

Undead 521

Chapter 521: Potions

Apparently, there were two stores within the Association building. One reserved for exclusive mercenaries because frankly, no one else could afford the stuff there, and the other for the general majority.

Silrat, who had been worming his way cleanly into the structure of this Guilds Association had informed Skullius of his discoveries – the store in express detail – as he then warned Skullius about how this store could suck him dry of Plasma coin.

He was right.

Skullius stood, looking with his blank eyes dumbfounded at the items being sold by a warm and kind storekeeper who had asked to see Skullius' identification, seemingly noting him down before he answered a question of his.

"What would you like to buy, sir?" the man asked.

The items here were vastly different from the ones in the treasury. They were mostly for day to day usages and utilitarian purposes.

While sensing over the various items here, Skullius came across some unique ones for the first time.

Potions.

These were items that offered temporarily boosts simply by consuming them.

They had a wide range of uses, ranging from increasing attack potency, defence, clarity, precision, healing factor, dexterity, agility, strength, endurance and so on.

The branch of alchemy was usually reserved for Energy Formers and was particularly hard to master.

Mages were the primary practitioners and few of them could produce large amounts of even the most basic of potions. As a result, potions were very expensive and valuable, different from the products of an art like blacksmithing. Alchemy didn't leave room for subpar quality. It was strictly potion, no potion.

This was why Skullius hadn't encountered a single potion so far.

Potions were ranked in a familiar manner to skills – Normal, Special, Super and Supreme.

This ranking however, was the source of headaches for most purchasers of potions because...

"Can you please repeat what you said about the prices?" Skullius responded with a question to the store keeper's own.

"Sure. Normal potions cost 1 Plasma coin. Special potions cost 10 Plasma coins. Super potions cost 100 and Supreme potions cost 10,000 Plasma coins per bottle," the store keeper said with cheery smile that made Skullius gnash his teeth.

"Wait. Don't you mean 1000 for Supreme potions?" he asked with a frown.

"I'm afraid not."

For real?!

With his current fortune – which wasn't really impressive - he couldn't even afford ONE Supreme potion?!

What did these things do? No, what did the Supreme potion do? Make you a god?!

"Can I see a bottle of each please?" Skullius asked in a humble tone.

"Sure."

Before long, four bottles were placed before him on the counter, each being of the same aspect - healing.

The Normal potion was of a twilight fog colour within the bottle, the liquid's motion looking to be much like water in thickness. The Special one had a slightly thicker liquid, its colour being a pretty sky blue while for the Super, it was a sweet violet hue with a thickness akin to pus.

The Supreme potion had a golden colour which was mesmerising to look at. Its texture was like a sludge. Refined sludge one would say, like gel.

As for the effects of each, Skullius muttered 'Screw it' before igniting his eyes with a subdued darkness as he appraised the potions. The store keeper probably wouldn't understand what was going on with his eyes anyway.

"I... see. No wonder," Skullius said as he broke into a cold sweat.

No wonder they were so expensive.

This particular formula of potion was called 'Healing Bloom.'

Naturally, its purpose was to heal, with the differences between the grades affecting its effects not purpose.

Apparently, the Normal potion could heal minor injuries – slightly fractured bones, superficial lacerations and even common diseases. The effect after consuming the potion lasted 10 minutes, meaning all damage accrued within that time frame would be healed according to the potion's limits.

Special potions could deal with broken bones, torn muscles, dismembered limbs and even viruses, the effect lasting for an 1 hour.

Super potions, well...

They could save someone who had half their entire body ground to dust – before they died at least, reforming limbs instantly while also having the capacity to heal, to some degree, recent damage to the soul!

The effect lasted a whopping 24 hours!

A step further in absurdity was the Supreme potion.

Honestly, Skullius couldn't believe his own guidance field as he saw the description and effects.

Wasn't this a bit...?

Apparently, as long as the potion was used within a minute of a target's death, they could be brought to life without any complications!

The soul and body would be mended to perfection and with this, came absolute immunity to most diseases and viruses as well as a perfect physical modelling - vague as that was.

The effects lasted for 10 days as within that period...

It was impossible to kill an individual with normal means. Only extreme forms of power such as beyond Legendary weapons and other sources of power could have a higher chance at dealing fatal damage.

The effect of resurrection came with the first use after all and the effects after that would dwindle over time.

But still...

Skullius was dumbfounded.

The effects and descriptions mentioned here weren't all that the Super and Supreme could do, as the list was extremely long and specific but...

This...

'Healing the soul? Bringing back people from death? Who made these portions?!' Skullius thought.
'The Deities?!'

The Hybrid Luman couldn't believe it!

This was ridiculous!

The storekeeper, after seeing Skullius frozen for a while was about to ask if he anything was wrong, but he caught himself.

He let Skullius continue to wonder about whatever he was digesting while internally pondering over what the dark glow in the Hybrid Luman's eyes was.

Soon, Skullius, with a dark expression dropped a couple hundred Plasma coins on the counter.

"Give me a 100 Normal potions, 10 Special potions and three Super potions," he declared.

The store keeper was surprised at first but he wore an apologetic smile before speaking.

"Unfortunately, these portions are rare and we buy them at exorbitant prices from the Mages, which means our stock is not as good as it should be. The limit of what I can offer, is 25 Normal potions, 5 Special potions and 1 Super potion. This is purchase limit for all mercenaries over a month."

"Oh..." Skullius said disappointedly with his <CURSED HEART> beating like drum. "What about the Supreme potions?"

"Those are extremely rare. Sometimes we can't even purchase them because the success rate of forging one is apparently extraordinarily low."

Skullius pondered for a while.

"Alright. I'll settle for all I can buy right now then."

Skullius was given the 31 promised potions which he analysed for a bit before storing them in his spatial storage ring.

After getting lost in thought for a few more seconds, he calmed himself and checked the other items in the store – spatial storage rings, Enriching gems, horse cards, chariot privilege cards and so on.

The Insurgent Magnus' gaze fell on the Enriching gems from purple all the way to green that were in stock. The path of Enriching gems had gotten him far and it was still viable. The prices of these gems here were also pretty high as the higher quality Enriching gems grew few in more dangerous Clusters but Skullius didn't sweat on these.

Raising his stats wasn't something urgent. Besides, there were many untouched Enriching gems in Fortune that he intended to use. They could be beneficial for Yuyui as well if she took her growth seriously.

'There's so much to the Association. I'll figure it all out and take advantage of it all after dealing with incoming bad luck. Now, let's get to the Isise,' Skullius said as he began what would be a rather exciting, surprisingly quick and highly beneficial mission in the troubled lands outside the harsh cold of this region.

Chapter 522: Too Easy

"What happened to him?! He was alright when we came back hours ago!"

"I have no idea, my lady! He suddenly started vomiting and he just... It was sudden."

"What did you feed him?!"

"Nothing, nothing! I swear! I would never poison him! <Sniff>! I don't think it's anything he ate. He just..."

A sombre atmosphere overwhelmed the household.

The death of a normal person had a sense of mundaneness that gave it a more impactful punch.

Not facing defeat by the sword.

Not facing the veil by the maw of a Cluster beast nor by some magical phenomena that scrambled the body...

There wouldn't be any tales told about one's extraordinary exploits.

For this simple, rich home populated by six people – a man, a woman, their three children and a house maid – the loss of the father figure was a hard blow.

A teary woman was bombarding the maid with a plethora of questions and accusations. She assumed the worst had been brought about by this maid whom she had never trusted from the beginning.

There was no way her husband would die in such a ridiculous, pathetic way.

It had to be poison.

The children had been locked in a room to prevent them from witnessing the distorted and pained visage of their father. It was much too gruesome – the patches of vomit mixed with blood spotting the face and clothing.

The woman grabbed the trembling maid by the collar and bashed her against the wall!

"Tell me the truth! Speak! I swear I'll skin you alive myself if you don't admit it! What did you do?! What did you do?! What did you do?!" the woman screamed with a bitter expression on her face that showed the ache and agony of losing her better half.

Strength faded from her body after a few minutes as she slid down to the ground, as did the maid, both women weeping separately.

The children banged on the door while calling in loud voices for their mother but they received no response.

They would not understand the tragedy until some time later.

The wife of the man lying dead on his broad bed crawled up to him and embraced him as she wept.

Why?!

Why was this happening?

What had she done wrong?

Why did the Deities punish her and her husband so?

Her tears flowed without ceasing, her grip persisting with each passing second.

Yet, it was with this clawing of her hands over his flesh that she felt it...

Her husband's corpse shrunk quite a bit, a terrible cold that exceeded one she would expect from a corpse gushing through it and licking her skin!

The woman shuddered and drew back hastily.

Her husband's body had, as if robbed of muscle mass, reduced in size, its slightly muscular build shrivelling by a great margin.

The sorrow didn't allow the woman to see with clarity but she could feel something unnatural around her husband's dead body.

Yet she could not see it.

All she saw was the terror on his face, his pale skin and the Control Seal on his arm that expelled a light glow briefly before returning to its normal state.

Skullius exited the city on foot, meeting with the ever present queues of people waiting to enter the city for various reasons.

The Capital Knights and Capital Order Knights who exuded a dangerous presence walked along the various different lines for different kinds of distinguished and otherwise person while keeping the order as usual.

"Even more people are here than when I entered the city for the first time," Skullius said while sensing the vast crowd with [Koten Machi].

It seemed like the hype around the Premium Age Royale was calling more people to Genhuis City as the EverSword Household seemingly hadn't erected a larger network to expand the dissemination of Control Seals for some reason.

