

# Undead 131

## Chapter 131: Prelude To A Gruesome Grind

It turned out that no one knew that Elita had freed Skullius as her speed when she brought him out of the cell and rushed with him away to deal with the chaos in the entire city had not been noticed as she completely outclassed everyone in the city physically.

Her decision to not kill Skullius was the one that Yugefet was mostly hinged on more than the fact that the Purity itself had attracted a tragedy to Eofel.

However, it was natural that a scapegoat was always required in situations like these.

Skullius had already fled, the whole 'no presence' factor of his Apostle as well as his weakness doing good to not expose his location as the fact that he had escaped was made known to everyone far too late.

[Pelvis Boar-Man Majestic Attire] had run out shortly after the two had left the city, Red Rage losing his voice and flight immediately.

From there, the Apostle had princess carried his master and bolted in a random direction.

During the journey, Skullius had been mulling over the situation with Elita.

From the moment that he had arrived in this world, it had been foe after foe, malicious intent after malicious intent thus though he hadn't shown it in the moment, Elita's willingness to let him go when many wanted him dead had struck him deep.

The fact that she paid a heavy price for helping him also caused him no small amount of guilt as it brought on a very itchy and nagging feeling of a memory that tried so hard to sneak into his mind but failed.

Skullius grunted in frustration.

Elita was probably dead by now and there was nothing he could do about it.

The Discount Human pulled up his status to check the contents of the description of the curse again.

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[UNCoddled]

[The Arch Lich Somanda wishes you well on your journey to eventually return to him. However, in light of your previous attachments, he has decided to give you an additional 'incentive'. A curse to follow you till the day you face him. You shall be bound to walk alone. Only with your strength.

Any help from the outside will promptly attract FATALITY, leaving you alone till your destination has been reached]

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This description did not stipulate just how the curse weeded out those who helped him.

He had received a deeper explanation from the Grinning Jester Fox that had a mysterious eye which allowed it to analyse his curse.

The best that Skullius could gather was that cases like with Benzard and his group where he was 'helped' and 'saved' from perilous situations but with the ultimate goal not being for his benefit, were not taken into account by the curse as they were not helpful to him.

Cases like the Grinning Jester Fox where grand benefits awaited with the decision of the other party were what incited the curse to activate.

According to the fox, three factors were taken into account.

Contribution, level of strength and proximity.

Contribution pertained to how much help Skullius got, level of strength determined how the target would be affected, with the stronger opponents being affected least while proximity to Skullius as the benefit was delivered also determined just how screwed the individual would be.

"I'm sorry..." Skullius found himself muttering.

Though he didn't know the bulk of the story, he knew that Elita had been extremely suspicious of him as all her actions prior to the end of the fight were never to assist Skullius but herself as she believed Skullius to be able to help her with situation as he had tangled with a Green Neolist before.

The Discount Human shook his head as he threw these thoughts out of his mind. He had to focus on what was ahead now.

First off, he took out the map that he had been given by Elita.

Over its demarcated areas with bold texts showing the cities within Pelian, a small spot could be seen moving across the map.

It represented Skullius' position to show him where he was in relation to the lands.

"It's really convenient..." he said.

Fortunately for him, the map had the convenience of showing which cities were the largest and which were like Eofel. Smaller.

The distance between Eofel and the nearest big city was atrocious and Skullius almost got a headache.

Even on the map, he could tell that this distance was not merely a few miles.

"Good thing you have infinite endurance bro," Skullius said as snuggled deeper into Red Rage's arms.

He then told him the direction that they should be going.

To a city called Genhuis, South West of Eofel.

The journey was going to be long even as Red Rage raced at full speed. His speed wasn't anything exceedingly impressive anyway as when Skullius thought of this, he decided that for his next summon, he would choose something with a natural affinity towards speed.

He looked at his guidance field and saw the 1,800,500 Exp he had gotten from the Cursed Knight. It was a great addition to his stock that he was still saving. He would use it to level another Apostle to Tier 1, preferably this next desired one.

Strangely, Skullius didn't receive a notification for collecting the Null Life Essence for the Cursed Knight, which was probably because it was already dead.

There were also a few other notifications for killing a whole bunch of humans with Benzard's attack as it had ended up murdering innocents but that was another story he didn't give a flesh about.

'Now. About that class...' Skullius thought as he looked at Red Rage.

Skullius had yet to figure himself out in his Discount Human form but for his Penetrator form, it seemed balanced at the moment.

After seeing Red Rage fight, he discovered that this bro needed a high boost to his strength as his race focused on defence. He had been unable to do any damage on his own which defeated the purpose of being a... hero?

Besides, Red Rage was still the quick learner he always was. He could pick up sword skills if he wanted to just by watching and following the movements.

Thus, Skullius decided to forgo the Valiant BoneKnight class and choose the Temper Skull Hegemon.

With that, Red Rage received an addition of 250 to strength, 70 to Mana and 40 to Agility along with the exclusive skills.

Red Rage was too preoccupied with carrying him to give him a thumbs up but Skullius knew that the Apostle still appreciated despite his rebellious nature.

'Now. Time to figure out the ins and outs to the Insurgent Magnus. Heh. I like that...' Skullius thought as he got to work.

A true grind to reach another level was about to begin.

#### Chapter 132: The Insurgent Magnus Within (1)

"Okay. Let's get to it," Skullius said as he lazed on Red Rage's back. The Apostle was racing at full speed on the hard ground, heading in the direction of Genhuis.

Skullius had opted to change positions as being princess carried made him feel weird, above the fact that he wouldn't be able to practise what he wanted to do stably.

He was about to explore all about his class and sort out all the skills he had, investigating their functions separately and in conjunction with others.

The fundamental element that made the Insurgent Magnus unique was the two special elements, [Evil Darkness] and [Just Light].

The skills related to basic [Evil Darkness] manipulation that he had so far were [Basic Evil Weaving] and [Evil Darkness Production].

There was also [Pseudo Evil Veneration] but it was not a skill.

From what he had gathered so far, [Evil Darkness] had the ability to restrict, bind and control.

The many individuals locked within the Hall of Fulgardt in the Labyrinth of the Yoke were a prime example, Skullius managing to see the complex knots within Eldris' body that controlled him back then.

He had also seen the effect of [Evil Darkness] within the yokes as they had the power to seal away the power of the target.

This was likely as a result of the dark power used in conjunction with [Just Light] but if that was the case then Skullius knew nothing about this element separately altogether.

The same was the case with [Just Light] as he hasn't used it that much. He was quite clueless but the skill [Just Light Production] was supposed to help him with it.

The two production skills, as described by the guidance field were ones meant to actually generate the respective elements from his body which was incredible to think about.

Since there wasn't much to explore with his two elements, Skullius moved to check everything else that was exclusive to the Discount Human form.

There was the Luminant Seed which he had received after killing Dezrael. It was dormant at the moment and would bloom when he reached the Advancement Stage.

"Damn it! I still don't know what the flesh that is," Skullius complained as he lacked knowledge on the stages of power that humans adopted. He had a feeling that the answers would finally be revealed if he got to Genhuis though.

He had another thing that was similar. A piece of soul he had been awarded with after killing General Sila. He recalled that when he took damage to the soul after being killed in Eldris' body, a part of Sila had been used to mitigate the damage.

So far, there was nothing else apart from the stats it granted that even showed that he still had it, but that would change soon.

The [Binds of Fukal] were also another thing. They were the tattoos on his chest.

When Skullius saw their description he couldn't help but smile bitterly.

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[Binds of Fukal]

Whoever is bound is never to associate with Deities and is unable to receive their blessings nor their curses.

