

Undead 421

Chapter 421: Unlimited POWEEEEEEEEER! (4)

The Hybrid Luman was born.

A being with the mix of a Luminant and of... a Discount Human.

The manifestation behind his back was proof that Skullius had been conjoined with aspects of a higher existence!

This [Wing of Embrace], it jolted up what he had thought was the current maximum of his new strength to a higher degree, so much so that Skullius felt that in this moment, he could scrap with Bek at equal footing despite what he had seen the former Capital Order Knight to be capable of.

'Wow...!' Skullius felt the presence of the wing and marvelled.

He couldn't see it, but it was a part of him so he understood it quite a bit, yet most of its mysteries were hidden from him.

'I'm no longer a Discount Human, it seems,' he thought while smiling.

Once again, as if all this wasn't enough to swallow already, two more shocking pieces of news were reported by the guidance field, along with their effects promptly bursting through Skullius!

['Just Light' has deemed the <Wing of Embrace> profound enough to latch onto, changing it to the <Wing of the Just>]

['Just Light' affinity has been promoted to 'D' rank]

[You have acquired the skill 'Basic Light Weaving']

"No way!" Skullius exclaimed.

From within his body, from the Fruit of World Myths that was etched in him, a serene light crept up and imbedded itself into the [Wing of Embrace], making it grow a meter and a half longer!

It now stretched at a length of 3.2 meters!

Skullius' body shuddered from the additional strength boost that came from this, the glittering lights over his body becoming more bountiful while gushing out an array of colour!

Yuyui looked at all this with gaping wonder as she didn't know what the flesh was going on!

Skullius groaned.

He couldn't even think properly from the burden of strength as well as the crippling sense of weakness that came with it!

Yet, as stated before, there was one other thing that was let loose, freed because Skullius had grown much, much stronger!

[The remnants of Fulgardt within you gush with light applause]

[You have inherited the <WILL OF UNDERSTANDING>]

[You have inherited the <WILL OF BLOODLUST>]

[You have inherited the <WILL OF CUNNING>]

[You have inherited the <WILL OF BRUTALITY>]

"Auuuughhhhhhhhh!" Skullius screamed at the top of his lungs!

This..

This was unbearable!

Between the crushing might provided by the [Wing of the Just] and the series of <WILLS>, Skullius felt an outrageous feeling of suffocation!

There was his body which grew incredibly stiff from the storm of power and his soul which grew tense as if it was slowly being squeezed between massive pillars of pressure!

What was this?!

His advancement had unlocked too many things at once, giving birth to a circumstance where all of this could actually... kill him!

What was most terrifying about this experience was the <WILLS>!

They were not inherent boosts to his strength but more like raging voices that caused his soul to ripple with commands that he couldn't understand!

Masculine voices that each had the strength to rattle his soul!

Each pulled Skullius here and there, flooding Skullius with their intent which he couldn't grasp!

This was bad!

This was really, really bad!

'Damn it! Damn it! Damn it! What do I do?! Sila are you there?! SILA!!!!' Skullius called within, but there was no answer.

'Great! Am I really going to lose this way?!'

Skullius cursed his chibi soul!

He clearly felt it get overpowered!

Was he just weakened from the constant damage he had been taking to his soul?!

Is that why all this was too much?!

Right when he had attained a victory against an impossible opponent...!

Right when he had finished his First Trial through the simplest, entirely self-serving contract through the Tie of Exchange with Yuyui...!

Right when he had unlocked all these powers, he was about to be crushed by all of them coming together at once...!

This was tragic!

This was...

WAIT...!

'The Tie of Exchange! Of course...!' Skullius screamed in his mind as he hurriedly gave Ferex a mental command.

The Apostle had rushed over to its master at the first sight of his discomfort but had not been sure what to do as it didn't know what exactly was plaguing him!

Now, however, it received an order.

Finally!

'Give me the ring!'

Immediately, Ferex did as he was asked.

Skullius felt his will wane and drown under the voices that uttered in an unfamiliar, powerful language as he injected mana into the ring and pulled out something he hoped would work.

Yuyui watched this with her mouth agape, wondering if this was because of the Temple or something else.

Was someone fighting her finally appeared means of escape?

"COME ON, MISTER SIR! YOU CAN DO IT!" she cheered in fury and anguish, hoping for Skullius to get over this!

Skullius collapsed under the might of power, kneeling down with a distraught expression that showed his pain while he screamed bitterly!

On his hands, weird tufts of string-like darkness started to form as well as over his ankles!

His face started to get covered with a golden white cover that could be described as anything between a mask or a second face!

Something was overtaking Skullius' control of his own body!

His long auburn hair started to get tinged with a black hue that rushed over all of it within a breath while the Hybrid Luman's eyes turned dark, with furious wisps of darkness bursting from them!

Over his midsection, a kilt-like object appeared, its colour dark with one piece over its centre that extended beyond the lining, words of golden white etched onto it!

Skullius' guttural scream quickly turned into a hoarse howl of pain and then... into a roar of power!

A roar that reverberated through this entire space.

Through the entire corridor Skullius had come from.

Through the entire Temple of Unlusted Tears with a heavy sense of dreadful power that turned Bassbion and Yagrina alert.

The waters of Fuwin's Territory rippled as well, the giant dolphin narrowing his eyes as he also grew tense!

This power.

It was...

....

"Uh..." Skullius forcefully opened his eyes.

A veil of darkness had suddenly covered his awareness, locking him out on everything happening around him.

Now...

His sight, which he didn't expect to have, focused on his body to see that he was... in his skeletal form.

Not the impressive one from the Penetrator, but his old skeletal form from Deadmanland!

"What?! Why do I look like this? What's going on?!"

Around him, a beautiful but damaged land filled with violets could be seen.

Every piece of this land was cracked, its integrity rather shaky even as it held a fine level of beauty.

The sky was dark green, with a menacing view that would make the weak of heart give out their last embers of hope while beyond the land was flaming red sea that also induced a certain level of pressure.

The flowers around Skullius had small orbs of light that produced images and sound, scenes taking place within them.

It was a marvel that Skullius felt so familiar with.

This landscape, the sky, the sea...

It was all too familiar.

"I didn't think you'd call for me only when you were on the brink of perishing, aha ha," a boisterous voice spoke, making Skullius turn with both relief and hesitation.

Chapter 422: An Old Chum

The image of a familiar face appeared before Skullius with several changes when compared to what he remembered.

The voice that had just now spoken belonged to an individual whom he knew as a giant. One particularly terrifying one.

Sausifillis, otherwise known as Sause.

Skullius narrowed his eyes.

Luckily, his last-ditch attempt at saving himself from being crushed under pressure had worked, but it hadn't been a certain, sure-fire method.

He had called on the nail that acted as the medium of Tie of Exchange between himself and Sause, calling for the giant to appear as stipulated by the mutual agreement!

"We're not friends. Why would I call you any other time?"

"Fair enough, aha ha."

The giant was no so giant at this time, his height being merely a full head taller than Skullius.

On top of his head which had been bald last time the two met, patches of blonde hair had begun to grow but just barely so.

Furthermore, unlike how Sause had been naked before, this time around, he was adorned in a thick dark blue cloak with hairy tassels at the ends that hid everything else he wore, revealing only his thick arm which had a steel brace that oozed of compounded mana.

His skin looked healthier but faint red veins still ran over it, giving him an unnatural look while sharp, close set eyes with a bright red hue showed his mood.

"You have quite the lovely inner soul space," Sause said as he looked around at the field of violets and then beyond Skullius. "And quite the intriguing Reflection."

'What is this guy talking about?' Skullius thought.

His bones rattled as he turned to where Sause was gazing with surprise that was reflected in his blazing sockets.

'Reflection..?' Skullius thought.

In the distance, over the flaming sea was as a tall, burly skeleton decked in darkness.

Its sockets flared as it looked over in this direction silently, a massive green scimitar in its hand that billowed with waves of dark red energy.

The amount of mana it spewed was ridiculous as Skullius could feel it even from here, but there was no threat or killing intent in it. At least for him.

'Is this what Sila was talking about? The Reflection of my soul?' Skullius questioned before turning to the violets around him that held orbs of light from which Skullius could vaguely hear and see scenes playing out. 'What are these? Memories?'

The skeleton's bony hand reached out to touch one of the violets when...

"I wouldn't do that. Normally someone at your level can't even visit this place. You're not supposed to aha ha. I brought you here so we could have a clearer conversation that is not riddled with mighty roars or screams. Your current state is less than desirable after all," Sause said with a smile.

Skullius withdrew his hand from the flower.

Was that right?

Given what Sause had just said, he assumed that this was where Ferex appeared that time he asked the Apostle to extract information about the girl he kept seeing.

