

Undead 481

Chapter 481: It Ends Outside! (2)

Within the blink of an eye, what had been an ice covered landscape turned into a hellish ground with all the moisture drained from over a seven mile radius.

Barely ten seconds had passed from when the General opened his mouth to release a dreadful storm of fire to now, yet...

Skullius was shocked by this level of power as he compared this to the feats that he had seen from the Galemonger back in Inhone City.

In terms of genuine threat, he didn't know which to scale above the other as this bastard was definitely a contender.

The Cluster General could sense Skullius' surprise and this helped him deduce a few things.

"I'm starting to realise that I was a fool to believe your lies. You may not be afraid of dying but you certainly serve no higher power if the likes of this is enough to surprise you," the Cluster beast said to Skullius.

The orange halo with pink patterns still revolved around him and the Cluster General who, as the wielder was immune to the Nullification effect. Hence him using any skills was still impossible.

"You can believe whatever you want," Skullius said.

The Cluster General seethe within. He couldn't tell if Skullius had some other plan or not. He seemed too... nonchalant.

Of the Fire Breeders behind the Cluster General, one of them was torn from the control of his lord as afterwards, he was given an order.

"Go and notify the others that it is safe to come out now."

The Fire Breeder nodded as he flew down.

"Before whatever you plan to do comes to pass, I'll slaughter everything in sight and reach a higher Tier. Then, we'll see who will be able to stop me."

Unlike within the Cluster where there were no varied means of evolving except by simply being groomed by the chaotic energies that made up the Cluster to begin with, here... there was bound to be many creatures to kill.

Yes.

The Cluster General believed that he would grow much faster, perhaps inventing a better way of merging with the eggs he produced in the process.

Maybe he would even—

"Lord! Loooord!" the Cluster General shifted his gaze down to see thousands of his Fire Breeders flooding out of the exit to the Cluster.

What?

His messenger was yet to re-enter the Cluster and tell everyone that it was safe to come out, so what was this?

Panic could be sensed from the faces of the Fire Breeders and the Cluster General couldn't help but wonder what it was now!

"LOOORD!" one of his guards shot to his position with a terrified expression.

The Cluster General was about to search for what was wrong by using his control over the Fire Breeders but, what had them all panicking quickly showed itself!

From the giant gaping hole on the flat surface of the sliced mountain, a figure with lime haired shot out, her figure zipping through the air as she stepped on the crowded Fire Breeders that were flying haphazardly through the air, ascending with every step on the unsuspecting Cluster beasts!

She wore a half vicious, half terrified expression, her movements looking undecided and clumsy, but she steadily rose, her speed completely stunning the stronger Fire Breeders which she was targeting!

As for what she did to them...

This girl, Yuyui, zipped over the back of fourteen Fire Breeders in an instant and a half, leapt up high towards one of these targets of hers with her hand that was balled up and swung down!

There was nothing in her balled hand though!

She swung as if she held something, with a distance remaining between her hand and her enemy!

What the hell?!

Demion's Dance was in her other hand, but she wasn't using it!

But, this seemingly void-of-logic move worked well still, because...

FWIIISH!

The Fire Breeder in Yuyui's sights was split in half!

Yuyui kicked off this dead body in the air and started to race on the backs of the Cluster beasts that had finally started to have half a mind to split up.

Unfortunately, before they could, Yuyui killed dozens of them as she swung her hand with spectacular speed that dazzled the onlookers, Skullius included!

Even if she had a blue core, she couldn't be that quick on her feet!

'What the flesh is going on?' Skullius thought as his sockets blazed. He was beyond surprised at this visual, but in the next second, he was even more so!

Yuyui looked right up to where he and the Cluster General were, the harsh winds blowing away hair from her forehead.

...!

A dark coloured eye with an ice blue iris opened wide, its pupil looking at the Cluster General and his sword.

Five minutes prior....

The moment Yuyui felt something slide into her hand, a mental instruction of what to do flowed into her mind.

To her surprise, this was from Ferex!

A part of what the Hound was preparing was finished. Something to integrate into his new body. But for now, he would use it to help his master through Yuyui.

At first the girl hadn't know what the heck it was that she was made to hold in her hand, but clarity soon came.

If what had been fed to her could be expressed in words, it would be...

'It's me, Ferex, master's Apostle. I'm going to use your mana to make myself stronger and you have to use me to kill these enemy bros. Trust master. Just SWING me. I'll tell you how to move and extend some of my magic arrays to you as well. Make sure to keep moving.'

Hooo....

Just like this, Yuyui had both been enlightened and encouraged.

What she wanted had just landed in her hands!

A means to fight.

'Thank you,' she said as she built up her resolve some more.

A cute, angry look flashed on her face as she did as Skullius had said before.

She SWUNG what was in her hand towards the guard that was pulling on her hair!

The Fire Breeder was sliced in half at an angle!

Hot blood was spilled, the creature screeching horribly as its torso was split in two!

Yuyui huffed in breaths with her mouth open while she gazed down at her kill.

Huff, huff.

Killing from up close was much different from how she had done it before with Demion's Dance but accepted it.

Also, she was pretty surprised by the strength of this sword.

How was it so easy to slice through such a powerful this Fire Breeder with this weapon? Wasn't he that strong Cluster beast that had fought the blue skinned creature two days ago?

Despite this, Yuyui kept her eyes on the prize.

The Fire Breeders around her were startled by the sudden death of a guard, the rest of the higher levelled Cluster beasts rushing her as they angrily sought to stop her.

Unfortunately for them, Yuyui felt hundreds of little complex weavings of mana crawl into her body, empowering her with miniscule amounts of power individually but collectively...

"YAAAAAA!" Yuyui screamed as a mind-boggling burst of power filled her flesh, almost making her lose control of herself.

This was the best thing she had ever felt!

Right then, in her mind...

'There are eighteen enemies coming towards you. Don't worry about the number or their strength. This form of mine doesn't just harm the body. It is also geared towards damaging the soul. If I exert myself I can also harm multiple targets at a time. So don't be afraid to use me.

Now, as for how you attack...'

What would have been a dialogue of a few seconds was cut down to a mere split second as Ferex used a speedy mental depiction of how Yuyui was supposed to attack!

And despite how terrifying this was, it was true!

Ferex had turned himself into a weapon, one that could harm the soul!

It wasn't him simply using his Hide which had an ability like that.

This was linked to his visit to the Temple of Unlusted Tears.

His visit that ended with him asking Bassbion to take a look at her sword!

A sword that could injure the soul and body!

One didn't need a book to understand the rest.

With renewed vigour and the requirement of a supreme level of combat art being completely unnecessary, Yuyui immediately set to attack her incoming enemies all at once, raising the unseen weapon in her hand under Ferex's instruction and outputting as much mana as she could!

A pulse, like a wind that ran through atmosphere blew outwards, smacking every one of the incoming enemies!

"EEEEEEEEAAAAAAAKKK!"

Horrendous screams were heard as hidden under the flesh, the souls of eighteen Fire Breeders had been smitten by an unforgiving, unseen force.

An unblockable, intangible ability beyond their level of tolerance!

Though only fractures appeared on their souls and in great number, the Fire Breeders collapsed, convulsing on the ground, powerful and weak alike!

Yuyui's face lit up!

This was incredible!

She felt this FIGHTING SPIRIT that had been awakened by Skullius continue to grow, her forehead twitching violently as a result!

Her emotions were acting up in ways she hadn't thought they could outside what she was used to.

The eye on her forehead felt and reacted to it.

As the Fire Breeders remained a distance from her, apprehensive as they felt and saw a dangerous threat from this green haired woman, Yuyui rushed to pick up a sword that had been dropped by one of these Cluster beasts.

Demion's Dance.

She would be damned if she left her master's sword here.

There was too much she felt from just seeing this sword now, and all of this culminated into one thing.

A final twitch from her forehead as the Eye of Dispersal pushed away the skin that covered it and showed itself fully!

Back to the present.

As soon as Yuyui's Eye of Dispersal gazed at the Cluster General, the beast felt the energy from his great sword immediately die down, the halo around him Skullius vanishing completely!

Just like that, effects of a skill at the Legendary level merely faded!

....!

"You too." the Cluster General was shocked as his face turned feral while gazing down at Yuyui who was fast losing footing!

"This wasn't how I was going to go about this but I'll play along with this one..." Skullius' voice sounded from the Cluster General's hand, thirty two spots of light immediately lightning up the air as they shot bolts of Levin!

The Cluster General scoffed madly as he returned his focus to Skullius, his thick hand exploding with a recalcrescent flame that blew up some of Skullius' bones, turning them to dust while his skill continously struggled to reforge his body!

'I'm no fool,' the Cluster General said as it looked at Skullius' socket flames with indignation. Even though it spoke with Skullius in the mind, it still opened its mouth to exhale.

"Master!" Yuyui down below called at the top of her voice.

Quickly, the lime haired girl swung the unseen weapon she held with all her might!

The object flashed, crossing the distance towards Skullius and the Cluster General!

Skullius' body continuously broke down from the heat and flame, but he wasn't discouraged at all.

He stared down the General without flinching.

Blaring against his mind, a familiar mental signal caused him to focus on something that remained out of everyone's view, his sockets flaring excitedly.

'I have had enough of you. Burn to ash here and I will await your return with your so-called master,' the General growled in Skullius' mind while the flame that spurned from its hand reached a baffling temperature!

Skullius' body started to crumble rapidly!

This wasn't something his bones could handle!

But would it all end here?

'Not today!' Skullius shot back at his opponent, the thirty two sparks of light focusing their Levin on his arm which regrew instantly, just quick enough to feel the handle of something heavy reach his hand with decelerating motion, perfectly positioned for him to thrust at the Cluster General's mouth in the next split second...!

Chapter 482: It Ends Outside! (3)

The unseen form of Ferex remained so while lodged into the wide mouth of the Cluster General who looked absolutely shocked!

Unfortunately, shock was the least of what he was feeling at this moment, as with the edge of the transformed Apostle which had crudely sank into his flesh, drawing blood, came a frightful reaction from his soul!

Gruesome agony!

The frown and grimace of the Cluster General as he howled madly in excruciating pain was mirrored by the scream of Yuyui who died by melting while in the air, UNCoddled punishing her for a wholesome deed!

The Cluster General felt fractures in his soul that temporarily took away his ability to think properly as he could only focus on the horrendous pain that threw his mind into disarray!

When he had been a Fire Breeder, he had experienced all kinds of fleshly pain.

But this...!

Like an inborn itch that one couldn't scratch...!

Like the sensation of bones snapping within but with no means of stopping their torn mass from scraping against the flesh...!

The Cluster General ground its teeth as one of its flaming pupils glared at Skullius hatefully while its body trembled vehemently!

...!

Skullius who had been fast fed all the detail about all Ferex's features while in this form the moment he had caught the Apostle in his hand, was astounded!

His stab to the creature's mouth was supposed to be fatal to all the other Fire Breeders as they had no way of defending their souls, but this creature... it was still standing or rather... floating!

Wasn't it supposed to die like the rest?!

'Damn! He's tough!' Skullius commented begrudgingly.

Fortunately, the Cluster General wasn't attacking as the pain was too great for it to handle. It was barely able keep itself afloat with its red hot wings so continuing to assault Skullius right now was impossible.

Skullius thought fast!

If this wasn't enough, then the many schemes which he had been concocting for the past two days would surely work!

At least one of them had to!

Before sorting through them however, Skullius, as he recognised that Ferex was in a sword form, pulled out the Apostle from the Cluster beast's mouth and flicked him up, pulling along the crown on the Cluster General's head!

...!

The Legendary item fell into the hands of the Penetrator who was currently being blasted by thirty two bolts of Silentburn Levin which repaired his body!

Skullius immediately wore the golden artefact decorated with pink patterns around it and...

