

Undead 1371

Chapter 1371 The Dragon's Haunts

1371 The Dragon's Haunts

Jiggorrhax had never known weakness in his entire life. He prided himself on his strength, cultivated through knowledge, Divine favour, and best of all, time. He was a Herald, a capable one who had been ordained to mend the Rules of Aigas with his breath after Quintess and Listafelle departed. He was no beast. He, his father, Seongssax the Ivy, and his younger sibling Jerthrax, were descended of the Eternal Drakkens, the first creatures created by the three governing Deities of Aigas – the vessels whom they charged most of their strength and ingenuity into.

Jiggorrhax was one of the few to reach the summit of Aigas' power system, a feat made much easier by his title as a Herald, and also his race. He was a Beyond The Veil Stager – indeed, cultivating strength like the humanoid species on Aigas – and had even begun to feel stranded at the peak.

No other Herald held a candle to him in strength and wisdom. That was only natural. However, Jiggorrhax wished his descendants would inherit even a sliver of his potential. The Giants, offspring of the dragons, were nothing like him at all. Indeed, Jiggorrhax was a little impulsive at times, always eager to find a situation to exercise his great might, but he would never jeopardise the balance of the world for such a trivial want.

Twitch, twitch!

He remembered it as if it was only days ago.

The Giants had set off on a campaign to give knowledge to the humans and the Sif, hailing themselves as missionaries, only to be called back to Edagon and scolded by him. They had hidden their true intent for a while. They had hoped to rule over all the continents of Aigas, holding dual roles of teachers and dictators. They believed themselves to be a promised race.

Perhaps it was no lie, but that didn't mean their ambition was right. Patience and obedience were great virtues.

Later in time, Jiggorrhax would prove that he held both when he was forced to hold himself back, still and passive even as Fulgardt the Immoral wreaked havoc on Aigas.

He had hoped his kin would exercise such restraint, but alas...

His rage at the actions of the Giants had been great back then, but it also opened his eyes. The world was not ready for the end of the lineage of dragons. The Giants were yet to evolve into true representations of their Elders. A dragon needed to remain in Aigas until such a time came.

And that was why Jiggorrhax had fed many of the Giants to Jerthrax, sacrificing them for his accelerated growth. It was harsh, but necessary, and the Giants accepted their fate. Well, perhaps not all of them.

Jiggorrhax now wondered if that had been wise.

Twitch, twitch, twitch, twitch!

He remembered his battle against a four-armed creature, an anomaly. He was aided by the Immoral, who had claimed that it was an outsider eager to sow discord on Aigas. Initially, Jiggorrhax had believed Fulgardt, who was adorned in a different set of flesh. Together they had battled the anomaly in Jiggorrhax's own time... and then in another time – a distant future.

He hadn't processed it then, but it was a pathetic excuse for an Aigas. The mana was less than rich, and there were few powerful souls.

Tragically, in this future, the Herald was unable to sense the presence of Jerthrax, and he was not naïve enough to remain optimistic about that. It must have meant that his younger sibling had perished. No, he must have been killed. This assertion was supported by the fact that Jiggorrhax couldn't sense any Giants on Edagon, save for one.

It was odd, and ominous.

Jiggorrhax had even detected a great pressure, stronger than Suzamete's during the battle. It was clearly that of a Deity, but not of Quintess, and not of Listafelle.

Indeed, Boron had risen then.

This was a cruel, unfamiliar world, but one where the Rules were intact, scorched by his old breath from back then. It must have been a world that preceded his successful mending of the Rules, but...

Why was it like this?

Jiggorrhax had hidden his frustrations during the battle, but they slowly surfaced the more queer everything around him became. Soon, he was even questioning if the individual he was fighting – the four-armed anomaly – was the enemy at all.

Nothing made sense.

Twitch, twitch, twitch!

How did it become like this?

A sharp throbbing thought answered, slow and meek. A whisper.

Jiggorrhax rebelled against the thought. He was wise, wise enough to know that man and Sif were a people of their own. In the same way they joined hands to fight against the Giants in the First Grand War, they would eventually revolt even if the Giants succeeded at first in putting most of them down and staking their claim on Opungale and Feinheath.

'No. That could never happen. Not if you had supported them,' the voice came again, sharper.

Jiggorrhax refused to believe it.

It couldn't be.

It couldn't be!

It couldn't...

Twitch!

The Herald's eyelid opened with a crunch. The scales on it were still charred, but healing. He was coming to. Flakes of snow fell on him as he laid his head over a great mountain, feeling the great chill wandering about its peaks. At once, the dragon noted that he was in a Majestic Territory.

He heard voices.

"...aware of it?"

"Of course, I'm aware. I can sense the hundred and some powerful souls running about, killing foes,ahaha."

"You have that much faith in them? Hmm. I shouldn't ask. I would have thought you would rush to Edagon after sensing that disturbance, but you were suspiciously confident."

"I already told you. I have one last battle in me,ahaha. Besides, I'm no Herald, and no Divine. I'm quite sure that freak of nature, a skeleton ascended to an anomaly, will deal with it. If not him then Suzamete herself."

"I'm once again unnerved by how alike we are. The only difference is that I seem to desire Divine experiences more than you. Queer. Maybe I, a lowly, innocent bird, am the one descended from the dragons."

Sause, a transparent, ethereal form high in the skies, laughed.

"It just may be," he said before his eyes noticed the glow of a large eyeball below. He reeled and stormed down at once. "Elder!"

Ashton followed after him.

Together, they floated right in front of Jiggorrhax's eye. Its slit-like pupil dilated with focus at the sight of Sause, and then a booming voice left its giant mouth.

Chapter 1372: Bitter and Sweet

'I'm finally getting used to it, I guess. I don't feel so devastated anymore after each incident of this,' the Hybrid Warmoth told himself. He believed it, for the most part. Sudden bursts of misfortune had

been his staple food for a long time, and he got used to expecting them. Even when he didn't, however, Skullius grew to know that as long as he survived, he hadn't truly lost. 'In any case, I can't be a hypocrite. I talked all big about facing great challenges head-on in that speech for mine to the Troops. I suppose this is my first real test after touching upon Divinity.'

As stalwart as Skullius' hope and resolve had become since coming to Aigas though, it couldn't shield him from the bitter taste of defeat. He hid it well within the very recesses of his being, but he was also screaming silently, roiling with hate and fury.

He dug into his Broader Existence. Quite like how Skullius could feel the innards of his mana core with [Depths of the Core] before, he could see the dark, abstract space of his Broader Existence. The Amras well was in the centre. It was supposed to light up everything around it, but it instead, it was a darkness itself. Well exhausted. A flicker of silvery-blue swiped out, and then another, but that was all there was.

