

Undead 61

Chapter 61: First Encounter

Mana supply, check!

Anxiety, check!

Courage, nope!

Greater hostility plus weak presence it is!

Skullius unboldly sauntered towards the path with the weaker presence. After thinking carefully, he had considered that fighting a powerful enemy was never going to be a good idea.

There was no way whatever powerful titan was in that dark corner was going to be a jolly fellow giving out treats.

Even if it wasn't hostile, that didn't mean it was friendly!

Skullius' experience with Azila never left his mind. Even though the Great Mane Mountain Ape was not hostile at first, even when it clearly saw that he was an undead, it still resolved to kill him for reasons unrelated to just being pissed off.

Fighting an unreasonable opponent who was weak was probably the better choice for him so he decided to try his 'atrocious (?)' luck.

As the Discount Human walked through, he saw a strange scene.

A soft light that looked like it was coming from a dim flame illuminated a single spot from above, tearing away the solid darkness that was present around the vast space ahead.

Skullius couldn't exactly make out everything that made up this place, but the floor was as if made of stone blocks.

Sturdy stone blocks.

They looked chipped and old but they held on through what could have been eons.

Illuminated by the faint yellow light was the figure of an old man with a white unkempt beard and short hair of the same colour. He wore dirty rags and was seated on the ground with his fading blue eyes exuding madness and murderous intent.

He kept mumbling to himself, his voice reaching high pitches from time to time which made Skullius hesitate to move forward.

There were two distinctive features about him that stood out in the dark; a bright white mark on his forehead that looked like multiple knots creating the image of something akin to an octopus, and a large yoke that bound him.

The yoke was black, with no excess detail, as though it was conjured from darkness. It bound both his hands and restricted them to the level of his neck while being anchored to the ground by thick chains.

"Ah... I know... I was with her last night! She fed me her tomatoes too! Actual tomatoes! She had a whole field of them....can you believe it?!"

"Yes! That's right! Back in my day, selling tomatoes was punishable by death! I should have told her that actually. Did you hear me, Tonston?!"

Skullius went from being intimidated to being confused. He approached the old man and while using [Basic Mana Manipulation], he felt the man's core.

It was white with blue embers on its edges!

This old man was definitely weaker than whatever was in the other path. He also looked to be bound, which gave Skullius some hope.

As the Discount Human approached, the old man snapped his head to him and frowned. He then turned away and continued mumbling nonsense, which puzzled Skullius.

"Uhhh..."

What was he supposed to do now?

The guidance field swiftly answered.

[You have encountered your first opponent, 'Sila the great Tower General']

[Opponents in the Labyrinth of the Yoke are weak to 'Just Light' and 'Evil Darkness']

[As a rare individual, a carrier of both affinities, you have been given the privilege of two choices. You can choose to release 'Sila' from his yoke, honouring him with a fair fight or you can kill 'Sila' while he is yoked, depriving him of honour]

[The first choice grants an enhancement to 'Just Light' plus the guaranteed gain of a skill from 'Sila', while the second grants an increase in 'Evil Darkness' plus a chance to steal the soul of 'Sila']

[Which do you choose?]

Skullius looked at the stream of notifications with a careful light in his eyes.

So this guy was called Sila. Was he a captive of Fulgardt?

Skullius scratched his chin, thinking deeply on his options.

If he did the ridiculous action of releasing this hostile old man before killing him - if he even could - he would gain some sort of reward for the affinity of Just Light plus a skill while if he just killed the man, he would get a reward for Evil Darkness plus a chance to steal his soul?

What could he do with the old man's soul?

Freeing the old man would probably be a dumb idea, but it gave a pretty good reward. Skullius could see that this was no ordinary old man, after all. One skill from him would probably be insane, but...

Could he even defeat him?

The other notification had said that the two affinities he had were the bane of creatures like Sila? Prisoners of the Labyrinth.

'Hmmm.' Skullius thought. 'First of all, how do I use these affinities? Evil Darkness... Can I manipulate darkness in general or...?'

Skullius raised his hand and waved it, focusing on the surrounding darkness.

There was no visible change. Nothing moved. Nothing happened.

'Is it because I can't 'see' it?'

Skullius tried it with the weak light that came from the unseen ceiling.

As he waved his hand, trying to find the most minute of changes in the light, he saw something!

It was a shift of the light, a very slight one, like a distortion on the stream of light that rained on the babbling Sila.

'It works... but it's so weak!' Skullius thought.

He drew his sword. Unfortunately for him, he hadn't been able to bring his staff in here. Denille had kept on yapping about how it was just unsightly trash that no one needed, thus she had disposed of it.

Alas, Skullius had been limited to the Baleful Gale Reaper.

He wielded it and unhesitatingly swung it towards the old man's neck!

The old man stopped talking and gazed at Skullius with cold eyes, but the Discount Human didn't halt his attack!

MBIIING!!!

Skullius felt a powerful vibration as the blade struck the old man!

It was as though it had struck against steel!

Skullius grunted and drew back, watching the old man look at him with a mocking gaze.

"You should have told her that selling tomatoes was forbidden! It's you, isn't it?! The one who stole the tomatoes?! I'll kill you!" Sila began raging under Skullius' dumbfounded eyes.

'Bro, what the flesh are you on about?!' Skullius wondered.

The fact that his sword had bounced off this old man's flesh only added to his confusion. Even if he was weak, this blade wasn't a common item. It surely should have done some damage.

'Can I really only kill them with these affinities?'

Skullius looked at his sword and then at Sila who was scowling at him.

"Let's see then. What if I..." Skullius mumbled before he began to focus on the darkness around and try to wrap it around his sword!

With this, he should be able to see how efficient the affinities were, right?

That was if he actually managed to manipulate them.

The Discount Human put his mind to it, focusing on the darkness that seemed to refuse to budge.

He then focused on the sword, as it was what he wished to be able to conduct even the tiniest bit of darkness.

After a few seconds, Skullius saw it!

Jagged bits of darkness clung onto the edges of the sword. They were like small stains on the blade, showing just how little Skullius could do with this power at the moment.

Skullius was gnashing his teeth as he felt that if he lost concentration for a second, the darkness would run back home to the surroundings.

With this much on the sword, Skullius edged his way to the bound Sila, and decided to give it a try.

He raised his sword under the vigilant gaze of the rambling old man and brought it down!

TCH!

A small portion of the sword cut through Sila, pinching into the flesh!

The old man grunted and looked at Skullius hatefully.

"You...! You're using Darkness! It really is you! I will... I will... avenge her for the tomatoes you stole!"

Just you wait!" Sila yelled.

Skullius ignored the idiotic nonsense as just this much progress was great for him to see.

"It really works!" he exclaimed with a joyful expression.

He then went on to don the grinniest grin he could as he began hacking away at Sila's head!

Blood sprayed while the old general kept on babbling about tomatoes.

Skullius did not mind how horrific this scene looked in the least, especially with the added aesthetic of darkness.

It didn't take too long for the aged head of Sila to drop to the ground, and for Skullius to receive his reward for such gruesome work.

[You have killed Higher level existence, 'Sila the great Tower General'. You have gained experience]

[550,000 Exp awarded]

[Would you like to appoint Exp to 'Null Lifeform (Boneman) or 'Discount Human'?]

[Your prey emits...]

Skullius jumped for joy as he saw the massive amount of experience he had just received! If he shipped it all to his Boneman form...

"Hehehehe!"

Skullius felt like things were finally going his way after a long while... again.

He tried to extract the Null Life Essence from Sila, but unfortunately, his bar for the resource was already full.

Before he could give a remark on the matter, more notifications popped up on his guidance field.

[You have chosen to grant 'Sila' no honour, mercilessly killing him while he is bound and trapped in madness. The vestiges of Fulgardt grin with approval]

[You have surpassed the expectations of the Labyrinth with your pure cruelty]

['Evil Darkness' affinity has been promoted 'D' rank]

[You have gained the soul of 'Sila the great Tower General']

"Ohoo...." Skullius said as a nasty grin crept onto his fake face!

Chapter 62: Pieces In Motion

What were the advantages of getting recognised by the Voice of Worlds?

What did one gain above others who hadn't received such an honour?

The criteria to attain this was something that could be described at another time, as Skullius was a terrible case study. Chance played a major role with an overly special circumstance being the final ingredient to his receiving of this gift.

When one was recognised by the Voice of Worlds, they would gain the ability to be informed of things that they would otherwise not be privy to, like exact numerical measures of their strength; the strength of others without having to get powerful skills first, among many others.

With each significant increase in strength, many other aspects would be revealed through the guidance field.

Skullius at this moment was staring at a floating ball in the palm of his hand.

It was Sila's soul.

It was bright, a powerful energy sifting from it, but at the same time, Skullius couldn't help but feel like it wasn't the full package, especially for someone whom he recognised to be stronger than he had initially thought before seeing the reward for killing him.