WHOOOOOOOOOOM!!!

The Penetrator's four sockets flashed with flames that threatened to overwhelm the hot, night skies with a fierce blue glow that signified the horrendous boost to Skullius' might!

Levin silently burst over the surface of Skullius' dark blue bones as everything about him was enhanced many fold, his body being recovered in a instant!

"Hooo..." Skullius hummed with a breath of excess mana blowing from between his teeth while the Cluster General seethed, his hand that still held on the Penetrator's spine, slowly increasing its grip as flame rebelliously flickered from it powerfully!

Yet...

BOOOOM!

Mana gathered under Skullius' feet and launched him up forcefully, the Penetrator escaping from the Cluster General's hold as he flew ten meters above it and gazed down while halting his ascent!

Skullius had created distance between himself and the Cluster General to ensure that there would be no surprises.

"Let's see you handle this!" Skullius bellowed as his body bubbled with mana, his right hand shifting the unseen Ferex to his left as with the former held out towards everything beneath him, something churned and roiled!

The crown filled him with power, elevating what he was already capable of!

It amplified range and power and that was about to come into play.

It brought much to light, and gave a sense of omnipotence to the Penetrator!

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[Incalescent Mountain Breath]

<Legendary>

A crown naturally formed by the igneous conditions under the dark lands of a large Cluster and fed the rich mana and fire essence of all dead and buried Fire Breeders over the millenia.

-Durability-

67,000/85,000

-Special Effects-

- Increases Intelligence by 1500 with absolute conversion



- Increase Mana by 4000 with absolute conversion
- Increase all skill and natural ability efficiency by 150%

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[Skill: Incandescent Synch]

As per the will of the user, all equipped items are granted the <Blissful Flame>, to increase defence and damage by 70%.

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[Skill: Reign of Heat]

The user is able to draw on the heat within a six mile radius and condense it into a singular point for one extremely hot attack. Usable once a day.

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An increase in skill efficiency by 150% was the only thing Skullius was interested in from this crown as from when he had seen its effects with the guidance field two days before, he had decided to take it the moment he got the chance.

Everything was good and all, the skills and the stat boosts but...

None of it mattered in this moment, as the circular grooves carved into Skullius' hands lit up with a white light again...

A moment that had been robbed of him earlier was about to be regained!

A skill was cast, boosted by 90% from [Epiphany] and this newly attained 150%!

The deadly feeling it gave was amplified all the more as not only did the Cluster General who shot his head up as he felt its dreadful presence again, but the tens of thousands of Fire Breeders that were chaotically flying around a few hundred meters below it also felt it!

An extra terrestrial threat that meant only to harm!

A twisted form of death that only sought to cut apart!

Skullius, filled with confidence and malice as his sockets flared incredibly called out... again.

"Serration Zone: Baneful Edge!"

The shuddering Cluster General growled as it forced out all its might, its figure blurring as just in the nick of time, it shot away from the Skullius' line of sight, flying disorderly as it crashed into the side of the flat hill!

A fraction of a millisecond later however, all the creatures that felt the mad presence of this skill were stunned in fright!

Over a span of a hundred meters that grew in a conical shape to extend over a mile and a half, a light, turquoise blue stained everything!

The air...

The Fire Breeders...

The ground from where a creeping chill was trying to resist the hot conditions cast by the Cluster General...

This blue hue tainted everything and froze it place momentarily!

The Fire Breeders caught in it while flying remained suspended in the air despite not flapping their wings...

The air grew still, being unable to move, the flying ashes and sparks within it also held in place...

It seemed like everything caught by this hue was forcefully suspended in timeless space for a second and then...

"<Rabbet>," Skullius commanded, as the skill wanted to know which method of cutting he wanted between the two available options – rabbet and slash.

As he spoke with naught a care for the Cluster General or the Fire Breeders out of range, Skullius felt a torrential wave blast out like a condensed, heated gust of wind that charged towards everything caught within the light turquoise hue!

Then...

The Fire Breeders.... grew bloody, as groves appeared on them with the pressurised expulsive force that blew them away, their body parts revealed to be severed into rectangular shapes!

All of them!

Neat stacks of rectangular flesh blasted into the ground in the millions, some belonging to powerful Fire Breeders and the others to the opposite as it seemed none of these Cluster beasts came even close to being able to resist!

Experience was funnelled into Skullius who was amazed at this while falling from the sky, but he didn't neglect the fact that he wasn't done fighting.

The Cluster General wore a ferocious look on his face as he looked down at the mess on the ground from his wedge in the hill, his body slowly getting used to pushing through the pain.

Skullius kept his sense on this creature and on the few thousand Fire Breeders that had been outside his range, their masses flying away to watch from a distance!

Mana gathered at the Penetrator's feet as he propelled himself down, reaching within the range of where he could extract the abundant Null Life Essence as well as the mana from the cores of these dead beasts that was yet to dissipate!

With so many Fire Breeders dead from his attack, Skullius had managed to reach level 18 and harvest a total of 10 compressed orbs of mana that rushed to his side as he landed on the ground and looked to his enemy above.

"Unfortunately, my odds still aren't too good..." Skullius said to himself as he suppressed his excitement.

He was still outmatched.

Even evolving right here and now wouldn't change this fact, especially when the Cluster General still held that problematic great sword in his hand!

In truth, over the past two days, he hadn't been concocting a super specific plan of escape. Instead, he created a variety of potential routes to victory and survival, all of which stemmed from one thing.

Null Life Essence.

As the Penetrator looked up, around him circling an over twelve meter radius of serene blue was created by the activation of [Null Life Aura], Skullius scrolled through his options, especially one particular one.

"This is my only hope. Either it works or it doesn't," Skullius said as his socket flames continued to blaze, mirroring his emotions.

During his silence during the two days, Skullius had been trying to finally master his control over Null Life Essence, but that was easier said than done. While seeing the blue skinned creature he had summoned use it to tank heavy damage easily had spurred him to try the same, it was no easy feat to merely make the energy budge outside of his body.

Unless he was merely delivering it to a weapon he wanted to steal a skill from, it was nigh impossible.

He had made zero progress over the first day as nothing helped him understand how to tame this elusive power.

It was different from mana.

It was different from a mere element.

Mastering it wasn't entirely reliant on talent.

However, on the second day, Skullius had changed his way of thinking.

If there was anything he knew most of the ins and outs to, it was mana and while it was different from Null Life Essence, the two had similarities, one of which allowed Skullius to gain insight into how to manipulate the Essence of Null Life.

Variation.

With [Serration Zone: Baneful Edge] Skullius had discovered that there was more than one type of Null Life Essence, and the one tied to this skill was very violent. The same applied to mana which could be shifted to different forms as demonstrated by the Stages Skullius had witnessed first hand.

The Advancement Stage where mana could be condensed to form Full Body Aura.

The Master Stage where this Aura in turn could be fashioned in a more perfect form, a Genuine Incarnation.

By condensing mana, these could be attained.

But what about condensed Null Life Essence?

While it was hard for Skullius to mobilise Null Life Essence out of his body, it was easier to tumble it within his body, compounding it within himself.

What did this do?

It made Null Life Essence thicker and by extension, gave it a more... 'tangible' form that he could grasp!

At this moment...

Slowly...

Silently...

Serenely...

Null Life Essence started to leak from Skullius' body to cover him!

Watching the blue skinned creature he had summoned had granted him hope.

If enveloping himself with enough Null Life Essence could allow him to tank powerful blows like that thing had done then...

"It's worth a try, I guess..." Skullius thought as from within the [Null Life Aura] bursts of sparkling Silentburn Levin shot out with incredible thickness and power!

Naturally, Skullius wasn't a master at wielding Null Life Essence now. He was extremely slow in using it as he had to condense it first and then push it from his body which took nearly a minute!

More than enough time to die many times over!

On top of this, he could wield Null Life Essence at this poor degree ONLY when [Null Life Aura] was active!

Thankfully, this wasn't the entirety of his plan.

It was just the start!

The Penetrator, with the especially luminescent bolts of Silentburn Levin that roiled within the [Null Life Aura], extending his hand forward and shot a massive stream of the element towards the Cluster General which was wedged into the hill!

In an instant, the bolt in all its glory had lit up the night and the hill, causing a monstrous explosion that gouged out a massive portion of the geographical feature!

Yet...

The Cluster General could be spotted hundreds of meters in the air with a furious expression, the light from the explosion highlighting its dark scaled body with the curved greatsword in its grip flaming as if as angry as its wielder!

Skullius was not at all surprised.

This was a Tier 7 Cluster beast with a dull purple mana core.

This was the least he could expect.

It was the end indeed... but only a touch away from the finale where one died and one lived.

Despite the clear disparity in power, one was better in skill and the outcome was anyone's guess!

Chapter 483: It Ends Outside! (4)

'This little creature... He's the opportunistic sort. A dangerous breed for... whatever he is,' the Cluster General thought while shaking its head to brush the pain it felt tremor within its soul away.

It hurt!

It burned!

It itched!

This little bastard had to die an agonising death for this!

Even if pain was something that it could not feel, as it had claimed, he would make it a possibility somehow!

The Cluster General's body began to turn red as a shimmering bluish red flame exploded from its body without warning, warping the space and bearing down on Skullius and everything around him on the ground!

The excessive pressure that was also released along with the overpowered mana from a purple core completely squashed the hill where abandoned houses were set up, lighting them aflame before turning them into ash!

Fire lit on everything, igniting the air, burning the ground and its intensity digging onto the flat surface of ALL that the Cluster General saw, as if a massive ball of over seven hundred meters had suddenly been flung down on this place!

Skullius' body, even from the distance between them was squashed into the ground and he grit his skeletal teeth!

'Damn! This guy doesn't want to come close to me anymore because of Ferex's form! He'll keep using long range attacks until I'm dead!' Skullius surmised as his already dark bones turned darker while brightening up from the atrocious heat!

Rocks began melted and this land slowly turned to a lavascape!

'This is brutal but not enough to put me down!' Skullius thought!

The mana from the orbs he had condensed was channelled to the thirty two sparks of blue light from [Silent Revelation of the Bright King] that shot out massive bolts of Levin to recover his body!

The Penetrator went on to add more fuel to these, ensuring that he wasn't killed in one attack, his rate of recovery speeding up dramatically!

To give an epic visual for this effect, bolts of Levin the size of Skullius' full body were shot from each of the thirty two sparks of light, burying him a whitish blue highlight that caused him to recover so fast it didn't look like he was taking damage at all!

The layer of Null Life Essence around him was also working but the amount of damage he was taking far exceeded the tolerance it gave!

At this point, it was merely an add-on.

Skullius seemed invincible!

However...

The massive greatsword of the Cluster General was suddenly pointed to the ground, in the Penetrator's exact location.

"Cross," the Cluster General said, to which the large sword reacted, its hissing orange blade that had patterns of pink over it releasing an unnerving shudder and then, with a sound akin to thunder and a white shockwave that blew across the sky, an orange blur left the sword's tip!

"Huh..." Skullius had barely begun to process what had just happened when everything around him exploded into flying debris!

Within a six hundred meter radius, the hard crust layering over Aigas was shattered, the ground becoming piles of broken rubble, most of which flew as a massive cross shaped gouge simultaneously carved itself on the surface, as if flung from the unknown darkness!

The gouge extended from Skullius whose body had been shattered without warning, his defences having accomplished nothing as his bones were torn apart!

'Damn it!' Skullius cursed as he struggled to keep himself from falling into the huge depth that was the flaming cross gouge.

The hundreds of arrays from Ferex, attributed to one of the spells he gained from the Innate Holder he had stolen, [Boost], had been lit up on his body, cushioning some of the damage however.

