

## Undead 1341

### Chapter 1341: All's Fair In Women and War (6)

The main difference between Summoners and Tamers was the creatures they were capable of beckoning to them. Tamers could only subdue creatures within Aigas while Summoners could only make contracts with creatures trapped within Stagnant Space or the Abyss, as the Cavern called it.

Summoners had to traverse to the Abyss with their consciousnesses and attract beasts that would be interested in joining hands with them; which meant their Class was rather costly. Even when they succeeded, Summoners needed huge energy reserves to summon the contracted beasts; these creatures couldn't be stowed somewhere in Aigas, after all. They had to return to the Abyss after the terms of their use or cooperation.

Some would say these costs were worth it, though. After all, a strong enough Summoner could reach the Stagnant Space bleeding out of Aigas, where some beasts which had been stranded in the great void had been trapped. And indeed, the calibre of such beasts, when compared to Cluster beasts and guardian beasts was a lot higher.

Franceesta was riding a bizarre beast, a large blue horse with a massive, muscular frame and four eyes that blazed with a red hue. On its forehead was a strange mark, squirming like water, but also like fire. The horse lunged once, its head prepared to ram into a target with the mark, and it was already upon Yuyui.

But she was faster. She surged, quicker than the horse could see, but she was intercepted by tens of large, cawing humming birds that moved as fast as Nigerra. They whipped at her, faster than light, and one of them managed to graze her with its wing. The feathers sliced Yuyui's leg halfway through casually.

'That's dangerous,' the lime-haired girl thought, but her [Tenacious] attended to her injury. As the birds rushed her, a great school of airborne fish numbering a hundred flew in, attempting to impale her. They were just as fast, not to mention coordinated. They could easily skewer thousands of Incandescent Stagers.

Yuyui evaded them all while also avoiding the charge of a strange, large palmed monkey, a jellyfish livid with cutting winds and a queer jade blob that looked suspiciously ordinary.

But then Franceesta was falling on her, her hands interlocked to drive a fatal blow into her head. Yuyui was fast enough to dodge, but the enemies were plenty. She stepped over some of them as she flashed away, but died immediately when she 'accidentally' made contact with the jade blob.

She respawned, confused and wary.

'What in the world was that?' she thought, before retreating even further away.

But then...

"Majestic Territory Expulsion..." Franceesta cried from the distance.

'I knew you were going to try it!' Yuyui thought and she was gone. She went far out of the range of Franceesta's Territory, and the beast of a woman was left to roar in frustration. She had wasted her mana.

Some of her summoned, contracted beasts rushed after Yuyui, however, as did Nigerra.

"Come now. You still haven't given it all, have you?" she said as her arrows stopped Yuyui's retreat. Soon, the summoned beasts were upon them both. "I told you. Don't get comfortable."

Yuyui clicked her tongue. Bubbles came blazing to her side. The enemies swarmed them in different formations.

She took a breath.

She was already exerting herself plenty, yet what she had to do next was even more draining. Yet she didn't hate it.

Bubbles was again engulfed by a bizarre orange-pink flame, Grand Flame, and his form dissolved and condensed, changing shape. He turned into a great pair of flaming scissors that Yuyui skilfully brandished against the enemies.

And then Yuyui was suddenly a blur with wisps of orange-pink. She cut down a hundred and fifty of the summoned creatures, including a part of the school of strange, impaling fishes to bits!

It wasn't a matter of strength, but speed. Even the creatures with the toughest skins were sliced through like butter, and those with vague forms also succumbed to the quick, flaming blade!

But Nigerra was hot on Yuyui's tail. The lime-haired girl noted it and flung the giant pair of scissors and it went on a rampage at ten times the speed of light, cutting, killing!

Then she turned to Nigerra. She pointed at the woman with her index finger.

Nigerra had already been bracing for an Aggrante. She recognised how deadly it was.

But she misjudged.

Yuyui's finger detached from the rest of her and zoomed towards Nigerra at a speed she had not expected at all.

What in the world...?

Before she knew it, her heart had been pierced. Yuyui's finger had borne through her chest and made its exit from her back. It had bypassed her defenses.

But how?

Nigerra was bewildered, but she also didn't expect the leg which smashed into her face, sending her spinning through the air. It too had detached from Yuyui to attack, catching Nigerra off guard. The limbs blinked back to Yuyui – connecting with [Tenacious] – as did Bubbles whose form changed from a pair of scissors to three hundred little, flaming butterflies.

This was Bubble's special property, taught to him by Skullius' fourth Apostle, Beyrmir!

Using the Eye of Moving, Yuyui forced the butterflies towards many of the beast targets at more than ten times the speed of light. They struck true and killed brutally before releasing intense detonations of Grand Flame!

"RAAAAAAR!" Franceesta rushed in from behind Yuyui while Aizel surged from below. But the two women couldn't catch Yuyui by surprise. Not anymore.

Four fingers stabbed through Aizel's neck before she understood what was going on. Yuyui's hand, detached from her arm, had struck, ignoring her defenses. Aizel choked, again staggered by how this was possible.

How was Yuyui suddenly able to deliver blows that ignored her defense? This was different from when she wrenched an unsuspecting Porria's head off! She (Aizel) was prepared for that!

But the answer came right as Yuyui's hand withdrew.

...!

Aizel saw it!

She saw the Eye of Dispersal attached to the hand!

...!!!

'So, that's why...!' she thought.

But almost at the same time – indeed, almost – Franceesta experienced the same. A disembodied fist smashed through her beetle armour, dispelling it, and bashed her chest in, destroying her ribs, and puncturing her heart!

After dealing with Aizel, Yuyui had immediately moved the Eye of Dispersal to a different limb in order to attack Franceesta.

And indeed, this was how she was doing it.

The interpretations of the word 'move' were endless by the Eye of Moving's standard, and as long as you could come to terms with another vague interpretation of it, you could actualise the effect, even if it meant 'moving' separate limbs to different locations!

Yuyui, through Skullius' help, had made it so that Bubbles was an excellent conduit for the Eye of Moving. He was no different from an extension of Yuyui's body, capable of withstanding the intense powers of the eye!

The Unlimited Star had successfully immobilised both Franceesta and Aizel – if only momentarily – and she meant to finish them off right then.

...!!!

But she was suddenly forced to turn behind her, immense fright in her eyes.

She had sensed something vast and potent. It was like Nitros, but bolder and fiercer. It had sprung up for a moment and then died down. Yet, it caught her attention all the same.

'What the hell was that?' Yuyui thought, a drop of sweat sliding down her temple.

And then suddenly, arrows had appeared on her legs, immobilising her.

"Damn it!" she cursed, and attempted to free herself immediately.

"Majestic Territory Expulsion...!"

But it was too late. Even while spitting blood, Franceesta had managed it. With the opening she had seen, she had managed a Territory Expulsion, and lucky for her, Yuyui hadn't managed to escape this time.

"...Sovereign Beasts' Crystallice!"

The Territory engulfed everyone, including the summoned beasts.

For it was meant for the summoned beasts.

Before the GeoScape even finished forming, they grew and were drenched in immense volumes of power that reminded Yuyui of the Stolen Angel!

## Chapter 1342: All's Fair In Women and War (7)

Yuyui gritted her teeth. She and Bubbles were separated when the Territory was cast and thus she couldn't help by shielding him with her Nitros from its effects. Nigerra's arrows also continued to press her down, and in the small speck of time she needed to save Bubbles, she couldn't have dispelled them to free herself. The arrows – in great number – were so powerful, they disallowed her even from using Granted Warp, she found.

Luckily for her, this Territory did not focus on direct offensive functions.

