn its allegiance, quite unlike the majority of other weapons and equipment in the exhibition hall.

Even as it lacked better distinguishing utilities and offensive properties, Replicus had hoped it would be enough to defend him against most of Skullius' attacks.

It sadly turned out that he had been a little too optimistic.

Once again, there was a crackle like that of a whip just as Replicus heard the whistle of Skullius' sword in the unfathomable darkness.

No harm came to his Transcendent armour or the robes representative of [Unbridled Wisdom of Ascended Nullmancer]. However, the Warmoth's Progeny was perfectly severed in two from his right shoulder to his right leg!

...!!!!!!

Somehow, Skullius had forgone having to interact with the silver armour altogether.

Somehow, the Hybrid Luman had attacked with enough force to damage Replicus despite his crazy high durability.

Somehow... the Infinite Sword God had managed to perform both feats without evoking mana, or Aura, or Nitros!

'What in the world is going on?!' Replicus thought, immensely agitated and wincing slightly.

He would have immediately set to heal himself, but his enemy wasn't casual about killing him.

From the insurmountable darkness, a piercing golden-white light cast a glaring highlight on Replicus' body, and then a large creature made of luminous vines appeared within the great light!

The Stolen Angel had returned to the battle, and the light that shone with its reappearance was coming from the [Heart of Revelation] which was floating above him!

Replicus scowled.

The intensity of light from the [Heart of Revelation] was stunningly grand, but again, he didn't sense any exertion from the deep purple core within the Stolen Angel either!

This radiance, evidently empowered far more than the norm, did its job perfectly. It revealed the sensitive bits of the Warmoth's Progeny after casually turning Replicus' armour faint and meaningless, his skin and bones into mere intangible illusions!

...!!!

A merciless fist then hurtled from the Stolen Angel – repelled the defensive Ju`wtte – and dug unobstructed into Replicus' delicate cache of internal organs, his thirteen cores, and, of course, his soul (the copy of it which he had)!

...!!!!

Again, Replicus felt it.

The Stolen Angel's fist was... terribly heavy.

BOOOOOOOM!

Though he couldn't quite feel it well enough, Replicus was sent flying and bouncing off the veiled interior of the towering building. He spun like a top while enduring the immense agony that came with being punched through by a dramatic degree of weight!

He had sustained immense damage both to his flesh and to his mana cores. Though they survived the attack, many of them were damaged!

What power!

Skullius was able to imbue a total of about 2 million tonnes of weight into one attack currently because of the gravity core he forged after Sila destroyed his own a while ago.

During the last few days, however, he had recreated a core of similar stature for the Preeminent Attegoth. Because the capacity and power of Preeminent Attegoth were greater than his own, it was able to bring out even more absurd powers from the gravity core compared to its master!

And thus, unlike the 2 million tonnes Skullius was capable of, it was able to imbue 123 million tonnes of weight in a single hit!

Of course, this wasn't all that Replicus had felt with the punch just now. In addition to its current 1,000% boost to stats and the increments from [Greatest Antiphon of Malignance], the Stolen Angel was also in possession of a new brawling skill Skullius had created by merging a few weaker combat skills: [Bombastic Imminent Barrage]!

Replicus felt his two pieces struggle to keep together. Thankfully, they held because of the armour.

Still though, the pain he felt was excruciating. His insides were greatly messed up, and in addition to that...

'W-what's this?' he thought.

Among his mangled and burst organs, something had been attached to his innards: a half a skull mark – the mark of the Preeminent Attegoth!

The shocking radiance of the [Heart of Revelation] returned and rendered Replicus' defences moot once more!

The gleam of the Stolen Angel's two orange eyes flashed in Replicus' sight, and then its fist sped forth like a projectile of light!

This time, Replicus was prepared, unlike last time. Sadly, however, when his two arms shot forth to stop the attack, they manifested as frail bones with no substance, and the Stolen Angel's punch fazed right through them before crashing into the odd innards of his chest!

BOOOOOOOM!

There was grave impact as Replicus felt his entire collection of organs burst and his body nearly implode from the inside!

He held fast, however. This wasn't enough to kill him. Not by a long shot!

He didn't go flying this time around because he managed to mobilise Null Life Essence to stop much of the force of the blow.

Replicus' phantoms had just been making a joke about how, thankfully, he didn't have any blood, when the light from the [Heart of Revelation] faded, revealing once again a bright jewel over the Stolen Angel, which retrieved its fist to attack again swiftly.

'Hmm?'

But Replicus didn't have time to think on this just yet. His hardships were far from over.

...!!!

Right as the surge of an enormous volume of mana registered to him, the air was suddenly assaulted by an endless series of whistles which told of the coming of an insurmountable number of sword slashes from every direction!

And indeed, they were unending.

Replicus' Ju`wtte sprang forth to defend him in an impressive, omni-directional shower, but like before, it was quickly overwhelmed. The slashes that came were mixed in with squirming, sharp dark red threads of Mortal Ruin that created opportunities for powerful slashes to reach Replicus!

Yet, the Warmoth's Progeny met them all with his quick hands.