Skullius' hypothesis was that Rearren was trying to minimise the vast suspicion already barrelling down on him because of this event while also avoiding encroaching in the territories close to the other Houses.

The Luman couldn't shake off the feeling that the EverSword House was actually running solo in this thing, without the help of the other Houses, contrary to Silrat's belief. Perhaps Rearren was afraid of giving them a reason to interfere.

Whatever was happening had many layers of danger folded into a cataclysmic food wrap.

"Hmmm," Skullius hummed to himself while walking away from the gate, the annoying sensation of the second sun that one could only see and feel when they entered Genhuis City no longer finding room to bother him.

With the feeling of being set loose also came something that piqued Skullius' interest.

There were close to three thousand people standing in line under the lax sunlight from the sky.

Along with their arrangement came the jumbled shadows stretching from under their feet, some interlocking in nasty ways.

'Could this be an easy, free harvest?' Skullius asked himself while glancing in vain at the Capital Order Knight walking on the other side of the queue he was walking past.

With his new attainments in mana manipulation, following the acquisition of [Greater Mana Crafter], Skullius could now activate skills in a more discreet manner when compared to before by controlling the flow of mana through his mana channels.

The usage of a technique among most experts outside of Assassins and Mages was usually felt pretty easily because while they could control their cores, the finer details following the flow in their mana channels was lost to them.

Skullius, because of [Greater Mana Crafter] and the hell he had to go through after losing his mana core understood it very well, however.

And this gave him a hefty advantage.

'Might as well start with the Task as planned,' Skullius thought as he activated [Basic Evil Sanction].

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

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

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

Mana Requirements: ---

Duration: ---

Cooldown: ---

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With the skill's activation, Skullius drew his focus on what was below the people's feet.

He could feel it.

Material darkness.

Unlike how he had dealt with the bandits before reaching Genhuis City, Skullius' usage of the skill now was different and essentially useless.

Absorbing shadows instead of absorbing the darkness he could see within people with Crude Vision, didn't give him much in the way of benefits.

At most, he could learn a person's name but things such as learning everything attached to the evil deeds they conducted, was not possible. He couldn't exercise that here so he resorted to taking shadows. His task didn't specify the types of 'pieces of darkness' anyway.

One by one, shadows dashed towards him from the ground with blinding speed that eclipsed what weak Advancement Stage experts could perceive!

It was a funny and epic sight to see. The Hybrid Luman didn't make any explicit moves other than walking, so he didn't look suspicious at all.

As [Basic Evil Sanction] stole the darkness, Skullius ensured that he skipped over some other sections in order to reduce the likelihood of suspicion. The issue though, was how the people would react to finding out they didn't have a shadow anymore.

The answer was... weird.

After absorbing a shadow, another shorter one grew after the real one had been stolen, a peculiar phenomenon that Skullius saw by using Crude Vision for a few seconds.

'I didn't think it would grow back,' the Hybrid Luman thought while waking quickly past the standing or sitting individuals. 'Honestly, I was prepared to make a run for it if anyone pointed to me about it.'

People, carriages, animals... Skullius didn't discriminate.

He could technically also steal colour but he restrained himself. That would be too conspicuous.

Naturally, Skullius couldn't walk through the many lines, taking his sweet time as it could cause problems. If [Basic Evil Sanction] had a wide range, he wouldn't be facing this problem but alas, this was his limit with this portion of his journey.

Still, as Skullius surmised before, the first portion of his Twelfth Task to absorb 1,000 pieces of darkness was the easy part as by the time he reached the end of the line, he had 600 collected pieces already!

He was already past the halfway point!

'Hehe. This makes me dread what the next Task will be though,' Skullius humoured this dark thought and went on his way.

This was comically easy!

Chapter 523: Master of Light!

In the spirit of celebrating his progress, Skullius continued with his absorption spree. Coming out of the City which was constantly under surveillance made him feel free to explore his Insurgent Magnus self again.

He had sworn to never use darkness and light without cover in the City streets and even in the Premium Age Royale as he had a few hunches about their distinct nature drawing unwanted attention but now, he could go wild. There was one thing he could use related to that but that depended on the situation.

The snow covered lands made his journey as the sun hung low quite enjoyable, but the thought of the missing Red Rage was enough to ruin it.

There were no traces so far of that Apostle since he left the city and worry piled onto Skullius' mind.

Where could that bastard be?

The Hybrid Luman let go of the subject quickly though as stressing over it wasn't going to help.

Instead, as he crossed woodlands, he absorbed the shadows of trees like a maniac, also including a few shrubs and animals while he was at it.

Unfortunately for him, animals appeared with a greyish colour in Crude Vision's sight. Since they acted on instinct, they were deemed neutral, neither evil nor good. Plants were the same. Therefore, he couldn't absorb any darkness from them like with humans.

After an hour, Skullius was practically begging for the infamous bandits that had harassed him to show themselves so that he could abuse [Basic Evil Sanction] which had levelled up to Level 2, shockingly.

Perhaps more complex usages would allow it level up faster but even those didn't make the skill budge previously.

Sadly, Skullius' journey continued without interference and when he reached 900 pieces of darkness acquired, he didn't continue.

The first reason was because after the 500th piece of darkness, Skullius had started to feel a bit of additional weight piling on him, as if with each shadow he absorbed, he took on some portion of its weight.

Weird. What was that about?

After 900 pieces of darkness, he felt like he had added a average human's worth of weight to his own, which was bizarre. He had to stop and analyse this.

The second reason was that...

"This might be useful..." the Hybrid Luman thought while gazing at a lake before him.

Chunks of white ice floated over the chilly waters that hid their depth with a vibrant blue hue, wisps of frost daring any external living thing to enter.

Skullius figured that he might as well work on the sub Task while on his way.

He hadn't paid much attention to [Just Light] as he did [Evil Darkness] after all. The only issue was that unlike [Basic Evil Sanction] that allowed him to complete his Task discreetly, what he needed to do was anything but concealable.

Therefore...

Skullius dared back the freezing waters and leapt into them after making sure there was no one in the surroundings. Even for natives of the region, the cold here wasn't one that called for jackets, fishing poles and jolly drinks.

With bubbles rising after his descent, Skullius increased his weight with his natural mana property, the mass he gained quickly landing him at the bottom of the lake.

Several species of fish grew in here but they all rushed away, giving the Hybrid Luman his private space.

'Alright. Let's see this again,' Skullius thought. He pulled up his Task with his guidance field.

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EXP : 500/500

Twelfth Task : Absorb 1,000 pieces of darkness (912/1000)

Sub Task: Create your own Precept of Light.

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A Precept of light.

The way Skullius understood it, [Just Light] was like an absolute control mechanism. At least that was what the plaques he had found in Fulgardt's chest said.

The element's whole thing was to control stuff.

By that logic...

'A Precept must be... something that I can identify with. Maybe a basic structure that I use to control the light better. Or something that makes it easier to use [Just Light] to control others things?' Skullius thought as he settled in the water, sitting on a smooth rock.

That seemed right.

Maybe when he could make this Precept, the Task of using [Just Light] would be smoother. Perhaps that was the fundamental difference between light and darkness.

'Let's see how far I am with moulding the light. I have [Basic Light Weaving] now so it should make it easier.'

The Luminant Seed had not only rewarded Skullius with an upgrade in his affinity with [Just Light] but also unlocked the skill [Basic Light Weaving] which he didn't have before. It was one of the reasons why Skullius hated practicing light to begin with. Without that skill, it was hopeless.

The Hybrid Luman activated [Basic Light Weaving] and [Basic Light Production], the quality of the mana from his blue core guaranteeing that these two normal skills would work on overdrive for him.

Surely, streams of golden white light were expelled from his body, their contrast with the dim atmosphere in the water creating a magnificent picture.

Surprisingly, though, not much light appeared compared to what Skullius hoped.

He expected a whole damn sun's worth of light but he was disappointed to find that the amount of the element he could produce was greatly strained.

[Just Light] created a small halo that expanded a meter and a half around him. That was it.

'Could it be that [Just Light], since it's meant to control stuff doesn't need large quantities unlike with [Evil Darkness]? Well, darkness seems to work better when I overwhelm my opponents with it? So light could be the opposite,' Skullius thought.

It made sense as far as hypotheses went but the Insurgent Magnus hoped it wasn't because there was another restriction he wasn't aware of.

With all the light he could produce now present...

'I think I should make a unique shape. Something I feel comfortable with for this thing.'

It was only natural to think so, right?

Unfortunately for the Hybrid Luman, he found that he couldn't really think of anything in particular that he would be fond of except... bones.

1000 years of seeing bones, bones and more bones couldn't be erased with a few weeks in the human world.

It was a sad realisation really.

When Skullius thought about skeletons, a myriad of ideas on what kind of material Precept to create flooded in!

In fact, since he had the skill [Beyond the Hype] that passively forced him to process everything at twice what would be his norm, an incredibly marvellous blueprint was already forged in his mind, making him giddy.

The Hybrid Luman lamented.

This was his reality.

He just had to live with it.

He wasn't human.

'Let's begin. Oh wait. I also have that thing too. Might as well see what it really does since its related to this.'

Indeed.

There was another boon from the Luminant Seed that Skullius had yet to explore too.

It wasn't a skill per se, but a feature of his existence as a Hybrid Luman.

With a thought, an expansive wing bloomed from Skullius' back, its bright, golden white hue overpowering the depressing lighting at the bottom of this lake!

