

Undead 431

Chapter 431: The Promised Chat

The Elimparidis Stone Staff had a special ability.

The ability to store [Dimensions], as the guidance field termed them.

This did not refer to complex spaces exclusively, like Clusters and the like.

No, this also referred to literally any structure magical or otherwise.

And guess what else could be stored in the Elimparidis Stone Staff right now?

Indeed!

The Temple of Unlusted Tears!

Skullius hadn't been sure at first because he knew of the protective arrays protecting this place.

However, after feeling the din in the power of the arrays that covered the walls the moment Yuyui was broken free, Skullius had assumed this was the case for most of the temple's defences. If he had to guess, then that area along with the Ground of Communion was were all the reserves of energy were going to.

Now that he could confirm after racing through much of the Temple, Skullius decided to give it a go.

He pointed the Elimparidis Stone Staff at the Temple.

"KIKIKI! What are you doing there, friend? Oh!"

The massive figure of a dolphin suddenly appeared above Skullius with its eyes honing in on him, what could be said to be freakish focus visible as its mana shrouded him.

Fuwin had appeared.

He had created a link to the Hybrid Luman, asking him what he was doing when he noticed...

"Ohhh! KIKIKIKI! That's the one isn't it?! Human male, are you the one who helped her?!" Fuwin questioned with immense enthusiasm.

The situation within the Temple was supposed to be secret so he wouldn't tell outsiders but he knew of the goings on in the Temple by inquiring from the guardians Bassbion and Yagrina over time, especially with individuals he was particularly interested in.

For Skullius who had only entered for a couple of hours and returned with the host who had gotten the legacy of the Diverse Oculus, but was stalling everyone's freedom, it was... shocking!

"Yes. Yes I did," Skullius said with a light smile while Yuyui gaped at the massive creature which she recognised, the same being true for the dolphin!

Neither directly showed any gesture of acknowledgement however.

"KIKIKI! This is interesting! I really liked this one and her music! Good, good~!" Fuwin said. "And now, I'm freeeeee~."

The conditions for the dolphin to remain were completed, though Bassbion and Yagrina would say otherwise as they hadn't achieved their purpose.

Fuwin wouldn't care though.

The host was found and secured safely as far as he could see.

The entire Territory burst like a mute bubble, revealing the cold waters that wrestled against everyone's balance with raging portions of mana, contrary to the lovable atmosphere within Fuwin's demesne.

Yuyui hugged Ferex tightly while doing her best to keep her eyes open.

"I hope you don't mind now if I do what I want with the Temple?" Skullius asked the giant dolphin which remained staring at them with excitement that ran through the waves.

"KIKIKI! Not at all! I'll be waiting here~," Fuwin replied.

Skullius nodded with a smile as he activated the Staff in his hand, a powerful beam of milky white energy going to wrap around the Temple and the pedestal it was set on which had begun to sink when the Territory disappeared.

The light rushed over the entire temple in a matter of seconds, tingling it white and zipping back to the white stone at the end of the Elimparidis Stone Staff.

Just like that.

The entire thing was stored!

Skullius almost laughed at how easy it was.

He had been right.

At least he could take his time discovering this place's secrets.

He could deal with Yuyui's issues on the road to Genhuis, which was why he was in a hurry, even going as far as to antagonise the two guardian Spirits by cutting their conversation with Yuyui short.

"Uuuuuu~! That's interesting! The whole thing disappeared!" Fuwin said as he clapped his fins, the force released from it creating cataclysmic shock waves that avoided Skullius, Yuyui and Ferex.

Skullius stored the Staff and turned to the beast as he curiosity asked.

"Why are you still here?"

"KIKIKI! Have you already forgotten? You said you'd talk to me after you were done! You're still alive, which is good for me and you changed quite a lot! I want to hear everything! You aren't going to back out of that deal we had, are you~?" Fuwin asked as he swam ridiculously fast and appeared behind Skullius who had to wiggle his feet and turn to once again face the eye of the massive creature.

"Of course not. I remember now. Let's have our talk," Skullius said with a not-what-I-signed-up-for look in his eyes.

What the heck was he supposed to talk about with a large dolphin that couldn't even tell the difference between human males and females without technicality being involved?

This was going to be a terrible conversation that didn't turn out as Fuwin expected it to.

It would probably only last a few minutes.

....

Several hours later...

"Woow, that was more enjoyable than I thought," Skullius said as he trekked through the safer regions of the Urja forest.

The night was thick, signalling that more than a day had passed since Skullius had dove into the waters.

He had finished his talks with Fuwin just a minute ago and a smile could be seen on his face.

Turns out, the two had a lot in common and Fuwin was a great conversationalist!

Fuwin knew how to draw out information and to compel who he was talking to spill more details voluntarily.

Skullius found himself relating to the giant dolphin's tales of its activities alone in the past millenia when compared to what it did before its deal with the Order of the Trodden Rose.

Talking to himself.

Creating objects that he could interact with.

The loneliness.

Skullius clung onto the topics with a 'That's right!', 'I know right!' and 'That's so true!' as he truly felt the dolphin's pain. Of course he couldn't share intricate details of his life in Deadmanland for obvious reasons but he did mask the undead parts with... alive human friends.

The Hybrid Luman felt a bond with this lonesome dolphin only to feel it tested by a sentiment of his that refused to detach from what Sila had said.

His yearning for companions was just an effect of his soul missing its other half.

It was depressing but Skullius didn't let it keep him down.

He had parted with Fuwin reluctantly, happy that he had lead the conversation in a safe direction (making sure Fuwin didn't melt) while also enjoying talking to someone who understood and was willing to listen.

It was a strange feeling, yet it brought Skullius joy.

At this moment, he was soaking wet and so was Yuyui had started to walk on her own, slowly.

She looked around curiously like a child while grabbing another snack which was wet under her armpit, but she didn't care.

She had a lot to say to Skullius but since she couldn't understand him now for some reason, something she had discovered when they were still in that depth, she could only keep to herself.

Until... Skullius started taking his clothes off!

"Master, what are you doing?!" Yuyui cried as she covered her eyes.

This was a ridiculous action as she had already seen Skullius naked before but back then, so many things had been happening and she hadn't truly thought about it.

Now, she was self-conscious!

Skullius ignored her screaming as he focused on the blinking guidance field notification before him.

[High Cosmetic Body] had timed out.

Indeed, the time had moved quite a bit, Skullius having to remove his shifting armour out of habit even though it could trace both his bodies with ease.

The Penetrator emerged while the Hybrid Luman took a backseat, Skullius emitting another sharp breath of mana.

"Ah... yeah. I really am weaker as the Penetrator now. Hmm. Well, I guess I should put raising my Tier as a priority. Still though, I really got plenty of new abilities with this new boost.

I can probably learn them on the way,' Skullius thought, immediately beginning to devise his next moves.

'That's right! I should also—'

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRGHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!
MONSTEEEEEEER!!!"

Skullius turned to see Yuyui stumbling and running away as she had a horrified look in her eyes and on her face that spelled the incredible fear she was suddenly hit with!

"Oh, I almost forgot about that," Skullius said, realising that he hadn't accounted for Yuyui just now. He was going to have to get used to it.

Her too.

"Ferex! After her!"

Somewhere far and vast...

With a ring of red light and a heavy thud, as if something had distorted space, directly appearing in the encirclement of this magical construct, a figure appeared.

A large figure that towered several meters in height.

A scorching breeze brushed against his face and body, making the cloak he wore with its stylish tassels blow back.

"Nmmm, that is hot indeed, aha ha," the voice of this figure leaked as he commented on the harsh weather conditions in this place.

Of course it was just any place, it was home.

Sause's home.

A comically large mountain with bursts of steam covering it with a coil from the midway point up, a growing red tinge depicting the heat building up at its tip showed a distance away beyond the red soiled ground, lay ahead.

It covered Sause's entire view, giving off an intimidating pressure that threatened to overwhelm anyone who laid eyes on it.

"Where did you suddenly disappear to?" a voice called to Sause from the side, a man seated on the ground addressing the giant.

He had long Havana brown hair and sugar grey eyes, red tattoos plastering half of his face while emitting a light red glow.

His build was bulky, but not overwhelming so, covered by a dark cloak with visible runes that displayed their presence with faint lights of activation.

"Oh, I was answering the call of a friend. Nothing much, aha ha," Sause said with a dismissive chuckle and a sharp gaze that spoke many hidden truths.

The man with brown hair merely met Sause's gaze with his own while trying to decipher the truths hidden within the giant but it was useless.

"Come now, my dear Benzard. Today is a special day. You want to meet HIM, don't you? We better not dally here if that's the case, aha ha."

The man, who was Benzard, morphed to a greater version of himself shifted his gaze and nodded.

"Fine. Let's go. I'm curious to see if HE looks anything like I imagined in my fantasies," Benzard said as he started moving forward.

"I am curious of that too, aha ha," Sause spoke as he followed.

The two walked towards the looming mass ahead, a track of reality opening up as it spelled something in the new future.

