

## Undead 581

Chapter 581: Even

A minute and a half ago...

Setkh wheezed as he dropped to his knees.

The noose around his neck loosened a bit but the comfort it brought was little.

Karrun felt the same.

They were now outside the mansion and the man responsible for the noose around their necks gave them both a fearsome, deathly gaze.

"Where is it?" he asked apathetically. "Even all that wasn't enough for you tell me?"

Setkh sweated. He didn't offer a response. He was torn still.

Up until now, he had only used half measures because naturally, he was undecided on how to act. Was he to completely betray his family?

The man with the noose in his hand, a peculiar Incarnation, crouched and leaned in close to the kneeling down Setkh.

"You know, it's a very easy thing for me to kill every single one of your Family members. Wherever they are. You made it comically easy by willingly summoning us. After scurrying around and delaying on delivery because you thought that we wouldn't break the Severed Code... and to that you were right... you must have seen yourself as a free man with all the time in the world..."

The noose around Setkh grew tighter and his face turned beet red.

"Let me remind you. What you have is only a trinket leader is amused with. If you refuse to cooperate, I can just as easily take you back to that lovely cave where you'll hurt so bad your only pleasure will be smacking off to the memory of your sister just to stay sane again."

...!

Setkh shook, his eyes showing terror.

"And you know what the best part will be? You will have the perfect view of her disembodied, disembowelled corpse as inspiration for all your fantasies."

Karrun grimaced.

Even he didn't know about these specifics. He finally got the idea of what the hell was happening with Setkh. He had assumed the whole flirting with Stylla bit was just a way to annoy her, keep her off his trail.

Apparently not.

"Fine! I'll show you!" Setkh exclaimed with a huff, prompting the man with the noose, Seddrik, to loosen its hold over his neck.

"I'll show you! Please leave Stylla alone!"

Seddrik scoffed as he stood.

"Sibling love, they call it. Who knew some people break to such a sickening degree?" he voiced while dragging the two.

\*\*\*

Present time.

Stylla, Ed and the rest spawned within the mansion, right where they had entered from. Unlike with an entrance, an exit could be made from anywhere, as long as the individual attempting to create it was of Bryne blood (barring Setkh).

"Come on! Let's hurry!" Stylla urged as she dashed through the hall as fast as she could, the others following behind her.

It was as she had surmised after reading that note. Though the information had been limited, it had been enough.

'Your enemy is in plain sight. A prodigal son hiding his fangs well and baring them against your Family, starting with its head has you all fooled.'

This was what the note said.

At first Stylla hadn't wanted to believe it but..

First, she searched for a motive.

There didn't seem to be any at first sight but under close scrutiny...

Setkh's rivalry with her concerning matters pertaining to the Family after father got cursed...

This could be excused.

But... how about wealth?

Setkh had left the Family back then because he wanted to make something of himself. He wanted to establish his own wealth and familial structure. Maybe a powerful organisation on the side.

However, for a Family like the Bryne Family, their wealth when compared to the truly wealthy, were insignificant, which meant Setkh's initial riches weren't enough to get him where he wanted.

And on the subject of wealth, if there was anything extremely valuable in the Family, something with enough value to turn a number of rich heads, it had to be the source of the Bryne Family's powers.

That smooth edged crystal!

The secrets of another Family's techniques were extremely valuable because they couldn't be legally taken away even if said Family lost in a proper conflict of resources.

That aside, the very nature of this crystal was sublime and its capabilities, the ability to fuse conflicting elements and concepts, much like how Stylla did when she produced steam, was incredible.

The powers inherited from this crystal could be applied on a higher level, as Stylla's father did but he was the last person to be able to properly bring out much of the potential hidden within the crystal through the technique crafted within the Bryne Family.

For that, among other reasons, Stylla's father was very... adamant about the crystal's safety because he understood its value.

This was why Setkh had gotten their father cursed, according to Stylla.

Why Setkh hadn't stolen the crystal was anyone's guess but she believed it was emotional conflict.

Hmph!

Like she gave a damn about the moral struggle in Setkh's mind between harming family and getting wealthy.

This was obviously how his lustful mind worked, right?

Stylla didn't know exactly where these three men who just appeared came in but that didn't change her thoughts.

This had to be the extent of the motive!

The group rushed through the halls until they reached the open space of a foyer where...

...!

Arisa was the first to scream in horror as she saw... she saw...

All her maids were hanged from the ceiling, luminous yellow nooses wrapped around their necks so tight that the flesh had gotten swollen and red!

Stylla grimaced in pain but she gritted her teeth and kept her focus on the mission at hand. This wasn't the time for grieving.

"Ed and I will head for the storage! That bastard must be leading the enemy to the our vault! Half of you will follow us and the rest will find as many of the staff as you can and get them to safety!" she ordered before hurrying with her most trusted guard.

Ed could see Stylla's pain as they bolted past the doors to the mansion and it hurt him to see her buried it only to uncover it later.

Sadly, all he could do now was make sure the traitor was caught.

For her sake.

\*\*\*

The salamander riding on its master's sceptre suddenly straightened its back and sucked in a deep breath, its neck ballooning up while its scaled skin glowed with a soft blue hue!

Its large eyes traced the ongoing fight that rocked this protected space every millisecond, shockwave after shockwave blasting in every direction as two super fast combatants dished out atrocious blows against each other!

"COME ON! FIGHT HARDER! DON'T YOU FUCKING HOLD BACK!"

The bellow of the beefcake battling against Skullius exploded across the wide space along with consecutively, resounding hums!

The Hybrid Luman flew, slamming against everything in his path but the moment he touched the umpteenth hard surface, his body ricocheted unnaturally as he ejected himself at blinding speed back to his opponent and gave him a thunderous punch to the jaw!

"HAHAHAHA! THAT DOESN'T EVEN TICKLE ANYMORE!"

"Tsk!" Skullius grumbled.

He launched several jabs but the monster he was fighting against swiped them away expertly, flexing his knowledge of close combat techniques!

He then whipped his right foot through Skullius' spaced legs and tackled him backwards, causing the Hybrid Luman to lose balance!

The momentary loss of control cost Skullius a lot.

The muscular tank dropped along with him while pushing his entire weight down to pin Skullius to the stairway. Then, in a brutal fashion, he hooked Skullius' thigh and mercilessly ripped it off while delivering an elbow into the Hybrid Luman's face!

...!

This man was having the time of his life, mutilating this opponent who could seemingly heal indefinitely!

For a ravenous Form User like this bulky man, this was a beautiful daydream!

Skullius forcefully drew his body away after expelling his mana to the surroundings, attracting himself to the nearest surface where he stuck to firmly.

He simultaneously healed himself while sending a minute proportion of his focus to the Mage who had yet to do anything but watch the exchange.

'That last feat.. Transmuting [Evil Darkness] shouldn't be normal, right? I don't have a reference but that shouldn't be something a normal Mage can do.' Skullius thought with the processing power and time afforded by [Beyond the Hype].

He was very wary of this Mage.

This was why he hadn't used Demion's Dance.

If this Mage was keen enough to identify how dangerous the weapon was, he might do something about it. Like teleporting it away as he had done with Skullius' [Bead of Malevolence].

For now, he was looking for an opening to use it to kill this mound of battle fetish in one slash!

'Tsk. If only I had enough mana to use the Precept. I'll have to make it a habit to stock up on mana every few days. In any case... this guy must be—'

A flash of blue light along with a terrible heat blared, instantly overwhelming every inch of this battleground.

'You are a curious little man,' the Mage thought.

The salamander on his sceptre opening its little mouth open to reveal the stream of blue, coiling flames gathered in its inflated neck.

'For a creature of this calibre to be born from that queer darkness of yours... I think I'll need a sample of you for my studies. Better yet, if you keep using that unreasonable healing factor of yours, I might take you in whole.'

...!

Skullius hadn't even fully processed what he was currently looking at when a condensed laser of unbelievably hot, glaring blue flame that melted half of the criss-crossing stairways in this space without even licking them burnt his body to a crisp!

The speed!

The power!

Skullius hadn't managed to get out of the way in time!

He only managed to move away before he could be completely disintegrated and started to heal himself while feeding the VergeRider armour he was wearing with Null Life Essence so as to not remain naked!

Everything melted as the salamander's laser-like breath zipped towards Skullius again while his bulky opponent adorned in his Perfect Aura yet to form a Genuine Incarnation, bounced over every surface while building momentum!

He then dashed at the Hybrid Luman at a speed that exceeded Skullius' max gravitation pull by at least three times!

This calibre of combatants...

This calibre of Masters...

It was incredible!

To think he was fighting two of these monsters...!

Skullius couldn't help but smile even if he didn't have a solution for it!

He ate a turbulent punch that sent him tumbling through the burnt, hissing air!

Shortly after, a clean blue flame melted half his spinning body but Skullius still wore a smile as he waited for the perfect moment.

With every attack, he guarded his ring with mana and Null Life Essence, a combination which wasn't enough to spare his body because of his dismal level of control.



'Now!'

The moment he wanted came!

"ARE YOU GOING TO ACCEPT A DEATH LIKE THIS, PEST?! AFTER BRAVELY STAYING BEHIND TO FIGHT AGAINST US?!" the bulky man screamed at Skullius with a mad face.

He flashed toward Skullius, followed by the ringing blue flame from the salamander!

It was the time.

This brute had to die quickly!

Demion's Dance appeared in Skullius' hand and in the next second, he funnelled all his might to attack when...

...!

A dreadful sensation caused him to pause and look around him confusedly!

It was the presence of one powerful... no. It was the presence of hundreds of powerful creatures that suddenly spawned around him, making him sweat as he thought the worst!

This was the same feeling from before, right after he met up with Replicus on the journey here!

'What the hell is this?! Another enemy?! Was I being tailed the whole time?' Skullius' mind raced.

WHAM!

"DON'T YOU DARE IGNORE ME!"

Skullius was smashed into once again, his body becoming unsightly mangled!

'What the flesh is this?! I can't focus if I have a series of enemies after me dammit!' he thought as he kept the grip on Demion's Dance even while spinning.

Skullius' zealous enemy roared as he approached his position rapidly again and the thought of being sandwiched by a slew of enemies which he expected... never happened.

Instead...

A bright golden light brilliantly lorded over the fumes and harsh blue flame that melted everything around.

It was beautiful, with arcs of white and yellow that sought to bring out the fullest in its beauty.