"What do I do with this?" Skullius questioned. He couldn't imagine exactly what to do with a soul. He didn't have much knowledge about these things because he barely got to leave the tombs and mines to see the actual undead stuff that Liches did.

As he looked at the soul, Skullius felt a sudden desire to... eat it.

It was a weird sensation that made even him to question his own sanity. Eating a soul? Where did this impulse come from?

It was too strange. His head suddenly inched closer to the soul, but Skullius fought back.

Little did he know, this was simply an instinct that came from his Boneman self which still existed, but was just wrapped under the mystical camouflage of 'turning a new Null life'.

The sensation got too much for Skullius to bear and in the next moment, he found himself throwing the bright ball of light into his mouth!

Taste? There was none.

But as the soul went down into his body, Skullius felt a burst of heat that rushed through him with the grace of a fountains spray!

It travelled to all his body parts; the soul broke down into particles of energy that were assimilated into Skullius at once!

[You have consumed the soul of a Higher level existence]

[A piece of 'Sila, the great Tower General' has been permanently engraved into you]

[The strength residing in this soul is too much for you. 99% has been wasted and the rest has been salvaged]

[+35 intelligence]

[+30 Strength]

[+50 Mana]

"Bro!" Skullius yelped as he saw the stats he had just received. This was a great and unexpected haul from a single 'victory'!

Skullius grinned.

"This is a pretty good jump in my stats! I wonder if I can get more from... No! Let me not get greedy. I doubt it will continue to be this easy as I go. At least I have more mana to spare now!" Skullius said while toning down his enthusiasm.

He decided to do this step by step.

First, he transferred all the experience he had gained to his Boneman form, watching with an exhilarated expression as he gained another level, which brought him to Level 9.

Just a step away from Tier 1, with merely 305,800 experience points remaining.

"Just a bit more!" Skullius said with determination.

A double-edged sword crackled with white lightning as it released a barrage of devastating attacks that lit up the space in the narrow corridor!

Unfortunately, the ridiculous response to this incredible assault was even more devastating as the holder of the sword that looked like a fearsome reaper, found a massive axe swinging towards his torso with an even quicker speed than his sword attacks!

As the blade of the axe was illuminated by the flashes of arcs of lightning that ran on his body, Benzard gnashed his teeth and used up a large chunk of his mana reserve to evade the deadly attack.

He turned into a flash of light that zipped its way back to the point where he had been standing initially; he appeared right beside a panting Reon who had his sword ready to attack anytime.

The two had found themselves together after entering the Labyrinth. As they were the strongest two, their pairing was a major concern, as if they reasoned with the assumption that they were all paired upon entry into the Labyrinth and in different locations, this would mean that one of them was alone!

Therefore, they had wanted to hurry and try to regroup with the others but unfortunately...

A tall humanoid creature with aged flesh and dirty cloths on its face had appeared.

It had a blue core with glimmers of purple, which alerted the two as they came to the same conclusion as Denille.

With their perfect coordination and powerful attacks, they had tried to kill of the creature in one blow but unfortunately... it couldn't be done.

"Is this really just the beginning of the Labyrinth? If this is some kind of gatekeeper, I have no idea what the actual challenge is like. What do we do?" Reon asked while lowering his katana.

At this point, he and Benzard already knew that this creature was a reactive type. No matter how long they waited, it wouldn't attack and it seemed to have one skill which he had deduced after watching its movements and using his high level appraising skill, [Source Tracker].

This creature was only physically strong. Its power came from the level of its core which was already ridiculous, but it didn't have much in the way of intelligence. It was a creature conditioned with a skill to respond to any attack with skilful and refined movements perfected through many years of training; but that could be argued to be instinct.

"We have no choice. One of us has to use their Full Body Aura. We are just beginning, we can't afford to waste all our energy and time here," Benzard said. His eyes never left the enemy.

Reon sighed. He knew that 'one of us' meant him. He would have to use to use his Aura, his current full strength, to take down this creature with Benzard's help.

Without wasting time, Reon lowered his stance and took in a deep breath. His eyes closed shut as he then placed his right hand on the hilt of his sword and the left on the scabbard.

Suddenly, bright wisps of mana raged from his blue core and shrouded his figure with a firm enclosure. They exuded a white hue first and then it turned blue, the mana within exploding outwards and taking the vague form of a wolf!

Reon looked to be struggling to keep this form of his mana as even as this shape was formed, raging out and creating a low rumble in the corridor, Reon himself was trembling.

In the next moment, Reon opened his eyes and drew his sword, blinding lights flaring from them as they were directed at the tall creature with a massive axe!

A ripple travelled through the ground in a blink and when it touched the creature, it tinged it with a blue outline which then thundered down and bound the creature in place with a deafening boom!

A crater appeared under the creature's feet as its weight seemed to be increased by Reon's Aura, making it difficult for it to move!

Reon used his full strength, drawing his blade while carefully weaving mana into it for maximum damage with the current added boosts at his disposal!

However, the creature they faced, suddenly moved!

...!

It wasn't supposed to move!

Reon momentarily panicked as in one moment, the creature took a step forward and in the next, it was right before him, swinging its axe casually even while the blue outline around its body which represented the influence of his Aura tried to stop it!

'Dammit! My Full Body Aura still isn't complete! I can't stop it!' Reon thought.

The agitated air parted for the speeding axe and its carrier with crackles and sparks. Reon was already losing his will to fight.

This thing was too fast!

BOOOM!

Right then, an incandescent white light stormed right in front of Reon protectively with the image of a man in a timely rescue!

Benzard looked like a divine being as he swung his sword upwards, the loud clang that rang afterwards spelling the clash of mighty existences!

This was not a simple skill that Benzard was using. It was a Special one.

A type of skill that individuals with white cores could only dream of using.

The axe was parried into the air and Benzard immediately cancelled his skill, his godly appearance vanishing.

"Do it now!" he boomed.

Reon tore himself from the fright and awe as he immediately refocused, charging with immense speed to take the opportunity to cut down this enemy that had been created just for him!

Ethereal slashes with a speedy trails of mana were delivered from Reon as four figures similar to him flickered in and out of existence in a millisecond around the axe-wielding creature!

The lone and intense body of Reon appeared a few meters from the creature with the axe, holding the katana with both hands while a mirage-inducing heat left his body!

The creature with the axe was split apart. Its blood sprayed everywhere as it fell to the ground motionless.

Chapter 63: The Vestiges Of The Ideal Ark

Stages were the humanoid species' way of mastering control over the large amount of power that came with the progression of cores.

With each advancement from one Stage to the next, significant boosts would be attained, making humans and others creatures of similar nature, stronger than beasts.

The first Stage was the Foundation, where one laid down a solid blueprint for their progression. Next was the Advancement, where some were likely to develop Advanced classes but the probability was relatively small.

At this Stage, individuals could awaken a Full Body Aura. It was a concentration of their mana which gave boosts to their already existing attributes and skills.

Benzard, Denille, Irlen and Reon were at this stage. All four had awakened their Full Body Auras, but as Benzard had said, they had barely grown out of their Foundations, unlike Eobald who had been halfway through the Advancement Stage.

Benzard was at LV13, Reon at LV12, while Irlen and Denille were at LV11.

Eobald had been on LV15.

Reon and Benzard stood at a fork in the road that they had trekked after defeating the axe wielder. Three paths were laid before them, each exuding a rather powerful yet unsettling energy that made them both nervous.

All they could think about was the possibility of meeting a foe stronger than the monster they had fought right off the bat and it made them extremely nervous.

The two looked at each other. It wasn't at all outlandish to find such instances in legacy-bearing areas but this was too much.

"The fight probably won't get easier from here. I still have a lot of mana to spare. I'm sure you can back me up even in your state?" Benzard.

"Sure," said Reon.

Waiting would have been an option for them if they had all the time in the world or rather, if they felt at home in this creepy place but they didn't have a semblance of either.

Thus, the two nodded towards each other and walked over to the first path.

As the two reached the path, Benzard who had been walking ahead passed through but Reon bounced off the demarcation to the path.

He withdrew vigilantly with a surprise while Benzard turned to see what had happened.

"It seems like only one of us can enter per path. Will you enter the other one?" asked Benzard.

Reon mulled it over before sighing and sitting down.

"Not yet. I was confident that we'd be fine together but now, I can't imagine myself surviving for long in this place after depleting quite a bit of my mana and using up my Full Body Aura," Reon replied. "You go on ahead. I doubt the Labyrinth will allow us a collaboration anytime soon."

The Full Body Aura was such a strenuous technique. It usually left those who hadn't mastered it for long unable to use it for a full day or more depending on their endurance and mana capacity, which is why Reon decided to wait and recover for a bit before making any rash decisions.

