

Undead 1411

Chapter 1411 Taming Fellow Cluster Beasts

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"I repeat, do not kill the Cavern. Doing so will only make the crystals stronger. Red Rage and I are about to extract more information about them. Once we do, we'll let you know. Make sure you don't kill any of those dark creature by mistake, Brains. You're especially susceptible to missing the point in what people tell you. I've noticed. Oh well, byeeeee!"

A vein throbbed on Savast's temple as the illusory figure of Kintar vanished between him and Baddan.

The Sky Watcher gave a chuckle.

"She really has it out for you. Is it because you gave her a hard fight back when you were a Cluster General?" he asked.

"She still beat me with a mere three attacks in the end," said Savast. "Life was so much easier before she became so powerful. Does she think I owe her?"

"Maybe you do. She's the only reason you're still alive."

"Well, yeah, but does master rub it in your face that he's the only reason you are useful out of your Cluster?"

"Fair point," said Baddan with a grin.

Savast was right. Even if he managed to live long after his Cluster – which had been the Venue of the Premium Age Royale back then – was destroyed during the battle between Rayn and Skullius, Baddan wouldn't have had any abilities at all. As a Sky Watcher, his powers were centred around the sky of the Cluster he had lived in. He had lost them after it was destroyed.

"But at the same time, it's really not a fair comparison," Baddan said as they walked into the lake. "Kintar is just... Kintar. Perhaps that's how she expresses her affection. By saying awfully hurtful

things. No one really understands her. I doubt even master understands her completely. That just might be why she had the most outstanding result in the Impossible Task – her doubles must have been confused by her just as much as they confused her."

Savast found some funny in that.

"Now that's a fair point," he said.

Before the intensive training regiment leading up to the Impossible Task, Skullius (as Replicus) had drawn a large number of Clusters using the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow into the Timemould Mirror Box. Some were weak and some stood at the pinnacle of fatality.

Red Clusters.

Skullius would sometimes bring out creatures from these Clusters and have them fight the Stark Troops.

Savast was a Cluster General from one the red Clusters which Skullius had brought in. He had been matched against Kintar, and they had had a very brutal fight which ultimately ended in Kintar's victory.

After the battle, she refused to kill Savast though, and asked Skullius if he could join their ranks. Savast's powers, according to Kintar, were a counter against anything that could think and should be preserved.

And that was how Savast ended up joining the Stark Troops.

He dreaded those days, however. At first, he had been happy that he was spared, but when Skullius inducted him into the brutal training, he had screamed on several occasions that he would have rather died after Kintar defeated him.

But here he was, diving into another Cluster, happy to be part of the Stark-Soul Order.

"Get the Stor ready," he said to Baddan as they were devoured by the rich waters.

The red Cluster he and Baddan had entered featured a lot of water bodies, big and small. The Cluster beasts never left the water. It was no different with the Cluster General. Even though Baddan and Savast had made a show, killing its kin, it never came out. It waited for them to come to it.

The two dipped into the water, powerful experts not averse to slaying creatures categorised the same as them. One, a silver-furred humanoid with dark eyes, the other a humanoid with three, pupilless eyes. Both were adorned in the Granted Star Armament, but in different styles. Savast's was pretty unique. It spotted seven golden horns on the helm which revealed his face in full while hugging the sides of it.

The waters under the Unlimited Stars was particularly clean and empty.

Nothing but a pale sand floor could be seen.

That roused the two's suspicions.

"Let's get this over with. I think we'll collect this one too," Savast said. It was a trifle for him and Baddan, talking underwater. He snapped his fingers. There was no sound, but a pulse stormed violently from him, coursing through the entire water body in a flash.

...And then there was a scream.

The modest mental attack Savast had released was powerful enough to hurt it terribly, throwing its mind into chaos.

The creature seemed completely imperceptible under water. No sensory ability could detect it. If it were any other expert from Aigas having to face it, they would have been killed without knowing how or why.

But Savast's attack just now, allowed him to see the form of the creature through its mind.

He was especially good with everything to do with the mind.

All kinds of minds released pulses of energy, and he could detect them, read them, manipulate them.

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[ Name : Savast QUEi]

[ Tier : 97 ]

[ Level : 348 ]

[ EXP : --- ]

[ Core(s) : Purple ]

[ Class : Batty Mind Caster]

[ Race : Warpsing Fleshimon ]

[ Inv. Status : Considering dismantling Kintar's brain nerve by nerve ]

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[ Stats ]

[ UNGENTLE APPULSE (II) : 122,900 ]

|Host can attack three targets with a single action|

[ WHIP STEP (II) : 400(231,900) ]

|Every movement with the intent to cross a large distance by the host may (if they desire) be amplified fourfold|

[ BEYOND SMART (II) : 134,094 ]

|Elevated intelligence; every unit of intelligence recorded is worth two extra units|

[ THREE-BLOW QUO (II) : 675,000 ]

|Host cannot be harmed unless they receive three consequent blows each above a certain threshold of strength (The threshold is 675,000 (II))|

[ LUCK : 165 ]

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[ I RESIST DEATH : 44/50 ]

|The host cannot be killed until all automatic reviving charges have been exhausted|

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[ MANA (II) (x4) : 40,453,000/50,210,000 ]

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[ NEURAL ENERGY STORE (x9) : 14,499,576/18,050,785 ]

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Savast read it when the invisible Cluster General attacked them, sending drilling streams of water reinforced with millions of units of golden quality mana their way.

Baddan languidly activated his armour's Stagnant Parameter, a barrier of Null Life, to block the attacks, but Savast left himself wide open. Two massive storms of spinning water drilled their way to his position and smashed into him at the same time.

The former Cluster General was unfazed and unharmed.

Because of his unusual stat, Three Blow Quo, he couldn't be harmed unless he was hit by three attacks in succession.

He lifted a finger at the agitated enemy that only he could imagine and gave a smile.

"You're an ally now. You will fight with us against the Cavern."

And that was enough.

As soon as the creature heard his words, it stopped. Its mind was altered according to Baddan's words.

It even began to reveal its frog-like body, white as snow and scaled like a lizard. It was quite large. It was a Tier 670 phenomenon.

"Take him," said Savast, and Baddan warped towards the creature with a small white sack called the Stor.

His and Savast's objective was to gather powerful Cluster beasts to use against the Cavern and so far, they had caught 87,907. All of them were above Tier 300 and all of them were in the Stor.

Chapter 1412 End of Service

1412 End of Service

Ashton waited patiently in the King's throne room after dispelling his Majestic Territory. He had been here - in Pelian - ever since Philemen Royan made the castle, and when his successors renovated, extended and designed it however they saw fit for their term of leadership.

For over four thousand years, the little bird, Truworth Bill, had called this place home, but now, he was finally ready to move on. He was open to the extraordinary things that life would give, but he was also open to the prospects death could offer.

But Ashton didn't know if he could say he was satisfied with the trade he had made.

He had wanted to learn what the Deities did to the humans, allowing them easy passage to Divinity.

Sause had laughed hard when they had discussed this within Ashton's Territory.

"So, it was you who introduced the Majestic Territories into the power system of Aigas? That's hilarious," he had said, dumbfounded.

And indeed, he had.

