

## Undead 141

Chapter 141: Contrived!

The scenery scared the non-living shit out of Skullius as to Red Rage, it only served to bring him joy.

What the flesh was there to be happy about when they were facing a horde of more than fifty monsters?!

Behind the two, an illusory slit could be seen as while on the outside, a crack in space could be seen, what the creatures within this mini space saw was merely this. A sign that their time for escaping from this place was nearing.

Skullius couldn't even take in the scenery that was all around. A certain irritation that almost suffocated him was abounding along with a collection of energies that he wasn't privy to, except mana!

It irritated his core, the feeling being extremely uncomfortable.

On top of this, his eyes couldn't tear away from the growling beasts that advanced slowly.

They were...

"Goblins? No... it can't be..." Skullius guessed and then rejected his own inference.

Short creatures with long ears, round faces and wide mouths that held tens of sharp teeth all exuded an unreal hostility at these invaders.

They had pitch-black skin and torch-like blue, beady eyes that illuminated the view of their enemy along with freakishly long arms that almost dragged along the ground as they moved forward.

In stark contrast, their legs were much shorter, bearing long nails that didn't at all look sanitary.

The most distinctive feature about these creatures was the pulsing thing on their chests that was heart-shaped, half exposed from the skin with the same blue colour as their eyes.

In all fairness, the hearts were only half, making the image of one of these quite bizarre.

The surroundings looked like a not so wide cave with red and blue soils as well as thick vines that stemmed from weirdly shaped trees that coiled around themselves eerily, having not the healthy spark of life but something else entirely.

A thick interweaving of energies.

Special gems that gleamed to illuminate the darkness that would be present otherwise, holding an otherworldly beauty decorated the cave-like walls.

Such a scene could not be found in Aigas.

Only in a Cluster, where different creations would be born and precious resources accumulated over time.

"Bro, why are you happy?!" Skullius asked Red Rage, receiving an immediate reply as he stood up to take up a stance.

"These guys are weak and perfect for me to kill for experience? I guess they can help me level up if there are any Tier 2s among them but are you sure they are weak?"

The Discount Human used his guidance field to check the stats of these beasts as he spoke.

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[ Name : None ]

[ Tier : 2 ]

[ Level : 11 ]

[ Race : Lucky Strike Gremlin ]

[ Inv. Status : Starving ]

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[ Stats ]

[ Strength : 100 ]

[ Agility : 40 ]

[ Intelligence : 5 ]

[ Endurance : 67 ]

[ Luck : 90 ]

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[ Health : 336/336 ]

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[ Mana : 90/90 ]

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"Ummm... those stats make me nervous," Skullius remarked as he pulled out the Baleful Gale Reaper.

The first red flag that he saw was the name of this creature, which was further solidified when he saw its luck stat.

"Ridiculous! Blessings like these exist?!"

The Discount Human felt the unfairness of the world.

"EAEAEAEAEAEAEAEAAAAAAAAA!"

The gremlins screeched as they rushed to Skullius and Red Rage with their naked bodies that didn't have any goods to hide!

Their speed was relatively slower as by now, Skullius was used to fighting strong powerhouses but that detail alone didn't allow him to let his guard down.

These creatures had more than two stats after all and though they weirdly had a shockingly low intelligence stat, they had a freakish level of strength for their Tier!

Red Rage boldly stepped up to meet the slow charge.

"Don't kill them! Leave those you can for me!" Skullius said, Red Rage transmitting to him that he didn't want to the gremlins either.

For Skullius, after studying the thing with his Task for levelling up, he had discovered something that he intended to test out after killing a gremlin and for Red Rage, he wasn't into murder anymore at least unless it serves a greater purpose.

As the leading gremlin arrived while screeching and waddling like a penguin, the unexpected happened.

A large chunk of the cave suddenly dropped from the ceiling and crashed on top of Red Rage before the Pelvis Boar-Man could act!

BOOM!

The chunk was so large that Red Rage's body couldn't even be seen underneath where dust was settling after a loud reverberating impact!

"Bro...WHAT?!" Skullius exclaimed as he readied himself for the charge while backtracking a bit.

Unfortunately for him, a tangled vine was behind him and he tripped, falling backwards while he showed an expression of shock!

The first gremlin didn't miss this chance, dashing up to Skullius as it then hammered down with its freakishly long arm that had its hand balled into a fist!

"Crap!" Skullius hurriedly held the Baleful Gale Reaper as he blocked the attack, bits of soil from the ceiling impeding his vision out of nowhere!

The fist of the gremlin that attacked him knocked against the sword, Skullius feeling the midget's strength bear him deep into the ground!

"It's strong!"

More of the gremlins waddled to Skullius' position as he was pinned, the Discount Human pushing with his strength that was above the gremlin's own and driving it a few steps back!

He immediately stood straight and slashed with all just might while inserting a bit of mana into the sword which produced hissing winds that threatened to rip the gremlin before him apart!

However...

SWISH! SWISH! SWISH!

Skullius missed thrice even as he struck precisely at the gremlin which greatly shocked him.

"The hell?!"

CRACK!

The large chunk of the cave that had fallen over Red Rage cracked as intense golden energy pounded on it from underneath!

The Pelvis Boar-Man was rising!

'Great! With Red bro back, I can-'

BOOOOOOM!

A much larger chunk of the cave stomped over the one that was currently above Red Rage, burying the Pelvis Boar-Man deeper into the ground!

"...."

Skullius was beyond dumbfounded.

As he was staring at this contrived convenience, one of the gremlins threw its fist into his belly, the Discount Human flying and crashing on the ground!

He quickly rolled while vomiting fizzy 'blood' when another piece of unhappy news was dropped onto his head!

[You have been struck by the skill 'Critical Lucky Strike'. You have sustained heavy damage]

"GAAAAH!" Skullius roared in rage at this ridiculousness.

Chapter 142: Fight Back, Bro! Fight Back!

All stats were greatly influenced by a number of factors.

This was true for luck as well but it was a special case.

Luck was a stat that one would be born with a specific value of. Its increase or decrease was USUALLY tied to intervention by higher-level experts as even when one levelled up, this didn't correlate to an increase in luck.

The fact that these little creatures had such a large figure in luck was ridiculous and Skullius couldn't help but roar in anger at the consecutive rush of misfortune.

It could be said that his atrocious luck would work best when he was dealing with such an opponent as surely when Skullius set to stand and attack again, he fell forward all of a sudden, his chin landing directly into an uppercut from one of the gremlins!

The force almost made one think that Skullius' head would detach from his body as the Discount Human's mouth gushed out blood while his body started to grow heavy and hard to coordinate!

Heavy damage!

The fact that he wasn't dead was a miracle, which went against the very fact that he had atrocious luck but when one thought about how these gremlins were relying merely on their luck, it was understandable that one-shotting Skullius right away was not guaranteed. They lacked the skill and intelligence for it.

'Damn! I didn't want to carelessly use my mana before because I don't have enough to try out all my new stronger skills but...' he thought. '...if it continues this way, I won't have a choice!'

Four gremlins out of the tens leapt and locked their fingers as they sought to smash Skullius into paste!

The Discount Human rolled away only to find that he was heading into a crowd of more vicious-looking gremlins, all of them drooling as they snarled and screeched!

"Oh, come on!" Skullius yelled as the little creatures neared in their tens!

"Fine then! Let's see how lucky you socketholes really are!"