Detached from his flesh and clothing, with its build beginning inches away from him, the [Wing of the Just], which had been the [Wing of Embrace] before it was possessed by [Just Light], appeared grandly.

Its appearance gave the impression that a divine being had grabbed strokes of light, stretched them taut and gave them pristine garnish. It was gorgeous.

As it appeared, sparking glitters popped into existence on and around Skullius, making his handsome figure all the more so.

With a breath, the mana around him became subservient, even more so than when he used [Greater Mana Crafter].

A lull ensued.

The light around him which had yet to be fashioned into a Precept grew brighter, responding to his every action, even the blink of an eye.

Manipulating [Just Light], which had been a chore became as easy as taking a breath now!

'I see. This Wing...' Skullius, with a languid gaze that expressed the excessive and shockingly immersive feeling he got from this racial feature, turned to the Wing at the centre of his back, unfurled and unhindered. '...it is like [Crude World Projection]. It makes manipulating an element much easier. The light is so... light now.'

Skullius raised his hand, which caused the water to moan.

Strings of [Just Light] followed its move.

He tilted his head slowly.

Strings of [Just Light] followed its move.

This was bliss.

So that's how it was...

On top of this omnipotent feeling, Skullius felt like everything about him was bolstered massively.

His mana, his strength, agility, endurance and all was amplified fivefold. He nearly drowned in the feeling of power.

However, this feeling quickly began to turn dull.

A pang of weakness screamed from the distance.

This state wasn't meant to last long.

Skullius snapped out of his god-like reverie.

'If it works like how [Crude World Projection] used to then I guess it should sap all my strength away with longer durations of usage. I thought I was strong enough to handle it but, it's clearly on another level,' Skullius thought as he refocused.

While in this state of super powered affinity to mana and [Just Light], he would create the best Precept of light he could, provided he interpreted what a Precept was correctly that is.

The Hybrid Luman locked his hands together, his white eyes producing a dull light.

His creativity ran wild in the limited time he had and surely...

Chapter 524: Save Evic (1)

One day later...

From the height, two men with their bodies coated in mana defensively gazed over the vast distance where, in diminutive sizes, a couple of small towns as well as three small cities could be spotted.

The fresh greenery all around created a beautiful picture but these two men were not interested in that in the least. All they cared for was the product of gold.

Every other day, resources were funnelled into this cluster of settlements a distance away. A lot of resources.

Their mission was clear.

"You never told me what the boss ordered," one of the two said.

"Ah, that's right! I never did, did I?" the other responded with an embarrassed laugh.

"Tsk. Forgetful prick. Did he say we should attack?"

"Ah, no. He told us to wait a few more minutes."

"I see. Will he be joining us?"

"I don't think so."

"Hmmm. And about the pests snooping around this base? How did he say we should deal with them?"

"He said to ignore it. 'Unless someone significantly powerful shows up, they will never be able to enter this place. The Shamans are making sure of that. Besides, we won't be staying here for long'. That's what he said."

"I hope he's right."

"Ah, cheer up brother. This will be easy. Our job is to procure the valuables and leave. We have greater numbers and strength than them all. What could go wrong, haha?"

"Procure the valuables and leave, ey? Is that all we are going to do?"

"Ah..." the other voiced as a devilish grin crawled up on his face.

Isise, Evic.

The 'capital' of the arrangement known as the Isise, three cities joined in order to share economic innovation and resources as well as to strengthen their mutual extreme devotion to the Deities, the city Evic, was slowly getting back on its feet.

Weeks ago, a terrible battle had taken place here, bringing about a catastrophic level of damage to both the infrastructure and the lives of the inhabitants.

What was shocking was that it was registered that there was only one assailant and he managed to defeat one of the top five Paladin Champions of the Purity and a Higher Order Priest.

With many dead, and the majority who were still lost in some form of trance after the assailant used a strange ability, it had taken a while for any form of stability to be established. Priests had flooded Evic along with dozens of Purity Knights to offer security which did have a minimal positive effect.

What truly boosted morale and peace of mind above the ground however, was the arrival of a Paladin Champion in Evic. To the devout residents, this was the best case scenario – the Deities sending another chosen to protect them.

Unfortunately, the budding peace and calm was ruined by the many groups of bandits that sought to take advantage of the relief that was being sent to Evic from different other cities and sponsors.

The attacks were constant and unyielding but ultimately they more so drained the strength of the Purity Knights and Champion who guarded the city than cause much damage.

To continue to endure against the rush of attacks was the main problem, thus to relieve the pressure, the Paladin Champion stationed here as well as the City Lord organised for the hire of Contract Knights.

Fortunately, in this region, the Carpet Keep, a fortress that welcomed those willing to work as Contract Knights was well known for its rapid response and quality of combatants, especially against criminals.

The call had been made seven days ago for help and a Division of Contract Knights had been sent to the Isise, arriving on the same day.

The pressure had been lessened significantly with the arrival of these Knights as one of their strengths was the variety. Reconnaissance, power, speed - they had it all - and their well-coordinated movements won them many battles.

The Knights lived up to their name.

Yet, against this experienced Division, the might of the Purity and their streak of success, a particularly dangerous group of bandits had arrived four days, turning the victories into losses.

The tide shift had been so bad that the consequences of one raid were terrible.

"Please don't look so irritated, Sir Anara. They only got us once," a Purity Knight decked in silver armour said reassuringly. "We won't let it happen again."

"Right. It's easy for you to say that. I don't blame you. Do you know how else one goes about rising in rank amidst the monsters of Paladin Champions above them?" the man walking beside the Purity Knight, Anara, asked rhetorically, with a frown. "Accomplishments. You prove that you are efficient, especially when it comes to protecting innocents.

The Purity strengthens its reputation by proving that they can at least protect the devout."

"Failing at that as a Paladin Champion, even ONCE, just pushes my chances of building renown lower and lower."

To this, the Knight beside Anara couldn't find any more words to say to bring comfort. He would just be adding fuel to the fire.

Anara, tall, stout, long black haired Anara, was a rank 11 Paladin Champion, one rank above the last.

Past rank 10 was a different dimension it seemed, as Anara and the Champion below him were the only ones in the entire ranking to not have a purple core!

Even the woman Anara despised, Elita, who had vanished weeks ago had a purple core and she wasn't anybody special. She was famed for underutilising her strength and holding back in the name of honour.

Now that she was gone though, the spot she left could be his if he succeeded in, with the Contract Knights' help, repelling the waves of bandits.

But this particular group of criminals. They were different.

"Argh! At a time like this, one of those privileged Grand Priests keeps sending people here to help with the 'effort', as he calls it. If someone is to repent of their sins, let them do it at home! There's been tens of those useless civilians sent here to help build houses, cool or do some stupid mundane tasks to earn forgiveness and such. We need more fighters instead!" Anara growled.

He pushed his hair back viciously, which seemed to be the hundredth thing to annoy him today.

"The Grand Priests probably don't know what's happening here. They never have to fight, right? How many more are we expecting of these... sinners?"

"Hmph, probably tens more. I hear there's this one scum among them. Used to provide living sacrifices to Evenfall cultists. Tsk. How does one repent from that by stirring some broth? Can't wait to see that fool get here."

As the two walked through the streets which were chock full of unfinished houses, multiple camps for healing those with ghastly injuries, to feed the residents who could walk by themselves and house those who were still in the strange trances, Anara's mood softened.

As he gazed at these people, he couldn't help but be reminded why he chose to become a Paladin Champion in the first place.

With the latest attack by this new group of bandits, more damage had been sustained, with hundreds injured in the battle to repel the greedy bastards but the thing that caused Anara's heart to sting the most, was the thousands of hollow shells of humans that wouldn't eat nor drink.

Whoever had messed up their minds was powerful.

No Healers or Mages had been able to bring these people back to their right minds as of yet.

Anara shook his head and tore his mind from these thoughts. This wasn't the time.

"By the way, has anyone been able to find out where those people reporting missing went? They couldn't have been kidnapped right?"

"No. Strangely, all of them appeared to have been sick or dying. I doubt any bandit would abduct burdens. Maybe it's those cultists?"

"Right. Maybe. And that doll? Any clues or anything?"

"None yet."

"Perfect. Just perfect," Anara said with a bitter expression.

The two finally reached the spot outside the city where the Contract Knights had set up camp.

They seemed to be scrambling for their weapons with some rushing off in different directions!

Anara quickened his pace.

"What's going on?!" he asked, hoping for anyone to answer.

One of the Knight bulleting past him answered succinctly.

"They are coming!"

Chapter 525: Save Evic (2)

The enemy!

They were coming?!

Perfect! Just perfect!

The damage caused four days ago was just starting to get under control!

Anara rushed over to a tent at the centre of the makeshift camp.

As he entered, he found a burly man with short fiery hair, sharp eyebrows and close set hazel eyes sitting down with his gaze plastered on the ground.

He was decked in a bulky reddish gold armour that constantly hissed of fine mana with a massive greatsword attached behind it.

In front of him was a very short figure who spoke with a light pant, drizzles of sweat oozing from her brow. She had light ash blonde hair and large black eyes that never left the burly man's face as she gave a full report.

Anara waited for this woman to finish whatever she was saying before he asked.

"How does it look, Bull?"

The large man named Bull did not shift his gaze from the ground or give a direct answer. Instead...

"Oliviana..."

For indeed it was...

"Yes sir," the short figure responded immediately. She turned to Anara and gave the answer in Bull's stead. "Around three hundred."

...!

"Three hundred?! Are you sure?! There were only dozens of them before!"

"Anara," Bull said. "Oliviana is the best scout we have. Even as an Assassin without as much strength as the others, she excels in information gathering. It IS dire."