Chapter 432: Ambitions of The Weak (1)

The period that followed the victory of humanity and the Sif against the Giants had a lot of developments.

Rebuilding, remodelling and reconciliation.

A lot had to be done and thankfully, Aigas supported man to achieve many of their dreams with long life.

Mana was thick in the air, so thick that it nourished the bodies of man even before they left their mother's wombs, their physiques bearing stronger traits than those found in the current time.

With this abundant nourishment came long life and great strength, the average life expectancy of even the most tainted man being over 400 years.

The strength that clung to the bones and flesh, built on by the pure mana that traced through the air naturally, was profound.

Better yet, the purest of mana clung to man's souls, giving them vibrance in thought and spirituality to an incredible degree.

The mana that nested in their souls was much more condensed and refined than that which ran through their bodies and it further enhanced their potential.

With this potential came the bestial nature of man when it came to battle. In this time, when war pervaded, savage was fitting of a word to describe it.

It was brutal yet spotted with skill because of the long life that gave opportunity for honing of different raw styles of combat.

These different styles were ultimately decided by which nation one came from.

In Feinheath, there were three nations.

Maqi, the nation hailed to have the purest blood of men, untainted by the fishes and beasts of the jungles.

The strongest and most aggressive of man could be found in this land and their air permeated into all things, making their land the splitting image of its people.

Emeradis was known to have the smartest of man. Ingenuity, craftiness, shrewdness - these were common among the natives of this land and they took pride in it, making of their land what they could with their creativeness and innovation.

Then, there was Pelian.

The history behind this nation was fascinating but riddled with controversy.

Pelian did not exist until after the coming of the Giants.

As all stories involving the human race, Pelian had originally been a vast land that Maqi and Emeradis fought over.

After establishing themselves in their respective corners in the past at roughly around the same time, the lands left behind had been a subject of constant wars.

Numerous battles has been waged with different victors who claimed the land each time, ownership of this space that would get swallowed by Maqi and Emeradis interchangeably over centuries never being settled.

Maqi's fearsome brute strength and Emeradis' formidable strategy clashed without producing the ultimate winner for longest time before the coming of Giants.

When the large creatures had finally set foot on Feinheath, the war over this land had reached a pause, no definite inhabitants living in it as a gesture of laying claim, as those that settled there were either the poor or refugees.

The end of the First Grand War brought about a calm to Feinheath after the alliances built, the issue of the vast lands that remained without definite rule being left alone.

At this time, eighty and some millennia before the current time, a certain ambitious man from Emeradis took the chance to lay claim to this land.

A man by the name, Philemen Royan.

He was not gifted in combat and was not the brightest mind of the time, yet, those who wrote about him in the future, described him as a man with strength of will that pushed past the limits of man.

Ambition.

Direction.

He had secured these for a grand move that would leave a legacy that lasted millenia.

He gathered a small group of men and women with potential in various aspects – combat, leadership, technological innovation among others and left the nation of Emeradis to unite all the scattered individuals who dwelled illegally in the unclaimed lands.

He formed a small city that had a population of roughly 200,000 people whom he governed with word and action.

They wanted food? He gave them the means to secure it.

They wanted homes? He taught them how to build.

Each of the men and women he ran away with from Emeradis grew to head the varying facets of daily life that were required to keep the city which was made of vagrants, bandits and the weak into a powerful hold.

Naturally, when this establishment kept growing, Maqi and Emeradis could no longer remain still.

After 10 years, they sent their armies to destroy this new prospering space which they thought was a simple gathering of ambitious thieves, yet to their shock, their armies came back bearing news of defeat!

Against a small city, the might of armies of 500 combatants bearing the power of the steadily growing ranks of power were defeated and with relative ease but few had actually died.

Before the wrath of the two great nations could wash over his city with stronger force, Philemen requested an audience with the ruling parties of said nations, to which he was met with messengers instead, sent to hear his plea.

Philemen requested that the two nations allow him to form a nation of his own. The third human stronghold which would have a different culture, set of values and strength from the pre-existing two.

Another bastion for the race in case another threat from the Giants came.

Philemen was met with scoffs and ridicule as an expected rejection followed his plea, but he was not done yet.

Philemen challenged the two great nations.

He proposed, vowing with his life and soul that if he could produce a 100 Incandescent Stage experts within 10 years, Maqi and Emeradis would leave these lands to him.

If he could not, then he would personally slaughter every single one of the men and women within the walls of his city on top of handing himself to the two nations afterwards.

It was quite the shocking proposition, not to mention preposterous!

Over the 8000 years that the Giants settled on Feinheath and Opungale, the Universal power system had been established.

Mana cores, Classes and Stages.

Stages were known to be the most difficult to progress through and reaching the Incandescent Stage was no trifling matter.

With long life in these days came stringent attention to one's foundation as a combatant. As such, a Foundation Stage expert of this Era could kill an Advancement Stage expert of the times that came later.

Beyond this, it took more than five years on average for one to scale the Foundation Stage, Tasks from different Deities accounted for, with even more time needed for the Advancement and Master Stages.

Taking ten years to reach the Incandescent Stage, even if one breezed through the Tasks without care for their foundation, was impossible!

All this said, Maqi was the first to agree to this ridiculous proposal but after adding another stipulation, mostly for ridicule.

Provided that these 100 Incandescent Stage experts could be produced, they had to battle 100 Incandescent Stage experts from Maqi and Emeradis in a death match and only by having at least half of them win, could Philemen be considered the new ruler of the vast lands warred over by the respective nations.

Quite the interesting rule.

What would Maqi stand to lose either way, after all?

It was good to entertain such ambition.

The result was an inevitable resounding failure and the show that followed this failure would be entertaining to watch.

Emeradis, with their decision followed after, agreeing to this proposal as after noting that this man was from their nation, they promised to punish him brutally for this deed after he eventually butchered his followers.

As such, by Philemen's request, the deal was sealed with a magical contract that was created by an external party to ensure that none would back out.

Then...

Ten years later...

On the day of enquiry, when 50 Incandescent Stage experts from Maqi and 50 from Emeradis walked into the unnamed vast lands, grins and sneers showing on their faces...

100 Incandescent Stage experts sprung forth from the small city ruled by the seemingly unremarkable man who had started this bet!

...!

Their presence was nothing short of extraordinary and their bodies depicted no weakness, as if they had carefully sculpted themselves over hundreds of years!

Shock was palpable.

Disbelief was abundant.

Gaping mouth holes refused to close at this shocking development.

Philemen had done as he said!

In only 10 years...

Yet still, there was the bout!

There was no way these experts were as strong as those seasoned over hundreds of years!

It couldn't be!

It was impossible!

Instead of the one on one that had been intended, the ruler of Maqi proposed a match of 100 against 100!

There was no time to waste!

The illusion and trickery borne by Philemen was to be revealed immediately!

The man behind it all did not struggle against the decision but fully agreed, with the match beginning thereafter in a dry plain of no significance.

The experts from Maqi and Emeradis were equipped with the powerful weapons and armours while those from the small city only had subpar equipment and protection.

Yet, to them it mattered not.

When the match began, many expected a brutal blood bath with the weaklings from this small city being trampled by carefully woven might.

Yet...

It was not so...

The battle ended before anyone could see a single sword slice through flesh.

All the 100 Incandescent Stage experts from the small, insignificant city in the wilds roared two words that manifested something that everyone else did not see coming.

Something that was considered terrifying and sacred.

A glimpse of the wrath of the wild!

Majestic Territory!

Chapter 433: Ambitions of The Weak (2)

Majestic Territory!

100 Incandescent Stage experts formed a magnificent art that devoured an area of over 30 miles, engulfing everyone present.

Within this Territory, they were free to kill anyone they wanted.

The might of the Majestic Territory crafted by 100 Incandescent Stage experts bore down on everyone like a dreadful tide, crippling their pride and power!

Rarely was it seen for one to exceed the Incandescent Stage as the Tasks grew incredibly difficult, the cumulative mana experience to reach the next level also extremely difficult to acquire as more powerful beasts needed to be hunted.

The Classes and Cores of those present could not do anything against this formidable might either, as it was overbearing and new to them.

No human had ever wielded this power!

Common counters against it were not discovered... YET.

With this, Maqi and Emeradis could only admit defeat.

Somehow...

Somehow, Philemen had achieved the impossible!

They didn't know his methods and were extremely curious to know how a power only known to beasts could be acquired by man.

It was very fortunate that a magical contract had been signed beforehand, otherwise Philemen could have killed all the opposition on this day!

This was what the two nations thought, but Philemen never intended to do that.

Instead of instigating more war, he preferred a safer path ahead. One that took advantage of what he saw before him.

The greed that was palpable in the eyes of Maqi and Emeradis.

The battle was only half won.

The next step to ensure that his newly claimed land would remain as his, was to divulge the secret to this new power that his experts had learnt!

Naturally, Philemen had learnt this from the beasts of the Sacred Forests.

While in this Age, the Patkmas Yujgi, men learned a variety of powers through beasts but there was seldom any communication, as entry into Sacred Forests was rarely welcomed with care from the more and intelligent of these creatures.

