

Undead 311

Chapter 311: Once and For All (2)

'Stop overdoing it, you idiot! What are you doing?!'

"WHAT ON AIGAS DO YOU MEAN?!"

'You're not behaving like her at all! Don't you know how to lie?! You're more stupid than I thought!'

"YOU NEVER SAID IT WAS THE WOMAN WHO WAS THE DIVINER! THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING!"

'What part of female did you not understand you sockethole?!'

"WHAT KIND OF AN IDIOT REFERS TO WOMEN AS FEMALES IN CASUAL SPEECH?!"

'I used the word BITCH too, didn't I?!'

Within Skullius' mind, a battle was going on as he tried to salvage the situation.

He thought this would go smoothly as he had planned with Sila who claimed to be the expert but things were turning out to be otherwise.

To begin with, when Skullius had shown Sila his ability to attain cosmetic flesh and wander around in a human form, the Tower General had been surprised despite experiencing it through what he saw as part of Skullius' soul.

At that time, Skullius had told him that before they embarked on this journey to find the place Sila had prescribed, he had finish off a few matters.

He had mentioned in some detail about Damilla and her Divining abilities but refused to show anything to Sila because that would reveal his whole problem with the Doom Factors.

This was a sensitive matter he wasn't sure he should share yet and while he was sure that Sila could tell that his soul was in a terrible condition, the old soul probably didn't know the full extent of it.

Somanda forbid, if that guy potentially used that information to screw him over somehow!

When he had arrived at this point, he had then wondered if Sila could do something about this situation.

As an old guy from old times, the man probably should have ways to deal with things like divining.

It was then that Sila said something interesting to Skullius.

"OH, YOU'RE DEALING WITH A DIVINER?! HAHHAHAHA! OF COURSE THOSE BASTARDS CAN BE A PAIN IN THE TWO TOMATOES, TOMATO FLINGER!"

"Lower your voice, dammit!" Skullius had said to which Sila had obliged and gone on to explain.

"Right! I could potentially help you get around that, IF, you allow me some more leeway on our agreement!"

Skullius had been suspicious of this.

"What more leeway do you want?"

"I'll want to visit a certain place on our way to the Sacred Forest I mentioned. If you refuse then I will not help you, tomato flinger."

'...'

Skullius was skeptical about this and had once again reminded the fragment of Sila's soul that if he tried anything funny, they'd both be doomed.

Sila acknowledged and ensured that this wasn't a trap for Skullius but the Penetrator still couldn't be sure.

He agreed nevertheless as he wanted this matter to finally be over.

"Fine. How are you going to help me, bro?"

"Right! Diviners touch the soul, right?! And from what you've told me, this Diviner was particularly rough with yours. Hmm... it even shows over here," Sila had said, referring to Skullius' torn soul. "I've lived long enough to appreciate the intricacies of a soul!"

Heh! In my time, I could even manipulate it to some extent much like other expects at the Incandescent Stage!"

Quite the juicy detail that Sila had spilled.

Skullius had been shocked by this reveal as when he recalled the path of Stages, he found that the Incandescent Stage was the one above the Master Stage.

Sila had been at this level?!

"You had been at that Stage?"

"Of course, TOMATO FLINGER! I was unrivalled when compared to everyone who was at the same Stage! I was a monster, HAHA! With my expertise, manipulating the soul of a lowly Diviner in a distant small city, especially when she reaches out to touch us will be child's play!"

Child's play, the damn Tower General had said.

Back in the present time, Skullius whose face was scrunched up couldn't help but emit a barely perceivable sigh.

'Get your act together before you flesh us over, you sockethole!'

"IT'S HARD GETTING TO KNOW HOW SHE SPEAKS IN A FEW MINUTES, YOU KNOW?!"

'What have you been doing for the past ten minutes then?! What else could you possibly be looking for in her body and soul?! Aren't you supposed to be looking for her memories?! I've invaded other people too so don't lie to me!'

"..."

"TOMATO FLINGER... ARE YOU PERHAPS A NATURAL EUNUCH? PERHAPS I'VE BEEN INSENSITIVE ALL THIS TIME."

'What the flesh are you talking about?! Finish the job before they get even more suspicious!'

The conversation between Skullius and Sila barely took a few moments as it occurred within their conjoined souls.

The idea behind Sila's manipulation through the soul was to extend a portion of his will which still had remnants of his former power when Damilla touched Skullius' soul.

As he had plenty of experience with this, that one touch was enough for him to invade her and push her into the backseat in a non-hostile manner.

This connection could persist even if they were no longer in contact, but for a few minutes before it was automatically cut off.

The old General didn't have the full strength of his soul anymore after all.

In that time, he had to make sure he solved the issue by impersonating Damilla and make sure that when the Diviner came to, she wouldn't remember much of this except what she needed to.

And thus, the General tried his best to salvage the situation after reading more into Damilla.

To the onlookers, Damilla suddenly wore her signature stern look.

"No need to be suspicious, Terian, City Lord. I was merely recovering from taking in all that information. This man was responsible for breaking down a magic formation that barred Tulnas and his group entry into the hiding space of the cultists.

He also helped in killing a few creatures summoned by the Summoner that was aligned with the cultists as well as saving the lives of one of Tulnas' Guild members," she said.

"It pains me to say this, but I'll admit that his contribution is undeniable. As a Mage yourself, Terian, I'm sure you can attest to his value as one as well."

Oh.

Erkus' expression softened while Terian's remained the same.

Both still had their misgivings and concerns, mostly because of Damilla's conduct but with these latest words of hers, both felt like she had snapped out of whatever ungodly trance she had been in.

Erkus took a few moments to mull things over before turning to Tulnas.

"So this man saved a member of your Guild and you did not even bother to mention that in his defence?" he asked.

Tulnas who was absolutely astounded by what Damilla was saying quickly tore himself out of thoughts and replied.

"You wouldn't have believed me, would you? You'd probably think I was just buttering you up with sentiment," Tulnas said.

"That is fair. Terian?" Erkus said as he turned to the old Mage.

Terian took a few moments as he stared at Damilla.

He finally relented and sighed.

"It would seem a verdict has been reached," he said simply to which Silrat wore a hidden smile.

Seriously?!

This young man had actually pulled it off on his own!

He didn't much care for what sought of craft he had used which even Terian couldn't identify for now as what mattered was...

It worked!

His gains were secured!

Hopefully.

Tulnas also couldn't believe this as he shook his head, his heart burning with interest once more as he looked to Silrat, having made his decision.

This Mage was worth more than he had bargained with Silrat for this whole ordeal!

'You were right, after all. We're keeping him!' he thought deep within where a hoarse voice responded.

'Of course I was right! I'm always right!' the fox within him chortled.

Erkus stood up and walked up to Skullius who promptly stood up too as he tried to wear the most natural smile he could come up with.

The City Lord shook hands with the Discount Human.

"As I said the last time we met. You have value, which is one of the reasons you're alive after your crimes. Though I will have to deal with a lot of steps to clear your name, you can consider yourself pardoned of your crimes in light of the many lives you helped save. This is as far as we go however. Your achievements cover for your crimes. In the Capital Service, you'll gain no repute from this."

Harsh it was but WHATEVER!

Finally!

Finally, this matter had been solved.

Chapter 312: Changes To The Original Arrangement

Skullius sighed in relief as he realised that this ordeal was seemingly over with.

Finally.

Terian nodded lightly to him doing the best he could to hide that he wasn't convinced.

The only reason he was letting this go was because there were times when Damilla would have an intense reaction from Divining other people though this case was rather different.

She had seemed like a different person altogether.

Then again, when he considered that when she was Divining Skullius was another one of the times when she was subjected to these strange reactions, he swallowed up the matter and decided to confer with Damilla afterwards to check if everything was alright.

"Very well. I shall take my leave," Erkus said as he set to leave the room.

Skullius merely nodded as he then checked on Damilla who followed after Terian as the three headed for the doors.

The Diviner wore a strange expression as she trailed behind the Mage.

She looked uncertain.

"Don't start doubting me, TOMATO FLINGER! I covered my tracks well!" Sila noisily attested within Skullius' mind.

'I sure hope so,' the Discount Human thought. He had learned to not celebrate prematurely through quite the bit of experiences but he was more inclined to believe that this was a permanent fix.

Outside the door, Terian turned to Damilla who looked to be contemplating deeply.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

Damilla raised her head.

"That's... no, actually. I'm just surprised," Damilla said with an unsure expression that expressed her internal turmoil.

"I saw a perfect picture of the battle between Festos and what looked like a wolf with... honestly an astounding clarity. It was as if I had suddenly replaced him in that particular scene. And that's including everything else he did. That's never happened before," Damilla said.

Terian's tense expression loosened.

He had wanted to question what the whole... self fondling was but decided against it.