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"As simple as that, huh?"

It was blessing and a curse at the same time. Now he couldn't ask for help from them, that is if he would ever get a chance to speak to them.

[Pseudo Evil Veneration] was something else that Skullius was looking forward to progressing as it had saved him on two critical occasions, but he still didn't know how to do so.

The Fruit of World Myths which would appear as soon as he willed it was also something to be explored but the issue was that the two (it and Pseudp Evil Veneration) seemed to need a powerful understanding of the fundamental elements.

With all that said, Skullius decisively activated [Evil Darkness Production]. He would rather give more attention to the element he had the higher affinity to for now.

The skill didn't have a definite mana requirement as it converted mana to the respective element under a strict criteria.

Skullius felt a familiar sensation run through his body upon activation.

From his finger, a thin wisp of [Evil Darkness] sprouted, wiggling its way into the air!

Skullius pushed his focus to the limit, seeing the pitch black image struggle to remain alive, however it seemed that this was his limit!

Nomatter how much effort he put, groaning and grunting excessively, he could not produce more than the four inches worth of [Evil Darkness] before him!

"You've got to be kidding me! After all that?!" he yelled.

Was this just how trash his affinity was? But it had grown back to grade C after his experience with the Fruit of World Myths!

Was manipulating already existing darkness easier than creating your own?

Skullius withdrew his control of [Evil Darkness Production] and looked at the shadow that trailed along Red Rage's movement using a skill he thought to be useful.

[Basic Evil Weaving] had allowed him to manipulate Darkness before and he naturally thought it could help with this.

The Discount Human extended his hand towards the shadow and focused after activating the skill.

Yet...

Nothing!

The shadow didn't budge nomatter what he did!

'What?! But it worked in the Labyrinth! Or... wait! Is it actually different? Is [Evil Darkness] not derived from normal Darkness or something?'

This seemed to be the case and Skullius deflated.

At least he now knew that he needed to start from scratch and work smarter when dissecting this power.

What a hassle!

Being more intelligent was a hassle!

Clearing his mind, Skullius once again activated [Evil Darkness Production] and injected mana for another try with his newfound knowledge.

From the looks of it, it seemed that a conversion from mana to [Evil Darkness] depended on his affinity grade.



Another unsteady, squirming wisp of [Evil Darkness] protruded from his finger, becoming erect when Skullius' focus peaked.

The Discount Human gnashed his teeth while sweating, analysing the small wisp.

It looked intricate. Too intricate to be simple darkness that one would find anywhere but still... it was strangely lacking.

Different shades could be seen when one looked even closer but the light from the sun did not stain it. A sickly looking trail of darkness.

While having the wisp in bloom, Skullius activated [Basic Evil Weaving] which didn't require mana and tried to manipulate it.

It worked!

As he focused on the wisp, willing it to lean to the right, it promptly did so, which made Skullius heave a sigh of relief.

Unfortunately, he didn't feel much better as the this current progress spelled the strenuous hard work that he needed to do.

It was unfortunate that he didn't have infinite endurance to practise this like with his Penetrator form.

Still, the Discount Human didn't lose fake heart. He had managed to spend a thousand years doing something so unbearably monotonous so could he feel disheartened with just this?

While keeping both skills active, Skullius continued to try out different things with the wisp of darkness while injecting more mana to see if there would be a change.

The output to input ratio didn't change even as the figure for mana increased tremendously.

Was there something else he was missing?

Probably.

There had to be.

Skullius didn't expect to figure out this power so easily anyway.

After trying for a full thirty minutes without progress, Skullius stopped.

It just wasn't working. The conventional means weren't going to cut it.

'What else has a strong connection to [Evil Darkness]?' he asked himself.

What indeed?

There were a limited number of things that could possibly be the answer.

The Labyrinth.

Fulgardt.

And...

The answer didn't play hide and seek with Skullius as it had been something he had used earlier.

The Fruit of World Myths!

When he had used it, he had gotten a different feel of [Evil Darkness] and [Just Light], seeing it in the surroundings through [Crude World Projection].

Unfortunately, this new addition to his arsenal wasn't a skill and had to be deciphered from its source without the help of the guidance field.

Perhaps he had been wrong before.

Perhaps the Fruit of World Myths was what he needed to better understand the two elements!

Skullius willed the item to appear and the flower like, ethereal object floated before him with its golden center and dark fumes.

"Come on bro. Show me something," Skullius said as he reached out his hand to touch it from Red Rage's shoulder.

In the same instance, he activated [Basic Evil Weaving] and [Basic Evil Invasion] to try and see if something would come of it.

The result was something Skullius didn't foresee at all as instead of the out of body experience he had felt before, the Fruit of World Myths shot into his body, the Discount Human feeling it as it settled in his very chest!

Chapter 133: The Insurgent Magnus Within (2)

It was quite the freaky feeling, having something in your chest.

It was different from when Skullius saw his own core that shone brightly in his bone body as this time, he couldn't see it at all.

What was it doing?

Skullius didn't feel any new sensation from having the Fruit of World Myths. He waited a few seconds to see if something would happen but he truly felt no change.

This item was already weird as he had yet to understand how its uses were unlocked and used. He had hoped to spur some action from it using the two skills but the result was underwhelming.

'Can it come out?' Skullius thought as he willed the Fruit of World Myths to come out from his body, but it remained in place.

A notification popped up instead.

[The 'Fruit of World Myths' has been integrated into 'Discount Human' body permanently]

...!

"What?! What's with this thing?!" Skullius blurted.

What were the rules?!

Was there an immediate benefit for this?

Skullius once again used [Evil Darkness Production] to see if there was any change.

Surely, there had to be something otherwise this thing was a mere freeloader.

CHLLLLK!

A weird sound emerged as shockingly, the wisp of darkness that sprouted from his finger grew longer than before while being more lively!

Skullius even felt it to be a bit more vivid and ominous as its colour was shockingly deeper and more uniform, its movement more intense!

"There's a difference!" Skullius exclaimed in joy.

There really was a change and it wasn't just the length!

The darkness he had conjured before felt.. bland, as crazy as it sounded. It was indeed the unique essence he had used before but this one...

It was different.

Skullius felt as if he had touched upon the genuine and pure element, being able to conjure it at will, though in limited amounts.

Sause had been able to blow away the darkness within the multiple spaces in the Labyrinth of the Yoke because it was never the real thing in the first place.

Even he had stated it.

Skullius had touched upon the true [Evil Darkness] and [Just Light].

This made sense when he thought about.

"I guess all I was able to use in the Labyrinth was a lesser version. It makes sense I guess," Skullius said. "So to be able to truly use the power of the Insurgent Magnus, I must have the Fruit of World Myths within me?"

A lot of mysteries were still hidden under a cloak of.... mystery.

Skullius shook his head, ridding himself of such thoughts as they had no answers at the moment. Instead, he dipped himself in the exciting task of trying to conjure greater variations of darkness and to see how he could use it effectively.

First, the Discount Human tried to increase the volume of [Evil Darkness] he could produce per unit of mana which turned out to not be that much even with the help rendered by the Fruit of World Myths.

At this point, Skullius could at most produce half a human shadow worth of [Evil Darkness] and that was after continuously repeating the process of manifesting and withdrawing the darkness from his fingers while shaping it with [Basic Evil Weaving] which worked like a charm.

It was quite peculiar that he was doing all this while was being piggy backed by the armoured Red Rage but the Discount Human barely spared a thought to the awkwardness.

[Basic Evil Weaving has levelled up]!

