

Undead 1281

Chapter 1281: Gearing Up (2)

The Immobility Pin's prowess was impressive.

Skullius could only grin at its effects. Its size was insignificant when compared to the towering mass of the great armour. But rather than just the size difference, the wide disparity in the ranks of both of these treasures – the khopesh and the nigh indescribable armour – also fascinated him.

The khopesh was a World rank item, and the armour was a Void rank item.

But be that as it may, this wide disparity was cancelled out by one factor.

The World rank khopesh was a Prime treasure, and the Void rank armour was a Wicked treasure.

Apparently, when it came to the Common Reality Leagues, this distinction was extremely important and could decide a battle even more than the ranks themselves.

"JAN`IND! JAN`IND!" the great armour called, but because of the effects of the Immobility Pin, even the sound of its voice was restricted to a very small area around it. Because this area was extremely miniscule, even though the armour was moving, it appeared to be extremely still, and even though its voice travelled, the distance it crossed was so insignificant that it couldn't be heard at all.

"There's no shortage of weird weapons in here, is there?" Elita said, her eyes staring at the khopesh and the armour.

"I'm afraid not," Skullius said.

"Aren't you going to pick that armour? That's a Void rank treasure, a step away from the Reality rank. As abrasive as it seems, it's extremely powerful. It might just be the strongest treasure I've ever seen," Elita said.

Skullius nodded.

"It really is impressive, I agree. However, while I can't exactly judge the significance of the gap in power between a World rank item and a Void rank one like you, I'm rather accomplished in the field of wills," Skullius said sombrelly. "That thing's will is extremely powerful. The WILLS of Fulgardt pale in comparison. If I were to choose and don it right now, I wouldn't be able to control it."

A look of understanding appeared on Elita's face.

She herself understood that the wills of treasures could be dangerous, but she had imagined that Skullius' true power could handle it. She found out now that she had likely underestimated the power of the armour... or perhaps overestimated Skullius' strength.

It was easy to get lost in the wonders of what Skullius had been doing for the past hour or so.

"Anyway, I've bought us a little time without any disturbances from that thing. Pick whatever you want. The Transcendent grade treasures are in the bottom rows. I think you should be able to handle those, right?"

Elita chuckled.

Skullius was puzzled.

"What?"

"I'm sure you mean well, but just because I haven't reached Divinity yet doesn't mean I can't handle treasures ranked in the Common Reality Leagues," she said with a smile and flicked Broodweiler, her pink and gold sword.

Voided Deathforms, upon fully realising their powers, were granted gifts from Void herself, according to Aurolio.

He had claimed that this was how he had gotten the page holding the soul of the Corrupted Deity Nunax which he had given to Skullius in Genhuis City back then.

Similarly, Elita had been granted gifts by Void for her journey and so far, she had only shown this sword.

"Broodweiler is a Realm rank Prime sword," she said. "Though it only submitted to me easily because Void subdued it for me, I am able to use it to subdue other weaker treasures in turn."

"Oh."

Skullius was surprised.

So that's how it was.

"So, you can use any World rank item?" he asked.

Elita shook her head.

"Only World rank Prime treasures. Prime treasures can only subdue Wicked treasures with their Absolute Properties. In this case, I'm using the stronger will of Broodweiler to suppress that of weaker treasures, not its Absolute Property," she explained.

There was a balance when it came to Wicked and Prime treasures.

They all had basic properties, but they also possessed Absolute Wicked and Prime Properties.

Wicked treasures could best higher-ranked Prime treasures with their Absolute Wicked Properties and the opposite was true. Thus, what mattered when obtaining a treasure wasn't always its rank, but its Absolute Property.

Of course, the rank was important when dealing with treasures of the same designation – Prime to Prime, or Wicked to Wicked. In that case, what determined which was more powerful, wasn't the Absolute Property, but the rank.

This was why the World rank Prime khopesh, Immobility pin was able to overwhelm the Void rank Wicked great armour at the end of the hall, if only temporarily.

Skullius nodded at Elita.

"Alright. Then pick what you want," he said and he walked over to the right side of the hall and began perusing the items there. They all still called to him, desperate to be picked.

He skimmed over the ones below the World rank.

There were roughly five hundred World rank items in the hall, then about sixty Realm rank treasures and a measly ten Void rank treasures, excluding the great armour.

'I probably shouldn't get too greedy and pick off the Void rank treasures just yet. At the very least, I'd need my War Body to subdue them. For now...' he thought as he extended his hand towards a folded scroll on the wall.

It rushed to him at once, and he appraised it. A great laugh burst out of his mouth almost immediately.

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[Charged Mantle: Dance of the Thousand Levin-Born]

+Realm (Prime)+

A scroll containing Runes that when released will unseal an army of enslaved, fearless, and mad Penetrators that will raze the user's enemies to the ground.

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-Basic Properties-

+Sealed Entities – 1,000/1,000

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A scroll hiding an army of Penetrators...

Skullius would have never thought he would be holding such a thing in his life – an army of a thousand that would have qualified to be his close kin if he had remained as the Penetrator.

He laughed hysterically, garnering a curious look from Elita.

He then drew another scroll from the wall. It, like this previous one was called a Charged Mantle. It was essentially a pre-activated technique sealed in a scroll. Back in his days as a mercenary, Skullius had seen scrolls like these. They were prepared by the Mages and sold to the Guilds Association. Prompt Spells, he remembered them being called.

He hid the scrolls in the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] and moved on to other meaningful weapons.

He drew an odd little dagger towards him. It was double-bladed, but the blades were thin, small and straight, and they spotted dark, obsidian swells along their lengths towards their edges. It was a strange weapon indeed, but the power of the dagger couldn't be denied.

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[Tainted Lycan's Siphoning Claw]

+Realm (Wicked)+

A Wicked treasure with an insidious desire to openly inflict agonising death to all that would stand against its user.

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-Basic Properties-

+Will mark all of its targets with a blue hue that all, including the target, can see; all marked targets will be rendered completely vulnerable to the user's attacks for one microsecond upon initial marking

+Can mark and attack an unlimited number of targets

+Inflicts dread within weaker targets upon completing the marking

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+Absolute Wicked Property+

All marked targets, living and non-living will be ripped from the inside by unending sets of sharp, infected dark claws until they die

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Skullius wouldn't call himself a sadist, but he didn't think he'd mind testing this out on the abundant numbers of the Cavern.

He wondered how infected the claws that were supposed to come out of the targets were. That should be interesting to see, he imagined.

He then picked an impressive looking spear of the Realm rank, a golden helmet with an opening at its back, an evil-looking bracer, and several other treasures, and slotted them into the nimbus as well. They fit quite well within it.

He turned to check on Elita's haul.

She had already donned a domineering silver and black scale armour that made her look bigger than she was. Then again, she had gained a bit of muscle since the last time Skullius saw her so maybe it was perfect. What looked like a bold floral design traced along its waist in a luminous silvery, sparkling hue.

Elita had also picked up a large bow that seemed to be made of some kind maroon bone and two more swords that she had hung behind her back.

When she noticed his gaze, Elita smiled sheepishly.

"I didn't take too much, did I?" she asked.

"Not at all," Skullius said with a laugh.

Elita beamed.

"Then if you don't mind, could I also have that?" she said, and pointed at the Immobility Pin keeping the great armour set at the end of the hall in check.

Skullius smiled.

"Of course," he said. "Though we are probably going to have to make a run for it after I retrieve it."

Elita gave him a grin and a nod.

As Skullius was done picking what he wanted, and Elita seemed to be done too, he stretched his hand towards the khopesh, and with a quiver, it stormed towards him and into his hand.

"JAN`IND!!!!"

The booming voice of the great armour exploded out at once, as did the Amras that frothed from it.