[Silent Revelation of the Bright King] also didn't disappoint, as it didn't stop spitting out the thirty two bolts of Levin to recover his body that was nothing but bone scrap at this moment!

'I need to increase my output of Null Life Essence!' Skullius thought as he used more of his racial energy to shroud his body that was recovering rapidly. 6000 units of Null Life Essence seemed like a lot when he used it all with [Serration Zone: Baneful Edge] which was amplified by two different skills but when it came to protecting his body, it was barely sufficient.

Ferex's body in his hand was damaged quite badly, but with Skullius surging a huge of mana to cover the Apostle, it wasn't in as bad a state as he had been seconds ago.

The Nullmancer's sockets gazed at the lengthy mass of damage that exuded a frightful heat in the shape of a cross and wondered how much more of this he could take.

He was right.

The Cluster General was keeping its distance.

If that was how this fight was going to go down until the end then none of his plans were going to work.

And as if to affirm his frustration...

"Double Cross," the Cluster General called, the greatsword he pointed down releasing another shudder that reached all the way to Skullius along with another rocking explosion which abused the ground, creating another cross shaped pit against the formerly created one, an eight point cross shaped depression being made!

Skullius' body was torn again, but this time, the damage wasn't as bad and with [Silent Revelation of the Bright King] active, he was quickly restored to full health but...

The orange hue that rose from the gouge glowed bright as a similarly coloured heat wave rose like wisps which formed a large yet thin figure, its likeness like that of a thin serpent with lambent orange-pink flames burning over it!

This creature coiled around Skullius who immediately began to burn once again while bound tightly, bolts of Levin persisting over his figure to deny his demise!

'Damn it!' Skullius cursed again.

While it seemed like he was invincible even now, there were only about three minutes remaining until [Silent Revelation of the Bright King] took a hike.

After that...

It wasn't hard to figure out the outcome.

Things really weren't going his way!

The [Null Life Aura] around Skullius gleamed only to the vision in his sockets as he garnered dozens of thick bolts of Silentburn Levin to be produced from the abundant mana he had, all of them hurtling towards him and the serpentine flaming figure!

This skill, [Null Life Aura], allowed Skullius to use elements born from the concept of Null Life such as his Levin and the flames from [Ungodly Passion of Debauchery] freely and without limitations of time. However, the only caveat was that the specific effects of these elements when used as skills would not be accessible to Skullius.

For instance, the Penetrator could not enjoy the effect of creating thralls when using the flames of Debauchery. They were merely an extremely hot flame when used under [Null Life Aura] which is why he hadn't been abusing them in this fight.

Presently, his dashing bolts of Levin did absolutely nothing to the serpent that bound and burnt him with fierce heat, only passing through it as if it didn't exist!

Bruh!

The Penetrator was about to curse again when he felt Ferex inch his way into his mind, exposing an idea.

"What?!" Skullius exclaimed. "Are you sure you can do that bro?"

A mental affirmation strolled in his mind, the Apostle he was conversing with giving reassurance.

Really?

A last minute plan?

Would it work?

Skullius' mind churned fast.

This was feasible and if used in conjunction with his own plan...

There was a chance!

Unfortunately...

"That all depends on whether or not this guy will decide to come closer..." Skullius said as he gazed up.

That was up to chance.

The Cluster General wordlessly looked down at the Penetrator, but a scoff could be pictured from his visage.

"Pathetic. Even if you are not a warrior... I am glad you are this durable. I will savour your slow death..." the Cluster General said to himself.

The bolts of unfamiliar energy that constantly repaired Skullius' form were troublesome though. They delayed the inevitable a little too much.

Perhaps this needed a little speeding up.

The Cluster General's index finger pointed towards his enemy.

"Enhath."

A Special skill was cast with a word – one from the Fire Breeder tongue which meant 'Incinerate.'

A fireball that shone with a blueish, red hue, pulling on the atmosphere as an audible breath escaped from it, its weight unbearable especially for Skullius who sensed its true might, emerged!

...!

Once again, this was bad!

'Ferex! You might want to use your recovery trump card now!' Skullius instructed while preparing to take the hit, though in all truth, it was probably impossible!

He would try still!

If he was to die, he would die trying!

The fireball spun with the Cluster General grinning as his body continued to exude an awesome heat, ready to finish off Skullius.

This was going to be gloriou—

PTSSSS!

At that very moment, an unexpected sound and visual cancelled the momentous occasion.

The intimidating fireball fizzled out and disappeared as if it had never existed in the first place!

...!

The Cluster General was taken aback and so was Skullius and Ferex!

This clearly wasn't intentional on the General's part!

So what or who could have done this?!

All three individuals subconsciously looked in the same direction.

A wobbly legged Yuyui stood on the ground with her head looking up at the Cluster General, an ice blue iris from the eye on her forehead looking steadily at the beast!

The Eye of Dispersal and all its vague glory had cancelled out the Cluster General's skill!

"This one..." the Cluster General growled, its body blurring from its spot in the sky and appearing on the ground before Yuyui who yelped and took steps back.

The overbearing presence of the creature momentarily watered down the lime haired girl's resolve but she soon regained it, donning a brave face!

'FIGHT!'

In the girl's head, the word echoed and she firmly held the hilt to Demion's Dance and slashed at the powerful beast!

The sword hissed once more as a dark line was traced through the air but...

WHAM!

With a speed faster than the girl's slash, the Cluster beast punched at Yuyui's head, sending it flying clean off her body!

Yuyui's headless corpse collapsed to the ground and shortly after, she appeared out of thin air again, with bulged eyes overflowing with shock and terror!

"Hmph. You are the most peculiar..." the Cluster General said as it looked at her third eye.

This odd organ didn't have any effect on him as he looked at it, but seemingly only affected abilities and skills, even high level ones.

Fascinating.

The General grabbed Yuyui by the head and dragged her along as it flashed over to Skullius who was crumbling and reforming ceaselessly under the bolts of Levin.

He stood a distance away, watching the Penetrator who desperately kept the Incandescent Mountain Breath on his skull gaze at him with his fiercely burning sockets while keeping up his recovery with the rate of damage he took.

"It seems we can do this for a long time. Your special abilities allow you to recover even from the worst of the minor attacks I throw," the General said as it threw Yuyui down and stepped on her face to block her eye.

The girl fidgeted madly with her limbs but to no avail.

The Cluster beast then raised his large greatsword with a chuckle, from his distance, extending it over to Skullius' shoulder. As it reached the Penetrator, an orange halo glowed, with pink patterns around its circular circumference.

Immediately, the thirty two spots of light that continuously funnelled Levin to heal Skullius vanished and in the Nullmancer's hand, a cracked, blue bladed sword appeared.

It was a jian.

Its guard was decorated with a miniature skeleton that hugged it, along with brown, shaggy furs that circled it.

The Cluster General's greatsword had nullified all skills, including Ferex's Pseudo Spirit Walker's Hide's ability!

The serpent remained still though, burning Skullius as it pleased.

"Haa!" the Cluster General chortled. Now Skullius had no means of recovering against the damage.

He could have the satisfaction of watching him burn even if it wasn't with a scream!

"I will keep this unique toy. Come fetch it when you... if you return," the General said with a light slamming of its foot into Yuyui's face.

Soon, Skullius' body turned red, fumes leaking from it. His bony hand shivered as it touched the greatsword on his shoulder that imposed this dreadful effect on him and Ferex, his socket flames blinking rapidly.

It didn't matter that he still wore the golden crown.

Even the Null Life Essence around only delayed the inevitable.

The Cluster General watched Skullius' pitiful face with a chuckle.

He was truly and utterly doomed.

With the Cluster General keeping its distance still, even as it could finally see the weapon that had caused it that treacherous level of pain, there was nothing Skullius could do to it.

That was how it seemed.

But...

WHOOOSH...

"Hmm?" the General hummed in surprise.

His sword...

Something... happened to it.

A light breeze was expelled from the near three meter long mass, as... something was definitely rapidly pulled from it!

"What is the meaning of this?" the General narrowed his eyes before beholding a shocking phenomenon.

Levin roiled over the surface of the Penetrator's bones again while his sockets flared madly!

Mana gushed in his direction, pulled upon by... a skill?!

But... that was impossible!

The greatsword's natural ability of nullifying all skills...

It was gone?!

The orange-pink halo around Skullius dimmed and vanished, along with Ferex who was in the Penetrator's hand!

A snaking darkness swirled around Skullius before forming a lengthy, torn hooded cloak that barely looked material, its edges intricately sown with an extended glowing blue pattern!

It had large sleeves and a similarly large hood, it's form seemingly made for a cruel hag or powerful Mage, whichever claimed it first!

Its unannounced emergence over Skullius caused the serpent that had been binding him to shatter into small fragments of heat that were dissolved into the atmosphere, a billowing wave of power, of Null Life Essence, oozing from it!

Along with this, the socket flames of the Nullmancer watched a series of notifications stream in!

[The Nullmancer grows tremendously!]

[You have acquired a new skill, 'Defiant Raiment of Perversion']

An absolutely ridiculous skill was awakened... but Skullius didn't care for it at this moment!

His plan didn't even account for it and for now, killing this son of a femur was all that mattered!

The Cluster General frowned as it saw that something was wrong.

Was this creature finally using that trump card of his or was this another unforeseen trick?

Its confidence remained erect.

As long as it wasn't that itching damage, it was confident that this would amount to naught.

Before any of Cluster General's questions could be answered, however, the large creature felt a stinging pain that pierced its eye!

Something unseen!

Something sharp!

Something quick had sunk into its eye, bringing about not only pain to its flesh but another burst of pain to its soul!

"ARRRRRGHHHHH!" the General screamed and so did Skullius who pushed his crumbling body over to the beast and touched its abdomen!

"It's a beautiful day to fleshing die, sockethole!" he bellowed.

Chapter 484: It Ends Outside! (5)

What had happened?

What had led to this contrived set of events, one might wonder in confusion.

Well...

The plan Skullius had, had borne incredible fruit!

What was this plan?

The one that hinged on him having Null Life Essence in reserve?

The one that needed the Cluster General to get near him?

Well...

It was to get rid of what Skullius considered the biggest pain in the pelvis – the nullifying ability of the greatsword!

This skill was a problem to Skullius as it threatened to dispel any of his skills, thus cutting off his possible channels of victory.

Just as it had portrayed, the greatsword's halo had dispelled Skullius' [Silent Revelation of the Bright King] leaving him susceptible to the atrocious heat belched up by the serpent which was also summoned by this damn weapon!

To solve this, Skullius wanted the Cluster General to get close enough for him to extract it with his Null Life Essence!

And he had done so successfully and quickly!

With his new level of mana manipulation that allowed him to claim higher level skill from items and the fact that he could now control Null Life Essence in general, the extraction of the skill from the greatsword had been faster than when Skullius extracted the skill enhancement feature of the Elimparidis Stone Staff!

The fact that the Cluster General couldn't see or sense Null Life Essence gave Skullius a beautiful edge, the Cluster General's slow reaction to the events that followed after bearing even more delicious fruit for the Penetrator!

Right after the extraction, Ferex had executed his own plan after Skullius hurriedly affirmed, the conditions now being perfect for it!

The Apostle shifted his form once again, producing a whip of Unliving Thread that travelled along the Cluster General's greatsword which was still on Skullius' shoulder, its end sharp like the tip of an arrow!

This tip was the one that sank into a vulnerable organ of the Cluster General, its eye, and along with this, a skill was cast from the Pseudo Spirit Walker's Hide that covered Ferex's whip to make it invisible to the senses!

[Spirit Walk]!

~~~

[Spirit Walk]

The hide assimilates with the user's body to allow them to 'walk' within the soul of a target. Usable once a day.

~~~

"ARRRRGHHHHH!" the Cluster General screeched in pain while Ferex vanished from where he had lodged himself, his figure appearing in a completely different space!