Sovereign Beasts' Crystallice was a terribly vast Territory that looked like a humongous cave of bluish-green mountain-sized crystals. They expelled soft lights, which gave the expansive world a picturesque look and the illusion that it was not bound by a ceiling overhead. The crystals formed an assortment of animal habitats everywhere: nests; what might have been giant kennels; and even coves where large bodies of water slid out within the Territory.

Oddly, pairs of gleaming eyes could be seen within the habitats. They belonged to the denizens of the Territory, but these creatures showed no sign of coming out to assist their master.

Their master had no use for them yet. She instead desired to beat Yuyui with the collection of beasts she had summoned.

Franceesta's Territory specialised in empowering her summoned beasts to freakish degrees. Like Aizel, she wanted to ensure that opening her Territory meant the immediate defeat of an enemy. However, she didn't just juice up her beasts with a 12,000% increase in power.

No.

As some of the beasts she summoned came from outside Aigas, they did not have the properties of its power system.

Franceesta's Territory temporarily enlightened them to the Aigas' system and granted them its benefits according to their strength. Through impressive Creeds, it even informed them on how to use these powers.

And that was why, in addition to being elevated to quadruple digit tiers of power upon entering the Territory, the summoned beasts – the hummingbirds, the monkey, the remaining fish, the suspicious blob and the others which remained – were coated in monstrous volumes of Nitros.

At once, Yuyui knew this was bad news.

The beasts were strategically placed, positioned in a sphere around her when the Territory fully formed.

Yuyui managed to remove Nigerra's arrows right then, and attempted to flee the ominous formation, but tens more arrows appeared all over her body, pointing in all directions chaotically. They pulled her every which way, restricting her.

Yuyui grunted. As her Eye of Dispersal began to open, she heard Aizel cry out.

"FRANCEESTA!" She gouged her Eye of the Prince and flung it at Franceesta who was repairing her chest with the help of the odd beetle Yuyui had seen in her brain. She caught the eye, and without hesitation, she pulled out one of her own, and pushed the dark eye in its place!

But Franceesta had already been chanting before the Eye of the Prince was in her possession. She had anticipated Yuyui would simply use her Eye of Dispersal in one burst and end it all.

"This is my Creed! My Territory is the perfect nest for the dark eye, the Eye of the Prince!"

And thus, when the eye perfectly connected to her flesh, becoming hers, Sovereign Beasts' Crystallice thrummed, and then suddenly... its GeoScape became one solid block of darkness that consumed everything without reservation.

With her Creed, Franceesta applied the effect of the eye to her Territory, temporarily amplifying it!

And thus, there was silence.

But then, deep within this silence, Nitros exploded out in great, potent measures!

It was expelled in a wide, hollow, spherical shape formed by two hundred smaller spheres of Nitros. These spheres expanded towards the dark gap in the centre mercilessly, and soon, their combined force smote it!

And indeed, over two hundred, incomplete Majestic Territories had been expelled in a great formation to crush Yuyui!

They had not failed.

The Eye of the Prince, now in Franceesta's possession, disallowed Yuyui from responding to any attacks Franceesta threw at her. Thus, she couldn't counter with the Eye of Dispersal, at least not when two small purple arrows had appeared on both sides of the eye and forced it shut right before the Territory turned dark!

Yuyui cursed Nigerra right as the combined force of the Territories smashed into her and killed her.

But when she respawned, she was still smack dab in the middle of the Territories within a Territory. Thus, she died. And died. And died. And died.

It was cruel.

It was a mess.

But it was perfect.

A strategy like this could have killed the possessed form of Skullius which fought the Warmoth's Progeny – before he started evolving his sword skill [Infinite Sword God], of course.

No expert on Aigas in the current time could have survived.

However...

In-between the deaths, Yuyui laughed.

She hadn't felt this hopeless since the Impossible Task. The versions of herself she had had to fight were ruthless, calculated and observant. They noted how she responded their attacks and adjusted accordingly.



It had been a task and a half to kill more than 3,000 of them.

And indeed, it was still way harder than this. Dying was a part of Yuyui. She didn't go into a battle expecting not to die. In fact, death brought revelation, she believed.

A funny laugh came from her lips, but was drowned by the droning of the Territories.

'And now, to evolve again...' she thought.

...

Meanwhile, Franceesta was allowing the Fervent Mystery, the brown beetle she had stored in her flesh for the battle, to finish healing the intense damage to her chest. She had once again donned the beetle armour, and was gazing at the beautiful light show in her Territory with a grin.

'She even managed to get one over on Nigerra. Hahaha. She's freakier than I thought. If her ideals weren't so skewed and nonsensical, I would have gladly called her sister and staked an oath to serve her for the rest of my life,' she thought.

She sensed Aizel watching from elsewhere, and Nigerra as well. Her eyes were shining in that unnerving fashion they always did when she found yet another woman who was better than most men in combat.

'Is she still not planning to kill wom—' Franceesta began, but an abrupt rise in the intensity of the Nitros above her stole her attention.

In the centre of the Territories erected by her beasts... a strange power was emerging.

It grew rapidly. It ballooned wildly and quickly eclipsed the other Territories around it, pushing them back!

'What the...!' Franceesta thought, bewildered.

What in the world was happening?

A Territory?

How could that woman expel a Territory when she was under the influence of the Eye of the Prince amplified beyond what she could handle with just her Eye of Dispersal in a single burst?

It didn't make sense!

It didn't make... sense...?

In the next second, as the two hundred Territories were pushed away in a magnificent, queer display of power, Franceesta was overwhelmed by what she saw. She gaped, and tears began falling from her eyes.

Nigerra damn near had the same reaction. Her eyes beamed with both joy and admiration.

But Aizel was disgusted and horrified.

It was then that she realised it. There was no way she could compete with an enemy like this.

Chapter 1343: All's Fair In Women and War (8)

Yuyui had remembered it clearly. After all, her master had mentioned it just hours ago, after he had ascended and before everyone left for their respective missions.

"My possessed self was a tough, ruthless bastard. I learned a few things from him that I probably would never have realised," Skullius said to the Stark Troops. "For instance, with the right number of Creeds, you can enhance an already active Territory. You just call its name again, pay the cost, and it becomes much stronger. Or, you could do it again, again, and again as you see fit. Luckily for the Incandescent Stagers, the Impossible Task earned you all a lot more Creeds than you could ever use at once, so go crazy."

And indeed. In addition to levelling through Tasks and Trials, Creeds could be earned by performing god-like feats. (In fact, this was the fastest and most efficient way to earn them.)

The Impossible Task registered very well as a supreme feat, especially for the Unlimited Stars. They earned hundreds or even thousands of Creeds for it.

But as exciting as this had been for the Stark Troops, what Skullius had said minutes later, was much more valuable to the Unlimited Stars.

Yuyui remembered it vividly.

"Majestic Territories were never meant for humans, Sif and Giants. In fact, their introduction into the powers of humanoids like us, hindered us from reaching Divinity. Only oddballs like Fulgardt powered through regardless," Skullius had said. "The original system allowed experts an easier time. A few of the pieces to this truth were fitted for me by Sause, a living Giant I met, but the last ones, I gathered on my own."

"The Incandescent Stage prepares your soul for Divinity, and the Transcendent Stage begins the process of altering the state of your soul. Originally, Nitros wasn't meant for creating Territories – at least for us. It was meant to edify the soul, to make it stronger and self-sustaining. At the Beyond the Veil Stage, the soul achieves a certain threshold. I'm not sure what it is exactly, but I'm sure it helps fulfil one of the conditions to reaching Divinity..."

...

...

On her twentieth death, Yuyui had thought deeply on these words. She thought about the soul, and about the Eye of the Prince.

How exactly did it determine a defensive reaction from its target? It forced the target not to respond to attacks, but it didn't paralyse them. It allowed actions outside rebellion, but how did it judge?