He gave one last glance at the field and the Reflection a distance away before turning back his attention to Sause.

"So... what is happening to me?" Skullius asked the giant.

Sause sat down, laying his arm over his knee. He patted the ground next to him, motioning for Skullius to sit as well.

The bony un-undead hesitated only for a brief moment before sitting beside Sause who then spoke.

"First of all, I should advise that you be more careful with the Tie of Exchange," Sause said with a cautionary smile. "If you perish before our exchange is complete, undesirable consequences will eagerly visit my house."

"What do you mean? Wasn't our deal that in exchange for your freedom, you'd help me with my Arch-Lich problem? I thought me dying would release you from the Tie of Exchange?"

"Aha ha. You're still green, little one. A Tie of Exchange is more than a simple contract. It is an absolute transaction. At least that's what it has become from old times. I already attained my freedom as you promised in accordance with the exchange but you have yet to gain what you desire from me."

"I am bound to pay it even if you die, though in that case, things will grow a little more complicated, aha ha. On top of this, I am the one who initiated the Tie of Exchange so I bear a heavier burden."

Skullius' socket flames flared.

It was this serious?

He didn't realise.

An exchange had to happen nomatter what!

This put the one who initiated the Tie of Exchange in a rather rough position!

"I see," Skullius said while scratching his chin.

"Hmmm," Sause hummed as he traced his finger on the ground to this field.

"As for what is happening to you... my guess from what I have observed is, you somehow awakening the power of a Luminant triggered a variety of changes in you... quite a lot of them. Of these, uh, changes...you gained access to another of Fulgardt's power. One of the 9 seeds of Fulgardt's masterpiece, the Fruit of World Myths. I believe he called this particular one, Seramoro, Oblivion's Edge."

Skullius' sockets dimmed. The seeds of Fruit of World Myths...

He knew about these.

He had attained one of them before, [Crude World Projection]!

Now, he had unlocked a new one?

"Aha ha, I remember how that form caused the pitiful armies of his enemies to shudder and bow. It was the perfect embodiment of the damn tyrant, which is the problem for you. Such a thing isn't meant to be wielded by you in its current form and, that mixed in with how Fulgardt's WILL sinks its fangs into you the stronger you grow, this has put a tremendous burden on your soul."

If Skullius could frown, he would do so at this moment.

So another seed, as well as the WILL of Fulgardt...

"Does this mean I will eventually lose myself and become... him?" Skullius thought while recalling the notification he had received after inheriting Fulgardt's powers back then.

'You have taken up the power of a legend who died before his story ended. You shall finish his story.'

A remnant of Fulgardt is engraved into you permanently.'

Something along these lines.

Now that it seemed to be coming to fruition, he couldn't help but take it seriously and thus the question he threw at Sause.

"I've found that to be the objective of many humans who left their powers behind for others to find. To somehow carry over bits of themselves while overtaking the one who inherits their abilities. It is quite distasteful, if you ask me," Sause said as he spat on the ground.

'Hey, you're spitting on my soul!' Skullius cried inwardly.

"You say that as if the giants are any different. Wouldn't you do the same, large bro?"

It seemed natural to Skullius that some of these freaks of nature would do such a thing. Heck even he would do it!

"Of course not! My entire race believes in accepting times past and letting those favoured for the near and far future to live as they wish. Our anatomy makes sure we accept that fact. You would be surprised by how much my race desires to give, aha ha. We once gave to all other races EVERYTHING after all."

Skullius scoffed.

"And then you turned on everyone and then got beaten back to wherever you came from."

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!" Sause laughed raucously while slapping his knee a couple of times. "That tale gets me every time I hear it. I'll let you believe whatever it is the Sif and the humans think to be true."

"Huh?" Skullius was caught off guard.

What was Sause insinuating?

Was what he had read not the truth?

Before he inquired further, the giant changed back the subject which had derailed.

"My time is valuable so let us hurry this up," Sause said, immediately after, a bright flare shimmering over this entire island of violets with a silvery hue that discoloured everything else!

This light seemed to scan everything on this island before it last landed on Skullius' skeletal body, giving him a shimmering silver highlight.

The skeleton didn't feel any different from before even as he was decked in this light, which prompted him to ask...

"What's this?"

"I always had something prepared and on my person in case of this inevitable situation - you summoning me. Also, Fulgardt was incredibly overbearing and that was bound to be the case after his death. It was a given you would be squashed eventually so I prepared for that. I'm currently suppressing the WILLS manifesting within you from the outside as well as Seramoro but...

there's something you need to take care of first before I proceed."

"Huh?" Skullius was so confused.

What did Sause mean by suppressing?

And what was this something he had take care of?

The giant briskly stood as something like a colourless string sprang from his body and shot towards a certain direction.

What lay in the direction the string rushed to was rather eye-catching as it showed more of the pathetic state of this island than just the cracks over the crust.

It was a gorge. A very deep one.

From within, multiple lights kept flashing erratically, making Skullius anxious.

Sause began to walk in this direction and Skullius followed, the two reaching it and looking down to what it held in the deep.

A figure was bound within it by golden chains, its likeness being blurred out such that it was hard to recognised.

Skullius instantly recognised what this was however.

No.

Who it was.

"Sila?"

Chapter 423: Integral Choices

"Sila?" Skullius voiced in surprise as he looked down to where the two slopes that reached deep into the ground met.

The crust of this depth was torn to a grander degree as no greens could be seen unlike with the area above. Strange billows of colour would sometimes glow from the walls of the depth of the gorge as

if to show how dire the situation was in terms of the integrity, especially at the base of the island where parts kept falling off.

This gorge stretched out to cover the island like a gash, but it could still mostly be considered a giant pit where a hazy blue figure with the outline of a muscular man could be seen kneeling down while golden chains that pulsed powerfully, as if reemphasising how screwed he was, sank into his torso!

The expression of the aged soul couldn't be discerned and neither could his more definite features but Skullius knew it was him.

It was definitely Sila.

After pushing away the surprise, Skullius flung a question into the deep, the echoes of his voice racing down the walls.

"Hey! Sila! What happened to you?!"

The aged soul turned his head up and gazed at Skullius and Sause.

"Hmph, tomato flinger..." the old Tower General murmured.

Skullius could see that he was in pain.

The golden chains that sank into him seemed to be latched on so hard that the experience was equivalent to having meat skewers dug into one's torso.

It was dreadful.

"Oh. Is this another new development, aha ha? You were housing another soul in you?" Sause asked with intrigue as he leapt up and descended into the gorge!

Skullius cursed and followed along.

The two came to face Sila who kept his focus on Sause, evidently wary.

"Tomato flinger... who is this?" Sila questioned.

"Answer me first. What happened to you?" Skullius answered with his first question.

Sila drew silent for a while, apparently not pleased with the sass and the torture to his soul.

"That golden light from earlier. As soon as it appeared, it bound me and dragged me here. I can't... move," Sila finally answered with a furious tone.

The power from the Luminant Seed had seen him as an impurity and bound him.

This was a more merciful outcome though as little did Sila know that if Skullius hadn't hogged much of the energy in completing his core and adjusting his mana pathways, he would have been purged, the rest of the energy used to patch Skullius' soul in his stead!

Skullius himself was surprised to hear this.

From the looks of it, this binding was different from his own way of locking up Sila in a 'bubble'. It was more... absolute.

"Poor soul. I sense you are from an era long passed, brought back to nothing but an open space where you don't belong and where nothing is saved for you. Such a shame..." Sause said, his smile turning into a stern visage that showed genuine pity.

This feeling would have been amplified if he knew that Sila had also been in the Labyrinth.

"Sadly, your fate lies in the hands of this little one, though I assume you two have a favourable relationship at best, aha ha."

Skullius gazed at Sila while the latter gazed Skullius.

Favourable? That was hilarious!

"He's the thing I have to take care of before you help me with the thing?" Skullius asked with keen socket flames.

"Indeed. The wills infecting your body are mostly automatic. At least at this stage. They are not as vibrant with the presence of Fulgardt and thus they activate after certain periods of time without any input. What I can do for you is to assist in integrating these WILLS with your soul. To absorb them, essentially.

You make them your own while denying their ability turn you into the Second Fulgardt. The Second Immoral. I trust you would also see that as a good approach to your future. I know, I would," Sause explained while looking up where the skies were dark green.

"If he is bound like this, your inner soul will consider him as an anomaly that needs to be removed when the process outside fully begins. Thus, the choice of whether to keep him or get rid of him lies in your hands. Aha ha."

Sause had recognised the presence of the Arch-Lich in this space, slowly creeping up to devour this island that was shockingly still standing.