The Discount Human immediately cast one of his newest skills, 50 units of his mana being used as they were compressed and compounded into a small sphere of mana!

"Mana Blast!" he called as he flung the marble-sized sphere at the lot of them.

'Surely, with their numbers, I can catch some of them with this.'

BOOOM!

The small orb of mana exploded with a rough intensity amidst the raging gremlins, creating a larger force than Skullius hadn't expected!

Many of the gremlins were injured and flung after the crust was blown up, with none of them dying outright!

Skullius hurriedly stood and turned, going for the other gremlins that had sought to squash him before!

They seemed to have been alarmed by the explosion and seeing their fellow gremlins being pushed away and hurt!

Skullius' eyes quivered with rage as he made a short analysis.

'I see. Even with their luck, they can still take damage. All they have been doing is disrupting or hindering me now that I think about it. If that's the case, then let me see if this works!'

The Discount Human inserted his mana into the Baleful Gale Reaper and swiped forward, a small gust of wind that carried with it dust and dirt smacking against the four gremlins'.

The creatures raised their hands to cover their eyes from the dirt and at that moment, Skullius struck!

[Evil Darkness Production], [Basic Weaving]!

Skullius extended his index finger which produced a thin stream of [Evil Darkness] that shot towards one of the gremlins that was three meters away!

As soon as it reached the creature, its end exploded into a dark cloud that covered the gremlin's head while the rest remained as a thin line connected to Skullius!



The creature stopped as it panicked but Skullius didn't stop.

He pulled his arm back, the gremlin being drawn to him by the stream of [Evil Darkness] which acted like a rope!

It could be used this way too!

After spamming the combinations of the two skills, Skullius had learnt a whole lot of things about this new power, Red Rage's account which he had received later after it had happened helped him know that [Evil Darkness] could restrict movement and entry along with a few other versatile functions.

Skullius had only used enough mana to create such a limited construct.

The gremlin who couldn't see anything as the smoke-like Darkness covered his face reached Skullius quickly, only to receive a brutal slash with a wind covered Baleful Gale Reaper!

[You have killed (II) LV10 Lucky Strike Gremlin. 2500 Exp awarded]

[Your prey emits the Essence of Null Life. Would you like to extract it? Remaining time 59 seconds?]

"Oho...!"

This time, there was no salvation, as the gremlin was slit diagonally by an enraged and excited Skullius who instantly bore his hand into the chest of the gremlin when it fell.

He immediately drew the Null Life Essence from his prey finding it to be 35 points!

A mana crystal had formed immediately after the gremlin's death!

A dead core.

One of the benefits that Skullius ever enjoyed on his journey with Benzard and his crew was learning new things.

Carving out cores was one of them as his first experience had been when they had come across Onumbasssss.

Now, Skullius had used that knowledge as all creatures held within them a core, the fate of this construct after death being what differed with the species.

The Discount Human stored the item in his spatial storage and then rushed to meet the last three while keeping his awareness straight on the many that had recovered and were running towards him from behind!

At the moment, a shocking explosion resounded as the portions of the cave that had collapsed on Red Rage 'accidentally' were obliterated, a golden light exploding outwards as a particularly rageful looking Pelvis Boar-Man appeared!

Ridiculously, from the outburst of power which flung debris in many directions knocking and killing some of the gremlins, a small rock flew and smashed Skullius straight on the side of the head, making him spin like a top and roll on the ground!

Red Rage sped towards the many gremlins and with a shocking burst of speed and he threw his fists all around, each of his punches tearing apart the little nuisances!

In less than five seconds, ten gremlins were already on the ground, oozing as meat and blood.

Skullius on the other hand was kicked away by the other gremlins, tumbling on the ground but he stood and faced the horde of lucky gremlins!

"Kek..." Skullius cackled as he unflinchingly glared at his enemies, a crazed look in his eyes!

"I'm far from done you socketholes!"

Skullius gathered mana in his core as he prepared a heavy hitter!

He stretched out his hand and a bright luminance shone as a powerful skill let itself known!

[Manassault]!

A raging stream of mana compressed itself as it then shot out with a ravenous desire to destroy in a straight line while producing a bright flare-like light!

The gremlins sensed the danger, but their meagre luck-based measures couldn't shield them from the monstrous skill!

Or rather they couldn't use the boons of their luck to their advantage willingly.

Still, the streaking light razed through the gremlins that attacked in a crowded fashion, burning away bone and flesh alike as it instantly killed nearly fifteen gremlins while the rest were either critically injured or were saved by higher luck stats!

Red Rage merely watched as he hadn't been able to finish the other gremlins before Skullius launched [Manassault] which only stopped its advance after striking the cave wall with an extremely loud impact!

A crater which was six meters wide opened on the wall with hissing burnt rock and crisp crumbling ash!

The remaining gremlins looked on in shock with their eyes wide open, backtracking in fear.

This transcended their natural luck!

It was a powerful skill!

[You have killed (II) LV13 Lucky Strike Gremlin. 2700 Exp awarded]

[You have killed (II) LV12 Lucky Strike Gremlin. 2450 Exp awarded]

[Your prey emits...]

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Skullius relished in the blood and guts sprawled all over as he then picked up his sword as he rushed up to the nearest corpse where the mana crystal was exposed.

He immediately grabbed it, his guidance field finally announcing what he had been waiting for.

[You have successfully completed your Second Task, gathering two Tier 2 mana cores.]

[You have reached Level 2]!

"Yes!" he had finally reached his goal.

Chapter 143: Cluster Boss?

It had become apparent to Skullius that Tasks were strangely specific yet not. He couldn't half ass his way through them.

For starters, he had discovered that if he was tasked to acquire cores of a specific Tier as the situation in this case, it meant that he had to be the one who secured from their source if one wasn't specified.

Or so he had confirmed after actually killing gremlins and obtaining their cores which prompted the level up.

Five stat points per stat were given to him after the level up but strangely, this stat gain felt... different.

Skullius could have sworn he felt his core's minute growth in that moment, his body actually tensing up as with the strength addition he felt like he could topple a small mountain, with the agility, that he could run like the wind and with his endurance that he could tank the [Lucky Strike] from the gremlins to a larger degree!

One of these had been able to push him to the brink of death but now...

"Is this the difference between scaling in power between humans and beasts, like Benzard said that time?" he asked himself as he drew the Null Life Essence from the gremlins.

The proper way to grow, as Benzard had called it.

Every stat gain was immensely powerful as compared to beasts.

No wonder humans remained on top despite the many tiers of levelling that beasts went through.

The remaining gremlins shuddered as Skullius pressed his intense gaze on them while advancing with his sword.

He didn't forget that these guys could mess him up with their luck.

It seemed that they didn't consciously control their luck and perhaps because of their Tier, interfering with powerful skills was beyond them even with their high luck.

"Well... I won't be the one to finish you off. It's too risky. Red bro!"

Given the consent and the way to prevent further mishaps, Red Rage stormed over to the twenty some remaining gremlins and killed them in one continuous sweep after using the skill [Dash in Dust] which had levelled up to 8.

The corresponding notifications about how Red Rage had received some experience showed up in Skullius' guidance field as he then took some time to rest his body which had sustained damage.

The punch and kicks he had received had literally bent his body as perhaps a way to mimic broken bones and Skullius was walking like a hunched old man.

"So this is a Cluster..." Skullius said as he sat down crudely, taking in the scenery of something other than the blood and guts.