It seemed his anxiety was unfounded as Damilla didn't show any signs of having been manipulated in any way.

As she was the one most determined towards things like this, seeing her let this go made him loosen on the issue as well.

"Perhaps your constant search for inconsistencies in countless stories has finally been rewarded," the old man said with a light laugh.

Damilla clicked her tongue and shook her head.

"I can't tell if that's sincere or not."

The two briskly followed after Erkus as they went onwards.

Back in the room where the three men were settled, Skullius was enduring the gazes of both Silrat and Tulnas as they seemed to want to ask a hulking mass of questions.

"I just showed her what she needed to see," was Skullius' response before either of the two could inquire about every detail.

That was all he was willing to say.

He hadn't forgotten that this wasn't a friendly partnership that he was engaging in with these people.

He wouldn't share excessively.

As for what had really happened to Damilla, Skullius had showed Sila everything that had happened during the excursion, barring a few moments that he wished to keep confidential.

This information was transferred to Damilla's mind replacing it with what would have been the contents of her Divination by Sila, while the old soul also went on to ensure that Damilla's mind which he had pushed back for him to take control perfectly remembered a fake scenario where nothing awkward happened.

Naturally, to fully understand the relationship between the soul and mind, an intricate exposition about the soul as a whole was needed.

"I'll respect your desire to withhold information. I don't much care for how you do your stuff since I can never replicate it anyway," Tulnas said as he hung his legs on the table.

The Tamer was referring to how Skullius probably managed whatever the hell he did because of his Hidden Class which he assumed was heavily leaning towards Magecraft.

Silrat didn't quite get what Tulnas meant but he ignored it and expressed his opposite intent to Skullius.

"If you have capabilities like these I'd have to know, Festos. This could help our case," the Association branch head said with a concerned look on his face.

"Hmmm. I might consider it, I guess. But... first tell me. What did you two agree on? I know Tulnas is gaining something by helping you support me this much," Skullius said.

Tulnas smirked.

"That much I can divulge," Silrat said as he glanced at Tulnas with a sly smile.

"Our agreement was to use his little excursion to end the Clusters to help you get pardoned which would earn me the right to leave with you," Silrat said.

"What do you mean 'leave with me'?" Skullius asked with furrowed brows.

"What I mean is, people like me, Branch managers earn merit by introducing extraordinary talents to the Guilds Association. Doing so allows me to get more benefits, one of which is being relocated to a better place.

I informed the Guilds Association of your existence, specified your abilities and potential, and well, as a result they agreed for me to bring you to a Potential Aptitude Evaluation at a larger branch. All I needed was to get this stain off your record before we proceeded," Silrat explained.

Skullius mind whirled.

So that was it.

This sounded like it had a ton more benefits to uncover.

Relocation really seemed attractive to Skullius.

And this Aptitude test. Skullius presumed that he would need to prove his worth heavily in order to gain the most out of it.

These benefits were getting better and better.

"So we'll be leaving soon? Where will we be going?"

"Genhuis City."

"Oh!" Skullius exclaimed.

This was the city that he had been heading for back then with the map Elita had given him!

Somewhere along the way, he had decided to make a stop in Inhone which prolonged to a full blown 'vaccation'.

So essentially, he was back on track now!

Such...luc-, ahem...fortune!

Such great fortune.

The Discount Human then turned to Tulnas.

"What was he supposed to gain then?"

Silrat pressed his fingers against his temples.

"For him, I have to expand his Jurisdiction. Tsk," Silrat said as he clicked his tongue in annoyance. "To do this, I'd have to infringe on common grounds for smaller Guilds which will bring no small amount of criticism to me. I'll probably be accused of bias."

Tulnas burst into laughter as he heard this.

"That's right! Hahaha! I remember you openly asked me to go for a Potential Aptitude Evaluation with you back then!"

The Tamer cracked himself up as he remembered that day.

When Tulnas had first appeared, making waves with his talent and strength, Silrat who had been a greenhorn when it came to tact and principle that time had boldly made an offer to Tulnas in public,

promising him riches and everything he could ever ask for in such a cringey speech in an effort to recruit him.

The Tamer had blatantly refused which utterly embarrassed the Branch manager who thought his boldness would be rewarded.

Silrat grimaced as he thought back to that scene.

Skullius merely shook his head at this.

"Sounds like Tulnas will gain more from figuring out the Cluster thing than this," Skullius pointed out.

"If it's confirmed that the information we disseminated helped to stop the Clusters in another area other than this one, then yes. I'll also be riding off of that," Silrat said with a happy glint. "For now, Tulnas will have to make do with a 30% increase to his territory as we agreed on."

Tulnas suddenly sat up straight as he lowered his legs from the table.

"About that..." he said with a sharp and cold glint in his eye.

"Hmm?" Silrat hummed in curiosity as he turned to the Tamer.

"I have some misgivings about our previous arrangement," the man said as he finally decided that this small increase in his territory wasn't worth more than Skullius.

Technically, Skullius was already part of the Harem Guild even if one were to consider the ToE which wasn't exactly something that could be proven physically.

Of course a ToE couldn't be broken that easily, which would be Tulnas' biggest obstacle in his play but fortunately, his 'friend' had a way around it.

Apparently.

Tulnas asserted as his blue eyes glowed with a bright blaze of mana much to Skullius' surprise.

"I will be keepi—"

"Oh right!" Silrat suddenly cut off Tulnas as he expelled something from his spatial storage ring.

"...?"

Tulnas was confused by Silrat's sudden gesture.

The branch head held a sheet of paper in his hand which he then laid on the table and slid over to Tulnas.

"In light of my coming resignation, I sent the Association headquarters an application with the full list of your achievements and capabilities.

After a full review, which took quite a bit of time, they decided that it was plausible and passed it as to come into effect the day I leave for Genhuis," Silrat said with an even more sly smile as well as a solemn optical glint full of pure unadulterated cunning.

"A few days from now, when the new Branch Head selected by headquarters comes to replace me comes, you will be the first ever Vice Head of the Association. Should you agree to our pre-established terms, of course."

...!

Chapter 313: Sh*****t!

What the hell?!

Tulnas' eyes almost fell out of his sockets as he heard this.

His whole body literally trembled as Silrat finished his sentence, his heart beating so fast that one could hear it thrumming powerful in his chest!

What was this?!

Tulnas opened his mouth to speak but the sheer flabbergastiosis that ran through him disallowed words to exit from his mouth!

His eyes then darted over to the sheet of paper, which was an Association Declaration and he immediately began reading over everything that was written over it.

Surely!

Truly!

Holy crap!

A stamp from the Association told of these contents' legitimacy!

What the actual flesh!

Many, many thoughts raced within Tulnas' mind as the first thing he then went on to say as he held the paper up with a folded face was...

"Isn't this... isn't this way too premature?! When did you even apply for this, you bastard?!"

Silrat merely smiled as he leaned in his seat.

If this had been a certain foreign entertainment medium, he would have gladly pushed up his glasses.

Skullius watched silently as he saw that one of the two had clearly outsmarted the other.

His input was not needed here, so he played the role of spectator.

"Well, if there's something I understand quite well in this world, Tulnas, it's that I'm not the only one who can recognise the value of something or someone's worth. I'm not raw combatant by nature. I'm more of a...glorified observer. I knew that you of all people, especially with your

possessiveness, would pull something like this. Therefore, I gambled on your capabilities," Silrat said.

"Are you kidding me?! You gambled on my theory being correct? For that you risked everything?" Tulnas asked with a spiked voice.

"Of course I did. You were the only channel I could use to get Festos out of trouble. Even the Association couldn't do anything against someone who was charged against the Capital service," Silrat explained.

Tulnas clutched his forehead.

Was he overreacting?

Was this a normal thing that people that did?

Heck no!

"And you even decided for quit your position before Festos has been evaluated as worth the Association's attention?! You realise that being invited for a Potential Aptitude Evaluation doesn't guarantee that they will accept and reward you, right? You could very well have resigned for nothing?! This is ridiculous!"

"I know that more than you do. Trust me. I have backup plan. But do you seriously believe that Festos would be ignored by the Association with his capabilities?"

"..."

Skullius couldn't help but feel weird when being referred to like this.

Tulnas even gazed at him as if to fully gauge what the result would be.

As someone who had travelled a lot to irrigate his burning hubris by witnessing the true powerhouses of the world, especially with his trip to Maqi, Tulnas didn't have a biased view.

In reality, they were more monstrous talents that he had seen in his lifetime.

Some with odd abilities and others with general elemental powers that they utilised in truly innovative and devastating ways.

Such individuals weren't in short supply among the Families in Pelian or the other two nations in Feinheath.

Tulnas could attest to that.

However, even when considering this...

"Probably not," he replied to Silrat's question.

At this moment, his heart finally settled down and he breathed out a defeated sigh.