The image gave Skullius no comfort. It only exacerbated his fury – his fury at Fulgardt and at the Primeval Deities.

[Who are you to keep us waiting?]

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That line now lived rent free in Skullius' ego – wherever it nestled within him. He returned to the flesh.

He sighed. He opted to remain sprawled on the ground for a little while longer, right where Fulgardt's Corrupted Deity had dropped him.

It was only after he heard the approach of several sets of footsteps that he rose and massaged his brow.

Kenno crouched beside him, Araeyn and Sila approaching. The Unlimited Star whistled.

"I'd rather die several hundreds of times than suffer through that humiliation, boss," he said.

Skullius grabbed him by the face with one of his hands and flung him seven kilometres away. The Unlimited Star was back in a flash, however.

"And I thought me saving you this time would result in another victory, tomato flinger," Sila said. Skullius turned to him. The two locked eyes for a few moments and several knowing exchanges went unspoken between them. Sila grin.

"Yeah, well..." Skullius said, shrugging. "I'm glad you came out of your cocoon just in time to catch the battle's finale, you demented general. Just like last time."

Elita stood beside Skullius. She gave him a half sympathetic, half cautious look.

"Are you alright?" she asked.

"Emotionally? No." The Hybrid Warmoth stood and for the second time since Fulgardt left, he looked at the tattoo around his wrist. "Not at all."

Uyuniya was standing on his other side in the next instant. She took his hand and inspected the tattoo. Taken aback, Skullius created a mana network between his and her mind.

"Crafty," Uyuniya said as she rubbed the tattoo with a finger. "He used Fundamental Barter to make this."

"What?" Skullius raised a brow.

"Fundamental Barter. It's a mechanism parallel to the Common Reality Leagues used to boost the power of certain abilities and even tools by adding strict restrictions. It works on artefacts too, but not Prime and Wicked Treasures. It won't work on Andori or any facet of the Common Reality Leagues either," Uyuniya explained.

Skullius frowned. There was such a thing?

'I guess it's like Creeds and Rules,' he thought.

Uyuniya explained the target and duration conditions required to activate Fundamental Barter for the exponential boost to the power and efficiency of the subject involved.

"The Common Reality Leagues are strictly for powers that only apply to Divines. That's why the Fundamental Barter is not considered part of such an... esteemed system. It works even for mortals."

"I see. So, there are other powers on the Divine level that don't qualify for the Common Reality Leagues. I suppose that's where the Existential Parallels fall in."

'And I suppose some of the Seeds of the Fruit of World Myths like the Womb and Exorbitance,' Skullius added in his thoughts.

Uyuniya nodded and inspected his tattoo again.

"In this case, that man not only applied the first two mandatory restrictions of duration and target. He also added a third restriction, or perhaps more like a drawback, further increasing its effects," she said and looked at him. "He revealed to you the exact restrictions he gave the bracelet. If you hadn't known, you might have been dealt even worse damage, but he traded that advantage to make absolutely sure YOU wouldn't do defy him."

"I see," Skullius said, understanding at once.

This tattoo, inflicted by the bracelet which had been forcibly slung around his wrist, was meant to stop him from interacting with the SOMETHING he found – through infiltrating Fulgardt's mind back in Maqi – hidden in the Labyrinth of the Yoke. It was something extremely precious to Fulgardt. The tattoo only affected him, however, and only worked for an hour. With this knowledge, Skullius could simply wait an hour and then visit the Labyrinth – as he intended to. And that was probably what Fulgardt was hoping for. But of course, that wasn't necessarily a good thing for Skullius.

'That bastard said he's going to go hunting for Boron and Suzamete, the only Deities left on Aigas. I'm sure he doesn't mean to reap all the benefits himself. He must be more interested in raising the potency of Rias' new Andori,' Skullius thought.

The young necromancer, according to what Skullius heard, had managed to elevate his Imagining Technique from a mere skill into an Andori. Andori were stubborn techniques. The only way to permanently increase their power was to increase the quality of one's Broader Existence. Fulgardt must have meant to give Rias easy kills in the two Deities.

But Boron and Suzamete were not easy targets. Well, at least the former certainly wasn't.

Skullius sighed.

'Could he do it in a mere hour though?' He scratched his head. It appeared his earlier estimation that by the time a day went by, Aigas would be ash, was true.

The bitter thought suddenly made Skullius turn to Uyuniya. He really wondered what motivated her brash, unreasonable personality. She looked to have been on the verge of attacking Fulgardt even though he had the upper hand on multiple levels; he even had a Deity on his side.

'Then again, she did mock me for being cautious of Deities.'

"You're awfully liberal with information now. I assumed your cooperation was limited to after we defeated the Doom Knight," Skullius said to her.

Uyuniya narrowed her eyes.

"Was all that talk about you being kin to Voided Deathforms a lie then?" she asked sharply.

Skullius shook his head. 'Right.'

"No. It wasn't. I just didn't think you'd buy into it for long," he said. "Void certainly doesn't."

"After seeing that new Parlous Nature of yours in action, I can only buy into the idea. Whatever that power is, applies the void in a manner very similar to mine, and in some aspects, it's even better," Uyuniya said. "You're Voided Deathform to me."

"Hmmm. So you really were just racist."

"That's not necessarily a bad thing when Existential Parallels are matched against each other from the start, and then shunned by most Deific beings. Besides," Uyuniya's face softened a little, "you're still fresh from one world. You'll soon discover the staggering magnitude of factions formed across reality, constantly assaulting the other for good and not-so-good reasons."

Skullius' gaze lingered on the woman. She only just now started to feel like a person to him.

His gaze then swept over to Elita.

He could tell she was prepared to guard against him on their pending matter, but Skullius wasn't ready to indulge in his gnawing fury over Elita decisions just yet.

He had two other pending matters: the nine contracts waiting for his response, and the portion of the Doom Knight's Broader Existence that was almost finished condensing in his own Broader Existence.

Since the latter wasn't quite ready, Skullius decided to deal with the matter of the contracts first.

It was going to be torture, but it needed to be done.

Chapter 1373: Nine Contracts (1)

Skullius pulled a skin of Exora Mead and put it to his lips. He immediately began to drink, taking gulp after gulp without pause. His Amras well started to get restored, bit by bit.

Exora Mead was a strange resource. It had no grades, no standards of quality that increased the amount of Amras it restored per certain amount – nothing of the sort.

As Skullius had seen before, it restored ten units of Amras every five seconds, and that was only if the user kept drinking it without pause. Skullius had gotten three skins of Exora Amras from his LIMITED CONTRACT with JOISEN ANTERRAS. He was going to have to use them all before replenishing a significant chunk of his total Amras pool. His estimates told him that the three skins on their own weren't going to do the trick though. He needed more.