This affirmed that truly, he was going to have to fight an Arch-Lich in the future but also, it gave him more hints as to what he could stand to gain besides being released of his end of the bargain.

This individual with two unique powers...

Asides from accomplishing his obligation to the Tie of Exchange, there was more he intended to explore with this special existence.

Skullius on the other hand went into deep thought.

It was pretty convenient that Sause knew that he would be having problems containing Fulgardt's powers, or rather, he didn't know the full scope of the relationship between Fulgardt and Sause.

But none of that mattered to him.

What he thought was...

'So I can take in all these WILLS and merge them with myself? Understanding, Brutality, Cunning and Bloodlust? What do I gain from them though?' Skullius thought.

If he took these WILLS to do literally as they were titled, CUNNING was easily the best among them, followed by UNDERSTANDING, though he didn't know exactly what it entailed.

BLOODLUST and BRUTALITY were a little... edgy but he didn't know if leaving them within him would be a good idea.

But if he were to take them in, what would he become?

Skullius raised his head and faced Sause.

"How do I know that this will even work? Weren't you captured by Fulgardt in the Labyrinth too? How would you be able to suppress the WILLS of someone stronger than you?" Skullius fired a bombardment of questions that Sause snickered at.

"That's a trade secret. I'm not some benevolent mystic library. I'm doing the bare minimum required to keep you alive, little one. Nothing more," Sause said "Now, make your choice."

Sila who was shivering at spaced intervals because of the pain turned to Skullius who gazed at him with flaming sockets.

The skeleton was deliberating on whether keeping Sila was the best option, as opposed to eliminating him right here.

The latter would give Skullius a lot more breathing room along with literally purging his anxiety on being ambushed with another scheme from Sila while the former would maintain the status quo with their... relationship.

Skullius sank in thought as he considered these options deeply.

There were many factors he intended to make sure were made clear so that he could make a final decision.

Quite a bit of them.

His main concern was with the WILLS however as they were a bigger deal.

This could lead to another version of him that was better or worse.

Merging with all these...

Hmmm.

What would be born?

Skullius thought about this and his internal affair with the Tower General for twenty minutes before opening his mouth and..

Chapter 424: The New Anomaly

Yuyui lay shook on the ground which populated by corpses, most of which were agape as if just as shocked as she was when looking at the scene before her.

Today was definitely one of the days she would pin to memory till the day of her death, her real death, as the number of occurrences that had spilled into the last seven-ish hours has dribbled between astonishing and insane.

The current thing which she was looking at with her two, different coloured eyes took the whole freaking cake however.

It was something she had believed to be a myth. Something society had discarded as a mere folktale, causing the complete disregard of the First Grand War of legend as mere such.

A legend.

A giant was standing a short distance from her.

The poor lady had to crank her neck up to see where the behemoth's head was as his whole figure easily reached the ceiling of this space.

The massive cloak this giant wore made her even more anxious, while its red glowing eyes made her shiver.

Luckily, besides from the giant smiling at her briefly with a wink weird wink added on top, he hadn't paid her much attention.

Instead, his gaze remained focused on the figure planted the ground, roaring with a soul crushing pressure while bound by hundreds of strings that came from the giant's fingers.

RAAAAAAAAAAAH!

The air, space and mana rippled and rumbled as it was run through by this horrendous force, threatening to break apart as a result!

No one was exempt from the crushing feeling propounded except the giant.

Ferex, the ever protective Hound was currently held firmly under the giant's foot as he also struggled to free himself from its grasp but a stream of intricately woven mana coming from under the giant's expansive boot kept him and even his Unliving Thread in check!

Yuyui's eyes refused to blink.

She was that frightened.

The sequence leading up to all these events had been brutal, as it didn't ease her into the abrupt shift.

All she knew is that her master pulled out a large finger nail, infused it with mana and then in the next few seconds that followed him losing control, this giant had appeared.

Him binding Skullius and trampling Ferex who had instantly lunged at him, thinking him to be a threat, had been the giant's first course of action on arrival.

He had then placed something akin to a golden medallion on Skullius' back, the end of which glowed with a silvery light that lit up the roaring figure's back!

Calmly, seriously...

The giant continued to watch over Skullius' body with its menacing red eyes, the transition that slowly began to take place reflecting in his eyes.

Yuyui watched silently as the creature that roared, causing her heart to quake in immense fright was culled of its intimidating presence, its shout turning into a murmur then into silence.

Her new master had finally calmed down, his body laying on the ground silently on its belly.

The giant withdrew its strings from Skullius' body but kept its eye on him.

"That should do it," he said in a voice that caused Yuyui to swallow hard.

....

Skullius opened his eyes which couldn't give him any visual information as expected.

He felt for his body, his limbs and senses instantly reacting to his desire to stand, as it was obvious that he was currently lying down.

"Haa...."

Skullius took a light breath.

With his arms, he heaved himself, the contours of his flesh and its well sculpted edges showing as he exerted energy, his glittery ivory toned skin accommodating every movement with grace.

His long dark hair which neared his waist swept his back as he rose, the tufts of darkness around his wrists and ankles like hairs starting to recede.

The kilt of darkness around his waist, designed with symbols of light started to disappear as well, leaving him naked.

The [Wing of the Just] behind his back fragmented into light particles, his skin turning from its glittering state back to its normal hue.

In his dark vision, a set of notifications kept flashing in his eyes, ones that had been displayed long before he got sucked into his Inner soul space.

[You have successful unlocked another one of the 9 seeds of the 'Fruit of World Myths']

[Number 7, Seramoro, Oblivion's Edge]

'Hmmm...' Skullius hummed in his thoughts at this.

He fully rose, his senses vibrantly showing him everything around him with immense clarity along with [Elevated Mana Manipulation], whose performance was augmented to quite a shocking degree.

SSSSS....

Mana started to leak from Skullius, creating a haze of bright white around him!

The thick covering extended up to a meter and a half from the Hybrid Luman, a testament to how much mana he could output... when he wasn't even trying to pump out much mana!

BOOOOM! BOOOOM! BOOOOM!

The ground under Skullius' feet couldn't handle the special property of his mana as it went and dug in on itself thrice, indenting deep into the stoney floor with impactful grandiosity while dust flew along with a harsh breeze.

Sause gave a whistle of amazement as he watched the little thing with long dark hair that had started to change from black to light auburn, exude a marvellously unique presence.

Skullius raised his head as he then went on to look up at the giant.

Swiftly, he floated from the four meter deep and six meter wide hole he had made and landed on the still intact floor.

His empty gaze made Sause smile while Yuyui and Ferex could note a great difference in their master.

The Hybrid Luman turned to Yuyui who couldn't utter a word, the white eyes that stared at her giving her a dreadful sense of fear.

Her heart started beating ferociously, the saliva she kept in her mouth drying...

What was this...?

She felt so nervous and her body started to exert the little water it had left just to sweat!

The few seconds worth of time that Skullius looked into Yuyui's eyes were enough to almost cause her to die from shock.

"Dear Quintess what a gaze, aha ha," Sause said with a cheery grin. "If I didn't know any better, I'd say you were one of Fulgardt's Chosen at the very least."

Skullius didn't respond. He didn't understand what the giant was saying anymore as they were no longer communicating as souls. Instead, he gripped the long, light auburn hair behind him, gathered mana around his hand and sliced it off!

This effectively left him with medium length hair which he trimmed a bit further.

Sause's grin grew wider as he saw this.

This wasn't a simple haircut, it was a gesture that let him know the result of his work.

Skullius pointed at his mouth and then his ear before shaking his head, the giant taking only two seconds to realise what he meant.

A small string stemmed from Sause's finger and reached Skullius' chest, a connection being formed immediately as the Hybrid Luman curiously looked at the length thing.

"I wouldn't have guessed that you'd suddenly lose the ability to communicate even in the Known Language, little one, aha ha. How have you been getting by?" Sause said, Skullius being able to hear him now even though he was still speaking from his lips and in the same language.

What an interesting ability.

"Many events happened in-between this moment and last time we met," Skullius said with a slightly deep voice that differed quite a lot from that which he had previously. "I see you've gotten bigger rather than stronger."

"Hahahahahahaha!" Sause laughed, his voice causing a low tremor to shake the space. "What can I say, size is one of the defining features of a giant."

"Good for you," Skullius as he quickly donned the Stacked Series of the VergeRider. His eyes sharply landed at Sause's feet before he spoke in a chilling voice. "Now get your foot off my Apostle... bro."

"Oh, scary," Sause said in amusement.

The giant followed Skullius' request with unveiled intrigue, Ferex who had been caught under the creature being let loose as he then rushed to Skullius.

"I see you're doing well with the WILLS within you, aha ha. Make sure you're ready for the next batch. I likely won't be able to help you as easily with those and all those that come after that. I can't contend against Divine WILLS casually after all."