Becoming the Vice Head of the Guilds Association...

This was huge!

This essentially allowed him to potentially be able to bring reform to the entire region if he played his cards right!

With his good relationship with Erkus, this was bound to be a boon and nothing but a boon!

With his large scale campaign during the past few days when using Renialid and the other girls to storm every Cluster in sight, he was sure his Guild had earned an enough amount of repute in at least half of the regions settlements.

Haaa....

"You got me. You really poked me when it counts," Tulnas said with a sigh as he slumped.

'He did own you like a-' the fox's voice echoed within the Tamer.

"Shut up," Tulnas harshly cut off the beast.

"What?" Silrat asked confusedly.

"I wasn't talking to you," Tulnas said as he grabbed the Declaration detailing the specifics of this new position with its granted responsibilities.

"So a new Branch Head will be coming too, huh? Hahaha, Inhone is about to become a bit more fun. Make sure to leave quickly. I want to get this started immediately."

Silrat chuckled.

Just like that, Skullius' position by his side was secured without hostility.

Perfect.

Or perhaps not.

When accounting for the sheer degree of how things could have gone wrong especially with Skullius' sudden disappearance...

Silrat shivered.

Thank goodness it worked out. He wasn't the only one riding off of Skullius.

"Come, Festos," Silrat said as he walked out of the room.

Skullius and Tulnas who quickly stored the sheet of paper followed after the Branch Head.

The trio climbed down a set of stairs to appear within the Guilds Association hall where the atmosphere was becoming bubbly once more as the sun began to set, mercenaries streaming into the building like flies.

Among the many clustered mercenaries, some with Conqueror's Halos and others without, Skullius spotted the EdgeKings Guild members with their dark armours and abrasive attitude that could clearly be felt and seen within the crowded halls along with the Ravenclad Guild.

It seemed that most Guilds would be taking short breaks from activity.

Skullius recalled how the members of the EdgeKings Guild had tried to embarrass him after his return from the party-up with Stylla and chuckled silently.

It felt like forever ago when that happened but look at him now?

The Discount Human's thoughts were rudely interrupted by Silrat who mentioned something that piqued Skullius' interest.

"There's something else I will share with you in the coming days, Festos when it has been confirmed. On our way out of the city, we will leave with another benefactor that I have secured. She will come with her proposal for you soon and I encourage you to think about it carefully before having any thoughts on declining," Silrat said with a serious tone.

"Hmmm? Another benefactor?" Skullius questioned.

"Don't worry. She's essentially proposing another mutually beneficially contract but in my own opinion, it benefits her a whole lot more than it benefits you. Though I'm sure her terms will attract your attention still."

Oh.

"Interesting..." Skullius said.

Another female sockethole with interest in him?

It was funny how UNCoddled was seemingly becoming easy to dodge. Or was it because it was meant to strike good-willed people down so as to corrupt the cursed person's view of the world?

Perhaps.

Nevertheless was interested in this.

Who was this female?

Before he could ask some more though, the trio reached the exit to the Association building where, surprisingly, the City Lord, Terian and Damilla were standing on the street as they conversed with some individuals donning dazzling silver armours!

Two carriages could be seen with a lavish yet sturdy design, a three pointed star being seen on the side to represent the affiliation they belonged to as naturally, Skullius recognised that these were from the Purity.

The Discount Human suddenly stopped when he saw something that made his non-existent heart halt its patterned for a moment.

Of the twelve figures that had disembarked from the two carriages, one of the them who seemed to be conversing with Erkus was eerily familiar!

This man...!

"Shiiiiiiiiit...! You have got to be kidding me!"

It was then, in this instance of intense surprise, that Skullius unlocked a new swear word to accompany this seemingly unfortunate re-encounter with this individual...

Chapter 314: Strong.... Monster

Skullius froze.

Before him was a man that he never expected to see again.

A man by the name Gin.

The same Purity Knight who had been aggressively opposed to hearing Skullius' case as Elita had judged back during the event where he interrupted the charge of the carriages that were headed into Eofel.

The man was smiling as he conversed with Erkus when he raised his head to look at Silrat, Skullius and Tulnas, his eyes immediately going to hone in on the Discount Human.

...!

The Discount Human opened his mouth in shock as if to scream but held himself back.

'SHIT! If this guy remembers me, then I'm done for!' Skullius thought with aching distress.

"What are you waiting for. Let's go down there," Tulnas said as he slapped Skullius on the back.

The Discount Human inched towards the steps that reached down to where Gin was, his eyes squinting at Skullius for a moment more before Erkus decided to introduce the three while indicating each with a stretch of his hand.

"These three are from the Guilds Association. Silrat, the head for the branch here in Inhone City, Tulnas, leader of the strongest Guild in the city and this... is Festos," the City Lord said.

Gin smiled politely with a nod of acknowledgement.

From his short introduction, one could deduce two things.

The first was that, Erkus seemed to want to avoid having to speak about the Ideal Ark as if he stated Tulnas' Guild to be the second strongest, he'd have to deal with being asked on which one was the strongest Guild.

This wasn't exactly applicable in this situation as Gin likely wouldn't ask something like that, but the fact of the matter remained that he had had enough of such questions over the past week.

The second was, he did not want to introduce Festos as someone worth attention given his circumstances that could very well attract the Purity's attention because of Festos' curse.

He preferred to not be involved with the Purity no more than was needed.

Erkus continued to speak, introducing the Purity Knight next.

"This is the head of this group of Purity Knights, Gin. He is here to secure the man Tulnas captured."

"Pleased to meet you all," Gin said before he looked to Tulnas with an amiable smile. "I'm surprised you are the one who captured the cultist. I expected someone older. I suppose talents aren't that rare in younger generations as the Deities are so grateful."

"It was a team effort, I assure you. I couldn't have brought down a Master Stage combatants on my own. But I can also guarantee that Quintess had a hand in our success," Tulnas said with a cheery smile in response.

Gin wore an even brighter smile as he heard this.

"Definitely. Young and acknowledging of the Deities. Hahaha, a fine young man," Gin said.

As Skullius heard the conversations, Gin going on to give a genuine smile as he spoke to Silrat as well, he couldn't help but want to shout 'hypocrite'!

Wasn't this man the same one who smacked him while he was seated in the carriage while being as tough as jerky?

Wait? What?!

Still...

"You truly hate this man don't you, tomato flinger?" Sila's voice echoed in Skullius' mind.

'Be quiet,' Skullius thought while shutting off Sila as he then focused on what potential danger could be in store.

Skullius didn't know much about Gin truthfully.

The man was kind hearted yet bold and enthusiastic.

He portrayed a harsh and unforgiving temperament when dealing with individuals that stood at odds with the Purity, which would make such see him as a monster who knew no empathy or mercy.

The Purity Knight had perfectly demonstrated this during that day when Eofel was invaded by Fulina who used her <Faithful Message Undeath> to cause despair within the city.

Soon enough, Gin turned to Skullius as his gaze turned sharp with his face showing that something was really eating him up inside.

"I'm sorry, I feel that we've met before. Your face looks quite familiar," Gin said with a polite smile.

Skullius absorbed these words carefully.

Wait.

'He doesn't remember me?! Why... OOOOH that's right! I look different from before!' Skullius thought as a wave of relief started to wash over him.

Because of his use of Enriching gems, he looked utterly unrecognisable save for a few fundamental features on his face such as his longer hair, its colour, facial structure etc.

This was great!

He could escape suspicion without any issue!

"I don't think we have. I just have a very common face that's all," Skullius said with a respectful tone.

It was no shock that everyone who heard Skullius, even Sila disagreed with this but just didn't voice out their opinions.

Skullius' voice through off Gin even further as he shook his head and apologised.

"I apologise then. It's a pleasure meeting you still," Gin said as he then turned to Erkus. "I would like to get to the prisoner as soon as possible so we can transport him to a more secure location before the morning, City Lord. Can we get to it right away?"

"Of course. I will leave you with Silrat to deal with the rest," the City Lord replied as he then exchanged a few words with the Purity Knight and left along with his entourage of two.

The Association branch head, Silrat took over as he decided to personally lead the men to Guissepo's cell, leaving Tulnas and Skullius alone.

"Well. It seems like it's just me and you. How about you come and watch me celebrate the victory at my Guild residence? It'll be fun. Mostly for me. I won't lend you any of my women though.

It's a shockingly exclusive party," Tulnas said with a cheery smile as he slung his arm around Skullius' neck.

'Women this, women that...' Skullius thought as he shook his head.

Instead of answering Tulnas, he changed the subject.

"Do you remember what you said two days ago? When you and Silrat told Damilla and the old man that you'd be supporting me? That you'd risk even your entire Guild for the whole thing."

"What about it?" Tulnas asked with a languid expression.

"This whole idea of risking something you care about for something you want. How does it work exactly?" Skullius asked with a serious expression.