His newly added Immortal Realm Physique, Expanded Shadow Fiend's Leather, gave him a 25% increase to total Exora Amras well reserves, and a 15% to Exora Amras regeneration speed, which was an excellent boon that was sure to quicken the process of energy regeneration.

But all in all, it was going to be a long wait, which was why Skullius decided to multi-task. Looking through the contract offers was bound to be as tedious as it was possibly rewarding - a powerful way to pass the time.

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, SVEERCUSK+++

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>REVISED ENTREATY:

Treacherous, insolent fool. You dare ignore the goodwill of nine of us rushing and gushing with gifts, some of which you might never see in your entire Constern – if you manage to see it all? I have retracted some of the gifts I had wished to part with for your astounding Exotic Parlous Nature. For you, they must be adequate. I don't see anyone else offering more than I am.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of the Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I am willing to grant you the following:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Braskaan Wolf's Grace;

+ Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Anti-ALL Shell;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Rider's Beacon;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Exo-Skill Vision;

+(97) skins of Exora Mead;

+(4) SVEERCUSK's Tears

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, ABBON-RIGGIE+++

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>ENTREATY:

Woah. I never expected an Exotic Parlous Nature like yours to be born in this reality. Outstanding! You anomalies are really something. I feel a little humbled. I've been alive for many, many years and I have studied the great void for just as long, yet I have never come close to gaining some insight from Void's powers at all.

I have a proposition for you. I admit, I'm not offering as much as some of my friends, but I believe the little I have given is more than enough to warrant your consideration. Oh, and just between you and me, don't get intimidated by the older fools, and don't be afraid to shut down any contracts you feel are unfair.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of the Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I am offering:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Mincer's Shredding Jerkin;

+ Immortal Realm Physique of the Second Stratum, Dark-fire Drake's Womb;

+Realm rank Wicked Treasure, Whispering Wand;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Unspoken Third Hand;

+(149) skins of Exora Mead;

+(5) ABBON-RIGGIE's Tear

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, GREY VONSE+++

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>REVISED ENTREATY:

Typical. You're the proud owner of a very powerful Exotic Parlous Nature and you're already so indulgent on a battle with a little Undead Deity that you refuse to save us face. Do you think these contracts will last forever? Well, I suppose the ability you have awakened is just that great, and all of us are willing to bend over backwards to a degree, but nevertheless, you might find us unsavoury if we want to be. No one dares treat with old monsters so casually.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of the Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I grant you the following:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Second Stratum, Elaborate Star-lined Turtle Core;

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Microcosm of Spire Cells;

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Nine Gears Phantom Body;

+Realm rank Wicked Treasure, Ring For All; Discover exclusive tales on empire

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Prospectus Arrow;

+(310) skins of Exora Mead;

+(5) GREY VONSE's Tears

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

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

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>REVISED ENTREATY:

I offer you a final warning here, you little worm. Again, I tell you, there is nothing to lose here. I have exceeded your worth with my gifts. Do not be tempted to treat me any lesser because I have returned seeking another one of your little powers. Do not ignore us!

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of the Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I give you the following:

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

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Gale Lord's Fortress;

+Realm rank Wicked Treasure, Ascetic Laser Bolt;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Darkfire Bolt;

+(109) skins of Exora Mead;

+(1) D'JORRO's Tear

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, RHEVNA PLUME DOH'WE+++

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>REVISED ENTREATY:

Taking your sweet time, aren't you? What is taking so long? How can you be powerful enough to create something almost all of us rushed to turn our heads for, and still struggle against opponents like this? You are a queer individual. But then again, it's queer individuals like you who stir reality, and old giants like me, for the first time, are forced to spin like everything else.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of the Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I am offering the following:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Thriller Biller Villa;

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Stone's Gracious Cove;

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Titan-making Aegis;

+Realm rank Wicked Treasure, Master Cuirass of the Odd;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Paired Magnesian Bracers;

+(77) skins of Exora Mead;

+Corrupted Deity, Barmain;

+(9) RHEVNA PLUME DOH'WE Tears

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

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

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>REVISED ENTREATY:

I had the wrong impression of you, little anomaly. Did you think that just because I decided to be amicable, I was a close chum of yours? I thought someone like you, highly intelligent and filled to the brim with ingenuity, would understand how a business transaction works. Time is a very valuable resource, little anomaly, especially in the wider reality. The management of Consterns and Consternals is quintessential to everything. EVERYTHING. I decided to teach you a bit of a lesson in this. I hope you take it to heart. You have no right of bargain over our time. We demand respect and attention, and we wish to see it.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of the Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I grant you the following:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Flamboyant Totem's Hide;

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum: Mood Stack of the Hero

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Obstinate Challenger of Sacred Bones;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Kiss Me Once;

+Realm rank Wicked Treasure, Crush Me Once;

+(88) skins of Exora Mead;

+(2) JOISEN ANTERRAS' Tears

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, COLMUUN+++

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>ENTREATY:

I see. You belong to that little world I once passed by on my way to the Voiwalla. Fascinating. I just may pay you a visit. I wonder what inspires such boldness in you and the powers you create. You have no doubt made an enemy of Void, given the nature of this power. On the other hand, no matter whom amongst us you choose, I fear you are starting a war. Indeed, there are tools and powers out there that allow us to reach the Broader Existences of others, but thisbone... it does a lot more than most of the rare specimens I have seen.

I feel you are climbing up into powers you are not fit to wield just yet. If I decide so upon seeing you, I might just pluck you from reality altogether. Perhaps I'll even do it as a favour to some. Ah, perhaps we could make it a game. If you choose a great ally among us, you might just survive. But I am second only to AKHASHA, you know? Well and perhaps that one, but nevertheless, whichever Primeval Deity you draw – if it is not me – you best hope they can handle me.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of the Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I grant you the following:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Second Stratum, Straw Lager Enhanced Body;

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Mulling Trotter Arteries;

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, Greater Limbs Network;

+Realm rank Wicked Treasure, Embezzling Cloak;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Crow of the Beguiler;

+(310) skins of Exora Mead;

+(4) COLMUUN's Tears

Chapter 1374: Nine Contracts (2)

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[LIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

+++Seal of Primeval Deity, DRADPAS OL'HERT+++

>ENTREATY:

I have an impression to make, and I feel – for good measure – I should include some Void-ranked choices to better my chances, and for a good bit of... irony. I love anomalies. I am so willing to invite one into one of my territories across the wider reality, but you lot are exceptionally cautious. You should learn to loosen your guard a bit. Not everything is out to get you. Perhaps the common Deities have put too much fear in you, dreading your appearances on their worlds, and with good reason. But one such as I... Well, I wouldn't mind it if you fed your benefactors with one of my Rich worlds.