[Evil Darkness Production has levelled up]!

The results of Skullius' hard work showed from time to time as he pushed himself, and when the sun finally came down, Skullius stopped.

[Basic Evil Weaving] put his mind to the test as all the shapes he imagined were applied to the darkness when he strained his mind, his full focus was being on high demand each second.

When he chose to take a rest, Skullius was drenched in sweat, or rather... water, a cheap replacement for actual body fluid.

"Let's stop for a bit, Red bro," Skullius said.

Red Rage stopped and Skullius threw himself on the ground to rest.

The Apostle sat at his side and watched as his master's chest went up and down rapidly.

Mana depletion and mental exhaustion combined to form a big ass bitch.

It took a few minutes for Skullius' mind to stop spinning and for his body to stop feeling so heavy.

He rose and sat up straight, finding the golden glowing sockets of Red Rage gazing at him.

"Don't look at me like that, bro, I'm working hard here. For us," he said.

Red Rage didn't show much of a reaction but his intent reached Skullius anyway.

"Jeez, this race change has really made you a pain in my pelvis hasn't it? You're all I have right now, bro. The curse I have probably won't let me find anyone to help us unless they are stronger than Somanda. Besides, if anyone sees what we really are, they won't care enough to not erase us. We have to be smart."

Apparently Red Rage was dissatisfied with how Skullius had handled the matter in Eofel. Red Rage had really wanted to help Elita but as a follower, he didn't exactly know everything about his master, including the UNCoddled curse.

"Besides, Red bro," Skullius said as he raised his hand to give his Apostle a thumbs up. "I need a hero like you to save my pelvis everytime I'm in need of help."

Red Rage's sockets flared, almost igniting in flame as he also raised his hand and gave Skullius a thumbs up.

[Apostle Red Rage approves of your cheese. +25 Favourability]

"What? You know what, never mind. Don't waste your blessing Red bro, why don't you go and level up your skills? We'll need it."

The Pelvis Boar-Man immediately rose to begin session.... after he had asked to borrow Skullius' sword that is.

When looking in his spatial storage, Skullius remembered that he still had a chest that hadn't been opened!

However, his excitement died down as he recalled that he didn't have any mana at the moment along with the fact that his ability to produce [Just Light] was simply non-existent.

His affinity was not even graded at the moment and who knew how much time he needed to raise it up.

He would have to wait a bit more to accomplish that.

Seeing Red Rage in the distance as he repeatedly swung the Baleful Gale Reaper while also spamming some of his other skills, Skullius decided to kick his grind up a notch.

There was no need to only focus on his class skills. He still had other skills that needed to level up and evolve especially the one skill that helped him begin the entire journey...

#### Chapter 134: Gruesome Grind (1)

Skullius ate the food that was in Reon's spatial ring while waiting for his mana to recover. Unfortunately, while there was a lot to eat, there was not a lot to drink and he had been noticing the rise in temperature during his travel in the daytime.

It was not a case of feeling pain from his skin frying but seeing the mirages in the distance along with the overall effects the heating sun had on the environment.

Furthermore, even though he couldn't feel it, his body became wiry and heavy making Skullius curse intensely.

'My mana regeneration still sucks... I guess its different from my Penetrator form. I wish I could... I'm so dumb!' Skullius suddenly slapped his own face and injected his mana into the ring he wore.

The Null Devil's Aegis of Damnation plopped on the ground, raising up dust with its grand appearance from the spatial storage.

"I could just use the mana regeneration effect of the armour as well as 1500 boost to mana!"

Perhaps it was the fact that he had only worn this thick armour while in his Penetrator form which had created a bias in Skullius that made him forget that he could wear the armour and still enjoy its effects or perhaps it was the heat had made him forget but nevertheless, this obvious method he could use to grind had appeared in his mind.

A 100% mana regeneration rate and an addition of 1500 to his mana pool!

It would make it so much easier for him.

Naturally, Skullius use the armour for combat as it was too large for him to wear but mana exercises weren't much of a problem.

With a few grunts and great difficulty, Skullius donned the armour even while looking unsightly as the Chains of Damnation dangled and cranked against the armour.

Skullius' head popped out the armour but his whole body couldn't fit perfectly as it was way too small. It looked more like he was hiding in the armour than actually wearing it.

Still, it didn't matter as the effects of equipping the armour immediately began to show.



A massive amount of mana compared to his current capacity gushed through him, the armour acting as a holder of this vast sum!

"That's what I'm talking about!" Skullius roared with a large grin.

Even though he didn't quite feel this addition to his reserves while in his original form because of his already vast mana pool (for a white core), his current weak body felt it.

"Now to evolve [Basic Mana Manipulation]!" Skullius said.

This was the skill he wanted to evolve. It had opened up possibilities before and it could do so now.

To do this, he needed to level up six times, a feat which needed him to attain a better grasp over mana and how to shape it.

He had learnt this piece of information when he was straining to pull on the mana that flowed excessively from Dezrael's armour, the ArchLight Generation Keeper, with his under-performing mana manipulation.

All he had to do was subject himself to harsher forms of mana manipulation that were above his current capacity and push onwards.

For such a thing, Skullius chose something simple.

The thing that appeared in his mind when he thought of mana was the mana core, since forming one was not an easy task, at least for him.

The Discount Human brought his hands together while they were in the enclosure of the armour.

He closed his eyes and focused, bringing streams of mana into the space between his hands.

He slowly parted his palms, gathering more and more mana while also trying to condense it.

This was the way he had forged a strong core when he was in Deadmanland, repeating the process until he built a stronger than normal core.

As an undead, after years of exposure of mana, eventually forming a core was not outlandish but for Skullius, he wasn't satisfied with one that couldn't do anything, thus he made one for himself while others sought to cultivate [Boneman of Steel] instead.

Mana focus was the only way!

A small ball of condensed mana appeared between Skullius' hands, glowing with a bright white light.

Skullius' brows twitched as he then began pumping more mana into the small ball. The white energy surged, giving the ball a brighter shine that lit up the interior of the armour intensely.

Soon, the ball grew brighter and brighter becoming harder to contain which made Skullius sweat.

'Crap! This is harder than I thought!'

Skullius gnashed his teeth as he steadily poured more mana into the small ball of mana at slower rates to manage the intensity.

Minutes passed with Skullius pouring and struggling to contain it!

His previous experience with this had been messy with him being unable to fuel even a quarter of the current mana he had managed to contain within his core.

[Basic Mana Manipulation has levelled up]!

[Basic Mana Manipulation has levelled up]!

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A few notifications popped up over the next few hours as Skullius kept on trying to contain the mana with his mana manipulation.

However, after reaching a certain threshold, his focus began to wane and the capacity he held at the moment became too much for him to handle!

Because of how much power he had packed into this small ball of mana that he kept compressing, Skullius was afraid to release it within the armour.

He hadn't thought that far as he had instead gotten lost in his task.

The Discount Human took a deep breath as he struggled to focus.

'What do I do?! Won't this destroy me and the armour if I just toss it aside?'

This was a possibility in Skullius' mind and it scared the fake shit out of him.

'Wait! How about I change the shape and try to lessen the damage if it explodes or something?'

There was one level left until the skill was level 20 but Skullius didn't know if he would survive till then.

'Calm down, you sockethole!' Skullius barked at himself. He drew in his focus once again and tried to shape the small ball of mana. 'Wait. Rather than shaping it, what if I focus it into a skill?'

A harmless skill that is!

Without delaying any longer, Skullius immediately cast [Evil Darkness Production] with this condensed mana!

FWOOOM!