Benzard thought for a while before nodding. Since they couldn't collude anyway, there was no reason for him to stay.

He walked into the path where nothing but darkness could be seen and penetrated it.

In the strange black that seemed to devour all light, Benzard felt a deep sense of foreboding. It was different from when his natural senses told him about an incoming attack.

No.

It was a feeling of being surrounded by a repulsive energy. Evil. A dark power that used the innocent absence of light as a cover; as a mask.

Suddenly, wisps of this darkness invaded his body seamlessly and ran through his being without any regard for his opinion!

Benzard was shocked, commanding his mana to go on the offensive in response but it did him no good. The darkness did as it pleased within his body until...

It vanished.

After the energy was expelled from his body, Benzard strangely felt lingering effects of it within his body. Something had been left behind. Something like a lump of darkness that stuck to his core like a mole.

'What is this? Have I been infected with something?' he thought. He felt his body stabilise again and turned this way and that to see if he was truly alone.

Seeing nothing to be found around him, Benzard moved forward, taking slow steps until he found the darkness to suddenly vanish, making way for a radiant golden white light that rinsed off any blemish in the world and almost blinded him!

Benzard covered his eyes. In the next moment, he felt a burst of energy that didn't feel nearly as invasive as the darkness, penetrate him and shower him with a continuous ripple of light as if evaluating him.

It didn't take long before the white light vanished.

Benzard felt that this time, there were residues left of the light as with the darkness.

Little did he know that Just Light had not seen itself fit to exist in a man who had no explicit evil within him.

However, [Evil Darkness] had seen him worthy, as when his righteousness was challenged, this man was found to have his own version of it that stood tall.

Benzard's eyes saw a new scene appear before his eyes.

Two paths lay before him. One exuding a powerful presence with the creature within emitting no hostility, while the other emitted a repulsive irritation backed by a weaker presence.

A verdant energy died down from Denille's body. She panted as she lowered her bow, her hands feeling like jelly after her attack whose results were before her.

A broken odachi-like sword with a red hot colour to its jagged edges, where Denille had struck with her full power, laid in the hands of a short, aged humanoid.

The surrounding walls held large craters that released streams of smoke and residual mana while chips fell off and yet, the body of the target merely held scratches.

Naught by scratches.

Denille had an exasperated expression as she watched this. Her full strength had done nothing but provide superficial wounds for her opponent and worse yet, the bastard still stood tall, waiting for her to attack.

Was this just a deliberate move by Fulgardt to break the wills of the many challengers?

Denille couldn't imagine there were many individuals who had survived the counters of this creature when it was in its prime.

'I can't do this...! I didn't want to do this! Why must I be here suffering for this?!' she frustratedly bellowed in her own mind.

There was clearly no way she would be able to defeat this thing on her own. She had to move.

It was her only option.

With that thought, Denille sprinted, using her mana to enhance her speed as she raced towards the direction she assumed to hold a way forward for her!

Denille didn't take that many steps before she felt her hair rise. A massive sword was speeding to decapitate her!

Denille ungracefully dropped to the floor in a desperate attempt to dodge the attack and luckily, only half of her hair was cut while her head remained intact!

She rolled on the ground and stood to look at the creature that refused to let her get away with shaking eyes.

Once again, the creature placed its weapon on its shoulder and waited for Denille to make her next move.

There was no escape. One had to die.

"Bleeeeeurghh!" Irlen vomited blood. His eyes lost focus as the surge of pain was too much for him to bear. His sturdy shield had failed to stop the lightning fast attack of the creature with a hidden face.

As someone who generally had low offensive power and mobility, Irlen had been done in by the quick counter dishd out by this creature when he had tried to attack with a shield bash.

All Irlen had felt was the shudder of his body as the spear penetrated and now, he knew he was done for.

In all his life, he had known. He was inferior without a helper, a teammate. He had hoped that the day when he could fight for himself would come but perhaps joining the Ideal Ark and learning that his strong defence even without an outstanding offense was valuable, had made him complacent.

Feeling the encouraging pats of friends on his shoulder when he was the sole reason for their survival from sneak attacks, ambushes and the likes, was a joyous experience for him.

It had been.

Irlen dropped to his knees, the creature he had faced retrieving its spear as blood went on to gush out from him.

The muscular man slumped to the ground.

In his mind, under the regrets and flashing of his life was a sincere hope that his friends would survive and rebuild the legacy of the Ideal Ark.

Chapter 64: Veneration!

[Name : None]

[Level : 1]

[Experience : 1000/1000, <Pending>]

[Class : None]

[Race : Discount Human]

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

[Stats]

[Strength : 40]

[Agility : 10]

[Intelligence : 40]

[Endurance : 10]

[Luck : Atrocious?]

[Health : 60/60]

[Mana : 20/105]

[Skills]

[Basic Mana Manipulation | Lv.4]

[Flesh It Like You Mean It | Lv. 1]

[Bitter-Sweet Hell's Inferno | Lv. 3]

[Artless Dodger | Lv. 1]

[Mana Bolt | Lv. 4]

[Null Extraction]

[Affinities]

[Evil Darkness - D]

[Just Light]

~~~~~

Skullius grinned.

His new status held promise. Already, the effect of the additions to his stats were starting to show as his mind didn't feel muddled anymore. He felt a powerful surge of strength and a growth in his core to carry over a 100 Mana Points!

'This is interesting! Does everyone go through this process? Wouldn't you become unbelievably strong just by participating in this place? No, probably not,' Skullius thought as he turned behind him.

There was nothing but darkness. No exit where one could simply wave goodbye and thank the Labyrinth for the meal.

'I don't think you can leave after killing everything in your way. Oh! Is that the reason why Labyrinth splits people up?!' Skullius inferred.

This seemed like a reasonable assumption. If this place could split up challengers, in many a case at the very least, those with the Keys would most likely be separated, unable to find their way to each other for an escape after reaping some gains.

This conclusion still begged the question of why Fulgardt was willing to grant capable challengers who could defeat these prisoners a sizable boost to their strength.

What would he gain?

Was he that benevolent?

No one would believe that, even Skullius as the short introduction he had been given of Fulgardt didn't exactly paint him as a saint.

'Hmm. Anyway, if I have to continue going forward, then I guess I should wait for my mana to fill up. I can also try out to see what this increase in [Evil Darkness] can do.'

Skullius reached his hand towards the darkness and surprisingly, it moved along with the movement of his hand!

There was vast difference from when he had used it prior to killing Sila.

Visible lumps of darkness swayed this way and that, following his every intended gesture.

While this feeling was great, he didn't get what the endgame was? What else could this darkness do? It was called [Evil Darkness]. Was there something more to it?

Skullius suddenly got an idea when he looked to at the illuminated ground where Sila's body lay.

There was no way this was an infinite space with no walls. This was a labyrinth, so logically, this was supposed be a room filled with this mystical element.

The Discount Human raised both his hands and began focusing to part the darkness before him. Slowly, the black was pushed away and some manner of visibility was restored.

Skullius walked for a few meters before he reached a wall.

Since his sight had already acclimated to the normal darkness, he could see the contents of the wall just fine.

Various markings could be seen strewn about on the wall.

They weren't simple markings drawn without a sense of substance. Darkness could be seen wiggling in the grooves of the carved symbols that looked consistent enough to be a form of language or some sort of spell.

Skullius couldn't read it. [Greater Communication] didn't cover literacy after all.

He touched the symbols and a strange feeling bubbled within his body. It was a reaction from [Evil Darkness] which sought to connect with what was written on the walls!

Skullius found a surge of darkness welling up within his body as his affinity to the dark element caused him to grasp some of the symbols written on the walls.

Instinctively, Skullius began saying out the words he understood under the influence of [Evil Darkness].

"One... bound... forever.... yoked.. Those... to...

captives... gain.... their strength... will.... done..."

Skullius confusedly tilted his head. Even though his upgraded affinity to [Evil Darkness] had helped him understand some of the words, the paragraph that he had read made no sense.

As he looked further, parting the darkness, he saw that there was a whole lot more to be unlocked.

Unexpectedly...

[You have managed to partially learn a high level art with your flimsy level of affinity to 'Evil Darkness']

[You are the second individual to achieve this feat and the Labyrinth gives its reluctant congratulations]

[Certain conditions have been met...]

[You have awakened the forbidden art of 'Evil Veneration', created by Fulgardt to battle the Deities of Aigas and beyond]

[You are unable to use the fullness of a high level art]

['Pseudo Evil Veneration' has been awakened. You are able to use the art of 'Evil Veneration' at a capacity of 1%]

"What? I gained something like this?" Skullius looked at the notifications dumbly. "Veneration? What does it do?"

As this was already available in his status panel, Skullius checked the details.