If you are interested in meeting with me, I will leave a map for you. Perhaps, given that you are the single most accomplished anomaly in the wider reality, you might actually pay me a visit. I will be waiting.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of your Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I am delightedly offering the following:

+Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, The Monster;

+Immortal Pseudo-Void Physique of the First Stratum, Unyielding Liquian;

+Immortal Pseudo-Void Physique of the Second Stratum, Nyananyana War Frame;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Finite Vision Bow;

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Sword of Long Worlds;

+Realm rank Prime Charged Mantle, Stardust Crusader;

+Cloud Monger Deity, Havenlost;

+(111) skins of Exora Mead;

+(4) DRADPAS OL'HERT's Tears

[UNLIMITED CONTRACT OFFER]

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

>ENTREATY:

I am truly pleased, young blood. Reality hasn't had us Primeval Deities twitching like this in a long time. I see it as an absolute joy that you have not once, but twice now drawn my attention. Only the OTHER knows how boring it is here in my... Hmm. Ahahaha. In any case, I will chance again at the opportunity to get you to pick me.

As you can see, I have chosen a different sort of contract to offer you. An Unlimited Contract. Unlike the others – the limited – this one is not a one and done. As long as you choose to sign one with me, I will give you gifts each time I use your new, precious Exotic Parlous Nature. It is regrettable that the consumption of Amras will be borne by you, its progenitor, but I will surely make up for that.

There are also other perks, which you will see in what I'm offering. I hope they entice you. And if don't listen her.

++Terms of Trade++

In exchange for perpetual usages of your Pseudo-Void rank, Exotic Parlous Nature, Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, I am offering the following:

+Immortal Void Physique of the Third Stratum, Embodiment of Accelerant Starlight (I daresay, this suits very well with your Andori, [Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight]. The reaction between the two will be brilliant!);

+Realm rank Prime Treasure, Plasmodian Strider Greaves (I was not cheap with this one. I assume the use of speed is one of the many facets you wish to delve into, given the descriptions of some of your earlier skills.); Find exclusive content at empire

+(145) skins of Exora Mead;

+(0) TITEMIUS Tears.

(I offer none of my Tears because once you sign my contract, every location where I have ever set up a Fated Reef in the wider reality, you will be allowed to visit at your discretion and with whomever you may like.)

[...]

[...]

[...]

[You have received a map from DRADPAS OL'HERT]

...

Skullius thought himself a fool for thinking the previous batch of contracts he had received before was stacked. By comparison, that former collection was terribly mediocre compared to the kinds of gifts being offered here. Indeed, there were a lot of nasty threats and demeaning words, but Skullius had ignored most of them in favour of hurrying to the meat of what the Deities were selling.

'Damn...' he thought.

Some of them really did not hold back.

When it came to both Treasures and Physiques, Skullius had yet to see Void-ranked options, well, at least here in the wider reality. He had a few of them in his Treasury, but most of them had extremely powerful wills, and were difficult to control. The best he could hope for in order to handle them was to assume his War Body, which was likely to be able to suppress these Treasures.

'I wonder if the Void and Pseudo-Void Treasures I have been offered are fitted with aggressive wills too. Well, come to think of it, I should be really be careful about some of them being used to trigger something in me once I get possession of them. I don't really know where these are coming from,' Skullius thought, frowning.

Speaking of Void-ranked Treasures, Skullius immediately considered TITEMIUS' contract offer.

An Unlimited Contract where each use of his Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz by the Primeval Deity prompted a different set of gifts offered to him.

That was outrageously good!

TITEMIUS' contract was the only one offering genuine Void-ranked items and the Deity seemed mysteriously tapped into Skullius' powerset – previous and current – which made the Hybrid Warmoth quite suspicious.

'I suppose all these Deities can tell where I am and what I'm doing, which is why some of them – through these Revised Entreaties – were berating me for taking so long to beat the Doom Knight,' Skullius thought and cursed. He scrolled over some of the harsher Entreaties. 'Do they have any idea how hard it is to fight a Deity when you've just become Divine? Either most of them don't know or remember what weakness feels like or they are just mocking me for not realising my potential. The latter is a little fair, I didn't see the potential of the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] until it created Second Divine Sinew.'

But be that as it may, Skullius did not appreciate how entitled some of these Primeval Deities were, even if they were offering some interesting sounding Physiques and Treasures.

The Deity to instil the greatest chill in him, was definitely COLMUUN though. The bastard sounded old, shrewd and wicked. A part of Skullius had almost considered just picking his contract in order to not get on his bad side when he read the Entreaty. But then again, D'JORRO was back, promising chaos if Skullius didn't pick him.

JOISEN ANTERRAS, acting quite like a disciplining father, was also back, but Skullius was determined to ignore his contract no matter what he was offering.

To be sure, whatever D'JORRO and JOISEN declared weren't empty threats, but most of these Deities were trying to coerce him into signing their contracts anyway, so the effect became null after a point.

Still, Skullius considered COLMUUN. He wondered what this 'other' one he mentioned was. Claiming to be second only to AKHASHA was one thing, but adding another person in-between... Skullius wondered just how many bits of subliminal messaging there were in COLMUUN and the other Deities' Entreaties.

'Well, some of these Deities seem to consider my powers outside of Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz. They all have the resources to do it – the guidance field. Apparently, it keeps records of the skills I cultivated as a mortal too. That or TITEMIUS has been watching me all this time somehow,' Skullius thought.

He wondered if it was possible for the Primeval Deities to keep a constant watch over every anomaly out there using the guidance field. After all, other than strange types of bearers like the masked man, all other anomalies qualified to have the guidance field – courtesy of the Voice of Worlds.

It seemed unlikely, but DRADPAS OL'HERT's Entreaty suggested otherwise. The Deity seemed to have devoted a large chunk of their existence to finding thrill through anomalies, but was constantly eluded or rejected by them. He sounded friendly enough, quite like ABBON-RIGGIE and RHEVNA PLUME DOH'WE who seemed rather laidback and... young(?), but Skullius was done using the Entreaties as a measure for a Primeval Deity's friendliness. Each of these Deities could very well be trying to curry his favour with false impressions.

Skullius re-read the contracts again and again.

'There are so many good options, but I suppose I shouldn't take too long on this now that I have opened them all.' He eyed TITEMIUS' contract. He was tempted. Tempted terribly. But... 'VOW told me to avoid making any treaty with TITEMIUS. Damn. This is what happened last time. TITEMIUS' contract was easily the most tempting then, same as now. Damn it! Is he just like JOISEN then? Someone who hides their true selves behind the Entreaty?'

Skullius didn't know what was true or not.