It would be a lie to say that he fully understood even half of the risks that Tulnas and Silrat made in the name of benefits.

He wanted to truly understand what they did it for and how they could be sure of everything going their way.

"Oh. Your words make it seem like you truly have nothing that you care about. But I'll tell you this. I never gamble on something that I'm not sure will work or at the very least have no contingencies for. I had several plans in the background to ensure that me and my ladies would be fine even if things went wrong," Tulnas said before he suddenly turned sullen.

He recalled the moment when Ginie was blasted open by Guissepo and added more to his statement.

"I'll admit though, I did learn that I was growing overconfident and thought I could account for every little thing when in fact, I could have lost everything instead. So... you could say a risk is only as good as what motivates it. If you don't have enough desire to attain something, there's no worth to your risk."

Hmm..

This was food for thought for the Discount Human.

Ambition.

He lacked this in great detail.

What he had to work with was what Serenity had given him as well as the need to get rid of the seeds of Somanda that still lingered within him.

But what about personal desires?

'It doesn't seem like, I have much of those...' Skullius thought before his mind raced over to the girl he constantly saw.

Could that be something he could try to uncover?

Tulnas saw Skullius getting lost in thought and smirked.

The two journeyed for quite a while, talking about different subjects as Tulnas found once more that Skullius was a natural information sucker.

He tried to absorb every little detail but Tulnas would evade.

He was still cautious of the young man's curse.

It was only when they passed by the city gates that gave a view of beyond the horizons that the Tamer sensed something amiss.

From the hordes of people that wished to enter the city as the night descended, there seemed to be some noise going on.

A disturbance was occurring that pulled on the attention of the Capital Knights who rushed to try and found out what was going.

"What's going on over there?" Tulnas asked with narrowed eyes as he started to walk over with Skullius in tow.

The masses parted to reveal a group of battered and bruised mercenaries that desperately pushed away anyone who stood in their way, while wheezing and stumbling.

The Knights held up some while Tulnas immediately rushed to hold up one of them.

"Hey! What's wrong? What happened?!" he asked.

The man he held looked to be in too much pain to form proper sentences but he managed to say something that put Tulnas on active guard.

"Strong...monsters..."

Chapter 315: Extravagance Unearned

"Strong...monsters..."

Tulnas' brows creased as he thought to the implications. The man he held was wearing dented and torn armour while his skin was bruised, punctured and cut.

His entire body was quivering as it tried to suppress a tide of both pain and fear.

Tulnas knew that this man wasn't going to be able to say anything more and thus he turned to one of the other mercenaries that looked a bit more lively.

"What happened?" he asked in a voice that perfectly captured his caution and anxiety in an attempt to make the person speak quickly.

The person he asked was a woman who bit her lips to keep herself from going unconscious before she spilled in detail what had happened.

"<Pant, pant>. We were... in Dise... when a strange... powerful monster showed up... It all happened so fast..."

Somehow, it summoned thousands of monsters that looked just like it... and in a few minutes... the entire town was... wiped out before we could...save anyone..." the woman said as she sucked in deep breaths while the contortion on her face spoke volumes about how much she wished she had been able to do something.

Everyone listening couldn't help but get seriously concerned.

An entire town wiped out in a few minutes?

When there were mercenaries around?

That could only happen if a massively powerful Cluster beast appeared or something strong wandered from a Sacred Forest.

Tulnas quickly took in this information as he came to the conclusion that his guess had probably been right.

He didn't know the specifics, but he was certain that this... had something to do with the powerful Cluster he had hypothesised.

"Where are those monsters now?" Tulnas asked as he shook the woman who seemed to be sinking into unconsciousness.

Her eyes shot wide open as she continued heaving.

"They... I don't know... we just...ran...<sniff>... but they... didn't follow after us..." she mumbled almost inaudibly in a torn voice.

Skullius was listening from behind Tulnas and this seemed to be some serious stuff.

"As we were running away.... we saw... other villages destroyed in the distance... Whatever these things are... they have been wreaking havoc everywhere."

...!

This turned the situation even more serious.

The fact that word hadn't spread yet wasn't as simple or as vague as there being no individuals to spread it, but because no one had lived to tell the tale!

'Hmmm... if everyone is dying in these settlements, then why did these monsters spare them?' Tulnas asked himself as he rationalised everything he heard.

Wait...

The Tamer's eyes narrowed as he instantly came to a disturbing conclusion.

If these beasts were intelligent, like the ones he had faced before in certain Clusters and Forests. Beasts that turned their instincts into intelligent ambitions then....

'Could they be trying to pinpoint the location of the city? Or... if they are intelligent enough, could they be trying to identify where the strong opponents are?'

His thoughts were only half true though, as another agenda was afoot.

Guissepo knelt down in his cell which had warped space that threatened to swallow him whole if he struggled.

This cell was identical to the one that Skullius had been held in but difference was in the type and placement of runes that held down the strength of the individual captured within it.

There were a lot of these lined up in a row on this floor which was two stories below where Skullius had been placed, an indication on the danger level that was placed on Guissepo because of his Stage and overall traits.

Thick maroon chains with a brown, rusty texture were wrapped around him many times over, binding him thoroughly.

They were Unique grade items that suppressed all forms of energy, except divine, their effect stackable to the point where Guissepo felt no strength to even speak.

To that point, he could not even use his blessing, Extravagant Jubilee as he couldn't even muster the juice for a light twitch.

"Hmmm..." he hummed.

His thoughts spiralled to his past life before joining the Evenfall as in this moment, he had no hope for escape.

Still though, he thought this end was way better than the one that was destined from his previous story.

A simple life he lived with his mother, father and sister, with just barely enough to eat, just barely enough to drink and a place just barely big enough to live in.

He was thankful for all he had as his parents were kind individuals whose warmth radiated to cover the humble home they lived, their teachings of the grace of Quintess, Listafelle and Suzamete translating very well into their children.

'There's a plan in everything,' they said. 'So be grateful for anything.'

As a result, he and his younger sister grew to be good-natured individuals who grew to be appreciative of the little they had, no matter how hard it became.

They didn't blame their parents or anyone for it but learned to enjoy it all without complaint.

Such a mind-set made life easy but it squashed ambition and wrought conflict within Guissepo.

'At least I ate a piece of bread. Somewhere out there, someone hasn't eaten at all...'

'Lies! I'm so hungry that my stomach is barking like rabid dog!'

'Phew, the roof is leaking, but it's still alright. At least we have somewhere to call home.'

'I hate this life! It's as cold inside as it is outside! What's there to be thankful for?!'

Slowly, the burning desire for more grew in Guissepo as at some point... it all just seemed....

Inadequate.

For some messed up reason, some people could live in peace, with everything they wanted even if they didn't believe in the Deities. They had it good without retribution or punishment.

They lived their best!

In luxury!

In abundance!

In... EXTRAVAGANCE.

Yet for him and his family...

His mother thought it was alright.

His father thought it was alright.

And his sister, who was too young to think of this was forced to also see it as the norm.

How was this fair?!

The reality of this became painfully clear when he grew to want to ascertain his Direction.

It was to fight.

To fight the evils that spawned from Clusters.

Even with the so-called blessing of the Deities that he grew to attain after he took on the call to become a combatant, nothing changed.

The blessings manifested nothing except the opportunity to finally begin on the path to strength.

The Foundation Stage.

He had to work hard for them to become meaningful while for some... those said to have been CHOSEN to stand at the precipice of power for the Deities, they attained power beyond measure in an instant.

Divine blessings.

The Paladin Champions.

The Higher Order Priests.

Extravagance without effort at all.

It was all so... crass.

He could only scoff as his mind-set changed slowly with his growth.

Guissepo's thoughts were torn when he heard the sound of footsteps, his eyes that had been staring at the cold floor turning to see the sparkling silver armour he loathed so much.

In his head, he could only grumble at the distastefulness the sight left in his mind.

'How extravagantly sickening...'

Chapter 316: Chaos Begins!

Gin walked up to the cell where Guissepo was 'housed' along with the other Purity Knights as well as Silrat.

On reaching it, he stared down the cultist who could barely raise his head to glare at him and scoffed, his temperament shifting from the usual polite and well-mannered Knight into a bringer of judgement and disdain.

"Why do you even bother when at every turn you will be thwarted anyway?" Gin said to Guissepo with a voice that dripped of nothing but contempt. "Your plans do nothing but fail in each Era. Give up already. Even this recent one will be stopped soon."

Naturally Guissepo couldn't answer the question as he didn't have the strength to but his eyes showed the burning fervour he had to at least burn away at the contempt he was receiving.

Nothing brought him more rage than these entitled Knights in his eyes that believed they were so much better than him and what he stood for!

"Thwarted?! My extravagant brethren are still causing havoc all around Feinheath as we speak! And even now, you are oblivious to what's coming!" Guissepo defended himself.