This display was so marvellous that Skullius' opponents halted their attacks and cautiously analysed this light.

What was this?

A special attack?

An ally?

First, a freakishly long and dazzlingly beautiful cape showed, draping behind the pillar of blinding light that slowly receded to show a tall, humanoid figure.

Their outline could hardly be seen but it made the Mage teleport close to his partner.

What was this development?

It was the two's turn to be surprised.

Skullius wasn't though.

The finally realised what the flesh was happening and to be frank, he was more annoyed than delighted.

"You little bastard...!"

His angry call was interrupted purposefully by a heroic declaration laced with seeds of loyalty.

"Be at ease, my dear Master. Your prodigy has returned to fight for you... finally.

Chapter 582: Casual Justice, Stolen Spotlight

The prodigy had returned.

Red Rage had returned.

Finally!

An unnatural air blew from his lengthy cape and onto Skullius' face, its moving particles somehow whispering the word 'Justice' half-imperceptibly.

This glorious cape, with its unwrinkled mass, looked like a careful placement of billions of tiny golden grains into a silky sheet, the entirety attached to the now visible pristine white armour of this...hero.

Groves with a golden hue inlaid within them could be spotted on several select points across this blameless white armour in circles as well as swirls, the pauldrons, couters and poleyns of this adornment made into bulged images of golden six different golden beasts.

The helm worn by the heroic Apostle had a complex appearance, with its visor partially hiding the golden light brimming from the face of creature it hid.

As if the magnificence of the armour wasn't enough, a thick stroke of radiant yellow outlined Red Rage, within it dancing illusory shapes that thrummed audibly, promising a sturdy level of offense and defence.

Justice...

"I'm glad you decided to join, Red Rage," Skullius said with a visible scowl and the shake of his head.

Red Rage drew closed to his master while floating elegantly.

"Please identify me as Prisma Avaris when we are in the presence of malicious company, Master Skullius. Thank you," the Apostle whispered an update while cupping his armoured hand over his closed helm.

...

Skullius couldn't believe it.

This bastard had gotten even worse, hadn't he?

Power-wise though...

The first thing he noticed was a super bright blue core within the Apostle's body, powering his image superbly.

'I can't even pretend to be surprised anymore,' Skullius thought.

The [Blessing of Serenity] continued to do its wonders.

As for his Tier...

The Hybrid Luman sighed exasperatedly even more dumbfounded.

"Should I even ask...?"

"Perhaps now isn't the best time, Master," Red Rage replied, his serene light and air baptising the atmosphere with graceful justice.

"Ha! An ally? Good! One of you was getting boring for my taste!" the burly Form User said as he cracked his knuckles, the Perfect Aura around him brimming as he grew excited.

"Don't be foolish," the Mage who had teleported to his side just now said with narrowed eyes, his gaze upon Red Rage drowning in suspicion. "You can't tell he has no presence about him?"

"What? So? Presence. No presence. What difference does it make?" the beefcake chortled as he advanced on the remains of broken stairways not boiling within themselves.

He wasn't stupid, however.

His skin rippled a bit, a detail Skullius didn't miss. Nor Red Rage for that matter.

His words were deceiving.

He was wary of the enemy but didn't show it.

For insurance, the Form User finally decided to use his technique offensively.

"Let's see what YOU can do," he said before making a strange gesture with his hands, something Skullius assumed was a combat form too hard to describe or deconstruct.

"Dragon Breast Ram!" the bulky opponent hissed as his body tensed, his muscles growing muscles and his body being temporarily decked in thickets of scale-like skin!

A white shockwave blasted from his body as he moved, the air crackling like thunder as it was torn by the vicious man breaking the sound barrier!

In the Hybrid Luman's senses, the shape of the Form User vanished but in the sight of those who could see, the man appeared in front of his Red Rage after teasing reality, his body leaning while with a grin, he hurled a malevolent hook at the floated Apostle!

His large fist and its velocity were so fast that Red Rage couldn't see them and with the wind unable to catch up, the Apostle had no way of knowing that he was done for!

...!

Well... he would have been.

The burly Form User was elated as his fist drew inches closer to Red Rage's armour.

Then...

Its momentum slowed.

Slow.

Slower.

Halt.

Pat.

The fist connected with the glowing white chestplate upon the floating Red Rage but it had naught but the force of an fly.

...!

Justice...

The Apostle gazed upon the remnants of an attack landing on his chest, then at the gobsmacked bulk before him, utterly shocked at what he was experiencing.

"What...what happened? I was..." the man began with a panic stricken face only to feel a gauntlet fall on his shoulder lightly. Then a voice spoke to him with the universal authority of justice.

"Attempted murder? Vile. I live (sort of) to deal with walking filth like you," Red Rage said before cooking his fist back a bit.

"Look away, Master. It might get messy."

"Huh?"

"What?"

Both Skullius and the Form User had similar reactions to these words.

The burly brawler drew away while gathering his Aura... but it was too late.

The pristine armoured arm of Red Rage fettered by the yellow light turned into a nigh imperceptible beam of light that hurtled towards the beefcake's chest!

...!!!

The man who thought he had defended enough...

Skullius who looked on with realisation...

The Mage who analysed the new entrant...

All three felt and saw things differently but the conclusion was the same!

A punch so fast it looked like light, its impact so loud it cracked the rune powered walls, the resulting radiance dying everything white...

This was the power behind a sequence of justice delivery, starting with the Special skill called...

[That One Punch]!

The bulky form user spat blood as his chest was caved in by the attack that sent him soaring like a shooting star high up!

His Incarnation didn't help at all!

His technique didn't help!

His raw muscles didn't help!

Something raw!

Something so sharp and invasive that he couldn't evade or block had knocked into him, bypassing his defences!

That... wasn't a punch!

The innards of Skullius' ears exploded, as did those of the Mage but he quickly healed himself as he traced his partner who soared madly!

The Hybrid Luman didn't tear his attention from what was going on.

In his mind, all he could think of was...

"That was Null Life Essence...!"

But the dishing of justice was far from over.

The sequence was not yet done!

After trying to commit murder, one couldn't just eat a single fist!

The figure of Red Rage coming from an attack twisted, warping in a circular manner as it vanished into thin air!



It appeared right where the spinning burly Form User was about to pass, a second dish of penalty of about to ensue.

He was yet again ready.

Red Rage's fist turned into a golden beam that struck the back of his enemy's head with the follow-up skill in the sequence...

[That Other Punch]!

With this attack, the walls to the space rippled while an even brighter light bathed everything, the burly man being sent shuttling through the air once more while roaring in pain!

"A..." the groans he made lasted for only a minute granule of time.

He fell into the pool of molten rock, his body disappearing within it!

Red Rage flashed towards Skullius while folding his arms.

"Manageable," he said while nodding.

Skullius turned to his Apostle, both amazed and confused.

"He's not dead. You know that right? Those were some... powerful hits but against a Master..." the Luman pointed out.

"Oh, Master. I'm quite aware. While I can kill him, I don't intend to do that myself. I'm a father now," Red Rage said with pride.

"Uh? What?" Skullius said, piles of not-understanding piling over his head.

The pool molten rock bubbled and the body of the bulky man floated up.

He was gnashing his teeth, the gruesome wounds on his chest – bones sticking from it – as well as the blood pooling in his hair from the back of his head paining him greatly.

His skin was skin discoloured.

His body was dragged over to where the Mage stood, his sceptre coordinating where it would go.

"Impressive. I am astounded by this show of strength. I have never seen power exercised like this before," the Mage said with intrigue, setting his partners body down.

A potion floated from him and went into the hand of the muscular Form User who eagerly drank it up, his wounds visibly healing rapidly.

The salamander atop the Mage's sceptre cooed.

"I don't need the compliments of a fool," Red Rage said. "A soon to be dead fool."

The Mage chuckled.

"You seem pretty confident. Are you going to fight him and remain snarky too?" Skullius asked while finishing the task of mending his body.

"No, Master. I'm sure you'd want to handle the Mage yourself. I deign to see how my oldest son will fare against the strong muscle brained adversary," Red Rage explained.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Skullius asked with a frown.

What was this father business?!

Red Rage emitted a cough before pulling on his cape.

The inside of it, as smooth as it was, suddenly changed colour from the pristine gold to a shade of sky blue. Strangely, it then started to swirl and flow... like a liquid. Like water.

Wait!

It was water!

...!

"Come out, Killin Max," Red Rage called.

Blub, blub!

From within this watery surface of the cape, a dark shape appeared, tearing through the somehow contained water to reveal a large hand first, then a full body in the world.

It was tall.

It was... thick.

It was black.

As soon as it appeared, it took in a long, deep breath.

SUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!

The air was pulled on with a heavy suction.

So was the air and the bits of mana now swimming in the space from the usage of techniques!

It was all drawn in!

A balefully dreadful presence then softly sifted out of this creature and its long tentacles, its entirety almost seeming to be made of mana just because the sheer amount of it that it possessed was utterly ridiculous and it wasn't even coming from the mana core!

"I'll be damned.... Red Rage you sockethole..." Skullius said while looking dumbfoundedly at this creature.

The Mage frowned for the umpteenth time.

'What in the world...? A Tier 9 beast? Or is it 10?' the robed man thought, his body stance changing.

The tide had shifted suddenly.

Who was this man who could casually call forth a beast of this Tier?!

Chapter 583: Challenges

Such a high tier beast...

Skullius couldn't fathom how, if his sequence of thought was correct, Red Rage had groomed those eggs he was so desperate to protect, into this within a matter of what? Weeks?!

And while looking at this creature before him...

Its dark skin that was somewhere between leathery and slimy, its thick bulky muscles constantly wriggling under the wet skin as well as the four thick humanoid limbs it had...

The dark sclera of its eyes and the yellow irises complemented by the tentacles that draped beneath them to reach its chest, acting like a beard...

This appearance... it was like the Galemonger's, the monster that invaded Inhone City that time with a horde of its Cluster beasts!

This creature Red Rage had seemed to evolve into something similar to the Galemonger Maelstrom and its Tier...

"Tier 9..." Skullius said after a quick check with his guidance field, his mind kind of understanding the how of it all now. A bit.

Red Rage turned to Skullius with a look of pride visible even under the veil of his helmet.

"Magnificent isn't he, Master? Like me, he is capable of super fast growth. He's nearing Tier 10 already, several tiers above his brothers and sisters," the Apostle said as he patted the large creature's shoulder.