Philemen had only achieved his shocking feat by tracking a certain powerful beast with his men.

The Truworth Bill.

A powerful bird that ventured from its Sacred Forest many a time to interact with humans.

To his fortune, Philemen had stumbled upon a two men now under his care who had come into contact with this beast while traversing the lands in poor health.

They had claimed that the beast had offered to cure him in exchange for their life in 30 years time, a deal they saw to not be as bad if they could live those years in peace.

In desperation, these men had agreed, to which their disease was cured and lengthy, healthy lives lived ever since.

It had been 21 years since the event when they shared the tale to Philemen and the man had invested his time in searching for this beast before making his crazy proposal to the two nations.

He analysed the intricacies of the Truworth Bill's desires in this trade it made with these two man and formulated several plans that lined with his goals.

When he eventually found the creature, he made a deal with it.

In exchange for granting 100 of his men power equivalent to that of Incandescent Stage experts as well as an edge to help them win a bout with twice the number of opponents, he offered something only known to his advisory council.

In addition to this, he made another deal with a treacherous offer in return.

The 100 experts he selected were told to make the most of the opportunity. To learn as much as they could and absorb all possible detail when the Truworth Bill took them away for a year eagerly to accomplish its end of the bargain.

Philemen's anticipation of what Maqi and Emeradis would stipulate when he laid out his proposal worked wonders for him in the end.

The greed of the two nations was quelled as the secrets of producing a Majestic Territory were shared and spread to humanity, a great contribution to man very much worthy of allowing for the birth of another nation.

As for the other deal Philemen made, it was to secure the Royan line for as long the Truworth Bill lived.

Regardless of the method.

Regardless of the civil wars to come.

The Royan line was to thrive no matter what it became.

The Truworth Bill obliged as in return for safekeeping Philemen's legacy, the 100 Incandescent Stage experts that had built the foundation for Pelian became the objects of exchange.

"My King..." a middle-aged looking man said as he bowed before the figure that sat upon a regal throne made of smooth black stone.

The figure perched upon the royal symbol leaned on the back rest while lazily supporting his head with his hand, his ocean blue eyes which contended against the sunflower blonde bangs falling from the top of his head languidly gazing upon the Knight that bowed before him.

"Rise..." the man on the throne said with a deep voice that contrasted his young looking face.

His demeanour was befitting of royalty despite what many others would say against him.

He was not as grand or as phenomenally renown as the one who came before him, or even before that, but he did carry the Royan blood in him.

The blood of Philemen Royan.

This man was Edricus Royan II, the seventh ruler of Pelian.

"What news have you for me, Rayn?" Edricus inquired.

The man known as Rayn showed a look of discomfort as he proceeded to answer.

His jade green eyes looked up at the King, his golden armour clanking as it responded to his slight movement.

"My King. Our fleet is about to converge with the enemy in the Tattered Serpent's Throat. Are you certain we do not need me to rush to their aid? I alone could go," Rayn asked with determination lighting up in his eyes.

"What for?" Edricus questioned without a shred of urgency or care.

This once again drove Rayn's emotions to flicker like a mask over his face, but he retained his cool.

"My King, Prince Holt is out there, leading a charge against a Union in your stead. Do you not wish to see him come back alive?"

Edricus emitted a short breeze from his nostrils, hints of a smile creeping on his face only to disappear from it.

"Why would I send my most powerful combatant, the Head of my Royal Knights out there to support foolish and overly ambitious spawn? My son chose to go against me and rally a private army for the assault. His Direction is his own," Edricus said with a fierce tone that subtly displayed his anger.

"But My King..." Rayn began when...

"Rayn..." Edricus interrupted him, "... a sword has no need for a mouth. The talent I saw from you when I picked you from the rotten streets was your impressive battle intellect and callous killing intent. I do not care for the relationship you have with my son. What I care for, is your relationship with the nation at large."

The King's words bit at Rayn who was shocked that Edricus would actually be so indifferent to the fate of his son.

Unfortunately, he could do nothing.

He owed the King a huge debt.

A debt of service.

It was fortunate that he would do more than simply serve, as his actions in the future would be imperative to the survival of Pelian.

As for the battle of fleets about to take place at the Tattered Serpent's Throat however...

Chapter 434: Naught Ambition

The sea between Feinheath and Opungale was called the Krassos, its waters dubbed the Thicker Deep as many a sailor claimed that they would turn as thick as honey at dense waves.

Because of the ferocity of the waves as they wrestled against the land, a path had been dug inland, tearing through a remote part of the continent up to dozens of miles where it narrowed into a stream.

This passage from the sea into the land was what was named the Tattered Serpent, as because of the waves that had created it, masses of fertile and infertile crust could be seen floating within it before succumbing to erosion, the meandering of this 'serpent' breaking into Emeradis and Pelian.

At this moment, two fleets could be seen slowly pushing in opposite directions against each other merely four miles in through the Tattered Serpent, this far into these waters being called the Tattered Serpent's Throat by many sailors.

One fleet had ships that had a dark colouration with the occasional golden white on the sails and keels while the hull and every other part of the ships remained with the colour of the night sky.

These ships had a rather bulky mass, with sturdiness that could be discerned with the mere sighting of them. Even the waters below these ships seemed to sense the might carried by the vessels as no living thing could be seen within them.

The other fleet had blue, red and white coloured ships, their build seemingly focused on speed as they were leaner with the craftsmanship emphasising a narrower shape up to the forepeak.

This fleet belonged to those who were defending their home.

An ambitious young prince and his army who had rushed over to the Tattered Serpent's Throat upon hearing word that a Union of the treacherous Fulgardt had finally reached Pelian led the charge through water.

Who was this prince?

Bold couldn't even begin to describe him as he was true to the Royan line, as was everyone born during and after Philemen Royan's time.

It was rare for a single Royan to rule over Pelian for more than a century as the ambitious blood that ran in the family lead to internal schemes and plotting. Brother against brother. Blood against blood.

Yet, the line lived on.

On a large ship leading the 64 on Pelian's side against the 52 on the opposing one, a young man with wide set ocean blue eyes, scarlet blonde hair tied into a ponytail and a square face, stood on the bowsprit of vessel.

He was adorned in a blue armour that sparkled under the sun's grace, its grade higher than Legendary and its defence higher than that of any other in the land save for that belonging to three individuals.

He scanned the ships a distance away and breathed out, expelling hesitation while taking in bits of courage.

This man's name was Juulicus Holt Royan, the second son of Edricus Royan.

"Logma. Can you predict how they may choose to act? The Purity has been supporting the three nations to fight against the Unions since the war started after all. Any Intel?" Juulicus asked without turning his head, his words directed to a dark-skinned man who stood behind him on the deck.

The man did not reply immediately as he considered his answer carefully before even hoping to respond.

"The Unions are bold. Just as you have seen, despite knowing that we are aware of their movements, those on this fleet are still calm. The energies from their forces have yet to even turn hostile," the man said. "They are incredibly confident."

"I see. Even when there isn't one of those... Chosen among them? I heard that only those four are the true threat," Juulicus said.

The man who had been addressed as Logma smiled bitterly.

"Only the fighters from Maqi can say that with confidence. The forces from your nation can't take that claim to heart. The population has barely grown and the same is true for your strength as a whole," Logma said as he blew away the braided brown hair that turned stiff as it fell from his scalp, making angled falls on both sides of his head.

His small, angled eyes with a hazel hue were taking in large bursts of information while he was entertaining the young prince's questions, enormous bursts of energy streaming from his golden armour that represented his affiliation.

The Purity was dividing its combatants between the three nations, supporting the fight against the heretic believers that followed Fulgardt's belief.

Blasphemy against the Deities?

Needless massacre?

This had to be stopped!

It went against the divine

Over a hundred and fifty years had already passed since the beginning of the Second Grand War and Pelian was only now getting assaulted by a Union. This confused many but it wasn't as if anyone was going to walk up to Fulgardt and ask why Pelian wasn't getting some.

This man, Logma, was a Paladin Champion sent to Pelian to relay information and assist with the war effort but his stationing had almost been forgotten since Pelian had been somewhat free for the past century. Everyone else was busy and he wasn't.

"Prince Juulicus, why hasn't your father deployed Rayn to lead a charge? Does he truly intend to selfishly keep his strongest soldier at his side?" Logma threw a question of his own.

"Hm. That's exactly what he is doing," Juulicus said with a chuckle. "Commander Rayn would have come with me but... he is loyal to my father. No doubt with his strength, he could fight a Chosen or two by himself without dying."

The pride in Juulicus' voice was free for all to notice. The few besides Logma who heard what Juulicus said nodded with grins as they also felt a sense of pride, knowing a bit of the lore surrounding Rayn but the Paladin Champion behind the Prince couldn't help but frown.

Indeed, Rayn was terrifyingly powerful.

Even he as a Peak Incandescent Stage fighter with the full force of his Divine blessing wasn't at all confident that he could even manage a clean hit on the man.