Back then, Philemen Royan, the man who established Pelian, had made a wager with Emeradis and Maqi that should his warriors best theirs, he would get to keep Pelian as he had established it. Knowing that he would require a miracle to actually win the wager, he had appealed to Ashton who taught his warriors how to use Majestic Territories.

Of course, Philemen being the shrewd man he was, told the secret to how he made his warriors so strong to Maqi and Emeradis. He had known that even if he won the wager, they could still attack him to learn how he got their hands on the mysterious power known as Majestic Territories.

Also as a mark of his forward thinking nature, Philemen made a deal with Ashton to protect the Royal line of Royan. This was why even till today, the Royans remained as the rulers of Pelian, even the incompetent ones.

In the present time, Ashton could only reminisce.

'It's been so long and I gained as much as I lost. My younger self truly thought that having the humans adopt Majestic Territories would hinder their growth permanently, but they persisted. Richness Royan even made it to the Beyond the Veil Stage and Fulgardt breached even that to Divinity. There was never anything stopping man from growing. I should have realized that earlier,' he thought as he sat above the throne.

Indeed, that had been his plan. Ashton had wished to go against nature. To temper with the growth of the humans by having them adopt Territories. Naturally, this inspiration only came after Philemen approached him, but he had still thought it would work.

He had to see.

He to experience it: the difference between man and beast.

Ultimately, he saw it and was humbled. The Deities were not foolish.

It was then that King Royan walked into the throne room, looking anxious.

Asthor had learned to hate this man.

Of all the incompetent Kings in the Royan line over the last 4,000 years, he was the worst. He simply enjoyed Asthor's protection without doing a single thing of note with his life. At least previous Kings attempted to apply policies, to build upon what their predecessors had created... but not this man.

Asthor did not dare grace him by calling him by name since the day he ascended the throne.

"Why have you called me?" King Royan asked shakily. "Are you done using my throne room for your leisure?" There was a tone of entitlement in his voice which the Truworth Bill didn't like.

"Yes," said Ashton, "and I'm also done dawdling around you Royans for my leisure as well."

The colour drained from King Royan's face.

"What? No. No, no, you can't! You can't leave! You swore to protect the Royan line! You will stay!" he cried.

Ashton was more amused than offended.

"Is that right? I'll humour you. What makes you think I'd want to stay?" he said. "Do you realise that out of the 118 Kings who have sat on this throne, only you – just you – managed to net me nothing? Absolute nothing. Not wisdom. Not magical insight. Not power. Not even common, mundane, unmagical skill. Nothing. Why should I stay?"

King Royan began sweating.

He had never – never even for a moment – considered that Asthon would leave, that the bird's protection would one day flicker away.

"You swore to serve till the end of your days! What do you wish to learn when your only duty is to protect all who sit on that throne? Have you forgotten how my ancestor Philemen sacrificed the righteous lives of 100 Incandescent Stagers to buy your eternal service?!" he shrieked.

Birds seldom rolled their eyes. Most probably couldn't, but Asthon did so in that moment.

"I was the one who made those 100 souls into Incandescent Stagers in the first place. A greater price was paid to make them stronger than what was paid to secure this family line. It was in my best interest to study the kind of kin Philemen would bear. The price of 100 Incandescent Stage experts would have been far too low for an unwilling guardian beast. Believe me."

King Royan stumbled back.

"No! No! You liar! You would say anything to justify your own release!"

The records he had read were true, he believed. There was no falsehood in them. There couldn't be.

Asthon sighed.

"I nearly forgot. A human like you, born way after the Ashing of Time would believe everything the records say," he said, not caring if King Royan heard him or not. "I'm privileged to be one of the few who remembers the authentic truths." He gave one last look at the King.

"Farewell. In these dark times, I can only hope that your wit and strength will be enough to save you. You only need to survive for a few days and then you might once again find yourself in the good graces of a long, healthy life."

The guardian beast had taken flight, phasing through the roof before King Royan could protest. He heard the shrieks and cries of the man though, undignified, ugly and pathetic.

Up above, way beyond the canvas of wide, silver and ebony clouds, Asthon met with a gargantuan draconic figure suspended in the air, waiting with his eyes closed.

The mighty Jiggorrhax, the Abiding Madness had fully healed. Or rather, he had been healed in full.

When Asthon reached up to the height of his head, Jiggorrhax opened his eyes.

"When will we be going on our way?" the Truworth Bill asked.

"Right now. The Deitess of the Skies awaits me," Jiggorrhax said and almost immediately, a crack in space opened in front of him. It was far smaller than he was, and would undoubtedly make one judge how the great dragon would fit, but it would suffice.

Dragon and bird flew in and were twisted into incomprehensible shapes that were sucked into the crack in space.

Chapter 1413 Subdue the Chronocle Fiend

1413 Subdue the Chronocle Fiend

<This eye was created during the dark times that followed Fulgardt's rise. Well, the Order of the Trodden Rose as a whole was a product of the chaos that Fulgardt created in those days. These women were driven into hiding after everyone began rejecting their vile ideals. For a while, they refused to leave their little blasphemous temple, fearing that the experts hunting them down would find and kill them. Thus, they spent those days developing eyes that would help them with that predicament.> Suzamete explained.

Yuyui, Grim, the Stark Troops and the guardian beasts were listening closely. None of them knew the nuances of the lore from back in those days and it wasn't every day that you were given an account of history by a Deity.

<As you can imagine, the kind of eyes the Order of the Trodden Rose needed to beat all their enemies couldn't be created with just the sum of their powers. They needed more power. To obtain such, they used their massive stash of captives – all men, of course - and the Creeds at their disposal to make them extremely powerful. Your Eye of Dispersal and your Eye of Moving are among the strongest ones they have created. But the Eye of the Visitor is a tier beyond that.>

Yuyui gulped.

She had noticed that her Eye of Dispersal was particularly powerful, as was the Eye of Moving, of course.

Even while discounting what Nigerra had said about her eyes as a legacy being stronger than those the ladies of the Order of the Trodden Rose used, these two eyes were not only strong, but they had seemingly limitless applications or at least limits impossible to define (at least when considering non-Divine phenomenon.

"What does the Eye of the Visitor do? How would it attract that creature you mentioned?"

<The Eye invites different kinds of entities, living and non-living towards the location of the user. It projects a special signal that can travel to ranges even beyond Aigas. When the signal meets prospective targets, they will see sparks of things they are interested in at the location of the user.>

Grim reeled.

"Even Divine beings will fall for this?" he asked.

<Yes. Those with some level of intelligence, that is. Most genuine Divines will never fall for it, but the creature that I want you to capture is no more than a beast of instinct. It will be drawn here by the influence of the eye. There are many kinds of entities with Divine powers, but aren't Divine in a way that's acceptable by the working of this reality. Many.>

Yuyui was busy digesting the explanation about the Eye of the Visitor. It's functionality was rather simple, but extremely potent in scope, it seemed.

Grim nodded with a drawn-out, "Oh". This made him feel a little better about the task at hand which required his efforts.

"So," said Yuyui, "what did Nigerra and the other eleven women hope to achieve with an eye like this? I don't get it. Wouldn't using the Eye of Moving to move somewhere else on Aigas be a better alternative if they just wanted to escape their pursuers?"

Suzamete didn't answer immediately. Unbeknownst to all her listeners, she felt a little ashamed that she had to say what she ended up saying.