The answer, as Yuyui interpreted it, was that the Eye of the Prince searched an individual's intent, and this intent was likely recognised from both the body and the soul, meaning there was no way to cheat, especially if the user of the dark eye was well versed in souls – an Incandescent Stager and above.

But Yuyui didn't intend to cheat.

In fact, she convinced herself that she didn't even need to fight the constant death.

Perhaps, all she needed... was 'enlightenment'.

Thus, after her twenty-second death, she declared:

"This is my Creed. Quadruplicate my mana reserves."

And it was done. The mana gushing through her was fierce, but she didn't use it to counter. She couldn't.

Instead, she condensed it into Nitros and sought 'enlightenment' – the original intent of Quintess, Listafelle and Suzamete. She poured all that Nitros inward, into her soul!

Doing so was a tragic feat. Even though her master had said this was what Nitros was meant to do from the start, she didn't think it would be so painful. Her soul drank the Nitros greedily, and Yuyui sensed immediately positive changes in her soul, but it was too much change all at once.

Her soul throbbed and stung, but she felt it tremble in excitement. Half of it was pain, and half was ecstasy. This, Yuyui could handle, but her body reacted violently. It gave warnings. It was afraid of what she was doing. The ripping, pulsating, grinding stress from her brain became too much for Yuyui only a few seconds into the process she had begun.

Thus, with extreme effort, Yuyui pointed at her temples with two fingers, her resolve solid as a rock.

"Aggrante!"

The top of her head was blown off... but she didn't die. Her eager soul refused. It was thriving. It was changing. It was growing.

And Yuyui herself felt the ecstasy within it much clearer now that her body was out of the way. Her soul's joy was growing leagues stronger than its pains.

The Stark Constellation could be seen on her forehead. It spat out branches of Ju`wtte, joining in her excitement.

Her body was crushed by the Territories, but she did not die. Her soul remained, thrumming, throbbing. Over nine hundred Creeds, pretty, colourful gems, could be seen swimming within it.

Yuyui smiled. She didn't know a soul alone could be this free – this unburdened. The Territories were pressing on even her soul form which was drunk with Nitros and beaming like a star. But they couldn't have crushed it.

Even with this 'enlightenment', there was no way Yuyui could complete something that was supposed to be a gradual process drawn over months or even years, in a matter of seconds. And thus, her soul subconsciously expelled more than half of the Nitros that had been fed into it outward!

It was not Yuyui's intent, but this much Nitros was still more than double her total Nitros capacity, and as such, with its expulsion, it crashed with incredible potency against the wall of two hundred Territories, pushing them several hundreds of meters away!

But this was insignificant. They began to draw back again, faster and fiercer.

Yet...

Only Nigerra realised it at first.

Her face didn't betray it, but a hint of terror struck her right then. Her finger twitched as she bit into it, ponderous.

Even though Yuyui's soul was still weaker than her own – unrefined – it did something that only hers could do, if only subconsciously.

It was a celebratory gesture that even Yuyui's soul didn't quite understand. It wasn't intentional.

Something fiercer than Nitros shuddered out in a blurry, rustic pulse, traversing at speeds even Skullius would marvel at.

Whatever it was shattered the Territories of the summoned beasts by way of a strange vibration, and squeezed the life out of each one of them without touching their flesh. It was violent, yet modest

and serene. It caused Sovereign Beasts' Crystallice to crack ever so slightly, the darkness it had become dwindling to once again reveal the blueish-green crystals.

But Franceesta was in too much awe to mind. She forgot to breath.

Yuyui belatedly realised that she was free. The same was true for her foes.

"This is my Creed, restore my flesh," she said, calm and unbothered. Her flesh returned to her and she donned it with grace. Her armour was missing, but it was not her concern. Not right then.

Her eyes settled on Franceesta. The beast of a woman dropped to her knees. Yuyui recognised the glaze in her eyes. The Eye of the Prince desperately pulsed, hoping to stop Yuyui, but its user was entranced, lost.

She had discarded all will to fight.

But that didn't stop Yuyui from snatching the beetle in Franceesta's head in an infinitesimally minute morsel of time.

...And Sovereign Beasts' Crystallice shattered for the very last time, and its user fell with a bloody smile on her face.

#### Chapter 1344: Promised Triumph

The beetle squirming in Yuyui's grip was one thing, but the palpitations of something deep with her body, thoroughly enjoying its growth, was another. The lime-haired girl's soul was thriving. She felt her body rebel against its growth. Apparently, there was an imbalance now.

But Yuyui couldn't have cared for it. Her Eye of Dispersal, Eye of Moving and Inhuman Eye were resonating with the changes in her soul. She felt them grow more powerful, and they eagerly pushed her to use them, to refine them. Each of them began revealing different ways they could be used.

She smiled.

'I see. So Incandescent Stage experts and beyond were supposed to be a lot stronger than they are now – at least with just their body and soul. Gaining the ability to use Territories forced them to ignore the growth of their souls...' she thought. She could have laughed.

She hadn't thought she'd grow even stronger in this battle and begin to understand things even her master wasn't privy to.

'That vibration I just released... It's the same thing I sensed before Franceesta caught me in her Territory. It was Nigerra's doing. That must mean...'

But Yuyui didn't get to finish her thought.

Unlike Nigerra, who was watching her with an intrigued grin, Aizel was panicking. She had reached the same conclusion as Yuyui: that the lime-haired girl was a freak who had managed to tap into powers only Beyond the Veil Stagers could awaken (at least according to her own knowledge).

Thus, Aizel didn't hesitate to...

"Majestic Territory Expulsion, Serpent-Kissed Peak!" she cried desperately.

Yuyui had seen her motions vividly. As much as her body was rebelling against the new strength of her soul, it was forced to inch itself towards a state where it could equate to the soul. Her Eye of Moving prompted her body to react faster.

The Unlimited Star had several options to deal with Aizel now, but she chose an alternate one that was a bit daring.

She reacted just in time to match Aizel.

"Majestic Territory Expulsion, Premature Maiden," she called.

...And a clash of Territories ensued.

Yuyui's Nitros and Aizel's met in the middle in a terrifying clash that shook Pelian. But it wasn't looking too good for the former.

A streak of silver lightning shuttled out of Aizel's still-forming Nitros while a sky-blue, feminine outline rose from Yuyui's. The two aspects smashed against each other above the Territories, but the winner was obvious. The outline was blown back by the lightning, and it began to fade like smoke.

When two Majestic Territories clashed at the same time, their Primary assault functions were matched against each OUTSIDE the Territories. Usually, the more physical and less abstract Primary functions overwhelmed their counterparts in such a match up, and if both Territories happened to be equal in this respect, the quality of the Territory (if it had living beings growing within it or not) decided the battle.

Aizel's Primary assault function was meticulously crafted for situations like these as well. Though Yuyui's was a physical attack type like hers, it was simply weaker.

This gave Aizel confidence. A glimpse of a smile had even begun to show on her face.

Until...

"Majestic Territory Expulsion, Premature Maiden."

"Majestic Territory Expulsion, Premature Maiden."

"Majestic Territory Expulsion, Premature Maiden."

...And then it wasn't a contest at all.

Aizel's face lost color.

Right as Yuyui's Nitros ballooned to cover the region, the sky-blue outline above it also grew to more than ten times its original size. It grabbed the branches of screeching silver lightning pouring from Aizel's Territory and tore them apart as though they were mere grass roots.

After it was done, it locked its hands together and smashed Aizel's Territory apart. The impact was felt through the entire region. It might have been worse than the worst earthquake.



Aizel was stumped. She managed to survive being crushed, and was huffing in deep breaths to stifle her fear. She prepared to replenish her mana, but too late... Yuyui had taken her head.