"I see. That outrageous amount of mana though?"

"It's his natural ability. He can draw on mana from all sources as long as they aren't secured and stores it either for his evolution or for usage outside of his mana core."

Really?

That was broken.

It was natural for Skullius to think this way.

He moved closer to the creature.

His enemies seemed to be taking the time to analyse what was going on – at least the Mage was – as well and in the process waiting for the complete recovery of the bulky Form User.

"Hmm. That's very intriguing. His presence is overwhelming," Skullius commented before asking the obvious question. "Is he capable of sharing the mana he stores?"

Red Rage looked amused.

"Killin Max?" he said, to which the creature he had called turned to Skullius and extended its hand, a glow of mana brimming from its palm.

"Perfect," Skullius said with a grin.

On the other side of this interaction, the bulky Form User recovered and glared at Red Rage with a formidably hostile expression.

"Relax. Don't take losses like that too seriously when you are the one who charged in first," the Mage instructed while watching the salamander on his sceptre dissipate into darkness.

Transmutation only lasted for as long as the mana infused into the original appearance lasted. The amount of action the transmuted item performed also dictated its life span.

"NGGHRRR! I'll kill them all!" the muscular, half naked man growled as his Perfect Aura surged, finally forming a Genuine Incarnation.

The robed Mage sighed.

"If you are going to go crazy, be sure not to disrupt my analyses. We are simply waiting on Seddrik and that's it. Get it?" the Mage spoke, knowing fully he wouldn't receive an answer.

Still, he knew he wasn't going to escape having to fight. Regardless of how much regard he held for himself as a Grandmaster Mage, none of his enemies knew what he was capable of.

Besides, he had remained here while Seddrik went to retrieve the objective solely because he didn't enjoy having to deal with tedious stuff like that.

Therefore, he might as well indulge seeing as his opponents were preparing something fascinating.

Skullius was left grinning at the massive amount of mana gathered in the palm of his hand.

A large ball of compressed mana floated over his hand, the quantity of units of mana it bore being roughly twelve times the amount his core could hold, which was close to 350,000 units of mana from mainly blue cores!

"You're right, Red Rage. I do want that Mage for myself," Skullius said with a smile, his [Greater Mana Crafter] helping him lift the ball of mana up. "I'd forgotten that when you're not being a pain in the pelvis, you're actually helpful."

"I'm flattered, Master," Red Rage said before pointing at the mad Form User. "Killin. That's your target. Make sure you kill him quickly. Otherwise I'll strip you of your name."

The creature tensed but it seemed hyped.

SUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!

Large pores opened all over his body and sucked in large volumes of air!

Soon, the beast inflated as compartments under its skin designated for storing air compressed and held onto it. Afterwards, the pores on its skin closed shut!

The tentacled monster grew to easily become twice its original size with rock hard muscles that contained vicious mana and air.

Its eyes tainted the bulky Form User who was glaring its master until he focused on it, his teeth showing as his murderous intent to the beast.

"You want to fight me that badly?! Come on!" he yelled.

Red Rage flew back to watch while Skullius hoped over to stand at a closer distance to the Mage.

"So you'll be my opponent?" the robed man asked with a chuckle. "Are you sure that's wise? It wouldn't kill you to simply wait until what we want is in hand, you know? We wouldn't kill you without reason."

"It would kill me actually," Skullius said while twirling Demion's Dance in his hand.

He then used his teeth to hold the sword before locking his hands, a great surge of his mana swimming out to touch on the ball above him.

"Hmmm?" the Mage tilted his head curiously.

"I'd rather have the honour of carrying a Mage's head back to Genhuis City," the Hybrid Luman said as with excited eyes, he called upon [Just Light] in its most brilliant form and forged a massive construct that rose high behind him.

Its light was beautiful but different from Red Rage's earlier.

The large, cracked bones of light that made up the trunk of the Precept of Light, as well as the rows of different sized skulls with different numbers of sockets didn't represent something pure or innocent.

This light was all about obsessive control and carnage.

Red Rage was surprised this.

"This is new..." he said while folding his arms.

But of course.

This was his master after all.

He didn't believe for a second that his master had run out of tricks and shocking powers such as this!

His absence had led to him missing out.

[Beads of Malevolence] spawned in the thousands, their numbers limited to an exact figure of 40,000 this time. Soft glows from a mark, half a skull, could be seen over them and with this, Skullius had the ability to move every single one of the orbs without any need for complex thought or control as the Precept of Light, the Preeminent Attegoth, did it all for him!

"Fascinating!" the Mage said as he saw the orbs floating all around, covering up all possible ways for him to run to on foot.

"Let's do this!" Skullius said while grinning.

His figure bolted up with his special mana trait of weight making him extremely light!



His body turned into an elongated wisp of shadow as he dashed towards the Mage while using some of the [Beads of Malevolence] as stepping stones!

He had precisely 2000 orbs move at a staggering speed to attack along with him, building a harsh offensive against his opponent.

The movement of the orbs carrying mounds of weight emitted raging noises and as he saw them coming, the grey haired Mage smirked with a condescending look on his face!

When the first wave of orbs, arrived, he had already vanished, appearing at another spot devoid of many of the [Beads of Malevolence].

When the second wave came, he vanished again, then again and again!

Skullius had the orbs softly floating by move according to where he wanted to set his feet as he dashed. His senses were on full alert, letting him know where the Mage appeared and because of this, he didn't have to race all over the space like a fool.

The straightforwardly attacking orbs suddenly shifted their pattern, zigzagging over hundreds of meters in order to make randomly teleporting a no-no for his opponent.

"Hahaha," the Mage gave an amused laugh as he appeared in another spot, his sceptre extended to immediately generated a hazy blue barrier that knocked away the orbs.

The others shot at him in this new pattern and the grey haired man grinned as mana burst from him with a ravenous wave.

"Mass Transmutation," he called softly.

...!

The hundreds of orbs that had reached him while carrying their incredible speed suddenly lit up with a brilliant white hue of mana!

In the next moment...

"Shit!" Skullius exclaimed, but not in panic.

He actually wore an intrigued and excited face as he saw the absolute insanity before him!

Hundreds of small black creatures now floated around the Mage – spiders, rats, mice, centipedes, cats, puppies, worms, snakes and so many more – their eyes showing a peculiar subservience!

These creatures shot towards Skullius and his orbs under the fierce command of the Mage, some of them bulging as they breathed out gushing pools of magma, others fire, other winds while several snakes twitched before exploding into massively destructive bolts of lightning that struck in all directions mercilessly!

The cascade of attacks brimmed, chaining to form a storm of inexplicable cataclysm that barrelled towards Skullius in a breath!

This application...!

This was too profound!

This wasn't high level Magecraft at all!

It was simply the fusion of the most basic of Magecraft Patches that made an official Mage – Transmutation and Elements!

"Keep it up..." Skullius said as his focus reached a peak.

He sucked in a breath and dark red energy blazed from Demion's Dance. He then pumped his cheeks with air and swung downwards in an elegant arc, one so beautiful, so powerful that for the first, he felt like all the power and skill granted by the skill [Epic Memory] in his sword had reached a cap!

There was no more additional strength that the sword could give!

Thus...

[You have mastered the skill 'Parting Wave']

['Demion's Dance' recognises you as its sole wielder]

...!

This was good.

Too good.

But Skullius wasn't into that right now.

His slash, the [Parting Wave], was awe-some, in every meaning of the word.

The galloping destruction met a red slit, bordering on black, produced by the motion of the sword's tip and a lull occurred for the briefest of moments before...

VRRRRRMMMM!

The amalgamation of fires kissing winds and winds cuddling lightning parted, their split masses being cast aside violently as a tear through the air ran towards the Mage in a mad charge!

...!

The pressure created by the division gave Skullius a magnificent silhouette as he was stuck in stance.

A magnificence that translated to his hype and Red Rage's glee!

"Beautiful..." the grey haired man said with solemn eyes.

Yet...

His figure vanished and appeared a few meters behind Skullius, the remnants of spatial manipulation on his hand and... on the Hybrid Luman's shoulder.

Skullius' arm was gone and it took him a split moment to realise as he turned to his enemy who floated seamlessly.

"This is a rather dangerous weapon. Dare I say it's power seems familiar. A dreading sense of death from the blade... A menace to its wielder... It definitely is the sword behind the story of Demion and Escus..." the Mage said while looking at the weapon held tight by Skullius' severed arm. "How are you able to wield it without being corrupted by death itself?"

Skullius didn't respond.

He regrew his arm and stretched out his hand to which Demion's Dance shot towards him from his severed one and rested in his new grip once more.

A mark, half a skull, was on the green sword after all.

"Who knows? Maybe I'm death itself," Silrat said to which the Mage laughed, genuinely finding the response funny.

"Death itself? That's bold," he said as he stored his sceptre into an unseen storage item.

His mana spiked horrendously, blobs of black, constantly shifting matter appearing around him.

"If you truly are death itself then shall I challenge you with my full might? Perhaps if I beat you, I may learn the secret to life without death."

...!

A musing statement but for some reason, Skullius felt like it had all the seriousness in the world.

At that moment, space became tangible.

The grey haired man casually practiced powers beyond the normal bounds of Academy curriculum-oriented Patches.

He exercised his powers as a Grandmaster, folding space with his hands, as if putting away useless paper and in doing so, everything within this rune protected space was pulled towards him.

Everything including the entire building outside this space – the Bryne Mansion.

Chapter 584: Loss?

A few minutes ago...

Setkh and Karrun were dragged out to a field full of various healthy crops being grown in large, well organised and tended beds.

Nooses were still slung around their necks but not as tight so as to allow them to breathe and move well.

On the other hand, the people who had been working in the fields were not so lucky. Their bodies were hung in the air, yellow nooses tightly gripping around their necks, with their points of origin being high up in the sky where their ends faded into the dimming daylight.

A judgement from above?

No. It was murder from below.

Close to a hundred of the staff who had worked for the Bryne Family could be seen, and their silent throes gave Setkh a tinge of guilt as he glanced towards them briefly.

This was all his doing.

But what of it?

They were already at this point.

"It should be here, shouldn't it?" Seddrik said as he stopped, a burst of his mana flushing outwards to burn away the crops and clear the ground.

Setkh nodded his head with a conflicted face. He then asked a question, something that had been bugging him.

"How did you know it wasn't in the house? I told you it was here in the field but... even before that, you immediately took me away after I summoned you," he asked.