<As Nigerra told you. She and the others were simply born... sick. They were skewed from the start. It wasn't society that turned them into what they became. They found excuses to let loose their natures in what human society was like. As such, they were always drawn to extreme conclusions. The Order of the Trodden Rose wished to leave Aigas by drawing here a powerful creature that they would try to compel to take them away. If that didn't work, they were willing to see Aigas ravaged by an anomalous beast from beyond Aigas. In a way, they accomplished that goal, actually. They used the Eye of the Visitor many times. They invited some of the evil creatures that ravaged Aigas when Listafelle and Quintess left. While people died on the surface, they remained safe in their temple under the water, guarded by the guardian beast Fuwin.>

Yuyui was horrified, as was everyone else.

To think the crimes of these women extended that far...

Yuyui felt a bit sick owning her eyes now after learning what they were used for in the past.

"I can't believe it..." she murmured.

Grim wore a hard face.

"Damn. As if the threat of Undead those days wasn't enough to deal with," he said. "Thank goodness then that the Rules were mended."

<Indeed.> said Suzamete. <Speaking of the mending of the Rules....>

Right then, there was a brilliant flash and a massive green-scaled dragon and a tiny bird found their way into Suzamete's domain.

While Yuyui, Grim and the others gaped and gasped, Jiggorrhax and Asthon immediately bowed.

There was no need for words, at least when it came to the dragon.

While he was suffering from his wounds, Suzamete had healed him and invited him to her domain. She had only told him that she had an important task for him though and had not revealed the details.

That had pleased Jiggorrhax plenty.

He found joy in being useful again in this time.

"I-I-I-Is that...!" Grim stuttered while sweating, "the help you said I'd have?"

<Indeed.> Suzamete said with a smile that none could see. She turned to Asthon. <It is good to see you, Asthon you cunning critter. I'm glad you decided to join us.>

The Truworth Bill would have responded, but he was busy trying getting used to the crushing presence in the domain. Unlike Jiggorrhax, he had never been in the presence of a Divine.

"I am also glad to serve, Deitess," Jiggorrhax said.

<I know. And eager I see. Since that is the case, let me explain the nature of the creature you will be hunting once Yuyui uses her eye.>

Grim and the others ceased ogling Jiggorrhax and his outstanding size. It took great effort, but they managed somehow.

<Time is merely a fragment of the true means used to measure the flow of events in this reality, what Divines call Consternals. Time usually works in limited places like worlds, realms and Breaking Chasms. But sometimes, Consternals, as a phenomenon that runs through the imperfect canvas that is the great void, split off and coil around debris drifting about aimlessly. Sometimes these long coils of this time wind up mixing with Treasures or other strange phenomenon that happen in the void, creating beasts woven from billions of units of time: Chronocle Fiends, I remember them called. I need you to draw one here and subdue it. Do that, and we can save Aigas.>

Chapter 1414 Preparations

1414 Preparations

Grim understood the assignment now and how severe and manageable it was.

His role was the most vital, so he couldn't help but feel a little nervous.

The opponent was a Chronocle Fiend, a beast made from strands of fragmented Consternals – time, essentially.

Grim's purpose was to help subjugate it and then copy its properties, which would be a hefty task.

Grim's Hidden Class was called Esurient Hoarder. It gave him access to three beast forms, all with unique abilities.

There was Avhanar the Voracious, a giant wolverine head that could consume anything and break it down into energy.

There was Paradox Parody, a beast form that allowed Grim to copy the properties of other beasts and attach them to his body.

And then there was Esurient, the ultimate expression of the Class.

For this excursion, it was the properties of Paradox Parody that were required. Grim would have to copy a large portion of the Chronocle Fiend and attach it to himself.

Whatever Suzamete required couldn't be done with the body of the Chronocle Fiend itself because, apparently, it was extremely aggressive and when engaged in combat, it rapidly used itself up. All its attacks were time-based, and thus it practically used its own being as fuel.

The Chronocle Fiend wasn't a genuine Divine being. It didn't have a Broader Existence or even a soul for that matter. It only had Divine-level abilities. Because of this, it was plausible for Grim to copy its properties, but admittedly, it was going to take a lot of effort on his part.

Thankfully, Suzamete was going to help with this.

<I can't help much because most of my faculties are being spread thin on Aigas. I expended a lot of my energy earlier when some... treacherous beings broke their own restrictions to do battle on Aigas. If I hadn't intervened, most living things in this world would have died. I can only spare a

little energy for you two and preserve the rest for after you have completed the task at hand.> she had said to Yuyui and Grim.

Suzamete had bolstered the strength of Yuyui's Eye of the Visitor and Grim's Esurient Hoarder Hidden Class.

She had admitted though, that the two already had the capabilities of Supreme Skill holders, so she didn't have to extend the scope of their power by much.

Yuyui's eye already had a vast range. Suzamete extended it by a small margin, allowing it to reach the position of the Chronocle Fiend she had sighted.

Apparently, they were actually common, and often attacked worlds to steal their time in order to extend their power and life.

Grim took a deep breath. He could feel the boost to his Class.

'If the Chronocle Fiend is as powerful as Suzamete says, if I copy its traits, that will be one free power gained for me. It's a win-win. Now, I just need to calm down,' he thought to himself and looked behind him.

Yuyui was sitting some distance away in the domain in a lotus position. She was getting herself familiar with the full parameters with the Eye of the Visitor and its augment. Bubbles was sitting behind her, curiously wondering what she was doing.

The beast had indeed been obliterated within Franceesta's Majestic Territory, but one death was scarcely fatal to it.

Unlike the Stark Troops, Bubbles didn't have a Granted Armament. Yuyui had requested for Skullius to create for him a spatial storage that applied the Granted Restoration Starmation. Every time Bubbles died, he would be restored within the spatial storage.

After the creature had died during the battle against the Order of the Trodden Rose, Yuyui had forbidden him from coming out of her storage against since the situation had been dire.

'Lucky bastard,' thought Grim before he turned to his own company.

Azila, the frost goblin that had been questioning his and Yuyui's worth, and several other powerful guardian beasts were close by, preparing for the fight ahead. Jiggorrhax and Asthon were closer to the incomprehensible figure of Suzamete, conversing with her, it looked like.

"I don't think I can ever forgive myself for being so pathetic. Being put to sleep like that..." Azila said, his face a mask of embarrassment.

"I smell self-pity. Do you think you're the only one who was made to look like an idiot?" said the goblin with a scowl at the ape. "All of us were humiliated in front of the humans. Though, I will say, to see someone of your stature and important to all beast kind be put down like that was a blow to us."

Azila gave the goblin a sharp look.

"That's comforting to hear," he said and then he turned to Grim. "Have you figured out how we will move or have you left that responsibility to... him?"

The him in question was undoubtedly Jiggorrhax. It was fair to see him as the leader of the excursion, to be sure.

Grim glanced at the dragon.

"Maybe..." he said. He wasn't sure this should even be an argument. Of course, Jiggorrhax should take the lead!

The prestige around the colossal Herald was legendary. Even with his current strength, Grim was in awe at the might radiating from the dragon.

He was older, wiser, and probably stronger.

"Now, now, why do I sense such low self-esteem?" a voice of doubt spoke from Grim's shoulder.