~~~

[Pseudo Evil Veneration | 1%]

<Verbal Veneration Type>

Words delivered with an evil and cruel intent will be actualised to reality to a certain extent. Due to the art being a lesser form of the true 'Evil Veneration', the use is limited to short phrases and the efficacy varies depending on luck and how cruel the intent propounded is. Differences in strength barely matter, unless opponent has reached a high Realm of power.

~~~

"..."

This was...

Skullius re-read what was written many times before he slumped and cooled down.

"Whatever I say... actually..." he said. "But wait, there must be a limit. This is ridiculous. Of course, it says that level doesn't matter but..."

What was this?

This was a bit too much for Skullius. Things were happening a bit too fast.

It was really a good thing for him to have escaped from Denille when he did, as now he had managed to reap some sizable benefits already.

'Is this something someone of my level should have though?' Skullius thought. 'Who cares?! With enough practise I'll definitely make this into something that will allow me to reap Somanda... among other things...!'



At a moment like this, Skullius was again thinking to do all night spam spree with Red Rage if the future allowed.

"It's based on luck though... <Sigh>. Will this end well for me? I should still try it out, right?" Skullius said as he once again stared at the status panel, genuinely thinking that this new addition to his arsenal would suddenly disappear.

## Chapter 65: Wing Man

Something had been bothering Skullius for a while.

Now that his mind was much clearer, the question Skullius had when he had run away had received an answer.

It had been a spur of the moment thing when he had rushed away from Denille after seeing that she had her hands full with the creature at the beginning of the Labyrinth.

Why had that creature let him go?

Wasn't it some kind of guardian?

Would he also be considered a trespasser?

In that moment, Skullius had just bet on a chance and it had worked, but now he understood.

The giant fox had given the answer already when it gave an introductory speech to Skullius and his group.

'...He didn't acknowledge the weak, but he never bothered with them, never putting them in his sights.'

He was ignored because he was weak. The guards were made bearing the same philosophy as Fulgardt and therefore didn't attack Skullius.

However, that wasn't the only reason. The other more meaningful reason was something Skullius didn't know but it went a long way in explaining an ancient history between Fulgardt and the Deities.

Get to the point, what was the reason, one might yell?

Skullius hadn't been acknowledged by the Deities. This detail was vague but enough.

Skullius opened his mouth to say something just to check what [Pseudo Evil Veneration] would do but he suddenly stumbled.

Something within him had changed for the worst.

His mana supply had suddenly declined!

The once abundant streams of mana that he was enjoying from the arrow stabbing into him suddenly became thin wisps that staggered, slowly showing signs of dissipating!

"Damn it! Not right now! Did Denille decide to cut off her supply of mana from me?" Skullius surmised.

That wasn't right. That was something she would have done a long time ago and it was implausible for her to only now consider it.

Was she dead?

Maybe!

Or perhaps she was injured and couldn't afford to supply him mana anymore!

Whichever the answer was, Skullius wouldn't be able to find out anyway!

"What to do! What to do! Wait! If I can get more souls, I can increase the amount of mana I can handle! Will that work? VOW bro did say that I have to support myself with mana so maybe the reason I've been unable to save myself is because I don't have enough mana for it!

That's why he said I needed to reach Tier 1! Gaaaah, my mind!"

Skullius clutched his head as he felt a painful pulse in his mind!

The tense situation had caused him to go into overdrive, working out many things at once!

When it came to his intelligence, he wouldn't suddenly turn into an idiot just because his stats had decreased like what happened when he had used [Flesh It Like You Mean It].

His mind would simply become clouded but he was still equally as capable of thinking as he did with his high stats in the Boneman form.

Skullius shook his head and rushed forward. He didn't know what exactly he needed to do to move on from this place but assumed that going forward was his best chance.

He ran past the corpse of Sila and went deep into the darkness, cautiously making his way ahead.

Soon, a little visibility emerged, four paths appearing before Skullius.

The Discount Human halted and looked at these paths.

There was double the number of paths as last time!

Also... it wasn't a simple matter of choosing the one he thought he could survive in anymore.

All of them hissed with different types of powerful presences and hostilities that Skullius had never felt before!

His fake body mimicked the swallowing of a large lump of saliva. His grey eyes raced between the four paths, his mind working against the limited time he had to see if there really wasn't a better option!

After confirming that there was no better choice, Skullius just ran ahead, disappearing into the second path.

He was desperate to not meet his maker anytime soon!

As he went in, Skullius' bold choice and unrelenting will to survive was not rewarded by something reassuring.

In fact, it was the opposite!

Skullius felt his whole body shudder as another illuminated figure appeared in his view, bearing a magnificent appearance that was soiled by the piled on layers of age and thick darkness around.

A soft wind of power blasted Skullius continuously as this being who was bound by a yoke just like Sila, raised his head to look at Skullius.

A humanoid appearance with a tall frame knelt down as a thick yoke bound his hands, sturdy chains connecting it to the floor.

This figure had golden hair that flowed to his feet, bearing traces of dust and dirt. His face was filthy, different mixtures partially covering the untended skin, while sharp eyes that held a bright, true sapphire light gleamed in the darkness.

An armour that looked to have been made for a celestial king adorned the tall figure, being a combination of gold and crimson, the breastplate bearing a grand insignia that made Skullius instinctively back away.

The armour was very old with rust eroding most of its former grandeur.

The most intriguing feature about this being however, was the single, massive wing that came from his back!

It held numerous white feathers that were covered in muck and dust, twitching from time to time as it lay on the ground.

Unfortunately, a sad tale could only be told about the other wing as a bloody stump was all that remained of it.

"This..." Skullius stammered.

His [Basic Mana Manipulation] tried to reach the figure but it was blocked. He was not even being able to tell what this individual's core was like.

[You have encountered your next opponent, 'Arch-Luminant Dezrael']

[As a rare individual, a carrier of both affinities, you have been given the privilege of two choices. You can choose to release 'Dezrael' from his yoke, honouring him with a fair fight or you can kill 'Dezrael' while he is yoked, depriving him of honour]

[The first choice grants an enhancement to 'Just Light' plus the guaranteed gain of a skill from 'Dezrael', while the second grants an increase in 'Evil Darkness' plus a chance to steal the soul of 'Dezrael']

[Which do you choose?]

'What do I choose?! I don't even have a fair choice! Who in their right mind would free this guy?! I'm not even sure I can get near him!' Skullius panicked.

Dezrael's eyes flared with mana and he spoke with a frightening voice.

"El'u suv Ka'ril."

Those simple words caused even the darkness around to tremble as even though Skill didn't understand what they meant, something clicked in his body and core.

He stood aloof and suddenly, his body jerked forward!

'What's going on?! What is this?!' Skullius thought as his body involuntarily moved ahead.

His legs moved against the raging energy that exuded from Dezrael until it stopped a meter from him and...

He bowed!

Both of Skullius' knees touched the ground and while stuck in unbelievable shock, the Discount Human's upper torso leaned forward!

Dezrael looked down at Skullius with eyes that showed a regal authority and he spoke, this time in a language that Skullius heard.

"Free me."

Chapter 66: Hard Work!

"What?" Skullius said with a duck face over his generic one.

Dezrael had said something that he understood this time.

This at least told Skullius that he was now using a language that was classified within the scope of [Greater Communication]'s range.

Free him?!

Flesh no!

"Free me."

Dezrael spoke with a soft, high voice that caused a shiver to race through Skullius' body.

'How am I even supposed to do that?' Skullius thought as he was too scared to voice his opinion. What if he made this guy mad and got fleshed up?

"I sense it from you. You have it. You have grasped the essence of manipulating this darkness. It's what makes up this yoke that binds me. Come here and cleave it away," Dezrael said, his eyes flashing with mana intimidatingly.

A burst of hot air and mana brushed against Skullius, making him grimace.

Just that little display of power caused him to lose some Health Points!

'Damn it! What do I do? This guy really expects me to set him free. I—'

"Essu'l parik dos tep't, Ka'ril."

A thunderous power acted upon Skullius from Dezrael's words, making the Discount Human's body jerk forward unwillingly!

'Again?' Skullius thought in frustration.

His body moved while his hands took up the Baleful Gale Reaper.

As he drew closer to Dezrael, Skullius felt the burning sensation of power worsen by a great degree even though he had moved a few steps closer than the meter's worth of distance that had existed between him and the Arch Luminant before.

The majority of this power was mana in a vastly condensed form and Skullius noticed that it wasn't just coming from Dezrael, it was also coming from the gold and crimson armour he wore!

There was a distinctive difference in the mana that flowed from Dezrael's body and the mana that flowed from the armour which Skullius was barely able to notice with his [Basic Mana Manipulation].

The Discount Human stood mere inches away from Dezrael, noticing his imposing presence from up close. He could barely keep his eyes open as the power radiating from this monster kept blasting onto him like waves and depleting his health.

To make matters worse, his mana supply from the arrow finally stopped from flowing in!

'NONONONONO! Come on! Not again! I was ju—'

[The Doom Factor 'Disowned' has caught up]

[Assessing target's situation...]

[You have failed to grab a hold of—

"Oh no you don't! I'm not dy- getting erased today! And stop cutting me off!" Skullius boomed, making Dezrael raise a brow in confusion. He hadn't missed the arrow sticking out of Skullius' belly, mana leaking from it into the fake human's body until just now. However, he wasn't interested in the story behind it.

[Basic Mana Manipulation]!

Skullius in a last ditch attempt to save himself with all the knowledge that he had so far about this Doom Factor, used the only mana manipulation skill he had.

Since mana was abundant right here, he would just absorb it and try to feed it to his core continuously!

The mana that hummed from Dezrael was drawn to Skullius when it reached a few inches from his body, as was the current reach of the skill in terms of drawing mana in the surroundings.

Skullius felt mana trickle into his body and he directed it to his core rapidly, feeling the task to be vastly different from when he was using his own mana to coat weapons.

Since the activation of the skill did not require physical gesture of any kind, Skullius wasn't hindered by the compulsion from Dezrael's words.

He found his hands rising as he wielded the sword, preparing to start hacking at the yoke!

"What good will absorbing my mana do for you, especially with that pathetic grasp you have over drawing it?" Dezrael sneered.

Skullius didn't render him an answer.