Seddrik stomped hard on the ground, an intense reverberation humming through the ground for a mile.

With the feedback he received, he narrowed his eyes and pulled out a small vial containing a black liquid. He then swiftly poured half the contents of the vial where he had stomped just now while belatedly answering Setkh's question.

"We have our ways," he said.

The ground was eaten away rapidly, as if a harsh decay had been set loose over it, the disappearing crust revealing a depth that dropped for quite the distance.

Seddrik leapt down while the two were pulled on by his Genuine Incarnation, following him into the darkness.

Soon, the three felt the hard ground under their feet.

There was nothing but pitch black to look at, which led the three to rely on their senses.

Seddrik looked here and there. He then scoffed and pulled out something else from storage. A lamp whose handle was a rusted, blue chain, the light kept within a cracked glass cradling an orange flame that blinked multiple times before drawing a trail of light to his right a very long distance ahead.

...!

Setkh was appalled.

While he had left the Family for a long time, he was still familiar with the defences in place to guard the treasure that represented the Bryne Family.

It hadn't changed.

It was not easy to find where it was buried and if somehow one guessed where, they would have to find a way to breach their way in.

Yet for some reason, Seddrik conveniently had that mysterious black liquid that melted the physical and magical defences set to stop easy intrusion!

The other safety mechanism was the darkness that they had in their company.

No ordinary light was capable of thriving within it, yet not only did Seddrik have an answer to that, the lamp he held also pointed towards the correct way to go in order to reach the desired space that held the treasure he sought.

This...

"No need to be surprised. As I said, the Severed Code may restrict our movements, but we know a great deal," Seddrik said without a shift in his unamused expression. "Your privileges only extend against other Families, and not against us."

Setkh's face darkened.

.....

Soon, after passing several traps and mechanisms using different kinds of artefacts and items, the trio had arrived at the final hurdle.

Seddrik knew the answer to this too.

That was why he had brought Setkh with him.

The last obstacle was a simple brown door with a silver knob erected on it, its entirety planted on a rugged wall of dirt, as was to be expected in this cavern like space – one could only guess.

It looked simple but its impenetrable design is what depicted Setkh's father's fortune and connections to have something like this built.

"Stop!" a familiar voice called from the distance.

It was Stylla who huffed as she glared at the trio seemingly unaffected by the darkness, no ounce of pity visible in her eyes for Karrun and Setkh's sake.

Only hatred burned within her as what she had seen as she raced over here, the dead men and women whom she had grown up seeing and learning from, their lives taken so casually...

It was too cruel.

Ed was by her side, already looking to attack at the first chance he got as the two had prearranged that the redhead would tell him where to send his blade.

"No! Stay away Stylla!" Setkh barked as he turned with urgency.

"SHUT UP!" Stylla barked back with bloodshot eyes. "SHUT YOUR FUCKING MOUTH!"

Seddrik ignored the two as he went on to cut up Setkh's palm, drawing blood. He forced the man to grab the knob on the door and turn it, which seamlessly opened the construct without problems, revealing a tiny room, its walls glowing with defence runes of a different calibre.

A Mage of a high level had crafted these personally.

A stone pedestal was erected right in the middle of the room and atop it, a crystal, spherical in shape floated steadily.



It had an ancient air about it, on its glossy surface two different colours, black and white.

The black faded into white at the middle, creating a small portion of grey that enhanced the crystal's beauty several fold.

It was beautiful.

For as long as it had existed in the Bryne Family, this crystal was known as the Harmonic Ember.

Its view, along with the entirety of the interior of the small room was visible to everyone, a dim source of light allowing everyone to see.

...!

The tension rose!

The Harmonic Ember was too precious to let fall in the hands of the enemy and knowing this, Ed zipped forward the moment he saw it in sight, his blade at the ready as he neared Seddrik.

The ordinary faced man didn't show any form anxiety. After all, he had leverage.

"ARGHHH!" Stylla suddenly screamed, a noose having suddenly appeared around her neck and squeezed ruthlessly!

...!

"No!" Setkh screamed in panic but he couldn't rush towards his sister as he intended.

Ed on the other hand, was left torn.

He stopped his advance and turned back to Stylla who was slowly lifted off the ground as she struggled viciously but this lapse in his attention was enough for Seddrik to swipe the Harmonic Ember.

"It's been a pleasure..." Seddrik said as he turned to the anxious Setkh, his words having some form of conclusive intent. Dangerous conclusive intent.

GRRRRRRMMMM!

At the same time, the ground shook as the battle happening within the mansion finally reached a climactic point that exposed itself as the literally dragging of space!

Above ground, the large mansion that had been sandwiched between two smaller buildings suddenly began to sink in on itself as if a black hole had appeared!

Everything that made up its grand appearance vanished, sucked in by a single man's actions, the only enclosed space left revealed being the stairway infested space where a battle had been taking place!

Space folded like a paper and within it, the figures of multiple individuals could be spotted as they tried to resist being drawn into the Mage's hand as he pulled on everything!

Skullius had his [Beads of Malevolence] clustering around him and pulling him back with all the might the Precept of Light could muster.

This was dangerous!

"Tsk! Who ended up getting in whose way?!" the bulky Form User who had only just begun to fight the dark skinned Tier 9 beast grumbled as he was pulled away, spared from the attack.

Red Rage, with a bed encircled by a cylindrical light floating above him, on which an unconscious man slept, was also being pulled in.

In as much as he responded viciously to the violent and guilty, the call of the innocent and those in peril 'spoke' just as loudly to him. He was obligated to respond.

Speaking of those in peril, Red Rage heard a grunt of pain at this moment, and his racial instincts kicked in.

'Someone in need!' he thought.

He then turned to Killin Max who had yet to fulfill his role as he had instructed. The creature set its gaze to him too and nodded in understanding, having already understood what its Master wanted it to do.

An energy bubbled from it.

It wasn't Mana.

It wasn't Aura.

Beasts weren't capable of producing such.

However, in exchange, they had a large advantage that mankind had exploited millennia ago and inserted into their own power system.

His Tier was just one short but he was talented enough to make it work right now!

As this energy bubbled within Killin Max, Red Rage's figure warped in a circular manner, along with the man lying unconsciously on the bed.

Shortly after, the Apostle resisted the pull on space and vanished along with Stylla's father and this marked as the signal for Killin Max to use...IT

The Mage was the first to notice and his eyes narrowed in realisation.

Chapter 585: Executive Arbitration! (1)

Beasts were said to officially become threats by skilled combatants when they reached the fourth Tier. This was when they developed exclusive and high level abilities or obtained dangerous mutation synchronisation that gave their bodies special properties from combined racial traits.

However, this was only the start.

Due to the double amount of experience required per every level, reaching higher Tiers was extraordinary difficult for normal beasts after this point, as collecting cumulative mana experience was a really big problem the higher up the chain they went.

Yet, the benefits for actually reaching that level were outrageous, especially for special races like the black skinned beast who, for first time manifested bits of a medium level Divine energy that allowed it forge...

"A Dormant Territory!" the grey haired Mage said with intrigue.

A silvery blue energy that manifested like rays of cloudy light which stormed from the body of this beast, the Nightmare Gale Fiend, shot out and began to tear through the crumpling space!

Everywhere this light passed, the space was forced to return to normal, and as it extended, the Mage shook his head.

Skullius gazed at this beast and expressed mild shock.

'I'll be damned if I don't remember something I've seen too many times...' he thought.

How could he not recognise what this was when he had seen way too many times?

Feeling the suction and entrapment of crippled space waning, Skullius used the chance to retreat close to the Gale Fiend.

Sadly, his Precept couldn't last any longer because the mana he had been given wasn't as much as it could be thus, the Luman landed on the ground while feeling the power of an energy he hadn't yet known the name of caress him.

Nitros.

This was the reason behind many events interconnected to the history of Aigas as well as its power system. The mystery behind how one exceeded the stage of being a Master and leapt ten steps forward in power into the Incandescent Stage, a stage many considered to be 'reasonable peak of power'.

Nitros was stability and creation given a form that mortals could handle.

This was mimicking the art of Divines!

"Phenomenal," Skullius said, impressed by this feat.

So this is where it all began.

All the beasts he had met so far. Azila, the Grinning Jester Fox, Fuwin...

They had to be at least Tier 10 and above!

The Gale Fiend looked to be struggling as the area of coverage for its Nitros only reached around 10 meters, covering itself and Skullius.

The Mage seized what he was doing.

A layer of space could be seen crunched up in his hands like paper, depictions of broken wood, stone and debris on it. He cast it aside and watched it dissipate into various forms of energy.

What a waste.

The grey haired man snickered at himself.

No matter how Skullius looked at it though... that was terrifying.

"I didn't know this trip would have so many surprises. I get to witness a beast cast its Dormant Territory for the first time. A rather sturdy one at that..." the Mage said with a smile on his face.

Around the bright silvery blue light that stretched from the Gale Field, a cloudy texture could be spotted erasing details of the ground, making the beast and Skullius look like they were standing in the midst of a deformed sky full of silvery blue clouds.

"A Dormant Territory..." Skullius muttered.

If he had to guess, this had to be a Territory without any of its features activated yet.

For instance, the Grinning Jester Fox's Territory that didn't have any attack or defensive functions in place when he, Benzard and the others entered.

It was just a dark space.

Then again, Skullius didn't know what a proper Territory did do exactly. Of course he had actually cast one before when had inhabited Eldris' body through [Basic Evil Sanction] but he figured a Territory was more than just a ridiculous boost to stats and all.

It had to be a lot more special than that right?

\*\*\*

Stylla was choking, Ed had rushed to help her and Seddrik had won. The Harmonic Ember was in his hand and from the looks of his gaze on Karrun and Setkh, he no longer needed them.

It wouldn't be an issue if he killed them now.

Setkh could barely shift his focus to the imminent threat however as his concern was mainly his sister dying.

Seddrik was about to kill these two when...

...?

A flash of gold appeared behind Stylla, its brilliance dying to reveal a large bed onto which her father laid.

Red Rage dropped the bed down to the ground and turned to Stylla.

...!

Ed's hostility flared instantly as he didn't know who this suddenly emerged character was but in the next moment, he was forced to swallow his high guard.

The figure decked in pristine white armour, with a freakishly long cape extending behind his back, clutched Stylla's shoulder and the Genuine Incarnation that was strangling her... shattered.

...!

Seddrik frowned and caution reappeared on the subtle points of his face.