"I'll keep that in mind," Skullius said as he walked up to where the array around the frozen Yuyui began.

He pointed at it languidly and turned to Sause.

"There's some kind of obstruction here. Mind breaking it for me?" he asked in a tone that sounded more commanding than pleading.

"Oh? You have taken a liking to this young miss? Sadly, I'm not a wingman, you know, aha ha," Sause said with chuckle.

"Yes I have. She has a high likelihood of keeping me alive in the future. Freeing her will add a certain amount of... assurance that I won't end up being a pain in your pelvis," Skullius said as he raised his brow. "Sound good enough?"

Sause gazed at Yuyui who was just about to recover from her previous encounter with Skullius' frightening eyes.

The poor lady grew stiff once more as the large eyeballs of the tall giant zoomed in on her.

"Interesting. I'd only heard about those cruel witches..." Sause said. "Very well."

The giant swiped his hand over the array that held Yuyui within its borders.

The magical construct shone bright with destructive luminescence but then the flashes of light shattered as if they were physical, leaving the groves that made the construct's entirety on the floor as simple carvings devoid of anything unique about them!

Just like that...

Just like that, Yuyui was free.

The lime haired woman hadn't even realised it yet but Skullius did.

He collected the fingernail for the Tie of Exchange and stored it back into his storage ring which he had once again equipped.

"Ferex, carry her," Skullius gave the order and the Apostle rushed to grab Yuyui in his upright form.

The Hybrid Luman then turned to Sause.

"It seems I'll be exploiting everything I can from this exchange. Look forward to it, large bro," Skullius said with a smirk.

"Hahahahaha! To think you'd start growing this cocky, little one. Very well, I'll play along just a little until it's time to reap MY reward," Sause said as a bright ring of red energy burst from under his feet and with a massive rising force like a gushing wind, he vanished, leaving an empty spot.

Skullius sighed.

'That went well,' he thought. 'I feel different but I guess I can at least be happy that I now understand what the WILLS do.'

The Hybrid Luman sat down.

He had a lot to digest.

For one, he had been wrong.

The WILL OF UNDERSTANDING was the greatest asset among all the WILLS he had gained this time.

Even saying that was an understatement.

'Let's see if I'm right...!' Skullius thought.

But...

'Tomato flinger...!'

Sila's voice interrupted him.

'What is it?' Skullius replied casually.

'Why did you spare me?' the aged soul asked in a bitter voice.

Chapter 425: Secrets of The Immoral! (1)

'Why did you spare me?'

The result was as such.

In the end, when presented with the choice, Skullius had chosen not to permanently remove Sila from him.

Granted, the medallion Sause had used was quite the unique item that could repair whatever the damage Sila was patching up just like the Luminant Seed would have, but the Hybrid Luman had chosen differently.

Many would have chosen to remove this pain in the pelvis from their lives for good, considering that Sila had even confessed that while he was helping Skullius to enhance his powers, he would still scheme against Skullius.

This seemed self-destructive for Sila as a declaration as it wasn't impossible for Skullius to find another possible way to get rid of him. And it was.

Sila was a torn soul.

He had been serious about dying and he was serious about living enough to find if some of his comrades had survived. Heck, he knew that Skullius had the opportunity to do that whenever he wanted but.... his emotional and mental state wasn't what one would call stable.

He was broken soul.

Skullius had known this as well, noting the shift in Sila's thoughts from his madness to after he had taken his body.

Knowing this would surely encourage anyone to get rid of Sila but...

But that was no so for Skullius who had spared Sila for different reasons before and after absorbing the WILLS.

Skullius had spared Sila because of his invaluable information before Sause did his thing but after he merged with the WILLS, he came to a rapid realisation...

'I'm not sure you will like the response, Sila. I advise you to accept as it is. Or better yet, believe that you're still here because of my whim,' Skullius said nonchalantly with just a tinge of ridicule.

Sila was taken aback.

This wasn't the response he had expected. At least not from the Skullius he knew.

He thought the bastard was just putting up a front against Sause just now and he had even decided to shut up in case he attracted more of the giant's attention but...

There seemed to be something more.

Still, he was displeased.

This feeling of being looked down upon.

He didn't like it.

'I'm not in the mood for your jests, tomato flinger! Do you think I will suddenly become subservient just because you spared me?! Is that it?! You will not get any gratefulness from me! You might as well have had my soul destroyed!' Sila growled from within Skullius.

The Hybrid Luman didn't flinch though.

Instead, he inserted mana into his ring as if he didn't hear Sila's ramblings, drawing something from within it.

Right after this action, he decided to indulge Sila for a bit.

'It doesn't matter to me how you feel about it. Even if you choose to not be the well of information I have been relying on anymore, I can manage pretty well without you. Besides, that isn't the only reason I kept you intact. If you knew, you'd be begging for a swift death...' Skullius said with a brief laugh that added to the condescending vibe he gave off.

Sila shuddered in fury... and a bit of fright.

What on earth was Skullius talking about?

From the looks of it, he was dead serious!

He didn't need him anymore?!

Bullshit!

'You're bluffing!' Sila boomed with rage. 'You barely know anything about this world! What are you without the knowledge I give you?! Where would you be if I didn't tell you where this place was?!'

Despite the words Sila said bearing quite the bit of truth, Skullius didn't show any reaction.

He merely looked at the objects he had extracted from his spatial storage ring.

Three large plaques.

They were made of a certain hardwood with a dark brown colour that wished to cross over to black, their lengths almost half of Skullius' height.

Their borders were adorned with beautiful frames that had similar designs of alternating dark and light colours, giving off the sense that they were merely decorative.

That was what Skullius had thought when he had first found these.

These were the other objects that were stored in the first chest he had found in the Labyrinth of the Yoke within the room that held the Fruit of World Myths!

Within the chest had been the All Eater scroll as well as these objects whose description held the <???, effectively proving too complicated to discern.

Yet now, things were different.

Before he dove into these, he granted Sila a last response before locking him within the 'bubble.'

'You're right. I reached this stage because of you. But that doesn't mean anything to me just as me sparing you means little to you,' he said.

That was how Skullius felt.

As for what he truly intended to do with Sila, the more important reason why he was keeping him...

Well, the aged piece of soul was a failsafe against... death.

'Heh,' Skullius chuckled as he thought of this new outlook he had gained.

Perhaps the WILL OF CUNNING was already working a bit too well, gathering all he knew and making sure he used it all wisely and efficiently, as it should.

The Hybrid Luman had discovered that this batch of WILLS didn't affect his stats, but merely used what he had to bring about the best results!

"Right. Let's see now," Skullius said as he held out his one hand while holding one of the plaques with the other.

His palm flashed with [Evil Darkness] the element wrapping around his arm like flames while distorting everything in its immediate surroundings.

'I can't believe I was so short-sighted with this. Darkness and Light. They aren't limited to what I was using them for before...' Skullius thought as he felt the element clearly.

Its sensation.

Its power.

It was alive.

It had greater purpose than being forged into orbs and domains.

This was what the WILL OF UNDERSTANDING was funnelling into him.

While gaining a new perspective of his abilities, Skullius had thought to these mysterious objects that he didn't understand.

They exuded faint wisps of darkness and light but beyond that, he hadn't been able to decipher what they held.

Were they weapons?

Precious auxiliary artefacts?

Random tools?

He was about to find out.

Skullius waved his hand over one of the plaques using darkness and...

"I see..."

A trail of words started to appear.

Actually, it was more fitting to say symbols.

They crept up over the surface of the wood from the left to the right, creating rows of these strange symbols with gaps in-between like absurdly large paragraphs.

Each symbol had wisps of darkness flaring lightly over them, as if on fire.

...!

To Skullius' surprise, it seemed he could understand what these symbols expressed, as they seemed to be similar to the ones he had seen in the Labyrinth back when he had attained [Pseudo Evil Veneration]!

It was an understanding that one could understand through reading.

No.

That wasn't it.

It was like hearing what each symbol expressed through the darkness he had on his hand and that which flared on the plaque!

Weird!

Swallowing the surprise, Skullius dove right into it.

<They do not understand. Not my Chosen. Not their lieutenants. Not even you who reads...>

Skullius was taken aback.

Was this... Fulgardt?

<The essence of Evil Darkness and the truth of Just Light. It was birthed after I extracted the secrets to humanity. Their true depths which are rarely ever absolute, split between black and white. The vile ilk that taints them, the purity they bear and the bland middle that is created when these are mixed together. That is the truth of humanity. Of sentience.