The naked lime-haired girl tossed the head away while almost entertaining the influx of cumulative mana experience her guidance field announced.

"Master was right," she said to herself. "It works perfectly."

She then turned to Nigerra.

The woman was again unconcerned by Franceesta or Aizel's deaths. She only had eyes for Yuyui.

"You're perfect," she said. "Franceesta saw it in her final moments. You are everything we hoped to create, and you haven't even awakened nine eyes."

She was touched, but Yuyui was not.

"You were dismissive of me earlier."

"When you weren't anything special. Now you are."

Yuyui scoffed, but Nigerra's enthusiasm was in no way disturbed.

"With strength like this, can you not see how much more you can accomplish outside someone else's shadow? You needed no help achieving something all the monsters from my time would call impossible. Open your eyes and see it," she said.

"No help?" Yuyui said, looking offended. "You're wrong about that. I needed my master's help to beat your... sisters. Perhaps, I might have found another solution the more I died, but in this case – against hundreds of Territories – I had to lean on what I had been taught."

Nigerra looked disappointed. A scowl was on the verge of appearing on her face.

"Is that so?"

"Yes," Yuyui said and she looked at her hand. She tried to manifest that strange vibration which had killed all the summoned beasts. She failed. "But what matters is that my master didn't give me complete information – a golden spoon. I achieved what I achieved by interpreting his words on my own and producing a result." She smiled. "I even managed to touch upon something he will never be able to."

Yuyui faced Nigerra with a grin.

"I know you used it before. What is it called?"

The long-faced woman was surprised. She could feel the joy in Yuyui's voice.

'Amusing.'

Her body suddenly became a blur as she stood, as though it was vibrating at an intense speed. Then, something like an audio spectrum given human shape started lifting from her body. It was coloured ebony. It was quivering, shaking, trembling.

It made the world around it do the same, forcing a vibration through it which made everything blurry. Yuyui felt its effect vividly – its intensity, which pervaded all things seamlessly – but unlike before, when it had terrified her, she felt a close connection to the sensation.

"It's called the Aspiring Immortal Shadow," Nigerra said. The entity didn't look like her at all. At least it didn't appear so. It wasn't fully manifested. It simply inched out of Nigerra's and looked like a limited shadow behind her.

Yuyui studied it briefly.

'The fact that it's not fully realized only validates master's theory. Beyond the Veil Stagers can't use this Aspiring Immortal Shadow to its fullest extent because their path of growth from the Incandescent Stage – where it is supposed to start growing – has been poisoned by the introduction of Territories.'

It was rather interesting how the actions of one man from more than four thousand years ago impacted all experts so badly today.

"Shall I kill you too?" Yuyui said to Nigerra. "Or will you kill me? You still have the means to do so permanently, don't you?"

Nigerra considered her with a smile. She dissolved her Aspiring Immortal Shadow.

"Why should we talk about killing each now? That would be waste of both of our lives. I've suddenly become more interested in seeing how much the legacy I brought about will grow," she said. "Interpret the words of men all you want and evolve. Perhaps that is one of the more decent ways women transcend men – at least in this age. When you grow some more, I'll be willing to be either kill you or die by your hands then. I'm sure the rest of my sisters will feel the same."

Nigerra gave one last grin and then she was gone. She took the corpses of Franceesta, Porria and Aizel with her.

Yuyui plopped to the ground and sighed in relief.

She stared at the night sky.

"I wonder if I really could have killed her just now," she said to herself, but the thought was drowned by her immense joy.

And she had so much of it indeed.

She had accomplished a great feat. She had bested three opponents who were supposed to be way beyond her level and grown from the experience. If that didn't prove her strength, then nothing else would.

This was a great triumph.

[You have earned 375 Creeds!]

Yuyui grinned.

'Of course, I did,' she thought, and rubbed her right eye. It grew slightly itchy and a tear scrolled down from it.

#### Chapter 1345: The New Eye

Grim found her sitting up, her elbow placed over her raised knee, her head tilted up to the sky. She was singing a goofy song, as always:

"Upon me they'll look, appalled and leering,

They'll drown in my eye, despaired and fearing,

A 'Ha!' and they'll spook, lie I'm endearing,

My spark they will spy, a'shine, a'searing..."

Grim sighed.

'She never stopped being a bard.'

Seeing her nude state, he ordered the Stark Troops behind him to look away while he extracted something for Yuyui to wear from his spatial storage. He found a decent-looking Pseudo-Mythical grade armour set.

"You know you're naked right?" he said.

Yuyui turned to him, saw the armour set he had conjured and hurried to don it.

"I had almost forgotten honestly," she said with a sheepish smile. "I guess I never got used to social norms after the Temple of Unlusted Tears. Not really."

She had been stuck in the Temple of Unlusted Tears naked, hungry and alone for more than a century and the individual who had saved her hadn't really bothered to teach her how to be 'normal' again in their first days travelling together.

Yuyui rubbed her eye as she wore the armour and after she was done, she rubbed it again, gasped and face palmed.

"AH! Master is going to kill me for losing my Star Armament! I was so engrossed in the battle I didn't even think about it! Argh!" she cried. "I should have killed myself while I had the chance."

Without context, Yuyui might have sounded like someone who belonged in a straitjacket, but her statement was valid on many fronts. If she had killed herself at the right time, while in Franceesta's Territory, she would have revived with the armour intact, but the circumstances hadn't been that luxurious then.

"I see," Grim said. "Did you have fun?"

Yuyui noticed the somber, bitter tone in Grim's voice.

"Are you really upset that I handled this on my own?" she said to him.

"No. I'm just annoyed you didn't let me join in."

"Isn't that the same thing?"

"Fact remains. It would have been nice to fight with you, Yu. Besides, you ended up allowing one of them to escape. What was that all about?" Grim said.

Yuyui rubbed her eye.

"She'd lost interest in fighting me, and I knew defeating her wouldn't be so easy, if possible at all. Her leaving was the result," she said, and a smile bloomed on her face. "Though, I guess I can still say I won against her. At least in a battle of ideals. She learned something from me."

"I bet she did," Grim said and turned. But then he swiveled back to Yuyui.

"What?" Yuyui asked him.

Grim drew closer and pushed his face into hers. Yuyui blushed.

"WHAT IS IT?!" She pushed him back.

Grim drew back, a puzzled expression on his face.

"Er... your eye. I think it's changing. It's slowly twisting and..." Grim recoiled. "I've never seen you use this eye before."

Yuyui wore a confused duck face.

"What do you mea—" she began, but...

[Congratulations!]

The guidance field chimed, stealing Yuyui's attention.

[You have awakened the Eye of the Visitor!]

...!!!

Right then, Yuyui felt her eye burn and she winced in pain. She clutched it and hunched. It was suddenly as though a large, hot stone had settled in her right socket. The agony was unbearable, but it ended almost as soon as it had begun.

Yuyui blinked furiously. She took a deep breath and felt for her eye.

"Wh... what?"

"Are you alright?" Grim asked, looking concerned.

"Yeah... I... I'm fine," she said. She was shaken. "I awakened a new eye."

"I noticed. Maybe it wasn't such a bad idea for you to fight alone." Grim said, chuckling. "What does your new eye do?"

Yuyui rubbed the eye. She didn't feel anymore discomfort from it, but it still felt strange. It seemed larger than the others. Yuyui still had her normal set of eyes (the legacy eyes were additional ones that grow from her body) so she could tell the difference between them and those of her Hidden Class, the Pinnacle Occuluthon.

This Eye of the Visitor, was different, but in what way exactly, she didn't know.

"I don't know. I... I." Yuyui was lost for words.

"You didn't see any of those women use an eye like this?" Grim asked.