What the hell was this?

How in the world was this possible?

Ed was just as surprised.

He caught Stylla who dropped to the ground all while gazing at Red Rage who took steps forward and faced Seddrik.

"Another vile murderer..." he said with a disgusted tone. "Justice dictates that you walk freely no longer."

The man with the noose for an Incarnation tilted his head and scoffed.

Was this enemy looking down on him?

Just because he somehow deactivated his Genuine Incarnation's effect on Stylla didn't meant he had won.

Seddrik shut the door to the small room as he now had the Harmonic Ember in his grasp.

The space was immediately plunged into darkness. The radiance from Red Rage didn't aid in giving out light as the darkness was set to confuse all intruders, thus, knowing this, Seddrik instantly launched an attack at this new foe simply by recalling where he was standing!

His presence fled like that of a ghost and by the time a breath passed, he had already wrapped his Incarnation around Red Rage's neck, his body which stood behind the caped Apostle pulling hard with a terrifying force that dragged Red Rage up!

Even if this was Legendary grade armour, Seddrik's Incarnation was powerful enough to break through it given that enough force was applied!

This just so happened to be what Seddrik excelled at as an Assassin – short bursts of decisively fatal strength that killed the opponent instantly.

Yet...

"A killer with a neck fetish. You are beyond saving!" Red Rage proclaimed.

...!

Seddrik was surprised.

He had applied force enough to kill the average Master instantly but the result was... nothing.

To make matters worse, Red Rage's body warped into a circular distortion that faded and reappeared right before Seddrik, his fist which glowed and launched straight like a golden beam with a terrifying force hurtling towards his opponent's face.

Once again, it was [That One Punch]!

...!!!

Seddrik didn't need to see in the dark to know that this one hit was enough to kill him, even if he defended with Perfect Aura!



Alarm bells rang out in his mind!

His eyes narrowed as he exercised the extended uniqueness of his Incarnation!

Red Rage's absurdly quick arm was suddenly grappled by a noose that tightened around his wrist and pulled it hard to the right in one forcefully jerk!

BOOOOOM!

Whichever wall got blasted with the force of this Special skill was uglified immediately, the whole underground space quaking heavily under the might of Red Rage's misdirected fist!

"Hoo... You are a clever one, murderer!" Red Rage complimented.

Three more nooses tightened around his leg, neck and other arm and pulled hard, their origins being the walls!

Seddrik immediately went for the kill when he found Red Rage to be immobilised, using his Incarnation for coordination.

However...

"Against someone like you, I can mess around no longer," Red Rage declared before going all out, his most powerful skill being cast immediately.

[Greatest Executive Arbitration: Full Release]!

Following the wild gust of a thousands of units of mana and Null Life Essence, light was forcefully introduced into this space... no, the location everyone found themselves in was different altogether!

The one who cast the skill stood before them, his attire having changed to one that suited the occasion...!

Chapter 586: Executive Arbitration! (2)

Following the roughly two weeks that Red Rage went into retreat, the Apostle took his time to finesse all of the skills he had acquired since his summoning. He had them evolve and tried to find ways to implement them into helpful combinations with other skills he had, which produced a series of results.

Additionally, he paid attention to something he neglected because his racial attributes far outshined it.

This was his class as the Tempered Skull Hegemon.

It focused on might as this was what Skullius had assumed that Red Rage needed the most to couple well with his unique abilities as the Pelvis Boar-Man.

Sadly, that class was no more.

It was replaced when Red Rage scaled up the levels to evolutions when he had left the safety of Fortune without Skullius' consent. This had been his aim when he smuggled himself out.

Slugging down massive quantities of cumulative mana experience for himself and the newly hatched beasts that he had been tending to was something he realised would perfectly complement his exclusive training. Thus he had taken off.

After accumulating enough experience and with the help of the [Blessing of Serenity], Red Rage was exposed to more unique racial evolution options within the Pelvis series and since Skullius wasn't there (frankly he wasn't needed), the Apostle chose for himself what he saw fit as an option.

Without a guidance field, the options would be more like sensations with distinct yet vague differences but these were enough for Red Rage to pick his choice.

Thus, he deliberated and chose...

The Juvenile Pelvic Arbiter!

At this moment, as the skill [Greatest Executive Arbitration: Full Release] was cast, the very essence of what it meant to be Pelvic Arbiter and its ridiculous power were put on display.

Stylla, Setkh, Ed, Karrun and Seddrik were met with a bright space that pricked the eyes lightly.

It generally looked and felt like the setting had suddenly changed, their figures transported somewhere with a bright light but one with more perceptive capabilities would be able notice that they hadn't gone anywhere at all!

Everyone was still in the same place... technically.

An area of roughly twelve meters within the darkness had suddenly changed, tweaked to form this light ridden space where the host stood before the ground.

He and his foe, that is.

'What's with this sudden setback? Where did this man even come from? Where did he take me?'

Seddrik was put on guard by the change in the appearance of the surroundings but what put him on edge all the more was his opponent whose apparel had changed.

Instead of the white armour and the lengthy cape he had worn just now, Red Rage had donned a fine cloak of Null Life Essence, its composition so dense and powerful that ordinary beings born outside of the Null could see it!

It fluttered as if blown by a fierce and dramatic wind but Red Rage's figure, which was a mostly undefined, depicted to everyone as a silvery skeleton that blended into the bright surroundings gazing upon Seddrik with judging sockets, was barely noticeable.

If one didn't focus, they'd think only the cloak was present.

"Welcome... to a different perspective," Red Rage said with a saintly voice, his image fitting it.

"What is this?" Seddrik barked with a frown, his body boiling with Perfect Aura that blazed around his body, giving him the maximum boost to his overall ability that it could.

For someone like Seddrik at the peak of the Master Stage, a full 1000% in his abilities could easily be reached when he drew out all that he had, summoning all his Aura!

It was not quite the style of an Assassin but this enemy who had the power to kill him in a single hit if he didn't bring out his fullest strength and could seemingly void all attacks.... For someone like this, he was willing to use brute force!

...!

The wild gush of power was phenomenal!

As it occurred, everything outside collapsed from the sheer force of the Aura in an explosive rumble, everything falling on something!

The underground was ignited and it exploded upwards, destroying everything within a one hundred of fifty meter radius!

It was an awe-inspiring display but...

It all happened outside... as in outside the small bright space created by Red Rage!

"What?!" Seddrik finally showed a different look other than his normal, in-control visage!

"Unfortunately, violence won't do you much good here," Red Rage informed, his almost ethereal figure moving around Seddrik who eyed him with shock. "This is a manifestation of justice that I'm able to create. It's not actually a place but.. it's simply my powers invoking a change in the perception of whoever is close to me.

Your eyes have no choice but to see the world as I do and be restricted to the laws of justice..."

Seddrik grunted.

He clasped his hand and Perfect Aura forged nooses that rushed in to grip Red Rage, their build and knots thicker but...

They shattered upon reaching the Juvenile Pelvic Arbiter.

Red Rage was amused.

"Please be patient. I only have a limited time here. Fortunately for you, I lack the means to kill you when you're going all out and truthfully, even as a vile murderer, you are tremendous powerful. However..."

The Apostle extended his hand towards Seddrik.

"...your crimes outweigh your might, giving justice what it requires to harm even a monster like you."

...!

This line was chilling, as was what followed.

Seddrik found himself unravelling like paper, his skin turning translucent as beneath it, voices and faint images began to show!

The images were of the cruelty he involved himself in and these, along with the voices that were heard were things the Pelvic Arbiter could not ignore.

Screams of torture.

Wails of pain.

Throes of death.

Grunts of agony.

Every single deed to harm the innocent that Seddrik had ever done was shown, testified by his own flesh!

"What is this?! These are... What are you doing?!" Seddrik growled as he thought smacking his skin would change anything.

As Red Rage had said, he was incapable of killing Seddrik when he was using all his might to boost himself even with this ability which was yet to reach the heights it was meant to past his Juvenile state.

However, this white space that everyone was seeing – the perception of justice – forced one to admit that they knew the deeds they had done were wrong.

In short, as long as anyone facing this skill saw the bright space around them, it meant their mind understood the idea of justice. The idea of paying for wrongdoings, particularly against the innocent.

As a result...

"The voices calling from you seek vengeance. They enable me to take one thing from you. Something I allowed even as I am weaker than you..."

This was the reason for Red Rage stretching out his hand.

Since he was weaker, he couldn't take something from Seddrik that was too valuable.

Therefore...

"I will permanently claim... a third of your Aura, vile murderer!"

...!

What?!

Seddrik's heart skipped a beat!

There was no way, right?!

He had never heard about something like this before?!

This was a lie, right?

A joke?!

Well...

His flaring Aura suddenly started to dwindle.

Its yellow hue dimmed as instantly, the quantity was cut down by a third!

His translucent skin that had voices and images spawning from it turned dark as he suddenly felt weaker!

'My Aura...!' Seddrik gaped inwardly.

At the same time, his vision returned to normal and the orange sun dipping behind the horizon rained its light on him and the onlookers who were looking towards him and Red Rage in confusion.

A large opening had been made above and around because of Seddrik's outburst of Aura just seconds before, letting in the sun into the underground space.

It perfectly highlighted his shocked face as one word kept ringing in his head.

'Permanently...'

His Aura... a third of it was gone... permanently?!

Did this mean what he thought it meant?

Seddrik's thoughts which barely lasted two seconds led his Aura to weaken before it receded as his rage burned, his mind toppled by this absurd ability!

Could mode of his Aura be stolen?

Could his opponent use that ability again?

The figure of Red Rage returned to its epic and armoured form, his cape billowing proudly as he levitated a bit over the ground. The glow behind his visor brightened up as he grabbed his cape, a feeling of triumph having gripped his mind.

While everyone was reeling in the prospect of what had just happened, the card the Apostle had played right after [Greatest Executive Arbitration: Full Release]'s duration passed had already stationed itself in place.

'I win...'

In this form, the Apostle could exercise only part of the [Executive Arbitration] powers, which is why he had abilities like nullifying damage incoming from enemies – there were restrictions for this – the ability to teleport to those who called for help given that they were in range and so on.

In his hand, a ball of yellow Aura could be seen floating over his palm. He then quickly passed it into the storage within his cape and faced his enemy who glared at him with blood red eyes.

He didn't even realise.