The Arch Luminant didn't much care for it, going on to command Skullius to accomplish the duty he had assigned.



"Use your grasp over this darkness to cover your sword and remove this yoke from me."

Skullius gnashed his teeth.

He was already sweating as the pressure of his mind doing one thing while his body did something else was too much for him.

His body mimicked the heaviness of exhaustion and it made things much worse.

To top it all off, Dezrael wanted him to focus on gathering [Evil Darkness] onto his sword to destroy the yoke!

'Just my luck! We were fine just some minutes ago! What's with this?!' Skullius thought frustratedly.

Could he do these three tasks without crippling his mind?

There was no choice. He had to try.

On the bright side, the notifications for Doom Factor 1 had stopped coming in which probably meant that he was in the clear for now.

'If only I'd thought of this back then. Did changing into a Discount Human turn me into that much of an idiot? VOW bro even told me that [Mana Sense] would be the key to helping me with Doom Factor 1!' Skullius agonised. 'Or maybe it's better that I didn't think of it back then. I wouldn't have been able to hitch a free ride until now.'

Without further delay, Skullius dedicated a portion of his mind to drawing the darkness around and wrapping it around his sword.

Surprisingly, it wasn't as strenuous as it had been before [Evil Darkness] was upgraded to rank D.

A layer of darkness covered the Baleful Gale Reaper, giving it a beautiful inverted look; like a black and soft grey x-ray.

Dezrael watched with careful eyes as Skullius did his thing.

This wasn't the first time he had seen this. Three challengers had once passed by here, carrying the power to wield this darkness and for some, to wield a strange light.

He had killed the first two as even though he was bound; he had powers that were free from Fulgardt's seal, such as his speech.

When the third came, he decided to find out if he could use their ability to grasp onto the strange darkness around him to destroy the yoke which held a similar power.

Skullius struck down with his sword onto the yoke and felt it barely scratch the hard surface of the yoke!

'Gah!'

A slight mark had been created from a full power slash from Skullius!

Not that his full strength was anything impressive.

'It barely did anything.'

As Skullius looked intently at the yoke. He only now discovered that there were marks of damage on it.

Some were scratches like his own while others were deep gashes, with the deepest one running through a quarter of the thick yoke!

"It's not working. If I keep this up, it will take years to destroy this thing," Skullius said as he looked at Dezrael, his hands already rising for another try, void of his control.

"I know. You will slave away, hacking this yoke until it breaks for as long as it takes," Dezrael replied, a tame malignance noticeable in his voice.

"What?!"

'This sockethole is really going to make me do this for that long?'

Skullius would die or turn into a madman midway because of the Doom Factors!

Once more, Skullius brought the darkness covered blade down at the yoke which felt like it was made of wood!

Another scratch appeared, looking like it would disappear from the pile of black at any moment.

It was discouraging. It was infuriating.

Even though Skullius didn't want to be doing this at all, he had hoped it would be a quick process at least still.

This couldn't go on.

'Right! What if I...' Skullius thought as he recalled that he had a new weapon. The sudden encounter with a creature this powerful had caused him to forget that he had this.

[Pseudo Evil Veneration]!

He just had to say something with evil intent, right?

But what if it didn't work and Dezrael heard him say something obscene against him?

Well, he could just whisper it, right?

Skullius opened his mouth, focusing on the face that he was really hating on right now and...

"Eat yourself."

"..."

Dezrael heard Skullius' words and couldn't quite understand what this weakling was trying to do.

'Eat myself?'

"Turn inside out."

"..."

'Gah! It's not working! I knew it wasn't going to be something so simple! There's probably something else I need!'

Dezrael ignored Skullius' words, thinking of them as childish mumblings.

Skullius sighed as his body continued to work hard.

With time passing by, his body continued to feel heavy and his mind felt like it was assaulted by thunderstorms. His snarky comments lessened as his focus was pulled in by the work he was forced to do to keep his existence.

Suddenly, a refreshing feeling enveloped him, bringing his declining health back up again.

Skullius was puzzled. He looked at Dezrael and found the Arch-Luminant to be donning a nonchalant expression.

"I can't have you die on me before you free me. There will be plenty of time to die afterwards," Dezrael said.

He wouldn't let Skullius die until he was set free, unlike what he did with the other challenger who died of extreme exhaustion. He hadn't bothered to continue healing him as it hadn't been that long since he had been trapped at the time.

He had been spunky and hopeful, thinking that there was a better option instead of this agonisingly slow method of having the incompetent bastard hack at the yoke.

But now, he had learnt patience.

Dezrael had healed Skullius, but the Discount Human couldn't have felt more depressed.

It was already astonishing that someone with his enormous amount of raging mana that was once again beginning to scrape off Skullius' health couldn't break free from this.

Where did all this mana even come from?

A few minutes passed with Skullius doing the arduous task he had been granted.

It was extremely boring and tiring, especially with the add-ons of his other tasks. Since it had come to this, he thought that he might as well strike up a conversation.

Sila couldn't communicate, what with all that rambling about tomatoes - whatever those things were - but Dezrael seemed sane enough.

Skullius couldn't help but wonder.

Was he using the mana just to keep his mind intact?

"So, Wing bro. How did you end up here? Were you like, fleshed up and captured by Fulgardt?" Skullius asked.

"I WAS NOT CAPTURED! WATCH YOUR MOUTH, YOU FILTH!"

An unsightly expression smeared itself on Dezrael's once regal face, his mana bursting in a frightful manner and beating against Skullius' body which flew a distance away!

Skullius rolled for a moment, before coming to a stop.

He then stood up hurriedly, shocked at the sudden outburst and the ugly expression on Dezrael's face that caused him to take a few steps back with a drop of sweat running down his face.

"Well... damn."

Chapter 67: Choice...

What was with this guy all of a sudden? Skullius was puzzled and confused.

This didn't last long though, as right when he was looking to understand what had ticked Dezrael off...

[The Doom Factor has caught up]

[You have failed t—

"Oh come on!" Skullius completely threw all his previous thoughts aside and rushed towards Dezrael!

He started sucking off... the mana that came from his body and armour!

Just the little bit of time he had spent away from the concentrated mana source that was Dezrael had already warranted Doom Factor to catch up!

He had ignored the wrathful face of Dezrael along with the intimidating presence as he had to be ali- not be erased above anything else.

Skullius didn't look at Dezrael's face as he continued to use [Basic Mana Manipulation] to absorb mana.

The influence of Dezrael on his body hadn't ceased. His act of rushing towards Dezrael hadn't gone against the orders that he had been given, thus it was excused.

"I was not captured," Dezrael breathed out deeply as he calmed down, voicing in a soft tone.

"Gotcha," said Skullius as he wore a limp smile, his hands rising to strike against the yoke again.

And again.

TAK! TAK! TAK!

This was the sound that pervaded the surroundings for a long time as no one spoke for a while.

[Basic Mana Manipulation has levelled up!]

'Oh,' Skullius thought. It was something that he should have expected, but somehow it had gone over his head because of the tense situation. 'I wonder how much I can level this skill up. Maybe I can try other stuff to level it up as well.'

Time passed.

The Discount Human continued to work while also throwing some hateful insults in hopes that [Pseudo Evil Veneration] would work.

Split open!

Explode!

Disarm yourself!

Nothing worked!

After trying for a while, Skullius gave up on trying this art for now as he saw Dezrael's face becoming uglier with each phrase he threw.

He didn't know how much time passed but it certainly wasn't as long as his mind made it seem. [Flesh It Like You Mean It] hadn't been dispelled after all.

This whole thing made him feel like he was back in Deadmanland again. The monotony. The bore.

Doing something over and over again without the sense of it growing unbearable, only slightly annoying, was a tragic experience.

Somanda sentenced him and everyone else to this fate without remorse, enjoying the invisible pain that was reflected on him and his fellow Moronic Undead in passing.

It wasn't fleeting. It was prevalent, making Somanda enjoy it as a form of leisure for his aged existence that barely felt a thing aside from a twisted sense of pleasure.

How would divine beings experience any form of stimulation?

Through aspects that mortals would consider unruly, immoral or evil.

That was the point of Divinity. Not being bound by the norm.

Skullius gnashed his teeth as he remembered Somanda's words.

They ignited a sense of agitation and irritation that spurred him to grasp the mana from Dezrael with an even more intense grip.

A wave of cool energy would alleviate his pain and allow him to furiously continue his task without much of a problem and Skullius got used to it.

He also got used to receiving the numerous notifications about [Basic Mana Manipulation] levelling up.

With each subsequent notification and enhancement to the skill, Skullius felt the range and clarity of mana become detailed, his control also becoming better.

Each level of the skill caused a significant change to his mana control abilities and he kept at it.

Skullius had switched from slashing against a new spot to cutting at the deeper part that was left behind by the last challenger who ventured here.



After who knew how long, Skullius was already three quarters deep into the yoke.

The more he kept manipulating the darkness, the better he got at it.

Even Dezrael who had expected for Skullius to take longer as he was weaker than the past challenger, was surprised.

Skullius seemed to have a vastly greater appreciation of the [Evil Darkness] than that challenger.

"Why did you foolishly come here despite being so weak?" Dezrael asked.

'This guy...' Skullius grumbled within. Now he wanted to talk?

"I didn't have a choice," Skullius replied.

"There's always a choice."

"Says the sockethole who's trapped in a prison. Why don't you CHOOSE to escape?"

"..."

Dezrael was surprised by Skullius' response.

"How bold. Hmm. I made a choice. Which is why I'm here," he said.

"You just said there's always a choice. Meaning that you can continue to choose. Why don't you CHOOSE to—"

"I SAID I MADE A CHOICE! A SACRIFICE! CHOICES HAVE CONSEQUENCES!" Dezrael barked fiercely, looming over Skullius who shrunk.

"Gotcha."

This felt familiar to Skullius somehow.

Dezrael relaxed, taking another breath to calm himself.

"You have yourself to blame for being here. I don't give any excuses for my current state. I accept it because I wholeheartedly took on what came with my choice. But when I look at you, I see a mixture of anger, hatred and regret. All are ingredients for a foolish journey where you blame others for where you are now, instead of taking the reins to your future."

Skullius took all of this in with a blank face.

"...Ouch bro."

Was it true?

Yes.

Skullius blamed Somanda and his grudge was true. He blamed Eobald, Benzard, Irlen, Denille and Reon for leading him into this situation.

But... wasn't he taking his own destiny by the reins?

There was literary no other option for him but the cessation of his existence if he didn't do so.