Pretenders infest the masses, along with clowns, jesters and psychopaths. On the other hand, there are those born with purely good emotion and intent in the world, those I seek to spare in the coming reaping. These are the foundation of my power. How I structured it to work against them all with the gift the Wanderer Who Seeds imparted on me...>

<Evil Darkness, to RESTRAIN and BIND while Just Light CONTROLS AND GUIDES. These are but the crumbs of what these powers can do when one's connection with them grows to a partly respectable degree...>

<However, when one truly embraces both of these abilities, they can do so much more. To EXTINGUISH, ERASE, DICTATE, RULE... and above all else, when these powers are brought together, meshed as one against RULES, against the natural ORDER, against the NORM, the one who holds the gift I received, can.... GIVE ANYTHING...>

...!

Chapter 426: Secrets of The Immoral! (2)

The power to GIVE ANYTHING?

Skullius stroked his chin.

This was interesting.

He had gained some insight on the two elements that made the Insurgent Magnus what it was just from the WILL OF UNDERSTANDING which he could feel opening up his mind even now, but this...?

'Partly respectable?' Skullius thought. 'Only when I reached a connection... an affinity of B with [Evil Darkness] did I truly start to feel that it could restrain and bind. So if partly respectable is B, does that mean that respectable is A and the last one above that is S?'

The Hybrid Luman cranked his mind.

Ferex held Yuyui silently, giving the woman a signal to not make any sound that would disrupt his master.

The lime haired girl did so while continuing to gaze at Skullius with mixed feelings.

She couldn't forget that gaze which she had received before.

If she was going to be seeing that throughout her entire life...

'Sigh.... I'll write songs to keep myself at peace,' Yuyui thought while licking her chapped lips. 'And maybe the food will make it better.'

After the first set of words which were blazing with darkness, a large space could be seen, or in Skullius' case, felt, between it and the next.

However...

'There are traces of light in this gap,' Skullius noted.

He quelled the darkness burning on his hand and switched to covering it with light instead, the process of which was much, much easier than before.

A small smile appeared on his face as he swiped over the blank space, symbols made of light appearing with a smooth transition while they also burned with wispy flame-like [Just Light].

Skullius immediately read over them.

<The gift I was given which persistently takes root in my body is both greedy and powerful. At times it will call for you when you are at your wits end, yet sometimes it ignores, as if wishing you would die, giving it a chance to rush away to who knows where. Only the Wanderer Who Seeds, the only TRUE DIVINE, knows.

However, I have discerned that this gift bears nine seeds of power, traits separate from the darkness and light which I moulded, all of which are powerful in their own right.>

<Yet, only two of the nine are suitable for use with the mortal body. The rest are better planted into three of the PHANTASMIC RETAINERS forged from concise mixtures of darkness and light and used from there. Using the body as the conduit is dangerous for these. Ah... with each that I completed of these retainers, I felt unbridled joy and a will of carnage that almost made me forget who I am...>

'These really are just instructions, aren't they?' Skullius thought.

As far as he understood, the Seeds of the Fruit of World Myths were better used with these Phantasmic Retainers that were stated. He didn't know what they were, but he was inclined to believe this statement.

Considering that so far, he had unlocked only [Crude World Projection] and recently, [Seramoro, Oblivion's Edge], both of which had humanoid forms or were at least related to that, Skullius was lead to believe that the rest were probably incredibly... strange abilities.

The next set of symbols was a continuation of the dark characters which seemed to carry on from where they left, with the ability to give granted by the darkness and light.

As Skullius read on, he discovered that the black characters spoke about [Just Light] and [Evil Darkness] in general while the golden white spoke of abilities stemming from the Fruit of World Myths exclusively.

Most of what followed from these symbolic texts was more of light gushing towards [Just Light] and [Evil Darkness] with bits of more essential information in the dark paragraphs such as...

<Man is easy to read when one wields the power of darkness. Lies, internal struggle, ambition. It all can be deciphered. With light, manipulation is possible as one grows, though this will be largely more difficult when compared to the abilities of its dark counterpart...>

The WILL OF UNDERSTANDING had glimpsed this particular information to Skullius.

The depths of the darkness that he hadn't caught onto fully.

Now it was reaffirmed through this text.

The last bit of information that Skullius received was at the very bottom of this plaque from the bright characters that would sting the eye.

<A sacred handle of mine lies in a hold that can only be opened when your connection to the light and dark reaches a respectable degree. Before then, even if by some miracle the hold opens, the handle will obliterate you and he who aids you in opening its keep without mercy. Yet, if you do manage to take it properly, no enemy in this world will best you. Ha!

What can mere mortals do when you wield a handle that has tasted the blood of a DEITY!>

...!

Skullius was once again taken aback.

This statement no doubt referred to the second chest that he hadn't been able to open.

He had tried a couple of times with both elements but it refused to budge.

Now it was clear why... he should give up on that for the time being.

If his theory was correct, then respectable was an A rank affinity and this needed to be with both elements!

With [Evil Darkness] maybe it was possible, but with [Just Light]? Even these texts admitted that the light was harder to wield and for Skullius to advance [Evil Darkness], he had to go through some perilous times!

Naturally, he didn't fear death anymore and was more than willing to jump into dangerous situations while readily accepting the possible dangers but...

That wasn't a wise thing for now with where he was going to be hanging out.

It was all too much for this... 'handle' that Skullius guessed to be wearing of some kind.

Fulgardt's true weapon.

Nevertheless...

'I don't need to stick to one thing. I said I'd advance my Penetrator form to Tier 4 like Serenity said. I should focus on that now that my Disc.. Hybrid Luman side has gained quite the sizable boost,' Skullius thought as he took another plaque and repeated what he had done with the first.

The elements lit up the hidden messages.

'Oh... so these are the Phantasmic Retainers?'

On this plague, there was barely any symbolic text. What was on it were three images, one at the top, the other in the middle and the last at the bottom.

The first, as Skullius felt through the dark wisps that marked it, was... a tree?

Its name was rather complicated to pronounce as Skullius was sure he was still juvenile when it came to comprehending this... language.

A set of words below it, under its name described how to...craft it with specific proportions and construction lines of darkness and light as well as the affinity required for the feat!

According to some standard here, this was the easiest to craft but the instructions on how to build it were not as simple as systematic as those for building a house.

What Skullius could perfectly understand from the text for this was that it could hold 2 Seeds from the Fruit of World Myths.

'I see...' Skullius thought as he looked below.

The next thing depicted here was incredibly ridiculous as Skullius couldn't really tell what it was exactly.

The only thing he could see were sets of long arms locking their hands and even that was not truly clear.

In terms of difficulty of craft and affinity required, this was definitely a few leagues more difficult and complicated.

Furthermore, it could also only handle 2 Seeds.

The last piece was showed in a grandiose fashion, as it seemed to be.

Its depiction covered the entire base of the plaque, the wisps of darkness and light producing some kind of... humanoid mutant?

It seemed to be most powerful and most complicated as it could hold 3 Seeds with its construction requirements being absurd!

Skullius couldn't wrap his mind around these shapes and all at once.

What exactly were these and their effects?

He sighed and put this plaque down to check out the very last one.

Luckily for him, this carried a bit of history in symbolic text that he could understand.

Once more, it was partitioned like the first, but there was no light here, only dark wisps that told a story in three simple parts.

It was far from the whole story, but these three bits that were very meaningful.

Chapter 427: Secrets of The Immoral! (3)

<Logged 541 years after the First Grand War.

It has begun. I have chosen four loyal companions to lead the tide that will wash this world anew with me. Quilforg, Mezatee, Minobu and Joyyse. Each is powerful in their own right, prepared to die for the cause and loyal to a fault. I did not think a Mage from Emeradis would willingly decide to join this charge of the most esteemed but I was pleasantly surprised.

Moreso that my most trusted friend, Quilforg, also chose this path.>

<I had doubted this calling in the first days but seeing more and more of the masses accept it as I spoke, some even more so than me, I was driven to reinvigorate myself. The ships of my Four Chosen sail to Emeradis tomorrow while a Union of 200 will assault the nation from the boundary that splits Maqi and Emeradis in the South. Mezatee will lead this entire charge.

Her Magecraft is outstanding and she knows the layout of the land as a native. I would have Minobu help but I have other tasks for him.>

<Pelian is but a weak sapling that relies too much on the Purity, yet I cannot underestimate it. Those fools decked in silver know nothing beyond their blessings. They lack skill and are crippled by their beliefs, these... vile teachings. I should also consider the innocents and the weak in that festering pool of falsehood... yet it cannot be helped if they cling to the Deities despite the mercy.>

Skullius nodded slowly as he re-read this third of the plaque. So much was divulged.

If this really was Fulgardt's writing, he was extremely curious to know how this man fell when everyone acknowledged his existence millenia to follow!