He turned to look, startled and found a small bird there.

"Uhh..." He was stumped on what to say. He could tell that this beast was no ordinary creature. Suzamete had even welcomed it with something akin to cheer and Grim's own bestial senses told him that the bird was, to some degree, equally as impressive as Jiggorrhax.

"Don't be intimidated now. I'm just a bird," said Asthon, "and you are a lot more like Jiggorrhax than you know."

"What?" Grim couldn't believe that he had heard that right. "What do you mean?"

"Don't be fooled. Jiggorrhax is not some supreme beast. He only looks like one. And believe me, he is not as haughty as you may think. This is your stage, is it not? I can sense the excitement within you, buried behind all the anxiety. You have deep-set animalistic fervour. Tempered fervour. Why don't you let it loose? You've been wanting an opportunity like this, I'm sure." Asthon bounced on Grim's shoulder. "Listen, there are benefits to being a beast, just as there are benefits to be a man. As far as I understand your prowess, you might just be the only human who can be a perfect fusion of the two."

Asthton seemed especially excited, much to Grim's confusion.

Unbeknownst to the Unlimited Star, Asthon was having a moment of profound insight, one he had failed to obtain for 4,000 years. He had heard all about Grim's powers from Suzamete's explanation, and that had been a catalyst for a new line of thinking.

The bird gave a little kick to Grim's cheek, forcing him to turn his head to Jiggorrhax.

"You see that? I considered that to be the very best of what any being could hope to be once. A beast with the traits of a man, down to the progression of strength. That is a near-perfect version of what you should be. Towing the line between man and beast, but being perfect in both expressions. Ha! I'm glad I barged here uninvited!"

Grim understood none of what the ancient bird said. He could only stare at the bird, his eyes exposing his confusion.

Perfection in both beast and man traits?

What did that mean?

Grim had only ever considered using the powers from the Hidden Class as they were.

I can turn into different kinds of beasts, was the extent of how he interpreted it. Nothing more. He was sure the one who created the Class had a similar interpretation too.

Ashton could see that none of his wisdom was being conveyed. A pity. He sighed.

"It's quite alright. I will show you all of what I mean on our little adventure outside of Aigas," the bird said. "By the way, who are you?"

"What? Don't you already know my name?" Grim said.

"Of course, I do, but what would I glean simply by analyzing your name? I want to know who you are?"

"What would you like to know?"

"Everything!" said Ashton. "But I am a lot more interested in why there is so much doubt in you right now. I am especially good at reading human emotions, you see. Well, I better be after spending 4,000 years raising some. I sense a strong cord of confidence from you. You're often firm against challenges. But that cord of confidence is suddenly drowned in uncertainty. Why? Why now? I don't sense a fear of death from you. You can't really be losing confidence against an enemy when you have all this help, can you?"

Grim was startled to be seen through so thoroughly. He didn't try to deny it though. He hung his head, thinking of the best way to express what he felt.

"Honestly, I feel a little inadequate. Not necessarily because I feel my strength is limited," he said. "I never thought Yuyui would make me feel such a strong sense of... hollowness. I was never the kind of person who was interested in the kind of person I was. I was comfortable being part of a group. Obscure. But when I was recruited by my master, that changed. I adopted the traits of the Hidden Class he allowed me to have. That's what I became. It became my identity, and for a while, I was satisfied, fulfilled even. But now..." He looked at Yuyui, her eyes closed in focus.

"The lack of a profound past has finally caught up to me."

Chapter 1415 Grim's Dilemma

1415 Grim's Dilemma

Yes. Grim could have admitted that he was a little jealous of Yuyui.

Grim had seen Yuyui at her worst, when she had been about to leave Skullius' Faction back then. They were still a combat force of the Severed Union that time. She had thought she didn't have what it took to be a combat expert, much less someone who could be useful to Skullius.

She had even stagnated for a while, dawdling around while the others had been sharpening themselves as fighters.

But suddenly, when it mattered the most, she even managed to save them all from Jerthrax, the Vision of Misery during the voyage across the Central Boundary.

How?

Well, Yuyui had told Grim. She had reconciled with her past and it became a part of her core strength, especially when matched with her present circumstances and the future she hoped for.

This had begun to nag the Unlimited Star.

Despite Yuyui being a friend he wished all the good in the world for, it was such a shocking thing to see her eclipse him so suddenly, and not just because she had a powerful Class. It took great effort to awaken each of her eyes and Yuyui had unlocked the strength to do so.

But it wasn't just Yuyui Grim was jealous of. Skullius was the most prime example of someone who was shaped and empowered by their past. The thing that prompted Skullius to grow as he did was his mysterious background. It might have had elements of tragedy, but he used it as fuel to create the monstrous powerhouse he had become.

Grim had no doubts that he would grow in strength, but he wondered if, as a person, he would ever grow into a character who transcended the name Grim. Power went hand in hand with character, did it not?

In truth, the name Grim had been a moniker he had been given while he was still a bandit under Kenno. It had no meaning. He had no meaning.

Yes, he was Skullius' Unlimited Star, but what about his own person? All the Unlimited Stars had that, but he didn't. Was a notable past the thing he needed to define himself?

Grim had searched for an answer in the other Unlimited Stars.

Kintar was definitely a woman of her own. She was Skullius' contrarian. She was definitely a product of something bigger than Skullius.

Pherdanta was practically Skullius' shadow. She had been a subordinate of Warding Pride before deciding to defect. She was saved by Skullius and had sworn her life to him ever since. She had killed her own brother to prove her solidify her loyalty. That was her resolve. Grim couldn't match that. He couldn't be Skullius' second shadow.

Kenno was invited by Skullius to power and wealth that satisfied his bandit tendencies and more, changing him into something far more profound. He was a free spirit who simply meshed well with the Order and his past definitely bolstered what he became. Grim should know. He had worked under the man.

Baddan had been a devout protector of his lands, and when they were destroyed, he was given a chance to form a new identity with new powers that didn't force him to discard his past. He still proudly wore his previous beliefs.

Grim didn't know Savast very well, but he was sure the former Cluster General was glad to be where he was and had reconciled with his origins—the destruction of his Cluster and the second chance he had been given by Kintar.

But Grim was struggling.

He could hardly put what he was feeling into words.

In fact, he had refused to admit the fact that he was battling some identity crisis until just earlier, when Yuyui had single-handedly taken down three mighty women from the old ages of Aigas on her own.

He had found himself getting annoyed at how she hadn't needed his help. He presented it as a playful jest, but a part of him was burning, paining, struggling.

When Grim tried to explain all this to Asthon, fumbling over his words and wondering if the bird would even understand, Asthon laughed. It was a queer sort of laugh. Many wouldn't expect a bird to be able to express mirth like a human.

"Oh boy," the Truworth Bill said. "Do you think beasts don't run into identity crises too? I just explained how I was also driven into such a mess of wondering where my place on Aigas was. Many a beast feels the same. Inadequacy, helplessness, fear, uncertainty. These are demons all living things struggle with."

The bird suddenly looked at Azila.

"Most beasts fail to Ascend simply because they face the exact same feeling you are. Perhaps they don't agonize over a past, but they do wonder if previous holders of their racial traits ever went far, what they can do to surpass their genetics, how to match stronger, more blessed beasts. Am I wrong?"