The Paladin Champion's face paled.

This...

"How far are they?"

"They should arrive in five minutes. They aren't in much of a hurry," Oliviana explained to which Anara bit his lip and turned.

"I'll go mobilize my Knights to join th—"

"Don't. Keep your Purity Knights in the city to defend the civilians and Priests as they have always done. The Capital Knights from neighbouring cities are already being contacted. They should arrive as support soon."

The Paladin Champion ground his teeth once more.

'Damn it!'

These Contract Knights numbered a measly sixty and some. Against three hundred, they wouldn't stand a chance!

Before he left, Anara asked one more question.

"Are those two—"

"Yes. Unfortunately, they are among them. If I were strong enough I'd try to assassinate them but..." Oliviana said with a dark look on her face.

In the previous assault to Evic, there were two men who had been particularly dangerous to fight against.

They alone killed 43 Purity Knights, 37 Capital Knights and 15 Contract Knights.

Their prowess, their techniques...

The 11th rank Paladin Champion rushed out of the tent and behind him Oliviana and Bull followed as they walked up to the front of the camp where roughly 30 Contract Knights were already in formation.

Contract Knights worked in Divisions.

These were groups of up to a 100 individuals who would be sent as fighting forces to requested locations.

This was Division 16, lead by Commander Bull, a Second Phase Master with a grand reputation as a long serving Contract Knight of the Carpet Keep.

His lieutenant, Cast, stood at the forefront of the formation of the 30 Knights, on his body not a single piece of protective clothing.

"Ready?!" Cast called, to which the other Knights responded with vigour as they prepared, coating their bodies with vibrant mana. As did he.

Ten out of the thirty manned ten items that looked like cannons – large, thick barrelled contraptions that had an assortment of arrays within them.

They were peak Unique grade tools that required one to infuse their mana into them for them to function – expelling high destructive projectiles that could cause mass destruction.

These were clearly lacking but Legendary grade tools would not be issued when there were too many civilians within a 100 mile radius, otherwise, Bull would have ordered for the delivery of cannons of that grade from the Keep.

In response to the sudden overwhelming threat, a group of twenty reinforcements had come along with these tools to assist in the effort, but as Bull put on his helmet, he couldn't help but feel even more nervous.

"You go into the city too," he instructed Oliviana behind him.

"No," the short woman said as she pulled out a thin sword from her storage ring. "I'll be alright. An Assassin's shine comes from exploiting opportunities. I will fight too."

Bull nodded without fighting her decision.

He was her Commander but only in name.

She was free to do whatever she desired. After all, they were not conventional Knights hung up on hierarchy.

From the distance, a familiar sight showed.

Just like with how the assault had begun previously, two men were the first to emerge from the uneven, hilly ground far off.

They looked identical, both with skinny bodies and hideous clean vertical stars on the middle of their faces. One donned a sleek black leather armour, while the other donned one with a brown hue.

These colours were how most distinguished these two brothers, friends and foes alike.

"Ready!" Cast called as he took a cautious step, igniting the wills of the Contract Knights in Bull's stead.

"Yeah!" the Knights responded while taking a step as well, those manning the cannons flooding them with their mana!

"FIRE!" Cast ordered and two cannons roared, emitting a deafening noise that threatened to break apart the crust beneath them!

Then, as if tens of giant beasts roared in unison, each of the two cannons set loose two blinding beams of energy that forced even Master Stage experts within the formation of Contract Knights to squint!

The flash of light upon their release refused to die down immediately and as the beams of energy crossed the distance to their targets in less than a short breath, a thunderous boom was already lording over everyone's eardrums as the impact occurred!

Two devastating rumbles like earthquakes punished the lands where the two enemies had been spotted and further behind them, a mushroom of light, flame and dust shooting its way into the sky!

Bull immediately rushed forward, taking mildly spaced steps on his way towards the enemy he was almost certain was not done.

Not by a long shot.

As the light from the cannons finally started to wane, the dust and light, flying matter that covered the area literal bombs had fallen on dispersing, Bull grunted and pulled his greatsword from his back.

A tall, threatening shadow emerged from the thick.

It was almost six meters tall, made entirely out of forest green perfect Aura.

A Genuine Incarnation in the form of a mantis!

Beneath its tall frame, was Brown who wore a crazed smile as a neon green light wrapped firmly around him.

He pointed at Bull who furrowed his brows and then, with a light call that almost couldn't be heard, he shared a 'secret'.

"Black is already inside."

A maniacal visage tagged along with this message.

...!

Bull's eyes almost popped out of their sockets!

The degraded and pulverised ground still steaming with somewhat moist ache beside Brown, lacked the figure of the other twin!

The Commander turned his head back to his Division.

No. To the city!

Before he could blink, he witnessed an atrocity than not even his fellow Knights had had the chance to notice yet.

All the civilians who had been in the city... were now outside, directly standing behind his Division in formation!

Chapter 526: Save Evic (3)

Bull's eyes quivered as the implications bashed against his head.

These bastards...

'Using the civilians to divide our attention... Damn you!' Bull thought.

The healthy and the injured alike could be seen painting the area before the city walls, some heaped over each other like rocks as if they had been randomly tossed out of the City!

The bulky Commander cursed and dashed back after giving one quick glare at Brown who grinned at his distress, his Perfect Aura blasting from his body like a tornado!

"Attack!" Bull called out at the top of his lungs, prompting the Knights he was about to run past as he rushed to protect the civilians, act immediately!

The formation of Contract Knights, Cast included, all briefly turned to find what had gotten their Commander all riled up, the lieutenant immediately turning back his head towards where Bull had run from and charging ahead after realising the enemy's play.

The two nodded as they passed each other, from Cast's body a silver Aura burning ferociously as over his body that wore no battle protection, an archaic armour was formed!

The glimmering armour, formed purely out of silver Aura as Cast's Genuine Incarnation, released a dreadful shockwave and a blinding light, a rectangular tower shield appearing in the lieutenant's right hand to complement his style of fighting!

Cast's charge towards Brown rocked the immediate surroundings and the target himself was ecstatic to find that he had actually found a fun opponent.

The other Knights following behind Cast ignited their Full Body and Perfect Auras as not many were Second Phase Masters in this Division like Cast and Bull.

They roared as with their charge ahead, the army of three hundred hidden behind the slope steps away from Brown, all completely unscathed from the cannon fire just now, caused momentary fear.

But the Knights persisted.

On the other side, Bull was joined by Oliviana as the two stood before the piles of people, messily tangled against each other. His Perfect Aura had already started to rise from his body as he prepared for any kind of attack from in or outside the city.

"Good! That's it! Fight brave Knights!" Brown yelled in a ridiculing voice from the distance.

He was going to enjoy shattering this courage that was charging at him!

The Genuine Incarnation above him, with its two pairs of giant claws, made a move.

It brought two of its blade-like front limbs close and began rubbing them together intensely, sparks flying as it did so!

The sound that was produced... caused a menacing disturbance to say the least!

If one scratched a rough surface with their nail, it was enough to cause a grimace from those in the surroundings. However, if hundreds of thousands of nails scratched on hundreds of thousands of rough, board-like surfaces, it would cause more than just an uncomfortable flinch.

Especially.... if all that sound did not appear in the real world, but was mysteriously crammed directly into one's ear, the noise scratching against the brain!

"AAAAARRRGHHHHH!"

"NHGGGHHHAAA!"

As the giant mantis Genuine Incarnation's limbs blurred with extremely rapid movement, tens of Advancement Stage Knights immediately shrieked and dropped to the ground, trembling fiercely as a gnawing pain and disturbing sensation fought against their nerves!

Blood flooded from their orifices as they convulsed and the formation was jumbled and thrown into disarray instantly!

The Master Stage experts groaned and were brought to a halt as the effect was not as bad, but some also knelt down, grunting in agony. This much was all that Perfect Aura could do to shield them as a brain was still a brain and without intricate defence, they too were doomed!

The only one left who was barely affected was Cast as his armour was an Object type Incarnation which meant that it emphasised defence above anything else.

The lieutenant didn't stop.

He only glanced back to his fellow Knights for a brief moment, frowned and turned back to Brown.

'So that's it? This man is a Mind Caster. He must be able to create disturbances directly one's brain or something like that. His range is vast too it seems. Curses! They never showed this surprise last time they attacked,' Cast thought as he brought his tower shield before his body.

There was quite the distance between the city and where Brown was. At full speed, it would take Cast seven seconds to cross it but that was too slow.

He had to reach his opponent now!

The lieutenant's silver covered body suddenly produced a mirage like outline of white, its shape like a flame around him and his figure instantly arrived before Cast, the shield ready to bash the man's face in!

...!

Brown ducked down, protecting himself against the mad swing of Cast's two meter tall tower shield with a perplexed look!

'Was that an auxiliary technique?! A speed type one at that! We have another noble child far away from home here, haha!' Brown thought as he leapt back, creating some distance between himself and Cast.

The speed Cast showed just now was the product of an auxiliary technique! Definitely!

It was scared the living daylights out of him but with his experience, it was nothing.

Auxiliary techniques were usually preceded by a complex shaping of mana around the user before the effect showed and this...

Another mirage burned around Cast's valiant figure as he shot towards Brown with a shield bash in less than the blink of an eye but the murderous attack was blocked by one of the claw of the mantis under which the two were fighting!

Cracks registered on the claw but it still held.

Brown laughed, looking to be having the time of his life.

