

Undead 1221

Chapter 1221: A Tale of the Four

Kaella Seinold Fe'krel, a proud, strong woman who shed away everything – her family, her wealth, her old world – departed with hope on a course to pursue her ideals.

Her rigid, untameable stance on what life and death were, what they were supposed to be, pushed her towards similarly motivated individuals from an infamous band of mercenaries: Aspire to Divine.

She had had doubts when these people had reached out to her but soon she found that these doubts were unwarranted.

The Aspire to Divine mercenaries were the real deal.

Kaella was impressed by how vast their operation was. Because she had only seen a few hundred of the mercenaries on Faaminl, her home world, she had assumed that was all there was to them, but she had been mistaken. The hundreds she saw were just people from her own world who had been recruited before her.

As she left with them from Faaminl, wondering just how they would escape without upsetting the Rules, she was fed information she had lacked prior.

The Rules barring exit and entry from a world were exceptionally lenient when it came to the natives of said world. This was why they managed to leave Faaminl without any problems.

As for how it was that the Aspire to Divine mercenaries had managed to setup this entire recruitment process. Well...

The group was shockingly knowledgeable when it came to all things Divine and beyond.

They had ways to inspect and 'flirt' with the Rules governing a world.

For as long as needed, they would simply watch and select potential recruits from the great void using powerful detection artefacts. These seldom worked on the stronger, Rich Worlds, but for Faaminl, they worked well enough.

To ensure smooth recruitment, the Aspire to Divine mercenaries employed small, but powerful communication tools that wouldn't be rejected by a world's Rules. These tools would be dropped close to the marked potential recruits and through these recruits, the Aspire to Divine mercenaries would conduct their operations.

Kaella had been especially excited when she was evaluated by the six thousand older, veteran members of the Aspire to Divine who received them upon leaving Faaminl. They rode a great, odd silver vessel through the great void.

They called her a great number of flattering adjectives and gave her a rank befitting of her immense strength and talent.

Soon, Kaella was handling recruitment operations while undergoing the detailed induction that preceded a promotion into the above average tier of mercenaries in the interworld mercenary group.

A lot of people had admired Kaella, wanting to befriend her, but she wasn't the sociable sort. Aside from top ranking members of the group, she didn't entertain anyone else.

There were many reasons for this, but chief among them was the crushing guilt Kaella felt from what she had left behind. Her decision to leave Faaminl was bearing good fruit, and yet she had left her son to suffer alone back on Faaminl.

This sullen fact disallowed her from doing anything but attempting to rise up the ranks and grow in power in order to reach her goal. She resigned herself to not savour the process, much less enjoy it.

This soon changed, however.

From Faaminl, the new recruits and the six thousand veteran Aspire to Divine mercenaries had been going from world to world, bringing in new members while building a steady chain of camaraderie, but after a point, the recruitment stopped.

The high-ranking mercenaries changed the course of the great, silver transport vessel and in what might have been months (the passage of time was hard to process and quantify in the great void), the group landed on a Breaking Chasm.

Breaking Chasms were realms greater than worlds, normally conquered and inhabited by Divine individuals and Deities.

It was here that Kaella saw the true scale of the Aspire to Divine mercenaries.

There were millions affiliated with the group and over half had stepped into Divinity.

Kaella's intrigue and excitement had soared.

Her determination was fuelled.

Years passed.

Kaella grew colder and more impressive, exploiting the resources Aspire to Divine practically handed to the talented.

Quicker than most, she reached Divinity and was invited into the Ascended Camp where all the other Divine level combatants resided.

Kaella intended to maintain her cold demeanour until she eventually reached the second highest tier of powerhouses in the Aspire to Divine – the Deities – and beyond, but it didn't work out as she hoped.

She met two rather vibrant characters who melted her chilly exterior thoroughly.

One was a delightful, kind and pretty woman named Rorsetta, and the other was a funny, smart and extremely imaginative man who went by the name Parrhaya.

Both were close friends and they spilled some of their oddly positive pressure onto Kaella through their aspirations which, while different to Kaella's own, were in no way inferior.

Rorsetta wanted to become strong so that she could create a race of living beings that could take care of their world optimally, perhaps even bettering it in various ways. She had come from a world that had collapsed because its natives had been exceptionally careless, polluting it and crushing it with needless battles.

Parrhaya, oddly enough, simply had millions of ideas that he claimed could only be brought to life when he acquired the power to create living organisms.

Kaella found Parrhaya rather... vast. Some of the ideas he propounded...

"Wouldn't it be cool if there was a world with beings that would start out at the ceiling of power in their world? How would their day-to-day lives look like? What objectives would they grow to have?" he would suddenly say.

"I never knew there could be anything sentient that didn't look human. I'd say my Deity was rather bland, imaginatively speaking. It would have been cool if my world had had other sentient species. I'm curious how we humans would have interacted with them. Sure, they'd be wars, discrimination and all that but the niche interactions beyond such foolishness...

how would they look?" Parrhaya would suddenly spit.

Rorsetta and Parrhaya were the perfect pair.

Apparently, should either one of them become a Deity while the other failed, they had vowed to make the other's dream come true no matter the cost.

Their cheer and optimism affected Kaella more than she had wanted to admit at first.

She found herself actively engaging with them whenever they came to nag her, completely shattering her cold bubble.

But unfortunately, Kaella wasn't like the two.

She didn't have a broad imagination or valiant objectives.

She had been so focused on avoiding death in order to appreciate it much, much later in her existence, that she hadn't really given much thought to aspects that a larger life entailed; creation was a theme that couldn't be torn away from a Deity's life, for instance.

But Kaella didn't think too hard on this and her friends didn't push her to obtain greater, more saintly or entertaining objectives.

Perhaps that was why Kaella never had a problem with these two friends of hers.

They bonded and grew together, though to her astonishment, Kaella found that Rorsetta and Parrhaya were in a different tier of 'talented' than she was.

They grew rapidly. Parrhaya in particular was a prodigy. Apparently, he had reached Divinity when he was only 42 years old on his home world.

He didn't brag about it, however. If it hadn't been for the work the Aspire to Divine demanded of them as Divines, Kaella would have never known how much of an oddity Parrhaya was.

Because of his free-spiritedness, she was compelled to follow him rather than to become bitter and jealous. After all, he and Rorsetta had promised to make her goal come true as well, if she should fall short in some ways.

Time passed and Parrhaya and Rorsetta became Deities before Kaella could. They ascended up the ranks but kept close contact with Kaella, who had been expecting this outcome for a while.

As much as Parrhaya and Rorsetta attempted to ensure that things between them and Kaella remained the same, the change was still noticeable. Kaella was usually left to perform her duties as a Divine alone.

Her chats with Parrhaya and Rorsetta became a thrilling dessert rather than a filling, all-day course.

Kaella couldn't have admitted it, but she often felt lonely. She had grown used to the company.

But then, a certain individual came into her life.

It was a certain man, just as charming and as broad-minded as Parrhaya. His name was Ciumin.

Because her cold shell had already been melted off, Kaella didn't push him away when he approached her. He filled the hole that had begun to emerge within her rather perfectly. He fulfilled Kaella moreso than she had thought any one person was capable of this far into her life.

She fell in love.

Parrhaya and Rorsetta didn't quite like Ciumin.

He had odd ambitions and was rather bold when sharing them with anyone other than Kaella. He too was freakishly talented and unlike Parrhaya, he basked in his talent rather than subduing it under modesty.

Ciumin's deepest desires were rather sombre but oddly reasonable. While they had a touch of darkness to them, Kaella didn't mind. Ciumin wasn't a bad person in her eyes; well, compared to what she had done to get here, he was a saint as far as she was concerned.

Kaella and Ciumin ascended into Deific power a short while later and moved up the ranks.

To Kaella's surprise, Parrhaya and Rorsetta invited her to an idea they had been concocting. Since they all had become Deities, Parrhaya suggested that they all create a world with characteristics that matched their objectives rather than setting out on their own.

Kaella found the idea delightful, but Ciumin didn't and she understood why.

Of course, because Ciumin loved Kaella, he didn't stop her from joining her friends.

However, since creating a world was a binding affair that would essentially tear the two from each other for a lengthy period, Ciumin gave Kaella a condition; he wanted to become part of the world Parrhaya, Rorsetta and Kaella were to create.

Kaella accepted wholly, but her friends were not too happy with this.

For Kaella's sake, they agreed in the end, but things went south almost immediately after the creation process started.

Parrhaya and Ciumin did not get along.

Ciumin criticised Parrhaya's ideas ruthlessly.

"What use is a bunch of creatures born with all the power in the world? Are you insane? What principle do you hope to learn from creating such a thing? And you want us all to help you? That's a waste of energy!" he would say.

"That's about as thick as I've ever seen a man get. Why are you so obsessed with standard living creatures and solving prior mysteries? Nothing in this reality is new. Go find some world that already exists with these conditions, and write a paper on your findings. This is worthless! Now, if you would listen to what I have in mind..." Ciumin would bark.