A massive plume of darkness erupted with a heavy pressure that blew away the dust and air which created a sound akin to a rough, subdued explosion!

The amount of darkness produced in this instance was so ridiculous that Red Rage rushed over to Skullius thinking that the Discount Human had screwed himself over!

As he approached the thick layers of darkness, Red Rage found himself unable to proceed as it felt like he was pushing against an impenetrable wall!

...!

His hands tried to pass through the darkness, but it was impossible!

Moving forward didn't allow him actually reduce the distance!

The darkness wouldn't let him in and as it surrounded an area of almost twenty meters, the Apostle felt the need to activate his strongest skills to barge through as his master wasn't responding.

"Relax, bro. I'm fine," Skullius said from within the darkness.

Even though the Pelvis Boar-Man couldn't see it, Skullius was grinning from ear to ear.

In only a matter of seconds, he had received surprise after surprise while in the midst of the cloud of [Evil Darkness].

First...

[Evil Darkness Production has levelled up]!

[Evil Darkness Production has levelled up]!

This skill of his had levelled up twice from this incident alone, boosting the amount of [Evil Darkness] he could produce.

The second surprise was that...

"I've finally found a use for this darkness!" Skullius exclaimed.

Who knows that his hardwork would actually net him such a huge boon?

However, with his current level for [Evil Darkness Production], he couldn't produce such a huge cloud of darkness as he had done after using the condensed mana.

"I'll focus on that one later. I've just gotten a good idea on how to power level all my skills. But first, let's advance [Basic Mana Manipulation]."

Skullius chose to finish the task he had set to finish first.

The darkness that covered the area cleared when Skullius used [Basic Evil Weaving] which was level 5 now.

Red Rage looked blankly at the scene for a while before turning and heading back to do what he had originally been doing.

Skullius once again drew in his focus and started condensing mana. His previous session had left him having a heavy sensation that pulled him down, but he intended to push through. There was definitely light at the end of this tunnel.

He could feel it.

Within two hours, another super condensed mana ball had been created and Skullius finally saw the notification he had been waiting for.

[Basic Mana Manipulation has reached LV20. Would you like to evolve it into its next form?]

"Hell yeah," Skullius said with a grin as flowing 'sweat' trickled down to his mouth.

['Basic Mana Manipulation' has evolved into 'Advanced Mana Manipulation']!

"Hoo... Nice!" Skullius screamed in joy while making sure he didn't let go of the condensed mana he was wielding.

However, in the next moment, another notification popped up, surprising him.

[Due to the repetition of the action 'Condensing Mana', the skill 'Mana Blast' has been acquired]

Chapter 135: Gruesome Grind (2)

"Oh, a new skill? I didn't expect that," Skullius said while looking at the new notification. However, he couldn't bring himself to focus on this new addition just yet as a peculiar yet familiar sensation pervaded over his core, absorbing a vast amount of information from the surroundings!

[Advanced Mana Manipulation] cradled his core like a new-born child.

His senses became so focused that he noticed the finer details in the mana, being able to tell apart his own mana and the raw mana in the world from sheer detail alone.

'Beautiful...' Skullius thought, breathing in subconsciously.

He still held the small ball of mana and his activation of [Advanced Mana Manipulation] told him the complexity and flaws of this compressed ball of mana in a more simplified manner.

"I see now. Is this what it means... the different core colours. Being able to produce more compressed mana naturally...?"

It seemed to make sense now. The blue and purple cores he'd seen so far. They were an expression of compressed mana with a better quality!

Only such a quality could be used to activate higher level skills; special, super and supreme.

A grin etched itself on Skullius' face. He had found out one truth on his own.

Now...

[Luminous Healing]!

A burst of uncoloured energy streamed through his body, clearing the cosmetic flesh and healing the wounds he had sustained during the battle against the Cursed Knight, which he had ignored until now!

Instantly, all of Skullius' fatigue was washed away, leaving him feeling exceedingly fresh and new!

It was insane!

Casting this skill from the compressed mana brought about such a quick and effective result!

"Kek..." Skullius cackled. "Now..."

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[Mana Blast | Lv.1]

Naturally produce a sphere of highly condensed mana.

-There is no limit to how much mana can be packed into the sphere-

Mana Requirements: ---

Duration: ---

Cooldown: None

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"Once again, I get a very basic description. It's cool, I guess," Skullius said dispiritedly. "I can imagine what [Advanced Mana Manipulation] says... aaaaand I'm right."

Naturally, the description for [Advanced Mana Manipulation] was as bland as he imagined it to be with the word 'advanced' replacing the word 'basic' in the previous description.

Skullius couldn't say he was disappointed however. He was actually pretty happy with these results. He could discern mana from a distance of over 300 meters while also being able to draw mana from a radius of twenty meters, unlike before.

Such a huge and profound change was definitely worth it.

Between this and the revelation he had gotten about [Evil Darkness], Skullius felt ecstatic.

While he was within the cloud of darkness, the guidance field had notified him of something ridiculous.

[All basic stats are increased by 5%]

Within the enclosure of darkness, Skullius would gain boosts to his stats!

It was insane when he considered that he had barely scratched the surface of this unique power!

This wasn't even a skill!

Furthermore, he had yet to hear Red Rage's account of how the darkness rejected his entry!

"If I keep increasing the level of [Evil Darkness Production], I should be able to produce a large amount of darkness without having to condense such a ridiculous amount of mana. When that happens, I'll be able to handle battles better."

This was indeed true. Skullius had no doubt that he would be the only one receiving such a boost within the cloud of darkness and this was just a basic function.

What about when he would be able to actually do damage as long as enemies were in the cloud of [Evil Darkness]?!



This thought brought on the idea that he had to level up his Discount Human form as his current mana capacity was pathetic.

"I'll really need to fulfill that Task or whatever soon. But anyway, I can't wait for what comes next!" Skullius rubbed his hands maniacally. "If this worked for one skill, it must be effective with others. Let's see now..."

Since condensing mana continuously produced such grand results when using it to activate a skill, Skullius decided to see if he could attain some boons from doing the same with [Mana Bolt] and [Bitter-Sweet Hell's Inferno]!

As he now felt refreshed, the Discount Human began condensing mana and using it activate the two skills interchangeably.

[Mana Bolt] had a cooldown of five seconds while [Bitter-Sweet Hell's Inferno] was five minutes which made the task somewhat easy in terms of interchanging cast.

Time flew, the morning sun rising while Skullius was still repeating this process nonstop, activating [Luminous Healing] when the going got too tough.

As the light kissed his being, Skullius' 'sweaty' face showed the boredom that plagued him because of the monotony.

The results when not too bad as after going on for a few more minutes, [Mana Bolt] was ready to evolve.

With his consent, the mana skill evolved into [Manassault].

~~~

[Manassault | Lv.1]

Pure and refined mana is concentrated to form a quick and dangerous projectile which manifests as a streaking light that is capable of doing intense damage to the target as well as disrupting their core.

Mana Requirements: 150 Mana Points

Duration: ---

Cooldown: 30 seconds

~~~

"Not bad. It seems really strong," Skullius said before he collapsed on the ground.

The hot sun had returned, threatening to intensify his fatigue.

Skullius decided to take a rest.

[Bitter-Sweet Hell's Inferno] was only two levels from evolving but he had a feeling it wouldn't be so easy to evolve the skill within the next few minutes.

Rather, he called out to Red Rage who promptly rushed to his side.

"Let's keep going. I'll rest for bit," Skullius said.

Red Rage nodded and carried Skullius behind his back. He then held the map and ran in the direction of Genhuis city.