It was an island with black coloured soil. All over its wide mass, dark, scaled eggs could be spotted on the ground which seemed barren.

Above was a red sky overcast with dark clouds that blocked the source of the light while also inducing a sense of vertigo.

A thick smog covered everything on the ground except for the glowing cracks that were noticeable over different portions of the rising slopes on this island, all of which met in one place, a peak from which a throne could be seen!

Upon this throne, which was strikingly similar to the one in the Cluster, sat a thin, lanky armed dark creature that resembled the Cluster General!

Ferex who was in his Hound form grinned.

He had done it!

He had pushed his way into the Cluster General's soul!

As he fed his sight the figure seated on top of the throne, he couldn't help but make a comparison to something similar that he had seen - tall, dark boned skeleton in his master's soul!

This dark figure on the throne was the same; the General's Reflection of the soul!

"Who dares to intrude here?!" the creature screamed with a boisterous voice that caused the smog to disperse, giving a clear visual of Ferex!

The Hound ignored however, as within its maw, a red light was chomped on, a heavy blast of energy gathering in its belly and promptly being shot out from Ferex's mouth towards the base of the peak where the General sat!

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!" the thin creature shrieked as it hurriedly sped from the throne and rushed to meet the incoming blast with a replica of a greatsword that the Cluster General held!

The attack was deflected into the sky but when the lanky armed creature turned to look down at Ferex once again, he was different from before!

He was... massive!

The Hound had grown to up to three times his original size, his figure upright as it manifested six thick arms of Unliving Thread and slammed them down at the island!

BOOOOOOOM!

The eggs near the Hound's surroundings popped like balloons while the ground was smashed in, exploding into chunks!

"YOU FOOL! HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHAT YOU ARE DOING?!" the dark creature flailing its greatsword growled in fury as its figure darted towards Ferex!

The Hound couldn't be happier.

The Clusters General had never been attacked from the soul before and its Reflection was unable to react accordingly, clearly unused to this kind of assault!

Perfect!

Of course, the Reflection itself was strong, stronger than Ferex, so the Apostle couldn't wreck havoc as he pleased.

Fortunately, his aim wasn't to completely demolish the creature's soul anyway.

It was to provide his master adequate support while he was outside.

With this much, the Cluster General should be writhing in pain, unable to even pay attention to what Skullius was doing!

*

As soon as Ferex attacked the Cluster General, Skullius placed his brittle hand on the creature's body and activated [Greater Mana Crafter], his hold over the mana focusing on his enemy's dull purple mana core!

The Cluster General at this moment shrieked in agony as its remaining eye rolled back!

Ferex's efforts were proving extremely effective!

Now it was Skullius' turn!

'It's hard to manipulate an external mana core when the owner is fully conscious of it. But for you in this state...' Skullius thought as with his skill that was enhanced by 90% and 150% from two separate skills along with his full focus...

CRACK!

A small crack appeared on the dull purple mana core!

A fleshing small crack, damn it!

"It's sturdy!" Skullius remarked in shock!

Even if the core was a dull shade of purple, it was still extremely condensed and difficult to break in a single hit even with his advanced skill in mana!

Holy mother of all bones!

"YOU!"

...!

As a result of this attack, the Cluster General's fleeting consciousness was restored somewhat, the sharp pang of pain in its core jolting its body up!

The creature drooled lava from its mouth as with its quaking body that could barely move from the pain, it reached for Skullius with a fiercely flaming hand!

Unfortunately for the beast, the Penetrator was unfazed.

"Ferex!" Skullius called, a radiant light flying out from the Cluster General to wrap around his bony hand!

The Penetrator formed a fist and with the amount of mana at his disposal, he activated all the offensive skills he could think of while funnelling man into Ferex's form which was neither a whip, nor a sword at this moment.

It was a bony gauntlet with a hard blue cover made of Unliving Thread, glowing [Boost] arrays all over its surface!

The Penetrator threw a straight punch with all his might while pushing forward his incredible control of mana, his fist aimed at the General's abdomen!

POOOOW!

A bright flash ensued along with a howl of the surrounding mana and air as Skullius' punch smashed into his opponent!

The ground shook from the force and the Levin that smacked right onto the General, a low rumble echoing from the exhausted ground!

The Penetrator's hand crumbled with sparks of flame immediately afterwards as it had been made brittle by flame beforehand!

The scaly body of the Cluster General was left undamaged from Skullius' effort but after the beautiful show of power, the scaly Cluster beast shrieked so loud that its subordinates that were spectating from the air felt a chill in their bones!

What was happening to their lord?

Did he... lose?

The body of General was left intact but its core.... its core was massively fractured!

Its soul was worse, fissured so gruesomely that one would be left to grimace when looking at it.

The amount of pain and shock brought by these two damaged parts was too much for the General to bear.

With lava leaking from its mouth, it fell backwards and breathed its last!

[You have killed (VII) LV110 Grand Flame Bringer....]

A massive amount of experience was funnelled into Skullius as he earned an additional level and a half, just shy of his target.

The 3x required Experience per level led to the figure needed for these latest levels being astronomical!

The Penetrator didn't think too much about it though, as he immediately plopped to the ground with relief.

"I almost didn't expect to come out alive..." Skullius said.

Unfortunately, after [Silentburn Revelation of the Bright King] was nullified by the greatsword earlier, it had gone on cooldown and he couldn't repair his body.

This little piece of information was especially annoying when Skullius heard the flapping of thousands of wings descending towards him!

Thousands of angry and fierce looking Fire Breeders rained on his position with nothing but malice.

They wanted to tear him apart.

They wanted vengeance.

Unfortunately for them...

The Penetrator raised his torso and extended his one unbroken hand towards this flying horde.

"Give me a break already... [Serration Zone: Baneful Edge]."

[Serration Zone: Baneful Edge] had come off cooldown!

Four damn minutes!

Another burst of dreadful energy invaded the atmosphere, Skullius giving the skill he was using the Null Life Essence he had been using to defend himself.

ALL of it.

The thousands of enemies within the wide range of [Serration Zone: Baneful Edge] froze for a few moments, a rippling pressure blasting them in the opposite direction while applying the effect Skullius wanted!

<Slash>!

Every enemy, regardless of their Tier and core were shredded into vertical slices that flew high up in a bloody mess, creating a beautiful, bloody art piece in the air before falling down!

With all these enemies dead, experience that was in excessive of what Skullius needed rushed into him and landed at the sweet spot!

Level 20!

"I wish I could be happier about this..." Skullius said hollowly with his sockets flaming.

Many notifications speaking to the experience he had just received showed in his vision as well as those spelling the Null Life Essence available.

The Penetrator raised his hand and drew in the Essence from the falling bodies, quickly filling his bar.

It was finally over.

Yuyui who had a roasted face stood from where she had trampled over by the Cluster General's foot and walked up to Skullius.

The Penetrator saw her visage and expressed disapproval with a groan.

"Kill yourself and wipe away that disgusting look on your face," he said.

"That's not how it works, Master," Yuyui said with the puckering of her lips slightly.

She wasn't mad at what Skullius said at all.

A burst of joy could be seen in her eyes as she felt that she had grown from this experience.

She extended a hand for Skullius to help him stand up and the Penetrator obliged, the cloak over his body rustling as if blown by the wind.

"What is this thing, Master?" Yuyui asked curiously.

"I'm not really sure. I'll find out later," Skullius said as he kicked the gauntlet on the ground which was Ferex who had yet to return to his original form.

"Get up already. We won," Skullius ordered, to which Ferex unfurled himself and grew to his original size and form.

He seemed to have attained extensive damage that he hadn't yet repaired, just like Skullius and as he restored his figure he looked at corpse of the Cluster General with greed.

This was potentially the last component he needed for his long awaited plan.

"Woow, Master! Look, the Cluster is closing!" Yuyui said while pointing at the gaping opening on the mountain!

"WHAT?!" Skullius exclaimed with noticeable urgency and realisation!

Right!

The General was dead!

Of course the Cluster would close!

"DAMN IT! DAMN IT! Give me the ring!"

"W..what?!"

"The storage ring, you sockethole! Give it!"

Yuyui fumbled as she pulled the storage ring from her finger and passed it to Skullius who took it and immediately activated [Great Mana Crafter], propelling himself into the closing hole ahead at breakneck!

Hopefully!

Hopefully, he would get there in time!

If he missed out on collecting that THING, he would punch himself all night!

Chapter 485: Participation (1)

Governor's Residence, Genhuis City.

A man with a kingly air about him sat on a soft couch reserved for his bottom and his bottom alone, while gazing at the guests he had invited.

To his left sat a young man with a face that looked just like his, with the facial hair they had being similar, the only difference being the absence of a moustache on this visual chip off the old block.

"You're right. We should have had this meeting sooner, but I figured there was no stopping you anyway. Still, I must stress the huge amount of attention that you have garnered towards yourself and the City as well as the implications it bears," the man who sat regally on his chair, the Governor, said with a sharp glint in his eye that spoke of disapproval.

Unlike Families, Houses put themselves on pedestals, some of which were very much deserved because of contributions made over the centuries to the millennia but still...

The order in major cities such as this one would be threatened whenever these organisations made big moves and that was something the Governor didn't look favourably to.

"This was the perfect time to hold this event. It's for nothing more than strengthening the nation in preparation for any expected attacks. You know Maqi and Emeradis' silence won't last for long. This is merely the calm before the storm," the man who sat on the opposite end of the room, across from the Governor and his son said.

He had a confident and arrogant demeanour that showed not in his words but in his posture and tone instead.

He was the current Head of the EverSword House.

"Strengthening the nation you say? Have you any idea how many thieves and bandits you have just granted free passes to do as they please during this... event of yours? The chaos is already starting to show and I have had to increase patrols for Capital Order Knights in every street! To make matters worse, we may have spies infiltrating the city to observe us!

I do not see how this is 'strengthening' the nation!"

The Governor lost his cool a bit but asides from lightly raising his voice, he didn't lose his firm visage.

"All that you have said are givens in such events and yes, I too do not condone the existence of this hoodlums. The arrangement and rules for the Premium Age Royale, as well as the Venue, are meant to mitigate much of these. I had an emissary of the Royal Family review both and they were deemed spectacular in every sense. So please, rest assured."

The Governor shook his head, his eyes showing an incredulous glint as he gazed at the man opposite him.

Rearren EverSword.

This man had grown bold.

Everyone knew that the word of the Royal Family barely mattered as they hardly cared for Pelian and the intervention by the Houses was what was taken more seriously.

This could be taken the wrong way by the other five houses which had a greater standing in Pelian than the EverSword House.

Then again, this event was announced months ago. Surely they would have acted against it already.

Whichever was the right answer, the Governor couldn't help but feel that this event was hosted on account of one thing.

Insecurity.

This was wrong.

Many of the nation's powerful combatants would be participating as previous criminal records were not considered at all by the EverSword House and this was especially terrifying when considering that the majority of the stronger participants would be Master Stage experts, the main forces when a nation's military was taken into account.

At this juncture, the young man beside the Governor intervened.

"Forgive me if I happen to speak out of turn, but your event is causing some of the most... important, albeit eccentric individuals within Pelian to act. The Kinn Family for example, is adamant about their participation, their Family Head to boot.

I'm sure you don't need to be reminded that if this Family were to somehow fall by the window you have created, you would become an enemy to many of the Families in Pelian regardless of what the Royal Family says...."

The Governor gave a stern gaze to his son who immediately stopped speaking, realising that he did indeed speak a bit out of line.

"That sounds more like a threat to me. I'm not forcing anyone to participate and if the Kinn Family is to perish, it would not be the EverSword House's fault. That could only happen if somehow incited such an outcome," Rearren said with the narrowing of his eyes.