Kaella didn't know who she should support.

Thankfully, both Parrhaya, Ciumin and Rorsetta didn't allow her to butt in, but she felt awfully small when she heard them arguing while she sat some distance away, watching.

It was strange.

Everyone was here because of her.

If not for her, everyone would have gotten what they wanted.

But at same time, Kaella couldn't change the current status quo.

This proved true when Parrhaya finally had enough of Ciumin.

Kaella had never seen him so furious.

And it was then that she realised how mighty a Deity could be even in the eyes of another Deity.

The words Parrhaya said on that occasion still reverberated through her very soul.

"I have and will continue to tolerate you only because I gave my word to Kaella. I'm against throwing you out of our circle for that reason alone. But I can't stomach your attitude anymore. For Kaella's sake, I will have you linger, but I will not tolerate your outrageous opinions against my or Rorsetta's plans.

For that..." he had said, and through a manner of technique Kaella couldn't understand, he sealed Ciumin in the unstable foundations of the world they had begun to create.

Parrhaya had then turned to a shocked Kaella and said:

"I'm sorry, but refusing to entertain with him meant he would take you away, right? I couldn't allow that. I gave you my word that we would make your ideal a reality. And about him... don't worry. It's not permanent.

We will release him after we have enthralled ourselves with our ideas and brought you up significantly in strength."

It was these words that Kaella remembered when Aigas was completed, when Parrhaya created the dragons, the Giants and humans, when Rorsetta created the Sif, when the two became the land and the sea.

And when Rorsetta and Parrhaya were called upon by their superiors, ordered to hasten back to the Breaking Chasm where their journeys had begun, Kaella recalled how they, with great trust and faith left her with their work and hoped she would grow while protecting and bettering it.

Chapter 1222: Deceit and Wrath

Because of the battle between Replicus and Skullius, Aigas currently existed in three timelines.

They appeared as humongous drapes onto which live events from the period during which the Second Grand War took place; the time when the Ashing of Time was to occur; and the current state of Aigas, four thousand years later, were transpiring.

There was no manual detailing how such an unusual state of the world could possibly continue to persist or how it could be solved by mortals.

In any case, it was a dangerous state of affairs.

At first, most of the billions residing in each timeline hadn't been aware of what had become of the world, but because of the hundreds of thousands of Soul Spawn, and the heated exchange between Beyrmir and Jiggorrhax which had cast terrible shockwaves across the timeliness, many more people grew to know the status quo.

If they used the incredible powers they had, they could even see through their own drape of time and ascertain the position and contents of another.

It was truly terrifying to imagine what could happen as a result of this.

However, as established before, the current state of Aigas was only temporary.

Nothing that hadn't reached Divinity could forcefully give a permanent command to time.

Even Skullius, with his unlimited output slashes wasn't capable of that.

Of course, he wasn't the only one to toy with time in this world.

Eaniss had turned back time during the battle with the Ardent Curses in order to catch up to the masked man, Actuass. This feat was only possible because she had exercised powers from the Reverse Cluster that was imbued with time. In other words, she had temporarily harnessed raw time in the power of her hands.

This was different from acquiring an affinity with a concept.

An affinity was a relationship a combatant had with a certain element that normally couldn't be obtained normally. As such, exploiting an affinity with time was different from holding it and having it do your bidding.

At that time, Eaniss had pretty much been wielding a Rule, and because she hadn't used it for anything other than giving herself a lead, what she performed was nothing more than a small knot that was eventually undone in a couple dozen minutes.

Another individual to mess with time was Gabel, a man from the Severed Union directly under Eaniss.

The man had a Veneration art that allowed him to stop and rewind time. Using it, he had managed to reverse Skullius' death at the hands of Rias' machinations during the Premium Age Royale.

This was also different from what Skullius had done.

Veneration arts were not too different from Divine Blessings. The only catch was, they were received from a Deity who had no ties to the world the native who received the Veneration art resided in.

What Gabel did was prompted by a Divine power, thus it remained as a permanent fact on Aigas.

But the damage Skullius had done with his near-Divine power would not last long.

It could not be permitted to.

When creating Aigas, the Deities, particularly Quintess, had relished in the idea of their creations reaching ridiculous tiers of power that would shake the world. However, be that as it may, there had to be limits, otherwise Aigas would fall apart.

One of the sets of Rules set in place disallowed world-unravelling feats of power like this from becoming permanent, as that would cause too much chaos.

This was why Suzamete hadn't flinched when she had seen Skullius cut time... twice.

Indeed, the implications and consequences of an Aigas that existed in two pasts as well as a future, were outrageous.

Replicus kept looking dumbly at a face he had never thought he'd see again.

The chestnut coloured skin, thick, curly black hair and pure hazel eyes looking at him were thrumming with life.

Replicus couldn't believe it.

After all this time, Elita was in front of him.

She had been the Paladin Champion whom he met shortly after leaving the Tremur Forest back then.

She had shocked him after proclaiming herself to also be someone acknowledged by the Voice of Worlds back, like him.

She had known his real name.

She and Red Rage had joined hands to defeat the abomination of the Green Neolists that had been set loose in Eofel before he swiftly ended it with a sneak attack.

She had been the one who had given him a map to Genhuis City and set him free from the custody of the Purity Knights. Because of this, he had seen her in a very favourable light.

Replicus shook.

But... he had seen Elita succumb to the UNCoddled curse because she had helped him.

He had heard her scream, and seen her convulse, punished for being good to him.

Replicus had felt, for the first time, a pang of sorrow and guilt that day. He had always cursed when he remembered Elita, thinking her death was a waste.

In a lot of ways, what he thought had happened to Elita was what made him eager to prevent more of his future helping hands from melting alive.

And yet...

"You're... alive?" Replacus said to the former Paladin Champion.

He disregarded the giant figure of Boron not so far away, clutching at the nasty wound on his vessel's chest.

At Replacus' inquiry, Elita's mildly playful visage vanished. A modest smile appeared on her face instead.

"Oh, right. You didn't know," she said, an unmistakable note of sadness and empathy livid within her voice, "I'm sorry you had to carry such a thought, no, a burden, with you all this time. I grew to learn that you'd think it was your fault. It was some curse you had, right? I should have been considerate. I should have made an effort to show you I was alive."

Replacus was taken aback.

Elita was genuinely saddened by this.

"After you left, Quintess saved me. At the time, I struggled with the why and the how, but..." she continued.

"Quintess?" Replacus said, puzzled.

What did that Deity have to do with this?

But Elita gathered her wits. This wasn't the time.

"I'll tell you all about it later. As I'm still alright after helping you, I'm guessing you're not cursed anymore, right?" she said as she faced forward and made her long sword spin before clutching it tighter in her grasp.

"Yeah."

Replicus concurred. This wasn't the time for a backstory.

Even the brief moments they had taken to chat while a Deity was in front of them were incredibly bold.

And speaking of boldness, Replicus looked at Elita's sword again.

Its blade had alternating, messy, shades of hot pink and gold.

This must be the weapon she used to hurt Boron just now.

Because the Deity truly seemed to be heavily incapacitated as a result of that one blow, Replicus was sure this weapon couldn't be graded by Aigas' standards. There was no way!

Boron had similar thoughts about the sword.

In fact, he regarded the sword more than its user.

He was finding it hard to contain his essence within this vessel just from the cut he received on his chest.

It hurt.

It hurt immensely.

But when compared to a more discreet agony burning within something finer than his soul, this mortal wound was nothing.

Boron looked up into the sky.

He looked past the clouds and his vision settled on a human vessel that was holding the essence of his lover as it floated up.

His face contorted with rage.

<KAELLAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!>

The Deity roared so loudly that everything else on Aigas seemed to turn furious on his behalf as well. A shockwave of Divine energy rolled out of the Deity.

Elita propped up her sword and defended herself and Replicus from it.

Suzamete looked below with a mix of fear and sadness.

She knew she would have to face the consequences of her actions.

Indeed, she had fooled Boron. After all...

<SO THIS IS THE ENDING YOU HAD ME WAIT AROUND FOR?!> Boron barked, his voice reaching every Aigas across time.

Indeed, when Suzamete had told Boron to repent of his fury just until Replicus and Skullius' battle was over, promising that the 'ending' was spectacular, she hadn't meant the conclusion of the fight.

She had meant what would follow immediately after: Elita's arrival.

The wound cutting across Boron's chest was no ordinary wound.

It wouldn't heal.

Suzamete would know, just like Quintess and Listafelle would. She could see everything that would happen in Aigas as long it was not prompted by powers equal to or stronger than her own.

<I SEE WHERE YOUR LOYALTY LIES IN THE END! I SEE THIS IS HOW YOU PAY MY LOVE! I SEE THIS IS HOW MUCH YOU REGARD ME WHEN COMPARED TO YOUR FRIENDS!> Boron cried.