Who were these Chosen that were written here and how much did they contribute to the Second Grand War?

So many questions assailed the mind of the Hybrid Luman and unfortunately, what followed when he set out to read further was not a continuation of this part of the story but something else entirely...

<Logged 712 years after the First Grand War.

Ha. I certainly did not expect this. Those bastards have finally decided to show themselves. Men were no longer enough to face me. I have no equal on this world anymore, a credit I owe to the Wanderer, to myself and to that pesky creature who offered me aid. Yet, all my might is not enough for what is come.

Without reaching Divinity, this fight is lost. I may as well send myself off into the Yormuness but I doubt I'll be tended to by the Spirits. Had I known that the Purity was capable of such, of giving up their bodies as conduits with the use of Creeds, I'd have begun my assault after reaching Divinity.>

<Still, it matters not. I have reached the epitome of the Stages of the Power and only a third of Feinheath, as well as two-fifths of Opungale remain with somewhat powerful resistance. Would I give up when I am so close to purging the remnants of belief in these hypocrites?! No! I am merely a step away, I can feel it! Once I touch the bounds of Divinity, I will taste victory!

I need a little more time...!>

Heavy ambitions were thick in this symbolic text.

It seemed this was something akin to a diary detailing events that Fulgardt took down, perhaps to ease his stress and celebrate as well as motivate himself.

Skullius could understand quite a bit of it, but it was hard to wrap his mind around the actual idea of it.

Did Fulgardt just imply that the Deities used Human beings as shells for themselves?

As far as he knew, or rather put together, the Creeds, as Sila had used, were a form of power that allowed for one to safely gain extra benefits at the cost of something else.

If this was used, he could somewhat understand it as well as the fact that Fulgardt was not at the peak of power when he began the assault on humanity. Additionally, he had help.

The hall he had visited as part of the test in the Labyrinth, filled to the brim with powerhouses that claimed that Fulgardt had locked them there for helping him, their livelihoods changed to fit a celebratory aesthetic, came to mind.

Perhaps the individuals Fulgardt claimed helped him in this text were in there as well.

'That would be interesting...' Skullius thought. 'But was this guy really just trying to bring down the Deities for this... Wanderer Who Seeds' sake? Also, who the flesh is this guy?'

Once again, with added light came additional mystery that hid in the corners of darkness, weaving in and out to not be discovered.

The last third of the plaque also contained a different story that engaged Skullius on more of the thoughts of the Immoral.

<Logged 1202 years after the First Grand War.

I imagined being cut down by the Deities in a final battle would be the greatest pain in my life after I invested so much into this mission. I sacrificed the chance at love I had, the chance at peace and the chance at normalcy. I could have chosen not to plunge Aigas into this state of turmoil. But... I didn't.

With my most trusted friend at my side, I reaffirmed my resolve and carried on all these years. Quilforg...>

<This betrayal runs too deep. You are all that was left of all my Unions, of the Chosen Four. I needed consolation and reassurance but instead, I found you leading a charge led by the greatest of those 3 false gods to my lair. I fail to digest it. To swallow it. Why?

What were you promised? What did I not share with you? What did I hide for you to not confide in me anymore....>

There was a gap as the statement continued after as blank spaces, no doubt meant to convey silence after a lengthy outburst.

<But that grief, that pain, the sensation of betrayal... is what is birthing me into Divinity!>

Skullius breathed out.

He placed the plaque down along with the others and meditated on the words.

There was more emotion in that last part than he expected..

Even Fulgardt had been subjected to betrayal, it seemed.

Skullius wondered if that was perhaps one of the reasons why he chose to trap everyone who ever helped him inside that hall?!

Who knew?

'I'll have to go through these again and see if there's anything I missed,' Skullius thought as he stored the three plaques in his spatial storage ring.

He stood up and gazed at Ferex who held Yuyui, the lime haired woman who looked to be tearing up as the Apostle's large paw covered her mouth.

"Let her go, you'll kill her at this point," Skullius said with a sigh.

Plop.

Yuyui was dropped to the floor and she pitifully curled on the ground as she looked up at Skullius while sobbing lightly.

"I'm....so... hungry..." she squealed.

"Right..." Skullius said as he realised. This woman was starving after not eating for so long.

From his spatial storage ring, he pulled out two loaves of bread, spiced fish and two jugs of cider, placing them before Yuyui.

The Hybrid Luman didn't even have to say anything for Yuyui to muster all the strength she had to lunge at the food, devouring it in a manner that gave one the impression that she was the spawn of a demon and a rat!

The bread, cider and fish was cleared within less than a minute, Yuyui raising her head as she felt nowhere near satisfied, her eyes pleading with Skullius who looked at the scene left in the wake of her massacre of the meal with slight disturbance.

Yet...

In the next moment, Yuyui choked, coughed blood and...died.

Chapter 428: Two Souls, One Dark Tale

Once again.

In the loneliness that came with ethereal captivity, a wall of darkness on all sides that impeded sound and sights, Sila could only sigh in self pity and rage.

He was frustrated and confused.

His war-driven soul, built as such from the experiences preceding his capture and imprisonment into Fulgardt's prison, couldn't make peace with his previous story as well as this one.

What was right?

Was he even in the correct mind to make this choice?

Pathetic!

He wanted to blame it all on Skullius but...

That would be foolish.

His tale was written in the annals of Direction long before the tomato flinger came to be in Aigas.

If he was seeking someone to blame, it would have to be existence itself.

'Magra...' Sila called in the silence, nought but a vibration giving proof as to the fact that he had actually spoken.

This word...

This name.

It belonged to the woman he had loved and devoted his entirety to for the longest time.

A woman who was obsessed with growing tomatoes.

Having grown in a time that came after the coming of the Giants, mankind and Sif kind having driven them away with a rush of evolution and power, palpable emotion was vibrant everywhere.

Religion was strongest.

Focus was at its purest.

Everyone could feel metaphorical sets of chains torn from their bodies, alleviating the tension that was felt even by those who had been born after the First Grand War.

This was even more so for those that lived in Pelian, a nation that was young and new, birthed and groomed by a single man with a vision that quelled the mutual wrath of Maqi and Emeradis.

They all felt it.

A palpable sense of freedom.

Sila had felt the same.

He was born into a rather ordinary family. Nothing to complain about, nothing to cry about.

One would even call it the perfect family.

With the reverence of the Deities given by everyone, his family did not fall short in this praise.

They visited the temples everyday to hear the words from the Deities preached by the Priests, carriers of the message.

They delighted in it.

When it came time to pick their Directions, Sila who was the second child among four boys was found to be more suited as a combatant, a bright future being promised by the sagely voice of the Priest who attended to him.

The family was overjoyed.

The Capital Service was very welcoming of young aspirant fighters, especially those called for such, the whole facet going as far as to be completely subservient to the Purity which had set up their base in this nation.

Knighthood came for Sila when he reached eighteen years and it was quite the duty. Entertaining, thrilling and exciting.

Clearing Clusters, hunting down thieves and bandits and so on.

It was true.

The ministrations of the Priest for his Direction were true.

Things only got better when in the time of his service, Sila found a pretty woman, humble by nature, simplistic in mind and attitude but gloriously fair.

She had absolute faith in the words of the Deities, trusting them when she was told her prosperity lay in gardening and farming.

Magra, as was her name, accepted it joyfully.

And it turned out to bread the truth.

Many people flocked for her crops, especially her tomatoes which she paid much more attention to than the others, watching them grow up to the size of an average human's head!

People in the town she settled in said she had blessed hands but she denied it with a smile, tirelessly devoting herself to her work.

Sila had appreciated her simplistic nature.

Such an age of peace pushed him to desire someone of the same mind-set. Someone who took things as they were and made them their life.

Sila won her after constant rejection, her work being the excuse most of the time yet he eventually wore her down, for one with his persistence and for another, by proving he shared a simple motive for life.

Enjoying all that came, good and bad.

The love between them was blissful.

There were no qualms or quarrels between them, and for the most part, they understood each other perfectly, making a beautiful home anchored on service to the nation through duty and tomatoes.

Yet, things would take a turn when a looming darkness would spread over Feinheath to announce the coming of a second age of terror, one longer than the last.

Society collapsed in a few months.

The once peaceful continent turned chaotic, death and immorality reigning as everything that everyone believed was challenged by a single man.

The lovely peace that Sila and Magra enjoyed tried to persist, keeping its innocence intact but...

The world grew too brutal.

What had been an enjoyable experience for Sila as a Knight, comically chasing tame bad men like in the old fantasy folktales while barely mastering the truth about a blade, bloodshed, was burnt to the ground.

Sila was forced to hone his sword for true kills, in war, and even in society where even the best of men turned hysterical and mad.