The Discount Human's resolve was once again fortified.

'I am not weak anymore.'

If he hadn't made the choice to stray from practicing [Boneman of Steel], taking up the option to focus on mana, he wouldn't have been able to draw the books that contained [Lifeless Evolution] and [Flesh It Like You Mean It] to him back then.

If he hadn't struggled, taking risks to level up, he wouldn't have survived this long, gaining powerful skills that saved him against the Darewolves, the orcs and goblins.

There were moments where luck and opportunity met to create a miracle, yes, but the point still stood, he had made the choice to go forward.

"What choice did you make?" Skullius asked.

Dezrael saw the flicker in his eyes and scoffed.

"That fiend, Fulgardt raided my world. He was overwhelmingly powerful, bullying the severely outmatched opponent that was my entire race. I was the strongest warrior, so in the last moment, my friends and family gave their lives to inscribe their power and life energy into this ancient armour which was passed down only through the royal family."

"I see," Skullius said.

That explained the immense power that was radiating from the armour. Just how many people sacrificed themselves to make it last for thousands of years?

'So this guy is being kept alive by all that power huh? That makes him thousands of years old though. It's a miracle he's still alive.'

"The royals had already died and I was the next best option, so the armour was given to me. I used it to battle Fulgardt. Our battle was epic, rocking the entire world and bringing it to the brink of collapse.

The power I had received kept flowing in and I almost felt that I could beat him, but at what cost? He didn't back away either and the world was about to be erased, alongside the remnants of my people. So..."

"I surrendered. I asked for Fulgardt to take me in exchange for letting my people live. That fiend was so happy, spouting nonsense about adding me to his collection, that I had been fun to toy with. He accepted my deal but didn't fulfill my request completely.

He only saved a handful of my people, placing them on Aigas to live among the other races here, while the rest, he used for his own evil purpose."

'Sounds like Somanda to me,' Skullius thought, showing no empathy at all.

He continued to hack at the yoke until it was almost fully carved up enough to free Dezrael's right hand.

The Arch-Luminant looked at Skullius who remained indifferent towards his story and scowled.

"It's beings like you that are so nonchalant to life that deserve to die in place of those like me! Your poor choice has led you into my hands! You shall be next in the line of humans that I kill as I get my vengeance for what that cruel fiend did to me! To my people!"

The yoke finally broke, Dezrael's hand becoming free just as a thick chunk of the yoke dropped to the ground.

The Arch-Luminant's hand suddenly grasped onto Skullius neck and pulled him closer!

The sword from Skullius' hand dropped to the ground as he had finished his task, his body remaining docile.

"I will enjoy taking away your choice along with your life since you clearly don't need it!"

Even though Dezrael's other hand and head were still bound, he still felt a massive chunk of his strength return to his body, his legs rising from his previous kneeling position!

A ferocious golden red tint flared, consuming Skullius but failing to overpower the darkness beyond the two.

It came with a powerful wave of energy that radiated with even more intensity as Dezrael wore a content smile.

Skullius' body began to burn up from being exposed to the energy!

His skin started to burn away, his regalia also beginning to fragment as it couldn't handle the power of an existence such as Dezrael!

As Skullius was almost lit on fire, he couldn't help but curse at his own luck.

'Really?! This is how it ends?! After all that?! Why am I in this position? Because this guy thinks I haven't made some tough decisions too?! He's only alive because many people helped him!

How is he any different from me!' Skullius thought as rage consumed him.

Was it his atrocious luck that was acting up to deliver him to Somanda's hands so suddenly?!

Even though he couldn't feel the pain from his cosmetic flesh being destroyed, the frustration was torment enough.

Dezrael's expression as he made sure that Skullius didn't burn away immediately, struck a cord with Skullius.

For a moment, Skullius saw the overlapping, illusory image of a dark green skeleton with vibrant red flames over Dezrael. It cackled as it drew closer, making Skullius begin to shiver.

Rage, disgust, hatred, malevolence and a brutal desire welled up in Skullius.

It rose up from the deepest parts of him, his mind flickering as it reproduced the image he had seen in that cold place, of the girl trapped in the block of ice!

All that he felt intensified at this moment as even though he knew it was over, he couldn't help but spew from his mouth the most evil he could ever intend to befall another being, even if it wouldn't make sense to anyone not from his crew of Moronic Undead!

Chapter 68: Kek!

"|GET FLESHED|!"

The command caused a phenomenal change to occur in the surroundings.

Only Skullius appreciated its meaning and the amount of malice that it held as it carried the deep and pent up emotion that he felt!

It didn't matter if it made sense to Dezrael or anyone else because like it or not, someone was going to get FLESHED!

...And [Pseudo Evil Veneration] intended to execute this command in a very literal sense!

The darkness surrounding the two while they were enveloped by the golden red energy, stormed towards Skullius, flooded into his mouth like dark air, and then blasted outward, as though rushing to catch his words!

"What?!" Dezrael was astonished by the development.

He withdrew his hand from Skullius' neck with a cautious expression and prepared to take on whatever this weakling had prepared.

A storm of concentrated darkness gushed to strike Dezrael in the chest with a speed that was way beyond his capability to respond!

It punctured through the armour and invaded his body. It then surged as a noticeable black, inky ooze under his skin at a ridiculous speed, seizing control over his entire body!

"ARRRRRGHHHHHHHBLBLBLBLBL!" Dezrael screamed in pain as in the next instance, his flesh began to bubble in a disgusting manner, expanding and contracting as if something blasphemous growing within him was attempting to escape!

Skullius dropped to the ground as he felt all his mana drain from his body!

[Pseudo Evil Veneration] had activated, but it immediately drained him of all the mana he had!

But that wasn't all; it latched onto Skullius' [Basic Mana Manipulation] and rushed to devour the mana that flowed from Dezrael's body as well!

The winged being's body inflated further!

He grew to almost four times his normal size, becoming a mass of disgusting meat and bone that unsteadily changed shape, with the only constant being his head, which held rolled up eyes and an aghast expression frozen in a shuddering scream of agony!

The pain that the Arch-Luminant felt was unreal!

His armour had burst in some portions and fallen off.

Skullius watched in awe. He felt his body grow weak (heavy), his mind spinning incessantly, but he didn't MIND!

All that he thought about now was how [Pseudo Evil Veneration] had worked!

So what if his arm was charred, his face half missing while he was barely clothed!

Dezrael's massive body couldn't exist in this form any longer.

The mana he produced had continued to act as a fuel for [Pseudo Evil Veneration], but there was a limit.

So...

POP!

KSPDHEJESTSJESHHH!

Chunks fell down, raining with thick, disgusting grace.

However, Skullius didn't feel any disgust or repulsion at all. He only felt bliss.

Soon, what he had been waiting for finally showed.

[You have killed the Higher level existence, 'Arch-Luminant, Dezrael'. You have gained experience]

[Calculating...]

[3,804,950 Exp awarded]

[Would you like to appoint Exp to 'Null Lifeform (Boneman) or 'Discount Human'?]

[Your prey emits...]

"Hehehehehehe!" Skullius laughed as he saw the experience reward!

With this, Tier 1 was already in sight!

[You have surpassed the expectations of the Labyrinth with your display of 'honour' and your immense level of cruelty]

[A special situation has occurred]

[You have shown 'Dezrael' honour by removing his binds, allowing him a 'fair' fight and also stripped him of honour by defiling him in an unsightly, perverse way]

[The vestiges of Fulgardt grin with approval]

"I did what? I didn't free him because I wanted to!" Skullius protested.

[You have gained the rewards from two scenarios]

['Evil Darkness' affinity has been promoted to 'C' rank]

[You have gained the soul of 'Arch-Luminant Dezrael]



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

[You may choose a skill from 'Dezrael's' arsenal]

[Compiling list...]

Skullius jumped up and down in joy as he saw the rewards for his 'hard work'.

"Oh, I thought [Just Light] would get the same rank as what [Evil Darkness] had gotten before. Is E lower or higher?! The information packet didn't cover this. Ah, I'll find out later! Let's just check the good stuff!"

However...

[Interruption...]

[The Doom Factor 'Disowned' has caught up]

[You have failed—

"COME ON, BRO! NOT NOW!" Skullius roared as his joy dissipated in the sudden storm that was this annoying Doom Factor.

"Manamanamanamanamanamanamana!!!"

Looking around, he saw the armour that Dezrael had been wearing and raced towards it at full speed!

He didn't know if what he was attempting would work, but it was the only working idea that he had.

He had thought of possible ways to survive before and the option of donning this armour which had mana that had lasted for thousands of years had crossed his mind.

Skullius reached the armour and saw its pathetic state. It had been rusted, which made it hard to maintain its integrity under the ballooning of its wearer just now.

A chunk of its left side from the chest plate to the pauldron had been blown off, but the armour seemed decently intact.

Skullius wore the large armour set and immediately activated [Basic Mana Manipulation]!

"Ohh..."

Mana burst into him with intense vigour, nourishing his body and filling up his core!

'This isn't because of [Basic Mana Manipulation] at all! The armour is readily supplying me with mana!'

Skullius once again felt relieved.

He thought that the armour would reject him but that didn't turn out to be the case.

Though he didn't know it, the power within the armour had been raging for millennia.

Any subconscious reason that it once had for recognising only Dezrael was eroded by time.

All it yearned to do now, was to keep the wearer of the armour safe and nourished!

While Skullius wouldn't know all this, he did notice something strange about this mana sifting through him.

It wasn't like his own.

It had a greater quality to it, though it was not quite like the one he had felt from Benzard and the others.

'Strange,' Replicus thought. 'But welp, doesn't really matter right now!'

He plopped to the ground. He had dodged erasure once again, even though he had paid a price for it... again.

His mind was ringing as extreme exhaustion sat on his body in the form of cruel weight.

He could barely think straight.

He looked at his arm that was a black, charred husk, the skin on his chest left brittle and hard, the ease with which it could be crumpled very apparent... How annoying.

All this barely mattered, however. The Discount Human was still in the game.

[Interruption solved... please wait...]

[List of skills belonging to 'Dezrael' compiled:]

[Radiant Apocalypse - Special]

[Elusive Speed Saint]

[Primal Sun - Special]

[Edifying Light of the Luminant]

[Luminous Healing]

[Edos Summoning - Special]

[Son of Luserus - Special]

"Ooooh... so many."

Looking at the rather sizable list, Skullius couldn't help but emit a satisfied grunt.

Which one to choose though?

He speedily read through the descriptions and his eyes almost popped out of his sockets!

"Ridiculous!" Skullius remarked.

All the skills had absurd levels of offense, defence and damage but...

"THE COST!"

For instance...