The pressure around him grew and dwindled continuously.

He was growing weaker with each passing moment.

However...

His dark eyes flared gold.

<VERY WELL! THIS IS HOW WE PART! I WILL MATCH YOUR SERPENTINE DECEIT WITH MY WRATH!>

And Ciumin, whose moniker was Boron, let out a terrifying howl imbued with an exaggerated volume of genuine Divine energy.

It spilled out in every direction... but it did not affect anything physical within Aigas.

No.

It hurtled towards the drapes of time raised above the present and imposed Boron's will!

Chapter 1223: Flight of the Deities

The blast of Divine energy was unforgiving and uncompromising.

Suzamete felt it slither through Aigas, causing great reverberations, and knew at once what was about to happen. She paled.

She hadn't thought this was how Boron would respond to her betrayal. She hadn't seen how his actions would unfold.

She couldn't capture the actions of a stronger being than her even if they were in Aigas. She had hoped that Elita coming in through the gaps in the Rules of the world created by Skullius' Noboboyama earlier with her extraordinary sword would lead to Boron's immediate and thorough incapacitating, which would buy her a bit more time, but...

The drapes of time hanging in the sky were suffused with Boron's energy and they unfurled, swinging down with morbid grace.

While they hung from the present Aigas, it was clear to see the distinction between the two pasts of this world and its future. The texture of the former was different from that of the latter.

However...

The drapes of Aigas' pasts started to turn rigid and they made way for themselves within the stability of the future – the present Aigas. A film of genuine Divine energy coated them and it appeared to sow them into permanence, ensuring that their status as temporary visitors in the present was revoked.

To the common eye, they still appeared like giant drapes hanging from somewhere above (now turned stiff), but to Replicus and Elita, the new reality was revealed in full.

'Damn it!' Replicus thought, a dark look on his face. His still weakened body seemed to lose even more strength as it slumped. 'This is really bad!'

He looked up into the sky, searching for Suzamete's presence. He quickly figured that Boron's scream just now suggested that in his rise, he had already encountered the Sky Deitess. And if everything about Boron's identity as it was postulated by the Purity was true, then Suzamete and Boron would not be allies.

Boron did not care for Aigas, but Replicus knew how much work Suzamete put into ensuring Aigas stood in one piece. If Boron stood against that...

Right then, Replicus recalled a chilling sentence the possessed Skullius had said before their battle.

'...sadly, nothing you do can stop the progression of these plans. Even besting me will not change the course I have made.'

Of course, back then, Skullius couldn't have possibly meant that his toying with time in their fight would lead to this, but regardless, it was because of him that Boron was able to create this monstrous abnormality.

He was fixing the past times to the present, and as Replicus recalled, with an adequate affinity to time, it was possible to go from timeline to timeline with ease!

If this problem wasn't solved swiftly...

<I'D LIKE TO SEE HOW YOUR FRAIL PROWESS MENDS THIS, KAELLA!> Boron roared, a vicious expression on his face.

He could see the shaken look in Suzamete's eyes from here.

Even though his body was falling apart, along with his control of his powers, he had managed to pour out just enough energy to create a problem that couldn't be solved so easily, especially not by Suzamete.

The Sky Deitess was frustrated. In the next instance, she slid through the canvas of the sky and vanished from sight.

Boron scoffed, but then his dark eyes suddenly turned back towards Elita and Replicus. He had sensed movement.

The former Paladin Champion had pounced madly, her sword aglow. She meant to deal another lethal blow or better yet, end the Deity before her!

She was extraordinarily quick on her feet.

Replicus was surprised. She was way stronger than she had been before!

Boron scowled.

His eyes kept on the long sword in Elita's grasp. In this state, he wasn't sure he could completely avoid this woman's attacks especially if she moved as quickly as she had done before.

Elita's figure zipped here and there and then she vanished and appeared behind Boron!

...!!!

The Deity was a fraction of a nanosecond later in determining her position. His back was left wide open for her blade.

MBING!

There was a resounding vibration of steels!

Something had stopped Elita's blade before it could cut through Boron again, albeit with immense difficulty.

It was a cruel-looking scythe wielded by a large, horned, ash-skinned Carven with a big grin.

Ashema had come to his Lord's rescue!

"Fear not, my Lord! I'm here!" he cried with dark valiance, masked only by vague uncertainty. Ashema was wary of the sword he had bravely chosen to clash against.

He glared at Elita who raised a brow at his physical appearance.

"So this is the spawn from the Under I used to preach about?" she said and Ashema cackled.

She drew back and vanished again, appearing behind a surprised Ashema to attack Boron again, but...

BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM!

Four massive beings that looked as though they were carved from stone fell from the sky and surrounded Boron protectively. Elita slowed to halt.

She hadn't thought there were more of these creatures nearby.

Though they didn't expel some kind of pressure or energy at all, she could tell they were immensely powerful.

Two of the largest among these new Carven rushed and glared at Elita while the others tended to Boron.

"Lord! Are you able to sustain yourself?" one of them asked with great concern.

Boron hummed indignantly.

<I need a new vessel. Get me out of here.> he commanded.

At once, the two Carven heaved their lord and begun to float upward with his body as it continued to leak what looked like soapsuds from the wound on its chest.

Elita huffed in annoyance.

She put on the true sapphire mask she had torn from her face earlier and purple essence blasted from her body instantly.

It was Voided Death Essence!

'Just for a couple more seconds...' the former Paladin Champion said to herself.

In a blink, she vanished from sight, and the vast Carven that had been standing in her way were chopped up six ways!

She used one of their shoulders as a foothold and shot towards the escaping Boron.

The Deity wore an unsightly face at this.

<Persistent pest!> he growled and sent remnants of his power as Divine energy that cradled Ashema and the vast Carven Elita had just slaughtered.

The giant Carven gathered themselves back and with shocking speed, they leaped upward, one grabbing Elita's leg while the other grabbed her torso.

But...

SHIIIIING!

Seven, unseen, disembodied sword slashes flew into the sky and lopped off the arms of the Carven with ease!

The giant Carven were astonished.

Beside the weakened Replicus, a healing Skullius was extended his hand upward from the depth of the fuming crater, the Stark Constellation crackling on his forehead.

Elita used the chance to wiggle free and zoom towards Boron again, but Ashema, empowered by his Lord's Divine energy flew in from her flank with his bat-like wings!

His cheeks were inflated. A large gourd was in his hand, filled to the brim with blood. He had taken a deep swig just now, and...

With incredible precision, he spat a sharp, quick arrow of dark blood which zipped towards Elita responded promptly. She brought her sword forward and blocked it, but in her attempt to defend herself, she was forced off course as she was in mid-air without a foothold.

Ashema spread his wings and launched himself at her, his scythe spinning in his hands and the widest grin on his face.

"I sense unique blood from you!" he cried.

Elita cursed.

Her mask started to fade away as though it were an illusion.

'Time's up already? And all I have left is this damned sword,' she thought.

Her eyes stared up at the quickly escaping trio.

She wouldn't let them off so easily.

Voided Death Essence seeped into her sword and it drank it greedily. Elita's mask fully vanished.

Ashema came in hot, blood pouring from his gourd and his scythe storming balefully towards Elita. However... a flurry of invisible slashes came from nowhere and easily slashed him into seven dozen pieces that cleared away from Elita.

The Carven gritted his teeth and scowled. His blood manipulation made more potent by Boron's powers quickly helped him reattach his body and for a split moment he looked down into the crater at the Hybrid Luman – the source of the whipping slashes.

'I suppose our fun ends here then?' he thought, a little disappointed, but he was forced to turn back to Elita when his body fully regenerated.

Her gold and pink sword flashed with a dark purple hue.

'I swear I hate this sword!' Elita said and then she swung it with all her might, aiming at Boron and his Carven!

Chapter 1224: Sir Knight

The energy Elita channelled through the gold and pink sword was unfathomable. Voided Death Essence had an intensity to it that contradicted the still tranquility of Null Life Essence, especially when it was livid with hostile intent.

It was because of this fact that Replicus had already discerned that Elita was no ordinary combatant any longer. The mask she had worn had already given him clues, as it was eerily similar to the one Aurolio donned when he entered the 'Mastered Void Gate' state back then.

This new development, while extremely shocking to Replicus who had thought Elita was long dead, hadn't risen up his throat in words, but he had quickly processed it with the help of his phantoms.

Of course, it would make sense that Elita was tied to an Existential Parallel like him.

Everyone Replicus knew who had the guidance field was just like that.

It all made sense now.

As for how Elita suddenly became formidable enough to maim gods, Replicus wouldn't grow to know immediately.

For now, he watched as Elita charged her sword and slashed at the retreating Boron and his servants.

The former Paladin Champion bellowed.