"No. They actually didn't have many eyes I haven't seen yet among them. They only had one," she replied. "I used to think each of them had a unique eye, but I was wrong. Either that or they came from a point in time before they finished making the rest of the eyes."

Grim hummed in thought. He didn't know which of the options was accurate. He was urging Yuyui forward when...

...

A mad shockwave was suddenly upon them. It moved so quickly that neither of the two Unlimited Stars actually perceived it. It shredded through from behind them, intent on killing and destroying. It might have obliterated both of them if not for a certain Deitess' intervention.

The shockwave suddenly ceased and disappeared before it wreaked both Yuyui and Grim, reducing them to something finer than atoms.

Even as it disappeared though, Yuyui and Grim sensed the near brush with death. The latter was more sensitive to such things. His red eyes gleamed brilliantly.

"Did you sense that?"

"Y-Yeah..." Yuyui said, horrified.

But before she and Grim could wonder, space cracked and a rip akin to a Cluster emerged before them.

Grim frowned and prepared for an attack.

Yuyui, on the other hand, gasped. She patted his shoulder.

"It's not what you think it is," she said to him.

"What?" Grim turned to her, surprised. "What is it then?"

Yuyui's lips trembled.

"It's an invitation..."

Chapter 1346: Beam of the Order

"It's no use. You can't reach it. This is beyond the realm of the mortal, I think," the old man told Pherdanta just as she was about to slash with the Bashful Abomination again. "Don't be fooled by the seemingly flimsy defence. I imagine the real protection against any kind of interference – like us – was this, rather these dark creatures that were guarding it."

Pherdanta agreed, but she muttered under her breath "I wasn't fooled, old man."

She, this old man cloaked in a passive Territory aglow, and the Stark Troops surrounding a large, loud of group of commonfolk and withered experts were standing before a strange crystal. It massive, gleaming with a reddish-purple glow. It had only been revealed when Pherdanta had sensed something odd in the bland space ahead of her and slashed through it using her newly earned skill [Infinite Sword God: Primordial Sword]. She had found hidden this crystal, guarded by a fair number of Cavern that she had dispatched in a breath; apparently, they were a false defense mechanism.

But as the old man said, the crystal was the real protection. There was something within it, impossible to see clearly from the outside. Pherdanta's slashes didn't so much as graze the crystal, and to her and the old man, that was a tell-tale sign that this thing was beyond what mortals could understand or interact with.



The thing did feel a lot like Skullius, Pherdanta had noted.

"I had been wondering why these dark creatures were dying like flies all over when their mission was conquest. I mean, they've done a fair share of damage to Aigas, but now it appears that they are willing distractions. They are giving their lives freely. Unlike humans, they don't hesitate to dive to their deaths for their lord's plans. They don't second guess him. Admirable," the old man said and suddenly looked emotionally.

Pherdanta gave him a look with both her eyes and pointed nose.

Before leaving the Empyrean Bosom, she was the one who had proposed to the other Unlimited Stars and Stark Troops that if possible, it was preferable to try and ascertain the intentions of experts who breached the drapes of time rather than to immediately go for the kill.

Pherdanta had led by example. She had personally slaughtered eleven experts and thirty powerful invading beasts that had been wreaking havoc – the rest had been handled by Troops – and only this old man had proven to be cooperative. Pherdanta had been pleased to spare him.

Quite frankly, she hadn't been surprised when he showed every sign that he wanted to talk rather than fight. His long, clean robes and soft voice gave away that he was a Priest – a pretty devout one.

To the current Aigas, it was unheard of for a Priest to reach the Incandescent Stage and beyond, but Pherdanta was looking at evidence that it was possible right now.

The old man, Rakon as he said his name was, merely desired to tag along on what he called Pherdanta's adventures. He had been pretty helpful, Pherdanta had to admit. Aside from the sheer reassuring presence of the Stark Troops, his hearty laughs and stories had kept the commonfolk under their charge entertained and calm. They might have had the most gentle protection in all of Aigas.

"What do you think is the purpose of this crystal then? What does Boron aim to accomplish with it?" Pherdanta asked Rakon.

The old man let out a 'hmmm' that blew from his nose like snot.

"Well, you said a friend of your master delivered a blow to Boron that has weakened his vessel. I imagine he is looking for another one, but given how much he hates Aigas – these stones creatures are plenty evidence – I don't imagine he intends to stay here for very long. If he is looking for a new vessel, I don't imagine he wants to keep it forever. He has his own body fused to Aigas."

"You think he wants to retrieve something in the Under... or the Under itself?" Pherdanta asked.

"Who knows? I feel sinful just attempting to read the mind of a god. His designs are probably something we cannot guess. Seeing as we cannot do anything about it, I suggest we leave this crystal and continue on our journey with charity. There is much to do and more to say. I grow tired of the speculation."

Pherdanta didn't like it, but Rakon was right. There was no reason to stay here if they couldn't deal with this crystal. It was something only her master could deal with, she imagined, however much it irked her to have to surrender.

The Commander of the Stark Troops had every hope to prove the strength she had acquired through the Impossible Task, but it seemed that she was not to prove it here. What she needed was a real opponent, not an artefact requiring a simple threshold of power to defeat.

Pherdanta sighed.

But fulfilling what her master had asked was enough, right?

"You're right," she said to Rakon. "Let's go on. There's more lives to be saved and our company is meant to support Yuyui and Grim's in preserving Aigas. Until the guardian beasts mobilise enough of their strength and cover the whole of Pelian, it's up to us to limit the death toll."

And indeed, that was the case.

Pherdanta gave one last look at the crystal and led the company onwards.

In the following hour, she would go on to save hundreds of thousands more lives and spread the fame of the Stark Troops in a more righteous fashion than even that of the Purity. Thankfully, the crushing shockwave from an attack which almost ended her master's life was stifled before it could reach her, courtesy of Suzamete who noted the large number of survivors she was to be save.

But the Unlimited Star's role was far from done.

Carrying the torch for her Order was only the beginning for what Direction had in store for her.

On the other hand, a certain, short Mage was taking inspiration from infamous events that completely disregard righteousness and order itself.

#### Chapter 1347: Wrong Means, Right Reasons

Kintar's eyes were glazed over. She kept donning a deep frown every few seconds, and her irises kept changing colours as they darted to and fro. Intense palpitations of mana were brimming from her body as she sat on the Monarch's throne in the Royal Dwelling.

'He's up to something then. Well, of course he is, he's a Deity. I wonder if master picked up on it,' she thought and her eyes raced towards another direction. 'Nope. Doesn't seem like it. Looks like he's got his hands full at the moment.'

The Unlimited Star was using an advanced spell of her own making to monitor everything on Feinheath. The spell honed in on different sorts of energies and latched onto them. Once this was done, it allowed Kintar to interpret everything happening around said energies.

Given that not every Mage could discern every kind of energy on Aigas, this was a terribly impressive feat that only a mortal like Kintar could have achieved.

'I don't have a choice after all. Master is going to have to forgive me. It's all for the greater good.'

And then her vision was back in the throne room.

Stern-Mage Weyven and the Arch-Mages who had believed from the start that Kintar was a Realm Source Mage now sat around the short woman as aides. Those who had doubted before her staggering show of strength – which had left the entire Royal Dwelling – with only half of its original mass – were bowing before her, never daring to even look at her feet.

The Monarch was among them, but he was allowed to keep the little bit of decency he had left by sitting on the same chair Kintar had sat on previously when she was being 'judged'. Still, he dared not look at Kintar. Not after what he saw.

He and these other Mages had not been forced into anything. They had decided to prostrate themselves before the legendary Mage in front of them until she allowed them to rise, and the Monarch had willingly given up his seat to Kintar. It was Weyven who had stopped him from bowing like the rest.