Gin shook his head.

Everyone could feel the palpable emotion that was raging within Guissepo but they could care less.

"Can we borrow these chains? I'm sure he has a whole lot more up his sleeve if we afford even the slightest bit of leeway for him. While we have our own binds, they do not do well with others of different kinds," Gin said to Silrat while referring to chains that held Guissepo.

The Association branch head nodded without hesitation.

"Of course. We were planning on sending him off in the same way he's bound now. Though, I must ask. Given the fact that we gave quite the detailed assessment of this man's power, how come the Purity only sent Knights below the Master Stage? Not to disparage your strength, of course but I'm merely curious," Silrat questioned.

Gin wore a polite smile as he answered.

"I see why you'd question it. We are quite conscious of this in fact. A Master Stage specialist could have accompanied us but after your report, many Purity Knights have been deployed to help in the search for these cultists as that young man prescribed.

Escorting a bound man even at his Stage doesn't require too much firepower since the Purity supplemented us with high grade equipment for possible raids along the way."

"I see," Silrat said with a nod before walking ahead and waving his hand at the cell which made the bars rise up, clearing a way to pass through.

Several of the Purity Knights that came with Gin walked forward to grab Guissepo.

Typically, the waving gesture used to remove the bars would also cancel the suppression effects of the cell and in this case, the chains that wrapped around Guissepo were meant to ensure his continued powerlessness even without the cell's effect.

The cultist hatefully looked at Gin as he was grabbed on both sides.

Such an end was ridiculous.

The acknowledgement he had failed to attain gnawed at his chest and made this entire situation even more infuriating for him.

Yet, there was nothing he could do but accept the inevitable.

'I amounted to nothing much in the end. How extravagantly disappointing. Ah...at least I will now join the others who have already descended before me...' Guissepo thought.

He could only give up at this point and wait for the eternal peace he admired.

That was... until he felt something peculiar.

He suddenly felt like he was being watched.

With his inability to raise his head and look around, this only served to make him anxious, but only for a moment, as soon, a familiar presence registered in his senses.

A familiar presence indeed.

It was Primus energy!

Highly concentrated Primus with a signature he knew all too well...

From the corner of his eye, he spotted something appearing as he was being taken away.

It was...

A large purple eye!

It sprang forth within the cell and gazed intently at him, its singular pupil quivering as it focused on his body!

The sensation it gave was... unnerving but...

Within the millisecond that Guissepo stared into the eye that had just appeared, he saw many things.

He saw many profound things that enlightened his soul.

He felt things within it that rejuvenated his faith.

A vast experience that no one was aware of within less than a moment!

'Master Boron...?' Guissepo thought as he was lost in his own reality, tears streaking from his eyes.

It was evident that no one could see this eye but him.

Yet...

Something else appeared that everyone else witnessed.

This thing put everyone on guard, causing their eyes to grow wide!

It replaced the giant eye as it merely spawned within the cell with a grand intensity that lacked transition, staff in hand and with an extraordinary amount of mana roaring from its body!

A minute before...

Tulnas oversaw the mercenaries being taken somewhere to recover as he tried to focus his senses in order to pinpoint where the threat could be.

He was positive that whatever these things were would be here soon.

Or perhaps they already were.

"Prepare yourself, Festos. I think whatever these things will be here any moment," Tulnas said as he moved away, thinking that perhaps he should tell the mercenaries in the Guilds Association.

Skullius squinted his eyes before looking up where the sky had turned dark.

Even though there were lights everywhere within the city, giving much needed luminance, Skullius was focused on something else.

'It's night. I can't afford to stay here. If I suddenly revert back into my Penetrator form, I might flesh myself. For now...' Skullius slowly backtracked as simultaneously, he called. "Come on."

Immediately, an ethereal robe smothered his figure, around the neck, tiny bones being seen for a split second as they clutched onto each other to ensure that the robe was a comfortable fit.

Skullius continued to walk backwards without Tulnas noticing him, the Discount Human's presence having suddenly eased out of his senses as he anxiously prepared for an assault.

Skullius disappeared into the shadows, his presence evaporating altogether.

Tulnas was about to send word to his Guild when he suddenly to see that Skullius was gone.

"Huh?"

The moment he turned towards what had been Skullius' earlier position, a powerful activation of mana registered in his advanced senses at the same time!

The Tamer gave up on the issue with Skullius and focused on this threatening appearance!

'I knew it!' Tulnas thought as he turned to the direction of this surge of power!

It was a distance away, near the Guilds Association building!

A mist appeared with a grey hue which then went on to cover a vast portion of the area surrounding the building!

The people in the streets panicked and they were right in doing so as what emerged from this mist was a multitude of unforgiving masses of chaos!

Chapter 317: Seafood Surprise!

The instant that the madness began, a certain old man sensed it, followed by his short-haired sidekick.

"Something is here. In the city," Terian said with a calm voice, notifying Erkus who stopped and immediately rationalised the situation given the tone of the old man's voice.

As someone who had worked with Terian for a long time, he knew this man's subtle ways of indicating that there was trouble afoot and thus didn't waste any time.

He understood very well, that this threat wasn't simple from Terian's voice alone.

The man's thoughts spurred as he took certain things into account.

Could it be something to do with the cultist? Possibly.

Could it be something to do with.... the Cluster that Tulnas mentioned? Possibly.

He hadn't discounted that idea at all and was still thinking about it.

Between the two options however, the man was willing to bet on the latter but it was possible that this could be something else entirely.

"One of you go and check on the cultist. The other should do a full sweep of the entire city for where the threat is," Erkus said, Terian and Damilla immediately splitting up as they decided without a word on who was going where.

Damilla rushed towards the Association building while Terian started to glow with mana as he began searching the entire city with his vast sense!

It only took a few moments for him to capture the source of the disturbance.

Or rather the two sources of the disturbance, both of which were near the Association's building.

'Is it more Evenfall cultists..?' Terian thought as he rushed up one of the buildings and saw...

'Hmmm.... what on Aigas is that?'

"Everyone get back!" Tulnas yelled as his eyes constricted.

Those who heard and suppressed their curiosity back away with some who especially cautious running away as they saw the strange phenomenon ahead.

Where the mist coagulated and rolled, tall creatures began to emerge!

They had muscular builds with grey skin that was covered with what looked like boils all over, their shapes being humanoid but with tentacles that draped from their faces, reaching their abdomen.

Two extra long tentacles stretched from their backs being over ten meters long with fleshly barbs on all sides that dripped with a dark grey liquid!

VWOOSH! VWOOSH!

Such creatures leapt out of the grey mist with great fervour and as they did, visible pulses of energy blasted through the air with a shocking force that razed the ground and warped the air while blasting buildings and people away with exaggerated animation!

Strangely, this didn't seem to be a conscious action that the beasts did as Tulnas instantly recognised the cause.

'Damn! These bastards are either Tier 5 or above!'

Such massively strong creatures were casually spawning in the city!

Hundreds of the creatures darted from the mist and spread out with insane speed!

They left afterimages with their movement as they seemed to avoid the Association building and rush over to all over Inhone with hurried steps!

Some came in Tulnas' direction with their speed which far exceeded what he was capable of reacting to and the Tamer had no choice but to back away as he used his abilities to get the civilians out of the beasts' path!

Screams could be heard as the monsters that jutted from the mist caused havoc while blindly shattering through every obstacle they saw!

One particular beast landed on a populated street like a meteor, the impact of its descent shredding the people who had been close by into mincemeat!

One of the tentacles on its back then went on to swipe laterally with a harsh intensity, as this one gesture obliterated all things in the street into coarse and fine chunks!

The movements and attacks were something that normal people couldn't even see as before they even realised it, they were dead!

Another one of the beasts clawed over one of the buildings with a shocking momentum, its tentacles then turning erect as they sprayed a dark grey liquid over everything directly under it!

FSSSS!

The liquid rained over everything below; stalls, food, men and women alike.

Some were cowering under less than protective covers or running for their lives under the dark common precipitation but this rain did not discriminate.

The liquid did nothing to objects, but when it reached flesh and blood...

The people stained by this liquid had their bodies contort and roll over as they began to scream, their forms changing from the normal humanoid into something else entirely!

Their limbs lost their firmness and gained a flexible wiggle while their skins became covered in boils, the hue turning grey as their heads turned bulbous!

The light of intelligence vanished from their eyes while they also lost the ability to stand as soon enough, all that was left was an inking sight!

The transformation took only a few seconds, as the once dozens of people turned into squids!

Scenes like these were happening all over city, the speed at which the events were taking place being overwhelming!

Even Tulnas had been partially stunned!

These creatures truly had an aim!

A drive!

The Tamer saw the mercenaries who were in the Association building responding as they rushed out but the mist just in front of the building kept spawning these monsters that avoided the place altogether!