"The Deities made this world with their own bodies and the guidance field said that its the clash in their powers that makes these strange places. So does that mean that the Deities' bodies emitting

energy just causes something like this or am I yet to see the true effects? I thought it would be something more devastating.'

Skullius' analysis was for the most part true.

He pulled out one of the gems that was stuck on the cave walls and scrutinised it.

It was purple with a few starry lights within that glowed dimly while this shell had a glossy but rough texture.

A strange energy oozed from it that he didn't quite understand.

Still, the Discount Human deemed these gems valuable and decided to harvest them along with a few of the corpses of the gremlins, storing them in his ring until it was almost full.

In the midst of this process, Skullius and Red Rage felt tendrils of mana sneaking from beyond what they could see from the cave ahead.

The depths of the cave that wound a few times beyond.

Gems still lit the way, allowing for one to follow through and see where they were going despite the tangling of the trees and vines.

"It's not over, I guess," Skullius said, his mind thinking back to what that skinny bro had said about there being many monsters and then one stronger one.

Fifty creatures was definitely a lot for someone who was soloing the Cluster but for a group, it would have been breeze.

This was definitely a very weak Cluster. The weakest.

However, thinking that these gremlins would have spilled out into Santhi and started delivering their gospel of luck and unluck to the common folk would make one shiver.

Even Skullius recognised how much of a danger they'd pose. They were worse than the goblins.

Just how many 'accidental' deaths would occur by the time help arrived.

DUUM! DUM! DUM!

Loud thumps sounded with a heavy impact as something heavy could be heard approaching from the winding path of the tunnel.

Soil and small rocks shook each time there was such a vibrant stomp, the thin streams of mana that Skullius had felt becoming thicker as something rushed in the two's direction!

'Here is the last part!' Skullius thought, Red Rage who was beside him also readying himself with a heroic stance that seemed to foretell that was prepared the tank whatever damage came!

Skullius felt his little remaining reserves of mana and smiled bitterly. He had started with the intent to save mana but had actually done the opposite because of the pressure.

He hadn't used the Null Devil's Aegis of Damnation which would impede his movement but now, he had to consider it.

Only a few points of mana remained as even with his level up, he didn't get a recovery to his mana, that much being obvious.

As he contemplated his next move, a thick and tall figure rushed through, becoming visible as it appeared in the two's line of sight!

A large gremlin stood before them, bearing an identical appearance to the gremlins the two had killed with the only differences being in the height and proportions.

It stood at over two and half meters, having the same freakish arms but longer legs that enhanced its speed as it charged!

It was pretty fast!

As it saw the bodies of its juniors, the gremlin screeched loudly, but not in a fit of rage that exposed its sorrow but in anger that showed its longing for action!

The same pulsing blue half-heart could be seen on its chest and this organ began to glow as it passed by the gremlins, the corpses of the little creatures reacting as well, as hearts on the chests also glowed!

'I have a bad feeling about this,' Skullius thought.

And what he thought turned out to be true as in an instant, an overbearing force bore down on him!

It wasn't raw power or force.

That was a thing of its own.

This was Jackpot's peculiar skill!

Chapter 144: It Just So Happened...

[ Name : Jackpot ]

[ Tier : 3 ]

[ Level : 24 ]

[ Race : Lucky Emperor Gremlin ]

[ Inv. Status : Feeling lucky and furious ]

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[ Stats ]

[ STRENGTH (I) : 11 ]



[ AGILITY (I) : 7 ]

[ INTELLIGENCE (I) : 4 ]

[ ENDURANCE (I) : 12 ]

[ LUCK : 934 ]

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[ HEALTH : 7960/7960 ]

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[ MANA (I) : 215/215 ]

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"EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" Jackpot screeched!

"The hell...!" Skullius exclaimed. Another monster with stats that didn't match its level!

It even had a blue core, which influenced its stats, inflating them greatly!

And that luck stat! It was ridiculous!

934!

Really?

Where was the justice?!

Did this guy harvest luck on Mondays?!

Skullius couldn't believe it. The unfairness!

This was cheating!

Jackpot didn't care if he was cheating or not though, as when Skullius felt the overbearing force from this giant, he was already screwed.

The same was true for Red Rage as he had also been caught in the miraculous ridiculousness that was about to follow!

[You have encountered Cluster General, 'Jackpot']

['Jackpot' has used 'Divine Coincidence'. For the next 5 minutes you will be exposed to truly unfortunate circumstances]

"Bro! Come on!" Skullius barked as he retreated, Red Rage taking a step forward as he conjured the [Brilliant Boar Balance Buckler]!

The gold and black buckler with an exquisite carving of a boar's features appeared to intercept the raging gremlin but...

It just so happened, that one of the trees within the cave-like structure grew a hollow from being pummelled by a sharp rock that flew during the fight with the Lucky Strike gremlins before and spilt a rather slippery paste that Jackpot used to slide on, adding onto his velocity as he sped so far so quickly!

It just so happened that Red Rage was caught off guard as when he tried to raise his shield higher to accommodate the blow, the giant gremlin swung forcefully with its long and thick arms, swatting him away like a fly before the shield could reach!

Red Rage flew into the wall, shattering a few of the branches from the twisting trees!

Since the force came from the side, it couldn't flow steadily from Red Rage's body, into the ground and be neutralised!

Skullius vigilantly leapt back to give himself some more space to react!

However, it just so happened that one of the dead gremlins that had half its head blown off had its sharp teeth sticking out, Skullius' foot landing on the sharp objects, his shoe giving way for eight of the teeth to sink into his cosmetic foot!

Skullius stumbled but he didn't feel any pain, thus he continued backtracking.

However, it just so happened that this gremlin which he had stepped on was a poisonous variant, Skullius feeling his leg quiver on its own as the poison secreted by the dead gremlin's teeth already took action!

"The flesh?!" Skullius cursed while falling over, pulling up his pant leg to see that from his foot upwards, the skin colouration turned as pale as a sheet.

'What kind of.... Bro... WHAT! Is this poison?!' Skullius asked himself as he sweated.

The keen eyes of the large Jackpot Gremlin told him that it was well aware of what it was causing!

It was doing this consciously!

Unlike the Lucky Strike gremlins, Jackpot could utilise this natural luck willing in skills that allowed him to shape it however he liked.

Furthermore, with the glow of the hearts of the dead gremlins, Jackpot had gained their luck stats, which created for this outrages luck!

What kind of streak of conveniences was manifested by the skill [Divine Coincidence]? Well one could already see.

Jackpot pulled a large branch from one of the trees and swung it at Skullius with a staggering force that blew on the ground, rousing dirt and dust!

It just so happened that this thick branch was the thickest and largest from the tree, bearing a very hard and concentrated texture perfect for swatting 'flies', especially when dried!

Skullius couldn't dodge but he didn't wait for his death.

He summoned the Null Devil's Aegis of Damnation to appear before him right before the impact!

FFFBOOOOM!

The wall juttred out gems and rock from the shockwave that ensued, bearing down the mana rich ground which collapsed!

It wouldn't be accurate to say that Skullius managed to save himself from the intense attack, but for the most part, he was intact.

Depressions on his body that prompted for blood to spew from his mouth in large bursts as well as several bent out of the norm parts of his body could be seen when the large hunk of wood was raised as the Gremlin prepared to attack again!

'Damn! That was intense!' Skullius thought, thinking about whether he should really put on the armour... or rather hide in it.