The question was directed towards the Great Mane Mountain Ape.

He had been gawking at Asthon since he had come into Suzamete's domain.

His breath had caught in his chest when the bird had flown over.

"You are right," Azila said. "What you told me before, in Agmold... about humans being able to produce the insights we beasts need to reach powers beyond.... Did you manage to extract what you were seeking? It seems you are finally done with King Royan."

Asthon flapped his little wings.

"I learned a few things," he said, "but Direction drove me to this destination and I think I've just about found the one human I ever needed to meet in my lifetime."

Right then, a striking sensation made known to everyone that it was time. Yuyui was ready.

Grim took a deep breath and followed the others towards Yuyui.

They gathered around her and waited no more than five seconds before they saw her stir.

<Do it, Yuyui.> urged Suzamete.

Her Fruit Bearers – the mysterious humans with the carts – had gathered also, equipped with powerful items. They were supposed to help in what was to follow as well, after all.

Yuyui raised her head and looked up at the never-ending sky.

She opened her left eye, and brilliant white radiance stormed out of it, piercing and driven. By Suzamete's will, the light rushed out of the domain and spilled into the great void, covering a great distance far past what could be seen from Aigas' boundary.

It didn't fail.

It caught the attention of a fearsome beast that had not had a meal in 67 Consternals.

Chapter 1416 The Operation Begins

1416 The Operation Begins

The Eye of the Visitor was a beige eye with the pale symbol of a hook as its pupil. It created webs that fed into the whites of Yuyui's eyes, like roots. When Yuyui first equipped it, she was convinced she wouldn't be able to disable it.

Maybe it was because Suzamete was enhancing its range, but its hold over her was strikingly firm.

Yuyui found the eye to be her least favorite, given what it had been used for in the past. Having it actively try to become a permanent part of her left socket was sickening, to say the least. She weathered through it though. This wasn't about her. It was about saving Aigas.

'Arghh. It's really greedy,' she thought. The eye sapped a lot of her energy at a frightening rate. As the range of the light gushing out of it to attract her target reached further, the amount of her mana consumed doubled.

It had been a while since Yuyui feared the effects of using her eyes. Easily the worst time she had while using them was when she had used the Eye of Dispersal and Eye of Moving to save Skullius and the rest from Jerthrax's breath back then.

Using the eyes had strained her so much she bled from her orifices. But after the hellish training in the Timemould Mirror Box, she was able to handle multiple uses of all her eyes without a hassle.

'I suppose the Eye of the Visitor is just that much stronger, even without Suzamete's augments,' Yuyui thought.

<You should get going. The target is already on its way. You need to intercept it before it clashes with the Rules protecting Aigas.>

"Wait, it's already on the way?" Grim reeled.

Suzamete turned to him. He shivered. It was like having the sun's attention on you – it was incomprehensible.

<Yes. As I said, beasts of low intelligence are easy prey for Yuyui's eye.>

And indeed, Yuyui had felt it too. She couldn't see the appearance of the Chronocle Fiend, but she had felt it the instant the pulse from her eye reached the distance Suzamete had mentioned. It didn't take long for the creature to decide it wanted to pay Aigas a visit.

"We shall fly then," said Asthon, and he looked at Jiggorrhax. "You wouldn't mind me taking charge, would you?"

The Herald groaned.

"I would not. I am quite eager to learn about you, old bird," he said.

Asthon laughed. Grim wore a sheepish smile.

'There go my expectations.'

The Truworth Bill took charge indeed.

"Does everyone here have the means to take flight?" he asked.

Before anyone could answer, one of the six Fruit Bearers who would be joining them produced what looked like a few loaves of bread... or maybe large croissants.

His emotionless face made him seem a bit more eerie than he actually was.

<That is a Mythical grade consumable.> said Suzamete. <If you have a powerful enough mind, one bite will allow you to actualise abilities you can firmly visualise in your mind for an hour. It only works with one ability at a time, though. All of you – except for Yuyui – will take it. It costs nothing to fly while using this.>

Everyone was taken aback. For there to be something so profound here...

But of course, a second of clear consideration convinced them that it wasn't at all strange. This was Suzamete, one of the Deities that made Aigas, after all. It seemed that it was easier for her to cheat like this while in her domain, or rather, using her Fruit Bearers.

Grim remembered just then that Skullius had once mentioned meeting these individuals outside Suzamete's domain.

'The Mad Bishop would lose her mind,' he thought when he bit into a portion of the bread he had been given. It was fresh, soft and delicious. He detected a strong milky flavour. It made him tear up. 'So good...'

Everyone had the same reaction except Jiggorrhax and Asthon. For the former, no amount of bread could make him savour the taste with his massive frame, and for the latter... it seemed as though Asthon had tasted something just as tasty in his lifetime.

A few seconds later, the ice goblin was the first to start levitating, a surprised look on its face.

"It works!" he cried. He had simply imagined himself taking flight and his body had responded. It was easy and almost natural.

Grim was the next to take flight, then Azila and the other beasts. The Unlimited Star wasn't too impressed, but he smiled, fascinated.

'I wonder what other kinds of powers this bread could give us? Wouldn't it be better to boost our Classes and skills with it instead?' he thought.

<It wouldn't.>

Grim was startled.

Suzamete had read his thoughts. He turned to her incomprehensible figure.

<It is hard to traverse the great void. You'll find that even with great powers, as a mortal, it will be difficult to keep your balance and resist the overwhelming density in that darkness. Your ability to fly will be especially valuable. Since you only have to think about where to go without exerting any other kind of effort, you'll have the freedom to ignore how hard it is to move in the void and attack as you normally would.>

Grim nodded slowly.

Was it that hard to traverse the void?

Just as he wondered, the infinite sky above them started unraveling, leaving a deep darkness that beckoned them silently overhead.

"That's our cue then," Asthon said and he addressed everyone. "I'd advise getting out of here with your optimal battle characteristics in effect. Get your Dormant Territory ready if you have to."

The guardian beasts immediately prepared. Their Nitros surged at once.

Unfortunately, unlike humans, they couldn't wield Nitros unless they had every intention to activate their Majestic Territory.

Grim, on the other hand, not only reinforced himself with Nitros, but he immediately assumed the first form afforded by his Hidden Class: Avhanar the Voracious.

He quickly became a giant wolven head without a limb in sight. Jiggorrhax gave him an amused look, as did Asthon. The two took the lead in flying out of Suzamete's domain.

Grim followed after them, feeling his confidence rising.

This was it.

His moment to transcend his insecurities had come.

Chapter 1417 In Death and Time (1)

1417 In Death and Time (1)

Yes.

The answer was a solid yes.

It was that hard to traverse the dark void.

When Skullius had narrated how he managed to defeat his other self – putting quite the emphasis on how he had Beyrmir travel outside Aigas to retrieve the soul Festos had hidden – Grim hadn't paid it much mind. At the time, he hadn't thought travelling outside Aigas to be something he'd be charged with doing any time soon.

Perhaps Beyrmir should have given an account of what it was like. He should have given all the Unlimited Stars a heads up for what was to come.

'Thank goodness we had that bread!' was Grim's first thought when he passed into the darkness. Since Suzamete had unravelled the Rules over that portion of Aigas the squad was escaping through, it took no time or effort reaching the great void from Aigas.