"This isn't a one a one, I'm afraid," he yelled before he whistled, prompting dozens of Aura covered arrows to swiftly flash from behind him and snipe Cast with impeccable accuracy!

The lieutenant grunted as he blocked with his shield, but he was still locked in place by the assault.

The army of hundreds was finally on the move!

They had simply been waiting for Brown's command and the thuds of their boots and greaves as they rushed ahead caused Cast to grimace.

This was bad!

The mantis' claw flashed with incredible speed and struck Cast back as the rain of arrows continued to storm towards him, weakening his ability to fight back bit by bit!

"You're all doomed!" Brown yelled with madness painted on his visage, his giant mantis which still rubbed its claws, thus keeping most of the Knights incapacitated, raising its free claw and swiped down brutally!

At first Cast thought the attack was directed at him, but...

The sound akin to a turbulent wind bashing against a raging ocean ensued as with a single swipe, a blade of malevolent Aura raced past Cast, digging a trench through the ground all the way towards the city!

The Knights in the way were erased in the brief moment that this attack lasted while those with at least their perfect Aura around them managed to keep their bones!

When the blade of dull of green light that travelled at a treacherous speed finally reached the City, one burly man's deflection of it managed to reduce the damage it would have gone on to cause but the death toll had already spiked!

*

Inside the City, fifteen second before...

Anara was left gaping at what was going on.

In one second, he could see in his peripheral vision the many people moving about within the streets while he ordered the Purity Knights to get ready and in the next, these people were all gone.

His face paled.

Immediately afterwards, he felt a powerful presence hovering in the air.

It was a giant, luminous black dragonfly with purple stripes all over its body!

It zipped a meter to the left, to the right, below and a meter above within a millisecond, its focus directed towards him!

This was a Genuine Incarnation from the looks of its glow.

"Formation!" Anara commanded his Purity Knights who immediately did as they were told.

His eyes flashed around the area, looking for whoever had summoned this Incarnation. A moment later, he found a familiar man standing on the roof of a building close to the dragonfly and narrowed his eyes.

It was one those two dangerous bandits.

Black.

The man looked excited. Eerily so.

"Ah, I don't think you'd want to hand over all the good stuff even if I asked nicely, right?" he asked to which no reply but hostility came. "Fair enough. Have it your way!"

Pttststststststs!

Rapid flashes of blue and bright condensed Aura suddenly poured with extreme speed from underneath the giant dragonfly which zipped from place to place with an otherworldly showcase of speed but remaining close to Black!

Anara raised his guard further and rushed away while yelling "Split up!" but...

By the time half a second passed, eight of his Knights had already been killed, their heads blown to bits by the bright projectiles!

Each beam of Aura demolished the street, acting like a mini bomb that rocked the ground and shook the houses nearby just by the shockwave it produced!

From something like this, ordinary Knights couldn't defend!

Also, unlike Anara, most of the Knights weren't able to react in time and more were being cleanly slaughtered as the milliseconds went by!

Anara clicked his tongue.

First, all the people in the city had suddenly vanished and now this?!

The two twins hadn't used their Incarnations in the last raid and thus, dealing with them now, above their basic strength which was already terrifying...

'Perfect! Just perfect! This is my first time seeing an Incarnation that can fire Aura projectiles like this! What are this man's abilities? Is he the one who caused the civilians to disappear?!' Anara agonised before calling to his dying Knights.

"Don't hold back and don't stay in one place! Move around!" he ordered.

In cases like this, those who panicked would focus on defending with everything they had rather than running away from an opponent who could easily catch them, which is what some of Anara's Knights had been doing instead of trying to evade.

But that wasn't working.

Now that they were given another order, they ran in different directions. They were beginning to adapt to the dangerous situation.

But...

Ten different screams larded over Anara's ears as ten of his men were beheaded by a darting figure with a shining dagger!

...!

Before he knew it, this figure had already reached him as well, stabbing at his side viciously!

Anara hurriedly parried with his sword and with a furious roar, icy white steam rose from his body and coated his sword, its cool pervading the atmosphere!

"Ah! I see! That's your Divine Blessing isn't it? Show me what it can do! Show me!" Black, who had been pushed back a bit by Anara's parry yelled enthusiastically, his dagger swinging from one hand to the other as he then flitted forward like a shadow!

This man was fast!

Anara's fury grew but so did his anxiety.

Black wasn't intimidated by the effects of his Divine Blessing, Sacred Frost, in the least!

This was the pride of a Paladin Champion that they prioritised over Stages, Classes and Cores, yet his enemy was merely curious!

'He's faster and very skilled with close quarters combat! Can I win this?!' Anara thought, as Perfect Aura also gushed from his body to strengthen him many fold.

But was it enough?!

His Knights were still being picked off by the streaming blasts from the dragonfly overhead and he, with just two more clashes against the grinning Black, his wrists were already bleeding!

Anara tried to create some distance but Black wouldn't allow it!

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! FLSH!

Anara's shoulder was sliced through by Black whose movements grew to become blurs hard to perceive for the Champion's eyes!

The man gritted his teeth.

This was hopeless.

Perhaps this is why...

Maybe this was why he...

'Hmmm?'

Black who had been speeding towards him with a blackish purple Aura around him, his murderous intent suffocating Anara's fighting spirit... suddenly stopped.

His face which had showed only excitement just now grow serious as he back away and looked up.

Anara was confused.

Why did he stopped?

Was this a trick?

No. Black wouldn't need to use a trick on someone like him. He was already dominating this fight.

Then why?

The tall, stout Paladin Champion gazed up as well, following Black's line of sight and saw...

'What is that... wait... is that person?' he thought.

High up and a distance from the city walls, someone was standing in the air overlooking the city with his empty eyes...

Chapter 527: The Reinforcement

Someone was floating high up in the air.

For Master Stage experts, it wasn't hard to see his face even with his high altitude and distance from the city.

'Who is that?' Black asked himself.

Pushed back light auburn hair and blank eyes that he was sure was gazing at him specifically was all he could focus on at this moment.

To account for the possibility of surprises, Black swiftly brought his Genuine Incarnation directly above him for support while also withdrawing something from his spatial storage.

It was a small grey cube that perfectly fit in his palm. Something that gave him some reassurance about the situation... just in case.

'Ah, I can safely assume that's an enemy, right? Reinforcements maybe. No matter who they are, I can stil—'

Before Black could finish his sentence in his thoughts, his eyes bulged!

The blank eyed man who had been hundreds of meters in the air a second ago... was now standing two meters behind!

...!!!!

Black flinched and took a step back.

"What the hell?!"

Anara trembled as he felt someone behind him now. He slowly moved his head glanced at the arrival's new location over his shoulder.

'Perfect! Just perfect!'

What was going on?!

Anara dreaded the thought that this could be another enemy. As if Black wasn't enough!

Was his luck that bad?

Silence pervaded the atmosphere that had been chock full of a murderous intent just now as this man... he brought on a feeling of unease.

This same man then opened his mouth to speak.

"Ruined City. Paladin Champion. This is definitely the place. Hmmm, and then some random guy killing everyone? That old man didn't mention that bit," Skullius said, his image complemented strangely well by his clothing that was oozing of smoke but primarily undamaged from his ridiculously fast movement just now.

...!!!

His words made his position clear to Anara and Black as the former looked to almost sob in relief while Black wore an ugly expression, his body moving to utilise the grey cube in his hand immediately!

Unfortunately, he was a fraction of a millisecond too late.

By the time the last word from Skullius' sentence sounded in Black's ear, a heavy sensation had already brutally descended on his being.

*

Outside Evic, a few seconds before...

Oliviana vigilantly looked ahead while taking deep breaths.

The attack that had eaten up more than a mile's worth of ground before reaching her position in front of the civilians had nearly caused her to buckle under the stress of sure death.

It was deadly!

This was the power of a Second Phase Master with a Living type Genuine Incarnation!

Thankfully, one with power similar to this was on her side.

Bull's sturdy Perfect Aura which was still forming into an Incarnation had managed to deflect the dull green light blade, causing it to shift its course to the extended City wall on the left side, demolishing a huge chunk of it!

The short woman had breathed a sigh of relief.

Because she had recognised how outclassed she was and rushed over to protect the spawned civilians with Bull, she had been spared from having her brains messed up from inside her head.

While Brown's attack range was definitely fearsome, he didn't seem interested in assaulting the civilians or Bull whom he knew wouldn't be affected, thus Oliviana had survived along with that convenience.

Unfortunately, this fight was just beginning as from the distance, the image of Cast could be seen hurriedly drawing back while shielding itself with the tower shield from the coming army!

"Well. Here they come," Oliviana said to Bull with a sigh.

The other Knights who had split off from the frontal formation were returning to back them up but this was still a depressing situation.

'This is still better than rotting in an Academy as a tutor,' Oliviana said with a smile as she readied herself, preparing to activate her Full Body Aura.

BOOOOOOM!

First dust and rubble flew as the City wall bulged and exploded before expelling something that shot through the air while crackling with heat!

Then, the sound of the wall blowing up blasted out, almost causing those with fickle hearts a heart attack!

Whatever this expelled figure was which couldn't be seen clearly as it flew, landed among the rushing bandits only two hundred meters short of where Brown's giant mantis was with grievous storm of dust!

....!

Oliviana was immensely startled by this.

What was that?!

'Don't tell me inside the city too...?' she thought as she alternated her gaze between the torn wall and figure hundreds of meters ahead.

With a desperate wheeze and a sharp draw of air, a hand pulled an entire body from the crater made by this unidentified flying object.

It was Black.