~~~

[Radiant Apocalypse (Special) | Lv.1]

Manifest a foreign authority that brings with it a bright, crimson radiance which transforms living creatures below the Incandescent Stage into ravenous beasts with a passive aura that destroys all life.

Mana Requirements: 7,900 (I) Mana Points

Duration: 10 Minutes

Cooldown: 10 days

[Primal Sun (Special) | Lv. 1]

Create a miniature sun that steals all the heat as well as mana from an area spanning up to 500 meters, compounds it within itself and then attacks the target.

Mana Requirements: 10,780 (I) Mana Points

Duration: 1 hour

Cooldown: 15 days

~~~

These were ridiculously powerful skills, but they would cost Skullius an arm, a leg... his skull and pelvis.

This wouldn't even be enough.

Furthermore, he couldn't even use most of them even if he had the mana because his core couldn't support these skills.

They were Special.

Skullius would grow to know the difference between normal skills and the rest with time but Special skills required a blue mana core or above to cast.

The colour of a mana core depicted the quality of mana it held (even though mana retained a white hue regardless of the core it was conjured from). The same value of mana in a white core and a blue core, for instance, was different. There was a rough disparity of ten times!

Many of the skills on the list shown in Skullius' eyes were offensive but those that weren't were not bad either.

[Edos Summoning] would call upon an odd creature that would gain its master's abilities and amplify their effects fivefold.

[Elusive Speed Saint] would grant the user a 200% boost in speed for 3 minutes with the sub-effect of creating realistic after-images that ran in different directions to the user!

Skullius wanted these but...

"<Sigh>. I can only pick one. How did Dezrael lose with all these skills and so much mana?!" Skullius yelled at the splattered remains of Dezrael.

It was indeed vexing.

Skullius had already made his choice after reading the descriptions of the skills.

It was only logical to choose this after all that he had experienced.

[You have chosen the skill 'Luminous Healing']

That's right.

Skullius had chosen [Luminous Healing]!

This was because he had considered how low his survivability was. He had been about to die just by being in the presence of Dezrael before, which was tragic, to say the least.

Besides, the costs of the other skills made sure that he wouldn't be able to use them until he was overpowered as flesh.

On top of all this, it had the lowest cost.

~~~

[Luminous Healing | Lv.1]

Conjure a pure energy that runs through the body to heal damage and even cause spontaneous growth of special cells that can regrow lost limbs and cure deadly ailments. This skill can also be used offensively.

-Additional mana insertion after the base requirement can improve effects of the skill-

Mana Requirements: 200 Mana Points

Duration: None

Cooldown: 2 minutes

~~~

Skullius didn't have 200 Mana Points but...

A bright floating soul that was before him promised to solve that issue.

Dezrael's soul was much brighter than Sila's for obvious reasons. Skullius hoped that it would give him better stats.

His hopes were to be granted with a bit of something else as well.

He grabbed the soul, feeling the strange persistent desire to devour this glowing piece again and then...

\*Eating sound\*

Chapter 69: Switching Things Up

Skullius devoured the soul.

The sensation was different from when he devoured Sila's soul. There was a major difference.

While there was still no taste, an electric feeling smothered his entire being, coursing through his soul and inducing a rather exciting sensation!

Once more, the soul broke down in Skullius' body, going on to fuel it with only a smidgen of the power that belonged to Dezrael.

Soon, notifications streamed into his sight, bearing the results of what this soul had given him.

[You have devoured the soul of a Higher level existence]

[A piece of Arch-Luminant Dezrael's soul is permanently engraved in you]

[You have gained Luminant Seed]

[The strength residing in this soul is too much for you. 95% has been wasted and the rest has been salvaged]

[+150 Mana]

[+75 Health]

[+50 Strength]

[+20 Endurance]

"Hoo..." Skullius breathed out.

It pained him every time he heard that there was wastage. This time ,however, the guidance field had said that there was only 95% wastage which was a positive... right?

As he paid more attention, Skullius realised that it was probably because he had gained something else from Dezrael's soul.