If not TITEMIUS' contract, he was leaning more towards RHEVNA and DRADPAS' contracts because of their offers for Corrupted Deities. Skullius still wasn't sure how a Corrupted Deity differed from a normal one, but he did understand that there were vessels to be used in combat.

'Flesh this!' Skullius didn't need to twist himself over this. He operated the guidance field.

[Are you sure you want to use (1) piece of counsel?]

"Yes."

[What would you like to make an enquiry on?]

Skullius took a short breath.

"VOW. Why did you warn me against TITEMIUS? What's so bad about him?" he asked.

[...]

Chapter 1377: The Truth of It (3)

Serenity elaborated while Skullius furrowed his brows, reserving his comments for now. He hinged firmly on the fact that Serenity apparently wasn't allowed to have a bearer of Null Life outside the wider reality.

That was... unexpected.

"In order to skirt this restriction, I had VOW help me create a Book of Alignment. Books of Alignment, as you well know, are the pinnacle of Runecraft in reality and the style of their creation cannot be replicated easily, save by someone like VOW who sees and knows most things," she said, and suddenly sounded a little nostalgic. "In order to mask the presence of my odd powers, I also added another Book of Alignment with an ability - accessible even to a mortal - which would help them blend into different environments: [Flesh It Like You Mean It]. I didn't come up with the name, by the way."

Skullius almost chuckled.

Serenity continued.

"Since I couldn't create a bearer in this reality, my plan was to smuggle my Books of Alignment elsewhere - somewhere without the restrictions that bound me."

Skullius frowned at this.

"Don't tell me..."

"Yes. I wanted to smuggle it to another reality and travel there myself, away from this place. Start a new life as an obscure entity. I'd heard the other realities might be greater and richer than this one."

...!

Skullius barely held in his visceral reaction to this revelation. He had much to ask, but he allowed Serenity to continue without interruption.

"This is where Somanda comes in. I'm sure you've wondered at some point - after learning about the Existential Parallels - why it is that Somanda was the one with the Books of Alignment I had VOW make for me, if they did hold a power of a higher calibre than Undeath," she continued.

Serenity merely asked for the sake of creating an adequate atmosphere for the information she was about to give. She knew Skullius had wondered about everything. The books, Somanda's intentions with Aigas before he escaped him, everything.

The Hybrid Warmoth listened keenly.

"In order to smuggle my Books of Alignment out of this reality, I foolishly employed the help of Emmae - the Eminence of Undeath. You see, her realm - which you call Deadmanland - is located at the edge of this reality. Well, technically. It is a cheap copy of what I made with the Null Verse, but in some ways, it is very impressive. In exchange for helping me, I offered Emmae the blueprint of how I created the Null Verse using a Reality rank Prime Treasure as a base. I thought it was a fair trade. I still believe it was. Perhaps even a little more beneficial for Emmae since once I was gone, she would have one less major competitor for worlds."

Evidently, Serenity's plan had failed.

Skullius could scarcely hold himself back from outwardly rendering a guess as to how it fell through.

"Let me guess. Emmae decided to try and steal your power through the Books of Alignment?" he posited.

Serenity laughed.

"I knew you'd think that," she said, "But no."

There were hints of pride in her voice.

"In all truth, that was the first time Emmae earned my respect over Void as a sister. She, like all others envies my powers and my Treasure, and would love to learn the secrets, but she wants to accomplish it in a manner that satisfies her pride. I saw it back then. She took the Books of Alignment and threw them at the feet of one of her highest-ranked High Liches and told him to do as he would with them. And as for me..."

Serenity chuckled.

"She jeered and scorned me for treating her like a lapdog - something so desperate that it would lick even the leftovers which fell from my table. She chased me out of her halls with her armies, laughing at me, sneering at how my creations were locked up somewhere, probably ignorant of the existence of their creator, unable to stand and fight for me."

Skullius would be lying if he asserted that the contrast between Serenity's chuckle and the sombreness of her tale didn't tug at a few of his strings. He felt a little sorry for the progenitor of Null Life. However, even stronger than this emotion, was his curiosity.

"So, let me get this straight. You offered Emmae the method for how you created Null Verse, and even a Book of Alignment bearing your powers and in the name of pride she threw them away? That's not pride. That stupidity!" Skullius declared.

"Not at all. Like I said before, the Books of Alignment are made using the highest tier of Runecraft there is. Emmae and her Liches aren't privy to such knowledge. They would have, if Vow favoured them, but well... Because of that, I was confident even if she tried to pry the book open, breaching our agreement - if she did agree, that is - she wouldn't be able to learn its secrets. Only VOW could allow that. Emmae knew this too," Serenity said.

Skullius frowned. Well, if that was the case then it made sense. Now that he put some brain cells into it, he gathered that the blueprint for how Serenity created the Null Verse and the Null Verse itself were two different things. Emmae was interested in the latter - the creatures and artefacts born within the Null Verse.

"So, this High Lich who got the Books of Alignment..." Skullius began.

"I soon learned through VOW that he was Somanda's superior at the time. He spent Consternals trying to learn the powers in the books, and only succeeded where [Flesh It Like You Mean It] was concerned. Books of Alignment have ranks of complexity, and those containing mortal abilities are significantly less complex than those with Existential Parallel powers. This High Lich soon lost interest, and passed the books to Somanda. As an Arch-Lich, Somanda his own ambitions. He had

been eyeing Aigas for a while back then. He had placed an artefact there, just like many other Liches when Aigas' Rules were in shambles, and someone had actually managed to find it and connect with him."

"The masked man..." Skullius said.

"Yes," confirmed Serenity. "Somanda couldn't use the Book of Alignment with Null Life, and thus, settled for using [Flesh It Like You Mean It] instead. His superior had already cracked that one for him. The ability might have been a mere parlour trick to the High Lich, but to Somanda... well, he imagined if he gave himself flesh, he could work out a plan to infiltrate Aigas, with the added help of the Legendary grade artefact SoSei in the hands of the masked necromancer. You put a stop to that. Thankfully, VOW, ever-watching, used the chance. She acknowledged you, gave you access to the guidance field, and allowed you to acquire both Null Life and [Flesh it Like You Mean It], the latter already primed for Aigas' power system."

Chapter 1378: The Truth of It (4)

Skullius took the time to digest all this information. The latter part was not nearly as grand as he thought it would be - the bit about Somanda, that was. He had expected Somanda to have somehow been involved in a plot to harness Null Life, but apparently, Skullius had

underestimated how secure the Existential Parallel was from the influence of outside forces and factors.

In any case, the greatest takeaway from this, in Skullius' opinion, was the insight as to what kind of entity Emmae was. She might have only been responsible for the weakest Existential Parallel in this reality, but that apparently did not mean the product of this power was weak by any means.