Blood continued to gush from his mouth and his eyes that were so red that they hid his pupils!

Bits of Perfect Aura leaked from his body as after he tried to stand, he collapsed to the ground and vomited more blood, his gaze then rising to his twin brother.

Brown's face contorted dangerously as he rushed over to his brother who powered through the pain and finally managed to stand.

"What happened?! How did you get so beaten up?!" Brown hastily asked with concern.

Black sucked in a deep breath as he used his brother's shoulder as support, turned to the city and pointed.

"There's.... Someone powerful just showed up... he's dangerous... Call everyone... back... Ah!" Black grunted with a hateful stare at the hole in the wall he had come through.

Brown noted his words and whistled to the three hundred men on their side to halt their advance.

Someone strong?

Did these fools finally request an Honoured Level Knight from the Capital Service or a Mage perhaps?

Black didn't look like he could keep expositing on who exactly this enemy was. He was barely conscious.

As everyone was confusedly gazing in different directions, someone walked through the opening to the wall.

A man with light auburn hair and white eyes that did not see a thing.

He donned an edgy, yet stylish getup quite fitting for his well shaped body, a thick chain wrapping around his waist to make the edge even sharper.

His clothing, the VergeRider, was enduring as best as it could his rapid movements which caused it to produce a light black smoke that gave this man a very intimidating image.

Yes.

Skullius' appearance caused a lull.

No one needed to be told that this man, was the one who had dealt the lethal blow to Black.

Cast, who had the weight of attacks relieved from him because of the sudden development, raised a brow while retreating back as fast as he could.

Bull furrowed his brow.

Who was this? He looked more like a freelancer than the reinforcements they had called for from the neighbouring cities.

By the looks of it, he wasn't an enemy.

That was hope more than it was cool headed conjecture.

As for Oliviana...

She grew weak in the knees.

"Festos?" she said a small voice that Skullius picked up on with his keen senses, turning his head as he expressed mild surprise before turning his head back to the goal.

How... Why was Festos here?!

Oliviana couldn't believe it!

Also... did he just...? How... what?!

The individual she was stressing over ignored her presence for a bit as his eyes were ignited with [Evil Darkness] for Crude Vision.

'This is the first time I've used the gravitational effects at full power. It's much more fun than I thought,' Skullius mused while focusing his sight on Black. 'As I thought. Master Stage experts are a different breed. I packed 30,000 tonnes, my full output of weight into him and he somehow survived without fully guarding with his Incarnation. Hehe...

this will be interesting.'

Brown who held his brother gnashed his teeth.

"So that's him?" he said with a mocking tone. "We won't retreat for one man, Black. "Give me the boss' artefact. I will sic our numbers at him and deliver a decisive blow while he's distracted. I'll kill him in one hit. Here, heal up."

Brown tossed a potion at Black as he spoke. A Special potion.

His giant mantis vanished and the green Aura around him grew thick.

Black hesitated for a bit before passing him the grey cube. "Be careful," he said as he downed the contents of the potion.

The hundreds of bandits awaiting the order, some with swords, some with bows and others with spears had covered almost half of the way to the city by the time Brown ordered them to stop.

Now, the twin yelled while pointing at Skullius, 'Kill that man!' to which the charge of criminals enthusiastically responded without restraint!

They had numbers on their side.

On the opposite side, Cast joined Bull and Oliviana who looked like she had something to say but couldn't say it.

Her eyes were fixated on her former student with a complex emotion.

As for this student, in response to the charge of bandits, all rushing towards him, he grinned.

BRUTALITY was on his mind.

VWOOOSH!

....!

Everyone's hair stood on end when, like a flood pouring recklessly from a wide gap, mana blasted out of the body of this 'reinforcement'!

It was wild...

It was unrestrained...

It bloodthirsty.

Chapter 528: Brutality!

Skullius took a step.

The raging mana within him eagerly exploded out through his abnormally large mana pathways causing an anxious stir among the approaching storm of bandits.

How can someone output so much mana at once?

No. Maybe it was a bluff.

Was this to intimidate them?

Fat chance!

The Hybrid Luman didn't look fazed by the result. It would have been disappointing if his enemies suddenly turned tail anyway.

With [Beyond the Hype] influencing every aspect of his being, a plan weaved in his mind.

'I'll spare that much. The rest...' he thought as the terrifying mana cover around gained a deadly shape. One forged when a certain skill was used.

[Hyperfocus Motion Counter].

Skullius' existence vanished soundlessly.

Nothing, except for the absence of his image suggested that he had moved.

Not the ground.

Not the wind.

He was like a feather.

Before half a blink could pass, Skullius was already upon a fiercely charging member of this tide of fodder and not fodder, his existence a couple of breaths away from being registered by this victim.

With precise motion, even as the body of this bandit was being ravaged by the spiky form of Skullius' mana in slow motion, the Hybrid Luman screwed off the man's head.

Blood was still leaps of time away from splashing out of the man's neck but he was already finished.

Skullius grinned with flashes of inspiration on how else to brutalise the rest of his chosen victims, his mana flowing into the severed head he held which still wore a lively face.

A sturdy weight of thirty thousand tonnes was added to the head and with extreme force as well as calculated motion, Skullius flung it towards his designated enemies before following after it!

Sound didn't have its clutches on the situation yet.

All there was, was a laser-like blur that bombarded twenty-five oblivious Advancement Stage bandits who had yet to guard or activate their supplementary abilities.

Never in their wildest dreams would they have thought that they would be killed by a mana coated head but the bloody holes, gaps and ruptured organs on their bodies expressed that they would venture a few guesses before collapsing – when the time came.

[You have killed LV19 Human. 30 EXP awarded]

[You have killed LV17 Human. 24 EXP awarded]

...

Skullius rushed past the bodies of the men he had killed as he collected the 45 Null Life Essence points that they each awarded. Death was not a follower of time. Whether one had yet to realise their own death or not, it came and reaped nevertheless, unless of course...

Hmmm.

The Hybrid Luman wore a maniacal grin as he lodged his hand into the throat of one of bandits and pulled, ripping out their voice box!

'Fun! This is so... fun!' Skullius thought as his excitement drew him closer to the edge of ecstasy where extreme stimulation awaited.

Blood flew but Skullius was already behind the man he had violated, boring his hand into his back and drawing out his spine!

Mana flooded onto this object along with the property of weight, the bloody, yellowish structure of the spine growing erect from its previous state!

This, along with Skullius' [Greater Mana Crafter] made for a rather grotesque makeshift weapon that was forged for no reason other than to explore the most sadistic of ideas!

Skullius vanished and in the next second, 43 of his targeted victims were fitted with the most clean and jarring of wounds – split faces, cleaved torsos, carved limbs among many other gruesome forms of hurt.

After this, the spine was cracked as it couldn't handle what Skullius was using it for and thus the Hybrid Luman flung it away and reverted back to classic dirty handed slaughter!

He ripped a man's face in half by pulling at the gap in their mouth.

He pulled one woman's hair and delivered a full power punch into her face as soon as she had fallen to the ground, still unable to discern that was she done for.

In the terrible explosion that followed the excessively heavy punch, he bore his hands into the chests of two bandits and pulled out their hearts.

Skullius looked at the still beating hearts and scoffed.

What a strange concept a heart was.

As Skullius continued his murder streak, a few powerful combatants sprinkled in the small army finally showed themselves.

Two Master Stage experts blasted his way, one with a fierce expression that showed a particularly disdainful look at the atrocities that Skullius had committed. These bandits seemed to to have some sense of camaraderie.

Around the body of this man was a neon blaze of gold that raised his base abilities far above the norm, allowing him to perceive Skullius' movements.

Skullius was pleased that they were some who were capable of this.

The Hybrid Luman knew his limits. His main advantage lied in movement speed more than reaction and attack speed. That was how he could beat enemies stronger than him most of the time. In terms of close quarters combat, he might be bested as it was a different case when considering movement.

When it came to his application of weight, there were two ways with their own cons and pros

Skullius could apply weight to his body by enveloping it with his mana – coating it over his body – which allowed him to not wear down his body with whatever weight he wanted to apply to a target. This method also helped him apply the effects of weight to separate objects.

The disadvantage of using this application though, was that Genuine Incarnations could deal with it, as the mana which made contact with the enemy would be cancelled out.

The Luman could also apply weight to himself by charging his mana from within his mana pathways which would wear down his body with the weight he wanted to apply as well – he would also become heavy, which limited his movements. The advantage of this was that, Genuine Incarnations couldn't deal with it as there was no mana expelled from his body to cancel out.

All this said, fighting with Masters with just these was difficult, even if it was just bandits without complex techniques.

"You bastard!" the other among the two Masters upon him yelled.

He screamed as he launched a quick jab at Skullius that caused the air to crackle from its sheer force while the other bandit circled around the Hybrid Luman, sucked in a gust of air and blew at him!

A ferocious storm of blue flame that dyed the air blue while burning the air spilled out of his mouth with staggering intensity!

It was an effective hazard that instantly melted the ground!

To make matters worse for the Hybrid Luman, other Masters were also weaving through the abysmally slow Advancers, nearing his position.

By all accounts, this was a terrible situation for Skullius.

If he used his speed against powerful, much aware enemies, he was likely to reap limited results.

However...

[You are HYPED!]

~~~

[ Beyond the Hype | None ]

-Passive-

Every aspect of the user's being naturally processes all information fed into it at twice the normal capacity.

-Active-

When the user is excessively excited, the <CURSED BLOOD CELLS> will be supercharged, producing an artificial form of adrenaline that allows the user to process information with every aspect of their being at fifteen times their current capacity.

Mana Requirements: ---

Duration: ---

Cooldown: ---

~~~

Inspiration and murderous intent peaked in the head of the Hybrid Luman as the active effects of [Beyond the Hype] showed!