"Let's go!" Skullius said as he tossed the Immobility Pin to Elita and created a gateway to Aigas at the same time.

Ju`wtte sprang forth before him, pushing away the stern, stalwart space of the Warmoth's Treasury and making way for Aigas.

"After you," Skullius said to Elita.

She gave a sniffly laugh and dived through the gateway without hesitation.

Skullius took one last look at the great armour roaring for him, chuckled and then followed after his companion.

The challenging mission to rescue Aigas had finally begun.

Chapter 1282: Instant Assault

Aigas looked darker than normal, even when accounting for its the sun, which was setting on the horizon. Everything seemed gloomier, and there were tremors everywhere, shockwaves of various energies in the skies and the distant sounds of screeches and screams.

This was fitting, honestly. Even though the Stark Troops had already started to suppress the enemies, it wasn't as if Skullius had expected results in the little more than twenty minutes head start he expected they had on him and Elita.

Speaking of the two – one, a four-armed entity with coin-grey skin and a vast, lead grey cloud over his body stitched together with threads of merigold Ju`wtte, and the other, a beautiful, dark-skinned woman with curly black hair and hazel eyes, adorned in a black and silver armour – they had appeared in what seemed like a ravine within an ordinary forest. Skullius was sure they were in Pelian.

The ivory key and even his new ability to open gateways to and from Aigas usually left him in a general five-kilometer radius of where he last used it.

The forest was eerily silent. No animals chirped, slithered or growled. Even the waters in the river close to them were quiet.

All birds and beasts had either hidden away or fled. But one would then ask where they hoped to nest which was safe. The presence of the Cavern was just that depressing, it seemed. They might not have wasted time terrorising ordinary creatures here, but their malice spread far all the same.

Elita had on a nasty frown.

"I can only imagine what this world will look like in a few more hours if nothing changes," she said. "How many Divine level creatures do you reckon are among the Cavern?"

Skullius wasn't sure, thus he investigated.

His expansive senses went out and covered the entirety of Aigas.

Because this wasn't the effect of some skill, he was able to spy on everyone and everything, except a few, without being noticed.

The numbers and circumstances of beings on every place in the world registered to his mind soon after.

He spotted his Stark Troops moving in accordance to the way he had arranged. They were swift and effective.

Skullius smiled.

'Well, they're doing better than I thought they would initially,' he thought.

He ascertained the progress of his Unlimited Stars. They seemed to be handling their respective missions well, especially Kintar in Emeradis.

The hordes of Cavern were outrageous. They were everywhere, flying, running or swimming towards every location with every living they could find. He saw some of them use their abilities and narrowed his eyes. The fact that their range of powers could practically be any unusual supernatural effect that could or could not be countered, would be a challenge for most of the forces on Aigas in general.

The stronger ones among them were clashing against the battle fiends of Maqi, the Six Houses of Pelian as well as what remained of the Capital Service, and the endless Mage companies in Emeradis, matching or overwhelming them. Their numbers made the battles tougher than they otherwise should have been.

Skullius found that the projection of the numbers of the Cavern he had heard had been severely understated, which was understandable given that a few Stark Troop members had been the ones to

gather these figures. In all, there seemed to be roughly 120 million Cavern, and a large chunk of that number was assaulting the Severed Union at the moment.

For the moment, Skullius disregarded the presence of wandering powerhouses decked in their Majestic Territories roaming all over Feinheath. These were evidently the invading experts from the past, but he knew for a fact that none of them were Divine.

The presence of Divine level beings was hard to pinpoint actually, Skullius found.

Unlike everyone else, they were able to respond to his sensory inquisition. Some immediately vanished from his senses, as if they didn't exist, and some turned and glared his way.

"It's hard to tell, but those I found are roughly thirty. Some of them are on their way here, I'm afraid," Skullius said to Elita.

The former Paladin Champion sighed.

"You're going to have to deal with them. I still haven't recovered all my Voided Death Essence, and I'd rather save it for something that you might actually need help with," she said as she folded her arms.

Skullius gave her an odd look.

He knew she could assume her Voided Deathform... form, which wasn't human, like Aurolio and don a mask that would represent the astonishing powers of the void, but if she considered normal Divine opponents as beneath her... just how much stronger did she get with the boost of that mask?

Voided Death powers were still weird to Skullius. He didn't quite understand them.

"Your Voided Death Essence just recovers with time?" he asked her.

"Yeah. But there's also several points in the great void I can use to recharge. Void is quite doting," Elita said brightly.

"Lucky," Skullius said bitterly.

Even with a Null Core, Skullius still needed to slaughter living beings to obtain Null Life Essence or use [Null Extraction] on those recently dead. Then again, the skill [Null Extraction] had grown obsolete ever since he reached Divinity, along with the other non-Class related and non-Race related Null skills. But that wasn't a bad thing. Not at all.

"Here they come," Skullius said with a cold smile.

"And they're all yours. Unless they go out of their way to come for me, that is," Elita shrugged.

Over them, hundreds of meters in the sky, dozens of dark, shapely creatures built like dark rocks with ruby red eyes appeared and began storming down. Their charge towards the ground, from below looked like a masterpiece of a painting – one hundred and forty-four Cavern with grotesque wings and bizarre faces, behind them a sweet, obscure sky with pale cloud.

It was almost poetic.

But Skullius shattered the image at once.

His Amras was beckoned from its well in his Broader Existence.

Right as that happened, six figures within the charge of Cavern noticed and vanished from the whole.

'Clever,' Skullius thought.

The Hybrid Warmoth had a pair of pupilless, iris-less eyes. Above them, were odd eyebrows narrow and short, the skin under them protruding slightly.

But no. These weren't eyebrows.

They were eyelashes.

They quivered as Amras was channelled towards something behind them. In the next micro-instance, the clustered eyelashes parted, between them, a thin, slanted gap forming which widened

to reveal a brilliant shimmer of green and gold that altered the state of the world as Skullius perceived it!

This was the Andori, [Legion Eyes]!

Chapter 1283: [Legion Eyes]!

[Legion Eyes].

As was usually the drill with experts and powers rivalling or reaching the Divine boundary, everything happened before the count of a nanosecond.

The barely revealed, slanted eyes above Skullius' blind pair were as menacing as they were powerful. Their whites were overshadowed by the mixture of green and gold expelled from their thick irises, creating light flares so bright they made making direct eye contact with them nigh impossible.

But none among those present would have dared or conjured the means to lock eyes with the Hybrid Warmoth anyway.

Everything that the [Legion Eyes], a First Sage Tier Andori, and Skullius' second strongest technique in this form, looked at, was distorted.

It started with Aigas itself.

The rising mounds of rock, nearby greenery, river, and the gloomy sky with all its pale clouds and splendour were eaten away as if by a tide of blue mist. Everything before the green and gold eyes was torn down from its perfect state. The mountains, trees, modest grasses and skies beyond were reduced to strands of bright Rules connecting in taut tangles in a pitch-black void!

Their barest forms of existence, their blueprints, were revealed, and even the Rules themselves which connected to form everything on Aigas seemed to spill secrets of their own in the form of tiny sparks of different colours that vanished once split off from the Rule strands.

As terrifying as this seemed, what became of the one hundred and thirty-eight Cavern was even more morbid, not to mention swift.

All of them didn't even get a change to understand what had happened to them.

Their skins were stripped from their bodies, as was their flesh, bones and innards. Their souls were then revealed, pristine and ghost-like, contrasted morbidly against the darkness around them with strands of Rules, but they hardly lasted longer than miniscule fractions of a breath.

These souls were smitten by an unseen, raging pulse from the [Legion Eyes] and shredded to extinction.

It was utter destruction, horrifying yet merciful.

And indeed, this was the prowess of the [Legion Eyes].