If the hierarchy of the steadily growing Purity could be considered, Rayn would only lose to the most powerful Paladin Champion the Purity had at this time.

Truly, the man was an anomaly.

But the statement laid forth by Juulicus was a bit exaggerated.

Logma flashed up to the bowsprit and carefully dragged Juulicus to the deck.

"We're dangerously close to our enemies. Though unlikely in our circumstance, if a Territory battle were to spontaneously break out, you wouldn't be able to last, even with your armour," Logma said.

Juulicus felt insulted but he swallowed up his retort.

He watched as Logma carefully looked across the rapidly closing gap between them and their enemies, ascertaining their number and power.

'None of them seem to be above the Incandescent Stage but even those that aren't at that level are emitting ridiculous levels of energy! Where did all these powerful experts come from?' Logma questioned.

Those at the Master Stage on these ships all seemed to be on the cusp of reaching the Incandescent Stage, which was insane.

None of the fighters in these Unions had been reported to be weaker than this in all battles that had taken place so far.

'That said... she's the most dangerous...' Logma thought while focusing on a certain woman who languidly sat on the figurehead of the leading ship that was shaped like a grotesque dark creature from the pits of the Under!

She locked her eyes with his, her demeanour showing nothing but complete indifference towards his scouting.

Behind Logma, Juulicus turned to the men on the ship and shouted in a loud voice.

"Men! The day has come! You, just like I saw it unfit to remain sitting on our heads and strength instead of coming to meet the fiends that have started an uprising against the order the world! Let us be the first to engage and claim an uncontested victory against these overconfident bastards!"

The men on the ship, upon hearing the invigorating words spilled by their prince, cheered as their collective power, drawn about by their excitement, caused a dull light to shine on the ship!

"YEAAAH!" they called.

"Let's show them the power that the Royan line has birthed in full! Let us wrangle their innards over the Tattered Serpent's Throat and disdain their cheap attempts at invasion!"

"YEAAAH!"

"Let's prove that quick action bears result! Result and rewar—"

Blood.

Blood sprayed as before a quick breath could be drawn, Juulicus' head was severed from his head, the bodies of the forty rallied combatants on this vessel being shattered into bits before the brisk blink of an eye.

And...

Before a sound could be heard, the figure of an armoured Paladin Champion flew off like a blur, battered by an enormous force as it streaked through ten of the ships in this fleet which exploded as if ignited by tonnes of gunpowder...!

Chapter 435: This Vessel...

Huff! Huff!

Logma heaved deep breaths while blood and sweat oozed from his brow and left eye socket that had been carved with jagged finesse, destroying his eye and hacking at the side of his skull.

His armour was cracked pitifully and he ground his teeth as he pulled out some of its pieces that had dug into his body.

The light around him, shaped like a three point star faded and he hurled blood from his mouth as he struggled to get up.

All around him, all he could see was flame, flame rising from the oval shaped view over him.

The flame was so bright that it made it seem like the bright and sunny day had subbed in the night.

From this distance he could see the true scale of the devastation that had occurred in the minute or two that he had been knocked out.

At this moment, he was within a massive crater carved into the side of a hill.

This was where he had landed after the sudden strike or strikes... he didn't know, which he had taken, carrying him sixteen miles away from the fleet!

Cough! Cough!

Logma coughed in an unnerving manner before spitting out blood.

'This... If I hadn't used Star Counter...' he thought, dreading what could have happened if he hadn't used his auxiliary technique in time.

Yet a lot of good that did.

He had barely seen what had hit him, but he was sure it was the woman who had been sitting on the opposing ship's figurehead.

How on Aigas she moved that fast and how she had bested him so badly despite being at the same stage as him, with the same coloured core, was beyond him?

A unique class?

But still, his Divine blessing was proficient when it came to bolstering his Durability!

So... how?!

Logma crawled out of the crater and came to fully face the raging flame and the scene of utter destruction.

The time he had been unconscious for wasn't lost to him as he could ascertain it from the state of his body, this detail being what led his one remaining eye to bulge in shock when he saw that all 64 ships on his side were no more.

They were either sinking scrap, or burning wrecks over the Shattered Serpent's Throat which didn't deserve the name anymore.

The narrow way of waters had been expanded upon somehow, becoming a bloated pass that the full fleet of ships from the Union steadily crossed through as they continued their journey further into Pelian.

None of the men and women on the ships seemed to have moved or engaged at all which led Logma to have a horrifying thought.

'Don't tell me that woman...!'

"You're still alive, huh? Master Minobu was right. You bastards are hard to kill," a voice came from behind Logma who ground his teeth.

He hurriedly turned to find a woman crouching beside him while gazing at his face with a mix of pity and surprise.

She had long leather black hair that was combed over to the right side, the left part of her head being almost completely bald.

She was quite pretty, but it was evident that she didn't particularly care for her own looks.

She wore only a cover around her chest, made from a hard dark shell that didn't look to be steel, a rough hide under it to provide comfort to her flesh. She also wore something similar from her waist to her thighs like tight shorts and from her knees to her feet as boots, this scanty set of armour shockingly graded higher than Legendary!

A black machete-like weapon half her height was in her hand, coated with a layer of her terrifying mana.

Logma leaked blood from his mouth as he attempted to create distance between himself and this woman but he knew it was impossible in his state. She may only allow it on a whim.

"I'm glad I get to kill a Paladin Champion on my own. It serves to reinvigorate my belief, hmph," the woman said as she stabbed her weapon into Logma's calf!

...!

The Paladin Champion felt an intense wave of pain gush through his body, almost driving him to unconsciousness!

He emitted a subdued grunt as he balled his hand into a fist and struck the ground under him with great might!

The hill he had rested on exploded into fine dust, Logma finding an opening to dash away from the close encounter!

He rolled on the ground beyond the mile's worth of destruction he had caused with a single punch to the ground before steadily coming to stand on his feet.

The machete that had been in his leg had already been retrieved, a testament to how fast his opponent was and how she was aware of every one of his moves.

'Damn it!' Logma thought as his eye darted this way and that, searching for the woman.

He couldn't sense, see or hear the woman at all!

It turned out she was incredibly proficient at hiding her presence!

'If I use my Territory, I'm likely to die in the clash. I'm nowhere near my peak condition right now...'
Logma ran through his options as once more, a three point star shaped light engulfed him, flickering as it depicted that his strength was waning.

The Paladin Champion felt his heart constrain with regret and yearning.

He hadn't served the Purity long enough.

He hadn't served the Deities long enough.

He wasn't that high ranked among the twelve Paladin Champions and since the war started, he hadn't had the opportunity to do anything till now.

He had been eager to show his will for service with regard to his belief, but he was taken out in a few quick blows without exacting any change.

Without protecting anything.

How could he die with pride when his life amounted to nothing even with the Divine Blessing he had?!

Logma grit his teeth once more in anguish.

From the dust and dirt flying ahead of him, he saw a shadow and then the full image of the dangerous woman that had put him in this dreadful state.

She held out her machete as her eyes flashed with a power that exceeded Aura.

"Your flimsy counter can't stand against my strikes. I thought the display earlier would show you how true that is," the woman said with a scoff. "Still, struggle well. I'll hack off your limbs and parade your body on the mast of my ship. Hmph. Then we'll see if anyone Divine will come to rescue you."

Logma stumbled.

He was definitely going to die.

There was no way around that with his strength and according to Juulicus, expecting reinforcements was a waste of time.

The Champion sucked in a deep breath as he swallowed all the regret and pain.

'If I am going to die worthlessly anyway, I might as well try this out,' he thought as he knelt down.

His dark skin illuminated by the flames around him made him look solemn, though he did not intend for this.

He hung his head and focused deep within his soul.

Several hundred spots of light swam within it, leaving multi-coloured trails of utter beauty.

With the refinement of one's energies into an aspect of power greater than Aura, came its passive crystallisation and off shooting into something unique.

Creeds.

'I've never had to use these as I thought my strength was enough for the duties I had. I've saved 342 Creeds in hopes of being able to save the lives of individuals that matter in the long run at a critical point or better yet, trade them in return for something else bigger than me...' Logma thought.
'Now...'

Perhaps this was it.

This was the time for that.

"This is my Creed..." he whispered in a very low voice that could hardly be heard even by the sharpest ears. "...that my body be a vessel for the ones I serve to use as they see fit. My blood, my body, my soul... make it fitting enough for whatever they deem."

OOOOOOM!

The first to feel it was the woman before Logma, a hot sensation burning at her skin with a disturbing itch.

The ground trembled.

The sky quaked.

Logma's figure became like a mirage while the flames burning away at the lands and trees died down without transition, his body seemingly taking up the tremendous heat that had been suffocating the environment!

A pillar of light stormed from above for a brief moment, too fast for anyone not as strong as Logma and the woman to perceive!

Then came a voice that only the Paladin Champion could hear.

It spoke with an intensity that cracked Logma's soul, but relief and joy manifested on his face as a genuine smile, blood oozing from his remaining eye.

<It is remarkably insufficient, but I will make do>.

OOOOOM!

The continent trembled and so did the sea.