For less than half of a millisecond, Skullius' eyes flashed with a dazed look.

He wondered why he was feeling so happy despite the dangerous situation.

So expectant.

'The more I kill... the more I feel everything unravelling. Everything becomes complex, yet to simple. If I just cleave through enemies... everything will make sense...' he thought.

Brutality.

Was this the WILL OF BRUTALITY at work?

Skullius' mind reeled back into reality.

Into the centre of impending doom.

A jab was half an inch away from his face with a pulse to it that promised to obliterate his torso despite whatever defences he could conjure in that time frame.

A ferocious blue flame was slowly inching its way towards him, no doubt packed with enough power to burn him into a crisp.

Twenty-nine more Masters were rushing just a few meters behind the two that pincerred Skullius.

It was perilous but Skullius could sense it all with excruciating detail.

Being able to experience everything fifteen times faster than normal with every aspect of his being all senses, all sensory skills – had such an effect.

The wind, the mana, the fluctuation of every aspect of his opponents. All of it was nailed to his being at this moment as it all became vivid.

In truth, at base, most of Masters here eclipsed him in terms of raw speed and strength.

There was no way Skullius could weave through all the attacks and enemies coming his way right now.

Not with his body at least.

He could experience it all with all his available senses in a slow and vivid way but that was it.

'I would have loved to take the easy way out but...' Skullius thought as dozens of 'strings' of mana were expelled from his body at a speed that far eclipsed what all the Masters around him were capable of perceiving. His physical body couldn't move that fast, but his skill in controlling mana could.

[Greater Mana Crafter] could!

These strings of white mana connected to the abdomens of dozens of Advancement Stage experts among the bandits, the targets of Skullius' master plan from the start.

Master Stage Experts could probably resist this as their Perfect Aura countered most mana attacks and even some Aura attacks.

But these guys...

They could not.

Skullius thought a single word that brought about a stupidly unexpected result.

'Break.'

...!

And it happened.

The mana cores of 127 bandits immediately exploded!

With this, came the familiar force of death Skullius knew and he exploited it fully.

Yes, Skullius couldn't remotely affect the cores of individuals who were aware of their cores and could control them as they willed. But if he touched their cores with his own will, unless they had purple cores or an extreme understanding of mana, they were doomed.

The mana from 127 individuals – all with blue cores of varying brightness – was sucked through these 'strings' he had created and fed directly into Skullius who immediately used half of it.

A towering golden light flashed into existence from Skullius' body in real time.

With it came something so ridiculous and mind boggling... but no one but him understood it.

Chapter 529: Vile Seeker of Redemption

....

"B-Black... Black... did you see what happened?!" Brown asked with sweat dripping from his brow.

"..." Black remained silent.

His body was now fully healed but it anxiously stiffened. He didn't even have to give his brother a reply. His answer was obvious.

Yes, he and Brown had seen Skullius' mad killing spree, grimacing at this man's unnatural desire and style for killing even by their standards. Brown was gripping the grey shaped cube in his hand tightly as he had been about to attack when the Master Stage bandits swarmed the Hybrid Luman.

This was the chance he had been waiting for!

However...

On the opposite side of the fight, near the wall, Cast, Oliviana and Bull wore pale faces.

All of them felt the saliva in their mouths vanish.

In the heat of the massacre that was going on before them, there was suddenly a golden white flash of light that they all couldn't tell if it was true or not because of how quickly it had appeared and disappeared.

Regardless of what it was, everything changed after its passing.

Over a hundred and fifty of the bandits had suddenly collapsed to the ground. Dead.

Unlike the ones Skullius had murdered before, these ones... they couldn't tell what the hell happened!

Yet, this mystery paled in comparison to what the trio was focusing their eyes on right now.

16 Master Stage experts stood around the man responsible for this chaos.

They all had hollow looks in their eyes.

Those that had weapons had dropped them.

Those that had aggressive expressions had retracted them, so had those that were in the process of conjuring the effects of their techniques to kill this enemy.

They all stood still as a thin haze of golden white wrapped around their bodies individually, a distinctive mark shaped like half a skull plastered on their foreheads.

"This is my current limit it seems. Even with all that mana I used. That's hilarious," Skullius chuckled with the shake of his head.

He was completely unharmed from the attacks that had been raining from him as they had been dispersed, but he had to admit, if it had been a day ago, he definitely would have suffered some heavy damage before catching the eventual win.

But today, he not only avoided that.

He also won without anyone realising how.

He looked around, noting the faces of these men and women that surrounded him.

He couldn't make them do anything, yet.

But this peculiar effect didn't last forever. In fact, Skullius expected it to last for six minutes at most.

That's why...

"Might as well put this to good use."

Skullius pulled out the Simmering Cloud, the Legendary grade object he had just received as a reward for competing one of his Association missions.

He popped off the cork on the glass bottle packed with liquid and watched as it slipped out as a blue vapour that covered a vast range, pouring over the bodies of his enemies like a mist.

The 29 Master Stage experts collapsed to the ground one after the other following this, their faces still not showing any reaction.

The effects of this item worked like a charm.

A drop of 80% in mental clarity, 85% in soul clarity, 65% to all stats and 60% to precision!

With these experts having withdrawn their Auras and additional defences, the Simmering Cloud made short work of them even while they were absent of mind!

Skullius' gaze then turned to the last two enemies beyond the range of the abstruse ability he had used just now.

"Brown! Let's get out of here!" Black yelled as he saw that they were now the object of attention of this ridiculous individual before them.

Brown concurred.

If he had decided to attack just now, his fate would probably be sealed along with the twenty nine others!

Brown immediately attempted to activate the tool in his hand but he immediately felt a blade digging at his neck along with a shadow that blocked his front view!

'He's fast!' Brown thought in a panic.

Fortunately, a layer of green Aura was protectively shielding him!

Because certain conditions had to be met before he could use the tool in his hands, he couldn't use it while engaging with Skullius who had suddenly appeared before him wielding a goosebump-inducing green blade!

Half the image of Brown's mantis Incarnation quickly appeared above him, two of its claws glowing with tenacious light as they hacked down at Skullius!

As he did this, Brown passed the grey tool over to Black so that he could operate it, taking the two away from the danger!

Brown's attack was faster than the ones Skullius had experienced from the other Masters. It was a given.

However, before this attack could land and before the tool Brown had cast could reach Black's hand...

Mana slithered its way from Skullius' finger and activated his spatial storage ring, retrieving the All Eater scroll which appeared before Skullius!

...!

Brown was confused about what this was.

That was until he saw the claws of his Incarnation sink into this scroll in their entirety and in the next short breath...

Green coloured Aura was expelled from the scroll without delay, its edge slicing towards Brown!

The bandit was shocked!

This was his own attack used against him!

How?!

This was dangerous!

As a reasoned fighter, he hid his shock behind action, as with his Aura split between him and his Incarnation, he didn't know if he could tank his own attack fully, thus he opted to dodge!

Sadly, the moment his muscles twitched to move, his adversary was already aware of it.

Skullius smirked.

[Greater Mana Crafter] pulled on the mana in the air and made it all barrel down on Brown and his surroundings, resisting his movement!

That momentary lapse in his ability to move was what caused... two flashes of green light to slash at his torso mercilessly!

"ARRGHHHH!"

Brown screamed as blood flooded from two gashes on his chest!

He staggered.

At the exact same time, the grey cube landed in Black's hand but he couldn't focus on it at this moment.

"Brother!" he called in anguish as Brown's screaming voice cracked, his body kneeling on the ground.

Without delay, Skullius shot his hand out, grabbed Brown's head and faced Black.

He said no words as the look on his face was enough to make Black boil with rage.

A cold, unfeeling smirk.

Tendrils of darkness stormed from Skullius' body and entered Brown's body through his eyes, nose, ears and mouth, [Basic Evil Sanction] being used to pull out the true darkness within Brown that the Hybrid Luman saw.

This image brought Black back to rational thought.

This...

What madness was this?!

What was this man doing to his brother?!

Immediately, he activated the tool, a spatial tremor roaming through the surroundings to reach Brown as well who was within Skullius' clutches.

In the blink of an eye, Black was gone, but...

As the darkness that had invaded Brown receded back into Skullius who had been paying attention to Black's movements, he came to a realisation.

Thud.

Brown's body fell down. Now a corpse.

"I see. That tool only works on the living or something close to that," Skullius said as he gazed towards the body in front of him. "Sorry you were left behind."

The Luman scoffed as he began walking back to the wall.

His thoughts spiralled as the darkness he had extracted from Brown told of a great deal of things. He had to partition everything so that it made sense as in terms of information, he had gained quite a bit of it. Moreso than he had even hoped.

'I was thinking about cutting this trip short with this. Surely this fits the description of sufficient volunteer work. But... finding the man behind all this should be interesting,' Skullius thought.

Over his plan before, additions and adjustments were made.

The man Brown and Black called boss.

He was quite interesting.

He was worthy of becoming the nucleus, no the central marionette, to a vast web that the Hybrid Luman planned to enact over a society separate from the Capital Service, the Guilds Association and the Families.

"Hehe," Skullius grinned as the effects of [Beyond the Hype] helped him forge multiple ideas and outlines over how to deal with this boss and his plans.

Before he knew it, he was already standing before the stunned and vigilant Cast and Bull who couldn't help but keep their Auras ablaze.