Her sword suddenly seemed to gain the weight of a world, as her swing caused Aigas and all its timelines to groan. They shook, acknowledging might that was enough to snuff out Divines easily!

The world was dyed in purple!

Even normal organisms could see the flash of Voided Death Essence at this moment, and feel the sharp intent to kill that attacked the skies!

The violent bolt of light that streaked upward was fierce indeed.

It might have been nameless, but Boron, its target, would not soon forget it. He recognised the danger it posed, and for a moment, he hadn't thought he could stop it in his current, pathetic state.

He cursed. He cursed Kaella, Parrhaya, Rorsetta, the Parallels and their anomalies!

And then... BOOOOOOOM!!!

The fumes and dust swirling in the massive pit within which Replicus was settled in vanished, cleared by the absurd shockwave that rushed from the skies and temporarily added to the gravity across the world!

A halo of pressurised air exploded outward amid the blinding purple that lit up all things.

It was a lethal yet beautiful sight.

But Elita did not feel a pang of delight from it.

She felt her reserves of Voided Death Essence dwindle to exhaustion.

This might not have been as deep of a blow to her if she had ripe certainty as to the success of her attack just now, but she didn't.

Perhaps when she launched the slash, she had been sure, but when the skies that were dyed in a deep purple now started to adopt numerous dots of black and red, she began to doubt.

'You can't be serious,' she thought in disbelief. 'What good are you if your attacks can be defeated by something like this?!

The former Paladin Champion's latter thought, was directed at her sword.

Up in the skies, a slew of enemies were falling down, whole and living, torn and dead.

Tens of thousands of Carven were descending.

Some were charred and broken, no doubt because they had willingly dived in the way of Elita's attack, and some, with grins and howls of jubilation were streaking down towards their Lord's enemy!

Ashema, who had been concerned before, was delighted.

"HA! It's begun! Lord Boron has summoned the others!" he cried loudly.

And indeed, it was true.

Before flying down towards Skullius and Replicus earlier, Boron had already given the go ahead for all the other Carven in the Under to rise up to Aigas through the open gap in Pelian where the Extreme Formula had been!

Now, they had rushed to their master's side and made way for him to escape swiftly, putting themselves in harm's way for his sake.

But how could this be?

Elita's sword should have been able to cut them all down even if the Carven came in between the Champion's slash and Boron. The gold and pink sword was, after all, able to harm a Deity, was it not? Surely the Cavern, even if they had numbered a million in this instant, should have perished along with their Lord!

But alas, it wasn't so.

This was the reason Elita thoroughly hated her sword, which was called Broodweiler.

It had two simple traits, both of which had frustrating downsides.

For one, its powers worked at their very best only against Divines and Deities. The sword could disrupt the flow of their powers and even kill them provided that it touched their souls. But against mortal enemies, its prowess resembled that of an ordinary Legendary weapon on Aigas at best.

On top of this, like any other keen-edged weapon, Broodweiler could be reinforced with energy to bring out greater efficiency, but it did not answer to any energy that was not drawn from the Existential Parallels; it only grew from being drowned in Undeath energy, Voided Death Essence and Null Life Essence!

And now, Elita had run out of her own essence. She had exhausted most of her strength during her travel through the great void to reach Aigas.

The former Paladin Champion scowled as she fell from the height.

'Boron escaped,' she thought with a scoff, and then her body flickered with a bit of uncoordinated mana.

The tens of thousands of enemies, some fodder and some truly strong hurtled her way.

'Do I even remember how to use mana anymore? I should probably use my Blessing instead.'

At once, a golden energy erupted from her.

She was ready.

With Replicus assisting her as he had done before, she could handle herself even against all these enemies. Her first order of business would be to handle Ashema, who was streaking toward her from her flank.

But then...

"Halt, in the name of Master Skullius!"

A regal, commanding voice blared across the skies and shockingly, all the enemies – all 65,781 of them – stopped as though suddenly frozen in a glacial prison.

A figure bathed in light so brilliant it hid his appearance emerged, floating in the skies.

It was Red Rage.

Replicus smirked.

'Finally. I'm glad you were smart enough to not get blasted to bits!' he thought.

The Carven, some of which had rough crimson skins, some black, some grey, and a variety of twisted, misshapen appearances and sizes, suddenly had one thing in common at this moment: their ruby red eyes gleaming with surprise.

Why had they suddenly stopped moving?

Red Rage flew down and caught Elita, who had been falling and soared upward with her.

The former Paladin Champion had been taken aback at first, but she quickly grew at ease. She smiled.

"It's been a while, Red Rage," she said, "Or should I say, Sir Knight?"

Red Rage seemed pleased.

"It is quite nice to meet you again, valiant female."

Chapter 1225: Ending the Swarm

Red Rage and Elita swirled into the sky with the grace of unusual romance while their enemies and their ally watched with no small amount of surprise and puzzlement.

In Elita's last fight on Aigas, she had taken well to Red Rage whom she had battled a particularly foul undead minion with. Of course, this was before she had used her guidance field and found out that he wasn't a powerful, humble Knight as she had thought, on top of learning his name.

But that didn't change her positive attitude towards the Apostle.

A few moments later, the many enemies started to twitch and regain their ability to move. Their eyes were filled with malice and their bodies were livid with unique powers that didn't drain any source of energy.

The instant they were released, they would pounce.

Red Rage turned to them and then said to Elita:

"I can compel crowds of enemies to do as I please for a few moments as long as they are all – as a collective – weaker than my master. This effect only lasts for a few seconds, however. I'm afraid I will be swarmed by enemies rather soon. Shall I stow you away somewhere safe before everything begins? You have already done much for Master Skullius. I can handle the rest."

Elita was plagued by the thought that she had let Boron escape when he was severely weakened along with the complement frustration that came with having Broodweiler as a weapon. Both of these were reasons to be sour, but she couldn't help but chuckle at Red Rage's words.

To think a mere summon could be so chivalrous.

"It's alright. I can fight. Now that I'm back on Aigas, this is my battle as well," she said. "I would require your support though. Our enemies seem very happy fighting in the air."

"As you wish," Red Rage said.

Right then, the Carven recovered their ability to move and blasted towards the two at breakneck speeds, preparing to use their abilities or already activating them.

Ashema hung back, however.

He squinted his lone capable eye.

There were now three enemies who had vast powers.

He had seen Replicus fight, and his combination with Skullius was extremely lethal.

He had seen Red Rage draw away the great dragon Jiggorrhax.

As for Elita, the threat she posed (while he didn't understand it with nuance) was clear.

'These are all sacrifices,' Ashema thought while looking at his kin. 'They already served their purpose. Lord Boron has escaped. I shouldn't risk staying here and potentially getting slain like the rest. I would rather stay alive and claim my reward from Lord Boron for saving him. Yes!

He should remember my part and gift me something worth while.'

And indeed, if Ashema hadn't stopped Elita earlier, Boron might have perished altogether, as Suzamete had hoped. Boron would not soon forget that and truly would reward Ashema immensely.

Thus, with a keen look below, at Skullius, Ashema grinned and sped away.

Meanwhile, his kin reached Red Rage and Elita. Some of the stronger Cavern immediately rushed to use their abilities.

A particularly large one with a matted, maroon armour turned into a lengthy, dark string that sprang forth speedily and reached Elita's face in a blink. This string then bulged and inflated into the form of the Carven and he revealed a cruel set of pointed teeth to bite into Elita's flesh.

But before he knew it, Elita was gone.

She had been tossed upward by Red Rage so quickly that it seemed as though that she had turned into thin air all of a sudden.

The Carven then found a profound, glowing hand gripping his neck tight. Most of his bodily faculties ceased at once, and he wheezed.

"For the crime of sexual harassment to an ordained lady, I confiscate your powers!" Red Rage said to the Carven... and it was so.

He snapped the creature's neck, and then his gleaming form became an elongated, golden string that coursed towards another Carven and inflated, forming the full figure of the Apostle. Red Rage then decked the Carven in the face with a punch, and the poor creature's body disintegrated from the Apostle's raw physical strength which far exceeded the Carven's durability.

And again, Red Rage turned into a quick-moving golden string and crushed another Cavern and another and a hundred more in but a few moments.

As he did so, Elita, whom he had flung upward continued to be suffused in the light of her Divine Blessing, Peerless Spirit.

The Blessing reinforced her strength threefold, granted her immunity against most foul sources of contamination and could heal those bathed by the light she produced!

A fat-bellied Carven with tiny wings on its back raced towards Elita while stepping on the flying bodies of its kind and pointed both its palms in her direction!

A set of large, dark hands that looked as though they were made of oil immediately grabbed Elita and held her tight.

She frowned.

'This feels just like when I fought that undead creature back then. It had traces of Boron's energy,' she thought.

But things were different now. She wouldn't be weakened or defeated because of this, as she had almost been back then, if it hadn't been for Red Rage and Skullius.

Elita's Blessing responded in kind to her resolve and the golden flash of light around her erupted with explosive oomph!