Unlike the [Heart of Revelation], which it was modelled with, the [Legion Eyes] could strip away every obstacle over a target to reveal their most vulnerable states. On living targets, flesh, skin or bone could be stripped away temporarily or permanently destroyed as Skullius willed.

The unguarded, vulnerable state that was left behind thereafter, would also be crushed by a pulse of what could only be described as continuous visual damage, which did not stop as long as the [Legion Eyes] were closed. As such, in theory, as long as those eyes remained open, they could defeat anything.

This Andori could also show Skullius everything he was looking at in 64 different states.

At the moment, a dark void with Rules stood before his eyes, visible to onlookers as well, but to him, several other things, hidden away by Deific powers registered.

Skullius grinned.

In the miniscule fragment of time his [Legion Eyes] were open, he locked sights with the radiant figure of Suzamete's soul, locked away in a sanctum hard to reach for most beings.

A knowing look was shared between the two, and then the [Legion Eyes] closed.

The world returned to normal in a blink.

Nothing remained of the Cavern that had been diving towards Skullius. It was as though they had never existed. However, they did leave small parting gifts.

[You have killed Third Circle Cavern, Giyusham. 77 Null Life Essence awarded]

[You have killed Fourth Circle Cavern, Pamar. 70 Null Life Essence awarded]

[You have killed Third Circle Cavern...]

Skullius sighed.

He no longer cultivated cumulative mana experience, and thus, all that was left for him was Null Life Essence he extracted automatically with a kill. This trend he had begun ever since he obtained the Amalgam form back then.

'I almost miss the old levelling system,' Skullius thought.

"Neat. Just as horrifying as I imagined, I suppose," Elita said to him. This was meant to be a compliment, apparently.

She could have sworn that if she blinked just now, she wouldn't have caught even the littlest glimpse she did as to what had happened to all the Cavern diving towards them.

Skullius chuckled and then his senses focused on the remaining enemies – the main dish.

Six Cavern had split from the whole the instant they had sensed Skullius' Amras. They were the Divine level Cavern that had sensed his probing moments ago and headed in his direction immediately with the now-deceased small army.

They stood at six different points around Skullius and Elita, dozens of meters away.

They all had dark and rough bodies, but their sizes differed.

Two were almost six meters tall, while the rest were no shorter than three. They had distorted, fierce visages, and crowns of large horns that twisted or curled. One even had a tail.

The largest, and most powerful-looking of them wielded two great, red sabres that were burning with a dark flame. His five eyes had yellow pupils that locked onto Skullius, unwavering. Skullius appraised this great Cavern at once.

[Name: Agrovineish]

[Ascension Status: Broader Existence Phase 1]

[AKH: 7/1,000]

[Race: Cavern]

[Circle: Fifth]

The Cavern as a race rank themselves in Circles. These Circles are indicators of evolution, and they function like the Stages for humanoids in Aigas. The Fifth Circle is the second highest Circle reserved only for beginner Divines.

[Inv. Status: Extremely wary of you]

[+Stats+]

[Aggressive Dark Flame Engine (World Stratum 1):-]

This Immortal World Physique enhances the user's body and whatever they use as tools or weapons using a black flame as a conduit. This flame invigorates the user's flesh and blood, granting augments to their general physical attributes, most of which match those of the beings of Aigas except {Gift Augment}, which relates to the innate ability of a Cavern. This Immortal Physique also guards the user's Broader Existence to a miniscule degree.

[Strength : Two fold]

[Endurance : Ten fold]

[Agility : Seven fold]

[Intelligence : ---]

[Health : Nine fold]

[Luck : Two fold]

[Gift Augment : Six fold]

[Exora Amras (Beginner World Affluent): 10,890/15,900]

[+Andori+]

None

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Skullius was intrigued. Having this Patronage Rank 3 guidance field was convenient. It added notes to everything he wasn't familiar with even to the details of others he appraised. Elita, who had the same, appraised the other Cavern as well.

'Hmm. When it comes to Ascension Status, we are the same, but I have the upper hand in Physique, Exora Amras... and Andori as well. Hmm, he seems to have a Parlous Nature, though, I'm superior in that regard too,' Skullius thought, and the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] churned.

The Cavern prepared to attack, and he (Skullius) grinned.

It was time to have a proper taste of what Divine battle felt like!

Chapter 1284: Disappointment (1)

It happened quickly.

One of the Cavern, a particularly ugly and tall one with large, gorilla-ish arms and a spiked tail, stormed towards Skullius with insane speed. It almost seemed as though he had simply spawned close to the Hybrid Warmoth, but of course...

The [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] was jealous and overprotective. Once the Cavern was within ten meters of Skullius, it came to an abrupt halt, much to its own surprise.

Dozens of stitches made of merigold Ju`wtte had fastened it to the fabric of space on Aigas, and it was completely immobilised!

The Cavern didn't even get a chance to struggle because its dark body was suddenly coated in a heavy sheet of purple-gold ice. Whitish vapour rose the shiny, sleek sculpture that remained – entrapped Cavern.

The cloud Skullius was adorned with restricted anything Skullius saw as unfriendly from reaching close to him with the Ju`wtte empowered Melding Stitches, [Maximum Frost] and [Frigid Time]. The latter two were Skullius' new Exotic Parlous Natures.

'Hmmm... It's not dead,' Skullius noted.

The frozen Cavern had yet to kick the bucket.

Another Cavern, clearly wary of getting close now because of the fate of its companion, took to the skies and brandished its black-gold spear. Skullius watched it closely. He judged that it was about to use its innate ability as he didn't sense any Amras in use.

And indeed the creature did.

With a vicious, downward swing of its spear, the Cavern sent forth what looked like a visible, tangible slash made up entirely out of miniature versions of itself, swarming and colliding!

The slash moved at a speed comparable to light, but what it was capable of, Skullius' would not get to know.

Hundreds of miniature stitches stopped the slash in its tracks and then it froze completely.

The Cavern to sent out the attack was alarmed. Skullius was disappointed.

'He actually expected that attack to do something?' he thought.

With a silent command, he made the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] respond. The lead grey cloud suddenly turned luminous as volts upon volts of Ju`wtte wriggled like demented worms within it. It charged and charged, and then abruptly, the cloud emitted blinding orange light, turning its master into a bright flare!

The entire ravine was then baptised in the glaring light, yet as that happened, a bolt of Ju`wtte nearly as thick as the Warmoth's Spine, silently streaked out of the nimbus and connected to its foe in the skies who belated realised that he was screwed.

The devastation that followed left the noise that should have come from it behind.

Before the glare that had been cast about could fade, the entire ravine, the peaks, river and all, became dust, as did the greenery in the surroundings within five kilometers. Their soft remains rose and whirled in the air like a ghostly twister.

And then the deafening booms, the grating crashes and the faint splashes and sizzles of water evaporating from the impact ensued.

This was the result of the merigold Ju`wte, which had already been powerful enough to effortlessly harm a being like Jiggorrhax, empowered by 1,500% because of the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus].

The recipient of the attack was left as a fading, crumbling dark mass that fell from the sky pitifully, so pitifully in fact that Skullius himself frowned.

'Is this it? Is this really what even the weakest Divines amount to?' he thought, severely disappointed.

The remaining Cavern did not move in for the attack. They were wary, but not quite afraid. This gave Skullius hope.

Yes. There must surely be more to these guys then!

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From the charred corpse falling from the sky, a soul so firm and well-defined that it looked no different to the body it just left – when it was in prime condition, that is – stormed to the ground and landed by the largest Cavern.

The great creature did not take its eyes off Skullius. It plunged its flaming saber into the ground and laid its now free hand over the head of the soul of the other Cavern.

"Hmm?"

Skullius felt Amras get channelled from the great Cavern and then, to his surprise, the soul standing next to it started to grow bulging balloons of flesh that shrank and formed a whole new body for it!