That would help but the time to wear the armour was... insufficient.

But then...

"Oh..." Skullius yelped in glee as a realisation set in.

FOOOOO!

Air roared as the large branch came down once more, Skullius seeing the speeding figure of Red Rage come between him and the large branch before it hit!

Mana surged as Red Rage activated one of the exclusive skills from his new class, the Tempered Skull Hegemon!

[Tempered Armament of the Hegemon]!

Red Rage's silver armour reflected a light blue polished sheen that burst with a radiant intensity from the Pelvis Boar-Man's right hand which launched up to meet the branch!

BAAAM!

Chunks of wood flew as the branch exploded, overpowered by the blue brilliance of a skill that empowered what the Tempered Skull Hegemon used an attack.

Any medium of offense; weapon or fist!

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[Tempered Armament of the Hegemon | Lv.1]

Any attack launched by the user is empowered by 35% and coated in a film of Null light, a subsidiary of Null Life Essence that temporarily keeps the weapon or body used from being broken down by the opposing force as long as it doesn't exceed a certain level!

Mana Requirements: 550 Mana Points

Duration: ---

Cooldown: 5 minutes

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The Lucky Emperor Gremlin was shocked by the force as it was pushed back, Red Rage leaping forward as he juttred out his chest where the golden symbol on his chest released a golden light that

formed into the head of a rather vicious looking, illusory golden boar with pointed tusks and bright luminescent eyes that torched the figure of Jackpot!

Red Rage's figure shot forward with the activation of the skill, the tusks jabbing into Jackpot as could not avoid the attack after being staggered!

[Tusks of Justice]!

The head of the golden boar smashed into the wall with a tremendous force along with Jackpot, the entire cave starting to collapse!

Amidst this chaotic show of strength, Red Rage prepared to finish off Jackpot, but it just so happened that both of the tusks from his golden boar had missed Jackpot's vitals, merely scrapping some flesh on one side while only puncturing the shoulder with the other!

Even as the tusks dug into the cave, demonstrating their immense strength by crumpling the hard Rock behind Jackpot, the gremlin was unfazed... for the most part... actually agitated as it then cocked its arm and punched at Red Rage's chest where the golden boar protruded from!

It just so happened that Jackpot had a skill!

A Special one!

Mana churned from his blue core that hissed with a tremendous amount of mana!

[Critical Jackpot]!

Chapter 145: Unexpected Turn!

[Critical Jackpot]!

Vicious mana shot through the Gremlin's long arm, reaching Red Rage's chest quickly before he could use any skill that could help him mitigate the impending damage!

However, there was a huge problem when considering this.

Both Red Rage and Skullius had never seen a Special skill in action. Or rather Skullius had but without knowing what it was because of the identity of the individual who cast it.

One wouldn't ask many questions when seeing an expert of transcendent skill that far eclipses their own do their thing, but seeing someone closer to the expertise and level they had doing something so shocking, one would demand full attention and ask questions.

Skullius and Red Rage thought it would be the same high show of power that peak normal skills could carry but...

This was different.

As Jackpot's fist touched Skullius' chest, Skullius witnessed the entire background behind his Apostle... turn to dust!

Then a turbulent hurricane followed, with a shockwave that smacked Skullius a few tens of meters away grabbing the baton!

The cave wall was decimated under the pressure from one punch that struck one Pelvis Boar-Man!

The two challengers of the Cluster wouldn't know but [Critical Jackpot] was a skill that forced luck to become an energy value that could be used and weaved with mana compatibly to create a powerful attack that strike the user's body, soul and foundation!

Truly a special skill as this wasn't something anyone in Aigas could do unless they had transcended humanity or gotten a blessing.

In the midst of this chaos, the shocking image of Red Rage's state was revealed.

His entire left side was gone, armour, bone and all.

The hit just so happened to shatter his mana core as well, as only a quarter of it remained, floating within his body while still attached to the Apostle.

The Pelvis Boar-Man's sockets flickered and he snapped in two from the barely hanging spine that was now revealed after the armour he had been given by the blacksmith in Namu Village had failed to last against the horrendous skill.

"RED BROOOOO!" Skullius roared as he saw his Apostle fall!

Even as he was tens of meters away, the raging storms that had not ceased after [Critical Jackpot] was cast, he didn't fail to see Red Rage's figure.

He tried to stand but his leg which had been poisoned, his cosmetic flesh reacting violently to the vile substance, didn't allow him to move all that well or fast.

He crawled as he called, "Hang on, Red bro! I'm coming!"

One hand pulled, dragging his body forward then the other hand.

Skullius' eyes didn't leave Red bro's figure, as when he looked, a deep sensation that transcended Life and Death crawled within him.

Not within his cosmetic flesh.

Not even within the guidance field that helped him, but within his soul.

An aching that caused him to gnash his teeth until they cracked and bled as he focused on Red Rage, ensued!

Even as a large pit where rainbow-like swirls of light that caused his mana core to shudder and sink further within him appeared on the other side of the destroyed wall, tearing apart the insides of the cave, he adjusted his sight to face Red Rage while dragging himself!

In the heat of this desperate moment, Skullius' vision warped as the hard and dusty cave with twisted trees at its periphery transformed into a snowy patch where a harsh, cold wind blasted against his face.

Cold?



A feeling that Skullius didn't remember brushed harshly against his cheek.

But his soul remembered.

It remembered that day.

His fractured mind greedily drew comparisons.

Where Red Rage was laid, the naked figure of a girl who was pale, almost blue, hugging herself while resting in the thick snow and tranquillity of the unknown beyond could be caught in his sight!

Skullius' eyes could barely open wide because of the harsh wind but when he saw this figure, his vision shattered like glass as what he saw next was a block of ice behind which he was imprisoned, a green coloured skeleton with red flames caressing the ice between him and it while cackling malevolently!

...!

A searing pain stormed against Skullius mind and he grunted in pain while clutching his head.

The vivid images of the snowy field with the pale girl in the cold roiled like static and unclear showers in his mind amid the excruciating pain that was akin to his mind close to bursting.

Yet...

A few words squeaked out of his mouth as his demeanour changed. An exaggerated smile appeared on his face, the sadness it held being visible to anyone who could categorise themselves as human.

"I don't regret it. I won't regret. You got what you deserved... you got what you deserved..."

His eyes still saw the girl, focusing on her face as he said these words with a hateful yet partly guilty gaze.

Then, as if it was all a lie, Skullius' vision blurred and he was back to the nightmare in the Cluster where Jackpot was now standing between him and his view of Red Rage.

"..."

No words escaped Skullius' mouth anymore.

Only a tear trickled down his cheek.

He didn't even know it, but as he clutched his head, he sniffled a little before his mind pushed his thoughts back to Red Rage.

"RED BRO! HANG ON!" Skullius yelled as he glared at the gremlin which guffawed, completely ignoring the terrifying light show outside the cave that dragged in and ate the gems, the trees and all.

Skullius saw this and his sense of urgency increased.

His new discovery which had been accompanied by a surprised 'Oh' earlier, had now been rendered useless for now as the Null Devil's Aegis of Damnation was a few meters to his right, too far to reach by crawling.

'What now? Will Red Rage last?' Skullius thought in panic. He could tell that Red Rage was fading fast through his mental link to the Apostle.

He had to get to him and try every conceivable way to save his Null Life.

Jackpot raised his large arm, relishing in Skullius' helplessness.