The hands that had been clutching her tight were dispelled and the enemies that had been approaching her, viewing her as a free lunch, were shocked.

Elita's pure hazel eyes attained a freaky glow and her dark, curly hair flew in every direction. She cast away the large, dark cloak she had been wearing, revealing the sleeveless, high neck black shirt underneath.

Her slightly muscular, scarred arms were exposed, and with them, she grabbed two Cavern, bashed them together such that they died instantly, used their bodies as footing and then went on a complete rampage.

Every Cavern she gave a direct punch or elbow was crushed into a pitiful mess or disintegrated altogether. Before a second could pass, tens of Cavern were obliterated, and her pace was only increasing.

Elita's physical body had been tempered through means that didn't involve Stages, or Skills or Mana while she was gone. Thus, her bare, raw physical prowess was extremely formidable despite her progress by Aigas' terms being no different than it was when she left.

Replicus watched the slaughter fest from the ground.

Every now and then, he had Skullius send out a few slashes, but soon, he stopped trying.

Red Rage and Elita didn't seem to need the help and quite frankly, Skullius' body was hard to control using the Stark Constellation.

The brand allowed Replicus full control over whoever was branded with it if necessary. Over the last two months, he had familiarised himself with this feature by using it on his closest subordinates.

But on Skullius, it was difficult to use, especially when trying to access the Hybrid Luman's powers. This was because all of his skills were imbued into the Stolen Angel. To access them, Replicus had to first access the mobile Attegoth through Skullius, but that connection was brittle at best. It was like trying to grab a hold of something too far to even see.

Replicus could have simply freed the Stolen Angel and had it join the battle in the sky, supporting his allies, but he wasn't so sure that was a good idea.

Currently, the Angel was stuck in a spell he had casted on it, [Cold Time]. He could release it, but a creeping doubt (from one of his phantoms) speculated that this might lead to a plethora of problems. The Stolen Angel was Skullius and while Replicus currently had the Hybrid Luman under control, he didn't know if that extended to the psyche of the Angel.

It was best not to test that right now, lest he create an enemy for himself while he was weak.

Replicus looked up at the dwindling enemies and Elita.

'After this, we have a lot to think and talk about,' he thought. He too was disappointed that Boron managed to escape, but the Deity hadn't been someone Replicus had had too many thoughts towards to begin with.

Now, however, he had many things to wonder.

The Progeny had just sighed in exasperation when...

"LAS AGGRANTE!"

A loud, feminine voice suddenly rent the air, and after it came a great, groaning beam of bluish white light from the east, casting a glaring highlight in the sky!

The beam aimed for the tens of thousands of Cavern, but instead of blasting them apart (as it looked capable of doing) it faded through them as it passed, coursing upward!

In a blink, its light vanished, but then...

All the Cavern – large and small, powerful and weak – that had been pierced by the light suddenly turned pale and withered. Their eyes were glazed over and their flesh was suddenly sunken and atrophied.

All of them started falling out of the sky like rain, dropping into the great crater below.

Elita and Red Rage were astonished.

What in the world....?

Only a quarter of the enemies remained now, and even they, upon seeing what became of their kin were reluctant to continue fighting. How could they?

Who had attacked just now?

Before the lot even conceived of the idea to run away or do something bravely stupid, the nearly twenty thousand remaining Carven... were killed.

Their heads were twisted at odd angles, or divorced from their bodies.

Their bodies were either cleaved in four or smashed through the chest.

In any case, they were left with frightening traumas over their forms, evidence of their passing.

But how could this be?

Elita and Red Rage barely had time to even see that the remaining enemies had been vanquished before they suddenly found themselves on the ground next to Replicus.

They both found that someone was touching their shoulders, however: a woman with very long lime green hair and a pretty, dark armour decorated with stars.

Chapter 1226: Invitation

Red Rage looked at Yuyui with relief and recognition while Elita raised her brows; she was a bit stunned that the anomalous incident just now had actually been caused a living being. To slaughter over sixteen thousand Carven and bring both her and Red Rage to the ground before they could realise what had happened...

Elita found herself growing more invested in the identity of this lime-haired woman. She looked rather young, and her armour stuck out like a sore thumb. It was anything but ordinary.

It was slim and dark, featuring ever-moving, nebulous thickets of faint blue, red and yellow within which many stars could be seen. And speaking of stars, the poleyns, couters and chest were all printed with large, six-pointed, golden stars, giving the woman a more valiant look than the Paladin Champions!

The small tree-shaped mark on her forehead also inspired mystery, constantly crackling with odd, vibrant lightning.

Elita was impressed.

It was also surprising to her that she couldn't ascertain a single thing about Yuyui's strength, which was why her senses were molesting everything else about her, trying to grasp at anything that would reveal more to her.

Before the former Paladin Champion could voice the many questions she had though, Replicus spoke first.

"Good work, Yuyui," he said. "I see your reflexes have improved excellently. I wasn't sure you managed to escape the blast entirely unscathed."

And indeed, Replicus hadn't been sure if Yuyui and Red Rage could react to the crazy destructive capacity Skullius' ray had unleashed. Thankfully, because of the armour Yuyui was wearing, Replicus could always ascertain if she was alive or not, though her exact condition would be lost to him.

Yuyui wore a bright smile and passed Red Rage and Elita as she rushed to her master. She gave the Hybrid Luman body, which stood still like a statue beside Replicus, a heavy look.

She sighed.

"I'm glad you did it in the end, but... it's... it's really hard to see him like this," she said sombrely.

Replicus immediately felt exasperated.

"For the last time... You do realise that's still me, right?" he said to her.

"I know, I know, but..." Yuyui said and hugged Skullius' body tenderly.

Replicus would have rolled his eyes if they had the capacity for it. He turned away from Yuyui and faced Elita.

The look on her face immediately told him that she was as befuddled as a normal person should be upon witnessing the odd scene before her and hearing what she just heard.

"This is Yuyui. One of my subordinates," Replicus said, gesturing his head at the lime-haired girl.

Elita smiled.

"I figured, since you told me you're free from that curse. I'm surprised you managed to net someone as powerful as her though. It really hasn't been that long since I left, you know?" she said.

Yuyui temporarily turned from Skullius and gave her a quizzical look.

Replicus laughed.

"Well, you'd be surprised if you saw the rest of them."

Elita raised a brow.

What was that supposed to mean?

"How do you know about my curse anyway? I don't recall ever having told you about it," Replicus said.

Elita gave a subdued laugh, recalling a plethora of both pleasant and extremely unpleasant memories.

"There's a long story to that. Long story short, though, Void explained to me about that. Even though I had survived the ordeal, I never forgot about it and I always wondered what it was all about. So I asked," she said before giving Replicus a keen look. "I'm sure you're familiar with the name Void, right?"

"Yeah, I know Void, alright. A bit."

Replicus nodded his head, which was about the only thing he could do with his body at this moment.

He had a lot of questions for Elita, some he hesitated to ask now of all times.

So much had happened today, and the crashing of the corpses of the Carven from the skies like summer rain seemed to conclude the day's events and the direction they took all too well.

A brief, awkward silence ensued. For some reason, the fact that Replicus and Elita recognised each other as bearers of Existential Parallels changed the exact nature of their relationship, however favourably they considered each other.

Oddly enough, the change happened in this very moment.

For Replicus, it was even more strange to consider that Elita probably knew a lot more about him than his ties to Null Life. (Of course she'd know given what she had hinted at just now.)

Thankfully, in the lull, Red Rage interjected.

"Just out of curiosity, Master. Where did you send those whom you rescued from the Territory clash?" he asked.

It was as though a bolt of lightning had stricken Replicus.

Right!

He had nearly forgotten all about that!

"I'm not sure, really. I teleported them as far away as I could. They are probably still in Pelian though."

"Did you, by any chance...?" Red Rage began.

"I'm not sure of that either," Replicus cut off the Apostle with a grave look. He knew exactly what he had been about to ask.

There had been so much going on during the Territory battle.

Replicus hadn't gotten the chance to verify if among those he managed to save, Silrat and Theurien were included. A battle with his alter had not allowed that much leeway, especially with the fact that his vision had been 'cancelled' throughout that latter part.

Red Rage paused and the awkward silence took over again. Elita didn't know what the two were talking about, but the subject didn't inspire her to speak too freely.

Yuyui joined in, having gotten enough reassurance that her 'master' was safe.

"Master... that last blast... I really thought it was going to do a lot more damage than it ended up doing. It was so sudden and really powerful. How did you manage to contain it?" she asked.

Replicus turned to her and smiled wryly.

"Ultimately, I didn't do much. I tried to use my Territory to smother the explosion, but it broke apart almost instantly. To be honest, I was quite surprised when I sensed that Aigas was pretty much in one piece after the blast. I had given up hope on preserving it after his last attack," he said as he gestured to his Hybrid Luman body.