The Hybrid Warmoth grinned.

Now that was interesting.

'That's a Parlous Nature,' he thought excitedly.

Exotic Parlous Nature were outlandish phenomena beyond the confines of what a world could contain. One could think of them as more bizarre, frightening concepts and essences that couldn't be contained by even the richest of worlds, most powerful Rules and by extension other forms of Amras.

The genuine Divine energy Heralds in Aigas used for instance, and the genuine Divine energy Skullius himself had wielded through the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow, was Exora Amras, just in a form that didn't qualify for the Common Reality Leagues. It was similar to the Pseudo Immortal Physique Skullius had made for his subordinates.

'Let's take note of that,' Skullius thought, looking at the lingering pulsations of the flesh the Cavern just now had received. The nimbus seemed to groan in acknowledgement.

Right then, the frozen body of the Cavern ten meters away from Skullius shook lightly. From its back, a well-defined soul was expelled that flew high into the sky.

Skullius turned to it with intrigue.

This Cavern didn't rush towards the giant one to get a new body. At least that wasn't the priority for it.

"Oh..."

Skullius felt Amras surge through the soul of this Cavern as it then pointed forth both of its hands at him.

'It has an Andori!' the Hybrid Warmoth thought. Since the largest Cavern he appraised didn't have one, he had assumed they all didn't.

The unique thing about Andori was that since they weren't etched onto the body, but within one's Broader Existence, both the body and soul could use them separately.

The world around Skullius suddenly turned into a dense, kaleidoscopic plane!

Every cubic inch of space outside of the range of Skullius' nimbus spun and became indistinguishable from the other. Skullius couldn't even determine whether he was still on the ground.

However...

'Is that it?' Skullius was utterly disappointed. 'What kind of stupid Andori is this?'

He imagined that this was a ploy to confuse his senses and sneak him. When applied against a mortal, the effects of this Andori likely couldn't be dispersed even with Rule level concepts or Transcendent grade treasures. But against a formidable Divine level opponent...

The pair of eyes above Skullius' blind pair opened, and blessed the world with a golden green blast of beautiful light. The spinning world around the Hybrid Warmoth humbled itself and vanished from sight, leaving only darkness riddled with the strands of Rules!

It was only then that Skullius noticed the approach of three other Cavern. As he had suspected, they had aimed to sneak him while he was disoriented.

But for now, he didn't pay them any mind.

His focus went towards the Cavern in soul form high in sky, dumbfounded by the fact that its Andori had been overwhelmed so easily.

But that was only natural.

Andori were ranked from Grand, Sage, Ascendant to Cosmic; the Andori the Cavern had used was only at the First Grand Tier while Skullius' was in the First Sage Tier. There was a huge gap.

But, in order to match the energy, Skullius did not waste the power of the [Legion Eyes] on the soul of this Cavern.

No.

One of his hands peeked from the cloudy textures of his nimbus and pointed at the Cavern in the now dark sky.

His Amras, richer and more powerful than that of any of the Cavern here, was mobilised, and Skullius used a Second Grand Tier Andori to attack.

[Elusive Meta Carver]!

It started with one, unseen swiping slash, like a crazy whipping blow that struck the Cavern from shoulder to side. A thin, but very deep cut was left on the creature. But then two more came – one the other way across the chest, and the last across the face. The slashes landed with a crackle akin to that of thunder, merciless. The sheer force of the last slash sent the Cavern's soul flying down like a comet.

It was ripped, and torn into two pieces from the face.

At that moment, Skullius had prepared to deal with the incoming foes when...

[You have killed Fifth Circle Cavern, Tinhumesh. 80 Null Life Essence awarded]

[Would you like to invoke AKHASHA?]

Chapter 1285: Disappointment (2)

Reaching Divinity allowed one to share the properties of their body with their soul and vice versa. The soul would become able to exist without a body, and interact with physical matter, and the body would become able to interact with spiritual matter.

In addition to this, a Divine being manifested a Broader Existence – special, hidden space that existed between their body and soul in a conceptual sense. This is what made Divine beings hard to kill.

While their body and soul were fused, it was extremely difficult to harm them through their Broader Existence and kill them. However, if their body and soul were split, damage to either would be reflected on the Broader Existence.

Skullius had done just that using his Second Grand Tier Andori, [Elusive Meta Carver], a quick, invisible slashing attack that only attacked immaterial, intangible matter.

The Hybrid Warmoth himself had wondered if he should have used [Ruining Cutter] – [Elusive Meta Carver]'s counterpart that cut only material objects – instead, but judging by his own experience with his changed soul, he recalled that the soul remained an immaterial subject even after Divinity despite its ability to attack physical matter like the body.

[Would you like to invoke AKHASHA?]

'Invoke Akasha, huh?' Skullius said to himself, but he didn't pay the notification just now any mind.

He still had three other Cavern rushing after him at tremendous speed; they made sure to avoid the range of the effect of his [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus].

Skullius scoffed.

'Do they really think they'll be safe if they avoid that ten-meter range?' he thought, and flicked a finger in the air while activating [Elusive Meta Carver] once more.

The three Cavern suddenly froze. They couldn't move.

Their movements had been cut up!

In that fraction of a moment when they were dazed, stunned and shocked, Skullius increased the range of his nimbus' effect. The three Cavern were suddenly stitched to the world with strings of merigold Ju`wte and sheets of purple-gold ice layered over them while expelling a freakish cold.

[Maximum Frost] was a Parlous Nature that employed Maximum Catalyst to coat enemies in freezing cold that transcended Absolute Frost at speeds they could hardly react to – more than fifty times the speed of light.

[Frigid Time] was a Parlous Nature that caged enemies in time cooled to the point of freezing. It was on a different level than the skill, [Cold Time] which Skullius had used before against his possessed counterpart.

Both of these World rank Exotic Parlous Natures expressed through the nimbus completely immobilised the enemy, but couldn't kill them.

Skullius sensed one of the Cavern ejecting its soul and immediately coating itself with Exora Amras in anticipation of being attacked relentlessly.

Skullius sniggered.

The two others did the same, but it didn't help.

Exora Amras was ranked from World, Sage, Realm, Star, Void, Cosmic to Reality Affluents. All the Cavern here had Exora Amras at the World Affluent, but Skullius' was of a tier higher – at the Sage Affluent tier.

Everything he fuelled with this Amras would weaken the defense of those with weaker Amras!

Skullius released [Elusive Meta Carvers] once more, five for each of the souls. The Cavern were ripped apart mercilessly. It was no different to cutting through mildly tough linens.

[You have killed Fifth Circle Cavern, Yunimayas. 75 Null Life Essence awarded]

[You have killed Fifth Circle Cavern, Jinase. 80 Null Life Essence awarded]

[You have killed Fifth Circle Cavern, Cinshkash. 77 Null Life Essence awarded]

[Would you like to invoke AKASHA?]



Still, Skullius ignored for now. Through his thought phantoms, who had been told all about AKHASHA by Serenity, he knew he could afford to not respond to the call of the guidance field for a few minutes.

Skullius looked at the remaining Cavern. The largest one with five eyes and two red sabres lit by dark fire and the other Cavern whose flesh it had restored. They were gazing at him too, wary.

He smiled at them.

He spread two of his arms.

"You might be having fun terrorising the mortals, but your strengths won't do much against real might," he said.

To his surprise, a response to his taunt came.

"You are indeed fierce. But without that little cloud's effect, are you able to back your words?" a deep voice came from the great Cavern. The creature was speaking in the Known Language of Aigas.

Skullius laughed.

That was a bold thing to say, he felt, but also extremely stupid. Did these bastards think they could get him to disperse the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] just for ego? They knew full well he didn't need it to absolutely demolish them, but perhaps they hoped they could somehow increase their chances of winning if he didn't use it.