But this behaviour was not bizarre at all.

Neither the doubting Arch-Mages nor the Monarch could have expected Kintar to wield Absolute Magic, which was said to be a match for the very Rules that created Aigas. It was then confirmed by Weyven after Kintar's display, that the Absolute Magic she had used to prove that she was a Realm Source Mage was different from the one she used in the city Bane – when she saved it from the Cavern; Kintar having one type of Absolute Magic was one thing, but her having two was horrifying.

But this was only one part of her strength, it appeared.

All the Mages who witnessed her powers had been convinced she had a Hidden Class until she told them all otherwise.

Her Class, True Myth Mage was a mere Advanced Class, as she had put it. It was the way she wielded it that baffled most.

The Class allowed her to transform into any creature of immense strength, notably one considered a myth in one way or the other, as long as she had seen it and understood its general composition. She acquired its physical strength, energy output, total energy reserves and more, to the level of how much she had seen the creature's power. That was how she had been able to transform into a creature no human had ever seen: an Eternal Drakken, the very creatures Skullius had been shown by Sause – the reason Aigas was rich.

Skullius had allowed Kintar to peer through his mind and see his battle with Jerthrax and the special pool where the souls of the Eternal Drakkens resided on Edagon. With a bit of inspiration, she had created a mix of the two draconian beings.

Kintar rose from the throne and hovered over the floor. She turned to Red Rage who had been standing beside the throne. They gave each other deep looks.

The short Unlimited Star then smiled that creepy smile of hers.

"Say, Red Rage. How loyal are you to our master?" she asked.

"Do you need to ask?"

"I suppose I don't," Kintar said and sighed. "Let me rephrase. What I mean is, how broad is the term 'loyalty' to you? For me, it can be as vast as the oceans. In whatever way, I am willing to die for Master Skullius' sake and everything I do and say is in his best interest."

Red Rage looked suspicious. Kintar didn't let him reply. She had drifted off, floating behind the seats of Stern-Mage Weyven and the other believing Arch-Mages.

"You see, my master is an interesting... man. He truly values all of us – his subordinates – but he has seen in me something special. Besides my strength, he admires the fact that I often contradict him. It's always for the greater good, he knows."

The Mages around her looked intrigued. Red Rage was not.

"What is your point?" he asked.

Kintar gave a smile.

"You see, Boron is doing something other than preparing a new vessel. He has been hiding contraptions all around Pelian. I'm not sure what they are, but I know Pherdanta has encountered one of them. From the looks of it, she isn't sure what purpose they serve either. Sadly, because master is busy fighting some troublesome opponents and has more things to juggle even after that, he hasn't noticed. I want to help regarding this."

"How do you plan on doing that?" Red Rage asked.

"That's where my question on loyalty comes in." Kintar looked strangely on guard now. "My mission was to negotiate and prepare the Monarch here for friendly talks with my master. Of course, I achieved that goal – in a way – but what I must do might sunder the friendly in that."

Red Rage didn't like the sound of this. Kintar didn't like how his radiance grew ever so sharp.

"Master told me about how the masked necromancer once orchestrated this... grand plan by sacrificing the souls of fifteen million people. He made the impossible happen with this scheme, but because his victims were all unwilling participants, he had to resort to a roundabout strategy that took months to accomplish – a festival," she said. "I won't be needing fifteen million people, but I'm rather certain I will find many willing participants here with my newfound reputation. And with all these elements, I can help our master a great deal with this ominous problem growing in his blind spot."

Red Rage rebuked this at once.

"Master would not approve. Even he was sickened by what the masked necromancer did."

"Oh, you haven't been with our master all along. You've been elsewhere while the rest of us got to know him and see him grow beyond comprehension. He's beyond anything alive on this world." Kintar gave the Arch-Mages bowing before her a sharp, disdainful look.

"A few sacrifices won't matter if we are achieving the thing he is after. We are all beneath him, after all. Especially a couple thousand Mages who don't even know his name."

Chapter 1348: Epic Chaos!

The three new arrivals on the battlefield changed the tempo immediately, one moreso than the others. An entity on the level of a Deity would always outclass their mortal counterparts in terms of presence, not to mention all other aspects; that was to be expected.

But regardless of how natural the idea was, the fashion in which this party of combatants arrived was anything but natural.

Suddenly, the pressure of the unnatural state of existence – false death, false life brimming within a powerful body – enveloped everything and everyone. It slapped a queer crimson hue over the living, the unliving and those in between, marking all things under its reign. It was deific power indeed.

Everyone noted how different it was from the presence of an ordinary Deity, however, especially the Hybrid Warmoth, who subconsciously recalled his experiences with Boron, Suzamete and Luserus.

Skullius was staggered seeing Kenno and Araeyn facing off the undead creature in the sky.

'You can't be serious!' he thought.

He had paired Kenno and Araeyn for the mission to save Aigas because their powers complemented each other very well. Kenno was good at controlling the movements of opponents and Araeyn was good at taking away their environmental advantage. Skullius had hoped the two would stall Boron if he happened to make a move too early but...

...!!!

As the familiar power spread itself to all and pierced Skullius' senses, it brought on a dark sense of déjà vu – where once, Undeath energy had reigned within his broken, skeletal body of old. Something tragic was triggered within him as a result.

'DAMMIT!' the fresh Divine cried in despair.

His mind spiralled.

[illegible]

A course laugh seemed to travel light years through the great void, crushing obstacles, piercing Rules and storming into his senses with all the intensity of many worlds!

It was a laugh Skullius loathed very much.

It was too familiar.

It triggered the surfacing of the image of an ugly, humanoid creature, barely decorated with flesh, oddly green from head to toe, and with sockets that blazed with an eternal red flame!

It was not a vision, Skullius knew right then!

It was indeed Somanda, laughing. The High Lich could see him and he was pleased.

He said nothing. Instead, he pointed with a long, thin finger from within the hall of giant pillars and blocks of ice. He showed Skullius a familiar block housing—

"MY LIEGE, SNAP OUT OF IT!" Beyrmir's voice came. It blasted through the illusion or tempered reality Skullius had just been swimming through, trapped, and once again, he was back on Aigas, standing with Aurolio, Serenity before him.

The pale Voided Deathform, completely oblivious to the fact that Skullius had been 'absent' just now, was gaping at the sky. The threat of Void had been one thing, but for it to be supplemented by the threat of a deific undead creature was overkill, he felt.

"Fuck me," he said. He turned to the Hybrid Warmoth. "You wouldn't happen to have something to do with this too, would you?"

Skullius merely placed a quivering hand on his temple and took steady breaths. He was sweating and his mind was yet to settle. He could still hear the echo of Somanda's laugh. He hadn't heard what Aurolio said at all.

'Even something like undeath can trigger the Doom Factor?' he thought, horrified.

Unlike Aurolio, Serenity noticed his distress, however. She sighed.

She was inhabiting Sila's new body, temporarily suppressing his consciousness. She wasn't as taken aback by the appearance of the new enemy, but she didn't take it lightly either.

Her vision whipped over to Elita and Uyuniya who were drawing back while looking upward behind their masks (Bare Guises). The Void Clot around Uyuniya waned until it vanished. Her surprise must have affected it, or simply the exhaustion from using it for so long.

Whatever the reason, Serenity was pleased.

She zoomed to Skullius' side and held him by the shoulder. There was a little sympathy in her eyes.

"You don't have to worry about Void anymore. At least for now. She risked a lot by attacking you just now, and won't do it again unless she wants to compound her 'repercussions'," was the first



thing Serenity said to Skullius. "As it stands, you only have one enemy to defeat right now, and many allies on your side. Focus on that."