As Skullius was piggy backed, his vision slowly darkened as a sensation he hadn't felt before washed over him.

Sleep.

Fake sleep.

The journey as Red Rage sped ahead was meant to be a long one, but the two finally entered a new region with a terribly unforgiving weather, a few settlements visible in the far distance...

#### Chapter 136: Namu Village

Pelian as a nation was naturally vast. The second largest among the three human nations in Aigas.

It had four large cities scattered across the geological landscape, each, save for two, being in different regions.

Four ecological regions could be found in Aigas with the one that Red Rage had just entered being one of the them, coming out of the one where Eofel was settled in.

Skill hadn't put too much thought into it, but the Tremur Forest as also located in the same region as Eofel, being a few hundred miles away from the small city.

Ecological regions in any nation or continent in Aigas represented something significant. The more fierce the conditions tended to be, the more energies there were in the regions.

Except for old and ancient places that already existed, basically nothing new would usually grace the lands from mana as if there was a moderate ecological state, the mana would more than likely be docile and bland.

The Discount Human on Red Rage's armoured back opened his eyes as his cosmetic body reacted to the vicious heat that bore down from the sun.

"This again!" Skullius thought.

He was confused on why he was suddenly waking up after blacking out but the heaviness he was feeling along with the distant representations of the intense heat in his vision stole the show.

Also, within his body, something was urging him to find food. Particularly something to drink.

This was naturally something he wasn't used to but his body didn't seem to want to back down from the issue.

Several spots that were villages and towns could be seen scattered around the landscape ahead.

Shockingly, despite the heat, plants and trees grew quite well, having not the yellow colouring of malnutrition but the green hue of health instead.

Grass adorned the ground under Red Rage's racing feet, making Skullius remember the first time he appeared in Aigas. The repulsion he had felt on seeing the greenery.

'Such fond memories,' he thought.

Despite the heat, Skullius didn't lose sight of what he wanted to accomplish. There were obviously human civilizations ahead and he wanted to be prepared for anything.

"Red bro, slow down," he said, the Pelvis Boar-Man heeding his order as he reduced his pace considerably.

"It's better that we take our time. Besides, I would rather not let myself get caught in my Penetrator form."

Unlike last time, Skullius was wholly devoted to checking how much time he had before reverting back to his original body.

It wasn't too far off.

He wanted to give himself enough time for the three hour cooldown before getting closer to the human settlements.

In the meantime, after making sure there wasn't anyone nearby, Skullius began condensing mana and using it to cast [Bitter-Sweet Hell's Inferno].

The heat produced by the flame at this level was extremely hot, burning the plants even if they weren't touched by the tendrils of purplish orange flame.

Skullius flung the ball of fire a distance away, watching it smash into a bald spot of land with a booming explosion that left a large and deep crater.

He continued to do this, making sure to throw the fireballs in different directions, mainly those that wouldn't start a forest fire.

By the time the skill was ready to evolve, the sun had risen considerably high since the process was slow, Skullius not using the armour to boost himself in fear of reducing their mobility.

Red Rage couldn't carry him while he was in that armour and Skillius didn't intend to stop moving.

['Bitter-Sweet Hell's Inferno' has reached LV10. Would you like to evolve it into its next form?]

"Yes bro."

['Bitter-Sweet Hell's Inferno' has evolved into 'Revenant Flames of Ecstasy']

~~~

[Revenant Flames of Ecstasy | Lv.1]

Summon a special flame that causes profound destruction, burning its targets horribly while giving them an unbridled sense of erotic Ecstasy that turns them into allies who fight for you until they burn out.

<Current Limit – 5 targets>

Mana Requirements: 300 Mana Points

Duration: ---

Cooldown: 1 hour

~~~

"Hooo... looks like this was really worth it," Skullius said with relief scribbled across his fake face.

He lazed on Red Rage's back while taking a rest for a few minutes, waiting for the inevitable to happen.

Twenty three minutes later...

[The skill 'Flesh It Like You Mean It' has timed out – 00:00:00]

Skullius reverted back to the tall Null Lifeform he was, gaining his dark blue bony image with four burning sockets.

"That's the stuff," he said as he proceeded to sit down after donning his armour.

The only reason he was comfortable changing his appearance so openly was because there was a lot of vegetative cover and with his [Advanced Mana Manipulation], he could sense that there was no one watching.

Even if there was, he hoped his speed in wearing the Null Devil's Aegis of Damnation would help somewhat.

Looking in the direction that he was supposed to go, Skullius saw a small village.

There many other similar settlements around and he didn't think he could just ignore them.

"Well... I'll need to stock up on some things like clothes anyway. Might as well begin to travel around this world seriously," he said.

Of course, Skullius had to wait for [Flesh It Like You Mean It] to come off cooldown, meaning... he had three hours to kill.

"I have the perfect thing to pass the time."

\*\*\*

Namu Village.

The day was perfect.

Perfectly normal at least.

The weather was angry as usual but the crops grew and the rain would grace the lands.

A cluster of wooden houses packed closely with clean streets in between that held chattering figures and playing children could be seen.

Standard life was always so different from the more complicated living where money was the central focus above the actual standard of living.

One could see on the faces of the many within the village that this was more of a community than an establishment meant to raise crooks and merchants.

Even with such a happy atmosphere roaming around the small settlement though, a little bit of unrest could be felt in the atmosphere.

Two men who donned simple linen shirts and pants along with standard leather sandals walked while addressing the issue that had everyone in a reverse tizzy.

"Dear Quintess. I wonder where the Idea Ark has gone? I don't feel safe without seeing at least one of them doing a routine patrol. Hasn't it been a few days since anyone has seen them around?" one of the men said with a concerned look on his face.

"I do not have the faintest idea. Maybe there are off somewhere else dealing with more dangerous requests. Everyone is getting nervous though. The Cluster that opened up in Santhi hasn't been dealt with yet. What if it breaks before those other no-good Guilds deal with it?" the other man said while trying to keep his voice down when the two reached a rather congested part of the street.

"I don't know. We can only pray for the Deities to send someone to deliver us. My prayers surely can't be going to waste."

"Yeah. I hope the same. Hey... who is that?" the first man suddenly asked as he pointed ahead where the figure of a strange black-robed man was walking unsteadily while entering the village.

#### Chapter 137: Leave That Man Alone!

A few minutes before...

Skullius and Red Rage reached the village which had been a vast distance away a couple of hours ago.

Skullius was in his cosmetic flesh while donning his tattered robes while Red Rage was in his Capital Knight armour that had been damaged after receiving a storm of magical attacks from the Cursed Knight.

It had been saved by the defence rendered by his skill, [Pelvis Boar-Man Majestic Attire] otherwise, he would be a naked walking skeleton.

Following the event where Skullius had returned to his Fulgurant Bone Penetrator form, Skullius had passed the time by trying to take the skills from magical items as he had intended to before.

His class as the [Vehement Bone Nullmancer] allowed him to use Null Life Essence as a connection to mana based constructs like he had done with goblin staves back then.

He tried to do the same with [Demion's Dance], extracting the skills from the sword.

Unfortunately, as his Null Life Essence gushed into the sword, Skullius found to his disappointment that...

[Your mastery of mana is too low. Unable to extract]

Essentially, he couldn't extract something with a complex internal mana structure that exceeded his current mastery of mana, that is, his mana manipulation.

This discovery had both enraged and enlightened Skullius as he now knew that he was right. Enhancing his understanding and manipulation of mana was the right way.



However, it turned out that his efforts alone wouldn't cut it. He needed external help which he no doubt would find in bigger human settlements.