Turning behind him - just to sate his curiosity - Grim saw what the entirety of Aigas looked like from up here. It was like a gargantuan disk of colour fettered with a series of clouds. It was impossible to see the details of the sky or the lands below.

Thick strings, glowing with a Divine sheen wrapped around the irregular disk, expounding a fierce light into the darkness.

Grim was enthralled.

Aigas was as beautiful as it was inconceivable huge.

But the great void was more of the latter than the former.

Grim had thought it'd feel like being in a large tub of thick, mana-enriched oils, but he was wrong. Very wrong.

Traversing through the great void was like trying to swim through densely-packed sand.

Not only was it hard to move limbs while you were within it, it was incredibly hard to muster mana out of the body.

As soon as the group met the darkness, their Nitros fizzled out, dispersed into the void. Experts of their level couldn't die of asphyxiation. They could thrive off their energies. But losing said energies was a problem. They scrambled to shroud themselves again.

Condensing more mana to form Nitros was a task that required herculean effort and skill, they found.

Whatever mana or Nitros they coated around themselves needed to be held tight by their skill in energy manipulation, otherwise it would be lost in the void. Most of the guardian beasts, including Azila found it incredibly challenging, but Grim managed. If he wasn't at least a tier better than them at manipulating mana, he wouldn't have managed to complete the Impossible Task.

Asthon and Jiggorrhax had no trouble at all controlling their energies. The former hadn't gotten his Nitros sapped away at all when he entered the great void.

'The difference in strength and skill is uncanny,' Grim thought as he looked at the old bird. 'He reminds me of Kintar. They might be a match for each other.'

And indeed, it certainly seemed appropriate to equate the two monsters.

When it came to the Fruit Bearers though, it appeared they didn't require mana to traverse through the void. At first, Grim thought they were protected by some special authority of Suzamete's, but he soon realised that that wasn't the case at all.

The Fruit Bearers used artefacts to enable their mobility – Mythical grade artefacts.

A close inspection of them told Grim that they... did not partake in Aigas' power progression system at all.

They were simply humans, untouched by mana, Nitros, Primus, Amras or any other kind of energy. He found himself doubting if they even had souls.

But the mystery of the Fruit Bearers was too great to unveil right now and on his own. Grim could only throw it to the back of his mind.

As time scrolled on, everyone became even more appreciative of the fact that they could fly without exerting any effort into trying to push against the dense void. They didn't cover much ground, but luckily, they didn't need to. The enemy was coming to them.

It was impossible to communicate through normal means in the great void – at least for mortals.

Asthon, anticipating that a lack of communication was likely to cause problems later on, established a mana link with everyone around. They only needed to send their thoughts through the network to be heard.

"I suggest that all of you get your wits about you. Adapt to the environment as fast as you can. You will need the ability to mobilise your energies at the very least," Asthon encouraged. He then turned to Grim and Azila. "Come closer."

The Unlimited Star and guardian beast did as they were bid.

"The shadow of this Fiend approaches. My instincts tell me it's not the sort of creature we have the luxury of fighting over a long time. If it truly expends its body as fuel when it attacks, then it will be eager to finish us off as soon as possible. As such, we should also be aiming for a strategy that resolves this quickly," Asthon said to Grim, and with a swipe of his wing over his head, a Crown was revealed.

It was a strand of brilliant light coiled over him, a radiant star seated within it.

Azila was surprised. He didn't know the Crown could be hidden like that.

"Look at this closely. At the end of this, you might be able to acquire a Crown of your own," Asthon said excitedly to Grim. "I only want you to watch as soon as the battle begins. I'll spell out your cue to join."

Grim nodded hesitantly.

Azila on the other hand, looked offended.

"What about us? Are we only here as exhibits?" he asked Asthon.

"Not in the least. Your remarkable performances are what I'm hoping for."

Right then, the great void seemed to grow darker, scarier. The luminance from Aigas behind the group made it easier to spot such a difference in the highlights.

A shadow was cast over all the beasts.

Far beyond, something had appeared. Something colossal in size.

The void was an odd place indeed.

It was impossible to tell what was ahead, at least for mortals. It was like looking at an endless black canvas, only, this canvas had bits that were darker than the rest randomly placed over it. A Divine could have distinguished and discerned the many things in the distance, but mortals could only rely on proximity for clarity.

The shadow cast over them was the thing to alert them of the enemy's arrival... at least until the creature drew close enough to be seen. It had a light of its own, which made its figure easy to describe.

The Chronocle Fiend was more than a million kilometers away, but to the collection of beasts, it might have been a mere stone's throw removed from them.

It was truly mind-bogglingly colossal, but also a horror among horrors.

It didn't need a crushing pressure to terrify its foes. Just its form alone was too fierce.

Grim felt his white furs tingle and curl at the sight of the beast. It was unnatural.

Of all the things he had seen, the Chronocle Fiend was easily the creepiest. Its luminous, neon-like green hue only made it even more difficult to comprehend.

And as though just the look of it was not chilling enough, the creature had brought companions to what it assumed was a feast.

A company of fifteen beasts with the crushing pressure that was missing from the scene surrounded it, easily pushing through the great void.

But even Asthon found himself turning especially wary when he sensed a familiar, unkind sensation from this unexpected company. Jiggorrhax was the same.

It wasn't only time that the collection of beasts had to fight, it seemed.

They also had to fight... death.

Chapter 1418 In Death and Time (2)

1418 In Death and Time (2)

Time descended from Consternals in the wider reality had wound into a distorted shape after mixing with countless irregular, horrid phenomena. In the end, it formed this shape: a great turtle-like beast, thriving with powers that could end worlds.

The creature was made of countless coils of greenish-white bound together in uninform patterns. The great flat shell on its back was an astounding beam of plain white light over which three unimaginably vast spears revolved, their tips pointed downward.

Where flippers should have protruded from its shell, muscular human-like humans with crooked, ugly nails could be seen, twitching to disturb the void every few seconds. They were six limbs in the total, some longer than others.

It was the creature's face that caused the most horror. It was mix of human and turtle with irregular patches of soft white light on its head acting as hairs. There was such vivid wrinkling on it that the shadows forming on the face made it look like parts of it had been gouged out. And as though this was not enough to vex the mind, the Chronocle Fiend's eternally oblivious expression was an added wonder.

Its eyes, almost a third the size of the face each seemed lost, its snout, ending in two flared nostrils. Its large mouth was forever agape, rows of human-like teeth clear from the edges of the full lips.

The Chronocle Fiend hardly seemed to know, see, feel or hear anything at all. It might have been a large, luminous green boulder flying through the darkness, coincidentally going for Aigas.

But it would be foolish to judge its threat level by its dazed expression.

The creature was still descending towards Aigas, after all, and it was approaching at a shocking speed despite the fact that it didn't seem so.

But as bizarre as the creature was, its company filled its opponents with more horror than it did.

Fifteen, ruby red creatures, only a fraction of the Chronocle Fiend's size acted as its entourage. They might have been large jellyfish, but without the limbs. They were great red sheets that bounced through the void as though it were a great ocean, see-through, like stereotypical ghosts; tendrils that might have been their nerves were visible from within them.

But it wasn't their likeness that scared Asthon and the rest.

It was the fact that they expelled the sensation of death.

It was extinction as Void, Emmae and Serenity knew it.