And indeed. The moment the attack was launched, Replicus had known it had the power to completely level Aigas. To think [Evil Darkness] and [Just Light] could be weaponized to such a degree.

"Did Suzamete end up cushioning the explosion?" Replicus asked himself aloud.

"No, Master," Red Rage said. "It was the dragon. He was the one who contained it. I saw it happen from the distance."

"Jiggorrhax?"

Replicus was surprised, but then he wasn't.

Right. That actually made sense given how the dragon had behaved when innocents were at play. Well, he was a Herald, after all.

He had even used his Rule Runes to revive people who had died just by being in his presence over Agmold.

"Jiggorrhax?!" Elita cried in shock, but her face soon slackened as she realised a few things. She looked up.

The world was bonded in three timelines at the moment, and it didn't look like something that could be undone easily.

Replicus glanced at Elita, wondering about her reaction and then asked Red Rage:

"Where is Jiggorrhax now?"

"On my way here, I didn't see him. Such a large body should have been visible from anywhere. I do not think he is in this pit," Red Rage replied.

Replicus sighed.

Since Aigas was all messed up time-wise, Jiggorrhax was probably still hanging around somewhere.

The dragon was probably a pretty prelude to a catastrophe.

Replicus turned to Elita.

"I almost forgot that you just now arrived in Aigas and have no idea what's going on. I suppose I can explain it all once we are somewhere... other than here. And you can share your adventure as well," he said.

"...Right," Elita said with a sigh.

Indeed, it was better not to engage in lengthy lore and exposition in the scorching crater. Besides, time was of the essence and many things had to be done.

Replicus made Red Rage support him and through the Stark Constellation on the Hybrid Luman's forehead, he promptly made it draw closer.

But right then, a large crack opened in space a few meters away from the group.

They all turned hastily to look at it.

"What's that?" Elita asked, confused. "A Cluster?"

To her surprise, Replicus answered her with a frightening level of calm.

"It's an invitation. Suzamete is inviting us into her domain," he said.

Chapter 1227: What Went Wrong

Elita knew a great deal about the Deities as a Paladin Champion. She knew of their Heralds, and she even understood a lot more about their powers than most.

She had felt the individual intimacy of the powers of the Quintess, Listafelle and Suzamete through the Primus that flowed through the Higher Order Priests of the Purity.

Her years as a Paladin Champion taught her that indeed, the Deities were real, as was their essence.

She could differentiate them all: the land, sea and sky felt close to her ever since the day she was knighted.

Elita also had knowledge about events lost to time like the Ashing of Time caused by the dragon Jiggorrhax. She, like all the other Paladin Champions, was apprised of most secrets the general public weren't mandated to know, but even she hadn't met the Deities that had created her home world; not that meeting A Deity was anything special to her though at this point.

The fact that Replicus essentially revealed that he had been in Suzamete's domain before surprised Elita.

The Warmoth's Progeny looked at her.

"Let's go," he said and he had Red Rage take him into the spatial crack. Yuyui followed with a look that was a mix of excitement and fear. She didn't hesitate to follow her master because she trusted him deeply.

What she was about to face was supposed to be just as incredible to her as it was to Elita, but she hardly valued it as such.

Elita, on the other hand, took a breath. After Replicus and the others had sunken into the crack, she then followed.

At once, a bizarre view met them all.

To Replicus, it was rather familiar, though not in a pleasant way.

The sky was everywhere. The whole place was a canvas of bright blue with vast, white clouds softly floating in each direction.

Yuyui gaped and clapped her hands on her mouth. Her reaction wasn't because of the odd view, however.

She had seen HER within the first few seconds upon entry.

Beyond the simple design of the place, Yuyui saw something colossal yet difficult to define, perfectly integrated into the domain. It was gazing down at them. Well, it seemed as though it was gazing at them.

Yuyui felt the pressure from its presence and collapsed to her knees, as did Red Rage and by extension, Replicus, whom he was supporting.

Elita stood firm, however.

She gave a quick appraisal of the whole place and then looked up at Suzamete's Divine figure which seemingly had no end and no beginning but could still manifest in a form humans could measure somewhat as humanoid.

Replicus looked up as well, his gaze also as relaxed as it could be.

<Welcome.> Suzamete said softly.

Neither Replicus nor Elita knew what to say to this.

For the former, it was because his relationship with the Deity was quite tense and unfriendly, while for Elita, it felt as though she was meeting a parent for the first time, even if she knew that Suzamete did not have a hand in the creation of any living thing (the official races) on Aigas.

There was a pause, and then Replicus spoke. Well, he sneered.

"Seeing as you invited us, I have no doubt that the subject you wish to talk to us about is something that has spiralled out of your hands, unlike last time."

Elita gave Replicus a quick, questioning, rebuking look, but he pretended as though he didn't sense it.

<I see you are determined to make things difficult between us, anomaly.> Suzamete said to Replicus.

The Progeny scoffed.

"And I see you are still determined to not call me by my name. I'm not some damn anomaly!"

"Ahem!" Elita coughed awkwardly to disperse the tension.

This wasn't going as she had expected.

Sure, it seemed as though Replicus was already acquainted with Suzamete, but she hadn't expected them to have hostilities towards each other.

In all honesty, their short hisses at each other made Elita cry inwardly at the ruined fantasy she had just dreamed up. Perhaps a part of her had wanted to imagine herself as the Paladin Champion she had always dreamed of becoming before: one that actually met the Deities she served and was ordained by them personally for a task.

Right then, Elita felt the attention of Suzamete creep over her.

<Elita.> she said, and Replicus nearly detonated. <I remember the day I infused Quintess' Essence to create your Blessing. I'm happy you still have it despite how much you've been through.>

Elita gave a quick glance to Replicus who was now shaking his head, and nodded. She understood the deeper meaning buried within Suzamete's words.

"I couldn't get rid of my roots even if I wanted to. However much I've changed, I'm still Aigas-born and proud of it."

<Indeed. I can see that.>

Indeed, Suzamete could see it. In fact, she had banked on it.

Her words just now about being the one who forged Elita's Divine Blessing, were to extract all the insurance she could get from the former Paladin Champion.

Indeed, since Quintess and Listafelle were long gone, they hadn't distributed Blessings personally in more than 4,000 years.

It had all been Suzamete who had handled the task of granting minor blessings and bringing the vast majority of living beings on Aigas into the Foundation Stage, though she used the essence from Quintess and Listafelle's bodies – as most people were more biased towards those two Deities.

Suzamete's tone suddenly turned grave.

<Forgive me. I hoped to capitalise on your sense of belonging to Aigas before you even arrived. I had always known that Boron would rise again. Quintess forewarned me. Thus, I planned for a very long time with all that I could see of the future, and you were my first hope among many less effectual options.>

Elita was stricken with surprise.

She had been Suzamete's hope?

Or perhaps...

Elita turned to her sword.

<Indeed.> Suzamete said to her. <I saw that sword arriving in Aigas from the beginning. I had hoped that under the right circumstances, you would be able to diminish Boron considerably to the point where I could deal with him or even better, to kill him.>

Replicus frowned.

"Hold on. What do you mean, hoped? I know you can see everything that will happen in Aigas, but how could you have possibly not noticed if there was going to be a mishap somewhere in your plan?" he asked.

Suzamete turned to him.

<That ability of mine will not work when an entity as strong as I am enters the fold. The future events I see will become... uncertain. It becomes no different to envisioning a goal that may or may not succeed. As such, I could never have known how Boron would fair against the sword in reality.>

Replicus narrowed his eyes.

He supposed that made sense.

"So, Boron's outburst..." he began, referencing how Boron had suddenly turned livid earlier, screaming into the sky.

Suzamete sighed.

<I used your battle as a means to derail him, to postpone what he eventually wanted to do: to destroy Aigas. I meant to delay as long as I could until Elita arrived with her sword. Unfortunately, I might have underestimated him a bit. Perhaps being alone with mortals on this world made me complacent. I quite imagined Boron taking more damage than he did.>

Elita exhaled a shuddering breath. Her hazel eyes shone with understanding.

"If you saw me arrive with the sword, then... does that mean that..." she began.

<It's as you think. The reason Quintess spared you back then from the Undeath curse that assaulted you, was for this very same purpose.>

Chapter 1228: Request and Compensation (1)

Elita could hardly believe it, and the same was true for Replicus. He gawked at her and many thoughts of his started to run wild.

Quintess had actually been banking on Elita coming in with the sword, Broodweiler to help in Suzamete's plan to take down Boron? That was quite convoluted, unlikely-seeming... yet brilliant at the same time.

Replicus narrowed his curved eyes and looked sharply at Suzamete.

"How did Quintess do that when he's not even here? His soul, I mean," he asked.

Suzamete was immediately exasperated by the question. In truth, she didn't want to answer it despite knowing full well that someone like Replicus – a mortal – wouldn't know.