Oliviana was the only one who wore a sheepish smile as she recovered her senses but Cast beat her at breaking the ice with this terrifying man.

"Excuse me... sir. Who... are you?"

"Hmmm?" Skullius hummed. He was way ahead of this conversation as he naturally figured what would follow, so much so that he had forgotten he was in the now.

To the question though, he provided a very fitting answer.

"Oh I'm just a vile man seeking redemption."

Black stumbled into existence within the rocky and mildly vegetated area that he and his large band called a temporary base while they were in the Isise.

He grunted and punched the ground as hard as he could.

'Alan...' he thought with grief.

This was his brother's real name, never to be mentioned when they were in the presence of anyone outside their circle of blood.

The moment the cube failed to carry his brother's body along with him, he knew.

He knew that Brown was doomed.

A sob escaped from his being as he felt himself crumble. Never did he ever...

"You have never considered the possibility of living while your brother dies, have you?" a voice spoke from before Black who hung his head.

He refused to raise it, even while knowing who it was.

"I thought your alias was more symbolic of the darkness in you that no longer feels anything, but I was wrong. Carry yourself up, Black. Tell me what happened."

Chapter 530: Dictating The Way Forward

An awkward, heavy atmosphere was strangling everyone except for one person. No, actually two people.

Everyone else felt conflicted, nervous or flat out scared. It hadn't even been two minutes since everyone had settled down in this formal meeting room but it felt like an hour was approaching with silence being the only talkative existence in the room.

Bull, Cast, Anara, Oliviana and several other important members, some of which belonged to the Purity's auxiliary services were also in attendance.

All except for Oliviana couldn't take their eyes off this white eyed man who had suddenly appeared out of nowhere to save the city.

Following the brief introduction outside the walls, Skullius had been lead into Evic. The remaining Knights and Priests handled escorting the civilians back into the city while the rest took care of collecting the bodies of their own and burning those of the enemies – excluding the ones that were dazed from Skullius' unknown means.

Everything else was shut out by this executive committee as they gave priority to Skullius.

The Contract Knights were used to losses so they didn't give priority to mourning their dead at all while the Purity would deal with their dead after this meeting with... pious means.

"Are we going to go for another two minutes of this?" Skullius broke the silence.

Bull folded his arms and breathed out a sigh.

"Forgive us. That was a really... tense situation we had found ourselves in. Besides from the promised reinforcements whom we knew probably couldn't arrive in time, we were sure there was no help coming."

In other words, everyone was still in shock.

Signs of agreement registered from the people in the room to Bull's words in various ways.

Not only was their stand against the bandits unimaginably short, the eradication of their enemies was even more so, which was what made them all incredibly nervous.

Someone who was capable of dealing with an army of uncouth, morally unstable and organised criminals like this, with Masters among them to boot... was in their midst.

Bull and Cast had slightly different outlooks to the rest however because of what Skullius had said a few minutes ago.

"Allow me to ask once again, sir...."

"Festos. You can call me Festos."

"Yes, sir Festos. Who are you? Really."

Skullius sank into his seat and supported his chin with his hand. The look in his white eyes caused another burst of anxiety to shake the settling atmosphere in the room. Slight emotion was conveyed through them but no one could tell which.

"I was sent by a Grand Priest from Genhuis City. In order to get a curse placed upon me removed, he told me to come and help however I can here. Only then can I get my hands on something that can help me. Preferably a fast acting artefact," Skullius explained.

The Priests within the room marvelled.

Their fanatical brains immediately began to assume that the Deities had orchestrated an elaborate thread of events that saved the city and the people through this man.

How beautiful it was, the work of three Deities!

They were the only ones who thought this in the room, however. No one else did.

In fact, Anara's face hardened a bit. Even his usual prideful and serious visage had softened in the face of such a powerful ally but now, he couldn't help but wonder.

"Sir... Festos. Please forgive my impudence but are you..."

"I assume the Grand Priest contacted you about me. It's probably what you think. The one who once aided the Evenfall cultists... that's me," Skullius cut off Anara.

The Paladin Champion's face became harder, as did the faces of everyone here except Oliviana who wore a 'That's Bullshit!' disbelieving face. There was no way that was true. Skullius had helped in taking down Evenfall bastards in the past. He wasn't a saint or anything but she figured that if he fought against that evil bunch there was no way he would ally with them.

Above that, the man hadn't gotten any time or luxury for such side quests.

Sadly, not everyone saw it that way.

Even the Priests were having different opinions about Skullius now, contrasting what they thought before.

Anara shifted in his seat before gazing intently at Skullius. He then spoke respectfully.

"I'm sorry, sir Festos but I cannot believe that story. It's probably none of my business to pry but there is no way someone like you would be kidnapping innocent people for the Evenfall. With your strength, you would have been recruited in their ranks instead."

Bull and Cast seemed to get the same idea from Anara's words.

"I agree but just as Anara said, it is not our place to pry. I'd say you have helped us plenty already," Bull said with hard nod.

Cast also nodded, agreeing with the sentiment.

There was no doubt that Skullius wasn't a valiant Knight with great morality, evidenced by the way he killed the first batch of enemies. If some of the Priests actually had the means to see how some of the bandits had died, they would have been calling him an Incarnation of Boron instead, but this wasn't something Cast and Bull cared for.

The Carpet Keep harboured mad men with records of malice that outclassed Skullius'. His feats didn't cloud their judgement.

They were the only ones who accepted this, sadly. The rest were eyeing Skullius in fear or with judgement. Particularly some of the Purity Knights and Priests in the room.

However, their opinions didn't matter when Bull and Anara were present.

WHOOOSH!

A murderous air suddenly engulfed the entire room, causing everyone's faces to turn pale!

The light within seemed to dim and the image of Skullius seemed to grow larger than their own, a claustrophobic feeling compressing their forms continuously!

The will to resist instantly dissipated from the combatants' eyes and faces!

For the non-combatants, it was worse as some of them collapsed from their seats and grew silent.

"You're all getting the wrong idea. Choice. That's all it is. I am what I say I am. I saved no one. I don't care for what happens to this city after I leave.

I told you the mission I have and that's all there is to it," Skullius said in a voice that was neither as loud as a call or as low as a whisper.

"I'll kill the rest of the bandits. I know where they are and how many they are. It should be easy enough. That should be enough for you to put in a good word for me with the Priest, right?"

Skullius' question was directed at Anara who was frozen in fright. Despite feeling like his life was flashing before his eyes, he nodded quickly as not doing so felt like it would net him a quick death.

"Good. We set off as soon as you have everything within the city in order. I'll also be taking those remaining bandits with me when I leave. I hope none of you object."

Naturally, there was no objection.

Rising tension but no objection.

Skullius nodded and rose, leaving the room.

The atmosphere returned to normal in the room and the first person to gain a semblance of sanity was Oliviana who understood what Skullius had just done.

She followed after him and found him slowly walking through the streets where crowds were being escorted, the injured and dead being carried to different locations.

"So this is where you were?" Skullius said as Oliviana approached.

"You didn't expect a proper goodbye, did you?" the short woman said with an exasperated look.

"Not quite. I expected you to have communicated with Silrat though."

"Our deal ended when I arrived in Genhuis City. Me being housed by the Brynes and all was just an additional benefit."

"Oh," Skullius voiced. "I thought you would join the Association. It fits you."

"I thought so too. But it felt a bit... how should I say it? Too free? Maybe I missed extensive protocol, after all. But, Karrun told me about how relieving it is to work as a Contract Knight.

Turns out that was exactly what I needed."

"Karrun told you that?"

"Yes. He used to be a Contract Knight in the Carpet Keep. He even gave me a recommendation that helped me kick things off."

Skullius had not expected this. It made sense when he imagined everything he knew about the short woman. Oliviana had met Karrun possibly four days before him. There was plenty of time for them to get acquainted and sort out this whole thing.

What the Hybrid Luman wondered was why she had left seemingly a day or so after he arrived. Instead of letting the thought rage in his mind, Skullius asked Oliviana about it.

"I guess I wanted to see to it that the entirety of my old life was left behind. You were my last student. I had to see you before I left. Not that we have much of a relationship but... sentiment works in mysterious ways," Oliviana said with a self mocking laugh. "The gall on me to call you a student is astonishing isn't it?"

I don't even want to know how you're so monstrous now."

She said this but nomatter how scary Skullius was, she never felt frightened of him.

Skullius gave a short laugh. He too felt a bit sentimental.

It was all thanks to Oliviana that he had grown rapidly over the seven days when he was imprisoned back in Inhone City. The skills he acquired and levelled up rapidly... it was all because she, the only one who could help him at the time, chose to help him.

In that short time frame, Skullius had discovered how powerful Oliviana really was and what a waste of talent it had been for her to remain in the College of Battle Arts.

"You're enjoying being a Contract Knight?" Skullius asked.

"More than I imagined. I'm valued. Maybe that's why," Oliviana answered before turning to Skullius and finding a strange look on his face.

There were... hints of sorrow.

In the entire time she had known Skullius, she hadn't seen him look like this.

Instead of asking about it though, she shifted the conversation.

"I know you were trying to avoid being seen in a favourable light in there because of the...uh curse, but you best keep it at that. You might end up creating the opposite result to what you want if you go any further," she advised.

"I know. I might have gone a bit too far already which is why I intend to correct that. To balance it out with some more good, I suppose. Where are the injured being taken?" Skullius said.

At first Oliviana didn't follow but when she dug into everything she knew about Skullius, she realised what he wanted to do.