"If your purpose is to recruit gifted combatants into your House, then why even allow for figures such as a Vali Kinn and Aurolio Velanqi to participate in this event? They are already talented enough, aren't they? Announce them publicly to already be worth a place in your House," the Governor said with visible puzzlement.

The Houses were purists who generally wanted to keep their bloodlines clean.

This was why no other House had hosted such an event as they were more concerned with preserving their lines.

The Governor just couldn't understand what game Rearren was playing here.

"Everyone will be granted equal chance to join the House. Indeed these two are exceptional and that is a marvellous thing. They will only need to PUBLICLY prove their worth and inevitably win a spot for their Families, is that not right?"

Both father and son couldn't help but feel that this was inadequate as an answer and it seemed Rearren knew that, but didn't care.

They could tell something was wrong.

At this critical time...

In such a strange fashion...

If the Royal Family had backed them in denying the EverSword House the right to do this, their hearts would feel more settled.

Yet it was unfortunate.

"I'll take your silence as approval," Rearren said as he got up, the guards behind him opening up a way. "Right, I almost forgot. This was announced to be the day the event began, but I suppose most took it the wrong way. That was only for the participants. I felt that those putting their lives on the line deserved a chance to get ahead of everyone else.

I'm sure everyone relevant is declaring their participation in the event as we speak."

"Is that so? There has been a lot of controversy and speculation about the venue of the event. What did you have in mind?" the Governor questioned, hoping to gain an answer to another one of his burning queries.

"Don't worry yourself over that. Everyone will understand the rules and venue come tomorrow," Rearren smiled mysteriously.

Within a massive tower well respected and seen as a grand symbol of magical strength, a master and his student were having a serious discussion.

No.

It was more like a master giving stern instruction to his student before he sent him off on a perilous journey

"You will likely be the only Mage in the entire event and many a criticism will be flung at you, disparaging your honour and questioning your motives. This may be seen as... flattery in some instances but DO NOT grow overconfident because of it.

Finishing the Elemental Patch and finding your niche, which just so happens to be rare does not mean you will not encounter powerful opponents that rival your strength," an aged man with silver coloured hair said sternly to his disciple who heeded his words with a somewhat reluctant nod.

"I haven't forgotten your teachings, Arch-Mage Verys. As you always say, 'Magecraft was founded thousands of years after the three categories for Classes had already been established.' That's enough for me to not get a big head," the disciple said with a sigh.

"I would like to see that you understand in practise, not in wording. What comes from the mouth is most likely vain. Words can be knotted into fine lies but actions... actions cannot be mistaken of their intent by keen eyes."

"I understand," the young disciple said, firmly nodding his head to show that he understood.

Only when the foggy eyes of his master had glazed over him for a full minute did the elderly Mage finally pull out from a shelf a fine piece of black paper that had an vast number of runes that glowed over it.

"Very well. You may declare your participation."

Chapter 486: Participation (2)

Bryne Family Residence, Genhuis City.

Silrat was fuming.

On this night that most would call excitingly chaotic, full of carnal anticipation and perhaps a dash of confusion as the event everyone was waiting for hadn't begun as they had pictured, the former Association Branch Head was burdened by fury and worry.

Again with this bastard!

Why did he like to not be present when important things were set to occur?

Did he enjoy seeing this man almost get a stroke from anxiety?

At this point, Silrat was more concerned with his investment going up in flames.

Even now, if Skullius was to perish somehow, the position he had earned himself, which was formally termed Appraiser, the lowest rank among those in the executive circle of the Guilds Association, would not be stripped from him.

The Association had already acknowledged him as being capable of finding and grooming talent. If that wasn't the case, it would be dug up as time went on.

This was not what he worried about.

Silrat worried about Skullius himself.

The Hybrid Luman had questioned himself on whether Silrat knew the inner intricacies of his Tie of Exchange with him, the answer to which was... to some degree.

As someone not born in Old times, Silrat only knew that invoking a Tie of Exchange demanded quite a lot from the initiator in terms of the safety of who and what it was invoked for.

One may call his concern genuine worry for a friend.

Others may call it bloodlust to strangle Skullius for his impudence.

But none of that mattered.

If he had a damn leash, he would skilfully wrap it around Skullius' neck and turn him into a pet instead.

"Please calm down Mr. Silrat. I'm sure Festos will be here soon," Stylla said while seated on one of the comfy couches in the lounge.

She had been watching Silrat's journey less rush for the better part of two minutes and decided she had had enough of this looped show even though it distracted her from the third individual seated beside her.

"This is the ninth day for crying out loud!" Silrat growled.

"Yes but the Royale hasn't even begun yet. Whether that is by dumb luck or something more... that gives him and us a bit more time, " Stylla tried to reason.

In her thoughts though, she wasn't worried about this in the least.

Over the past two days, her mind had been preoccupied with digesting a bombshell she had received in place of the news she desired.

Apparently, the Premium Age Royale was trivial when compared to something else that Festos would be involved with in the future.

The words of the old Diviner hadn't left her ears.

He had dismissed much of what had to do with the Premium Age Royale and gone on to repeat the same words. Words that Stylla couldn't understand the meaning of.

A king was to descend by Festos' doing.

What did that even mean?

When she had tried inquiring about Festos' performance in the Royale, the old man had simply said a single line that left much to be desired but guaranteed that she wouldn't be stressed about Festos' tardiness having an effect on anything.

'He will contest fittingly.'

Stylla grumbled inwardly.

Talk about vague.

"If this... Festos doesn't show, will you finally reconcile with me by accepting my own candidate?" the third individual in this room said with a smirk on his face.

Stylla's face instantly hardened.

"Can we not have this conversation again?" she turned to the redhead she called brother with cold eyes.

"Oh, I like that look of yours, sister. It gives the illusion that you may actually swallow me whole with nothing but your eyes. Haha," the young man said with a chuckle. "It's quite alluring you know?"

This man's resemblance to Stylla was uncanny.

His chestnut coloured eyes and long red hair combed back with a dash of what seemed like gel which gave it a subtle gleam under the light from the chandelier above, brought on an pretty boy vibe.

He was sharply dressed in a formal white shirt that hugged his well trained figure and tight fitting pants which gave him a handsome look as he crossed his legs.

"Did your little 'stroll' in the streets of Genhuis leave that much to be desired on your crotch? Your continued flirting won't help you bed me, Setkh," Stylla barked with an angry flame burning in her eyes.

Silrat who was caught in the middle of this verbal exchange couldn't help but sigh and finally sit down.

This was an ongoing theme in this residence, with this man who was known as Setkh Bryne going on flirt sprees with his own sister that he couldn't properly identify as mere playfulness or outright attempts at incest.

Whatever it was, he didn't want to know.

"Come now, we don't have to go into that detail with Mr. Silrat here," Setkh said slyly. "I am serious about discussing this debate about our respective candidates though. If yours doesn't show, will you support mine for the sake of our Family?"

"Do you really have to ask?" Stylla immediately shot at Setkh with a deep frown. "Don't brush off the past few months of conflict between us just because you happen to feel that you have the upper hand now. Are you even doing this for father anymore or for some other hidden agenda?"

"I could ask you the same, sister. As far as I'm concerned, we've been going about saving the Family the same way. With pure rivalry. You cannot judge me for that. And now I'm asking, whether we continue that trend or it ends here. I would appreciate your support for my candidate.

It would increase OUR chances of winning after all."

Stylla could only retain her displeased visage without voicing any objection.

What Setkh said was not exactly false but it wasn't true either.

As far as she had heard, Festos' prowess had increased by leaps and bounds and Silrat who knew quite a bit about Setkh's candidate as well had given Stylla, without a shadow of doubt, the assurance that Festos was much stronger.

At that, she had regretted not being there to witness his strength personally but it was only a matter of time.

"It's not my place to speak on matters relating to your Family, but Festos is a lot more valuable than your candidate. His value is recognised by the Guilds Association's executive board and I have a few friends who can add more proof of this if you find it insufficient.

If this is about supporting the best candidate, then we can easily vouch for Festos as you do your own candidate as a viable option," Silrat chipped in, packing away his worry temporarily.

"Hahaha. That's rich. The word 'friends' doesn't exactly rub me correctly when it comes to authenticity. I'll believe it when I see it," Setkh said with a scoff.

At that moment, the doors to the mansion were opened as a guard entered while holding a wooden plaque carefully in his hands.

He walked straight up to Stylla and Setkh and gave a bow before handing the plaque to Stylla.

"A package has arrived for you Lady Stylla, Sir Setkh," he said.

As Stylla received the plaque, noticing the fine wood it was made from which exuded a delightful scent of mana and wood, she felt the gravity of what this before even knowing what it was about.

On this plaque was print in bold, the word 'EVERSWORD' branded onto it.

Stylla's eyes shot open and she placed the plaque carefully on the table.

Setkh gazed at the object curiously only to turn serious, as did Silrat.

"It really begins it seems," Setkh said.

Stylla analysed the plaque carefully, and saw that it had a space within it from which a dark sheet of paper was stored and could be drawn.

She pulled it out, her eyes and those of Silrat and Setkh being drawn to the innumerable number of glowing runes of this sheet of paper.

She placed the sheet down, finding to her surprise that though thin, this paper was reinforced many fold to be extreme tough, a blinking light hovered over it as it formed characters that could be recognised.

'PLEASE DECLARE THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM THE BRYNE FAMILY TO
CONTEND IN THE PREMIUM AGE ROYALE.'

Stylla swallowed a lump of saliva.

This was it.

While it was trivial to someone else, it was important to her.

She gazed at Setkh and Silrat who gave her different expressions that spoke different things before speaking...

"Two."

Immediately, the light hovering over the sheet of paper vanished, replaced by another which formed two swirling spheres of bright blue luminescence.

With something akin to a breath, two objects plopped over the black sheet of paper from the two spheres of light.

They were thick green cards with complex runes drawn over them in a spiral shape and dark colour, a vibrant energy flowing out of them!

A keen one would recognise what these were while reading over the early events in Aigas.

A keen one definitely would.

Another flash of light sprang from the sheet of paper, another set of words appearing before the S trio.

'A BRUTAL GAME OF MIGHT, DEATH AND CHANCE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN, THE ROYAL PRIZE OF WHICH BECKONS FORTUNE, RECOGNITION AND POWER. YOUR SOUL, BODY AND MIND WILL BE PUT TO GRAVE RISK IN THIS EVENT, AN INEVITABILITY IN THE GRAND SCHEME. IF YOU DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE REGARDLESS, PLEASE DECLARE YOUR NAME INTO THE CONTROL SEAL.'

Chapter 487: Three Little Things

"We make a great team, don't we Ferex?" Yuyui said with a big smile on her face while trying to get a high five from the Limitless Body Null Demon Hound.

Ferex's sockets dimmed as he seemed to be contemplating on whether or not it was worth it to be all buddy-buddy with this woman.

Just because she was his master's servant didn't mean that they had to be friends, right?

Yuyui started to sweat while trying to maintain her big smile, but time slowly passed with Ferex looking at her blankly, even going as far to transform into his humanoid form and sit down with his 'hands' on his chin as if really giving this some much needed thought.

'Seriously?! We made a good team, didn't we? I was hacking and slashing left and right! I thought we were bonding!' Yuyui thought while waiting for the response.

Skullius was sitting down a distance from them, watching this 'exchange'.

He had been successful in retrieving what he needed from the Cluster, the throne on the mountain where the Cluster General had been seated, right before it closed, though it had been too close for comfort. The Penetrator had had to lose his lower half to the collapsing Cluster but he soon restored it with [Silent Revelation of The Bright King].

At the moment, Skullius was digesting three things.