But surprisingly, it was Elita who answered.

"Deities are able to split apart their body and soul and continue to exist as powerful beings beyond reason," she said. "But however split their parts may be, they still possess a profound connection."

Replicus was stunned.

Really?

To think that was how it was, and that Elita understood this aspect of Deific power.

If she knew something like this, then perhaps his guesses as to what Elita was doing outside Aigas were too shallow.

<Indeed.> Suzamete said, quite proud. <As he had known always what would happen, as long you were in this world, Quintess was determined to keep you alive. The land would keep you safe even if he was gone. Thankfully for him, you also favoured Quintess best and received a Blessing with his essence, which made his connection to you all the more powerful.

Thus, when you were in danger, Quintess' body, spurred by his will, responded.>

Elita ruffled her curly hair.

The memory of her reaching death's door back then resurfaced.

She remembered vaguely, as always, how bits of dust had sifted through her nostrils and killed the momentum of Skullius' curse, UNCoddled.

She had already learned that it was Quintess who saved her before this meeting, but that dreadful yet blissful occasion was given more meaning now.

"I see. So, that's how you survived," Replicus said.

"Yeah," Elita said.

Replicus nodded. He felt a bit of strength creeping into his fingers.

"As for the sword, I'm guessing you received it when you first acquired your Voided Undeath powers."

Elita turned to him sharply, surprised.

"How do you know about that?" she asked suspiciously.

"There's another Voided Death user here on Aigas. Another anomaly," Replicus replied, and he gave a mocking glare to Suzamete.

Elita slowly nodded and shut her eyes for a moment before opening them again.

"Right. Void did tell me about that," she said. "I suppose it's not strange that you've already met that other bearer."

<In any case...> Suzamete broke the conversation brewing between the two anomalies. <I invited you here to explain all this to you and make a humble request.>

Replicus scowled. He already imagined what the Deitess was about to say, as did Elita, but she paid rapt attention.

<I recognise that I failed when it counted the most. I am the weakest of all the Deities that make up Aigas and the Under. I made an effort to grow stronger using this world that was left under my charge, as Quintess and Listafelle wished me to, but even then, it still isn't enough to keep Aigas safe completely.>

<At present, because Boron's energy is keeping Aigas in an unhealthy state where three versions of it are forced to co-exist, I can't ascertain the future at all. Everything is muddled and there many possibilities. Everything might come to an end today or tomorrow and I'm not strong enough to stop it.

I can't carry over into powerful human vessels like Quintess and Listafelle and be useful in combat as many hardly recognise and revere me. Even if I could, the enemies that may be creeping in from the past are many and so I think its better if I work around chipping at Boron's energy little by little until I restore Aigas to the norm.>

<In the meantime, enemies from the past aren't the only ones that may start causing havoc, slowly but surely straining the Rules that attempt to keep Aigas intact. Boron has already summoned his fell creatures, Carven, from the Under. They will swarm Aigas and kill the living things within it. Make no mistake, some of them are too strong for anyone here.

Some might even be Divine – the strongest ones that were hidden away until now.>

<I cannot handle all these matters on my own currently, as pitiable as that is. I have often been successful with dealing with crises in roundabout ways since my fellows left, whether by inspiring ideas in beings like Jiggorrhax to plaster Rules, or twisting fate from the skies as I did with my son and that foul, anomalous King. But in this case, I require capable hands.

I ask for your assistance in dealing with these terrors.>

...

There was a brief period of silence.

Replicus considered.

'So even Jiggorrhax was a product of her handiwork, huh? She inspired him to use his breath to repair the Rules that were broken?' he thought.

He supposed this was in line with how Suzamete dealt with problems in Aigas: how she had dealt with Actuass, for instance. One might say she delayed stopping his plot in order to limit the damage Caxellac would do with his Serene Grace through his later actions.

Replicus then spoke:

"I suppose this request extends to me as well?"

<...Yes.>

Elita gave a nod.

"You don't need to give many reasons for why you need help. We will gladly offer as much assistance as we can," she said.

Suzamete smiled even though she had already guessed Elita would agree.

"However..." Elita continued, surprising the Deitess. "First I must deal with a small problem. Or perhaps I will do so on the way. I might have to work twice as hard."

Suzamete considered. Her broad memory of all things in this world allowed her to lock onto what this 'small problem' Elita wanted to deal with was.

<I see. I have no qualms with that.>

Elita smiled. She guessed Suzamete figured out what she talking about. As bizarre as it was, she didn't want to discuss the matter with the Deitess though. After all, it could be awkward, considering the Deities of Aigas were partly responsible for this problem.

Replicus gave Elita a questioning look. She turned to him and bobbed her eyebrows up and down twice.

"What say you?" she asked.

Replicus scoffed and looked at Suzamete.

"I bet you enjoyed hearing my other self berate me for not wanting to kill people senselessly during our battle," he said to her.

<I wouldn't extract any delight from that. In fact, I was surprised you've come to value life so much. All because someone dear to you died.">

Replicus sighed.

Suzamete already knew his answer. If not because Replicus didn't want many more to die for no reason, then at least because he, in a way, was partly responsible for the chaos to come.

"I'll help. But unlike this generous crusader, I want something in return. This is the second time I'll be participating in a world-ending event in your place," he said.

Suzamete audibly sighed.

<I expected as much. I already have a proposition for you.> she said. <In exchange for your assistance, I am willing to give you something with more value to you than anything you could ask of me.>

Replicus raised a brow.

"What would that be?"

<I will allow you to borrow Amanas.>

Chapter 1229: Request and Compensation (2)

...!!!

Replicus was the first to get smacked with shock by the Deitess' words.

"Amanas?!" he exclaimed.

Yuyui almost yelped at his sudden cry.

Elita belatedly remembered what Amanas was seconds later and she gaped, her brows rising.

"Wait. Isn't Amanas Aigas' fourth and smallest continent? The one no one knows anything about?" she said.

<Indeed.> Suzamete confirmed.

Replicus felt strength gathering in his toes, but he hardly gave it much attention.

"What do you mean you will let me borrow Amanas? Isn't it just some mysterious piece of land? And how could it possibly be something with more value to me?" he questioned the Deitess.

Replicus had been surprised when Sause had failed to give him any information about Amanas at all. Apparently, no one knew anything about it, and this included the early dragons.

According to the known history, the Giants, when they travelled around the world with the message of the Deities, their attempt at reaching Amanas failed. There was some extremely powerful barrier around it that resisted them.

Replicus hadn't bothered with guessing what could be on the island after leaving Edagon days ago (months ago to him), but now, he was learning more about it when he least expected or even desired it.

Suzamete seemed to shift from her original position and float higher up into the 'sky'. Her attention was then focused on Replicus.

<I know your end goal. You desire to leave Aigas and confront the Arch Lich, no, the High Lich who enslaved you for many years, do you not?>

Replicus gnashed his teeth and swiped a glance at Elita. She didn't flinch.

This confirmed his suspicion that she knew what he was now, or perhaps what he had been.

<While your goal is extremely treacherous, perhaps even suicidal for the current you, the journey to reach your goal will perhaps be even more treacherous. I'm sure Elita can tell you how dangerous the great void is to traverse for great distances on your own.>

Elita wore a strained smile and Replicus could have sworn he saw her instantly start to perspire.

"That's right," she said. "The void is rather dangerous, especially when you're far away from any world and are stranded in the depth of the darkness. I didn't have to travel too great a distance to get here; Void herself made sure of that. Even she can't control everything that spawns inside her vast body, much less understand the nature of every little thing in it."

Replicus breathed out a harsh breath.

For real?

The void was that perilous?

Well, this wasn't exactly the first time he was hearing something like this. In fact, even without a warning, the notion that the great void was dangerous could be deduced just by looking at events that plagued Aigas before.

When its Rules were disturbed, many horrors from the outside had invaded, some Undead, some of other natures. And considering that there were realms beyond just worlds in the great void – in this reality, as Serenity had said – perhaps bumping into a hostile Divine being wasn't something unusual.

"Alright. I admit I hadn't given this matter that much thought," Replicus said, surprised (and just now realising) that his phantoms and Serenity were suspiciously silent.

For the former, Boron's suppressive pressure, which was likely the reason why she didn't come up when he was in danger earlier, was gone, which made her absence now strange.

But this was of no consequence at the moment.

"So how does Amanas solve this issue then?" he asked.

Suzamete churned again.

Elita pricked her eyes. She and Replicus were already getting suspicions as to what this repayment would serve as for the Warmoth's Progeny.

<Some time ago, Quintess, Listafelle and I made a pact together. In all truth, I merely hopped onto this pact. We vowed to help each other accomplish each other's dreams, and we ended up doing that through Aigas. After that, desires were fulfilled, at least for Quintess and Listafelle. My goal, however, has no defined end.> Suzamete said.