The fact that most worlds were wary of being raided by Undead creatures - including even the Deities who made them - was a testament to the strength of Deadmanland. Skullius had been privy to the fact that the Undead raided world after world, but it was only after Sause had shown a considerable level of fear towards the prospect of facing a Lich that Skullius had started to get the idea of just how big Undeath was.

Everyone loathed it and called it unnatural.

Heck, this fact had even helped Skullius rally Elita and Uyuniya against the Doom Knight. It shouldn't have been a surprise then that Emmae took great pride in her strength and saw the deal that Serenity had hoped to make with her insulting at best.

'Also, this idea that Deadmanland is actually a very special place with some unique spatial qualities is crazy. The dismal levels of mana and the general aesthetic of it was always... well, bland, as I remember it. Maybe Somanda's territory was the one with the gloomy view. Maybe there are better places and Somanda got better territories after rising to Divinity,' Skullius thought.

But these were just passing sentiments.

The bulk of Skullius' mental faculties were spent figuring out how all this related to him in the end.

He saw all the places where the favour he had heard implied from both VOW and Serenity applied now.

It should not have been so simple for him to acquire Null Life and [Flesh It Like You Mean It] back then. VOW simply allowed it.

It now made sense to Skullius why, when during his very first evolution, Serenity had said that he was not some chosen one, but the best individual who just happened to be in the best position to receive what could possibly be the best kind of power in this reality.

Serenity was desperate after all. She couldn't have allowed Null Life to remain in Deadmanland for all eternity. Eventually, someone in Emmae's ranks would have cracked the code to the Book of Alignment it was stored in.

But then, there was an inconsistency, or what appeared to be one.

"Hold on," Skullius frowned. "But didn't you say that you are not allowed to have a bearer of Null Life, as a restriction for your powers? How do I exist then?"

Serenity seemed to sigh.

"That's right. You were never supposed to exist, as a consequence of my how broad powers have become. Emmae, Void and I are bound by many restrictions," she said. "Void, for instance has a

body that spans the entire reality, but she can't move to attack any of her enemies with it as she wills. However, she attacked YOU. She broke her restriction, and for that, there is a penalty, same as with me. We Parallels stand at the pinnacle of power in this reality, so despite the restrictions, there isn't really a way to enforce them, except through punishment. You can be sure, Void accrued some horrible penalty for breaching her restriction, which is why I told you she wouldn't try a second time, at least not immediately, lest she wants to get hit by another tragic penalty."

Skullius nodded slowly.

"So, you suffered a consequence for making me a Null Lifeform?" he asked.

Serenity didn't reply. There was a need for it. Skullius already knew the answer after all.

"What penalty is it?" the Hybrid Warmoth asked.

Serenity again remained silent, but this time, it was just a pause - a dramatic one. When she finally revealed what the penalty was, it felt like centuries had passed.

"I will cease to exist soon."

...!!!

"What?" Skullius was astonished. "What do you mean 'cease to exist'?" He sensed a little fake mirth in Serenity's voice right after.

"Even you sense the irony in that, don't you?" she said and sighed particularly heavily. "I had hoped I wouldn't have to explain this. It makes me feel as though I'm trying to make you feel guilty for my own ends. I recognise how hard it must be to believe it, especially when the whole reason I developed Null Life was to skirt death with a new means of persistence - a new means of physical, spiritual endurance beyond the likes of real death. Immortality. Now..."

She faltered, failing to find the words to say.

Indeed, there was irony.

Serenity could remember the day she shed her flesh and became something larger than life both literally and figuratively.

Her power was immense. She had almost gotten lost in the feel of it, comparing it to Void's Voided Death and Emmae's Undeath. How tragic she had been.

Skullius was still reeling from this revelation when Serenity continued.

"I've done a lot to keep you alive - mainly employing VOW's help - because, yes, while I could theoretically create another bearer, I likely wouldn't be able to guide them. My penalty is as vague as I make it appear. I don't know when I will cease to exist. It might be by an inexplicable blow that lands on me from the blue, destroying my nigh-conceptual body. It might be that I will simply flicker out of existence in the next hour... I don't know. The unknown of it makes it much more frightening. You are all that I have, Skullius. And it has been a damn difficult time stopping myself from hovering over you protectively while I still can. That is also why VOW can appear overbearing. It's all for my sake."

Right then, Skullius remembered his final bout with the Null Devil King, Caxellac. The Null Lifeform had been about to use the ultimate expression of Null Life, Mors Serene Grace, and Serenity had warned Skullius about how it was capable of destroying hundreds of worlds when fired at its finest, but was still horrifyingly powerful even when cast by a weakened

Caxellac.

Serenity had wanted Skullius to run and save himself, but she also recognised that if he stayed and withstood the might of an Authority of the Null Verse - even if it was severely underpowered – he would grow by leaps and bounds.

And she had been right.

It must have been what mortals called parenting. It was a lifelong struggle between scarring a child for life and teaching them something new.

Skullius had learned and earned a great many things then, he recalled.

He had formed the idea for his Majestic Territory, Purified Cadaver's Impartial Felicity, and he had earned not only Caxellac's body and soul, but billions of units in Null EXP, all of which were responsible for what he was now... and what he had yet to show with his War Body.

A part of Skullius understood Serenity. She didn't want to behave like some sentimental mother, which is why she spoke as neutrally as possible, but her intent spilled out. Neither benefactor nor beneficiary expected some overly intimate relationship. Skullius was moved by Serenity's tale, but not to point of wanting to call her mother. Serenity didn't expect a deeper relationship to blossom between her and Skullius either, but the whole goal of this ordeal was to share information.

"I see. So that is it, huh? Your relationship with VOW," Skullius said.

"Yes."

There was a pause.

Skullius began chugging Exora Mead. His Amras began replenishing again.

Ten solid minutes passed in the silence. Elita, Aurolio, Uyuniya and the others, recognising that Skullius was busy with something, had gathered around the body of the Doom Knight and were analysing it while waiting for him.

The skin of Exora Mead was quickly exhausted and Skullius took another one before proceeding to drink for two more minutes. When he stopped, he finally spoke:

"Alright. What about TITEMIUS? What's your stance on him?" he asked.

Serenity gave a soft chuckle. She didn't mean to laugh, but there wasn't an ounce of mirth in it

anyway.

"If VOW's explanation cannot convince you against entering a contract with him, then I don't think whatever I have to say can. In the end... it's up to you," she said.

"I see..."

And indeed, Skullius had already decided.

It wasn't as impulsive of a decision as it appeared.