They blurred, lined with Ju`wtte, and redirected each slash successfully. It was almost as easily as catching leaves falling from a tree.

At the same time, Replicus gave a lot of his attention to the Stolen Angel, which, shockingly partially transformed into light and began to circle around him while throwing its deadly punches at openings where Replicus took fractions of time to avoid slashes!

But Replicus worked around this too.

These slashes were nothing like the one that had split him in two, and for some reason, the harsh light of the [Heart of Revelation] from the Stolen Angel had ceased.

What could the reason could be, he didn't know, but he was glad all the same.

'I will get to the bottom of it soon enough!' Replicus thought and suddenly, he zoomed out of the way of the unending attacks by entering the Ju`wtte Blizzard Corridor and emerging elsewhere in the darkness. But the attacks continued to rain from the black, and the Stolen Angel became a stream of light and raced after him. (It seemed unaffected by the rain of slashes.)



The entity threw a punch and Replicus dodged to the side only to fling a punch of his own that was immensely faster than the Angel's!

Before the blow could make contact, however, the Stolen Angel turned into an outline of solid golden white light; it became intangible and immune to physical attacks!

...But Replicus scoffed.

'You think light can't be punched?'

CRACK!

One of his hands blurred, was coated in a thick layer of Ju`wte, and a powerful fist landed on the light form of the Stolen Angel!

The feedback registered immediately! The Angel's outline reeled back from the force!

The Warmoth's Progeny had taken his time to understand not only his body, but also his Ju`wte; that was why he could operate well enough even while split in two.

Over the two months he spent in the Timemould Mirror Box, he had fully mastered everything to do with his race and Class. From this, he managed to learn that Ju`wte, when applied precisely, could strike concepts, especially feeble ones!

However, this wasn't the only thing Replicus had learned. Far from it.

Chapter 1190: The One Left Standing (4)

Sixty blows rained on the Stolen Angel in a fraction of a second, each with power enough to pierce space casually!

The creature burst from the might that met it, and turned into shards of light that Replicus was sure would reform sooner rather than later.

According to Serenity, the Attegoth had become the bearer of all of Skullius' skills, but he imagined that the two probably couldn't use the same skill at the same time. If they could, at the very least, one would have a lesser version of the ability.

This would explain why Skullius had a smaller [Heart of Revelation] over his head while the Stolen Angel had a larger one; the Angel was also the one predominantly making use of it.

As for how the Stolen Angel managed to recover from being frozen in Absolute Frost...

'As long as he carried a shadow and was embraced by the dark, he would never know any harm. He would never die.'

This was what Skullius had said just earlier.

To Replicus, this meant that Skullius had acquired a new ability. One, as he guessed, that like [Greatest Antiphon of Malignance], was an amalgamation of all his [Evil Darkness] skills!

This skill apparently made him immune to damage as long as he was smothered in darkness. If the Stolen Angel had access to this skill as well...

'It appears this skill allows him to remain perfectly hidden too. Even though he is using mana for these slashes he's ending now, I can't pinpoint his location,' Replicus thought as his speeding hands blocked all the disembodied sword attacks intending to dice him to bits. 'I have to get out of here.'

The Stolen Angel had just recovered when Replicus pointed one of his free hands forth, the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow – which he had called on earlier – raised, and declared:

"Brunt Divide."

At once, the darkness was parted like a dark sea, revealing once again the dark tiling, bright chandelier, and expansive sixth floor of the tower which the battle was now taking place in.

Replicus saw thousands of Skulliuses wielding long, chipped zhanmadaos and green hangers.

It still staggered Replicus that all these Skulliuses were actually real.

He couldn't have known, but they were products of one of the four Pinnacle Sword Styles of the [Infinite Sword God], known as the Slow Ghost Divine Sword Art. The user could create up to

7,000 fleeting ghosts that possessed the same attack power as the user, but they only lasted for five seconds before dissipating.

Many of these ghosts seemed a little surprised that the darkness was parted so unceremoniously, but they reacted almost immediately. They hurtled towards Replicus at once.

However, the Warmoth's Progeny was way ahead of them. After weaving in behind their attacks with astounding speed, making sure to kill some of them with quick jabs to the head, he activated [Mana's Whores].

Right then, the cores of the Skullius ghosts were suddenly tugged towards a point in front of Replicus along with their owners and a large, suspended mound of Skulliuses was soon created!

"[Core Demolition]," Replicus then said.

At once, the cores of the ghosts ignited in a spectacular explosion that caused the building to tremble.

None of them possessed a mastery of essence that eclipsed that of the Warmoth's Progeny after all, and thus they couldn't resist.

'I see. So, these ghosts aren't protected by the mysterious power of Skullius' new darkness skill,' Replicus reasoned while clashing his Ju`wtta together.

He seemed to be right on the money because a moment later, the real Skullius dashed from the solid darkness of the wall and hurtled in his direction. At the same time, the Stolen Angel lunged, its orange eyes strangely gleaming bright. But Replicus didn't hurry to engage with the two. Instead, a porous ball of purple-gold appeared in one of his hands and he swiped downward with it!

BOOOOOOM!