'At this rate, the City will be wiped out before those two show up! Tsk!' Tulnas thought as without any further deliberation, he burst forward towards the Association building!

Tens of the tall tentacled creatures rushed in his direction with a disgusting speed that left him only seeing vague afterimages, but he didn't intend to confront them directly!

The ground underneath his feet shuffled as golden brown sand emerged, exploding with a restrained force as it launched the Tamer and towards the reigning mist!

Tulnas flew rapidly while wiggling his limbs, his descent towards the grey shifting mass that spat out these chaos driven beasts being imminent!

'Here goes nothing!' he thought as he instructed Bradd on the next move!

Immediately, an encirclement of sand outlined the area around the mist and with a staggering upwards force, torrents of sand with bits of blue burst out from the ground!

They rose and spun into a massive pillar that held tens upon tens of the creatures that spawned from the mist that was now engulfed by sand, the monsters trying to free themselves!

This continued to occur as the sand rose, Tulnas riding above it as he yelled while gritting his teeth, "Don't slack on my watch, Bradd! More!"

The rising and rapidly spinning sand pillar grew larger as it ascended, carrying a multitude of these beasts along with it, some of which managed to escape!

A majority tried to use their overwhelming strength to break apart the pillar by to no avail, as it kept on shifting and rising!

The pillar rose up to 300 meters, with Tulnas looking down in order to see the carnage below!

At the very least, he was giving the others time to respond to these threats!

One would wonder why he had to endanger himself by even being here.

Well, the other drawback of Taming as a normal class was the fact that since the creature were bonded and sheltered in the body of the user, they could only use their full ability when closest to the Tamer, which is why Tulnas had leapt over to the mist to ensure that Bradd would exhibit his fullest capability!

The sand pillar kept on rising as the Tamer hoped that the others had begun mobilising and in the next few moments, he saw an indication that it was so.

An indication of one of the two he could count on the most at least.

A bright gold light shone bright from one of the buildings in the city.

No.

It wasn't just a light.

It was a bright, neon light that showered everything with a much needed luminance!

It was a light that signified the strength of a Master!

"Finally! Get to work, old man!" Tulnas yelled in relief.

Chapter 318: Live To Fight Another Day

Gin, Silrat and the others were left frozen stiff as the suffocating presence of the new entrant reigned within the cramped space of the cell and the corridor that led two different ways.

The Knights that held Guissepo stopped as the figure of this thing was something they hadn't expected to see - a tall creature with a bulbous head and slanted eyes that menacingly took in the surroundings for less than a moment.

Excessively long tentacles ran from below the creature's eyes, touching floor as their quantity and girth made them akin to a robe that the creature wore to cover the entirety of its body except for the arms.

The creature held a shiny, red staff in its hand with a diamond-shaped white gem atop which reflected a beautiful image that no one had enough time to properly marvel at or dissect.

The cultist between the stunned Purity Knights however, couldn't hold back his shock!

'Dear Boron...is this...!' Guissepo wondered as he looked at this creature carefully with his eyes trembling.

Immediately, his instincts and senses told him that this.... was it!

The large stream of Primus that they had been channelling to produce a powerful Cluster had finally birthed something worthwhile!

The robed figures that had been sitting around the formation back then had been drawing Primus from it and through their bodies to distribute it into locations where they designated new Clusters to form.

Guissepo could feel the Primus running through this creature but...

Why was it here?

The whole point of creating the Clusters was to give the entire continent a huge distraction.

Was this creature here to kill him along with everyone here?

Guissepo got his answer shortly after as the creature looked at him with its upwards slanted eyes and with one fluid motion, it pointed its staff at him, the white gem atop the Legendary object releasing a scintillating burst of calm energy that flushed over him with a milky white hue!

...!

The cultist felt the energy wrap around him tightly and....

Guissepo blinked and he was no longer in the dark space under the Guilds Association!

'Wha...'

He stumbled and fell to the dusty ground, his senses taking a moment to focus as he felt on himself no more binds!

Screams and light blasted his eyes and ears which made him turn to see the chaos all over the city as tall beasts raced through the city with incredible speeds while high up, a massive pillar of familiar sand that held many of the grey skinned creatures could be seen as it spun while continuing to rise upwards!

Guissepo looked closely at the very top, his advanced vision as a Master Stage expert focusing to see a familiar individual that he quite naturally loathed.

He turned to look around at the carnage, at the unforgiving beasts that chased after the civilians while destroying all obstacles, mercenaries rushing in from all directions to begin their counterattack!

'This is... this is... his will...!' Guissepo thought as he steadily picked himself up with a glad expression.

It wasn't all for naught after all!

The tentacled beasts passed by him without causing him harm, the cultist ignoring this peculiarity as instead, he smiled, his eyes almost tearing up.

As his strength started to pool back into his body with the binds now gone, he thought to join the fray, especially to pay back the owner of the golden-brown sand that rose into the air but...

"I have been given a second chance at extravagance. I can accomplish greater things... just as I was shown..." Guissepo thought to the large eye he had seen before.

He believed that the creature that had teleported him out of this predicament had something to do with it but even further, it could have been used as a means to communicate with him by his Master.

The thought of it brought him to almost squeal with joy.

'I hope you get to see what I accomplish, Tomin,' Guissepo thought.

There was nothing for him to do here.

Furthermore...

He looked up in another direction and saw the golden light that pulled everyone's attention.

There was another Master Stage expert in this city.

One that was ahead in his mastery of the power offered by this Stage.

This wasn't the time to think about all this however, as the man finally made the decision to use this chance to flee.

*

Back under the Guild Association building, the Knights and Silrat looked at what had just happened in pure shock!

The chains that had bound Guissepo fell to the ground as the captive had suddenly vanished!

The culprit responsible, with its upwards slanted eyes dangerously scrolled through everyone here in less than the blink of an eye and suddenly emitted a sound from behind its tentacles that caused no small amount of terror!

WHEEEZE....!

A dramatic pull exerted itself over the immediate atmosphere with such a grand force that the Knights who had been about to attack from within the cell were drawn towards the creature, from their mouths, mana and air gushing out before a second could pass!

The two men became like soulless husks with their chests indenting from the stolen breath, their bodies slumping to the ground instantly!

...!

Everyone outside the cell drew back in shock, Gin immediately inserting mana into his spatial storage ring in order to pull out one of the artefacts that the Purity had lent him for this mission!

Silrat had collected his senses and started to dart forward to enact a possible solution but...

The bulb headed creature drew in another breath, this time a dragged out one that instantly began to suck the living breath out of all those around!

WHEEEEEEEEEZZEEE!

A powerful suction drew everything in, including dust and pebbles as the Knights and Silrat were the first to get pulled over!

Gin felt the air he had in his lungs get pulled out, the same happening to Silrat and the others before they could act!

From the time Guissepo had disappeared, to this point, barely five seconds had passed, showing the ridiculous capability of the creature that had just appeared!

CLOP! CLOP! CLOP!

Suddenly, hurriedly footsteps sounded as a woman appeared from the other end of the corridor, her eyes which had been white turning back to her natural colour as she then yelled at the top of her lungs...

"USE YOUR AURA!"

Her voice echoed in everyone's ears with a sure audible impact which prompted everyone to heed what she had just instructed!

Bright flashes of energy stormed the corridor as each and every one of the individuals activated their Full Body Aura, a tremor of power rocking the entire space!

Consequently, the colour returned to the skins of all the Knights and Silrat as they immediately felt the suction on their mana get reduced by more than half, their ability to breathe returning as well!

Damilla's image with a bluish white Aura over her finally arrived behind the Knights!

Evidently, she was the one who had saved everyone's lives!

Her arrival was a sudden surprise as one would think she would have had to pass through the entrance to the Association which was both blocked by sand and populated by the grey skinned creatures that stormed away from the pull of the sand and mercenaries that chased after them.

However, just as there were secret passages within the Association building, as demonstrated by Jac before, the same applied outside, as certain entry points were created for emergencies!

Damilla had immediately begun to feel the horrendous waves of power from the creature that had appeared in Guissepo's cell when she entered the building and thus, she used her Divining to try to ascertain information about it by 'tasting' the bits of its mana that flooded the corridor, much like she had done back when she investigating the crime scene involving Skullius at the College of the Esteemed.

She had felt waves of mana tinged with Primus and her Divination had showed her much useless information save for one important detail that allowed her to salvage the situation.

As a result, she managed to pick up on a Unique ability that this creature had.

The ability to draw all forms of energy through deep breaths!

The tentacled creature narrowed its eyes as it paid attention to Damilla.

It hadn't wanted to outright kill these people as it wanted their mana, but their activation of Full Body Aura immediately reinforced their bodies, limiting its ability!

Gin immediately pulled out the object he had intended from the spatial storage ring while Silrat hurriedly swiped at the cell, the bars that had risen up to allow entry, immediately dropping down as the runes within the cell activated!