Skullius knew there was more about TITEMIUS that he hadn't been told, but the fact remained that all the Primeval Deities were capable of deceit. ABBON-RIGGIE and DRADPAS OL'HERT, for instance, for all their enticing Entreaties could have been wolves in sheep's clothing. If that was the case, that made them no better than TITEMIUS as candidates to contract with.

Furthermore, Skullius had decided that perhaps... choosing contracts where he would readily receive Corrupted Deities wasn't the best idea, at least not until he understood what they were. He had the perfect exercise to help familiarise himself with them a little while after

this.

And thus...

'It's decided. I'm more interested in this Physique which is apparently a perfect fit for my [Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight]. Hopefully, all these contracts don't have anything laced with malice,' thought Skullius, and then he made his choice.

Chapter 1379: Even With The Consequences Too!

[You have successfully signed an UNLIMITED CONTRACT with the Primeval Deity, TITEMIUS!]

[You have received the Immortal Void Physique of the Third Stratum, Embodiment of Accelerant Starlight!]

[You have received the Realm rank Prime Treasure, Plasmodian Strider Greaves!]

[You have received Exora Mead (x145 skins)!]

[...]

[Your contract is open ended. You will receive more gifts for each usage of 'Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz' by the Primeval Deity, TITEMIUS]

And it was done.

Skullius had chosen to play the risk, and he could almost feel the tension radiate from Serenity within him. He could have almost said the same for Vow, but he knew she wouldn't waste his last piece of <Counsel> just to tell him how big of a mistake he had made.

But well, as long as the two didn't expand on why and how TITEMIUS was so much more dangerous than other Primeval Deities, who had equal opportunities to lie to and deceive him, acting friendly only to then screw him over later on, Skullius was content with his choice. Of course, that didn't mean he wouldn't be cautious though. He also felt dreadful tensions in the fibres of his flesh and soul.

[...]

[...]

[You have received a response from TITEMIUS. Would you like to read it?]

[You have received a response from DRADPAS OL'HERT. Would you like to read it?]

[You have received a response from SVEERCUSK. Would you like to read it?]

[You have received a response from D'JORRO. Would you like to read it?]

[You have received a response from ABBON-RIGGIE. Would you like to read it?] [You have received a response from COLMUUN. Would you like to read it?]

'I'm really not in the mood for threats. I'll only entertain TITEMIUS'... and COLMUUN's responses...' Skullius thought with a sigh. He started with the message sent by the former. [I'm a little surprised. Haha. I can only imagine that your gut told you to choose my contract rather than

your head. Only the wider reality knows the ideas %\$#\$^! And \$%^* have implanted in your head about me. I do believe this will be a very beneficial relationship for both of us]

Skullius frowned. He had noticed earlier as well, but some of TITEMIUS' words were being censored. VOW was hiding something, as he had surmised.

'Well, I won't waste <Counsel> on that.'

Skullius checked the other response from COLMUUN. The Primeval Deity made him particularly uneasy. Unlike D'JORRO, he had a way of instilling fear without being... extra.

[HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!]

...

And that was it.

Skullius' face fell.

That was the kind of response he'd expect from a truly dangerous individual: a simple laugh. The future promised some truly horrifying encounters and experiences, it seemed. But then again, it wouldn't have been any different even if Skullius chose COLMUUN.

The Hybrid Warmoth found some comfort in that.

'Well... there's really no use crying over this now. My goal is to enhance my strength now, scrape clean my dark sentiments over my defeat from Fulgardt and move on,' Skullius thought. 'Hmmm, you know, I have developed a lot more than I thought I would. My Default body wasn't meant to be so reliable in a contest against extremely powerful beings, but in the end, it is. In fact, it's become a more flexible combat unit than my War Body - which makes sense.'

Speaking of this flexibility, Skullius immediately focused on the boons he had gotten from TITEMIUS. Whatever his concerns about the Primeval Deity, having an Immortal Void Physique was just too good of a benefit.

Skullius was eager to equip it.

[You have equipped the Immortal Void Physique of the Third Stratum, 'Embodiment of Accelerant Starlight'!]

[...]

[...]

[Incongruence detected!]

[The Immortal World Physique, 'Audacious Chassis of the Ninth Filament' opposes the Immortal Void Physique of the Third Stratum, 'Embodiment of Accelerant Starlight'!]

[Would you like to unequip the Immortal World Physique, 'Audacious Chassis of the Ninth Filament' from your arsenal of Physiques?]

'Absolutely!' Skullius affirmed. That physique might as well have been non-existent when compared to the two he had just equipped and acquired.

[The Immortal Void Physique of the Third Stratum, 'Embodiment of Accelerant Starlight' has successfully been equipped!]

[+75% resistance to attacks two whole leagues above the user's defences]

[+65% resistance to malevolent Deific forces]

[+65% to total Exora Amras reserves]

[+45% to Exora Amras regeneration speed]

[+90% to Broader Existence Defence]

[+100% to Soul Independence]

[+100% effectiveness to attacks delivered while in Soul form]

[+100% to all Soul attributes]

[The Immortal Void Physique of the Third Stratum, 'Embodiment of Accelerant Starlight' resonates viscerally with the Third Grand Tier Andori, 'Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight!']

[...]

[...]

[The Immortal Void Physique of the Third Stratum, 'Embodiment of Accelerant Starlight' resonates with the Immortal Realm Physique of the Third Stratum, 'Expanded Shadow Fiend's Leather!']

[An Immortal Physique network has begun to form!]

'OH!'

A smile threatened to appear on Skullius' face.

An Immortal Physique network?

'It looks like TITEMIUS wasn't lying. This Immortal Void Physique resonates really well with [Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight]. The Expanded Shadow Fiends' Leather made it so that [King of Severing Twilight: AfterDark], which had been useless even against Uyuniya and Elita, had become effective against a Doom Knight - even though part of the help came from the Seed of the Fruit of World Myths, the Womb keeping the Dousing Sanctum intact, and Kenno keeping the darkness compact with his Territory. I wonder how [Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight] will react to this new one.'

The thought was extremely exciting. The effect on [Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight] was likely to be exponentially more powerful than that of [King of Severing Twilight], which was boosted by an Immortal Realm Physique.

The two darkness and light Andori had many powerful effects, but because of the calibre of enemies Skullius was already fighting, most of them were rendered useless, which was a

shame.

But not anymore. This was especially true when factoring something that had long finished condensing in Skullius' Broader Existence: the matter from the Doom Knight's Broader

Existence!

While Serenity was explaining how Skullius came to be as a Null Lifeform, Skullius had felt the new shard of Broader Existence swimming in his own. It was akin to a luminous piece of glass, hard, firm and billowing with a strange kind of power that Skullius' young Broader Existence had yet to taste.