"Oh, I can," Skullius said and he twiddled the fingers to two of his hands. "I won't use my little cloud's powers then. I'll even limit myself to just hands. Surely your chances will be better then."

He said this, but did not dispel the cloud.

The Cavern would have asked how they could possibly know if the effects of his cloud were truly out of the way, but that would further crash their dignity. They simply snarled.

The largest Cavern reverse handled one of his sabres and bluish-white Amras flowed from his body, rising upward like a gust of wind.

Exora Amras interacted with the world differently than mana or Aura or Nitros. It threatened anything beneath it. The shades of the world began to turn faint, and dull.

Dark flames bathed the Cavern's body as his Immortal World Physique churned. The smaller Cavern readied itself too, Amras leaking from its hands.

Suddenly, the large Cavern caused bulbous, twitching blobs of flesh to appear before him, and a huge body similar to his own, Amras, Physique and all was formed. It bellowed with fury at the enemy.

...!

'Oh!' Skullius' blind eyes shone.

The replica charged towards him, passing the dreaded ten-meter range that all the others had frozen within to reach him. It raised its huge arms and hammered them down with all its might. The motion caused Aigas to flicker between its normal state and a void with strands of Rules.

BOOOM!

The impact caused a ripple across dozens of kilometers in all directions, but this didn't mean anything.

Skullius had received the two arms of the replica Cavern in two of his hands easily.

He grinned.

"Is this a better challenge now?!" he called, and his third arm cocked back. Golden mana rushed through it, but so did something else.

The <WEIGHT> property that had been installed in Skullius' mana core – the one he forged after Sila destroyed his original one – remained, and was applied.

During his battle against the alter, Skullius had noticed that the bastard had actually managed to amplify the tonnage he received to 300 million tonnes.

However, that was back when he had purple core with a few tens of millions of units of mana.

Now, Skullius had a huge golden core with more than 745 million units of mana, coupled with a Supreme mana manipulating skill.

The current tonnage he was able to exert onto his body, was 44 billion tonnes!

Even without adding Amras into the mix, a blow from such an absurd amount of weight could harm even a Divine. But Skullius was petty. He also reinforced his body with Null Life Essence before throwing a punch that no one in the area could see!

Chapter 1286: Disappointment (3)

The great Cavern's body shuddered as the force of the blow coursed through it. Skullius had sensed it reinforce itself with Exora Amras just now, which was wise as he had given it ample time to defend itself from the attack.

Yet still...

Several horrendous crunches rang through the body of the Cavern as the ground below it bellowed in agony.

The replica, if it truly could feel things as well as its original body could, was not feeling too good. Even if its body remained intact for the most part, the pain from the shock gushing through it was too great to ignore.

Skullius scoffed.

The original Cavern with the black flames streaked round its replica and with impeccable speed, it sent a rush of attacks at Skullius' body with its two red sabres!

Skullius grinned. He dodged cleanly each time the edges of the sabres attempted to kiss him; he ducked, sidestepped, dropped to the ground, and sent his foot crashing into the leg of the great Cavern. The impact was absurd. 44 billion units of weight supporting Skullius' foot, along with a generous amount of Amras sent the Cavern's leg flying.

The creature groaned, teetered, lost its balance, and Skullius grinned at it even more. He flew into its face, and hammered it square with a punch infused with maximum tonnage, minus Amras – to keep it alive.

BOOOOM!

The friction from the creature's sinister flight across the region shook the land and lit up the forests and houses it coursed above. However, before it could land, Skullius had appeared; he yanked its foot, spun it and sent it flying back the way it had come.

His nimbus had turned faint, no more than a vague trail of smoke hanging behind him like a cape, leaving his naked upper body and black pants exposed.

The Hybrid Luman didn't relent.

Surely, this wasn't all there was to this guy with how menacing he looked.

The great Cavern's face looked like a ruined pie. The one punch it had received from Skullius had already messed it up bad.

It grunted.

Blobs of flesh bubbled where it extended its hand, forming a new body. Its soul swiftly transferred from its old body into the new one.

Skullius was pleased.

'Whatever makes you fight better,' he thought.

He sensed a nuisance behind him. The other Cavern was soaring above him, and charging Exora Amras. In the next instant, something akin to a luminous demarcated line, like one would find on a ruler, appeared between it and Skullius.

The line suddenly extended, and the Hybrid Warmoth found himself getting pushed towards the large Cavern on the ground below. The creature retrieved its swords and prepared to assault him with its full might.

Skullius found that he couldn't simply extricate himself from the situation. His trajectory was fixed, at least without using Andori of his own for other forms of movement.

'Is that another Andori?' Skullius thought as he was forced to approach the giant foe.

The creature dived at him the moment he was in close range and swung one of its sabres with astounding skill. Skullius was so surprised that he was a little late in reacting. He ducked to the side, but his lower right arm ended up getting nicked by the sabre's edge.

Apparently, that was enough.

'Hmmm?'

Right where a small, narrow cut was made on his skin, what looked like boils suddenly festered around it and the flesh on the arm was suddenly sucked into the cut!

It happened so fast. It was as though his arm was eating itself, as though the little cut was a little mouth with an insatiable appetite for its own flesh.

Before his whole arm collapsed in on itself in less than a microsecond, an extremely thin, pale silver line sliced through Skullius, ridding him of the arm. The Hybrid Luman had just used [Ruining Cutter].

He watched as his arm completely fed on itself to extinction in an instant.

The great Cavern seemed invigorated by the small victory and was already trying to slice Skullius up for a fifth time by the time this happened. (Skullius had been dodging all the while). However, at

the same time the Cavern missed him with its right saber, Skullius landed a cruel blow on its elbow with his lower right hand!

There was nasty crunch!

The great Cavern was alarmed.

It couldn't comprehend how Skullius had a lower right arm when he had just been forced to sever it less than a nano-instant ago.

The Cavern couldn't have known, but Skullius' Third Grand Tier Andori, [Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight] impressed nodes onto each and every one of Skullius' cells, prompting healing to commence the instant Skullius received a blow. When he sliced his arm off, a new one was already growing before the other one fell off and collapsed in on itself like dying star!

"Oh, you don't even know the half of it!" Skullius cried with a grin, dodged another swing by the great Cavern, and sent two [Ruining Cutters] slashing through its shoulders, severing its arms completely!

The creature shrieked in agony, but immediately formed another body, and dove into it.

Even though Skullius could have attacked in that instant before the creature's soul entered the new body, he let it be. He was suddenly feeling merciful. After all...

[Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] has noted the use of the World rank Exotic Parlous Nature, 'Flawless Reinvention'. It intends to analyse, modify and create a new Parlous Nature based on its findings with an input of 23,000,000 Null Life Essence. Will you allow it?]

Skullius would have been a fool to say no.

Right then, he felt himself get dragged backwards.

The ethereal line from the other Cavern's Andori was still attached to him, it seemed.

Apparently, it could adjust the distance between the Cavern and the target as many times as it wanted, and to maximum stretches of distance unknown.

Skullius felt himself draw closer to the smaller Cavern, but it moved out of the way and allowed him and the demarcated line representing its Andori to extend way past it and into the further sky at rapid speed!

'Now this is an interesting Andori,' Skullius thought.

The winds blasted on his back as he pierced through Suzamete's body.

However, he couldn't allow this farce to go on any longer. He was quickly disappearing into the clouds at this point.

The [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] became thick and robust once more and Skullius drew from it a small, double-bladed dagger with strange spheres along both blades.

This was the Tainted Lycan's Siphoning Claw, a Realm rank Treasure!

Skullius brandished the Wicked Treasure in front of him and activated its Absolute Wicked Property.