First was the unexpected boon he had received from extracting the nullification ability of the greatsword that the Great Flame Bringer had used which was now in his possession, the skill called [Defiant Raiment of Perversion].

~~~

[Defiant Raiment of Perversion | Lv. 1]

An ancient robe is summoned, one fitted with a unique type of Null Life Essence. The capabilities of the raiment are a bane that the Nullmancer wields against any form of magic grown in distant lands.

<Passive>

- Nullifies any low to middle level Special Skills and below
- +5000 Mana with absolute conversion
- +2500 Intelligence

<Active>

Any skill or concepts the user completely understands with the use of <Epiphany> becomes ineffective against them.

Mana Requirements: None



Duration: None

Cooldown: None

~~~

This was a Nullmancer exclusive skill, just like [Epiphany]!

One with ridiculous effects as well!

This was pretty much a free ticket against normal skills and some subpar Special skills!

It now made sense to Skullius why the flame serpent that had been summoned by the greatsword, which was called the [Cross Pyre] was instantly broken into fragments when this robe had appeared!

By all accounts this was a ridiculously good boon for Skullius and it added to the unique aesthetic he had.

This robe he wore as a result of [Defiant Raiment of Perversion] was said to be made from a different type of Null Life Essence, which confirmed his theory that stemmed from the skill [Serration Zone]. Null Life Essence was a much more broad concept than he had thought before.

That aside, the fact that the active effects of this skill allowed him to progressively grow, continuing to break apart concepts he had already comprehended through [Epiphany]...

'That's way too good!' Skullius thought with his bony hand rubbing against his chin. 'Still, it requires a lot of Null Life Essence to comprehend just a bit of a high level concept, so there's still a long way to go.'

The abilities of the [Cross Pyre] which heavily focused on flame had even prompted [Epiphany] to activate but Skullius wasn't too hot on gaining a greater understanding of normal fire at the moment.

He still had three high level concepts to deal with, after all.

The second thing that had Skullius thinking was Ferex's flaw, which kept blinking in his sights through a guidance field notification.

A rather troublesome one.

[The mandatory effect known as RESET for Apostle 'Ferex' is about to apply. Do you accept?]

Ferex's flaw, which was that he had to RESET after every intense battle, was flashing before his eyes. With it came Ferex losing the experience in combat he had gained, along with the personality traits and insights he had obtained to balance out his overwhelming potential in Aigas.

As Skullius thought about it, he realised that Ferex had never been in a rough battle until now.

With the Bulk Terrors, he had been killing them easily while miniaturised, most of them dying without knowing how. With the Bookworms, he had targeted Kotaman and killed her without conflict. In the Temple of Unlusted Tears, he had been one shot by Bassbion.

But now, he had had a bitter fight in the hands of Yuyui and then in the hands of Skullius.

'This time, I'm given the choice to choose whether to do it or not to do it, huh?' Skullius thought. It was different when he had merged with Ferex to create Ogwulf the Limitless, as that time, it had been a RESET that didn't ask his permission, probably because they were merged.

Now, with him holding the decision of whether or not to clear Ferex of his growth...

Obviously, he didn't want to but the flaw had a consequence.

There was a CHANCE that Ferex would turn into the world ending Null Terror, the Full Deck Bone Tender!

Whatever that thing was, Skullius could tell it was bad news.

Fortunately for him, the silver lining was... there was a CHANCE that this Bone Tender would be summoned. It wasn't something definite.

'I can't have Ferex losing all that he has worked hard to achieve. He's working hard to get stronger and seeing him start from scratch again...' Skullius thought as his socket flames turned to Ferex who in this moment finally gave a pat to Yuyui, acknowledging that indeed, within the few minutes of badassery they had made a good team.

Skullius just couldn't do that to Ferex.

For now, he bit down on his teeth and...

"No," he ordered against the RESET, his core cringing at the immediate side effect of the flaw that... didn't happen.

Ferex and Yuyui who wiped the sweat off her brow continued with their conversation, the lime haired girl pointing at Skullius from the distance as she seemed to be making fun of him.

How carefree.

The Penetrator wanted to breathe a sigh of relief.

This scene was contrary to what he thought.

He expected an explosion to erupt right where Ferex stood because of his atrocious luck but as the trend seemed to dictate, nothing of the sort occurred!

Things were going fairly well!

'I dodged another one!' Skullius exclaimed in his mind.

Thank the father of all bones!

He would try to ensure that a solution to this anxiety inducing flaw was found before he had to face that dreadful notification.

Phewww.

The third thing that had Skullius thinking was Yuyui.

Her Eye of Dispersal which could seemingly disrupt skills even at the Supreme level like his as well as her ability to use Demion's Dance effectively without having the [Swindling Death's Dance] technique.

The former was something he could dissect with time but the latter...

Skullius' theory on why that was, was that it probably had to do with how Yuyui was constantly dying. Perhaps her understanding of death allowed her have a subconscious understanding of the inner workings of Demion's Dance which manifested as the dark thread from the tip of the sword that slew enemies beyond her level!

The Penetrator was sure this was it.

During the past two days, Skullius' plan for Yuyui had only been for her to use her raw strength to cut down a few Fire Breeders for Null Life Essence required to use for [Serration Zone: Baneful Edge] that time.

His speech to her which worked a lot more than he intended, had lead to a spectacular outcome where his guinea pig now had the will to fight!

It was as if she was reborn!

"Speaking of being born," Skullius said as he cradled the object that he had laid on the ground minutes after exiting the collapsing Cluster.

An egg.

This was one of the three eggs that were on the throne, absorbing the fire essence in preparation for adsorption by the Cluster General!

With the spawning of creatures catalysed by his Null Life skills, these strange beasts coming from wherever he got his Null Life powers from, especially the latest one...

The blue skinned creature that had actually said a set of words that he understood, another mystery that bugged him, Skullius was very much interesting in seeing if possibly...

Possibly...

Maybe...

Was there a way to [Unbound] the flesh out of this egg and summon a creature from the 'other side' that was subservient to him?!

The Apostles were cool and all but... the mystery of Null Life... it was enticing.

His Apostles couldn't teach him more, after all.

It wouldn't hurt to try right?

What was there to lose?!

Skullius grabbed the egg, his sockets flaring.

The criteria was probably the same as with upgrading an object so... if he funnelled all 6000 units of Null Life Essence he had right now...

[What would you like to upgrade with 'Unbound'?]

"This egg," Skullius responded.

[6000 Null Life Essence points expended for 'Permanent Random Upgrade']

[Permanent Random Upgrade decided]

"Here goes."

...

Skullius watched in silence as the dark egg he held, one of the two smaller ones that had been on the throne, become suffocated with a light blue hue, its size beginning to rapidly expand, its shell starting to crack!

This was it!

Yuyui and Ferex were drawn by what their master was doing.

Though Yuyui couldn't perceive Null Life Essence, the enlarging egg that rapidly cracked, releasing a sharp blue light from within it drew her attention.

Skullius was anxious.

Maybe this was where his atrocious luck would finally catch him.

Maybe something incredibly dangerous in the Null world or whatever would suddenly appear and swallow him whole!

That was a possibility, right?!

The Penetrator stood and took a defensive stance as the egg finally shattered, releasing a concentrated burst of Null Life Essence... something emerging from it!

What monstrosity...!

What calamity...!

What... cuteness?!

"Aaaaaaaaawwwww!" Yuyui's eyes sparkled as a figure was reflected in her eyes, its mass seated atop the shards of the shattered egg.

Skullius looked at the creature with incredulous flames while Ferex was indifferent.

What lay before them all... was a chubby... baby.

A bold humanoid child with colourless slime oozing over it, its skin a light shade of turquoise blue, its muscles looking so fat and squishy one couldn't help but want to squish them (if they weren't an undead or former undead of course).

Skullius couldn't understand what this was supposed to be.

The blank eyes of the child as it giggled without a voice, a big smile on its face as it sat upright completely naked, though with no EXPECTED organs, gave him a weird feeling.

Yuyui rushed over to grab the child in her arms with a nurturing touch, the way she carried herself growing soft from the tough she had earned during the fight.

Skullius couldn't help but feel like he was duped.

There had to be something more to this.

He narrowed his socket flames as he searched for the description of this thing with his guidance field and...

Just the first line of description lead the Penetrator to yell out a never before heard bone expletive!

~~~

[Chubby Remnant Child of Polarity]

<Unique>



A living consumable item that grants EXTREME....

~~~

"CONSUMABLE????!"

Chapter 488: Eat The Child, Don't Eat The Child!

"What in the never-ending spinal...!" Skullius began when he carefully read the entire description, his sockets inhaling every detail.

His hands eventually covered his mouth as his flames flared wildly, a tremble that nearly made the Incandescent Mountain Breath atop his head fall off running through his dark blue bones.

"This..." Skullius said, his reaction drawing the attention of Yuyui and Ferex who asked the same question in different ways.

What was wrong?

Well...

~~~

[Chubby Remnant Child of Polarity]

<Unique>

A living consumable that grants EXTREME, STUPENDOUSLY DESIRABLE LUCK in one instance, in exchange for another instance of FIENDISHLY ABBHORRENT LUCK.

-Caution-

Remnant Child must be chewed and consumed whole for maximum effect.



-Caution-

Remnant Child must be consumed within an hour upon summoning, otherwise it will perish and disappear. The effect after consumption also exists within the same hour.

-Caution-

The instance of FIENDISHLY ABBHORRENT LUCK will claim the user at an opportune time.

~~~

"Bro...." Skullius said as a dark shade of gloom and uncertainty covered his eyes.

What the flesh was this?

A change to turn his luck around to the extreme in one instance for another instance of luck that was clearly worse than what he had been dealing with?!

This sounded like a bitterly sweet scenario!

If his luck got any worse... just what would he be in for?

Also, there was an hour time limit.

"Damn it..."

This was unfair.

Skullius absolutely didn't want to risk getting caught in whatever this FIENDISHLY ABBHORRENT LUCK had in mind... as no one would but...

The allure of STUPENDOUSLY DESIRABLE LUCK...

What was that?

What did it feel like?

Was it that incredibly good?

Would it feel like the world was revolving around him for a change?

Would that one instance make his Null Life worthwhile?

The Penetrator had the vague thing that Serenity mentioned which turned his bad luck around from time to time but...

This was more enticing!

Yet...

The FIENDISHLY ABBHORRENT LUCK...!

What if upon activation Somanda would just appear out of nowhere, donning a cloak of extremely bad writing and convenience that allowed to him to ignore the rules of the world established by the Deities and do whatever he wanted?!

What if Skullius literally just vanished from existence by some inexplicable reason that defied all logic, sending him to some alternate world where Bonet was Somanda and Somanda was Bonet, his best friend?!

What if Somanda....

Skullius breathed out a husky false breath. Enough with Somanda.

There were so many bad things that Skullius wouldn't just risk giving a free ticket towards him.

This was extremely attractive but... the Penetrator was literally looking for a reason to do it.

A reason and a way to ensure he wouldn't regret it!

...!

A thought crept inside Skullius' mind.

What if...

What if... by using this Chubby Remnant Child of Polarity, he attained extremely good evolution choices right now as he was about to evolve?!

Wouldn't that count?

"Gah this stupid time limit! I don't have anything that I can do with this luck on such short notice!" Skullius barked while plopping to the ground.

Maybe he could go to the stout mountain and waltz his way through the Spatial lightning and Distorted Gravity all the way to the dome where those treasures he desired were stored?

That felt like a waste.

What else could he do within an hour's time?

Gah!

Yuyui could see that Skullius' stress was coming from the baby in her hands but she couldn't see what was so bad about it. At least in terms of the presence it gave off, there was nothing peculiar or particularly dangerous.

However, if there was something of note...

'This ooze on the baby's body... it's disappearing bit by bit...' Yuyui thought.

The slime or ooze that covered the Remnant Child had been quite abundant when it appeared but it was slowly vanishing, as if reacting to the open world.