As the two were roughly twenty meters from the village which was surrounded by long grasses and sparsely distributed trees, in the distance blots of other similar settlements, Skullius stopped and turned to Red Rage.

"Look bro," Skullius said, "It's too risky to enter with you in that village. If someone were to take away your helmet, they would see your form and cause panic. I don't intend to stay for long. Just wait here. I'll just find something to wear, something to eat and be right back. Alright?"

Red Rage nodded as he stood in a heroic pose.

Skullius' rolled his eyes subconsciously.

"Here."

Skullius gave Red Rage Denille's spatial storage ring.

He had discovered after some strenuous thinking that he could simply rescind his ownership of the ring and give it to someone else instead of resorting to killing.

Having the guidance field made it so much easier as the process was further simplified.

After giving Red Rage some instructions, he watched as the Pelvis Boar-Man made the ring his own and wore it with a subtle, heroic glee.

"If anything happens, I'm sure you're smart enough to handle it," Skullius said before he walked towards the village.

His steps were slow and dragged out as his body continuously punished him for the sins of the harsh weather which didn't seem to bother anyone else but him.

He really needed something to help alleviate his pain.

Upon entering the city, Skullius saw many people of all ages moving on the dusty ground while engaging in different activities.

Washing clothes, chatting, selling some basic goods or committing to embroidery.

The atmosphere sure looked peaceful.

For Skullius though, it was a bit... frightening.

Every adult that he saw had a bright white core that oozed of mana!

The energy that these cores exuded was stronger than his after he became a standard Null Lifeform back then!

Even the children he saw had small bright cores like little stars, slowly growing with their age.

This was crazy!

He imagined that the stats were relative to his old form as well, which terrified the flesh off of him!

VOW bro hadn't been joking about humans being scarier than beasts.

He would have sensed this when he entered Eofel a day ago but he had been preoccupied with wondering if he would keep his Discount life.

'Bro, do you have any idea how long it takes for an undead to get a core naturally?!' Skullius bellowed in his own thoughts.

He soon got over this fact as his body demanded that he find something to drink. As he walked unsteadily on the ground, many eyes were drawn to him.

Shock and confusion were mainly what was depicted on the faces of the people that looked at him as they all collectively wondered.

'What the heck is with that face?'

It was unnatural.

No dimples.

No wrinkles.

No pimples.

No realism!

Skullius ignored the glares as they at least guaranteed that no one found him exceedingly suspicious for any reasons other than his face... and perhaps his robes.

As he wryly moved, an old man who was holding an axe over his shoulder while walking with his grandson who held a bundle of wood, walked up to Skullius with a kind smile.

His faded blue eyes and white hair had the scent of age and wisdom as unlike most of the people that looked at this clearly suffering soul and did nothing but stare, he chose to help instead.

His grandson followed behind him.

"Hello there, friend. I can see you are new to this region as the heat is clearly wearing you down, haha. Come with me, I'm sure you could use some cool water," the old man said, his grandson behind him smiling brightly as he nodded at Skullius, encouraging him to follow.

"Uhm... sure, bro," Skullius said as he nodded desperately.

This was easier than he thought it would be.

'But wait, doesn't this...'

"AAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRGGGHHHH!"

The old man suddenly screamed at the top of his lungs as blood gushed out of his eyes and mouth like a fountain, thick veins popped on his skin as they flooded with the red substance!

In the next moment, the old man's flesh began to melt off of his bones and pool at his feet!

The old man's grandson stood with his eyes wide open in shock as he witnessed this horrifying scene!

All around, the spectators screamed and leapt away while others merely gasped in horror while they stood in place.

Such a thing...

What on earth...

"What evil is this?!"

"What happened?!"

"It was him! He did something! What did you do?!"

Someone pointed a shivering finger at Skullius who face palmed.

"Yes! It must be him! Look at his clothes! He's clearly an evildoer! His face has no dimples!"

Another person screamed while grabbing a stick and quivering as he slowly advanced forward!

A small crowd of brave-ish men and women crowded around Skullius while the old man's grandson remained standing still, gazing at his grandfather's remains.

"Murderer!"

"Killer!"

"Kill him!"

Skullius couldn't believe what was happening.

'I didn't even ask him for help, damn it!' he screamed within.

This dawned curse had struck again, attacking a kind hearted soul that sought to help him!

Crowds chanted as they drew closer to him, hesitantly flailing their weapons around.

'Should I just kill them all?' Skullius wondered. This commotion could lead him into another problematic scenario after all.

There didn't seem to be a choice. He could just run away after the deed.

Since it had come to this, Skullius raised his hand as he prepared a skill that would no doubt leave get rid of the problem.

"Leave that man alone!" a boisterous voice resounded across the entire village, causing everyone to turn in the direction of its origin.

"I shall deliver justice on your behalf!"

Chapter 138: How To Con Commonfolk

Skullius didn't need to turn his head as he already knew who this voice belonged to. A second after the voice boldly called out, he received a burst of information from Red Rage as the Apostle asserted his opinion on the current matter.

Killing is wrong!

Let's be smart!

The Pelvis is the bastion of honour and blah blah!

'I get it! I won't kill them!' Skullius blasted Red Rage in return.

As expected, the figure that had roared a command appeared before the masses, bearing an image that was the very personification of hope itself.

A cape that fluttered without being pushed by the wind, golden guards and braces that sparkled with an intent to attract attention and give relief to those that looked on along with the strange mash created as gold clashed with the silver underneath.

A Knight donning a cape!

From the cylindrical spaces within the visor on Red Rage's helmet, two skewed golden glows could be seen, releasing small wisps of golden light.

Nothing could be felt from this Knight as only his appearance took everyone's mind off the current situation for a short amount of time, some of the more prone souls dropping their weapons as they gaped.

Red Rage walked forward in his [Pelvis Boar-Man Majestic Attire] that tried its best to mask the damaged parts of the Capital Knight armour which exposed a little of his bones, by coating his entirety with a dream-like starry dust.

"Who... who are you?" one of the men asked while shivering in awe.

As the man said this, most of the people snapped out of their stupor and made sure that the criminal was still detained.

"My name is of no importance, valiant citizen," Red Rage said with his macho-ass voice that caused a few women in the crowd to whimper as it completed the heroic, handsome stature.

In the next moment, Red Rage vanished from everyone's sights and appeared behind Skullius, slapping him on the head with a force that knocked the Discount Human into the ground with a dull thump!

"The hell?!" Skullius barked as he ate dirt, his head dipping into the soil.

Everyone turned and focused on Red Rage in shock, marvelling at the speed and decisiveness in his action.

It wasn't outlandish for the various guild mercenaries to be able to move like this, but the Pelvis Boar-Man's attire as he did this made everyone feel utterly reassured.

Some were still apprehensive of this man who had shown up out of nowhere but they didn't have the gull to voice it out.

The threat had seemingly been neutralised, which made them less inclined to ask further questions.

"As I said, valiant citizens. I shall deliver justice on your behalf. I shall take this sockethole to the relevant authorities to have him punished for committing murder," Red Rage said while pulling up Skullius by the nape.

"This is not what we agreed on! You're making me look like a sockethole, you sockethole!" the Discount Human fired at Red Rage who completely ignored him.

The vocabulary Red Rage was using was terrifying.

What was with this outrageous intelligence?!

Instead, Red Rage turned to the young man who was kneeling before his grandfather's skeletal and flesh remains with tears in eyes.

The young man hadn't bothered to turn to Red Rage or entertain him. He didn't even turn to the supposed killer, Skullius.