Only the Deities knew how much time this gremlin had spent in this place. Creating order, wandering in utter boredom as there was nothing new to see in this limited space.

Yet... a crack that promised freedom had appeared, Jackpot and his gremlins instinctively feeling the urge to wait for its fullness as something grand would be offered then!

This was it.

On top of that, he got to experience what swatting something else that wasn't another gremlin felt like!

As he prepared to squash Skullius, he saw the Discount Human start to crawl away.

He used his arms as he dragged himself towards a dark armour that had long chains draping on the ground.

"KIKIKIKIKIKI!" Jackpot laughed as he 'chased' Skullius in slow steps, not wanting the moment to end.

Why was it so enjoyable to watch this little thing struggle?

Who cared?!

With a grin of glee, Jackpot followed behind Skullius, almost skipping in his steps when...

The Discount Human suddenly moved at a rather quick speed as with one leap-like movement that let him reach the long chain from the Null Devil's Aegis of Damnation, he gained a bit more confidence.

"Hmmm?" Jackpot looked at Skullius confused.

The Discount Human wore a vicious gaze as he glared at Jackpot, pulling the large armour by the chain to himself as at the moment the armour reached him, the long chains grew alive clanging in rage!

Chapter 146: A Response To Vengeful Resolve!

[Artless Dodger]!

Skullius had thought to use the situation to his advantage as he created a scenario where Jackpot had to chase him, activating the skill which boosted his speed while he was being pursued by an enemy!

It wasn't a large boost by any means as Skullius' Agility was very low to be begin with, but the sudden action appeared fast as his goal was just to reach the chain that protruded from the Null Devil's Aegis of Damnation.

As he did, the chains rustled and whirled, acknowledging Skullius as the owner.

The Discount Human hadn't realised earlier that even in this form, the Chains of Damnation were bound to his will. As long as he was near the armour at least.

It was not unreasonable that he would forget that [Flesh It Like You Mean It] was a complementary skill to [Lifeless Evolution] and thus could recognise him through any medium connected to Null Life!

Jackpot's eyes squinted as he saw the figure with furrowed brows glaring at him as in the next instant, the Chains of Damnation sped his way at a quick speed, tearing through the agitated air!

Skullius was desperate.

After using [Mana Blast] and [Manassault] his mana reserves were already thinned out, a little over 50 mana points which he was saving as he thought of what to do remaining.

His rage at seeing his Apostle get beat up along with the mysterious flashes of memories that brought with them a lingering emotion that he wasn't familiar with saturated his mind.

As the Chains of Damnation rushed to Jackpot, they just so happened to miss, even while the giant remained stationary!

[Divine Coincidence] was still active!

Skullius gnashed his teeth.

The Lucky Emperor Gremlin bolted towards Skullius as it finally decided to put an end to him. Its fun was finally exhausted and it pushed its large fist towards Skullius who couldn't move out of the way to dodge because of his beat up body!

The Discount Human willed the Chains of Damnation to circle back and grab the Lucky Emperor Gremlin but the tall beast dodged, skidding across the rough ground as it attacked Skullius again from a different position!

The Chains weren't fast enough to reach the zipping giant!

The powerful fist of a blue core Cluster General pounded towards him and Skullius used one of the contingencies he had thought of.

He pushed his two hands forward and pulled out the remnants of mana he had, fueling a particular skill from his hidden class.

[Evil Darkness Production]!

With every last bit of mana used, a black cloud with a pitch black hue exploded before Skullius, only being able to cover one human head worth of space!

In that same moment, [Evil Darkness Weaving] was also cast to mould the darkness, spreading it to cover the surface area of the fist that headed towards him sloppily as the attack arrived before he was even ready!

BOOOOM!

An impact blew in a sphere outwards, blowing away matter in the surroundings as Jackpot had attacked with an even more intense vigour while a pleased grin rested on his face!

Yet... the grin vanished an instant later as he found what had happened to be out of his expectations.

It just so happened that his fist was unable to proceed any further than the dark cloud that swirled before Skullius' outstretched hands!

'It worked!' Skullius thought in a short-lived relief.

Jackpot's fist had failed to pass through the cloud of [Evil Darkness]!

Just like what had happened to Red Rage when he had tried to pass through the darkness, the Lucky Emperor Gremlin was stopped even with his prestigious title, advanced level and core!

For a moment, the gremlin couldn't process what was happening as this was too new!

Right then, the Chains of Damnation bound its arm and leg, pulling it back as the creature released a pained screech from its mouth!

The passive ability of the Chains that inflicted a ferocious amount of pain on the target had struck Jackpot!

However, even as the creature screeched in pain, its blue eyes showed its rage as it pushed ahead towards Skullius!

"How is this guy so relentless?!" Skullius barked as he glared at this creature.

He hated it!

He loathed it!

He wished it would die a horrifying death with the cruellest means possible for what it had done to Red Rage!

He opened his mouth to speak.

His voice rose as his intent to murder this son of boneshit peaked!

"Die! Get shredded into pieces!"

....

"...?"

Nothing happened!

No layers of darkness appeared to actualise his hate into reality!

Only the pained grunts of Jackpot as he neared could be heard, his figure looming over Skullius as he refused to be bound!

'It's not working! Why?!' Skullius frustratedly roared internally.

[Pseudo Evil Veneration] had let him down!

The one time that he used it expecting results, it didn't work!

Of course it didn't.

He had thought the darkness that was swirling before him would awaken as [Pseudo Evil Veneration] but no. That wasn't the case.

Skullius only knew that this art required a large amount of mana but it was only now when he took a deep introspective on the form that he realised that every time he had used it successfully so far had been in the same place.

A place full of [Evil Darkness] to splurge as he wished!

The Labyrinth of the Yoke!

[Evil Darkness] was abundant in the Labyrinth, which made scenarios when Skullius used [Pseudo Evil Veneration] look very convenient but the truth was, without enough [Evil Darkness], the art wouldn't work!

Each time the Veneration art was activated, a large burst of [Evil Darkness] would rush into his mouth as if to grab his words!

The amount he could produce now was nowhere near enough to do that.

It was unfortunate.

'All this time... I missed this detail..' Skullius thought as it put a stop to what had been his follow-up move afterwards.

'Damn it! Damn it! Damn it! The All Eater scroll won't work! This thing only throws physical attacks and I'm pretty sure the scroll would only be ripped apart if I tried to store a punch! I can't evade!

I don't have mana! GAAH! What do I do?!

Jackpot finally pulled himself back to Skullius and immediately stomped with his foot over the Discount Human who could only look as he was crushed underfoot!

Skullius felt his bones shatter under the weight and his body jerked as fizzy blood forcefully spilled from his mouth.

'I'm not losing like this...!' Skullius flared. He didn't want to end this way when he had another self capable of dealing with this sockethole. Unfortunately, that other self was hours away.

What then?

What could save him?

BA-DUM! BA-DUM!

From his chest, Skullius felt something pulsing, responding to his will to survive this encounter and somehow save Red Rage!

Something that he had almost forgotten about ever since it nested into his chest!

The Fruit of World Myths was calling for his attention...!

Chapter 147: Just Barely



Deep within, the thing that had spurred Skullius to awaken the very essence of the Insurgent Magnus, called to him.

He immediately gave it his attention, the pulsing vibration like that of a heart that ran through him giving him hope.