Far beyond him, where the glow of the growing line from the Cavern's Andori connected to it, the creature noticed its entire body turn to a shade of blue.

But not only that, everything on the ground below it, including its fellow Cavern with the dark flames and the surrounding area was dyed in a sullen blue tone as well.

Everything there... was marked.

...And with as violent of a nature as one would expect from a ravenous wolf tearing through its prey, great, dark claws, shining like polished steel stabbed their way out of the two Caverns and ground in the dozens, granting both physical agony, damage and TAIN'T!

Chapter 1287: Disappointment (4)

Everything was riddled with the claws, and they kept spilling out as though miniature cretins that had suddenly burrowed into the ground and the bodies of the two Caverns were stabbing furiously in an attempt to flee.

The large Cavern collapsed, roaring in agony. Its torso was already falling apart, chunks of its flesh ripping away from the inside and flying off. One of its legs had even exploded and was quickly disappearing because of the consistent, violent action. The fact that the ground was also being assaulted didn't bode well for the Cavern. As soon as it fell, its body was made quick work of by the claws reaching from the ground, chaotically restructuring the entire landscape.

The entire range of the Absolute Wicked Property began to dip, as though the world was swallowing itself.

The Cavern in the air wasn't faring any better. Its body was quickly ripped up as well, but it felt something else, something sinister in the claws way more vividly than its partner.

Its flesh was quickly tainted by what seemed like a vile, sludgy poison that stole its vitality and ability to control itself properly. It slowly felt its consciousness fading.

Panic rose within the creature. It knew that it had to eject its soul, but doing so meant leaving itself wide open to attacks that would then harm its Broader Existence. It had seen Skullius viciously take advantage of this and instantly kill its companions, after all.

But in this case, there was little choice.

The Cavern aimed to immediately attack Skullius after ejecting, and that was exactly what it did.

Its soul swivelled out of its body, ready to activate its Andori and counter Skullius in whatever way he chose to attack. However...

A rough hand seemed to materialise around its neck and squeeze with atrocious force. Skullius already had the creature in his grip.

Then suddenly, darkness thick as the night spilled from his fingers and wrapped around the Cavern like a blanket.



With that, the powers of the Cavern were sealed.

Skullius had employed a function of his Third Grand Tier Andori, [King of Severing Twilight: AfterDark]. As long as an enemy was coated in his darkness, they would lose access to their abilities – as long those abilities were similarly ranked or weaker than [King of Severing Twilight], that is.

"And this is how you fight Divine beings, it would seem. I'm sure it only appears simple because the bunch of you were absolutely pathetic. Harming the body and soul of a being with a more powerful Immortal Physique will likely be a lot more difficult, not to mention forcing them to split," the Hybrid Warmoth said thoughtfully while the Cavern wriggled.

He turned to the Cavern on the ground.

It ejected its soul, and pulled its sabres towards its arms. At the same, the creature hurriedly forged itself a new body with its Exotic Parlous Nature, Flawless Reinvention.

Skullius watched it closely.

'I've been using a lot of Amras. More than I thought I would. A Physique is Physique I suppose, nomatter how weak it is. My cutting Andori can only completely harm these guys' Broader Existence after two or three of them land. I wonder how far I can extend the output,' he thought before charging Amras.

In the next nano-instant, he sent out an [Elusive Meta Carver] packed with 15 units of Amras instead of 5, and...

...!

Before the large Cavern on the ground could slither into the new body it had created, Skullius' attack split it cleanly in half.

The kill was silent. [Elusive Meta Carver] was graceful, after all. It didn't attack tangible, material objects.

The notification for the Null Life Essence Skullius received rang in his head.

'Hmm, that's as much Amras as I can pack in one slash. I can triple the output and damage. I almost felt the Broader Existence get shattered just then,' he thought and turned to the Cavern he had captured.

He funnelled Amras into [King of Severing Twilight: AfterDark] and the bubble of darkness around the Cavern grew to engulf him as well. Now, the two were stowed away inside the savage darkness.

Skullius released the Cavern.

It drew back and looked around frantically.

The fear in its eyes was unmistakable.

It immediately tried to use its sole Andori on Skullius. A pale line began to appear where its hands stretched towards the Hybrid Warmoth, but it quickly broke apart and disappeared.

"Don't worry. I will be sending you off to your friends in a moment," Skullius said as he pointed at the creature.

He could use the darkness to bolster his awareness, and his general vision. He attempted to do so in order to see if it truly was impossible to discern another's Broader Existence.

'I can't sense it. It appears only its owner can perceive it. Or maybe I'm just not strong enough. Even the [Legion Eyes] can't see it,' he thought.

With that, Skullius sent an [Elusive Meta Carver] whipping towards the Cavern and its arm went flying. It screeched.

'I can hardly sense anything. I'm sure this is damaging its Broader Existence, but...' Skullius sighed.

It would appear that the new power system he was to grow within now, possessed a slew of ins and out that he couldn't quite cheat through. Just perceiving the Broader Existence of another Divine being was so difficult that Skullius wondered if it could be done at all.

Irritated, Skullius finished off the Cavern and dispelled the field of darkness he had conjured.

He then dropped to the ground which was riddled with towering claws.

Elita appeared beside him.

"Nicely done. At this rate, I won't even need to lift a finger," she said with a smile.

"Enjoy that peace while it lasts," Skullius said to her and turned to the red sabres the giant Cavern had left behind. He used [Greatest Hegemon of Sorcerous Mana] to pull them towards him.

"Spoils, I guess," he said and hid the sabres in his nimbus.

"Are we going to draw another set of Cavern here again?" Elita asked.

"No. We should get moving. I'd teleport us to Maqi, but I'd like to capture another Divine or two and test out some theories," he said.

Elita nodded and soon they were off.

Skullius' nimbus split off a chunk of cloud that Elita sat on it as she followed behind Skullius. The two streaked through the sky at godly speed. And as they went, Skullius finally invoked AKHASHA.

Chapter 1288: Invoking AKHASHA!

Before the merging process...

"Wait, what?" a phantom asked, dumbfounded. "AKHASHA is a what?"

Serenity sighed.

"You heard me. AKHASHA is a Deity, a very old one. I suppose you can call him the first Deity to ever exist. Me, Void and Emmae don't exactly qualify as Deities. AKHASHA is near as old as we are," she said. "He is the one who established the Common Reality Leagues and most of mechanism under them."

The phantoms were stunned. When they had asked Serenity what ascension meant and how exactly they were supposed to go about climbing up the new power hierarchy ladder, they hadn't expected to hear that the AKHASHA points Serenity had mentioned were necessary to climbing up were based on someone.

"As old as you are?" a phantom gaped. "Hold on. This... this has too many implications."

"If he's as old as you... but then... worlds... how does..."

Before the phantom had an aneurysm, Serenity answered the questions she knew were vexing the phantoms.

"Reality wasn't always as it is now. I already explained how Void, Emmae and I came to be. We lived on a world; the first world. Before AKHASHA transcended, nothing was established yet. There was no great void and there was only... The point is, everything you know to be true now only came after my sisters and I began on our respective paths. AKHASHA went about his after Void covered the entire reality, Emmae created her own space with her undead minions, and I, my Null Verse. He had free reign since neither of us really had much of a say in how reality would unfold because of the restrictions that came with our powers."

The phantoms listened carefully. When Serenity paused, they didn't rush to bombard her with questions. She appreciated that.

"AKHASHA is a prideful Deity. Anyone who wishes to use his established ascension system must first acknowledge him, and then they can begin to earn AKHASHA points. As it turned out, he inspired Deities that came after him to adopt a similar system in other regards to his Common Reality Leagues," Serenity explained.

\*\*\*

Present time...

[You have chosen to invoke AKHASHA]

[Will you agree to an EXTENDED CONTRACT with AKHASHA?]