The presence of the death somehow wove the jellyfish together. But of course, jellyfish was not a good name for these enemies.

"They are called Impermanence Fiends. They embody death. They are formed in the same way Chronocle Fiends are, and just like those, they come in many forms. We should be thankful we got this kind as opponents. They are troublesome still, but they won't be too difficult to deal with," said one of the Fruit Bearers through the mana channel. "Time and death Fiends attract each other, but its rare for so many to be in one place."

Asthon seemed displeased with just this as an explanation, it appeared.

"Why were we not warned about these other enemies?" he asked the Fruit Bearer, but his eyes never left the approaching enemies.

"Because Consternals are lesser concepts than true death. Death is a concept that transcends even the Primeval Deities and can elude all Divines as it pleases. The Impermanence Fiends we have as our opponents know to use it to that effect. They avoided even Suzamete's eye until now. They will no doubt be able to do the same to us if they feel threatened."

Asthon cursed.

Jiggorrhax groaned.

"In that case, our strategy needs to change. There are too many enemies. We need a battlefield that we can control for a start," he said. His voice was boisterous in the minds of the listeners.

By now, the enemies were a mere five hundred thousand kilometers away. They were moving at unreal speeds that would stagger even Divines like Skullius. The Fiends kept getting bigger and bigger in the vision of the beasts. It was baffling. The Chronocle Fiend on its own might have been half as large as Aigas, if not more.

Jiggorrhax acted at once.

He lifted his great arms and flames poured out of his mouth, flaring amidst the darkness of the great void. The fact that they weren't drowned instantly was a testament to the Herald's skill.

He forced the great flames into great runes that flew in all directions, growing more brilliant as he funnelled more energy into them.

They were Rule Runes. The same he had used to create a set of worlds that drowned the power of Festos' devastating ray of Evil Darkness and Just Light.

Jiggorrhax activated them as soon as the enemies were only a thousand kilometers away.

'I can create a world as large as Aigas if I expend 75% of my energy reserves at once. Hopefully the Fruit Bearers will have something that will restore my energy afterwards,' he thought.

There were flashes of light that did their best to pierce through the darkness right then.

...And then land began to form, then a sky, and light and air. They rose and fell from the runes, wide and welcoming.

A world was indeed forming and it was large enough to trap the enemies even with their distance.

But... BOOOM!

It happened soundlessly, but the impact was felt all the same. The world broke just as it was about to come together.

Tiny fragments, mountain-sized pieces, shards of the lightly-coloured sky...

They all flew in different directions, having failed to create one solid, coherent mass.

Jiggorrhax reeled, as did everyone else.

It wasn't the Chronocle Fiend's doing. It was the great void that resisted the formation of such a substandard world. It took more than simple Rules to establish a world in the great void, after all.

Asthon hurried to reassure everyone.

"Don't mind it. At least we have footholds now. For those who require stability to fight at their best, now's your chance to find a perch!" yelled the bird.

But the Chronocle Fiend was already upon them. At this point, none of the full details of its face could be seen.

Yet, that didn't mean no one saw when it made the first move.

Swifter than anyone could have imagined, one of the creature's ugly hands sank into the great void and extracted what looked like a giant band of gold, white and green. It was held between the creature's ugly fingernails.

One of the spears over its shell then stormed down, by far faster than the zoom of light, and struck the colourful band!

Everyone felt it. They shuddered uncontrollably and involuntarily. A vibration coursed through them, coarse and fatal.

Grim, Asthon, Jiggorrhax, Azila, and the other guardian beasts knew at once.

Their time – past, present and future – was in danger.

Chapter 1419 In Death and Time (3)

1419 In Death and Time (3)

Something all too vibrant coursed the group. It had no trouble causing the great void to tremble, so it stood to reason that it wouldn't have any qualms pulsing through the mortals drifting within the boundless space they did not fully comprehend.

But it was not a mere vibration.

The beasts felt their time being disturbed. Indeed, a threat had come over to touch not just their lives, but the time they flowed through. For the weaker beasts, it might have been a mere pulse of dread coursing through their bodies and souls, but for the stronger ones...

Asthon and Jiggorrhax saw it.

They saw their time rising from them in shapes that matched their own. The time was colored in a mix of green and white, throbbing. As the vibration persisted, the outlines of time made to flee in the direction of the Chronocle Fiend.

The old bird and the Herald responded as quickly as they could.

The latter manifested vicious Rules Runes that rushed to brand themselves onto his own outline while the former spread his wings and cried, "Absolute Magic, Fear!"

A great wheel of Runes appeared before Asthon and cast a fizzing purple haze over his own outline. The shape of time was shocked in fright too conceptual to be mere emotion - mere sensation. It froze in place. Asthon applied the Absolute effect to the time outlines of all the other beasts as well, ensuring their safety.

'I cannot hold it for long. That thing wants to devour our time. I'm not sure what happens after, but I'm hoping it's something as simple as death,' the bird thought. 'This is all wrong.'

He felt his control immediately slip from his grip. It seemed even the peak of Magecraft he had learned through the Mages who often visited the courts of the many Kings of Pelian wasn't enough to stop the audacious, greedy pull of the Fiend. But, of course, it wasn't.

Luckily two individuals had responded to the threat less than a micro-second after the old bird.

Grim spilled out of his beast form into his human form. He used a piece of the sky from Jiggorrhax's shattered world as a foothold and activated two of the Starmation from his armour. A staggering amount of Null Life Essence and mana were expended at once.

A glowing blue hue outlined Grim while great plates of luminescent blue energy covered the group from all sides, overlapping where necessary.

These were the defensive abilities built into the Granted Armament: Tranquil Instance, and Stagnant Parameter. Unfortunately, even their combined might couldn't stop the vibration coursing through the void and by extension the group of beasts. Still, it could make sure the outlines of time stolen from everyone wouldn't whizz towards the Chronocle Fiend unobstructed.

'This is all wrong,' the old bird muttered as he saw this.

One of the Fruit Bearers had also extracted something for defense. It was a World rank shield, gleaming with a fierce golden light. It was about as plain as a kite shield could look, but it was effective. It prompted the manifestation of a collection of golden, protective rings around the plates of Stagnant Parameter Grim had just erected.

The vibration stopped immediately within the protected space, and the time outlines shocked into stalling by Asthon's Absolute Magic swam back to their owners.

'So that's Divine power, huh?' Grim thought as he looked at the Fruit Bearer with the shield. The Starmations were made before Skullius reached Divinity so it was infeasible for them to be able to counter Divine powers outright even though they applied Null Life Essence. But the shield...

Grim didn't know much about Divinity, but like everyone with eyes, he couldn't help but admire it.

Another one of the Fruit Bearers extracted a Treasure – what might have been a large, potted cactus. It was milky white in colour, save for the thorns growing all over it. They embodied a vibrant vermillion hue.

The Fruit Bearer chanted something and the thorns grew to the size of the average tree before shooting off like arrows in all directions. They phased through the chunks of world Jiggorrhax had created as well as the two barriers before suddenly honing towards the approaching enemies at twenty times the speed of light.

A significant number of them rushed towards the Impermanence Fiends while the rest headed towards the underside of the Chronocle Fiend.

The latter, looking dubious, blinked and one of the gigantic spears flying above it flashed down, more like a phantom of light than light itself, and obliterated the thorns.