It seemed like some form of protection for the Remnant Child and Yuyui couldn't help but wonder what would happen when it ran out.

She wanted to point this out to Skullius but he seemed to have a lot on his plate.

Twenty minutes passed...

There were so many angles to look at this for the Penetrator, but he dreaded the consequences.

Each minute was spent debating the pros and cons, the cons and pros. Back and forth.

Solutions to the issue of the bad luck were abundant but he didn't know if they would work.

Actually, he didn't even know if this would work either!

His atrocious luck was a curse from an Arch-Lich!

Could it really be dispelled by a Unique grade... Child, even if only temporary?

Maybe this was a reason to try!

If the STUPENDOUSLY DESIRABLE LUCK effect didn't activate then... didn't that mean that FIENDISHLY ABBHORRENT LUCK factor also wouldn't work?!

But that logic...

Gah!

There were too many consequences if it did work and they were much too potent!

But...

"Flesh this!" Skullius yelled as he stood. "I have two fail-safes for even if I die! What am I afraid of?! Let's do this!" the Penetrator roared.

As he had told Sila back then, the aged soul was a contingency against what could possibly happen here, though he hadn't told him the whole thing.

And if that didn't work, there was a more, difficult route he could go through to try and disperse the FIENDISHLY ABBHORRENT LUCK before it even activated.

Bottom line was...

Skullius desperately wanted this luck effect!

He was willing to gamble on it!

To at least taste it!

Maybe he wouldn't be able to get the Remnant Child again, after all, these were Random Upgrades and never had he gotten the same thing twice!

The Penetrator walked up to Yuyui who was firmly holding the oozing child and grabbed the thing from her and began walking away.

"Master... what are you doing...?" Yuyui asked with nervous eyes and a reluctant attitude.

"What must be done..." Skullius said with a hoarse, heroic tone as a shadow loomed over his eyes, masking his emotions as he held the fiddling Remnant Child in his hands.

Looking at it closely, Skullius couldn't help but feel weird.

Could he even eat this thing?

He was used to consuming food in his Hybrid Luman form but his Penetrator form? He hadn't eaten anything as a skeleton!

Oh well!

He had already made a choice.

Skullius opened his mouth and bit on the head of the Chubby Remnant Child that retained its silent giggling and cheerful expression!

"AAAAAH! Master what are you doing?!" Yuyui screamed with extreme shock as she dashed towards Skullius.

Midway though, Ferex caught her and restrained her with his weight as he grew twice his size, numerous runes appearing over his body to boost his prowess!

Yuyui yelled and groaned as she pulled away from Ferex with ease, the strength from her blue core helping her overpower Ferex as she continued to rush towards Skullius with a firm grip extended from her fingers!

Once again, Ferex attempted to stop her, his body morphing into a large blanket that wrapped around her and firmly dug into the ground!

"Master, don't you dare eat that child!" Yuyui screamed but Skullius ignored her as he munched on the Remnant Child's head!

...!

The texture!

The softness!

Such a profound feeling it gave to Skullius' teeth!

A dense amount of Null Life Essence blasted into Skullius' mouth with an intense pressure, the Penetrator beginning to feeling less and less weird about eating the Remnant Child!

Slowly, he chewed the smiling Child's head off and ground it into.... vicious blobs that soon turned into thick wisps of Null Life Essence that swirled around Skullius unlike how food usually descended down a gullet!

Yuyui continued to gnash her teeth and wrestle with Ferex but to no avail as she watched in horror, the Remnant Child get masticated into mush!

Soon, Skullius was saturated with a dense and unique type of Null Life Essence, his body emitting a bright blue light that teased Yuyui's iris!

The Penetrator revelled in the feeling of this energy.

It was... definitely unique.

Nothing he had encountered so far held a semblance of a quality comparable to this energy and as Skullius checked his status to see if there was a change...

...!

It...it was real!

"It happened!" Skullius yelled.

This was phenomenon!

It had worked, against all his apprehension!

~~~



[ Luck : STUPENDOUSLY DESIRABLE (Temporary) ]

~~~

...

For the first time...

He had finally changed his luck from its atrocious tag to... STUPENDOUSLY DESIRABLE!

Skullius was excited.

So excited that his sockets were flooded with a bright flame as out of his mouth came a boisterous laugh with mana blaring out of him!

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!! THIS IS FLESHING AMAZING! MY LUCK HAS CHANGED!"

This was a momentous occasion for the Penetrator!

Flesh Somanda!

At least for the limited one hour window!

A limited window that Skullius wasn't going to waste!

It was time for evolution!

While ignoring Yuyui's inflated cheeks and intense gaze, Skullius went on to focus on his long awaited evolution.

[You have broken past many hurdles and reached LV20. You are now able to evolve into the Second Tier of power. Do you accept?]

"Of course bro!" Skullius gave a reply.

Immediately, his vision darkened and he felt his will and consciousness dive out of his body and pass through what felt like a powerful barrier and disappear into a new space.

This sensation was familiar.

Ah... of course.

He had almost forgotten about this.

"Serenity..." Skullius said to the blue flame that stood flickering before his sight.

"It's good to see you again, Skullius," a sweet voice responded to the Null Lifeform's consciousness.

Chapter 489: Serene Choices!

Skullius found himself before a blue flame that was very much 'alive' in the most simple sense.

Serenity.

His first benefactor.

Behind her, as Skullius remembered, was a ginormous sphere with alternating shades of blue over it, its entire mass blurred out of Skullius' focus.

It was definitely a world that he still wasn't allowed to see.

"I have been waiting for quite a while for our second meeting. You've finally evolved into the Second Tier," Serenity said with what Skullius assumed was a cheerful tone.

"Well... it's taken quite a while to blend and fit into the human world. I barely had time to level up my Penetrator form until now," Skullius said. "It's not easy when I have to fight bad luck."

"I know. But you have persevered. As you and I desire, you are growing stronger regardless," Serenity said.

Growing stronger, huh?

That seemed to be the only thing Serenity was interested in about him.

Just as she had emphasised during their last meeting.

Skullius had gotten more knowledgeable with his weeks long stay in Aigas so far. He had grown and he had learned a lot.

That said, with this growth came... suspicion and paranoia.

UNCoddled had made Skullius realise that for him to gain benefits, he had to offer something in exchange, otherwise there was no such thing as a free lunch.

For him it was that simple at least, not so much for the victims of UNCoddled.

There was an endgame here.

Naturally he knew this even when he first encountered Serenity and was curious about what this was all for.

Heck, Serenity has already mentioned that there was a purpose to all this but refused to tell him until he had reached Tier 4.

Be that as it may, Skullius felt that he was owed the full explanation of this. He had suffered and toiled to survive and while he could somehow understand that Serenity, much like Somanda couldn't directly interfere in this world, he still felt that such crucial information didn't need to be hidden.

What was out there that he was being prepared for?

He knew about the concepts of other worlds from his time in Deadmanland but there needed some expansion.

He didn't know if it was popular knowledge in Aigas or not as the only example of someone who even mentioned another world, was Dezrael when he had mentioned his backstory back in the Labyrinth of the Yoke.

All this said...

"After all I've been through, I feel like I deserve some... you know... knowledge about what exactly all this Null Life thing is about. There's definitely some conflict out there that you want me to participate in. What is it? I need to know," Skullius tested the waters.

Serenity remained silent for a while.

Whether she was contemplating telling him the truth or simple pausing for dramatic effect was lost to Skullius.

He could only wait.

"As I said before, you'll need to reach Tier 4 before I can tell you that. There is no other circumstance where I will share with you any of this before then," Serenity finally spoke.

"Why?" Skullius asked. "What's the difference?"

"You'll need to wait until Tier 4 to know that too," Serenity said, much to Skullius' displeasure and slight anger.

Serenity noticed Skullius' distress and she softened her tone.

"I understand that this is hard for you but the same is true for me. I wish we could cooperate as I wanted but there are Rules that bar me from such. Deities are powerful, TERRITORIAL entities, physically and immaterially as well," Serenity explained with hints of sombreness in her tone.

Before Skullius could continue to show how annoyed he was by the wait, Serenity changed the subject.

"You may think it is a terrible choice to wait, but I can see you're unravelling mysteries about Null Life on your own with the abilities you earned. There's a tremendously positive luck factor around you right now. I assume you found a way to reach one of the many luck based entities that a Null Lifeform can get their hands on?"

Skullius was conflicted as he knew that she was using this as a way to avoid his prying but he answered anyway.

"Yes. I just...ate something called the Chubby Remnant Child of Polarity. It gives me great luck but in exchange, I will suffer some terrible luck in the future," Skullius replied.

"Ah, I see. The Remnant Child. It's quite the rare item and it does give significantly potent luck. I'm surprised you would choose to risk gaining much more in the way of horrible luck in exchange for a single instance of good luck though," Serenity said with what Skullius could only assume was a curious chuckle.

"Well, I really want to see what good luck feels like not the vague thing from my past you said counters my bad luck. Besides, even if things go really bad, I have a few plans against that," Skullius said with a partially confident tone. "By the way, how is the Remnant Child powerful enough to fight against Somanda's atrocious luck curse though? I half expected it to not work."

"Hmmm. How indeed. You see, everything that exists in Null Life, like the Remnant Child is bathed in a form of immunity to what many may see as significant threats. This mainly applies to natural living objects like the Remnant Child which have absorbed significant forms of Null Life Essence.

When one lives within that kind of purity, sweet existence that comes after death but untainted by life as well, defiant properties are born that skirt by anything that isn't Divine, sometimes even resisting them as well. You lack such a thing because you have to consciously dissect Null Life until you reach this point."

"..."

This was hard for Skullius to wrap his mind around.

The Remnant Child was a naturally forming 'object'?

It could bypass Somanda's powers because....

"I see you're having trouble understanding it. My words will do you no good for now. Reaching Tier 4 will also help you draw closer to the truth."

An imagination vein throbbed on Skullius' brow.

Seriously?!

"I'll have to warn you though, Skullius. When inviting Null Life creatures into that world, do exercise caution. There are many channels to do so and some of the creatures you summon may cause more problems for you than bring."

Skullius sank into thought.

He had thought about this.

He was aware that bad things could happen with him continuing the trend of calling Null beasts over with the various means at his disposal.

This Null Terror thing which was part of Ferex's flaw, was something he particularly dreaded.

The Penetrator was about to ask about this creature when...

"I'm sure you greatly anticipate the fortune that comes with taking a bite off of the Remnant Child so I shall leave you to it," Serenity suddenly said much to Skullius' shock.

"Don't we have more time to talk?" he asked.

"We do, but we have little to converse about unlike during our first meeting. I feel your intense desire for knowledge which I sadly cannot satiate. That cannot sustain our conversation for long. Hasten your pace of growth if you can. The others are already set and I... well, I am quite patient."

"What?"

"Goodbye, Skullius."

Just like that, with a scurry of the blue flame before his eyes into the background, this conversation ended.

As if forcibly retracing his steps, Skullius was pushed back into his body via the same experience he had felt when meeting Serenity just now, leaving him with a bitter taste in conscience.

That was barely enlightening at all even when considering that he had forgotten that each evolution warranted a chat with Serenity.

Well, whatever.

Skullius' sockets flared with might as he returned to the scene where Yuyui was shaking her head, desperately trying to find a word to describe Skullius' atrocity.

Paedophile or child killer certainly didn't cut it!

"I wasn't counting on that anyway. Let's focus on what really matters. I hope this STUPENDOUSLY DESIRABLE luck works," Skullius said while focusing on the guidance field again.

Flesh Serenity for now.

He'd get to Tier 4 soon enough anyway!

[Loading possible evolution options for Fulgurant Bone Penetrator:]

[Oh! For some, UNKNOWN reason, three possible evolution options from higher Tiers up the Penetrator series have decisively appeared!]