The reverberation coursed through everything in existence but few could understand what this meant.

Among these few, one man who sat on the lavish floor to an exquisitely made mansion raised his head, his long hair softly cascading down against his thick, bare muscles that held untamed might.

"There it is. I was doubtful, but it happened as you said. Who would have guessed?" he said in a voice that was difficult to describe.

A figure at his side chuckled.

"I did. You have spilled a lot of blood on land and on the sea. These are the bodies of the divine, you know, aha ha?"

The man who sat down, letting his senses which covered the entire continent in a breath hummed as he turned to face the large figure in his company.

The only one of his kind on the continent at this time.

"That was the entire point of it," the long haired man said. "Now tell me, Giant. Do you truly know how to reach Divinity?"

Chapter 436: Final Preparations

A flame of green and black bellowed in a well lit and large enclosed space, blazing with a circular arc as it spat out two figures, one of which landed on its feet while the other gracelessly slapped against the floor with a loud clap.

These two figures were Actuass and Revia respectively.

The latter immediately started to throw up with her eyes giving off a dreadfully terrified emotion as the skin around them was tinged in a dark purple hue.

She retched and hurled, causing a disgusting echo to permeate through this hidden place where many figures could be seen.

The more prominent figures here, not being fazed by the two's sudden appearance as they had been waiting for it, were Cyne and Fulina.

The rest?

Well...

Revia sobbed bitterly as she raised her body with her trembling arms.

She shot a glare at Actuass that turned into a fearful gaze a microsecond later as she stuttered in terror.

"You... What did... what have I..."

"I think you understand more than you let on. It's a habit of yours," Actuass said as he sighed heavily.

He was tired.

That was a lot more difficult than he expected even with all he had taken into account.

Fortunately for him, it had worked.

Revia quivered with a tumultuous mix of emotion, her face contorting into an ugly mash of muscle.

"You used me...!" she shrieked, unable to propound what she true wanted to say.

"Of course I did. You are my pawn," Actuass responded while brushing away the ethereal dust on his robes. "You don't realise how rare of a catch you are. Spirit Wardens are extraordinarily scarce on Aigas, especially those who are conscious of the fact."

"You were my only ticket into the Yormuness. One can normally only go there either by dying or reaching Divinity. Luckily for me, because the Outworld Attic is outside Aigas, I have a clear view of the Yormuness."

Revia could barely hear what Actuass was saying as her mind was trying to process everything she had seen.

The weird, the strange and the atrociously bizarre.

All of it.

"In exchange for letting you in on sensitive information about me and essential information about yourself that you would have never known, I enhanced the effects of your inherent power to interact with matter and individuals outside the normal cycle of life, though only for a short amount of time."

Thud!

Revia couldn't stand it anymore. Even if she couldn't die anymore, her mind could only take so much in a short amount of time.

She lost consciousness.

Actuass kept his gaze on her body for a while before turning to the figures of Fulina and Cyne who were waiting for him to finish speaking.

"Done?" Actuass asked them.

"<Sigh>. It's done but I lost quite a bit of my men," Cyne replied with an agitated frown and a shrug.

"I'll revive them soon," Actuass said while gazing at the two objects placed at the very edge of the room.

They looked like sarcophagi but without any particular religious or cultural markings on them, a blackish purple hue glittering over their surfaces.

Cyne followed Actuass' line of sight.

"I only managed to secure two of the three in Emeradis. As for the third, the Mages that guarded the place were particularly fierce. It wasn't worth it," Cyne said with a sigh.

"No matter. They are only a contingency for after my deal with that man after all. Do we know his whereabouts at this time?" Actuass asked, turning to the person most likely to know.

"He's out recruiting a specific group of Energy Formers. He says it's part of what he saw and all. Should we let him continue to amass more forces? I mean, after your deal, things are going to go crazy in Aigas," Fulina replied.

"Don't worry. I have it under control. The main piece I'm counting on against any mishaps has already been stationed at the venue of the Premium Age Royale," Actuass said, alleviating Fulina's concerns.

All this concluded the preparations he had wanted to make.

All that was left was for the Royale hosted by House EverSword to begin and...

"You got some interesting pickings," Actuass said while shifting his sight to the hundreds of men and women lying down on the floor.

Every single one of these men and women was... aged quite heavily.

They were old but powerful, even the subconscious leak of energy from them causing the air to turn heavy.

They were all asleep with the exception of one man who sat on the floor with his legs tucked against his chest.

Fulina looked at this sight with complicated expressions.

She and her subordinates scattered all across of Aigas had managed to nab all these men and women who were mostly retired from their previous duties, bringing them to Actuass.

Some of them were partially senile while others were so old they could barely remember they were living beings.

Fulina felt uncomfortable performing this atrocious deed, so much so that she had delayed quite a bit.

"Yeah..." she said, responding to Actuass' statement.

The masked man walked up to the group and stared at the one man among everyone here who remained awake, looking at him with keen eyes.

From his dressing, it was quite clear where he was from.

"This man didn't struggle when we took him. He said he wanted to see something interesting before he died and since he didn't give us any trouble, Cyne didn't use his Undeath Concept on him," Fulina explained.

"Fascinating," Actuass voiced.

He was intrigued by the man.

The waves of power he produced were horrendous!

His senses that stretched to outside this hidden place could discern dense clouds beginning to gather over it, acknowledging his strength despite his age.

"Hmm. Wake them up," Actuass ordered Cyne.

The man given the simple order snapped his fingers, the hundreds of people who were asleep before starting to wake up.

Fulina and Cyne backed away as this was going to be brutal and they did not have any part to play in this, fortunately.

As the others woke up, confusion and frustration hitting them over what was happening, Actuass spoke to the lone old man huddled at the edge of the large space.

"Would you like to come at me first? It's the only way to get out of here as you are."

The old man laughed as he slowly stood up.

His eyes were calm but cautious.

He knew this man before him, unlike the other two, was a problem.

"I will oblige. Though, I must ask, will you alone take on all of us?" the old man asked.

"So it would seem..."

"I see...." the old man said with his presence flaring menacingly. "My interest in this little charade grows.... Hmm?"

Something interrupted the old man as he spoke.

At the same time, everyone else felt it too, a strange tug at their bodies!

Something like having the innards pulled from the inside.

...!

Everyone, including the old man urgently investigated within their bodies, but there was no need, as what was happening to them was clearly defined by Actuass.

"Ah, it seems I must explain once again," the masked man said. "Everyone who faces me will feel their life energy leak from their bodies. In other words, you could die before engaging me in combat."

....!

The tension further increased as while others were inclined to doubt, others believed this was true.

The group then felt another strange sensation within them, the life energy that had started escaping from them swiftly being contained as with this... came an exponential growth in their power!

Sensing that everything was set with the troublesome Creed he had placed on himself, literally having to empower an opponent before fighting them, Actuass' body bellowed with power.

"Now we begin," he said as he stepped forward.

It was time for the last preparation – gathering a vast amount of Undeath energy.

Chapter 437: Brewing Danger, Troublesome Stalker

The Isise.

"The Extreme Formula, you say?"

"Extravagantly so."

"So this... array that is etched onto the surface of Aigas somewhere, is what you want to undo? And it just so happens to be the one thing holding back Boron in the Under?"

"Indeed."

"Hmmm. What makes you so sure that the Purity doesn't know about it? Or as you said, that you were told that even the three Deities wouldn't interfere with you breaking it?"

"It is too early for me to be saying this, but trust me. If the Purity knew, they would have guarded it heavily until now. Originally, the Extreme Formula was not visible on the crust of Aigas. It remained as an extravagant, invisible marking that no one could see or sense.

But over the past millenia, Lord Boron has grown extravagantly impatient and due to his efforts, its location was revealed to the former leader of the Evenfall. Through him, may his soul rest in place, its etching on Aigas was eventually made visible to us all. Only we know about it."

Silence.

Then solemn consideration.

"Hmmm.... Very well. There are still many missing details however. Tell me. You seem confident, so why do you need us? And why do you think we will help you?"

"Ah, there's no harm in adding extravagant quality to the mix. The Evenfall has never been a true threat to the world since its founding two millennia ago. Poor leadership and strategy as well as extravagantly weak members being the cause. Your conscription will change the latter for the better..."

"As for why you would help us..."

A cheerful grin.

"Well, it's mainly for two extravagant reasons. For one, no one on Aigas will ever accept you and your little community."

Tension and rage rise.

"Calm down, calm down. I mean it in a matter of fact way. Summoners are to be captured and killed in Pelian by order of the oh so extravagant Royal family, so you aren't exactly a good fit here. Maqi keeps to its own and doesn't take to foreigners lightly, especially if they do not match up to the standards of strength they require.

This doesn't usually include calling strange creatures from unknown places, hahaha."

"Then Emeradis... While it is welcoming of talent, it has made it a point to crudely identify Pelian citizens as blandly cultured. As the progenitor of the extravagantly respected Mage class, I do not think they would be all excited to have you on board."

...

Only the truth was said.

It wasn't that they were Summoners, it was that they were Summoners from Pelian.