Skullius gave her a shaky look. He knew what she was trying to do. Neither she nor Skullius could do anything about the Doom Factor, and thus, she was reassuring him about the situation right now – the one they could do something about.

Void was the greater threat, of course, but now she was a nonfactor. All that remained, was the Doom Knight. Skullius immediately recalled what Serenity had said about these types of undead minions before.

Deities tamed by Liches.

He cursed silently.

"We have a lot to talk about. Regarding Void..." he said to Serenity.

"I know," she said. "But for now, you have a life or death battle to handle. I'm not allowed to engage in a conflict with anyone other than my sisters, so I won't be much help. Hopefully, Sila will."

And then she left Sila's body and streamed back into Skullius' body. Aurolio didn't miss that.

Sila's vessel remained stationary. It appeared his consciousness would take a few moments to surface.

Only ten seconds had passed since the three arrivals burst through the boundary of Aigas' canvas.

They remained in a strange stare down that lasted only a second more before Kenno used Granted Warp to teleport himself and Araeyn to Skullius.

"Hey there, boss," the Unlimited Star said with an exhausted breath. Araeyn said nothing. His dark sockets remained pinned on the Doom Knight.

The great creature landed a great distance away and appraised everyone in the area.

Skullius carefully concentrated his senses on his subordinates rather than the creature.

"How you are still alive is a great mystery to me. You look to be hanging on by a mere thread though," he said to Kenno.

Kenno gave a hearty laugh and wiped the messy splashes of blood over his face. He looked really banged up – torn flesh, scrapes, burns, gashes – as did his armour, which looked right about ready to retire.

"It's a little worse than that. I've died more times than I have fingers on one hand. By any chance, can you restore my charges for Granted Restoration? If not, my sixth death will be my last," he said cheekily before looking at Skullius. The smile disappeared from his face instantly. "Are you alright?"

Skullius gave a smirk.

"I'm the last person you should be worrying about," he said and patted the Unlimited Star's shoulder. Kenno was not reassured at all. "Then again, now that you've brought this abomination to me... you might need to be. Just a little bit."

Kenno gave a chuckle.

"We felt a terrible reverberation run through Aigas moments ago and figured it had something to do with you. Pherdanta would have rather died a sixth time against this thing" – he gestured towards the Doom Knight – "Honour, loyalty and all that, but I'd rather live a little longer. So, I thought it would be more... prudent that we fight it together."

Skullius sighed.

"Right. Prudent."

He noted all the players on the battlefield.

Kenno.

Araeyn.

Aurolio.

The still unconscious Sila.

Uyuniya.

Elita.

All these were allies or had the potential to be, as Serenity had said.

'If Void is no longer a factor...' Skullius had just begun to gather his thoughts when Kenno interrupted him.

"Um, boss." He had an odd look on his face. "For some reason, my guidance field is acting strange. There's a bold message on it. It's for you."

"What?" Skullius turned to the Unlimited Star, puzzled. "What does it say?"

"It says to tell you to pick one of the Limited Contracts you've been offered without fail, and preferably sooner rather than later."

Chapter 1349: Cause and Wait

Even though Alaris managed to push away the great blocks of debris which had fallen on him, the pressure of Undeath continued to press down on his body like a mountain. He tried to use his Perfect Aura to shield himself against the effect, but it was no use. With or without the Aura, he still felt as though the air was being sucked from his lungs. Or perhaps it was more like he felt as though life energy was drained from his body forcefully.

He struggled to even speak. One of his lips was hanging by a thread of skin below his mouth, blood red.

The rest of his injuries looked even more brutal. However, the fact that he had even survived the encounter with Mercella's corpse – which had become some kind of Divine relic abused by the nine – was a miracle.

Alaris wasn't satisfied with this miracle though.

He couldn't help but regret his choices.

Alaris, famed far and wide – even by the Purity – and even given the moniker Bloodless Steel Phantom, had been a legend. His rise from the Guilds Association had captivated many and many more had thought he would transcend mortal limits one day.

Perhaps Alaris could. He himself didn't know. But at some point, he had stifled his own potential, fearing what he might become when he tasted the depths of his true power. He had gone from a fierce warrior to a modest instructor within the Guilds Association. His greatest accomplishment now was related to someone else.

He had trained someone else who eventually breached the boundary to Divinity – Skullius – though he didn't know it.

Perhaps...

'Perhaps if I'd just persisted in drawing out my potential, regardless of my fears...' Alaris heard a small voice in his head squeak.

Perhaps he might have been able to do something about the Premium Age Royale and saved Theurien's children.

Yes. He might have.

Onarmont's words from back then also began to stab at him.

'I hope you make the right choice. I'm glad that you're not power hungry but sometimes, it's a detriment. Reaching your full potential is not a bad thing.'

And indeed it wasn't.

Alaris rose from the debris. He managed to push back his shoulder into its socket and only then did he dig up Revia where she had been buried.

The former Paladin Champion was weak and could hardly stand on her own. He supported her to a stand.

The sudden shockwave from moments ago had stopped Mercella from killing them both, but it also collapsed the remnants of the Purity headquarters on top of them; a fair trade, really.

Alaris looked over Revia who coughed up blood and tried standing on her own.

He wondered.

Did he perhaps convince himself to go on this expedition in order to find some validation? Perhaps to value his strength in what he thought was most meaningful at the time?

He didn't know.

But whatever the case...

He looked up at the world dyed in deep red.

He had failed at even that.

In the distance, Alaris saw the nine, moulded into a pillar of the flesh of men screaming and pointing in the direction of the blasphemous enemy.

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"Um, boss. For some reason, my guidance field is acting strange. There's a bold message on it. It's for you. It says to tell you to pick one of the Limited Contracts you've been offered without fail, and preferably sooner rather than later."

Skullius was baffled.

The contents of this message immediately informed him that once again, the Voice of Worlds was alerting him of a certain danger in not picking one of the Limited Contracts he had been offered. For this danger to be emphasised twice now, it seemed to have been a particularly lethal one.

But first...

'Why didn't VOW just tell me this directly? She just warned me about Void seconds ago,' Skullius thought. A look at Kenno told him that the Unlimited Star was beyond confused.

Every time VOW informed Skullius on something, a piece of <Counsel> - an upgradable feature of the guidance field that allowed the user (primarily) to learn information from VOW – was consumed.

After reaching Divinity, Skullius' guidance field had risen in Patronage Rank twice and thus, he had four pieces of <Counsel>. One had been used to warn him about the Primeval Deity TITEMIUS, and to urge him to pick a contract from those he'd been offered. The second had been used up when VOW tried to warn him about Void's attack.

But still, two pieces remained. Skullius imagined that VOW was unwilling to waste all his pieces of <Counsel> in case he actually had questions he wanted to ask, which was quite considerate. Thus, she used Kenno's instead. He was unlikely to be needing them at the moment.

But this was a feeble concern.

What annoyed Skullius terribly was that he was offered nine contracts by Primeval Deities for his newly awakened Exotic Parlous Nature, which he hadn't even gotten a look at.

There had been many things going on, not to mention the accompanying notifications that flooded his view. He had missed many.

'I don't have time to look over every single contract and I can't just pick one for the sake of it. I'm going to have to delay my decision and deal with THIS first,' he thought.

The THIS was of course the large Doom Knight standing impressively ahead, quietly appraising everything.

A short while had passed since it had arrived with Araeyn and Kenno. Even while on guard, Skullius knew it probably wouldn't take an instant for it to hit him with an attack that completely overwhelmed his physical body and forced him to exist as a soul. And he had no doubts that a Doom Knight had means to seize or break a soul.

A quick look at its guidance field confirmed as much.

[Unable to appraise enemies of a higher calibre than the user]

This was essentially a dead confirmation that this Doom Knight was a lethal opponent.