"My sincere condolences, valiant young male. I hope this person you love so dear finds peace," Red Rage said with a lower voice that prompted the young man to start crying bitterly.

'Since when can this brat act like a priest at a funeral? Wait! What's a funeral! URGH!' Skullius fought with his regurgitating mind.

The words that Red Rage had said to the young man caused the people to warm up to him even more as he seemed so kind and compassionate.

A Knight indeed.

From the way he spoke, to the decisiveness.

Many looked to him with a brighter light while in contrast, hatefully glaring at Skullius.

After giving the young man who was in mourning a gentle pat on the shoulder, Red Rage turned to the crowd that had begun to grow larger as those that had fled returned, those that hadn't been there before rushing to see what was happening.

A few other people helped to collect the old man's remains and take away the crying young man.

"Forgive me, valiant citizens but I must make a simple plea. As you can see, I recently engaged in a bitter fight, damaging my armour and exhausting my supplies. It would help me immensely if I could have something to drink and something to don on my body," Red Rage said while giving a short bow.

This appeal caused the hearts of the many in Namu Village to feel touched. This man was clearly an honest worker!

Perhaps he was a Stray Knight that protected the unprivileged.

His whole vibe hinted at this and made his image even more attractive.

From within the crowd, two men began to converse, whispering among themselves.



"Haha, you see! Our prayers were answered after all! A hero has shown up to save us from that Cluster!"

"You're right! Our prayers weren't wasted!"

Many immediately scrambled as they rushed to get what the Knight had kindly requested!

Was it so easy to win over a crowd like this?

Yes and no.

When common folk felt their sense of safety threatened, they would usually turn vulnerable, becoming accepting to any odd help that would appear at their doorstep.

In other scenarios, older people within such groups usually had the final say and the ability to mould what the younger ones believed, creating an extremely paranoid group of people that were highly suspicious.

Unfortunately, such things were washed away by the special effect of Red Rage's abilities, particularly the Hero's Charisma, Voice of Hope, which altered weaker people's perception of the Pelvis Boar-Man, implanting positive thoughts about him passively with his every single action.

Soon, many clothes were set by Red Rage's feet. The Pelvis Boar-Man acted humble, claiming that he didn't need many of them, even selecting the less luxurious ones while shaking his head at the more expensive ones. He promptly stored these in his spatial ring.

Skullius grumbled at this.

'This brat knows that he's not the one who's going to wear those! Gah!'

The Pelvis Boar-Man stored all the stuff he got, food, clothing and water.

The three minute duration of the skill soon wore out, rendering Red Rage unable to speak and removing his mystic attire.

This only served to convince the crowd that this warrior was probably tired from his long battle, their eyes twinkling as their expectations and hopes began to subconsciously pour onto Red Rage who remained oblivious to the fact that these people had baggage and needs they needed a 'hero' to deal with.

A middle aged man with a gruff appearance made his way towards the Pelvis Boar-Man with a few other individuals who helped him carry parts of a rather sturdy looking armour.

It looked like the Capital Knights armour but without the key features that attached it to the nation such as the national symbolism.

"Please, sir Knight. Accept this armour to replace with your own. It is the best I have ever been able to craft in my shop with the help of my gifted apprentices. I hope it will protect you at least until you find something else worthy of your strength," the man said with a strong voice as he and his apprentices humbly handed the armour to Red Rage.

The Pelvis Boar-Man man could only nod and stand aloof to keep his dignity after [Pelvis Boar-Man Majestic Attire] wore off.

He stored the armour and prepared to leave when two men zealously besieged him, speaking what was on everyone's mind.

"Kind Knight. We have a small request of our own. With your strength it shouldn't be a problem. Our village will be eternally gratefully to you if you help us," one of the men said.

Red Rage nodded.

"A white Cluster has opened close to Santhi, causing a great panic. We fear that it will rupture soon and release those evil monsters onto our lands. Please sir Knight, save us."

Skullius was listening to this and he couldn't help but wonder.

'Cluster?'

Chapter 139: First Encounter With A Cluster (1)

"A Cluster, huh? This is the first time I've heard of it. I should have milked more information from Elita while I had the chance. Then again, she didn't trust me. Wait! What did I just say?!"

Ugh, never mind that. You really think we should do this, Red bro?" Skullius said.

He donned a beige shirt that did its basic duty of covering up his upper body along with a pair of black pants that barely reached his ankles. Shoes that were nothing more than... shoes, adorned his feet, having a very rough texture as if they were made from dry grass, but the Discount Human couldn't feel it.

After the men had made their requests to Red Rage, the Pelvis Boar-Man had merely nodded while letting them spout all sorts of exposition like the direction of this Santhi place and little about the actual source of threat, the Cluster. After that, Red Rage promptly left.

Skullius had taken in this information greedily, connecting it to what he already knew about Aigas. While adventuring and seeking this Cluster thing did seem attractive, it didn't beat getting more information about the powers of this world.

Yet...

After the constant pleas from Red Rage, the Pelvis Boar-Man begging his master to fulfil the request that had been asked of him by the poor valiant citizens, Skullius had eventually been worn down.

Appealing to Skullius' conscience did nothing as the Discount Human didn't feel even an itch from being blamed for the nice old man's death, as he claimed that the wrinkly bro brought it upon himself.

Instead of this though, Skullius was attracted by the fact that he could use this opportunity to level up.

The task which demanded him to obtain the cores of Tier 2 creatures still remained uncompleted and perhaps this was his chance.

Back to the current moment, Red Rage nodded to Skullius without hesitation as the two moved on ahead, leaving behind the small village of Namu.

They journeyed North West to a small town called Santhi that was a few miles away. From their current position, they could see it quite well, many figures seemingly evacuating from the place on foot and horse-drawn carts.

"Is this Cluster stuff that bad?" Skullius questioned.

Was he biting off more than he could chew then?

Maybe. Maybe not.

At the very least he had to see it.

Over the differing slopes between Namu Village and their destination, the two saw different creatures in the open fields, some feeding on the various shades of green grass, others merely trotting over them in the heat that made Skullius pull out a sling bag that held in it cool water which he gulped from time to time.

A few in other distant villages were cultivating their crops peacefully, making Skullius wonder if the same hell he had seen back in Eofel was part of this seemingly different side of Aigas.

Still, his eyes remained on the prize.

On the journey, he gave Red Rage an earful about smacking him like a little brittle boned moron before praising his genius idea which actually netted him free food and clothing without much trouble.

Red Rage was even donning the new armour he had received from the blacksmith and his apprentices which looked glossy with bold choices in the breastplate and shoulder guards.

It was not as protective as the armour he donned before which was to be expected from something created by a small-time blacksmith but it would do.

On reaching Santhi, Skullius noted the few people that remained pulling on their donkeys and horses that pulled carts with their possessions as they sadly left their homes behind.

One of them saw Skullius and Red Rage and a spark of hope was lit in his heart.

He rushed to Skullius and Red Rage, his eyes being drawn more to the Knight armour as he addressed the Pelvis Boar-Man.

"Sir! Sir! Have you come to deal with the Cluster?! Are the Guilds finally responding?!"

Skullius was annoyed by the little attention he received and chose to walk away from the two.

He took a few steps into the city and was about to pay attention to the structures within when suddenly.

FWOOOOON!

A powerful energy was caught in his senses.

A wisp of condensed, unknown energy that wasn't exclusively mana.

Skullius turned from one direction to the next before rushing to where this powerful energy signature was coming from.

He raced through the more refined surfaces of the town where business sections were erected with symbols of various services advertised on old and wooden signs along with the respective equipment cluttered outside.