Skullius didn't have much of an understanding of this thing, but as it called, he responded without delay, giving the accruing damage no mind.

He activated [Advanced Mana Manipulation] and dived into himself, following the light from his core that was trying to produce more mana!

His vision was pulled to the Fruit of World Myths, his attention becoming focused on the flower-like object as in next moment, a familiar feeling overtook him!

The colourful world became dyed in strange shades of colour that only focused on black, white and grey!

Skullius saw himself rise as the pressure he felt from being trampled disappeared, his image now, whatever it was, feeling so free that all of his worries vanished, a sensation of complete fulfilment washing his existence!

Crude World Projection!

Unlike last time when he couldn't see his body, Skullius looked at his arms and saw them covered in a thick black smoke that rose up as if in long exposure!

The same was true for his legs and torso as all he was, was a black figure floating in the air.

He saw the large gremlin as an outline with a dark grey colour as it stomped on him while being bound by chains that held...a colourless hue!

As if this wasn't a surprise enough, Jackpot turned to look up to where this new body of Skullius was and narrowed his eyes!

'He can see me?!' Skullius thought in shock.

It was true!

The lucky brute could see Skullius but it couldn't bring itself to attack as it felt something discourage its engagement with this dark entity.

An immense sense of weakness immediately poured onto Skullius as his body began to descend, falling back to his Discount Human form!

'Come on! I just gained something that could help me! Is it because I'm on the brink of dying right now?!'

Skullius surmised that this weakness was because of that.

He also considered that the only reason he had this body while in this state was probably because his [Evil Darkness] affinity had rose to grade C after his first use of this [Crude World Projection]!

Skullius' eyes honed in on the dispersing darkness that was around him!

Unlike everything else in the cave, it held a particularly attractive shade of black that almost seemed... genuine... in a sense.

As he fell, weakness wrapping around his body as Jackpot looked at this cautiously, the Discount Human stretched his hand towards the darkness, a shocking change occurring in the very next moment!

The darkness which had been about to vanish was drawn towards his smoking hand at an astonishing speed!

The [Evil Darkness] gathered in his palm, forming into a abstruse yet vivid shape without definite qualities!

Moulding darkness was so easy!

The darkness heeded his call!

It submitted so readily!

It was as if in this form, darkness followed his will!

Was this the purpose of Crude World Projection?!

Sadly, Skullius' dark body was already halfway back into his Discount Human body, sinking steadily!

Before he could fully sink though, Skullius made one last attempt before this state was lost to him for the time being, willing the mass of darkness in his palm to solidify and smash into the head of Jackpot!

VWUUUP!

In less than a second, the vivid darkness condensed into a small ball of darkness that shot out at the speed of sound towards the gremlin!

Skullius' vision returned to normal afterwards as he looked to check what he had attempted had worked!

It just so happened that Jackpot tilted his head to the side as he sensed a terrible fate awaiting at the last second when he saw the black form of Skullius receding, successfully evading most of the blow but getting his cheek and ear blown off!

"EEEEEEEEEEEEAAAHHGH!" Jackpot screeched in pain as he drew back, chunks of flesh falling from his shredded side along with sprays of blood!

Skullius felt the slightest bit of relief from having the giant's foot over him as he didn't waste any time, using the Chains of Damnation that were already around Jackpot to pull him towards the ever-growing spot where the cave had been destroyed!

The heavy creature tried to resist but after the shock from having its cheek blown off, it didn't manage to steady itself enough to maintain a rigid stance as what followed...

CHSSSSHHHHH!

Jackpot was dragged into whatever the rainbow chaos outside the cave was and the moment he touched the outside, he screeched with an ear piercing voice that portrayed utter despair, a sound effect like fried meat resounding only for a second as the body of the creature was disintegrated!

Skullius watched all this with his body limp. He wasn't able to move after using [Crude World Projection] which he now understood a lot better.

Yet, above the feeling of achievement, he couldn't help but rejoice in the death of Jackpot, even though he didn't suffer enough.

[You have killed (III) Lucky Emperor Gremlin. 735,500 Exp awarded]

[Congratulations, you have killed a Cluster General]

[Congratulations you have cleared a 'Low level Cluster']

[The Cluster General fueling this space has been killed. Cluster will commence collapse. Please exit immediately]

The illusory crack that was visible from the cave suddenly cracked, opening up a path to Aigas, as the scene of where Skullius had entered from could be seen beyond.

Skullius almost panicked as he couldn't move, his mind having been rattled by the guidance field notification that said this space would now collapse!

Thinking quickly, he willed the Chains of Damnation to wrap around Red Rage's remains and pull them towards himself.

As soon as that was taken care off, he willed the chains to drag him out through the portal, a process that didn't take long as within a few seconds, Skullius found himself lying on the hard ground surrounded by a deserted town.

After a few more seconds passed, he watched as the large white crack he had seen in the beginning slowly close up until it didn't exist anymore.

Before he could rest and proceed with other important things, another notification appeared in his sight, being one the many boons to be earned when one cleared a Cluster!

Chapter 148: It Never Ends

[You have relieved the good people of Aigas from a great danger. You will now be bestowed a BLESSING from the Deities]

....

[The 'Binds of Fukal' resist. The BLESSING bestowal has failed]

[You have received a 'Conqueror's Halo' for clearing a 'Low level Cluster']

"Uh..." Skullius read the notifications in exasperation. "You receive a blessing every time you destroy those monsters in a Cluster?"

That seemed ridiculous. Right?

Skullius remained lying down as he digested this information.

When someone cleared a Cluster, there were two rewards involved outside of what they actually found in the Cluster.

The first was a BLESSING enhancement which made the effects of their blessing more profound.

This was different for Skullius because he never had a blessing to begin. He didn't even fully understand what it was.

The guidance field, or rather the Voice of Worlds acted as the mediator in this situation.

"It figures that anything benefitting me from the Deities will be rejected by these damn Binds of whatever," Skullius sulked as he had hoped he could get something else.

He turned to Red Rage's remains after his mind had calmed.

He had been making sure through his mental link with Red Rage that the Apostle was still nullive and it turned out that the Pelvis Boar-Man still had some fight in him.

After the two had wiped out the Lucky Strike gremlins, Skullius had absorbed the Null Life Essence from the creatures and so had Red Rage.

With his evolution into Tier 1, the Pelvis Boar-Man had received the skill [Null Extraction] which allowed him to absorb Null Life Essence as well.

It had come as a shock to Skullius during his fight with Jackpot when the Apostle had told him that utilising Null Life Essence was keeping him alive and the consumption of his reserve wasn't too high.

The problem was his core which was fading bit by bit after having been shattered with only a quarter remaining by Jackpot's Special skill.

Skullius didn't know how to help with this, but as an idea, he willed the Chains of Damnation to wrap around the half skeleton with a split torso and slowly insert it into the Null Devil's Aegis of Damnation.

Since the armour had the passive effect of improving Mana Regeneration and Mana Points, Skullius thought that perhaps this could delay the Apostle's demise.

Thankfully, it did a well enough job.

The core of Red Rage grew brighter but went on a fluctuating trend where it would dim and glow after several minutes each time which was still reassuring.

As long as Red Rage remained wearing this armour, his core wouldn't collapse.

However...

"Now the problem is the Null Life Essence. I remember when I first summoned this sockethole, the guidance field said that he was sustained by Serenity. After meeting Serenity I think I understand what that means a bit more..."