What was likely deterring the creature from decimating everyone – as Skullius imagined – was probably the fact that it identified him, Aurolio, Elita and Uyuniya as fellow anomalies, and was also considering the possible counters from Suzamete – whom it had likely already sensed – and of course, Boron who was in Pelian.

'And that's all the reason for me to acquaint myself with my new Exotic Parlous Nature!' Skullius thought.

This was how AKHASHA had intended after all. Facing off against a stronger enemy didn't necessarily mean that all was lost. Not when things like Treasures and Exotic Parlous Natures existed to grant all equal chances for growth, and reward the bold with glory.

But of course, the enemy Skullius was facing didn't remain still for long.

It began its act by exercising its privilege as a deific expert.

Chapter 1350: Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz!

On top of the heavy shroud of a sinister Undeath presence, a queer 'factor' rushed out, mapping the entirety of Aigas in less than a millisecond. To mortal experts, it might have felt like the slightest increase in the gravity of Aigas, but to Divine beings like Skullius and Uyuniya, it was far, far worse.

It felt like being drowned in the deepest parts of an endless ocean; one with a ton of 'impurities'. An unseen pressure sought to crush them from the inside and exerted a dough-like texture over them from the outside – sticky, smooth and irresistible.

But what was more of an enigma was not the origin of this 'factor'. Skullius and Uyuniya could at once tell that it was the Doom Knight's Broader Existence.

But for what purpose was it being used?

"It's marking Aigas," Serenity answered Skullius' unspoken question.

'Marking?' the Hybrid Warmoth asked.

"Deities are Divine beings who have refined their Broader Existence to the point where it becomes tough or malleable as they wish. It ceases to be excessively vulnerable to any decent Divine phenomena and can even be divided and left behind in distant locations for various purposes. In this case, the Doom Knight has split a portion of his Broader Existence to mark Aigas. In other words, he's staking his claim on it."

Skullius was stumped.

He had been right after all!

The Doom Knight had not immediately gone on the offensive because it was considering the two Deities on Aigas at the moment. But now, it appeared it wasn't too bothered by them at all. It was even challenging them.

Skullius turned to Kenno who was by his side. Just the look of his little frown told the Hybrid Warmoth that the Unlimited Star couldn't sense the true extent of the imminent danger, but he was more concerned with something else.

"Where exactly did you encounter this thing?" he asked.

"In Edagon," was Kenno's succinct reply. He seemed to know that this would mean something to his master. He was right.

'Of course! This thing was after the souls of the Eternal Drakkens – the purest expressions of Quintess, Suzamete and Listafelle on Aigas – the anchor for this world's existence. If it was denied



the chance to simply walk over to Edagon and take them without opposition, it will take them by an arrogant show of force!' Skullius thought.

For a moment, he wished Kenno was feeling the suppressive might of the Doom Knight's Broader Existence. Araeyn and Elita also seemed to be free of its overwhelming effect. Thankfully, Uyuniya was suffering, just like him. She could hardly move.

Looking at the alien woman prompted a certain thought in Skullius' mind.

'So, what she was doing earlier with her Broader Existence... Is that the discount version of what the Doom Knight is doing?'

It appeared so.

"Gather your wits, Skullius. I believe without using your War Body, you still have a variety of options. Quality options," Serenity told him with a suspicious inflection to her voice. "I know you're wary of the initial drawbacks of that body, especially when using it to fight an enemy of this calibre. I don't necessarily disagree, but if worse comes to worst, you will have no choice. Do not die here.'

Skullius nodded. Of course, he didn't want to die here.

But he had no intention of rushing in with his War Body yet, not when he had just awakened something that almost got him killed by Void. It had to have some crazy utility.

As Serenity had said, in the name of making the War Body as powerful as possible, certain trade-offs had to be made; time-related trade-offs that increased risk for greater reward. In a battle like this, that wouldn't do.

'Show me this latest Exotic Parlous Nature,' he told the guidance field, and at once, it sprung into view.

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[Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz – Prayer of Void and Vain]

+Pseudo-Void+

Formed through the prime collection of Null Life abilities known as the 'Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus' which successfully analysed certain depths to Void's qualities, this Exotic Parlous Nature has most unusual properties.

+The 'Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus' had great ambitions while forging this Exotic Parlous Nature+

If used in <Void>, it can be paired with Andori and other Exotic Parlous Natures to find the boundary of a target's Broader Existence through continuous attacks over their body or soul. The number of attacks required depends on the scale of an enemy. Once the boundary is determined, the Parlous Nature severs the connection between a target and their Broader Existence for a hundredth of a Consternal.

If used in <Vain> - which is preferably done after the Broader Existence of a target has been determined – it will siphon a portion of the foreign Broader Existence, usually up to 10%, and attach it to the user's own.

Each of the siphoned pieces of Broader Existence, on top of contributing to the creation of the | Greater Cosmic Law| will be used to accomplish the following:

+Unorthodoxly augment the calibre of Andori

+Encroach upon Deity-exclusive prospects

+Add or create separate reserves of Amras

+Create powerful shields than can be sacrificed in the event that the user's Broader Existence has been attacked.

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+Caution+

Because of the unstable and contradictory nature of this Andori, a limited reserve of it can be produced at a time using exorbitant volumes of Amras.

Additionally, there is a 45% chance that the user's body, Broader Existence and all its components may be unable to handle the influence of Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz. Thus, it is advisable to be cautious with each use.

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Upon taking in all this information, Skullius, immediately allowed his phantoms a voice.

As expected – or perhaps contrary to Skullius' expectations – they had a very visceral reaction.

"NO WAY! HOW ON AIGAS DID THIS EVEN GET CREATED?! JUST WHAT DID THE NIMBUS GLEAN TO MANAGE THIS?!" one cried.

"I... I genuinely thought the highest tier of Parlous Nature the nimbus could create was Second Divine Sinew! But this...? Did we underestimate our own capabilities?"

"No wonder Void wants to kill us! Did you all get this? This oddly named Parlous Nature derived the same principle Uyuniya used to make us lose touch with our Broader Existence! The means to do this... I'm pretty sure are heavily tied to Void's powers, which is why it's also dangerous for us to use!"

"How did this even happen? We made some serious alterations and sacrifices to make the nimbus powerful but... does the Nimbus have a mind of its own? Does this Greater Cosmic Law happen to be one of its ambitions? Does any one of you have an idea at all?"

Skullius let the phantoms spout all the amazement and shock he had. He had a lot of it.

Of course, their ravings convinced him that they had nothing to do with the ridiculous accomplishments of the nimbus, which made him automatically identify the next, most likely suspect.

But he didn't dwell on that.

He instead raised one of his free hands and made to conjure the properties of Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz.

A steady mix of puce and turquoise rose from his flesh and played a game with his fingers. As it streamed out in shockingly thin strings, Skullius felt it.

He felt a fury that burrowed through from everywhere. The great void was everywhere, after all.

Void was rather upset. Aigas was too, it appeared.

There was something about this Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, that made Skullius feel as though Aigas was about to fold in on him and kill him before it was too late.

It wasn't only Aigas that regarded him with this odd intent, however.

Elita and Uyuniya had stung him with sharp looks as soon as Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz poured from his body.

And also...

<WHAT ABOMINATION IS THIS?>

The Doom Knight spoke, his voice heavy and no different to the sound of rusted metals scraping against each other. His burning sockets honed in on Skullius, and suddenly, it was as though Aigas was a canvas of squiggles and doodles; it was distorted by the might of the Doom Knight!

<MASTER SOUMEI WILL BE EQUALLY DELIGHTED IN YOU AS A PRIZE, OR PERHAPS MORE THAN HE REGARDS THIS RICH WORLD.>