Even with all its bigger space, Skullius didn't spare much of it a glance as he followed the energy signature.

Even though Skullius didn't know what a Cluster was, the fact that the people of this town were only evacuating now and at such a slow pace made the Discount Human believe that the danger wasn't immediate.

Even the man who had told them of this did imply that this Cluster had yet to release whatever made it terrifying.

The energy signature got stronger and stronger as Skullius rushed through the empty streets, his eyes opening wide when he finally set his eyes on what this Cluster was.

"Wow..." Skullius expressed his awe.

A Cluster.

A large crack stood before him, appearing not on any material structure but on the air.

It was crooked as most cracks naturally were, with a bright white colouration about it that lazily waved forward and back with the thickness of a blanket.

Vicious winds blew around the crack while the inside could almost be seen, but tinted with a blur caused by the frightfully distorted air.

Skullius' auburn hair danced as he stood fifteen meters away, blown by the winds while his face was caressed by the white energy that threatened to spill from the crack.

He instinctively used his guidance field to try and identify more about this unnatural thing, his vision being covered by a screen that detailed what a Cluster was.

~~~

[Low level Cluster (White)]

A supernatural yet common phenomenon in Aigas where a clash of the four Deities' power creates subspaces that produce monstrosities which grow to sustain the minispace and eventually spill out when the surrounding space can no longer hold back the growth of the subspace.

~~~

"Hoo..."

The large crack before Skullius released a low howl as if anticipating his entry...

## Chapter 140: First Encounter With A Cluster (2)

Such a magnificence laid itself before Skullius, its white hue and unnatural shape giving the Discount Human a vague sense of excitement.

No, it was not vague.

It was wild.

He couldn't help but look forward to unravelling more about this peculiar thing that gave him a grand sense of adventure.

What else screamed adventure than such a turbulent crack in space that was currently breaking apart again and again with the sound akin to thick glasses shattering on the hard ground!

It was about to give out.

The description given by the system made Skullius pull his thoughts to decipher what it truly meant. With the narration he had heard from Elita, the matter of the Deities wasn't all that hard to understand. They gave their bodies to create Aigas which was a fantastical thing to think about.

But... there seemed to be consequences to such an action or rather unwanted by-products that these Deities either couldn't handle or simply left for the races they created to deal with.

Something would come out of this phenomenon known as a Cluster which was supposed to be dealt with by this world's fighters.

This something seemed to be rather fearful and though Skullius saw the words 'Low level' on the title of the description, he didn't dare underestimate whatever was inside.

He wasn't aware of how exactly these Clusters were dealt with, but he wanted to know.

'Looks like I won't just be checking it out,' Skullius thought with a smirk. His recent awakening of new skills and sorting his thoughts and powers had given him quite some confidence which he latched onto desperately.

Behind him, Red Rage and the man who had been pulling his belongings from Santhi appeared from the corner, the man coming to a halt 20 meters away from the Cluster while his face went pale.

It wasn't his first time seeing a Cluster but he felt a shiver whenever he saw it.

Common folk were common folk after all. Their minds and lives were not used to the pressure that came with mercenary work; fighting scary creatures, living without many conveniences and all.

The white energy that oozed out of the Cluster bewildered him to a horrendous degree and his first option when seeing Red Rage and Skullius casually walk up to the white crack despite the raging energies it emitted was to extend his hand and try to stop them.

"Wait..." he called softly but the two heard him, Skullius turning and walking to him as he had a lot he wanted to inquire from this native.

Once again, the man was forced to remember that he had been hopeful after he saw Skullius and Red Rage but now, he was already trying to dissuade them.

But wait!

Did these guys really want to deal with the Cluster or was he just being presumptuous?

"Hey, bro. Can you tell me about this Cluster thing?" Skullius asked as he gazed intently at the man with a barely veiled zeal.

Nope, he was right.

The man didn't know whether to answer or not. He peeked at the surroundings and realised that he had really grown fond of this town. He didn't want it to be destroyed if or when the Cluster ruptured.

His gaze fell back on the Discount Human and then to the Knight who was decked in a rather beautiful and sturdy looking armour.



"Do you really not know what a Cluster is Sir Knight? Also, who is this weird man you're walking with? You should send him to safety," the man said to Red Rage.

A vein popped on Skullius' temple as he felt utterly insulted by what the skinny man before him said so boldly.

Yet, he let it slide.

As long as he got his answers. Besides, it was only after he asked his question that he realised that he was practically baiting the man into helping him and leading him to his death under UNCoddled.

He couldn't afford to ask another question as that would be tempting his curse. After a few moments, Skullius was glad that this man didn't give him any face.

Red Rage nodded to the man while waving his hand as if to dismiss Skullius' presence.

The skinny understood the second gesture perfectly while he quite missed the first.

"Well, I'm sure you sir know about Clusters in general, but if you're asking specifically about the situation with this one then I can tell you that it opened up two days ago. We waited for the Ideal Ark to appear after we made a request to Honing City but we've not gotten a response since."

'That's information to work with I guess,' Skullius thought. He wanted to know more about Clusters and their structures in general but instead of inquiring further, he chose to keep his silence and only respond to the man cautiously.

The man looked concernedly at the duo, seeing that Red Rage, the Knight, was without a party to help him.

Was he a Stray Knight?

Did he seriously want to clear this Cluster alone?

"Sir Knight, are you planning on entering alone? Even if it's a low ranked Cluster, I've heard there are usually many monsters inside plus a very strong one."

Skullius heard this detail as he then took it as an important piece.

'So you enter this thing and fight monsters? That's it? Interesting.'

CRACK!

An audible crack resounded, attracting the trio to another crack that extended from the Cluster as it reached into the world.

The skinny man shuddered.

There was no time.

He had to run!

He glanced at Skullius who merely turned with immense interest while no trace of fear was visible in his eyes and ran away. He had been about to offer another piece of advice to this 'normal' human who showed no urgency in a situation where he couldn't defend himself.

'He must have a death wish. Who am I to interfere?' the man thought as he raced towards his belongings outside of the town.

Skullius looked to Red Rage after scrutinising the crack that had emerged.

"Well, bro. Shall we go in?" he asked.

Red Rage gave his master a thumbs up in affirmation.

It was time for action.

The two stepped forward and closed the distance.

Skullius felt a very irritating sensation to his core as he approached the Cluster, the bright white that assailed the crack having some effect on his flesh that disappeared as fast as it had appeared.

Unbeknownst to Skullius, the tattoo on his chest was constantly glowing in a golden hue to ward away what should have incinerated him upon contact.

He squinted his eyes as he and his Apostle stood inches away from the large crack that rose into the air.

"You go first," Skullius said. He wouldn't risk it when he was so weak at the moment.

Red Rage nodded determinedly and stepped forward.

The moment he touched the crack, his body vanished after a brief blinding flash.

Skullius immediately tried to reach out to his Apostle through their mental link only to receive scrambled feedback that told of the fact that the Pelvis Boar-Man was okay.

The Discount Human took a deep breath subconsciously and stepped into the crack, a flash of light devouring his existence as he was then taken into a different space!

As his eyes adjusted while his core took in the different conditions in this place, Skullius expected to see the figure of Red Rage waiting for him but...

"What the hell bro?!" Skullius was utterly shocked by the view as he even fell down upon seeing it, Red Rage who was beside him giving him a thumbs up that only brought seething rage to the Discount Human's face!

"Don't thumbs up to me, you socket hole! Don't you see those?!" Skullius barked, pointing at the multitude of strange creatures that glared at the two angrily!