The fact that Red Rage was sustained by Serenity made Skullius think that what kept him alive after summoning was his connection to the source of Null Life in general, which Skullius wagered to be the vast sphere that was blurred out during his encounter with Serenity.

Mana wouldn't help with the Apostle's Null Life but Null Life as a concept, would help Red Rage remain alive.

"His Null Life won't last forever, but the rate of consumption doesn't seem to be a problem. I have a few days at most though. I have to collect Null Life Essence and delay Red bro's demise while trying to find a solution."

Skullius looked at the Null Devil's armour. Since he still couldn't move, he merely gave the Apostle a sentimental guarantee.

"Don't worry bro. I'll have you back on your feet in no time," he said with a smile.

"Hmm? What was that? I don't need to worry because you'll be fine anywa—flesh you, you bastard! I'm trying to comfort you here!"

The Discount Human went back to resting while bathing under the hot sun.

He began sweating again as after his immediate worries were solved, he was reminded how hot this region was.

To draw his mind away from the heat, he began replaying his fight with the Lucky Emperor Gremlin.

His last stunt after the Gremlin had dodged his condensed orb of darkness while he was using [Crude World Projection], pulling the sucker into the rainbow turbulence outside the cave with the Chains of Damnation, had succeeded even though he didn't have much faith in it.

He thought that under the influence of [Divine Coincidence], the gremlin would somehow find its footing but it wasn't the case.

'Looking back, it does seem like that ugly bro could get lucky every second. Red Rage managed to hurt it right after it had managed to pin me down. So I guess I was... urgh... lucky?' Whatever. It's over for now.'

Perhaps [Divine Coincidence] didn't provide consecutive batches of luck during its duration was Skullius' hypothesis as to why Jackpot's skill hadn't helped him survive.

Skullius' leg which had been impaled by the venomous teeth of one of the Lucky Strike gremlins had swollen up, having a peculiar discolouration that reached up to Skullius' thigh.

It would have been hurting like a female dog if he actually had good senses but the Discount Human was rather relaxed as he waited for his mana to regenerate.

As his thoughts spiralled, his mind finally churned out the memory he had experienced during the tough battle.

The girl in the snow.

What bothered him the most about this scene he saw was the fact that when it had shown up, he had felt a mix of rage, guilt and... hate. The type of hate that one would feel after cultivating it for a very long time.

He loathed whoever this girl was and she seemed to be dead in the snow.

'Why would I get such a memory when looking at Red Rage? What does that mean?' Skullius thought as he tried to recall, to draw this memory and figure out the entirety of what it entailed.

But...



Skullius' odd face scrunched up as a wave of immense pain assaulted his mind, throwing his thoughts in disarray for a short time.

[Doom Factor 2 has been triggered. Your mind begins to fracture. 2%]

...!

Even while in pain, Skullius couldn't help but gasp at this notification.

Seriously?!

Right after surviving a rather brutal battle, he was exposed to the second Doom Factor that hadn't acted up until now?!

The pain began to subside as Skullius settled his thoughts.

"Trying to push my mind to remember that memory is a very bad idea. Gah! Give me a break!"

For the next few hours, Skullius continued to rest even after he had regained the ability to move earlier.

First, he used [Luminant Healing] to recover from the damage he had sustained within the Cluster and then waited for a mana refill again.

Seeing his over 250 Mana Points back some time later, Skullius finally stood.

He injected mana into his ring, taking in Red Rage and the armour into storage.

It was time to move on.

Chapter 149: The Long Walk Ahead

Another journey was afoot for the lone Skullius.

Even after all this time had passed, no one had come to Santhi to check out if the problem was resolved or not which didn't exactly surprise Skullius.

He now understood why these people were so scared of Clusters and this was just a low level one. What were the higher levelled ones like then?

The Discount Human pulled out the map he had been given by Elita and checked his position. The map didn't have markers for small villages and towns, which is why he had been oblivious to the existence of these settlements which he had to verify by sight instead.

Only cities and geographical landmarks were represented.

'It'll take too long to reach Genhuis city. For now, I should focus on helping Red bro. I need Null Life Essence. Besides, I can get answers even from smaller cities right?' Skullius thought as he gazed at the nearest large settlement around.

Inhone City.

Without delaying much longer, the Discount Human went on his way.

A steady path through grasses was traced, shaving away the green to create a bald spot which was created from the many feet and hooves that passed through here over the years.

His walk was long as there were no close villages or towns near this main road that he trekked on.

On the bright side, contrasting the silence and loneliness that this journey promised, the sun was about to take a time-out behind the horizon, with a foreshadowing of the lands being bathed in a rich orange hue in the next few hours.

During the few hours before this happened, Skullius saw three images racing down the road as they approached in his direction.

They were three men riding atop three muscleful horses that raised dust as they galloped on the dusty road.

The men were dressed in colourful, shining armour, two having swords while the third held a bow.

The men came to a halt when they saw Skullius, the Discount Human wondering if his face had attracted their attention.

That was certainly one of the reasons as the men did grimace a bit upon seeing Skullius' face but they couldn't possibly be rude to this humble yet powerful man who had drawn their attention.

One of the men gave a kind smile towards Skullius, showing off his dimples as he spoke to him.

"I had heard that there was a Cluster in need of clearing in Santhi but it looks like you dealt with it. Alone it seems. Trespassing in other Guild's jurisdiction is a serious offense though, even if they are not helping," the man said.

"Hmm? How did you know that I cleared the Cluster?" Skullius asked confusedly.

The three men looked at each other with puzzled faces before the man who had addressed Skullius replied to his question.

"Friend, how can you not know about a Conqueror's Halo? You have one right now. Everyone will see it for a full day."

Surely, around Skullius' body was dim light that looked like a soft lens flare. It looked unnatural but that was the idea. Its brightness was indicative of the level of Cluster cleared.

Skullius raised a brow as he looked at himself, wanting to see this Halo for himself as he had only heard about it through the guidance field but his eyes just couldn't catch a glimpse of it on his person.

"Of course, you can't see it yourself. It's meant to announce to the world that you've done a great service. Quite a useless gimmick, if you ask me," another one of the three men said.

"Anyway, I'm personally very grateful that you managed to deal with the Cluster. One of my friends lives in this region though far from Santhi. With you dealing with the Cluster before it ruptured, I'm assured he is safe. Why don't you come with us? We'll leave you off wherever you want to go," the first man to speak said with the same kind smile.

"Yeah. I would like to hear what kind of monsters you fought and what you got after. We could make a good trade with you at cheap asking prices too!" the third man said enthusiastically while already making space for Skullius on his horse.

Unfortunately, contrasting the cheery reception that the three men had portrayed, Skullius frowned.

'Not again.' he thought.

"ARRRRGHHHHHHHHHH!"

"EEEEEEEEEEAAAAAK!"

The first and the third man plopped from their horses as they began to scream and convulse violently!

The second man's eyes opened wide as he watched his comrades melt into human soup while their horses neighed in fright and ran away!

"Jork! Anthiny!" he screamed.

He dropped from his horse which was also spooked but he found that there was nothing he could do.

His friends were dead, only their bones remaining, while covered in bubbling flesh and dismantled armour!

They were gone!

The man turned to Skullius and drew his sword, mana bubbling from his body crazily as his eyes showed murderous intent!

"What did you do?! What did you do them you bastard?!" he roared as he rushed towards Skullius with bestial rage.