[Possible evolution options for Tier 2:]

"Is that supposed to be surprise on the guidance field's part?" Skullius commented with a grimace over the second notification.

Acting oblivious was it?

~~~

[Elder Sage of Penetration]

A revered variant of the Penetrator series that is entirely devoted to the mastery of absolute forms of magic. The Elder Sage forgoes the enlightenment brought on by skills and begins to use Mana and a greater version of Levin, Silentriddle, to forge GRAND and MYTH level runes for combat and utility.

The channel of a THOUSAND Runic Staples of each type of rune, which when fully mastered can rival Divinity is opened, along with a path to receive a fitting Veneration art to support this practise. While learning singular GRAND or MYTH runes may take a year or more, the Elder Sage is capable of being patient as the result exceeds any Special skill in power and efficiency.

The Elder Sage's form is altered to a leaner shape in order facilitate funnelling of all excess mass and power into vast reserves of Mana and high intelligence.

(Due to its unique powers, the Elder Sage of Penetration has inherited a flaw to balance its existence among the natives of different worlds.

The Elder Sage of Penetration CANNOT inflict any damage with the common forms of attacks. Only attacks with the intent to penetrate deal any damage. Above this, the entity in question cannot develop any more skills besides from those it already has).

-If you choose this race, you will have multiple other evolution choices within this series all the way up go the "#%!\$%#!"

-Possibility of gaining a Supreme skill in further evolutions



-Possibility of attaining a WORLD CREATION rune in future evolutions

-Possibility of attaining an ORIGIN SOURCING rune in future evolutions

-Possibility of attaining a KILL rune in future evolutions

-Possibility of attaining an ANTI-MANA rune in future evolutions

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<Stats>

+45,000 Mana

+3000 Agility

+4400 Strength

+38,000 Intelligence

+6000 Health

+5000 Endurance

<Runes>

-Rune of Beginning (GRAND)

-Rune of the FIRST (GRAND)

-Rune of the wise (GRAND)



-Cardinal Rune (MYTH)

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[Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator]

This is an incredibly favoured bone variant that embraces the true essence of Levin as well as what it means to see the gale, the storm and turbulence conjured in the sky. The Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator possesses the sharpest and most condensed form of pure Levin and is capable of existing as and in a massive storm cloud that has a great many utility and attack functions.

The Eternal Storm Penetrator thrives on living in the sky where it is safe and can oversee an area of over five miles even as a juvenile practitioner. As it amasses power, it can create avatars of its self that share copies of its abilities.

The avatars have an unlimited range and can amass strength and knowledge which is fed to the Eternal Storm Penetrator wherever he may choose to nest storm cloud form. Due to the huge undertaking of maintaining a vast form, the Eternal Storm Penetrator has a small chance of awakening a Veneration art to support its practise.

(Due to its unique powers, the Eternal Storm Penetrator has inherited a flaw to balance its existence among the natives of different worlds.

The Eternal Storm Penetrator CANNOT inflict any damage with the common forms of attacks. Only attacks with the intent to penetrate deal any damage. Above this, this entity can NEVER form more than FIVE avatars in the entirety of its evolutionary series).

-If you choose this race, you will have multiple evolution choices within this series all the way up to the "#%^!".

-Possibility of gaining a second Veneration art in future evolutions

-Possibility of attaining a Legendary Penetrator exclusive weapon in future evolutions.



-Possibility of becoming a TITAN WORLD STORM in future evolutions

—

<Stats>

+25,000 Mana

+6000 Strength

+9000 Agility

+7500 Intelligence

+5500 Endurance

+10,000 Health

<Skills>

-Storm Rider

-Brisk Storm Avatar (Special)

-Levin Dominance, Veil Storm Lance

-Vivid Firmament Canvas (Special)

(Previous Penetrator skills will be handled accordingly)

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## [Archfiend Warlord]

An atrociously aggressive bone variant hybrid born when a Null Badub and a Penetrator are conjoined. The Archfiend Warlord has an extraordinary natural physique which allows it to excel in all physical attributes dramatically.

Due to its source, it possess three unique forms of Levin as well as a unique element known as Dreading Spatial Haze which allows it to create a separate space where it can enter and exit as it pleases regardless of magical restrictions.

Each Archfiend is born with a unique FOND CALAMITY, a weapon that complements the Archfiend with the average rarity of it usually being Legendary and above as well as the capability to AWAKEN into a second form. The Archfiend also has a high chance of earning a Veneration art to support its practise as its body is usually incapable of handling its physical might.

(Due to its unique powers, the Archfiend Warlord has inherited a flaw to balance its existence among the natives of different worlds.

The Archfiend Warlord requires quadruple the amount of experience for the final level before each evolution).

-If you choose this race, you will have multiple evolution choices within this series all the way up to "#%^!".

-Possibility of obtaining a mutation in future evolutions.

-Possibility of attaining the AUTHORITY of a Null Badub in future evolutions.

---

<Stats>

+20,000 Mana

+32,500 Strength



+42,650 Agility

+27,000 Health

+5000 Intelligence

<Skills>

-Fond Calamity: Release

-Hidden Terrene: Sub-manifestation

-Hidden Terrene: Imposition (Special)

-Concussive Bluster (Special)

-Just Pride (Super)

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Once again Skullius was left flabbergasted.

He plopped to the ground.

He was right.

These definitely weren't normal evolution paths.

Chapter 490: Second Evolution! (1)

Skullius hadn't expected stuff like this to be honest.

He expected the STUPENDOUSLY DESIRABLE luck he had gotten to earn him some form of convenient evolutions but this was much more than that.

Each of these three evolutions were capable of turning his life upside down in a very good way.

Weakness?

Inadequacy?

What were those?!

Under specific circumstances, any one of the options before him could make him stronger than even his Hybrid Luman form when it had realised its full potential!

At least that what Skullius thought after reading the descriptions to these evolutions over and over again.

With this came a predicament.

"How on earth am I supposed to choose between any of these?!" Skullius thought.

He scooted away from Yuyui who pouted directly in his face as she was still yet to get over Skullius devouring a cute child. This wasn't the time for that!

An important decision had to be made here!

What Skullius could say made his life a little easier was the fact each of the evolutions options had a common benefit.

Each offered a Veneration art!

Or at least a chance at earning it.

The first two options had additional flaws above the one he was used to as Penetrator, as they were part of the series while the third option had its own type of flaw that was pretty infuriating.

These didn't help Skullius still as he was left to dissect each option critically.

The Elder Sage of Penetration was very attractive. It offered a huge amount of mana and intelligence, which Skullius wanted as well as a different path for growth.

Runes.

By the looks of it, these runes were different from the ones he had seen being used here in Aigas. The words GRAND and MYTH didn't exactly strike him as referring to the ordinary.

The description said that each rune was more powerful than any calibre of Special skill at the very least, which was a very big deal considering Skullius had witnessed some pretty powerful Special skills.

Even his own Special skill in the form of [Basic Evil Sanction] was extremely powerful and using it as a benchmark, this meant that any rune of the mentioned THOUSAND Runic Staples he could learn was stronger than that!

The description also said something about rivalling DIVINITY and this was the runes alone, not even accounting for the overall strength Skullius would cultivate after all that!

This evolution offered a lot and the future gains were also ridiculous!

Skullius drooled in wonder at what a WORLD CREATION rune could be!

What an ANTI-MANA rune could be!

These could be some world-breaking runes!

However, the fact that each rune could take a year or more to learn was...

'That's ridiculous. I don't even have that long until Doom Factor 2 strikes. Maybe the combined power of [Epiphany] and some legendary artefacts can increase my rate of learning these runes but... even if I solved that, I can't learn any more skills if I choose this evolution. I won't probably won't be able to extract skills too...' Skullius thought.

That wasn't too bad but...

The Penetrator moved on to the next evolution.

The Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator.

Now this was a very attractive choice through and through.

Skullius rubbed his bony hands in excitement.

Apparently, this evolution had the finest mastery of Levin and could exist as a massive storm cloud or even live within it while sending out avatars that could act on its behalf!

This was insane!

The most attractive part was that Skullius could learn all of what his avatars learned and have all their power added to his!

This suited his templates for growth very well!

Too well even!

The only problem was that some of the skills belonging to this evolution required him to have a blue core, which wasn't really an issue since he would have his blue core for his true form in about six days when [Bringer of All] went off cooldown!

If he could have an avatar, or two or three roaming around Aigas while hunting Clusters and learning new skills...

The thought made Levin spark wildly from the Penetrator!

'How would an avatar work with [High Cosmetic Body] though? Would it also be capable of using my Insurgent Magnus abilities? Could me and the avatar use these skills at the same time? If not, that would just make the avatar's life a reclusive one, which isn't bad if its job is to gather knowledge and power I guess,' Skullius thought.

Though there was a small chance of earning a Veneration art for this evolution, Skullius still liked this one.

Lastly was the Archfiend Warlord, an evolution that brought him to question...

"What really is a Null Badub? I've seen this name so many times..." Skullius said to himself as he stroked his chin.

Its abilities were extraordinary. The physical attributes, the fact that it could use different variations of Levin and this Dreading Spatial Haze that allowed it to have its own pocket space...

This paled in comparison to the fact that it would have a weapon of its own though.

A Fond Calamity!

A weapon that would either be Legendary grade or above!

While Legendary items were not very special in Aigas, their strength changed drastically when they were dubbed so in the Null Verse as evidenced by how even a Unique grade item generated from [Unbound] could rival the effects of a Legendary weapon in Aigas!

There was also a possibility of the Fond Calamity being above Legendary!

Skullius shuddered at this.

Just how strong would that be?!

If his luck extended to this as well, then he could get a Mythical or Transcendent weapon right off the bat!

As if this wasn't enough, this weapon could be AWAKENED for another form, which was ridiculous!

The future prospects for this evolution which had a mutation was surprising to him as this suggested that a Null Badub could be a... beast? A Penetrator certainly wasn't one right? At least in the conventional sense.

And what was this AUTHORITY that he could earn? It was attached to the Null Badub side of the Archfiend Warlord too.

Skullius didn't know.

These were the things he wanted to learn from Serenity but she claimed she couldn't tell.

Still, this was thrilling.

Skullius went deep into thought, digging into his future plans and schemes.

What he really needed right now...

What he wanted...

What would be best in the long run...

The Penetrator raised his head as he went with the one that excited him the most.

He wasn't going to take centuries deciding.

It was clear that any of these would work for him.

Defense.

Versatility.

High chances of immense future growth.

Skullius made a choice.

It had to be...

"I choose Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator," Skullius thought.

This was it!

This was what he needed!

The guidance field immediately responded appropriately with a flurry of notifications while Skullius felt a massive surge of power rumbling in his bones!

[You have chosen 'Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator' as your race]

[Your race is being upgraded, changes in progress...]

GRRRRRMMMMM!

Mana surged over the cloaked Penetrator.

High above, a cluster of pitch black clouds that distinguished themselves cleanly from the night sky appeared, forming a thick, expansive cone shape with a gaping hollow where Levin shone within the misty clouds!

A radiant type of Levin that was so bright that each of its flashes made the lands beneath experience a beautiful slice of summer light for fractions of a breath, showed!

It roiled within the hollow as the Fulgurant Bone Penetrator looked up with excitement!

It had been too long.

This feeling of being elevated was more thrilling than the more advanced fashion in which humans did it.

Evolution was more intriguing and animalistic.

Wild yet orderly!

He loved it.

Yuyui and Ferex looked up at the sparkling lights in the sky, wonder plastered on their faces, the Penetrator a distance from them opening his arms wide to receive it all.

Then, in a manner of flashy, alacritous manner, a massive bolt of the sharpest and most condensed Levin in existence silently bore down on the Penetrator who happily welcomed its grace...!