"Justice is it? Fools like you are why I kill in the first place! To rid the world of this pretty facade!" Seddrik raged, his face turning vicious. "You think taking away a third of my added strength is enough to make me weak?!"

"Of course not, you fool," Red Rage said as he pointed behind Seddrik.

...!



The man turned only to find that a peculiar creature with one of its tentacles digging into his neck was standing merely a meter from him after having seemingly shed its unique skin just now!

It was different from Killin Max.

It looked the same but its skin was red and its body was shorter and leaner, the tentacles that grew from it longer and doused with a purplish hue at their ends.

...!

"Poison?!" Seddrik exclaimed!

He suddenly realised that he had lost the ability to feel since a seconds ago and now...

How could he have no seen...?

Seddrik's body grew weak but he still had strength in his limbs.

Only a bit of it.

He grunted.

"Profound. You are even more resilient than the last person to taste this poison," Red Rage said mockingly.

As Seddrik's Aura that had begun to feebly glow around him showed a drop in luminance, the caped Arbiter rushed in, his fist storming into the Assassin's face with that one deadly punch...!

Chapter 587: Reasonable

The explosion from the hidden underground storage within the field had garnered the attention of the Mage, the beefcake, Skullius and the Gale Fiend.

The shrieks of Aura that had been released from there outclassed the power being displayed by the bulky Form User with his Incarnation fully showing over his body, which gave a more impactful meaning to what the Mage had said about Seddrik earlier.

As if this had suddenly turned into a contest, the simple minded brawn brain, as a Master Stage expert who could also bring out ridiculous plumes of power, let his Aura run wild!

In his journey to reach where he was, he had decided that what he needed was a pair of gauntlets as his Genuine Incarnation in order to increase the power of his Dragon Breast Ram technique. Other than that, he wanted to use his full might without incurring much damage, thus serving his fisty nature well.

A teal coloured pair of large gauntlets wrapped around his arms from the elbows, their size being easily twice the size of his hands.

They had protruding knuckles aimed at delivering extra damage to the opponent with their designs being intricate, the depiction of a dragon on them to forcefully create a brand for himself.

The two of them hissed lightly as the Aura seeped from them, the bulky enemy grinning as he looked at his foes, searching for hints of awe and fear.

Sadly, he found none.

Skullius wasn't really impressed.

He couldn't see its detail anyway.

The burly Form User's lip twitched and he shot towards the limited space of the Gale Fiend's Dormant Territory!

The Mage's attention looked to still be stolen by the explosion of power in the direction where Seddrik had gone.

That latest opponent with the cape had gone there too, hadn't he?

A strange spatial effect had wrapped around him and taken him there, such a thing being something the Mage was easily able to follow.

That aside though...

'Curious. How long is it going to take for Seddrik to retrieve the object?' the silver haired man wondered.

He turned back to find his partner rushing foolishly towards the Dormant Territory and sighed.

This idiot.

He didn't even realise how pointless that was.

As the eager punching machine closed in on Skullius and the beast, he was ready to land a punch with all his might when...

The jagged rays that formed the edge of the silvery blue Dormant Territory... couldn't be breached!

"Huh?!"

The bulky Form User tried but he remained in one place! His feet raced wildly, scraping against the dirt but he didn't go anywhere!

Skullius marvelled at this discovery.

Was this a property of a Dormant Territory?

One couldn't invade unless the user allowed them to?

'Well... this is inspiring!' Skullius thought as he flashed a distance closer to the struggling Form User and slashed with Demion's Dance that allowed him to casually wield all the power it could lend now!

The wind screamed as the sword cut into it, the force of the slash undeniably living proof!

Yet...

FWOOSH!

The figure of the Form User, which had been in mortal danger vanished and appeared right where he had been standing before!

Another look of confusion appeared on the man's thick face as he had barely noticed that he would have been fatally wounded at least if he was forcefully moved.

The Mage had teleported him to safety.

The power of Skullius' slash still hit its intended target though.

It slashed cleanly through the air and split the ground for miles with a low rumble!

UUUUUUMMMM!

The Mage whistled, very much intrigued and impressed.

Did this man know who forged this blade for the infamous Irida who then gifted it to her lover Demion?

Curious.

Did the forger know that his sword was in the hands of someone like this?

Frankly, he might just be proud if he knew.

'I haven't seen the four relics he forged in a while, now that I think about it,' the Mage thought.

"Hmm?"

His attention was once again stolen as he felt a familiar life signature fade in the distance.

That was...

The silver haired man blinked before closing his eyes shut.

His body then ceased floating above and descended to the ground next to his partner who was barking about why he had been forcefully taken away.

"He's dead," the robed man informed.

"Who?" the bulky Form User asked with a frown.

"Seddrik..."

"..."

The burly man grimaced.

His Incarnation swiftly faded as he turned in the direction Seddrik had headed towards.

A figure emitting a golden hue from his cape flew from there, reaching a distance from the scene where he attracted everyone's attention.

He spoke no words at first, as his next action spoke louder concerning his intent.

He stretched his hand, revealing within its grip a spherical, dual coloured object.

The Harmonic Ember.

"You want this?" Red Rage asked.

The grey haired Mage's expression didn't change but he did look at the crystal with a bit of yearning.

"Seeing as our partner died for it, that should be obvious," he replied.

Skullius was impressed.

He had received a notification about Red Rage killing Seddrik just now, but he could barely believe it.

That man was easily stronger than this muscle brain he had had fighting before.

The leaps in strength that Red Rage had gone through were incredible!

Now however, the problem lied with how this interaction was going to go.

The Mage wouldn't leave without a fight, right? Especially with his comrade dead.

Then again, these too seemed to be taking Seddrik's death without much sap. The Mage didn't seem to care at all actually.

"I'm sure you plan on a baiting game with me. A clever strategy considering I can't possibly hope to contend with you in flight, given your... traits," the Mage said while once again pulling out his sceptre from an unseen storage.

"However, a word of warning. Say I benevolently decide to leave that thing... Or perhaps you defeat me somehow... Our leader has gone through much trouble to secure that item. Paying a heavy price for a curse that can't be dispelled by natural means and making sure to hide the traces of our involvement intricately was only part of the investments he made.

From that description alone, those who aren't fools, like myself could tell that this is no mere trinket to him as he claimed."

The Mage gave a brittle smile while the burly Form User beside him gawked at him in realisation.

Perhaps he was one of the fools that actually bought what leader said? Or was it simply that he had no idea the leader had invested so much in this?

Skullius narrowed his eyes.

"There is no rush. He is willing to put up with the Severed Code's regulations for as long as it takes, you understand? Even if we're not the ones to get that crystal, swarms of others will follow with that intention in mind."

"You speak reasonably," Red Rage said with caution.

Why give them a warning?

The Mage's hostile intent had been toned down as he spoke. One would argue that he hadn't been hostile to begin with.

He had stated that killing was Seddrik's business and had been fooling around all this time.

"The society I'm from dictates that I be reasonable. Besides, I very much enjoyed what I saw here today. Your abilities and a beast performing a Dormant Territory for the first time... I appreciated that. You two are not inherent members of this Family, that much I can gather. So you might not care for the deaths that will ensue on everyone remaining in this estate.

But what of everyone else that remains?"

Red Rage's attention was peaked.

Harming innocents?

That was definitely something he didn't want to happen!

Then again, leaving these criminals...

"Give me the crystal and the pursuit on this Family will cease. If not, well... I don't take pleasure in senseless slaughter but seeing as I'd be forced to..." the Mage said as his body fumed with an unnerving presence.

One that was painfully crippling.

"Taking that route will not end well for you. You'll find that I'm not oblivious to your nearly bottomed out mana core and your cracked blade that CAN'T handle my full might."

The former was with respect to Red Rage and the latter was for Skullius.

The Hybrid Luman wasn't thrilled by fact that he understood just how outclassed he was.

It seemed even Red Rage understood.

With regards to what the grey haired man said though, Skullius ran his fingers over Demion's Dance and only now did he realise that it had several cracks.

It was true.

Tsk.

'Well that's humiliating....' Skullius thought as his blank gaze rose to his flying Apostle.

Well?

What would they choose?

Chapter 588: Stylla's Decision

Stylla rammed her hands into the ground endlessly under Ed's gaze.

Her fury was apparent, with her teeth gnashed so hard that it looked like they would shatter soon.

Yet she didn't care.



She grunted and screamed to vent her frustration while digging holes in the hard, crusty dirt with her fists but this didn't help her get rid of this feeling of loss.

Was it her fault?

Should she have not brought Setkh here for the confrontation?

Would that have saved many from being killed?

Maybe.

Would that have stopped Setkh from escaping?

Perhaps.

But what was the use in thinking over it now? All Stylla could do was roar in anger at her stupidity, her blindness and grief at all that had happened today.

At the very least, she had wanted punishment for Setkh but right after Seddrik was killed by Red Rage, he and Karrun had escaped using the latter's peculiar Mind Casting technique.

That had been... crushing.

Skullius sighed.

He stood beside Red Rage above the huge crater made into the ground as the sun decided to retreat behind the cover of the horizon. Using his senses to hear the harrowing pain and anguish expressed below, he sighed once more.

"I guess she didn't care that much about that crystal," Skullius said as he sat down.

"Definitely not. She is attached to people more than objects," Red Rage replied.

Barely a minute ago, the two had reached this exact spot and looked down to give the news on what was likely to be a controversial decision.

Stylla had sighed in relief upon seeing Skullius, as the situation outside was something she had dreaded. This was not to say that she was in a ship shake mood now though.

It only took a shake of the head from Skullius for her to know that the crystal was gone and so were the attackers but she wasn't that moved by this, much to Skullius and Red Rage's surprise.

After all, as she had said, the crystal wasn't of any use to the Family anymore and unlike her father, Stylla didn't place as much value on it, especially when considering the current circumstances.

What was left of the Bryne Family, hanging on a thread that she had been knitting together constantly since her father's cursing, had been plundered further.

Many who had served the Family for years had been killed and that loud noise from earlier wasn't a jolly elephant doing a dance. It was the destruction of something important, Stylla had guessed.

The destruction was likely to be catastrophic.

All this made the red head feel... defeated.

"I didn't expect this trip to get so dark. I thought I'd grab a few treasures as promised and be back in Genhuis to deal with pending matters but... here we are," Skullius said with the shake of his head.

"It's funny hearing you speak so optimistically, Master," Red Rage said as he too took a seat. "I thought I'd celebrate a clean victory after showing up for the first time in weeks. Unfortunately, having to admit a loss hurts more than I thought."