He slew hundreds in the first three months, what had been loving next door neighbours becoming scraps of barely recognisable human on the ground before him day after day.

He turned cold and distrusting, taking away Magra from the town they lived in and to a better place where Sila deemed fit for temporary settlement.

While Sila divulged into darkness, Magra tried to keep a positive mind, doing her best to maintain her calm by growing tomatoes.

To her, watching them grow even in this cruel reality meant that there was still hope.

The world wouldn't burst into flame.

The Deities wouldn't allow that to happen.... right?

Unfortunately, Sila believed otherwise.

Seeing Magra keep to the old had driven him to fury.

He grabbed Magra by the hands and spoke with the most meaningful angry tone he could conjure.

"This isn't a world that can be harvested of any good anymore. Leave this, it will only get you killed! Instead..." Sila placed a knife in Magra's hand, the poor woman quivering. "From now on, we fight. Maybe...somewhere in the future, when this is over, we can plant your tomatoes again. For now.

Let's survive."

Of course, for the woman who knew only the simplest of tasks, it was hard to transition to this - forcefully dragged onto a path that wasn't hers was difficult.

Learning to fight, grooming her body through mana and Enriching gems, spilling blood...

The colour red held sacred meaning to her but when it flowed from the severed neck of a man or woman, it warped her view.

Decades of this life of running and fighting still did not turn her into a fighter and she couldn't be much use to Sila who always had to cover for her, making sure she remained alive.

His words of comfort barely scraped the darkness that coated her heart, making her burst into sorrowful tears from time to time, even during a tense battle.

She wasn't a fighter.

She was a gardener, a farmer.

Only growing tomatoes brought her happiness. That and living with the man she loved peacefully.

It was cruel, but Sila refused to leave her behind even as she constantly screamed, "I can't do this! Please just let me die! That way, at least you won't have me as a burden!"

Roughly a century after the start of Fulgardt's campaign, Sila had heard about a place that could grant power, a promise propounded by the infamous Order of the Trodden Rose secretly to those in Pelian.

To Sila, this was a chance.

He didn't care if that Order of women was despised or not.

He didn't care if it could be a mere rumour, a lie.

All he knew was that it was the only choice he had.

If these women chose to give out power to anyone who wished, he would make sure that Magra got her break through this.

He didn't even ask for permission from Magra as he followed every lead he could over six years to reach the Temple which was buried underwater in the Urja, an expansive magic array around it then, before what it had now.

Against the woman's pleas, Sila with good intention had dove right in with Magra for the first attempt at getting the legacy of one of the most vile group of humans in that age.

This was the first of multiple attempts that only led to bitter effort without the payoff that Sila sought for his beloved...

Chapter 429: Back Here Again

Ground of Communion.

"You must be rejoicing in your heart right now, Sister Bassbion," Yagrina said while laying within the hollow of the statue upright. "I don't think that man withstood the temptation."

"Quit it, Yagrina! Isn't it more important to inquire what that powerful force was? I did not like the sensation that power gave me from within. What if it was that man?" the figure of Bassbion with her cap-like helmet on and chain covered armour leaned against the wall while addressing Yagrina's statement.

"Perhaps, though I wanted to believe that it was the host who is yet to come back releasing such power but it's unlikely. Anyway, what is the use in trying to inquire what it is. We cannot investigate it and even if we could, we can't unlock the full force of our powers through sheer will alone to defend against something like that. At least I can't.

Not until the host comes," Yagrina said, her stone figure not moving at all.

"Well it certainly won't be that vile filth. It can't be." Bassbion murmured with a scoff. "It's been 157 years since the host attained the legacy, the temple's many arrays flashed with green as my master said they would when someone finally succeeded, so what is taking so long?"

A sigh was heard as even the ever patient and optimistic Yagrina couldn't help but feel like the wait was taking way too long.

"Perhaps the test left behind by our masters was too.. difficult for the host? Your master did particularly stress that she wanted a quality host in body and mind," she said.

"How hard can it be to harness the unique power you are given without any cost to awaken three of the twelve eyes and gain enough strength to shatter the binding array on your own?" Bassbion grumbled while folding her arms, speaking of the solution to what Yuyui failed to do as if it was too simple.

"You wouldn't know since you were in slumber then, but... the host isn't exactly a... fighter. I wondered how it was possible for someone like her to be the one but... I suppose the rules are absolute and so is luck."

"Is that so? What exactly happened during th-"

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!!!!

A large chunk of the wall beside Bassbion was sent flying while a turbulent thrum caused the floor and ceiling far above to rumble with a tremendous intensity!

Dust from the hard wall material flew while the object to fly off, as well as baby chunks of the dry wall followed, crashed fifty meters away gracelessly!

This chunk was the same spot where Bassbion had given Skullius passage, the Spirit retreating a split second later while doing her best to hide her surprise.

She held her sword and looked to the wreckage while waiting for whoever was coming with caution.

Hope gushed within her, as well as in Yagrina whose stone body actually moved, the head turning to the opening which had been violently created, with hints of expectation.

'Yes!'

She could sense it.

Semblances of their masters!

The host..!

She was finally here!

Bassbion threw a quick glance at the cover to the wall that blocked the passageway, her eyes discerning the imprint of a fist on its surface imbedded deep, with a depression that then turned to cracks as it reached the edges of the structure!

'Remarkable! But...'

She too sensed the presence of the host, but her presence was much weaker.

It was overshadowed by a flaring presence that demanded everyone's attention, tearing away their programmed minds from the connection they naturally shared with the host and forcing them to acknowledge it!

Tap! Tap!

This vibrant, heavy presence grew closer with the sound of resounding steps, a figure appearing beyond the dust that made Bassbion's mood sink and descend to the Under!

She clutched her sword as rage brimmed within her eyes along with utter disbelief!

A man appeared!

THE man!

He wore not an armour, but a casual jacket in a dark blue colour with black leather braces on the arms, a hood at the back, as well as laces to promote a snug fit on his slightly bulky, athletic figure.

He was also adorned in fitting pants that had a dull black gleam, being not entirely leather but more like a mix of it and a thin hide.

Thick dark chains wrapped around his waist, completing the edgy gothic look he gave off while his short-ish light auburn hair was slicked back to eliminate any bangs, complementing this new theme.

Bassbion almost couldn't recognise Skullius as upon seeing him, she had grown angry before taking a perfect look.

And as far as looks went...

Skullius turned his white eyes to Bassbion and...

...!!!

Reflectively, the Spirit held her sword firmly and slashed at full power at the air, generating a sharp gust of wind that hurtled towards Skullius!

This was purely based on instinct!

Just from Skullius' gaze, Bassbion had detected a threat so great that her body automatically launched a counter for whatever it was!

Skullius' hand blazed with concentrated mana and with a sharp and precise movement, he hacked away at the incoming attack with his fingers which formed the shape of a blade!

GWAAA!

The visible but impeccably fast burst of sharp wind, bland and empty as Bassbion had not coated it with mana or refinement because of the urgency, disappearing right after!

"Ahhhhh! What's going on?!" Yuyui's voice was heard as from the dust behind Skullius, she appeared, casually sitting on Ferex's arm, her face showing a brief respite to display shock, different from the happy gleeful visage she wore while stuffing her face with a chunk of greasy meat just now.

At the moment, the long-haired girl was wearing a shirt and pair of pants clearly too big for her thin state but it was better than having her move around naked.

She curiously looked around to see the familiar room behind the wall her master had just punched through and felt sentiment rising up her throat like vomit!

Memories started to flood her mind about a time that had passed.

That time with her 'friends' as she challenged this place but...

"What....?!" Bassbion exclaimed.

Many questions and thoughts raced through her own mind as a result of the current situation.

Was this really the same man who had come in a few hours ago?!

What was this pressure he exuded?!

How did he just brush away her attack with ease?!

What was he doing with the host?!

'Don't tell me...!'

Yagrina had the same thoughts as Bassbion, only she digested them quickly, discerning the situation from what she was currently seeing.

The comfort she saw from Yuyui as she was moving behind Skullius while hitching a ride on Ferex...

Her one eye which was blue. ..

How she did not exude an air befitting of the legacy holder of her masters' power...

'Was she aided in getting around her test by this man?!' Yagrina thought in horror.

But.. that was cheating!

Bassbion pointed her sword at Skullius who merely raised a brow.

"What did you do?! Why are you with the host?!" Bassbion spewed question after question even though she had come to the same conclusion that Yagrina had.

Yuyui who had seized stuffing her face felt the tension rise along with a strange feeling that crept in her body, driving her towards Bassbion and Yagrina.

Suddenly, her blue eye with a golden slit as the pupil shone with a sky blue luminescence, her body which was relaxing on Ferex's arm (leg) dropping to the floor.