Skullius sighed.

With everything that the phantoms had shared with him about what Serenity said concerning this first Deity, AKASHA, he knew this wasn't something he could choose to ignore or find an alternate path for (unless he chose to go and live in the Null Verse, of course, where certain things seemed to be different when it came to Divinity).

Unless Skullius agreed to this Extended Contract, he would forever be stuck as a Divine with a Phase 1 Broader Existence, cursed to never raise his strength.

As for what this Extended Contract was, the short of it was that it was an agreement that served both Skullius and AKHASHA in the long run. Even Serenity wasn't sure what gains it gave AKHASHA himself exactly.

The thought made Skullius uncomfortable.

This first Deity...

He was quite different from Deities like Quintess, Listafelle, Suzamete and Boron. Very different.

His age was one thing, but his power was another. Apparently, he and several of the Deities that came after him had a name they gave themselves. The name wasn't hollow though. It wasn't a mere title. It measured these Deities as being second only to the likes of Serenity, Void and Emmae who had powers that transcended the Common Reality Leagues before it had even been established.

Skullius shook his head.

"Fine," he told the guidance field and it chimed.

[Congratulations! You now have access to AKHASHA's Unit to Ascension Methodium!]

[You have slain six enemies with a Phase 1 Broader Existence. Each enemy has earned you 0.5 units]

[You have acquired 3 AKH units!]

Skullius rubbed his temples.

AKHASHA units were drawn from the Broader Existence of an enemy rupturing. As it were, everyone who agreed to the Extended Contract seemed to get imbued with a fragment of AKHASHA himself that became a permanent part of them. This fragment would be transferred to this individual's killer after their Broader Existence was destroyed and on and on and on

And this was how the olden Deity was able to create a power system based on his terms.

Skullius had been right when he assumed the cumulative mana system of Aigas was probably based on the AKHASHA unit system.

'These numbers are... pretty pathetic,' Skullius thought as he looked at the [3/1,000 AKH] on his status.

He had known this was how it was when it came to earning AKHASHA points. According to what his phantoms had learned, this Unit to Ascension Methodium – as the guidance field called it – did not reward a Divine for killing an ascended expert weaker or just as powerful as they were, which was why the earnings were so abysmal for Skullius.

Additionally, the Unit to Ascension Methodium encouraged lower ranked Divines to seek out stronger enemies and hunt them using ALL the elements of the Common Reality Leagues.

It was possible to equip strong Treasures against more powerful enemies.

It was also possible to wield Exotic Parlous Natures that made the difference in quality of Exora Amras or Immortal Physique irrelevant.

How limited as the Common Reality Leagues appeared at first glance was merely a farce, Skullius knew.

If not for Serenity, he would have been caught off guard by this truth. Unfortunately, the fullest extend of the Common Reality Leagues couldn't be explored when one was stuck in a world.

Skullius clicked his tongue.

'Three down, 997 to go,' he told himself. That was not going to be easy especially if a chunk of his time was going to be stolen by his excursion here on Aigas. 'There aren't that many Divine level experts left and I doubt killing them will get me to Phase 2.'

This was true.

Right then, the guidance field chimed.

['Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus' has completed its analysis of the World rank Exotic Parlous Nature 'Flawless Reinvention']

[Would you like to—]

[Incoming intrusion...]

...!!!

Skullius immediately went on guard.

Someone was intruding on his guidance field!

'Don't tell me...!' Skullius thought, more awed than afraid.

[A Primeval Deity is interested in your newly forged Exotic Parlous Nature!]

[A LIMITED CONTRACT has arrived. Would you like to open the CONTRACT?]

Chapter 1289: Primeval Interest!

[A Primeval Deity is interested in your newly forged Exotic Parlous Nature!]

[A LIMITED CONTRACT has arrived. Would you like to open the CONTRACT?]

Skullius narrowed his eyes.

'It really happened the second I got a new Parlous Nature?' he thought, dumbfounded.

The notification kept flashing before him in an attempt to capture his attention or perhaps emphasise its importance.

The Common Reality Leagues were profound indeed, Skullius had to agree.

"Be cautious, Skullius," Serenity suddenly said to the Hybrid Warmoth. "There's little I can do if things get messy here. This is a Primeval Deity.'

'I know, I know,' Skullius said to her, sighing. And he did know.

Primeval Deities.

AKHASHA and twelve other Deities that came after him were the only Deities who answered to this title.

They were ancient Deities, powerful Deities responsible for creating – as Serenity had claimed – a third of the entire population of worlds in this reality!

Such a thing had staggered the phantoms when they had heard, and Skullius in turn when they told him. The Deities he knew – along with the ones he had bullied – were responsible for creating a single world as far as he knew, and to his knowledge, creating worlds was as draining as it was rewarding for a Deity.

Just how strong this collection of Deities – Primeval Deities – could be, frightened Skullius.

One of these archaic powers – who was no doubt similar in class to AKHASHA – had reached out to him.

The significance and potential danger could not be overstated.



'They can reach into my guidance field as they please, huh? Does this also mean they are so in touch with the Voice of Worlds that they get information from all guidance fields in this reality the instant it reaches its user?' Skullius thought, baffled.

The interference just now seemed to prove this fact!

Whoever the Primeval Deity reaching out was, knew all about Skullius' new Exotic Parlous Nature before even Skullius himself!

A frown found its way to the Hybrid Warmoth's face.

'First, let's see what the new Parlous Nature is,' Skullius said.

The guidance field reacted to his desire.

[You have acquired the Realm rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, 'Second Divine Sinew'!]

'A Realm rank Parlous Nature?!' Skullius thought, baffled again.

The original Parlous Nature analysed by his nimbus was only at the World rank, a step below this new one. How was this possible?

'Is the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] ... that strong?'

The Andori was Skullius' strongest one yet. Because it had been made using the skill, [Unbridled Wisdom of the Ascended Nullmancer], an ability that had allowed him to analyse skills, essences and concepts to then learn them with a price of Null Life Essence, the nimbus seemed to have gained a substantial boon; it was able to produce powerful Parlous Natures too!

At once, Skullius appraised this new Parlous Nature.

What about it could have possibly made a Primeval Deity take an interest in it?

~~~

[Second Divine Sinew]

+Realm+

This Exotic Parlous Nature allows the user to create a single replication from any one source – regardless of their nature and power – bound together by the outlandish threads of the Melding Stitches. The fabrication, if living, will possess all the qualities of the original, including:

+A Broader Existence of their own, however stunted when compared to the original {40% weaker};

+ All their learned Andori

+ All Immortal World Physiques

+Exora Amras {the well will be reduced by 50%}

...

~~~

Even though there was more to read, Skullius was already frozen, shaken.

What had he just read?

This...

This was atrocious!

This was completely different from what the giant Cavern had possessed!

That creature, as Skullius recalled, had only been able to create flesh vessels. They did not possess a Broader Existence, but it seemed the user of the vessel could share their Immortal Physique and Amras with the vessel to strengthen its defences.

Second Divine Sinew did more than this!

The Parlous Nature recreated all of the original source – body, soul, Broader Existence, Amras well, Andori, Physique and all!

The only downside was that the Broader Existence of this replica was 40% weaker than the original and their Amras well was reduced by 50%. Additionally, it seemed they were held together by the Ju`wtte Melding Stitches from the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus].

That is what constituted the perpetual cost for keeping the replica running, it seemed.

But still...

'No wonder that Deity wants it!' Skullius thought; his phantoms chattered nonstop in the background. 'I don't imagine they are a lot of ways to clone a Divine existence that are this good. Just imagining how this could benefit a Deity who wants to create multiple worlds...!'

Skullius felt his mouth go dry.

Elita noticed his turmoil despite it only raging in his head. She left him to his agonizing.