<Many years after creating Aigas, Quintess and Listafelle's dreams evolved, mostly because the organisation we are a part of became... unreasonable. And thus, we three created Amanas.>

Replicus and Elita frowned.

'Organisation?' they wondered.

Suzamete continued.

<Amanas is a mobile miniature world. We created it using the knowledge we extracted from the organisation we work for. It is quite special. It is perhaps one of the safest vehicles one could hope to use on a lengthy journey through the void.>

...!

And there it was, just as Replicus and Elita had been guessing.

Amanas was actually a vessel to travel through the great void, but wait...

"You Deities are powerful enough on your own. Why would you need a vessel to traverse the void?" Replicus asked.

Elita seemed to want to ask the same question, but she wasn't nearly as rude and free as Replicus.

<I shall reserve the answer to that. All you need to know is that I am willing to allow you to borrow Amanas when such a time you desire to use it comes.>

The Warmoth's Progeny sighed.

He didn't push his luck this time.

Indeed, the whole situation was fishy. The little background to Amanas Suzamete had given barely cleared up much about its existence.

She said it was a mini world. How did that even work? What were its finer functions?

What exactly was this organisation Suzamete was talking about?

One look at the Deitess and Replicus knew she wasn't going to answer these questions, which was fair. The relevant subject here was Replicus' reward for helping Suzamete out of another rut.

"I'll admit again. This just might be the best offer you could have made me. But how do I know there's full good faith in this transaction? This... mobile world seems very important to you and the others. Why should I believe you're willing to part with it, if only temporarily?" Replicus said.

Suzamete didn't answer immediately. She seemed to consider her next words quite a bit.

<The reason is simple. As you do not plan to head over to the world of the living dead at once, I imagine you want to elevate your strength, primarily ...> she pointed at the stationary Hybrid Luman <...through merging with that. I hear everything you say while in this world – don't forget. As such, I know much about you even though you are not a native.>

Replicus hadn't really been surprised by how much Suzamete knew. He was more unsettled than surprised.

"So?" he asked.

<So, the power you will acquire after the merge – and believe that I say this unwillingly – will not encourage me to toy with or lie to you.>

"Huh..." Replicus raised a brow.

Was that so?

How interesting.

Suzamete was actually saying Replicus' future strength was a deterrent for her being dishonest with him?

Well, well, well...

Even Elita found herself amused. She didn't fully understand what was happening between Replicus and Skullius, but she had a fair hypothesis.

This merge Suzamete spoke of seemed promising.

"Fine. I accept the compensation then," Replicus said.

<Good. Now I hope you will make haste. I don't suppose either of us has much time.> she said, mostly to Replicus.

Indeed. He didn't have a lot of time.

His timer for Doom Factor 2 was fast approaching, and sadly, the prelude to his madness would soon catch up with him.

Chapter 1230: A Trickier Bit

"At least she didn't throw us back into that dreadful pit," Replicus said as soon as he, Elita Red Rage, Yuyui and his Hybrid Luman body had exited Suzamete's domain. They had all been transported to a run-down village with no signs of life.

Yuyui breathed a sigh of relief. She was glad to be far from the dreadfully powerful presence of the Deitess of the Skies.

Elita turned to Replicus who still needed the support of Red Rage to stand.

"I remember you having a wanton tongue, but I didn't think it would be the same even in the presence of Deities," she said. Before Replicus could argue against her point, however, she clarified. "Don't get me wrong. I don't think too highly of Deities either, well, anymore, but I didn't think you would be so careless in front of one who made the world you currently dwell in."

Replicus scoffed.

"You'd be unsavoury to Suzamete too if you knew what she's done in your absence," he said, once again recalling the time when Actuass dragged him into the Deitess' domain. He didn't take kindly to that memory.

"I'd like to hear all about it," Elita said with her hands on her waist.

"I'm sure you would."

Replicus then looked up and around him. He focused far into the distance, trying to determine something beyond Feinheath.

'I guess she must have used those servants of hers to fix them,' he thought. He was, of course, talking about the vast, gaping dark spaces Skullius had made on Aigas using the Spirit of Drowning where the Rules were eaten away. He turned his gaze away.

Now he was looking at the two other timelines plastered like stiff drapes onto the current Aigas. There was no activity from them as of yet, which was a relief, but it probably wouldn't remain like this for long.

Even though Suzamete had emphasised haste, Replicus had asked her a few crucial questions regarding the predicament she wanted him and Elita to solve. The Deitess had given adequate answers.

Replicus had wanted to know what kind of experts could break through from their timelines to begin with. He had gathered on his own that experts with time-related affinities and abilities could probably move around the timelines freely, but he was sure that even those that didn't could perhaps have other means to do so.

<It's as you say.> Suzamete had answered. <Those with affinities with time will likely be free to wander, but Transcendent and Beyond the Veil Stagers will also be able to come through. Both have the ability to imbue their bodies with their Territories, and that is all they really need to shatter through the complex obstacles that bar time travel.

Nitros is a form of Divine energy, and refining it into an Imaginary GeoScape and donning it like a second skin – as Transcendents and beyond can do – is not too different to what you are capable of using your unusual concept. The one that renders you immune to change, I mean.>

By unusual concept, Suzamete had been referring to Replicus' Maximum Catalyst – well, [Neutral Maximum] to be exact. Apparently, Transcendent Stagers and Beyond the Veil Stagers could bypass their natural inability to travel through different times simply by cloaking themselves in their Territories.

Replicus imagined that these Territories had to have extremely high outputs for this to work though. They had to be Territories with Tertiary capabilities.

Of course, considering that individuals from the Second Grand War, most likely Aigas' most impressive time for humanoid experts, were the sort that would be coming through, it wasn't hard to imagine that they would be extremely competent.

Replicus had also inquired something that frightened him the most from the Deitess of the Sky. As it so happened, she too was wary of the possibility.

Since Replicus and Skullius had interrupted Jiggorrhax from repairing the Rules from a past Aigas, would the creatures the dragon sought to keep out also be able to pass through into the current Aigas?

<I can't be too sure.> Suzamete had said with a sigh. <The Rules Quintess and Listafelle set in place to prevent time from being mangled for too long aren't working to counteract Boron's influence. I assume they won't have a direct effect on these malicious beings either. However, for those that are past the Divine, things might get even trickier. Anything beyond Divine cannot exist in separate times.

The concept of time cannot handle them. This means there's no chance of a second me existing in the previous Aigas' timelines, for instance. However, entities of my level can detect it when their underlings are forced into situations like this. They will be drawn here and in Aigas' current state, there is no stopping them. That is why you need to hurry. I am left with no choice but to count on you.>

The last bit Suzamete had said had annoyed Replicus almost as much as it inflicted urgency within him.

Fighting Divine-level opponents in some of the stronger Cavern Boron was releasing was one thing. Replicus was already on a similar level despite not formally being a Divine being.

But fighting Deity-level opponents?

Perhaps his fusion with Skullius could solve that, but for now, the best bet was probably Elita's Broodweiler.

'I'm really going to have to let Pherdanta and the others handle most of the work. There're way too many enemies,' Replicus thought.

"I wonder," Elita suddenly said, a thoughtful expression on her face, "Do you think now that Boron has suffered a severe injury, he might choose to ally with some of the foreign enemies, if they break through? I mean, he is probably preparing to move into a different vessel as we speak, but I doubt it's going to be as strong as the old one.

When the Deities of Aigas used normal human vessels... there were always some complications and consequences. I could tell that the one Boron was inhabiting was supposed to be perfect."

Replicus turned to the former Paladin Champion. He felt as though she had exposed an odd sense of melancholy just now.

"I don't even want to think about what that might look like," he said, shaking his head. His tendons twitched. Strength was slowly returning to them. "But Suzamete was right. We need to make haste."

He patted Red Rage and beckoned Yuyui. The latter took over for Red Rage in supporting Replicus.

"Go and find out if Theurien and Silrat survived. All the survivors I teleported away shouldn't be too far from each other," the Progeny said heavily. "Regardless of what you find, come back here within two minutes."

"At once!" Red Rage declared with a salute and took off into the skies.

Elita didn't ask about the Apostle's destination or mission. She knew she'd be filled in soon enough.

"Where are we going to go after he returns? Do you have some kind of headquarters?" she asked.

"You could call it that. Though I'm not sure I can confidently call it mine yet," Replicus replied.

Right then, there was a flash of light in front of the two and a curious pair appeared.

One was a blonde man of average height with a lute strapped behind his back and the other was a tall, dashing man with long dark hair.

Yuyui's eyes immediately sparkled at the sight of them, though the same couldn't be said about Replicus and Elita. They both stacked their guard.

"Please, be at ease. We are not your enemies," Erlton said while raising his hands. Soidon beside him did the same, though he gave the Warmoth's Progeny a deeply wary look.

"Who are you?" Replicus asked.

Erlton gave him a sharp, appraising gaze.

"Someone who had the wrong idea while watching you fight," he answered.