There was the grinding of teeth and heavy breathing.

"Fret not. This is exactly why I'm here. Instead of creating a reclusive society of your own that does not interact with the world, join me. Soon, none of these extravagant racial, stereotypical and historical classifications will be relevant. Everyone will be same."

"...What do you mean?"

Another grin explodes to the surface.

"No one will have the time to worry about all that when there is extravagant chaos that turns back the clock, reforming everything to how it was supposed to be. Believe me, Master Boron is extravagantly open minded."

Emeradis.

Two men with bald heads bowed before an elderly woman who was also shaved of hair completely.

All three wore thick, navy blue robes that hid their shapes, going over to pool at their feet with their excessive sizes.

It was excessive but traditional.

An Emeradis Mage did not need anyone to appreciate their body. Only their mind and skill.

"What was taken?" the elderly woman who stood aloof with her eyes sharply gazing at the two men bowing at her feet, questioned.

"Lady Stern-Mage, they took two olden relics, coffins holding the remains of the scourge from that olden era," one of the two Mages said with a deep voice that carried a bit of fury.

"Two?"

"We managed to stop them from stealing the last one, Lady Stern-Mage."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, Lady Stern-Mage."

The woman looked around the courtyard leading up to the grand storage.

Numerous dead bodies were sprawled everywhere, bleeding on the white tiling.

The operation to collect the corpses had already begun but the mood was sullen. This was a very bold move but it was also surprising.

What was the motive of the attackers?

What could they possibly hope to achieve by stealing these coffins.

What was inside was either rotten and dried or close to it.

The bald woman carefully looked around, feeling the strange tangling of energy.

It was Undeath.

The Green Neolists.

Her eyes moved down to the ground.

A dark patch, one obviously made by the explosion of flame on the white tiles could be seen.

From this, the Stern-Mage noted that it was likely the use of the signature travel tool of this infamous group.

The Arcane Teleportation scrolls.

"How bold," she said before turning to the two who still remained bowing. "Report to the Monarch. He'll need to know of this."

Inhone City.

The enticing view of the city was slowly coming back with a refreshing flare, the new Guilds Association building as a prominent landmark rising in construction well while the different districts, commercial and otherwise were springing up nicely.

The city was bustling with life even after the recent attack as at this point, people had already grown past the destruction.

It came and went.

Such was life.

On the streets were many faces – happy and those trying to be, as well as unbidden emotion.

In this expressive atmosphere, a man wearing a shirt that looked to be made with mithril-like texture as well as reddish brown pants passed through with a passive gaze.

His nose kept twitching as he kept sniffing up the air, his expression changing after short bursts of time.

The strap to the sword sheath which he slung over his shoulder had had enough of his grip which also changed with his expressions, the swing of his body now and then as he seemed to be searching for something causing the object to jangle.

Suddenly, the man came to a complete halt as he drew in a sharp whiff of the air.

"Yeah, that's an undead curse alright. Probably from an Arch-Lich. Argh, a really foul scent," the man said as he swiped his hand before his nose. "Looks like Azila was right. There's something to look into, after all."

Chapter 438: Picking The Worst Target

The branches covered in snow did their best to obstruct the view but Healon's sharp eyes were unhindered.

Even as the dense assortment of trees tangled and twisted, almost masking the common road to the more populated areas of the region as they formed a vast woodland of immense natural beauty, he remained with his arrow nocked on his bow, following the target with incredible accuracy.

"You got a nice shot, right?" Trevis, who was over the branch which Healon was using as the perfect sniping spot in this large tree with large blue leaves that resisted the cold, asked.

"Yes. Just say the word," Healon said.

His arrow pointed to two individuals who were walking on the road a little more than a mile away.

One was a man with slicked back auburn hair dressed in a rather stylish leathery get up, thick chains wrapped around his waist as he walked on with his hands in his pocket.

"Is he some powerful freelance mercenary or some idiot dressed to impress and putting up a cool front for the girl?" Healon asked his friend Trevis who held a saber in his hand while also looking ahead.

"Probably the latter. That's some edgy fashion there. I can't tell if the girl likes it or is just tolerating it," Trevis replied with the shake of his head.

The girl these two were referring to was the woman walking beside this man.

She had lime-coloured hair that reached her shoulders, giving off a naturally wild look because of its unkempt nature that wasn't at all off putting.

It flowed from her scalp to cover one of her eyes, giving her a timid visage.

What added to this was how thin this woman was.

The clothes she wore made this fact more noticeable than it would have been otherwise, her skin having a slightly pale tone that somehow matched her up with the surroundings.

"On any other day I'd take on anything that isn't male but... what's with her? It's just like she hasn't fed on anything since she was born."

"Well we'll never know until we get the job done, Healon. That guy has to be packing something in that ring on his finger. Just incapacitate him and we'll probably find something good enough to not get our asses beat by leader."

These two men... were bandits.

Both had blue cores, with Healon having the Archer class as a Arma User and Trevis having the Warrior class as a Form User.

Of the two, Trevis was the stronger and more experienced one. He was even branching from his class to try forming a proficiency in basic sword play.

In the small organisation they were from, these two were among the lowest ranked both in scores and skill.

Each individual in the group was supposed to bring contributions in the form of valuables, termed as scores, every day in order to stay, as they were supported with a place to sleep and food to eat.

The increase in scores was what progressed your standard of living and rank in the organisation as well as the skills you honed, which was why Trevis had begun diversifying.

Today, they were lucky enough to find two unassuming travellers who seemed to not be aware of how dangerous this road could be. No one used such public roads anymore unless they had a powerful escort and Healon and Trevis had just been passing by when they caught sight of this prey.

This was an easy catch that none of them were willing to pass up.

"Hey, Trevis. They are arguing all of a sudden. Should I still take the shot?" Healon asked.

"I can see that. Wait a moment," Trevis replied.

In the distance, the man and woman had stopped moving and the woman seemed to be crying. She knelt down and gripped the man's pants, begging.

She was shedding tears!

"The hell?"

The man on the other hand looked irritated.

He tried to push away the woman but she hugged his leg and kept weeping buckets.

Trevis and Healon were taken aback.

Did they misunderstand the situation?

"Just take the shot. The details have nothing to do with us," Trevis said as he subconsciously increased his grip on the saber he was holding.

For some reason, as soon as he gave Healon the instruction, his body grew tense.

'Come on. Why am I getting nervous? If she's fawning over him, he must have something worth clinging to him for,' Trevis calmed himself down.

Healon confirmed his aim on the man and was about to shoot his mana covered arrow when...

...!

"WHAT THE HECK MAN?!" Healon exclaimed in shock.

He didn't know how or why, but the woman who had been clinging to the man, begging for something suddenly exploded from the waist up!

Her blood stained the snow covered road, everything from her waist to her legs which remained intact falling to the ground while spilling torn guts and juices!

Healon and Trevis grew exceedingly alarmed!

What the hell was that?!

Could it be...?

No, it was definitely the man who did this but...

They hadn't even seen him move!

From the distance, it was hard to ascertain his strength but he couldn't be that strong considering that he hadn't noticed them. If he was an expert of a higher level, he would have, and they should know since they were experienced enough at picking their targets carefully.

Maybe it was his gear?

Was it not some casual get-up after all?

The man with the slicked back hair swiped his hand, started to cleaning off the blood on his pants.

Then...

He suddenly turned his head... over to Healon and Trevis' position.

...!!!

The two men almost choked at how this man was seemingly looking at them as if they were right in front of him and then came the unsettling feeling that crept from the man's eyes!

A creepy and disturbing sensation that caused every cell in their bodies to jolt and start warning them of terrible danger!

It didn't help that now, with a clear view of the man's eyes, they saw that he had no irises or pupils, which added an even more terrifying layer to this horrific scene!

Healon's bow and arrow fell from his hands as he turned pale while Trevis grit his teeth with a shudder coursing through his body!

Even with this mass of fright however, he refused to drop his weapon!

WHOOOOSH!

SPLAT!

Something phenomenally quick suddenly blasted from the terrifying man's position, tearing apart the trees and branches in the way within the blink of an eye as it then smashed into Healon's head, shattering it into a gorey mess!

...!

"Ah..." Trevis stuttered as blood splattered on his body.

That was way too fast!

Right before Healon's body could drop...

WHOOSH!

Another one of these projectiles flew at Trevis!

The man's hand suddenly darted before him as he swiped with his sword subconsciously, a massive stroke of luck applying as it allowed him to partially deflect the oncoming attack!

Perhaps it wasn't luck but his anticipation of an attack coming for him too, as well as the fact that his long practises with the sword day and night jolted his hand to swing!

Who knew?!

Something hard knocked against his saber, causing the weapon to ring and vibrate vehemently, the following result being Trevis getting knocked off the branch he stood on!

The rapidly flying object landed a few meters away and Trevis who quickly recovered to his feet on the ground couldn't help but turn to see what it was.

A fist-sized stone?!

A layer of mana swiftly died down from it, bringing the bandit to come to a realisation but he didn't dwell on it.