Skullius turned to Serenity.

'Is this Parlous Nature really that rare, from your knowledge? If reality is as big as you say, shouldn't there be powers that can do the same thing?' he asked.

Serenity gave a hum of thought before answering.

"Not for Deities. Exotic Parlous Natures are as the name implies. They are dangerous. Most of the unique ones come from treacherous phenomena that spawn from Void's body. A majority of the

higher ranked ones are only good for destruction," she said. "Of course, in the Null Verse, a Parlous Nature like this wouldn't be all that rare."

There was a note of pride in Serenity's voice.

Skullius shuddered.

His nimbus expelled flakes of cold, mirroring the fear that spread through him in that moment. It seemed Deities were actively hunting down these types of powers!

Skullius' mind drew back to the subject of the CONTRACT offered to him by the Primeval Deity.

'What should I do?' he asked Serenity. He didn't want to do anything that would upset a Primeval Deity right now. He wasn't sure he would be safe, even behind the bars (Rules) of Aigas. No, he was sure he wouldn't be safe!

"Open the contract, read the terms and decide. The terms may be beneficial for you. It is a contract, after all and you can decline with no consequences. Hopefully," Serenity said.

For some reason, Skullius wasn't encouraged much, but he did as Serenity suggested anyway.

He instructed the guidance field to open the contract.

[Incoming Intrusion...]

[...]

[...]

[A Primeval Deity is interested in your newly forged Exotic Parlous Nature!]

[A LIMITED CONTRACT has arrived. Would you—]

[A Primeval Deity is interested in your newly forged Exotic Parlous Nature!]

[A LIMITED CONTRACT has arrived. Would you like to open the CONTRACT?]

...

Skullius froze.

He brought the nimbus to a halt at once and linked the fingers of all his arms. A bead of sweat ran down his brow. It wasn't all for fear. Part of it was enthusiasm.

Three Primeval Deities had offered him contracts for this new Parlous Nature!

Serenity went suspiciously silent. She too was stumped.

Goodness!

Yet another set of notifications sprung up in Skullius' vision. These ones baffled him all the more.

[(1) piece of <Counsel> has been used]

[Skullius, I urge you to choose one nomatter what. However, whatever you do, do not entertain any offers by TITEMIUS. You will deeply regret it]

Chapter 1290: Contract Offers

'VOW!' Skullius thought. This had caught him way off guard.

The Voice of Worlds was giving him counsel, again!

From his alter's memories, Skullius had learned that the Voice of Worlds had done this before, when Aurolio had given him the ancient page with the soul of the Corrupted Deity Nunax!

The guidance field had several useful functions that allowed users to essentially cheat through some of the universal norms; one of them was the <Counsel> function. It allowed one to ask for

assistance from the Voice of Worlds by asking a question. On the flip side, it seemed the Voice of Worlds could use this <Counsel> themselves in order to give advice to the user without being prompted.

VOW's advice right now...

'TITEMIUS?' Skullius thought on it. Who was this Primeval Deity? Was he dangerous?

"You should listen. Wy- the Voice of Worlds does not speak lightly. You're being favoured," Serenity said, and it was true.

VOW had always favoured Skullius.

The Hybrid Warmoth nodded at Serenity words.

If anyone would know the Deities very well, it would be the Voice of Worlds. He would be a fool not to listen.

'Alright. I suppose it stands to reason that one of these contracts was sent by this TITEMIUS. Let's look through them.'

The guidance field responded to his intent immediately. The contracts were shown, presented in a grid form before Skullius.

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, JOISEN ANTERRAS+++

>ENTREATY:

Little anomaly, let's be friends. You have something I want, and I'm sure as a fresh little Divine yet to expand their Broader Existence, you will benefit from my terms. I have been rather liberal with what I'm offering, I think. For you, this should be plenty.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for (1) remote usage of your Exotic Parlous Nature, Second Divine Sinew, I am willing to grant you the following:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Expanded Shadow Fiend's Leather;

+Realm rank Wicked Treasure, Malefic Gold Hand;

+(3) skins of Exora Mead

[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, D'JORRO+++

>ENTREATY:

There is nothing to lose here, even for an anomaly like you. I know your benefactor has a terrible number of treasures that would serve better in this reality than in her little cosmos. I am willing to continue to make trades with you, if you are sensible. I offer plenty. You should be grateful. If you reject my goodwill, you can be sure you'll be making a formidable enemy this Constern!

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual uses of your Exotic Parlous Nature, Second Divine Sinew, I am offering the following:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the First Stratum, Gallant Tempest's Embrace;

+(14) skins of Exora Mead;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Darkfire Bolt;

+D'JORRO's Tear.

[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, TITEMIUS+++

>ENTREATY:

Welcome to the greater standard of life, young Divine.

It is only the yearning of ancients like me that younger and stronger powers be born and join us to expand reality. As I am sure you already know, it is impossible to grow alone in the wider reality. There are too many unknowns, too many enemies. It only does you good to earn the backing of someone higher on the ladder. I could be that someone for you. I am quite interested in the Parlous Nature you have just created, no doubt because of your anomalous powers. I believe your cooperation with me will benefit for us both for a long time, if you are so willing.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual uses of your Exotic Parlous Nature, Second Divine Sinew, I am gracefully offering the following:

+(9) skins of Exora Mead;

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum (Evolvable), Value of the Sempiternal Sentinel;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Bane of Little Lords;

+Corrupted Sun Deity, Everdread Unithra;

+Corrupted Moon Deity, Whiteskin Unethra;

+(2) TITEMIUS' Tears

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Skullius found himself re-reading the contract offers again and again and again and again!

Exora Mead skins?

Deity Tears?

Realm rank treasures and Immortal Realm Physiques?

All this information staggered the Hybrid Warmoth!

He had paused for so long that Elita ended up poking him.

"What's wrong?" she asked with a concerned look. Her assumptions immediately landed her to the bizarre way Skullius had zoned out back in the Honing Fortress, after he had healed Stylla. She thought it might have been the same thing.

Skullius turned to her. His phantoms were arguing and discussing so loudly that he could hardly focus on Elita.

"Uh... give me a moment, will you?" he said and went back to considering the contracts.

'Of course, this TITEMIUS just had to have the best-looking offer out of all of them!' Skullius thought, frustrated.

The other offers he had gotten proposed fewer and less tantalizing rewards than those TITEMIUS was willing to give.

While Skullius didn't know what the significance of Exora Mead was or even the Tears of Deities, he was sure being offered two Corrupted Deities was substantial! It had to be!

There was no way sealing away Corrupted Deities was just a poor trend in the wider reality.

As the ancient page he possessed implied, Corrupted Deities were used as familiars or combat units. Their value seemed to lie in that alone, perhaps more, depending on what kind of Deity they were. Being offered two of these by TITEMIUS when the other Primeval Deities had offered none said a lot about the value.

TITEMIUS was staking a lot in his interests.

However, what Skullius would need to give up in exchange was what made him uneasy.

'Perpetual uses of Second Divine Sinew?' he thought. He didn't like that.

This was what D'JORRO and TITEMIUS wanted. To Skullius, it meant they wanted the opportunity to use his Exotic Parlous Nature anytime they wanted, and this made him uncomfortable. Was this wise?

On top of this, D'JORRO seemed like the hostile sort. He had flat out spelled the fact that rejecting his offer meant making him an enemy, and Skullius wasn't sure he could handle that. Unlike Luserus, it seemed the Primeval Deities weren't scared of the Existential Parallels. Heck, even Boron wasn't.

With VOW telling him to not associate with TITEMIUS, Skullius automatically rid himself of the possibility of accepting his offer. The Deity seemed nice and kind, but Skullius trusted VOW more.

Besides, it was all but clear that Deities were the best at playing the long game; they were masters of pretense.