She landed on her feet and with a semi-brave demeanour, she walked forward with strong but shaky steps. The air around her grew thick, a pressure that made even gazing at her feel more like a chore engulfing her figure.

Yuyui stood before the tall frame of Bassbion with a slight temble from her weak legs, the crumbs and grease staining her mouth distracting the Spirit she aimed to address, even as she began to speak.

"I'm.. I'm the one you've been waiting for!.. I've been chosen to carry the Diverse Oculus! You must uhm... obey me!" Yuyui said while nervously licking her lips of the meaty oil.

....

Silence prevailed as everyone here couldn't help but feel underwhelmed, a single word crossing through their minds but for different reasons.

'Seriously?'

Chapter 430: Rejected

The stance.

The shaky resolve.

The wobbly figure.

Nothing about Yuyui spelled any form of charismatic compulsion to anyone. Even Skullius who couldn't understand what she was saying could feel the dull intent.

Yuyui was both surprised and embarrassed when she saw no reaction from Bassbion who towered over her, the half a face visible from the Spirit turning into a frown as she actually felt insulted.

Above all that she could see right now, the greasy meat that Yuyui still clung to in her hand as she audaciously commanded the powerful guardian to obey her was... infuriating.

Drip, drip.

The oil from the stewed thigh broke the silence.

Yuyui would have blushed intensely if she could.

Bassbion's rage compelled her turn away from the new Skullius and take a step to intimidatingly lower her face over to Yuyui's own.

"Are you serious? You dare command me when you failed to attain a basic level of control over your powers in over a century and conveniently emerge, submitting to this... vi-....man?!" Bassbion growled as her mana flushed out like a hurricane, causing a brutish torrent of air to brush through the atmosphere.

Yuyui shrunk.

She didn't even know what was going on.

Just now, when she laid eyes on Bassbion, a foreign sense even making her notice that Yagrina's stone figure was also 'alive', the Inhumane Eye in her socket had caused her to jerk forward and demand the Spirits to follow her instinctively!

Of course she had failed and now, she didn't know what to do.

Skullius hung back and watched the show even without much of the verbal context.

When taking into account what Bassbion had said about the host and all, he figured that Yuyui was probably supposed to have these two guardians as servants or at least companions who would be loyal to her.

It didn't look like it now but he was sure he was right.

The Hybrid Luman wasn't really interested in much of all this as there was time to get to know it all later, especially when he used some of the more obscure gains he had attained.

Frankly, he hoped this show had a quick ending, otherwise he'd have to intervene.

Yuyui continued to shrink as Bassbion didn't hold back with her intimidating presence.

"Well, speak! Tell me! What gives you the gull?!" Bassbion boomed.

"Enough, Sister Bassbion!" Yagrina came to Yuyui's rescue.

Her stone head moved to look at Yuyui with a calm inducing visage.

She smiled, creating cracks on her face.

Bassbion scoffed and drew away from Yuyui while taking a sharp glance at Skullius and Ferex.

Yuyui could at least breathe after the pressure from Bassbion subsided but being looked at by a stone statue that could speak was... creepy.

She swallowed hard and remained rooted in place while quivering as Yagrina addressed her.

"I am pleased to meet you, host. I'm glad you have finally returned from your test. I and Sister Bassbion are supposed to be your guardians along with ten others but I'm afraid only us two remain, and the others cannot be awakened anymore because of the damage they have taken in previous battles," Yagrina explained warmly.

"It is also unfortunate that we cannot come under your service as you have not completed the test left for you by our masters. You fooled your way out of it, ignoring the vital lessons that you were supposed to learn. Patience, focus, preservation and hope. We are only assigned to submit to you when you gain three of the 12 Diverse Eyes and as such..."

It was as such.

Yuyui felt stung by the words.

Patience, focus, preservation and hope.

Did she have any of that?

Patience?

She had started crying after only four days of being trapped in the binding array.

Focus?

She hadn't even realised that her passing out shortly after being skewered through the head by a thick light that came from the symbol of the twelve eyes in that place had led to her receiving extraordinary powers until after eight months!

Preservation?

She had eaten an entire tree and drunk from... ahem...

She didn't have a sense of preservation even after a century passed, much less hope.

This stung.

"So..." she began. "I'm just..."

"Indeed you are!" Bassbion cut in with a growl. "Your very disposition reeks of weakness. I can't believe you are all we could salvage after all these millenia!"

"Sister Bassbion!" Yagrina rebuked.

"Alright, that's enough. We can finish this up later," Skullius' voice also cut in.

To everyone here, he was speaking an unfamiliar language that they didn't understand, but his actions soon told of what he intended.

With a flash, he had reached Yuyui and grabbed her by the nape of her shirt, casually flinging her at Ferex who caught her like a bag.

"We're leaving," Skullius said as he began walking towards the double doors that he had come in from when he first came here.

"But... Master! I have to... I'm not done yet. Shouldn't I try to..." Yuyui with a choked voice said even as she knew Skullius couldn't understand her, tears leaking from the sides of her face.

While sobbing from the hurt tacked on by the words from Yagrina, she took a bite of the meat she had in her hand, slobbering grease over her mouth some more.

"YOU! Where are you taking her?!" Bassbion huffed with fury. While she didn't acknowledge Yuyui, the woman was still what was truly left of her masters!

How dare this vile filth take her?!

Even Yagrina was displeased as she didn't intend to stop Bassbion from taking back Yuyui no matter the cost.

The tall guardian was about to attack with full force after noting that this man she had fought was no longer the same but...

SNAP!

Skullius who kept walking towards the double doors without looking back snapped his fingers, an unbelievable wave of mana covering the entire Ground of Communion in an instant!

The sound of crumpling paper and crushed rock emanated with the appearance of the mana and at the same time...

"HU—"

Bassbion felt herself get pulled by ridiculously powerful force, her body slamming into the hollow where she had come from previously when Skullius first entered this place!

...!

The powerful pulling surge resisted her desire to pull herself out, keeping her nailed to the statue!

Bassbion growled in rage as she struggled to no avail, her voice causing a stubborn rumbling to occur!

Clack!

Another set of the chains on her armour broke and she felt another portion of her strength drain her, giving her a sense of omnipotence!

She yanked herself from the statue and found her strength become enough to resist the drawing force quite a bit!

Good! Just a little more and she would be free!

Unfortunately, Skullius was already in front of the doors.

Instead of focusing on the raging storm behind him, he instead mused at a seemingly minute but ironic detail.

'Snapping your fingers does look cool as a gesture to overpower people. No wonder she did it so often. I should use it more.'

As he looked at the doors before him, Skullius confirmed that what he had felt some time ago was indeed the case.

'I see. Most of the arrays in the entire temple went off as soon as the array keeping Yuyui bound was destroyed. That means... THAT is possible,' Skullius thought as he 'glanced' at Yuyui who was still sobbing while munching away.

He pushed the doors and exited with his Apostle and servant, the two structures closing behind them.

Skullius took Yuyui from Ferex and princess carried her while giving the Apostle an order to miniaturise and hop onto his head.

'I don't know if the array that keeps those two still remains active but it's better to get a head start anyway,' Skullius thought with a smirk. 'Might as well get used to the properties of my mana too in the process.'

Unfortunately, Skullius' control over his mana in the Ground Communion faded as soon as he exited the place and thus his reasonings collided to the aforementioned thought.

The Hybrid Luman leaned forward and launched ahead, bright mana flashing from his body for a split second before he shot up the corridor with speed that made it seem like he was skipping certain known motion rules in his dash!

Skullius rushed past three long corridors within two seconds and continued to burst forward while causing the walls and floor to tense up after he passed!

This was Skullius' agility without any skills superimposed.

He was indeed incredibly fast!

*

It only took fifteen minutes for Skullius to navigate through the entire Temple and emerge in the terrifying Slurred Grounds full of flayed yet well preserved men.

Yuyui had almost puked all she had eaten when she saw this scene but thankfully Skullius didn't stop by for a gorey tour.

Once more the huge doors at the front of the temple were opened and the group of three emerged in the waters that didn't feel like waters.

Waters that seemed more like cool winds around the body.

Waters that refused to enter the Temple.

'I guess I was worried for nothing. She still can't exit the Ground of Communion,' Skullius thought addressing the tail he thought he had.

Apparently, he was safe.

He instructed Ferex to take care of the constantly eating package again, keeping her close.

Even though Yuyui had died fifteen times already from eating such tough foods after years of not eating, she still persisted until her body relented.

Skullius could only sigh as he focused on something else.

'Alright then. Let's check if this works...'

From his spatial storage emerged the Elimparidis Stone Staff.