"You can feel too now? Good."

In the end, Skullius and Red Rage had decided to hand over the crystal.

It wasn't that they trusted the word of the Mage but it was the fact that whatever they chose had the potential to produce the same negative outcome.

If the Mage didn't keep his word after they gave him the crystal, they were screwed as both could attest to the fact that the bastard was incredibly dangerous.

If they didn't have over the crystal, they screwed still as the man could likely stop them from escaping with his ridiculous spatial Magecraft.

It was better to choose the option with a chance at no conflict at all, after all, both Skullius and Red Rage had a lot to lose.

Thankfully, the grey haired Mage had kept his word. He didn't seem to be hung up on Seddrik's death but now, as the two met the ground beneath, they realised the man cared enough to retrieve his partner's body with his advanced magic.

Only blood stains remained of Seddrik's body.

"Well, it's not over yet. If I picked up anything, it would be the fact that these men were probably from the Severed Union. With enough fortune, we may meet them again. At least I will," Skullius said with a smirk.

Why was this?

That was because the Hybrid Luman had finally used one of the new features of his guidance field!

He had left a marker on the Mage and his bulky partner!

Now, depending on how the guidance field worked with him and his avatar, if Replicus was able to see the markers he placed with his own guidance field...

Well, this defeat wouldn't remain that sour for long perhaps.

\*

Hours later.

"Alright then..."

Deep in the night, within one of the buildings that had been sandwiching the main mansion, Skullius nodded in agreement.

Stylla had calmed down.

She sat down on the couch with her body hunched over, her locked hands pressing against her hung forehead as she rapidly tapped her foot on the floor.

"Hmmm," she voiced, her eyes that had dark marks under them looking resolute.

The remaining members of the auxiliary staff that had worked for the Bryne Family for years donned sullen looks, as did the Knights who were shocked to hear Stylla's decision.

Ed also looked conflicted.

"I don't qualify as a leader. I'm nothing like my father. The main mansion is gone, along with bits of my Family that I can never recover. Bits that I won't be able to explain to my relatives. Haha. Those that still care," Stylla said with a hurting smile and sniffled.

She then turned to the survivors. "For now... I only see a dark future for my Family. My father remains cursed and everything we have left is... something we can barely protect."

"It doesn't serve you well to remain with the Family like this. Leave. I'll settle enough coin for you to live the rest of your lives without trouble. Better now than later when it likely all falls apart."

"..."

There was a bit of silence as everyone digested Stylla's words.

She had decided to leave the estate indefinitely.

Quite the reckless decision on her part but this event had been just enough to tear down her flimsy resolve.

She hadn't been ready.

She had tried to look it.

She had tried to act it.

But she wasn't ready.

The weight of lives and property destroyed while she was at the helm was different when there was no one else to share it with.

She couldn't handle that right now.

She wasn't weak by any means but...

A fairly old woman walked forward.

"Lady Stylla. You would give up this estate just like that? This land has belonged to your Family for a very long time. Leaving it because you have lost all hope is—"

"Foolish? Stupid? Premature?" Stylla interrupted the woman. "Don't you see? None of it matters anymore. No one cares.

My father may never wake up and I... I don't have the strength to look over this land and what it represented. Not right now anyway. Maybe someday in the future when groom myself but... for now, I'll go back to Genhuis with my father. "

Everyone was appalled.

The sudden attack that had claimed many lives was tragic and some were scarred for life but this...?

"You don't have to settle your thoughts right now. You can stay here for the time being but I'll be leaving tomorrow. Best make a decision before I leave."

Stylla then dismissed everyone after saying this, leaving only Skullius and Ed in the room.

"Please do not question my loyalty too," Ed said before Stylla could say anything.

"I wasn't going to," she said with a hollow smile. "You are the only one among the others who stayed behind without giving an excuse."

The others Stylla referred to were other Master Stage experts who were convinced to travel with the other Family members.

As if they could be vindicated in this lifetime.

Stylla then turned to Skullius.

"Is that man...?" she began when Skullius answered her predictable question.

"Yes. He's with me. A follower, you could say."

"Oh. That's good," Stylla voiced, the general spark of inquisition that any normal person would have had towards a mystery like Red Rage who was waiting outside not visible in her eyes. "Thank you. Both of you. If you hadn't come, things would have been different."

"I'm part of the Family, aren't I?" Skullius said.

"That's... right," Stylla said with another variant of an empty smile. "Since I owe it to you anyway, I might as well show you to our treasury. You may take as many things as you want, barring the coin."

'Oh?' Skullius perked up. 'So the treasury wasn't destroyed with the house or something?'

Thank goodness!

The Hybrid Luman had found it inappropriate to ask when Stylla was facing such conflict but since she pretty much confirmed it...

Perfect!

Stylla rose to do as she said but...

"Hold on," Skullius said, causing her to stop.

"Since we are Family... technically, may I pitch in an idea?"

"What is it?" Stylla asked with her sullen eyes.

The Hybrid Luman smirked slightly.

This was an improvised thought but it was worth a shot.

The original idea behind signing into the Bryne Family was protection and ease of access to resources.

Well, why not take it to another level?

Chapter 589: Skullius' Proposal

"I realise this may be very insensitive but seeing as you're moving on from this experience yourself, I might as well speak up," Skullius said while scratching the back of his head.

Thank goodness for basic mannerisms and considerations that he had learnt from the many memories he had derived through [Basic Evil Sanction].

At least he wouldn't be needlessly tactless when dealing with people.

"With your father currently out of commission, this may seem like an... underhanded or suspicious move on my part but that isn't exactly the case. I... want to invest in the Bryne Family."

...?

Stylla expressed her confusion with a slight shift of her head and the narrowing of her eyes.

"What do you mean by invest?" she asked.

"You're sending away your... workers, because you're afraid they may be exploited should another Family try to claim your estate, right? It's clear that the Family no longer has the means to defend itself properly. Resources and even appeal... it's lost," Skullius expressed.

Stylla nodded silently.

"My point is, we can stop using each other like before and cooperate fully in building a stronger image of the Family. After seeing your entire estate earlier, I couldn't help but get the feeling that this wasn't what the Bryne Family compounds looked like in their prime."

The red head grit her teeth at these words, a hurting grimace showing on her face.

"You realised, huh?" she said.

It was true.

Stylla's Family dated back thousands of years ago to days when there were multiple Incandescent Stage experts within the Family, all with the ability to utilise the granted powers of the Harmonic Ember to their fullest in terrifying individual techniques.

There were also lots of people in the Family who helped create multiple estates around their territory, but as the years went on, the power that ran in the blood of the Brynes declined and as a result, longer lives couldn't be reached.

At some point, all blood would be diluted.



Ultimately, the infrastructure, the wealth and repute of the Bryne Family dwindled to this, the Family falling off to the level of a common Family.

This was another thing that bit at Stylla.

"Yes. We have been using each other and I kept sufficient distance from you. But that's because of your curse. Aren't you and Silrat the ones who told me to be less... interactive and helpful?" Stylla asked.

"Yes. That was the case. But things are different now," Skullius proclaimed with a genuine smile. "I no longer have the curse. Since it only happened last night, I couldn't tell you even when we spoke because of... mostly excitement, I guess?"

Bottom line is, you don't have to die when you help me anymore."

That was way too casual.

Stylla didn't know whether to believe this or not and Skullius could tell from her face.

"Trust me. I wouldn't cause you harm for no reason. We are in the same boat."

Stylla's expression softened a little but seasonings of doubt were blatantly exposed on it.

"Alright. If that's the case then what do you propose?"

Skullius sighed in relief.

That was good enough belief to work with.

"First, I have to ask. Do you still intend to rely on the Premium Age Royale to secure the future of the Bryne Family?" he asked.

"I intend to. Aside from doing my part to keep the Family standing till then, I do."

"Don't," Skullius said with a stern look.

Ed who was listening in the whole time couldn't understand what the heck these two were talking about.

What was this about dying after helping this man?

What was this about these two using each other...?

Someone explain!

The red head frowned as she heard Skullius' response.

"What do you mean 'don't'?" she asked.

The Hybrid Luman scratched the back of his head again.

"Well... Silrat and I had decided to keep this to ourselves until we saw the end result but since I'm trying to give a convincing argument here...<Sigh>."

"The Premium Age Royale isn't some fantasy tournament to give benefit to the winners. It's also not just the EverSword House's way of increasing their power, as many people think. At least I don't think that's the entire goal."

"What brought you to that conclusion?" Stylla was genuinely curious.

"Back in Inhone City, we captured a man. An Evenfall cultist. When that attack that wrecked the city happened, this cultist escaped and was never seen again... until the Premium Age Royale began."

Stylla furrowed her brows deeper, anticipating the revelation.

"The Game Master.... He's that Evenfall cultist. Name's Guissepo."

...!

Stylla reeled back in shock.

Ed while not quite following got the gist.

He wasn't a witness in the Premium Age Royale but finding out that someone involved in the Royale was an Evenfall cultist...

Wait! Was this even true?

"Are you sure?" Stylla asked as her face turned pale.

"I'm doubly sure. It's him. He remembers me too. During my fight with that arrogant sockethole Kurtish, I could tell when he glanced at me," Skullius explained.

Stylla held up her forehead as many thoughts raced through her mind.

If that was true...?

"To make matters worse, I recall that someone came to rescue this man when we had defeated him. A man from the Green Neolists. So...we assumed that these two groups are working together."

Dear Quintess...!

How was everything flipping on its head so casually?!

Given the fact that Skullius wouldn't do anything to sabotage or plant false information since no one who had received the Control Seal could refuse to participate, Stylla had to assume that at the very least, there was more to the Royale indeed.

Something insidious.

The Hybrid Luman couldn't afford to let Stylla and Ed take their time to digest this, especially Stylla who looked particularly beaten down by this news.

Her hopes were crushed in this one reveal!

"One way or another, this means even if I win, we may not be looking towards a nice ending. That's why, I, with my connection through the Guilds Association, can raise both reputation and coin by completing exclusive missions. Families and mercenaries don't usually mix but I can pull it off in a convincing way. With Silrat's help that is.

Slowly, with the funding and reputation I earn, we can protect the estate and build up the Bryne Family back up."

Understandably, this wasn't much of a finished plan.

As mentioned before, this was improvisation.

A base plan.