The tentacled creature felt the suppression before it could fully activate and it grunted, the gem at the tip of its staff shining bright as it then disappeared from the cell just as fast as it had appeared!

"Damn it!" Silrat cursed.

Chapter 319: A Master Works While The Sandy Tide Falls...

A golden light attracted the attention of all things in the city as it was set upon a high building, emanating from a single man.

It was akin to a neon light, its brightness having a distinct shade that was particularly attention-grabbing!

Stages were a form of power that allowed the physical body to become stronger in terms of strength, agility, endurance and potential.

The first three aspects could easily be recognised, but the third needed elaboration.

The human body was responsible for drawing out its own potential.

This also included its ability to draw potential from the core, regardless of colour as each had a set level of power it could unfurl.

The stronger the body became, the more it could utilise the core for many more things other than just mana and skills.

The Advancement Stage allowed the body to draw upon an energy that any core could produce whether it was white, blue or of a higher colour.

Aura.

While the efficacy and quantity differed with each colour, it was possible nonetheless and once the body reached the Master Stage, it would strain the core to pull on the advanced and perfect form of Aura, different from the basic Aura attainable on the Master Stage, which was dramatically more powerful and flexible!

When this was achieved, to maximise this aspect, most combatants would shape this Perfect Aura into unique forms which completely took advantage of the special trait of this Aura.

Yes, it could tremendously boost one's physical attributes way beyond what Full Body Aura could.

Yes, it could dramatically enhance one's skills, affinities and powers.

Yet, the one thing that set this aspect of the Master Stage above the rest, was a bit more interesting...

A shriek was heard throughout the entire city as Terian who stood above the building formed his Perfect Aura into a marvellously beautiful shape!

A massive bird was formed, different shades of gold highlighting its figure as it flapped its extensive wings majestically above Terian!

It was a hawk.

Its downward curved beak, sharp, reddish golden eyes which were adorned with black outlines as well as its bulky body which emitted a strange halo, like a flare garnered everyone's attention with its call!

This was the manifestation of Perfect Aura into a Master Stage aspect called a Genuine Incarnation!

'Hawk of Conflagration...'

This was the name of this marvellous bird made of Perfect Aura.

Threads of golden energy could be seen linking themselves from Terian to the hawk as both looked down with rapt attention from their height.

The moment this creature appeared, the grey skinned beasts looked up, some backing away in fright at the waves of energy that were being released from the hawk.

However, after merely a moment of hesitation, the creatures' eyes became overtaken with a light of zeal, as if something commanded them to continue forward!

The octopus humanoids resumed their assault on the surroundings without paying Terian any mind.

'Hmm? That's unnatural. Are they being coerced into ignoring me by something else?' Terian thought.

As he looked at the massive number of civilians either running away or hiding, he knew he couldn't stall any longer while gathering sufficient information.

He raised his hand and focused on all the beasts that were closest to his location.

With a harsh breath that emitted a gust of blistering heat, Terian called out a single word.

"ABLAZE!"

The Hawk of Conflagration above him called magnificently as it raised its wings, its golden glow erupting with a greater intensity as a wild gush of mana poured from Terian's brilliant blue core and wove itself into a Special quality spell that was simply named 'Ablaze'!

The hundred of beasts that raced through the city near Terian suddenly ignited with a sound akin to crumpled paper, orange flames that dyed the surroundings with their tint roaring ferociously as they rose up with an unforgiving high temperature!

The old man hiddenly gnashed his teeth, as everywhere these beasts were, civilians could also be seen and thus he had to control the intensity of the flame otherwise he would be contributing to the death toll!

The horrifying flames turned the ground red in a matter of moments as over 90 of the octopus humanoids were set aflame!

Terian watched as some died immediately, while others kept swinging their tentacles as their enormous strength demolished entire blocks with but one swift lateral swipe!

They were incredibly durable!

'Of course, they won't be that easy to kill...' Terian said as he made a gripping gesture with his arms, as if he was holding a bow and pulling on its string!

The Hawk of Conflagration called once more as with this sound, a large bright orange bow appeared in Terian's hand with a wispy form, a thin, hot sliver of flame acting as the string.

A white flaming arrow appeared, ready to be fired as it had nocked itself on the bow already!

It produced a sigh of terrible heat as the air couldn't stand for it, and started dancing instead!

'Mollifying Flame Arrow!' Terian's mind subconsciously thought as he set the arrow loose, the white hot construct releasing a nerve wrecking crackling noise with its release!

The atmospheric temperature instantly rose as the arrow barrelled through the unsuspecting air, and in its flight, disintegrated into dozens of spots of blinding white flames that hissed as they targeted the wildly dashing beasts!

FSSP! FSSP! FSSP!

Seamlessly and accurately, the heads of dozens of the octopus humanoids were melted upon being smashed into by the sparks of white hot flame!

It had to be noted how ridiculous it was for Terian to perfectly aim at these creatures as they moved at such abnormal speeds!

The old man's keen eyes made sure that each attack hit its target at the very least and in this way, he effectively struck down a few hundred of the enemies!

The response from the city was subpar and even though from a certain location, he could see a group of powerful ladies tearing away at the beasts strategically and effectively, this wasn't true for all the others who were fighting the enemy!

This progress was still far from excellent.

The old man turned his head to the rising pillar of golden brown sand which had reached a height of half a kilometre at this point and he couldn't be more glad to see the troublemaker he was constantly at odds with single-handedly pull much of the weight!

Tulnas who was above the sand pillar grit his teeth with rivers of sweaty staining his clothes as he struggled to keep the progress he had made.

'I think this is enough! Drop them, Bradd!' he gave the signal to his tamed beast.

The pillar of sand immediately began to tilt, along with all the trapped beasts as Tulnas switched his position to riding it like a wave as it arched and stormed over in a direction further away from the city!

The spin of the sand tornado accelerated in order to keep the beasts in a constant shuffling that limited their options for escape and as this occurred, the looming figure of the sand pillar above the city literally leapt over, detaching itself from the entrance to the Association building!

The leaning sand tornado then soared for more than a kilometre away from the city with its weight as it sailed through the air being felt as if from the night sky!

Tulnas immediately leapt off, his eyes remaining on the falling pillar which then went on to crash over the hard ground with a thunderous boom!

'I doubt that killed any of them. If they are not stalled, they will reach the city again in no time,' Tulnas thought as he looked at the city which was still plagued by the monsters that ran around with vivacious intensity!

Thankfully though, most of the Guilds and Knights were fighting against the monsters while saving civilians but the unfortunate truth was they were losing.

There were simply too many of these bastards!

"Damn it! At this rate everyone we'll all be dead soon! Where the hell is Unbreakable?!"

*

Terian kept firing arrow after arrow while at times using the spell Ablaze, but the fact that he had to watch out for the damage he caused severely limited his abilities.

He had managed to kill tens more of the creatures with the enhancement effect brought on by his 'Hawk of Conflagration' when he suddenly turned to his left as his instincts warned him of imminent danger!

A milky white light rushed towards him through the air with a blinding speed, emitting a ferocious deceiving glow that almost hid its intent to vanquish!

Terian had barely managed to turn his head when...

BOOOM!

Chapter 320: Double Teaming An S.O.B!

A blaring noise ruptured the ears of the nearby civilians as an explosion of magnificent proportions erupted the moment a bright white glow reached Terian!

A blinding flash of radiance had devoured the night sky for a few moments as the building that Terian had been standing above was demolished, degraded into dust and chunks along with everything that was in a 30 meter radius!

The casualties were not few as many of them had died painlessly in that single instance!

Only a large gouged out space, like a crater remained with intense billows of dust and smoke that rose obscuring the view of what remained!

In the distance, an octopus humanoid was standing above the Guilds Association building as it extended its staff.

It had noticed this powerful being that had been killing too many of its own at a time and had thus considered it a threat enough to kill.

It hadn't even considered Tulnas a threat as the man was merely delaying the inevitable. With his ability, which it discerned from his core, it decided to ignore him even as he took almost half of its fellow spawn outside the city.

They would be back soon enough.

The beast then sucked in a deep breath, like a raspy wheeze, pulling on the air and mana from the atmosphere and the surrounding mercenaries that were battling against the beasts!

Dozens of mercenaries who had been fighting the invaders in their groups of five to ten, suddenly clutched their necks as they felt the breath and mana from their bodies being forcefully stolen!

The only exceptions were those with their Full Body Auras active as the rest fell to death quickly!

In a few moments, massive amounts mana gushed towards the creature and it swiftly consumed them all behind the tentacles that covered its face!

"You're not very cautious, are you?" a voice sounded from behind the creature as its narrow, slanted eyes with lateral slits turned with surprise, finding Terian to have suddenly emerged behind it, his fist already barrelling towards its face!