The Discount Human merely sighed.

This curse was truly a problem.

Right before the man's sword which he swung with great fervour reached Skullius, the Discount Human flicked his finger, a plume of thick darkness that instantaneously surrounded his body and part of the man's arm spilling from it!

...!

The man found to his shock that his arm which was inches away from ripping Skullius apart couldn't move and it was stuck in its position as if frozen.

"What?!" the man exclaimed in shock and terror, a bucket of cold reality putting out his flames of rage!

"Unfortunately for you, my companion isn't here to stop me from killing you," Skullius said with a solemn glint twinkling in his eye as he then grabbed the man's sword from his stationary hand and slashed with it...!

A head fell off as Skullius then received a notification for a successful kill. A brush with a second death had changed Skullius' mindset a bit and his frustrations were still online.

Ending one life he didn't care for gave a brief sense of calm to his mind.

"Alright then...Onward!"

Chapter 150: Elsewhere: A Certain Man's New Future

Somewhere far...

A man woke up as his vision cleared after the initial blur.

He took in the air which was extremely rich with mana, his muscles coming alive with his return to consciousness after a long rest.

The cover of an exaggeratedly thick blanket which provided a healing warmth made his mind relax before it could panic at the prospect that he was unfamiliar with where he was.

A massive chandelier with an array of thick candles that produced orange and golden flames which brought about dust-like lights blatantly made its appearance known over him.

As this man sat up straight, his grey eyes taking in the view of the ginormous bed he was sleeping in while being naked and the comically large room he was placed, he couldn't help but clutch his head.

His brown hair draped over his temples as he hung his head, feeling a subtle rush of pain from his head.

'Where am I? What happened?' he thought, deciding that thinking back to what had happened prior first was more productive than wondering about the current inexplicable conditions he was in.

At the very least, he wasn't in danger at the moment.

Think back.

Retrace your steps.

What do I remember?

As this brown-haired man tried to recall what happened, delving deep into his mind with his extensive knowledge about his own body, scenes started to appear in his head.

Each of them held connotations that he wasn't proud of.

Betrayal.

Greed.

Failure.

Fear.

And loss.

Loss in two of the worst possible ways.

Losing a friend and losing to a universal enemy.

He remembered it all, his mind clutching onto the last moments particularly tightly as he found himself losing his grip on his cool.

His hands shook.

He had failed.

Miserably.

After Eobald had betrayed the Ideal Ark, everything had spiralled out of control.

He had hoped that he could somehow fix it, taking the reins as he sought to keep the embers of what he had believed in for so long alive.

Yet...

With his leadership came death.

Denille, Irlen and Reon were dead.

He had continued to lead them down a path orchestrated by his greed for power.

The bastion of his belief fell with Eobald and he felt that he needed to aimlessly hunt for power again. To feel secure. To feel strong. To feel like he mattered.

To feel like he was right!

To feel like the lives of commonfolk like him mattered and were not just statistics that could be counted and forgotten when nobles and strong powers trampled over them.

Yet...

This man... Benzard, gripped the thick blanket as he shed tears.

He had even given in to an unknown creature that offered him power when he feared dying without substance.

And with that power, he still lost. He failed to save a friend and he failed to defeat an enemy who...

An enemy who...

"Wait..."

Benzard remembered.

The last words he had heard before he was smacked by that outrageously powerful lightning from above.

'You're about to die, just like Denille and Reon...'

The undead he had fought said this and in that moment, he had realised that somehow, this undead could be the fellow he had been trying to stop from reaching the spiral grove doors!

'Was it... really?' he thought as he gnashed his teeth.



All of a sudden, all the blame he had been pouring towards himself started to shift to this tall and large figure that he connected to the weak, peculiar faced young man he had found in the Tremur Forest.

But...

'No. I'm still at fault. I won't blame anyone for my ambitions. It was all me.'

Benzard heaved out a deep breath as he cooled down a bit.

"Seems like you're having fun walking down a long isle of recollection, aha ha," a deep voice echoed within the large room, Benzard turning to the side of the bed where a tall figure was leisurely standing while looking down at him.

A bald head and deep red eyes that gave a sense of craziness and wisdom at the same time.

Benzard knew this figure quite well.

It was Sause.

This time, the giant was not naked. He donned a luxurious navy blue silk shirt with true sapphire coloured linings along with a pair of leather pants that articulated his powerful legs.

He glared at him with complicated emotion yet the one at the forefront was obviously anger.

"Don't give me that ridiculous look. You should be thanking me. I gave you what you desired, spared your life through a rather troublesome deal and now, I even brought you into my household. What's with the malice? The hate. There should be gratefulness in those eyes."

Benzard couldn't find the words to retort.

He touched his back with his hands and felt smooth skin instead of crusty, dry matter as what remained after the lightning strike that had ultimately dealt him the final blow.

He couldn't forget the damage he received each time he was smacked with that lightning.

Surely, he should have been dead but he was alive now, with smooth skin to boot.

"A poor boy who watched his world get lit on fire. People, houses, farm and all, as mere distraction for some lowly thieves. That must have been brutal, aha ha. Hatred and malice forged you. Your string told me of a powerful warrior whom I could induct into my camp. Truth be told, I didn't foresee myself granting you all this power which then bound us so intimately but, here we are..."

Benzard listened quietly before he decided to ask.

"What do you want with me?"

"Aha ha. That's always the question with you humans isn't it? Such a lack of ambition when you are caught between a mountain and a really hard place. You should be standing proud and speaking freely as you see that I haven't the slightest intention to kill you, aha ha," Sause said.

"As I said before, we are now bound. I invested a vast portion of my power in order to save you from the Veneration art that almost claimed your life in that Labyrinth. Now, I cannot reverse what I have done. You are destined to be my successor. The one who holds my ideals. When I die, the full strength of the Perpetual Colossus will awaken in you.

Before then, I have a lot of things to do and you now have the time and essence to survive long enough to see me do them, aha ha."

Benzard turned his head to the bald headed giant who had his signature playful glee. He didn't buy this. It seemed too, genuine.

"Don't worry. You'll learn to trust me with time. For now, let's go acquaint you with the family. There's a huge seven day banquet in honour of my arrival. Surely, the one who inherits my powers should join."

Sause snapped his fingers, numerous coloured strings racing along Benzard's body to form a simple pair of tight pants.

"What about the shirt?" Benzard frowned as he turned to Sause after looking at the new fashion he had been adorned with.

"Quit your human tendencies. You're no longer in that pest ridden hell hole. Only Quintess knows how much I loathe your pretentious customs. Now, come."

Benzard's body rose to float and land on the floor from the bed.

He walked with Sause towards the two massive, wooden doors that were at the very end of the room, sculpted with beautiful imagery from the historical tales, featuring tall men and... dragons.

Benzard gulped down saliva.

Unlike Opungale, the land of the Sif which had been travelled to by many humans who documented and drew images of the life there, the land of Giants had only been traversed to many, many years ago, its existence almost becoming a mere folktale among the ignorant commonfolk.

Being one himself, Benzard hadn't reached the stage in life where he sought for the validity in such stories, yet here he was now.

There was no disbelief that he could render to the situation.

He had no doubt.

Sause pushed open the double doors, a warm heat and loud cheer as well as chatter blasting its way into the room as Benzard's eyes open wide, taking in the view of ginormous structures, tall men and women as well as untold mystery that was a far cry from anything he had experienced in Feinheath!