It had yet to experience the odd, yet miraculous phenomenon that caused Fated Reefs to emerge within it naturally, giving its user dominion over the turbulent, spacious great void. It had yet to even develop a defence of its own by growing thicker and harder. It was simply

vacant, like the inside of a large balloon.

But now...

'What did the guidance field say about what I can use this for again?' Skullius called the guidance field and checked the description for Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz.

[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.

+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.

'I can augment the calibre of my Andori... unorthodoxly, encroach upon the Deity-exclusive prospects, add or create reserves of Amras, and create powerful shields that can be sacrificed if an attack reaches my Broader Existence... Handy indeed,' Skullius thought with a nod.

He understood three of the four benefits finely, but the one about Deity-exclusive prospects vexed him. It was... vague.

But that was another matter entirely, as was the thing about the creation of the Greater

Cosmic Lawl.

There was something to use <Counsel> on, or to ask Serenity about. Skullius knew the two had not yet told him everything. Serenity in particular had been pretty happy when Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz was created.

For now, Skullius chose to focus on the uses of the siphoned piece of Broader Existence from the Doom Knight. It didn't take a genius to figure out how he would use it.

Chapter 1380: The Obvious Choice

Skullius, of course, chose to unorthodoxly augment the calibre of his Andori through the shard of Broader Existence from the Doom Knight.

It might have made more sense to create a separate reserve of Amras, but Skullius deemed that unnecessary for the moment. Even if he managed to double his current reserves of Amras, it wouldn't help him much if he didn't have higher attack power for future battles. Besides that, he had just gotten a massive stock of Exora Mead. Granted, it didn't resolve the problem of Amras perfectly, but Skullius would be able to replenish it, however slowly.

It might have also made sense for Skullius to use the shard to create a powerful shield that he could use to defend his Broader Existence in case an attack reached it, but that also seemed needlessly extra when Skullius had just gotten an Immortal Void Physique that granted him higher values than the previous to his Broader Existence defences. The Embodiment of Accelerant Starlight even offered him 75% resistance to attacks two whole leagues above his own defences - higher tiered Andori, Exotic Parlous Natures, and Treasures.

And thus, with this reasoning in mind, the Hybrid Warmoth set his mind on enhancing his Andori.

[You are only capable of edifying a single Andori below the Cosmic tier with the siphoned shard of Broader Existence]

[The selected Andori will be raised to the Third Ascendant tier at once]

'Woah!' Skullius was stunned. He could have clapped his hands in excitement, but that would have drawn too much attention. Even if everyone behind him was mostly aware that he was looking through the guidance field, it wouldn't do to act so shamefully. But perhaps such a reaction would be warranted.

'The Ascendant tier... That's a whole tier higher than my current strongest Andori, [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus], well, if I'm not temporarily raising the power of my [Legion Eyes] using Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz, that is,' Skullius thought. 'An Ascendant tier Andori can bypass a Void Clot easily, as Uyuniya said earlier... and as proven by the Doom Knight. That's a huge jump in strength.'

Skullius turned giddy.

His mind bubbled with ideas and speculation even without the influence of his thought phantoms.

Power equal to the Andori the Doom Knight had used to almost kill him and Uyuniya when they were in the Void Clot... This needed some deep thought. Skullius wanted to elevate an Andori that would instantly turn the tables against incredibly powerful foes, especially those of a Divine kind.

He already had an idea about which Andori to choose.

His own thoughts gnawed at him, screaming the name of the man he hated most at the moment.

Fulgardt. Fulgardt. Fulgardt.

Even the revelations by Serenity - in all their incompleteness - couldn't overshadow what Fulgardt had said and done to Skullius, at least not for long.

'I will acquire a Corrupted Deity of my own soon, but I need to increase my own strength - my base strength - and ensure that in a contest against Fulgardt, I can immediately match him. The War Body is a terrible unit for confrontations with enemies like Fulgardt,' the Hybrid Warmoth thought.

Fulgardt's smile flashed in his head. He frowned, scowled and sighed.

At that moment, he understood what Fulgardt had meant when he said that he kept him alive solely to increase his (Fulgardt's) own potential for growth; matching an Insurgent Magnus against another Insurgent Magnus really was a powerful formula for growth, now that Skullius thought about it

The Hybrid Warmoth was striving to develop just to get back at the Immoral. No, he wanted to kill him.

To achieve this, Skullius needed to make the decision on which Andori to elevate count. Thus, for the first time in what felt like an eternity, Skullius allowed the thought phantoms to chime in. They went berserk immediately, as always, but...

"The choice is clear here, Prime! We need to improve the quality of [King of Severing Twilight]!"

"Yeah, it's obvious! We have no need to further improve [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] for now, and some of our other Andori can be bolstered - however temporarily - using Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz."

"You saw how powerful that darkness Andori truly is when it resonates with a mere Immoral Realm Physique. It's a Grand Tier Andori now, two whole tiers below what it should become, and it made you invincible - at least until the Doom Knight decided to go all out."

"I can already imagine it. This new Immortal Void Physique will boost [Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight], and make even its general properties useful in battle again while [King of Severing Twilight; AfterDark] becomes the main source of attacks! This will be a legendary combination. We'll truly feel like the Insurgent Magnus again, just like that time against the Maqians in Opungale. And with that kind of attack power, we won't need to rely solely on the War Body."

Skullius scratched his head.

His phantoms were right. This was a no-brainer indeed.

Again, Skullius was forced to confront just how his Default Body was going beyond his expectations. It was growing rather rapidly. However, that might have been because it was designed to be able to grow, unlike his War Body, which was... ahem.

"You're right, you socketholes," Skullius said to the phantoms. "I didn't realise hearing your voices, chalk full of confidence, would make me start feeling better."

"You better believe it," one of the phantoms cried.

"We will enjoy putting you to the side when it's our time to pilot the body, don't you forget it."

"What are you waiting for? Let's see the upper potential of [King of Severing Twilight: AfterDark]!"

"Yeah!"

There was no need to emphasise this fact, but it needed to be stated again.

Andori were stubborn abilities that could only be bolstered permanently by increasing the quality of the Broader Existence they inhabited. Skullius using Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz on [Ruining Cutter] and [Elusive Meta Carver] to create the mutations [False Tickler] and [Nonstandard Splicer] respectively, had only been a temporary boon. These Andori were not established in his Broader Existence. They could only be accessed by continuously funnelling Maximum Jaqqezjaqqz into the target Andori.

Thus, what Skullius was about to do was extremely outlandish. There were only a few dozen beings in all of reality that had ever used such a method to improve the quality of their

Andori.

'Now, let's do this!' Skullius thought and he invoked the guidance field.

[You have selected 'King of Severing Twilight: AfterDark' to be raised to the Third Ascendant

tier]

[Please wait...]