It was merely an aged fist hurtling through the air, however, a white flame that distorted the surrounding atmosphere with a stifling heat and melted the roof encased the old man's hand as the Hawk of Conflagration remained as his source of extra oomph to his already monstrous strength above him!

The moment the punch connected with the head of the beast, a searing heat bubbled outward and practically erased the top of the Association building, melting it and blasting it apart simultaneously as the figure of the tentacled beast flew away while its face was roasted with severe burns!

It screeched loudly as it flew tens of miles in a few seconds and crashed horribly over the rough ground with a graceless roll!

A majority of its tentacles had been burned into gooey masses of charred flesh that bubbled and boiled, giving it a pathetic appearance!

Terian fist died of the terrific white flame that he had and he instantly bolted ahead to finish off this creature which had suddenly attacked him.

The attack it released was much more deadly than he had anticipated and that coupled with its Tier being possibly higher than any of the others from the little he could sense, didn't give him a good feeling.

That said, it was feat to consider, how Terian managed to survive the beam of white light that the octopus humanoid had sent his way as it shone a light over the special property of Genuine Incarnations!

The ability to NEUTRALISE all mana and basic Aura generated phenomenon to a certain extent!

With a Genuine Incarnation active, depending on the core and potential of the individual using it, it was possible to perfectly neutralise all mana and Aura augmented attacks, leaving the user unscathed!

This was how Terian had seamlessly escaped death as the Hawk of Conflagration had instantly reacted even when he had barely been able to!

After surviving the attack, the old man had used an ability he had demonstrated to have before, an aspect beyond the base standard of all Mages which was the Elemental Patch.

Teleportation!

He had manipulated space to appear behind the creature and dish out a fine beating!

With this partial knowledge on the next Patch of Magecraft above the Elemental, which gave him weight above that of a normal Mage, Terian was a monster in his own right.

Shockingly however, it seemed that there were things about this creature that he could not discern, such as its core, but he ignored them for now.

He dashed towards the octopus humanoid which grabbed its fallen staff and began standing up when suddenly...

WHOOSH!

An armoured Knight raced passed him, eclipsing him in speed as he was wrapped up in a vicious force of white-coloured Aura while wielding...

A large bastard sword!

The Knight's movement was ridiculous as he reached the position of the octopus humanoid in a single breath's worth of time, his sword swinging mercilessly at the thing's head!

The beast quickly responded by slamming its staff into the ground which manifested a pristine white cylindrical barrier around itself that tanked the attack!

CLANG!

The bastard sword clashing against the barrier caused a heart-shaking shudder on the ground as the two battling individuals sank a full meter deep into the dirt!

The sword wielding Knight was naturally Gin who had pulled out the object he had intended to use on this bastard before!

He and his fellow Knights along with Silrat and Damilla and exited the Association building only to see the chaos outside.

While each had gone to do their part to save the city, Gin had noticed the octopus beast and immediately used rushed forward to finish it off after seeing it in this pathetic state!

The bastard sword he wielded had a sky blue blade that looked spotless with faint runes etched onto it, a golden hilt and guard allowing for an incredibly comfortable experience during his handling!

This sword, the Hollow Culling Blade, granted him boosts to his speed and strength that allowed him to potentially exceed even those a Stage above him in physical ability!

As the sword and barrier reached a stalemate, Gin grinned as his hatred towards this creature knew no bounds.

"Your judgement for allowing a heretic to escape is due!" he called as the Hollow Culling Blade suddenly shone with a luminous blue hue, a skill from the sword being activated.

The octopus humanoid noticed the looming danger and sucked in a deep breath with a raspy wheezing being heard!

Gin felt his mana being drawn upon but he didn't let up even as this suction by the beast eclipsed any of its earlier ones, the sharp draw pulling on a vast range which prompted ridiculous gusts of mana and air to be called over to it!

For Terian however, this experience was different, as the pull on mana that others felt, he didn't experience at all!

He resumed his high speed dash to the creature as the cause of this resistance of his to the creature's natural unique ability, was because of a complex symbol imbedded in his core – a requirement for all Mages.

The Reflective Sigil Matrix!

A marvellous construct that set apart Mages from other Classes!

Gin's sword trembled as the skill that had been activated from it, Hollow Culling, made short work of the cylindrical barrier around the octopus humanoid!

The blade sliced at the beast which couldn't react at all and the result was rather cruel!

It wasn't a lateral gash that appeared on the beast's body as one would expect given how Gin struck, but a large arching hole that replaced the creature's entire shoulder and torso!

Red blood sprayed from the creature as Gin landed a few meters behind it with a roll while in the next moment...

VWOOOSH!

A roaring flame devoured the creature that shrieked horribly as the crackling flame spun viciously around it with an orange tint while releasing a blistering heat!

Terian had wasted no time in activating Ablaze to finish off the creature!

The sizzling of flesh was heard as the image of the creature turned into a dark, hazy swirl under the roaring flames, its throes giving a sense of achievement to the two who had attacked it!

Terian relaxed a little while Gin backed away, his Aura still flooding around him.

After twenty full seconds passed without anything occurring to dispel their thoughts of victory, the two finally relaxed.

Huff, huff!

The two men took in breaths.

"What a tough bastard," Gin said begrudgingly as he slowly dropped his sword from its stance.

"It was too reliant on its staff and it clearly wasn't adept at close confrontation. We were lucky..." Terian pointed out as he let out a breath.

The flames continued to crackle as the image of the beast continued to burn between the two.

"There's still work to do. Let us both not waste our Aura," Terian said to which Gin nodded.

There was still much to do and whatever else remained could be decided upon later.

The old man took hurried steps towards the flames to see if he could potentially retrieve the staff that the creature used.

It was probably a natural treasure and if he could get it, it would no doubt become easier to defend the city.

However...

VWOOOOOSH!

The flames of Ablaze that Terian had cast over the beast, roared with a burst of eagerness that made him halt.

'What's going on?' the old man creased his brow.

Why was the flame growing stronger?

If anything, it should have been growing weaker!

VWOOOOOOOSH!

The flames suddenly rose high with the sound akin to an muffled explosion, their colour changing from the original orange to an unsettling blue!

A sudden arc of wind blew Terian in the face, pushing him a distance away while it called the Knight, Gin, to fully guard!

...!

The old man did his best to steady himself but on his skin, he felt the irritation of an atrocious amount of mana bloom from the flames ahead as the figure of the octopus humanoid that had been dissolving from his view started to become bigger and clearer!

"What in the world...?!" Gin exclaimed as he watched a vastly taller figure walk out of the blue flames with heavy, bulky steps!

Far different from the image of the tentacle covered beast from before, a hulking muscular creature appeared, staff in hand!

It emitted a ridiculous amount of energy that exceeded what it had been emitting before by at least five times!

Furthermore...

"This is... troublesome...." Terian mumbled to himself as he sweated.

Also different from before, the tentacles that hid much of the power of this beast were no longer hiding its powers as now, the elderly man could see with clarity that this monster... had a purple core!

Terian took steps back with the Hawk of Conflagration flapping its expansive wings above him.

He felt stifled for breath, much like Gin who immediately dropped to his knees as he sensed the overbearing energy of this beast!

The beast emitted a condescending grunt as it lifted its staff with its now bulky hand and pointed it upwards, a stream of milky white energy racing into the air!

It soared to almost a kilometre before it generated a grey mist that expanded to cover an enormous distance!

A distance equivalent to half the entire city!

The grey dust swirled and squirmed as something began to appear from it, slowly and creepily.

Something huge!

Something enormous!

Bits of dirt began to fall from the sky like rain, from the mist, as with this, Terian widened his eyes as he saw what was emerging!

An enormous island!

It cast its shadow over the city as its cone-shaped bottom dripped of chunks of dirt and rock!

The grey mist disappeared as soon as the island appeared in its entirety and then... the colossal mass began to fall.

Everyone looked up at this ridiculous phenomenon, the weight of the island beginning to barrel over the city with a mighty storm of wind blowing everything that was below!

The terror in everyone's eyes was palpable as this was simply beyond everyone's expectations.

An entire island had been summoned?!

From the looks of it, it seemed to have simply been torn from somewhere!

An image like this was enough to cause many to fall into despair!

As the dirt and rocks rained over the city, filling everyone with a sense of hopelessness, one individual looked up with trembling hands much like all the regular civilians.

An insignificant-looking hunched old man who had been hiding under the cover of the fruit trees he had grown and the bushes he tended to could be seen looking up as his mouth moved constantly.

His heart was quaking but he didn't stop mumbling to himself.

As he trembled, he gnashed his teeth as he persisted in his chanting.

"Regret brings Regression, Regression brings Strength. Strength brings Salvation and Salvation brings Peace..."

With this chant that meant nothing to anyone else but him, the old man suddenly to change...