'I have to RUN!' Trevis thought as he immediately took to his heels, pushing his body to the limit with mana while rushing in the opposite direction!

At least he thought to do so...

BWOOF!

The bandit suddenly fell on the snow covered ground with a puzzled and horrified expression.

He had intended to run but... he just fell down.

"I was waiting for that arrow for five minutes, bro. And it never came," a voice spilled into his ears.

Trevis was about to turn to see if the nightmarish thoughts he was having were true but a burst of pain beat him up first!

He quickly looked down to his lower body and saw the reason why he had suddenly fallen over just now!

His legs were severed!

From his knees and below, there was nothing there!

His legs were neatly packed side by side in the snow right beside the tree he had been stationed in!

"AGGGHHHH!" Trevis screamed in pain, his blood staining the frozen innocence pooling over the ground in this eternal season.

His eyes brushed against the view of the same man he had been targeting from the distance standing a meter before him, his image obscured by tears that started to flow down his cheeks.

The man held his saber which he thought he had been gripping tightly all along!

Trevis' thoughts could hardly focus on the details of what and why.

He could only feel the pain.

Something like this... had never happened to him.

Losing limbs was a mortal fear of all men!

"Looks like we won't be having a brief talk like I imagined," the man before him said as he walked up to him and crouched down.

Trevis trembled as he looked at the man's face with a pool of emotions.

He wanted to hurl his hate and put up an unfazed front like his thieving peers but he was past that point.

Even if he could, the image of the man's hand coming down to touch his face as his white eyes lit up with what looked like a dark flame caused him to quiet down as he felt his whole body turn stiff!

The same dark substance leaked from his hand as it started to sink into him without pause, Trevis' eyes growing bloodshot as he reached the climax of his fear.

Soon, the bandit found his consciousness fading, the last thing he would ever remember being the words of this man which echoed in his mind vibrantly.

"Let's see what a sockethole like you can teach me."

Chapter 439: Sanctioning Darkness!

The Hybrid Luman loomed over his victim, [Evil Darkness] leaking from his hands as it invaded without limitation.

His eyes that were full of the darkness as well because of the partial activation of [Crude World Projection] which he had mastered during the heat of the battle with Bassbion, saw the full image of Trevis but with a darkness tainting his outline.

A splash of grey and a small cloud of white could be seen over him as well, the Hybrid Luman who now had an understanding of what all these colours meant and how to take advantage of their meaning in each individual, rejoicing at having found another catch.

"Let's see what a sockethole like you can teach me," he said as he activated a Special skill which he had for a long time but had been unable to use because of the insufficiency of his core.

[Basic Evil Sanction!]

The darkness that leaked from Skullius' hand latched onto the darkness which he saw in his vision!

At the same time, the stream of his darkness which touched the spots of grey and white on Trevis instantly dissipated as if it didn't exist!

Through the darkness that cradled that within the bandit, Skullius felt sounds and experienced images that he had never experienced before.

They were all distorted.

It was like watching a scene from a far away distance with the sounds of what was occurring being obscured and the images themselves warped by darkness, giving representations more than real details.

No mental image could clearly be built for Skullius, but it wasn't about all that.

It was about what the darkness he expelled was able to explore from the darkness from his target.

Each action and its intent.

Be it what his victim learned, or was subjected to.

Murder.

Anguish.

Sick glee.

Determination for an unjust cause.

[Evil Darkness] pulled on everything it could, drawing away the darkness from Trevis.

Devouring it.

Soon, Skullius lost touch with this sensation that felt like he had just devoured someone whole, absorbing everything to do with what was considered the 'evil' within them.

The darkness flaring in Skullius' eyes died down as once more, he was left optically blind.

"As I thought, he didn't have much to offer," Skullius said. "At least I gained some insights about the sword. They should help me a bit with [Basic Sword Mastery]."

The Hybrid Luman looked at Trevis' body while rising to stand up straight.

The man was still alive but when he woke up, he would be... lost.

In a way, he would be left as a saint, as the darkness within him, the majority of his being was stripped away.

But he also wouldn't be himself anymore.

This skill, [Basic Evil Sanction], a skill which he had gotten at the same time as [Basic Evil Weaving] and [Basic Evil Invasion], was quite powerful.

Its effects when not as powerful as they should be yet but it was definitely very useful.

~~~

[Basic Evil Sanction (Special) | Lv.1]

Using the inherent darkness within, grab ahold of all material and representational darkness, pulling out what it hides and everything attached to it within yourself.

The stronger the skill grows, the more concepts can be drawn and shaped as the user wills.

Mana Requirements: ---

Duration: ---

Cooldown: ---

~~~

This skill was the reason why Skullius could now speak well enough in the Known Language and in several dialects of this region.

The description of the skill could be interpreted in many different ways, but once Skullius used the skill itself, he grew to understand it more.

As for how he came to learn so much in a short amount of time, it was because...

There were so many goddamn hooligans in this region!

He had come across three separate groups of thieves and bandits in the past eight hours, which grew irritating.

After having received the WILL OF UNDERSTANDING back in the Temple of Unlusted Tears, Skullius had intended to test out all his darkness and light skills which led him to stumble upon this Special skill he had never used.

In activating it, he had discovered that it was more effective on scumbags.

People who were identified as evil or bad, a concept which Skullius could fairly understand but was yet to fully comprehend.

The more darkness within a target he could see with [Crude World Projection] vision, the more effective it was. Now, this discoloured sight of his had more meaning.

Alternatively, if an individual was considered good or even splattered with grey, the skill would be more or less useless. Again, at the basic level, Skullius understood what good, meant.

This wasn't [Basic Evil Sanction]'s main use however, as [Basic Evil Invasion] could accomplish something somewhat similar on this aspect, but Skullius didn't use that skill often for obvious reasons.

Speaking of these reasons, Skullius has discovered something else phenomenally more profound than much else he had unlocked with his awakening.

He didn't know if it was the Luminant Seed's doing or if it was because of Sause's interference but... his soul, had been partially repaired!

From the 52% that was read through Doom Factor 2 because of how fractured his soul was, the figure had gone down to 35%, clearly depicting that Skullius' soul wasn't as tattered anymore!

With that, Doom Factor 2's descent was delayed by nearly 4 months according to the guidance field which caused Skullius much elation!

Naturally, as was the guidance field's habit, he didn't get a notification for this, unlike with a rapid progression to his Doom and he had to look into it because of how... different he felt post awakening.

What a good life it was...

If this was Sause's doing, it definitely felt like he was being fattened up before being devoured though.

But who cared?!

For now, it was a heavy boon!

"It would be too cruel to allow you to continue existing, wouldn't it bro?" Skullius asked solemnly as he gazed hollowly over Trevis' body.

His mana softly flared from his body, moving under his impeccable control to cover the bandit.

Then...

BOOOOM!

As if a massive boulder had fallen from the sky at breakneck speed, Trevis' body was squashed into nothing more than a spot of ground blood, the crust beneath it digging wildly into itself!

The unique property of Skullius' mana was on display.

Weight manipulation.

[You have killed LV13 Human. 15 EXP awarded]

'Yea, killing these guys doesn't give me much. Well, at least I no longer have to look at the large number of experience required for each level. This will definitely be useful for my Penetrator form,' Skullius thought with a sigh.

A perk of getting a new coloured, especially when transitioning from white to blue, was the expanded range of where cumulative mana experience was drawn from.

Unlike with how the white core functioned, blue cores and above could extract mana from not only body of the victim but the soul as well!

This discovery had answered some of Skullius' questions when pertaining to why the core anchored itself to the body and soul.

Both took mana from the core but the difference was in the quality!

The soul was also nourished by mana!

Additionally, the required experience was compounded into smaller but more meaningful figures, like a reset of sorts, this being helpful to Skullius who could see visual depictions of his stats.

"Master! Master! Where are you?!" a voice called from the distance.

A throbbing vein popped on Skullius' temple.

It was Yuyui.

Just now, as they were walking towards their destination, she had suddenly started begging for food, bleeding tears from her eyes as her stomach growled like an animal.

Skullius had been seriously pissed off.

This sockethole had watched as his food supply ended to her bottomless pit of a mouth, worse yet when he had just discovered that he now had the ability to taste!

Indeed. Finally!

He could taste instead of considering every food the same, yet the guidance field didn't tell him of this too, as with many small details!

Unfortunately, Skullius couldn't explore this some more as the food he had was cleared out by the pain in the pelvis he was travelling with!

Yet Yuyui kept begging!

In a fit of rage, Skullius had killed her to shut her up and now she had revived to become a bigger yap in his ear.

"Is this servant thing supposed to be an eternal thing or just temporary? If she keeps this up, I'll probably have to research on ways to kill her permanently. Those two ought to be of some help if I probe hard enough, right?," Skullius thought half-jokingly as he walked up to meet Yuyui.

Chapter 440: A Weird Relationship

"Master, did you have to kill me? I'm just hungry," Yuyui said while rubbing her hands against her arms.

She still felt the sensation of being blown to bits by her master, a new way of dying she wasn't used to.