"As for you, I know you haven't given up. You're pretty strong on your own and there's no reason to lay low and wait. In as much as you want to discover yourself and all that... you can't afford to let everything leave you behind while you're lost in thought."

The way Skullius' tongue churned out word after word amazed even him.

It was... vaguely familiar.

Outside bullshitting, he was a pretty good smooth talker and his words reached Stylla, producing a reaction from her.

Ed agreed with Skullius' words. Perhaps not his plans yet as he barely knew him but he admired the man giving Stylla a motivational pep talk that fed her reality.

Things wouldn't stop moving just because she had take time to think everything through.

Stylla herself understood that.

She remained silent for a while before speaking.

"You're right. I'm even sure your way has a great likelihood to work and we can genuinely help each other out. However, I still need to figure myself out," Stylla raised her head and looked into Skullius' eyes. "I tried to emulate what my father did and I failed miserably. I wasn't ready and some of my choices led to this. Give me some time to think about it.

If I'm going to agree, I'd rather do it with a clear head and a defined mind-set. I won't take too long."

The red head gave Skullius a sweet smile and he nodded as he rose from his seat.

"I have to go on ahead to Genhuis to settle a few things. Just in case, my Ap-, my friend will stay with you and accompany you on your way tomorrow," he said.

"Thank you," Ed rose and gave a short bow to Skullius. "You've been too big of a help already."

The Hybrid Luman nodded, grateful for the respect. Even though he was part of the Family, intervening wasn't a mandate really.

This is what Ed was thanking him for.

Skullius then exited the room and the building.

In the night sky, Red Rage was flying around, keeping watch when he felt Skullius' presence. He then flew down to meet him.

"I would have been quiet. There was no need to exclude me from there, Master," he lamented.

"Your appearance is too flashy. It would distract everyone. By the way, how long does this state of yours last now? Wasn't it 3 minutes before?" Skullius asked curiously.

It was a strange thing to see Red Rage with his cape and voice for so long.

"Ah, of course you wouldn't know. This is my permanent armament now, Master. I have become the embodiment of Prisma Avaris, the first Pelvis Boar-Man to ever exist," Red Rage said with pride.

Skullius looked dumbly at the Apostle.

First of all, this was Red Rage's new norm? Well, good for the bro!

He could speak for all eternity without cooldowns!

Also...

That hell?!

The embodiment of Prisma Avaris?

Skullius had said he would invest some time into finding out who this character was but sadly, time eluded him back then. The same was true for the current time.

The timer had almost run out so he brushed this subject aside.

"Listen up. I want you to stay here with Stylla, just in case. We'll meet back up in the Genhuis City when... on second thoughts when you arrive, stay behind the city gates and call for me. I can't tell if your presence is too suspicious or not. That's right!

I was angry about you leaving without telling me in the first place!" Skullius grew angrier the more this thought pervaded in his head.

"I knew what I was doing Master! I waited till the sun had disappeared and it's my theory that with Null Life Essence, we can avoid being detected by Divination! So I thought-!"

"Theory?!" Skullius boomed.

All that over a theory?!

[High Cosmetic Body has timed out – 00:00:00:00]

"Damn it! We'll continue this conversation later!" Skullius barked as he dashed away, his form changing when he was already half a mile from the two mansions.

Further into the distance, he became a streak of Levin that hopped high into the clouds under Red Rage' gaze.

"Ah... deep down, he's still the same angry sockethole of a Master I've always known," the Apostle said, reminiscing about old times.

#### Chapter 590: Aimless Roaming, Shameful Deaths

Somewhere far away, Setkh and Karrun were walking slowly with a sombre air about them. It was a dry air lacking their usual vibrant personalities to brighter it up, making the sparsely vegetated lands they trudged in seem like desert lands.

Each step the two took was hard and heavy, scraping against the ground as a blatant depiction of the sour mood both of them were in.

Who knew feet could speak much just from their interaction with the ground?

The two didn't have much of an aim or a place to go and just now, they had performed the lambada with death way too intimately, something Karrun was more aware of than Silrat who had been focused on Stylla.

Seddrik had been about to kill them.

If that caped figure hadn't intervened...

Karrun could only sigh.

That moment had been both a fulfilling and terrifying moment for him, but not for Setkh. This man had other concerns.

The reveal behind his employer's twisted affection towards his sibling had been unnerving for Karrun but in the grand scheme of things, it was flushed down under a ton of the stress he carried now.

"What now?" he asked while gazing at Setkh's lifeless face. Their relationship was professional but because of the circumstances concerning how it was formed and how it developed later on, it had grown more personal.

Karrun had staked everything on Setkh since the beginning.

After completing his first set of months as a Contract Knight at the Carpet Keep, Karrun had been looking for a different line of work.

His expertise and abilities were well appreciated in the Carpet Keep, so much so that one of the Commanders had offered him a permanent post with grand forms of numeration, but Karrun didn't want to continue like this.

He felt like his Mind Casting ability, which he had named Mindful Doubt, was unfit for public works.

He had even been criticised for it but others who only looked at how dangerous it could be. Trust was difficult to establish when dealing with someone who could up and leave at any moment.

Beyond these dilemmas, even though Karrun had an Advanced Class, he lacked heavily in actual combat capability. This wasn't by choice but by circumstance. A trade of sorts. For the time he spent cultivating an Advanced Class, he hadn't been able to simultaneously train up his physical abilities to the same level.

This wasn't too bad in his opinion though.

On his journey as a seeker for more specialised jobs, he had found Setkh who met the criteria for what he wanted freakishly well. It was as if direction was pointing him on this path.

A job where at a moment's notice, Setkh who was running from a mysterious group of individuals who had captured him and demanded him of something he was reluctant to give, would require his ability to escape, was perfect!



A job where he felt like only he could do it spectacularly.

Karrun was confident that even Master Stage experts wouldn't be able to detect him even after figuring out how his ability worked. Mindful Doubt was intricately tried and tested.

This challenge was just what he needed.

Following their official agreement to work together, Karrun was delighted when Setkh invited him into his Family as a further benefit and a cover for the true purpose of their relationship. He would need the man by his side all day, everyday so a convincing argument was needed for why he had such a tail.

Thus, Karrun registered for the Premium Age as a contender but his intention and purpose was never to win or even fight for that matter.

"What now?" Setkh repeated what Karrun had asked with a dark look on his face.

He genuinely didn't know.

"We will still be dragged to the Venue of the Royale by the Control Seal right? You need to make sure you're prepared for that," Karrun informed.

Setkh nodded.

That's right.

The Royale.

The setting would keep him and Stylla close for the next months, each instance no doubt feeding the guilt he felt inside and possibly Stylla's wrath.

Seeing Setkh's face, Karrun couldn't help but sigh in exasperation.

This wasn't what he signed up for. Dealing with deadly assassins and whatnot was great. It was thrilling to watch them all turn dumb after he vanished.

Just like that one time when underlings of this organisation had tracked down Setkh and managed to find him.

Karrun had happily assisted Setkh by giving them the slip.

Karrun was ready to even die by facing someone he couldn't fool with his ability. That would be a fitting death.

Now that this matter included betrayals and complex Family relations, the whole mission becoming an action drama instead...

This was not what he signed up for.

'Makes me want to head back to the Carpet Keep and ask if that post is still available,' Karrun thought with the raise of his head. 'I wonder... did it suit that short woman as much I thought it would?'

In this moment, Karrun thought back to a certain lady he had recommended the Keep to.

Perhaps she was fitting in just fine.

\*\*\*

Genhuis City.

"How did she die?"

"I don't know. I just got here."

"I think someone said something about her tripping and falling. Apparently when her head hit the ground she died immediately."

"Really? Just like that?"

"Just like that."

In the night, a small group of civilians gathered around a corpse that had been hurriedly covered up by a group of women who supposedly knew the victim. It wasn't by coincidence.

These women had been walking with this person when the incident happened and how people were so curious to look at her dead body had lead them to act, holding back the feelings of grief to respectfully hide their friend from unfeeling crowds.

For those who had been there when the woman died, it was truly a mystery how someone could fall to the ground and die like that.

The simple manner in which one could think about it is exactly how it had happened.

It was strange.

A Capital Knight soon arrived to disperse the crowds and take control of the situation. He made sure the crime scene didn't affect the general public too much while calling for his fellow Knights.

He crouched down and uncovered the tarp used to hide the body of the dead woman.

"What is this?" the Knight asked himself with a frown. "Isn't this body supposed to be fresh?"

What laid before his eyes was a partially shrivelled corpse, looking to have been plagued by a terrible disease that sucked up the mana and moisture from the body.

Strange.

The skin was deformed, twisted even.

It was just enough to almost hide the dying glow on the corpse's arm, the light tracing a Seal on it that was popular these days growing dull until it dissipated.

\*\*\*

Guild's Association.

A Guild Master was confusedly looking at his Guild members who had just come from clearing a blue-white Cluster.

For this Guild, as powerful as it was, this was just them taking up smaller requests in order to cover smaller expenses demanded by their growing size.

Petty cash transactions, as they were called in another universe.

Something like this wouldn't take much effort for even three of their members but in this particular case, a total of sixteen new members, all of them Advancement Stage experts, added on their number an experienced member of the Guild who was leading them, had taken up the mission.

But...

"You can't be serious?!" the Guild Master boomed. "Was it a Cluster General that did it?"

The Guilds members from the mission looked at each other with constipated faces.

"No. It wasn't," one of them replied.

The hell?

No way!

"You're telling me Timosse was killed by a common Cluster beast in a low level Cluster? Timosse, an experienced Form User who trained the lot of you in basic defence and awareness?!"

The Guild members shivered.

They didn't offer another explanation as it barely made sense to them how their superior had died such a simple, ridiculous death either. They had been there.

To describe it would be to dishonour Timosse and his skills.

The Guild Master face-palmed hard.

This couldn't be a joke, right?

What in the name of Cluster beasts could have caused this?!

If it was a Cluster General he would have understood, factoring in unique natural abilities those beasts tended to have but...a common beast?

Had that man somehow started slacking off or something?

To lose a member like Timosse was a huge blow to the Guild. He usually handled training and evaluating newcomers as well as taking care of them too.

Now that he gone...

This went beyond sentiments!

"You couldn't retrieve his body?" the Guild Master asked the group to which he was met with sombre looks that answered his question perfectly.

He sighed.

'Maybe cutting practise to go watch the Premium Age whatever pricked his strict self-training routine. Tsk. I can't believe this.'