The entirety of the towering building of darkness suddenly shook vehemently, and for a moment, the view of distant trees, charred ground and the mostly clear sky spawned around the three combatants, but it was quickly devoured by the sombre interior design of the dark building once again!

Replicus frowned and he shot a hard gaze towards Skullius who had stopped in his tracks, and with a look of extreme effort propped up two of his fingers in a magical gesture.

'Again?' the Progeny thought.

Just now, he had used Reversion on the entire building in an effort to revert it back to a state where it hadn't been constructed yet; all to get rid of Skullius' advantage. Unfortunately, it seemed to work only partially before Skullius used his unusual, unknown powers to resist.

Once again, he had resisted the influence of Maximum Catalyst.

This didn't make sense to Replicus.

Skullius' skills were all Super skills.

His [Heart of Revelation], which was at that similar tier of power, shouldn't have been able to overpower his Transcendent armour, rendering it meaningless when the Stole Angel attacked earlier. A Supreme skill – at least – was required to counter something of the Transcendent grade.

The same applied with Skullius' inexplicably potent sword slash which sliced him two. Somehow, the Hybrid Luman was ramping up the output of his abilities to mind-boggling degrees and without using any essence at all.

Skullius grinned as soon as the building was reformed and joined the Stolen Angel, which had already struck at Replicus.

The Warmoth's Progeny was wary of its [Heart of Revelation] suddenly flaring like before and leaving him wide open (literally), but thankfully that didn't happen. He swiftly grabbed the thing's wrist, pulled it forward and sent his knee banging into its torso. The creature burst apart even as it automatically turned into light to protect itself.

A rain of slashes then met Replicus' automatic Ju`wtte.

Skullius had come in close. He was always surrounded by a field of slashes that protected him – an effect of [Infinite Sword God] – and they immediately attempted to slash apart Replicus. Of course, they had been quite irrelevant so far, and thus Skullius had to act himself.

He unsheathed Demion's Dance, his green hanger, coated it in a thin, but firm layer of darkness, and flung it up into the air while keeping the Bashful Abomination in his grip.

A dark outline of him then spilled from his flesh and sped upward to catch the darkness-coated hanger while Skullius' body, which remained mobile, sliced incessantly at Replicus with impeccable speed!

Skullius had been marked by the half a skull mark from the Stolen Angel earlier. This was how his limp body was able to move even after his consciousness was expelled from his body with Crude World Projection. Essentially, the Stolen Angel was piloting his body!

The Projected Skullius, wielding Demion's Dance unleashed [Courting Death] – a field of immensely sharp, extremely refined Mortal Ruin – which immediately dyed the entire sixth floor in thin, straight lines of dark red!

But Replicus was unbothered. Even as the Stolen Angel entered back into the fray, cartwheeling, jumping up and drop kicking him from above, his Ju`wtte, which defended him from the previous two attacks in a shower of yellowish-red, erratic bolts didn't let the great foot touch him.

In the gap in time where his assailants exercised their violent right to fail at dealing him damage, Replicus activated [Unrelenting Ju'wtte Chain]!

A bolt of Ju`wtte as large as Replicus' entire body sprang into existence with a loud zap and connected Skullius to the Stolen Angel!

At once, the Stolen Angel was obliterated for the umpteenth by the shocking electric oomph, turning into what seemed like flaming ash after a blinding yellowish-red light. Skullius, on the other hand... was completely fine, albeit a bit luminous.

'He really doesn't take damage as long as he is surrounded by darkness...' Replicus thought, and he swung two of his fists harshly into the Hybrid Luman's face and torso!

On contact, balls of Ju`wtte emerged within fractions of miniscule time, and exploded like great fireworks around Skullius with about as much grace as canon-fire!

It was Crush damage!

One of these explosions had been enough to greatly harm Caxellac and even crack his armour!

Skullius was sent ploughing through the poorly lit space, and he bounced off the floor and smashed into the ceiling.

But he was unharmed. On the ceiling where his momentum died, he looked at Replicus with a calm grin as his Projected form slithered back into him.

'Shock damage didn't work on him either, huh?' Replicus thought.

He didn't like the way things were going.

Behind him, the Fallen Angel had reformed. Its orange eyes gleamed menacingly as it began walking towards him.

Everything was a mystery so far. This wasn't good. Something had to change.

While wielding the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow, he pointed to the darkness depicting the end of the building and called, "Brunt Divide."

At once, part of it split, revealing the view outside.

Replicus then turned to Skullius above.

"Let me abuse my time advantage a bit. A little game of cat and mouse ought to change the pace," he said and he streaked through the gap in the wall, appearing outside.

Skullius scoffed.

"Knock yourself out. But I'm afraid it won't go as you think it will."

As soon as Replicus met the outside air, his body was warped.

A second later, he appeared elsewhere. He wasn't in a forest, but in a town.

Quite an overpopulated town; it was one of the several strongholds for common men left in Pelian. It was just as Skullius had promised.

Their battle could only be held in the tall tower or populated areas around Aigas.

And also, quite like how Skullius pointed out, things didn't go as Replicus thought they would.