It was pretty terrifying.

But her hunger was even more so!

"You finished all my food stock. You know that, right? You're just fleshing with me at this point, aren't you?" Skullius asked the woman who was standing a distance away from him, scared that she might be killed again.

Granted, she knew her master was really strong and fast but it was better to try and avoid death.

"But... isn't it your duty to feed me? You rescued me, after all," Yuyui said in a very small voice while shrinking. She half-heartedly wanted Skullius to hear this though.

Fortunately for her, Skullius heard every word with his keen senses, a vein throbbing on his temples again as he suddenly wore a 'kind' expression, his hand stretching out to Yuyui and gesturing for her come.

"You know what? You're right. Come closer. Lemme feed you your own feet," Skullius said with a menacing, deep voice that made Yuyui shriek and back away in fright.

"I... I was joking!" Yuyui yelped.

The dreadful presence that her master had been attempting to put under control for the past day and a half was unbearable. It had almost killed her the first time she sensed it.

Now, her master could freely let it loose, especially from his blank eyes.

Skullius shook his head.

"I would have loved to stop by in some of the small towns we passed by to take care of that nasty hunger of yours but taking detours would be problematic to our schedule. Also, it was too risky to do with how I wasn't able to control much of my new self before," Skullius said.

There were many aspects of Skullius' new strength that he was hesitant to expose before he had everything under control, which was why he had stayed away from congested areas.

Speaking of Skullius' new strength...

~~~

[ Name : Festos Dawn ]

[ Level : 11 ]

[ EXP : 95/450 ; <Task Pending> ]

[ Class : Insurgent Magnus ]

[ Race : Hybrid Luman ]

[ Inv. Status : Still doomed ×2, Cursed ]

-----

[ Stats ]

[ STRENGTH (I) : 6120 ]

[ AGILITY (I) : 5912 ]

[ INTELLIGENCE (I) : 5001 ]

[ ENDURANCE (I) : 6118 ]

[ LUCK : Atrocious? ]

-----

[ HEALTH : 13,295/13,295 ]

-----

[ MANA (I) : 14,500 ]

-----

[ Null Life Essence : 400/6000 ]

-----

[ Skills ]

[ Elevated Mana Manipulation | Lv.78 ]

[ Great Saint's Invigoration | Lv.4 ]

[ High Cosmetic Body | Lv.1 ]

[ Revenant Flames of Ecstasy | Lv.19 ]

[ Null Extraction ]

[ Koten Machi | Lv.4 ]

[ Guard Light | Lv.7 ]

[ Mana Force | Lv.15 ]

[ Flash Flicker | Lv.9 ]

[ Raw Impact | Lv.10 ]

[ Great Rush (I) | Lv.14 ]

[ Revered | Lv.1 ]

[ Basic Combat Arts | Lv.5 ]

[ Basic Sword Mastery | Lv.2 ]

[ Beyond the Hype | None ]

[ Swindling Death Dance (Incomplete) ]

[<Class>]

[ Advanced Evil Weaving | Lv.14 ]

[ Advanced Evil Production | Lv.12 ]

[ Basic Evil Invasion | Lv.2 ]

[ Basic Evil Sanction (Special) | Lv.1 ]

[ Basic Light Production | Lv.4 ]

[ Basic Light Weaving | Lv.1 ]

[ Crude World Projection ]

[ Seramoro, Oblivion's 'Edge ]

[ Bead of Malevolence | Lv.3 ]

[ Perfect Night Domain | Lv.4 ]

[ Wing of the Just ]

[<Racial>]

[ Son of Luserus (Special) | Lv.1 ]

[<Arts>]

[ Pseudo Evil Veneration (1%) ]

[<Oddities>]

[ Binds of Fukal ]

[ Fruit of World Myths ]

----

[<Affinities>]

[ Evil Darkness - B ]

[ Just Light - D ]

[ Distorted Gravity ]

~~~

Skullius' stats had grown exponentially!

The additions to stats he had gained as the Luminant Seed rebuilt him were all in absolute conversion to the blue core he had, which was why he was so much stronger.

His previous stats were condensed, compressed and added to the massive figures of stats he now owned, each point having a higher value than that of the stats from a white cored combatant.

The change in the core also affected the individual's other stats as well as what Skullius had been seeing on other stronger opponents before was the same with him now, his stats having the (I) to depict that they were at the blue core level.

"How far does the map say we are from Genhuis City?" Skullius asked the lime haired girl.

Yuyui hurriedly checked the map that Skullius had given her, the one Elita had gifted to him back in Eofel which showed his and Yuyui's position in accordance to the main locations of Pelian.

"We are almost there. It might take half a day to reach there at our pace though," Yuyui replied.

"Good," Skullius said. He couldn't see the map so he had Yuyui read it. But unfortunately, this caused a certain problem.

"ARRRRRRRGHHHHH! NOT AGAIN!!" Yuyui screeched at the top of her lungs, her flesh melting off in a truly terrifying manner while she died in unimaginable agony!

If any normal human being had seen this, they would have thrown up endlessly.

UNCoddled had recognised how she was helping Skullius with the map again and she was subjected to a brutal death.

Fortunately, beside the pool of human goo, Yuyui promptly appeared like a fade in transition, her body trembling as she held the map in her hands.

She sobbed softly as the sensation of dying for the seventeenth time to UNCoddled was still fresh.

"Why <sniff>... every time?" she asked cruel fate with a tear. Maybe it could hear if she tried hard enough.

Skullius breathed out another sigh.

It was tragic indeed.

But on the bright side, when Yuyui died, there was a marvellous by product.

Over the course of the past day and a half, Skullius had witnessed how strange Yuyui's body truly was.

She wasn't just immortal.

Everything she had on her was essentially the same too!

If she died with clothes on, she would reappear with those same clothes in the same state they were in before her death!

The same was true for artefacts as well. As long as they were on her person, they wouldn't be lost!

Of course, as Yuyui had described before, her corpses rapidly aged and the same fate fell on the objects her corpse had, which meant creating duplicates by killing her was impossible.

As for her overall current strength, Skullius had had to use [Crude World Projection] vision to get a visual on her outline and then appraise it with his guidance field, otherwise while blind, he couldn't do so.

~~~

[ Name : Yuyui Yuyui Yuyui ]

[ Level : 6 ]

[ EXP : 0/200 ; <Task Pending> ]

[ Class : Pinnacle Occuluthon ]

[ Race : Human ]

[ Inv. Status : Atrociously Hungry ]

-----

[ Stats ]

[ STRENGTH (I) : 70 ]

[ AGILITY (I) : 45 ]

[ INTELLIGENCE (I) : 89 ]

[ ENDURANCE (I) : 52 ]

[ LUCK : 44 ]

-----

[ HEALTH : --- ]

-----

[ MANA (I) : 122/122 ]

-----

[ Skills ]



[ Ballading | Lv.124 ]

[ Greater Voice | Lv.98 ]

[ Broken Mind (Special) | Lv. 34 ]

[ Greatest Soft Tune | Lv. 150 ]

[ Greatest Music Tool Art | Lv. 11 ]

[<Class>]

[ Body configuration (Special) | Lv.1 ]

[ Inhumane Eye ]

[<Oddities>]

[ Inhumane Eye ]

[<Affinities>]

[ None ]

~~~

There were many aspects about Yuyui that Skullius wanted to explore but that was all in due time.

At least she wasn't actually that weak.

Skullius pulled out the Elimparidis Stone Staff.

"Let's take a break. I think we should finally visit those two and have a chat before we reach the city. I don't want any surprises from you," Skullius said as he pulled himself and Yuyui into the world within the staff.

Soon, the two appeared on the bare high ground that overlooked the ocean, the forest and the mountain range.

To Skullius, this place was becoming more like home.

It would be pretty great if he developed it some more, adding many items that would make it a perfect secret residence.

Yuyui took deep breaths, enjoying the fresh air. It hadn't been that long since she had been set free and though she had been here before, the fresh air was always good to take in.

"It's so beautiful," she said while looking at the sea and forest again.

She really liked this place.

To the side, was a large, white stone pedestal on top of which was perched the Temple of Unlusted Tears. This was where it had been positioned after Skullius had sucked it into his staff and now, he was ready to go back in and see what he could salvage information and material wise before entering Genhuis City.

Skullius grabbed Yuyui by the nape of her shirt and blasted up the stone pedestal at incredible speed, reaching the entrance to the large structure atop it soon after.

*

GSSSHHHK!

The massive double doors to the Grounds of Communion opened, revealing once again the familiar space marked with twelve large statues.

The instant Skullius set foot in with Yuyui, a torrent of wind infused mana burst outwards from one of the statues that had its face destroyed, a reminder of the battle between Skullius and Bassbion.

The ferocious waves of power were unwelcoming and so was the voice that boomed afterwards, its words now being kinder to Skullius' ears.

"Look who is back! I've been waiting for you, host and you... vile man!"

The voice of an enraged Bassbion echoed as her body which had been nested at the base of the statue in the form of a rock turned into armoured Spirit clutching its blade dangerously.