The Fiends hissed horribly, almost pridefully. But it wasn't in response to the fate of the thorns from the World rank Treasure just now.

The Fruit Bearer to cast them furrowed their brow.

"This enemy will be troublesome indeed. Most of the Treasures at our disposal may be useless against the Impermanence Fiends, in particular," they said.

Grim clicked his tongue. Azila and the frost goblin landed on the same piece of sky he was on.

Jiggorrhax flew lower until he was right above them.

"Only extremely high conceptual abilities may be effective against the enemy now. And it appears we cannot move as freely as we desire," he said to everyone through the network. "We cannot leave the protection of this barrier lest we fall victim to being siphoned of our time. I do dread the consequences of such a fate. We have to find a better way to fight and ultimately get what Suzamete wants."

Grim concurred, as did everyone else.

He couldn't copy the traits of the Chronocle Fiend while he was this far away and without interacting with and understanding it. The fact that the Fiend seemed to have stopped charging towards Aigas only made him nervous. It must have been unnerved by how it was unable to beat them at once with that time-siphoning ability.

'It's going to try something else. And I don't think our shields are going to hold for long if it uses stronger abilities,' he thought.

"This is all wrong!" Asthon cried through the mana network and everyone was shaken.

What the hell?

But even more worthy of surprise than the old bird's scream was the sudden shudder of the golden rings barrier and Grim's defensive Starmations. They quaked so boldly that it seemed they would break in a moment or two.

The scent of death grew fouler and viler.

The Impermanence Fiends were driven to agitation.

For death was an enemy to those who attempted to skirt it, and its emissaries had long noted the presence of one of its greatest enemies: Null Life.

Chapter 1420 Permanent Haven (1)

1420 Permanent Haven (1)

The golden barrier which the Fruit Bearer had erected trembled; a powerful, rough force had smashed into it violently. That one brutal bash depreciated its integrity by several leagues and the Fruit Bearer who cast it felt all that it was – energy and partly physical matter – get eaten away by the voracious appetite of death. It shattered into brilliant fragments when another thunderous crash landed on it.

Now the only thing that remained was Grim's Stagnant Parameter plates, but they were not likely to last for long, or rather, he wasn't willing to keep them active for too long since they sapped a great portion of the reserves in his Granted Star Armament the longer they were up.

Jiggorrhax rose to the occasion after the golden rings barrier shattered. The Impermanence Fiends' massive frames cast dark silhouettes behind Grim's barriers. They were aggressively brandishing their raw powers against the group and soon enough, they would invite death upon them all. It was unclear why they had suddenly become so active in attacking - at least to the group of beasts.

And thus, the dragon's body flared with genuine Divine energy, but before he could play any of the cards he had against death, Asthon stopped him.

"Hold on," the old bird said to him through the network. "I have a better role for you. I'll handle this."

The Crown and star over Asthon's head lost their beautiful glow, with the former reduced to something like a rusted steel ring forged an age ago. Without the lustre, the latter looked like a lousy rock floating within the steel crown.

But this had a purpose.

Asthon took a breath of his own Nitros and spread his wings wide.

Suddenly, an abundance of life energy poured out of him in great torrents, blaring and flaring like fireworks!

It was a shower of vibrant health, endurance, and persistence. When it met the other beasts like a wide ocean-like wave, they might have envisioned themselves as immortals while drowning in it. It was firmer and more solid than any energy they knew. Even Jiggorrhax was astounded.

Grim gaped.

'It's like the pressure I remember from the masked man right before the boss and he disappeared!' he thought, sweating, "Only, instead of Undeath energy, it's life energy!" he thought.

And that was a great feat. The kind of power Actuass had after he absorbed Jerthrax's soul was staggering. It left an impression on Grim then. If the masked man's body hadn't been falling apart under the weight of all that power, Grim didn't know if they all would have survived.

But now wasn't the time to glaze Actuass.

Grim immediately deactivated Stagnant Parameter. There was a better way to assist Asthon.

The Impermanence Fiends rushed against the group at fierce speeds once the barriers were erected, but the torrent of life energy from Asthon, still bubbling and deciding what shape to adopt caught them by surprise. For what might have been fractions of fractions of a micro-second, the jellyfishes were dazed.

Death was not an enemy of life, and life had no qualms with death. They were opposed, but they did not war against each other. Their relationship – oddly enough – was akin to the relationship between Null Life and Voided Death.

One of the true enemies of death attacked while the Impermanence Fiends were distracted, however.

"NOS AGGRANTE!"

Propping three fingers forth, Grim unleashed a Triplefold Nos Aggrante at the jellyfish. The mix of Null Life and mana pierced through Asthon's life energy bubble as a great bulb throbbing and spasming. Once it was out, it detonated with a terrible flash that blinded even the Chronocle Fiend.

All the beasts felt their skins, feathers, scales, and furs tingle. Their bodies shuddered. The force of the detonated Aggrante shook the void and distorted the margins of reality to an infinitesimally mild degree.

Even Grim was astonished by the force of the attack. This was the maximum power a single Aggrante could achieve.

When the flash of light died down, he and the others saw no sign of the Impermanence Fiends.

Could they have been wiped out?

'Not a chance,' Grim thought grimly.

Asthon grunted.

"They warped themselves in death and vanished before they could get hit," he explained to everyone. No one was surprised. He then sent a private message to Jiggorrhax and the Fruit Bearers that no one else heard.

The dragon grumbled.

"Be quick about it," he said. He and the Fruit Bearers then warped out of the dome of soft energy, ready to engage the enemy.

Asthon gave a little nod, and then he cried:

"Weave the haven of my blood, sweat, and tears! Bring forth the radiance that gives life and polishes those that breathe the living breath!"

Along with this chant, the old bird whipped his right wing upward, and a flood of runes crackled and sparked their way into existence, pristine and pure.

The flood of thread-like life energy began to weave itself into something profound, something greater than the worlds Jiggorrhax could create with his Rule Runes. They wove and linked with each other so finely and so quickly, that even Grim's keen eyes couldn't follow how they then formed the shape they did.

While this occurred, the runes Asthon had also conjured bordered the creation that formed.

He had not spoken the name, but this was another form of Absolute Magic, the very best he had learned, aptly named Enshape. It forced shapes he created to remain intact for a limited amount; the limit depended solely on the forces acting against said shapes. In this case, Asthon knew he didn't have very long.

In a few seconds, his creation was complete.

It was something like a world.

The sky, livid with a vibrant mix of purple and blue had threads of soft white lightning slowly swimming through it. Orbs of fog, like dead suns, differing drastically in size, also flooded it while pouring down a pressure far more intense than gravity. Whatever it was, was mixed in with refined life energy that fell in little droplets of greenish-blue.

Grim, as he gasped at the space he suddenly found himself in, weathered the overbearing force and the refreshing life rain.

He was standing on a thin plate of land, rich with healthy, moist blades of grass. It was roughly a hundred meters in diameter.

It wasn't the only one though.

Three more floated below it, in what might have been a bottomless abyss. They grew in size the deeper they were below.

Azila and the rest of the beasts were too bewildered and amazed to look around like Grim. The Great Mane Mountain Ape in particular was shaking with excitement.

This...

This was...

This was a Permanent Haven!