~~~

[Luminant Seed]

The soul of Dezrael has condensed the essence of his race and it has been passed to you. As a higher ranked existence, Dezrael's peak strength in relation to his racial abilities has found its way to you in the form of a seed from which you can extract the benefits of being a Luminant to a very limited degree.

~~~

"I don't get it," Skullius said after rereading it.

He requested to see this seed and the guidance field spat out a spherical object the size of a fist. It had a dull golden hue that made it look ethereal. It did indeed look like a seed.

"Do I eat it too?"

Sensing his desire to use the seed, the guidance field brought the seed to Skullius' chest, and the round object sank into him seamlessly!

Skullius watched this process with curious eyes before noticing that a soft tingle ran through his body.

[You have used 'Luminant Seed']

[Racial alteration attempt in progress...]

[Processing...]

[Racial alteration failed. You cannot bring out the latent potential within the 'Luminant Seed'. The seed will remain dormant until host has reached the Advancement Stage]

'Sighhh.... At the end of the day, I'm still so weak. I can't even level up, which is tragic. I wonder if there are many as strong as Fulgardt or Dezrael though.'

Skullius put the issue of the seed to the back of his head.

What could he do? He didn't really understand what this Advancement Stage even was, but he could guess that to reach it, he needed to level up, which, for the moment, was impossible.

He looked at his messed up body.

He now had a mana capacity of 255 Mana Points which rivalled his Boneman form's Mana Points.

Unlike before when he would have to wait or resort to using [Basic Mana Manipulation] to draw in and wait for hours until it filled up, Skullius found his core filled with mana in less than a minute.

"This is extremely convenient!" Skullius exclaimed happily.

He didn't waste time and activated [Luminous Healing].

A stream of relaxing energy burst into his body with such an invigorating sensation that Skullius emitted a moan of pleasure!

The soothing energy washed away the crispy, black skin on his arms and face. Skullius saw the rapid regrowth of his cosmetic flesh and he grinned.

Soon, he was as good as new, with a clean generic face that screamed of optimism.

Once again, mana streamed into his core to fill it up.

The effect of Dezrael's armour was too good!

The Discount Human would have been extremely satisfied with the armour if it didn't look like it was on its last legs.

Well, apparently it was on its last legs!

~~~

[ArchLight Generation Keeper]

An armour forged by ten of the royal blacksmiths of E'kald. It is made with extremely rare materials and carved with countless runes and mythic circles that enable it to hold the power of at least a 100 Incandescent Stage experts. It can store mana through a pocket core built into it, and can also store items within the subspace it was forged with.

-Defense-

2400

-Durability-

15/3500

-Special Effects-

- Can store pieces of the armour set

Currently stored – (Helmet)

- Can store mana from willing participants

Current mana limit – (34,562/21,000,000)

- Can reflect 50% elemental and physical damage

- +25% Agility

- +40% Strength

~~~

Skullius wore a grimace.

The armour had a capacity of 21 million units of mana?!

Even though only a fraction of that was available to Skullius right now, he was still bewildered.

This was unbelievable. It was a miracle that he had survived his encounter with Dezrael. If not for [Pseudo Evil Veneration], he wouldn't have survived.

Speaking of that monstrous ability, Skullius decided that he wouldn't use it for now.

Even though he had been lost in the ecstasy of watching that sockethole, Dezrael explode, the side effects he had faced had made him wonder what would have happened if [Pseudo Evil Veneration] hadn't latched onto the Dezrael's mana!

What if there had not been any nearby mana around?

It really seemed like he would have been devoured by that darkness too.

Was [Pseudo Evil Veneration] unstable? Was this detrimental feature because it wasn't in its true, completed form?

It seemed like a greedy force that required tonnes of mana.

The conditions to successfully using the art were still vague. To truly wish evil upon someone was a hard concept for Skullius. He only had such a thing for Somanda but no one else until now.

'Oh well. Now for the moment of truth...' The Discount Human thought.

With his healing done, he went on to pump some experience into his Boneman form to which he received the notification that it had finally reached LV10!

Oh yes!

This was good!

...But nothing else happened.

"I really have to wait for the countdown to end?! Gah!" Skullius grunted in disappointed.

Well, perhaps he shouldn't have been surprised.

Accepting his fate, Skullius looked around and noticed the broken yoke on the ground. Glints of golden white sparked frequently with an extremely dim light.

He approached and touched the yoke. Surprisingly, with a bit more focus, Skullius found that there were a myriad scribbles on the yoke in golden white.

They looked a bit like what was written on the wall, yet more intricate.

As he felt over them, the darkness and light on the yoke resonated with his affinities!

Once more, Skullius found himself gaining a bit more of an understanding about what was written as he ran his fingers over the writing that was engraved with the dancing elements.

It was much clearer now.

"Only a wielder of my two masterpieces in.... can .... this yoke... A choice is rendered where the flick of a finger from even the weakest carrier can... remove... bind..."

Skullius read on, his face scrunching up. He turned to the chunks of Dezrael and gnashed his teeth.

"I didn't have to spend all those hours slashing this thing?! I could have just easily commanded it to be broken?! Are you serious?!" Skullius barked.

Indeed.

From the beginning, everyone who managed to acquire [Just Light] or [Evil Darkness] or both had the option to release the opponent they found.

It wouldn't be much of a fair choice if it was hard to remove the yoke in the first place. The first option to show your opponent honour would be void if that was the case.

Dezrael did not know this for obvious reasons, which is why he immediately resorted to using Skullius to cleave the yoke off.

All those hours had gone to waste for absolutely no reason.

The Discount Human tried to decipher all the wording on the yoke but he still found it to be inadequate as he couldn't understand all the words.

After a few minutes of venting his frustration, Skullius decided to move forward. He had reaped some gains, but he barely felt secure.

His armour, while powerful, was still losing its durability; it was close to shattering. When that happened, Skullius didn't know what would happen to all the power that was loaded within it. Well, he would lose it, for sure at least.

Now that he had faced someone as strong as Dezrael, he wondered what other fiend he would face next.

He kept the Baleful Gale Reaper in his hands as he walked forward.

"No need to look back, there's nothing left for me if I suddenly give up now," Skullius said to pump himself up. It didn't help much.

He walked into the darkness and just like last time, he appeared at some kind of intersection.

That wasn't exactly accurate as there weren't any options aside from a set of double doors that loomed over the fake human.

Their height was roughly four meters and they looked to be made with a unique bluish black wood carved with the same design that Skullius and the others had seen at the gate leading into the Labyrinth.

The flamboyant design of two different flavours of the same man was portrayed on the door as well.

Skullius gulped.

What was it now? Was it still something of a challenge again or was it something else entirely?

The Discount Human didn't get to wait for long as a notification popped before his eyes.

[The Labyrinth of the Yoke welcomes you to dine in the grand hall of Fulgardt after the preliminary test you have endured. You can choose to enter this great hall and honour Fulgardt's hospitality - a courtesy that need only be observed for a short time before leaving as you wish - or you can choose to continue challenging the thousands of bound warriors within the Labyrinth]

[The vestiges of Fulgardt will give rewards for either of the choices made]

After the notification popped up, a pathway suddenly appeared behind Skullius, releasing dangerous thickets of energy that were by no means inviting. Well, they invited, but they didn't promise good tidings.

Skullius wore a wry smile.

Things were switching up.

Chapter 70: Found One

"Another challenger, I see."

Benzard heard the being that was held by a yoke before him speak with a blank expression upon its face, yet... bloodlust oozed like a river from this creature; it had been so since the moment it saw him enter!

It was only by not looking at this creature's face that Benzard understood that his conjecture might have been right.

Even though it was bound, it still released a terrifying amount of strength that Benzard was sure was above his own.

When the choice to pick from between the two paths, one holding a powerful yet dormant presence, and another holding a weaker yet hostile presence, his mind had tried to reason out the best possible choice.

Was this a case where reverse psychology worked? Where the one with the dormant presence was actually the hostile one and vice versa?

Or was it reverse, reverse psychology where the choices were just as blatant as they appeared to be?

In the end, Benzard decided not to waste time, picking the path which had the stronger presence.

One might wonder why he would choose this instead of a weaker opponent just to be safe, but the answer was relatively simple.

Benzard wasn't here because he was forced or dragged along. He was here because he wanted the legacy of Fulgardt the Immoral.

Challenging a stronger existence than his own? He would definitely do that.

Wasn't his end goal for battling against the cruel scheme of the Green Neolists which Eobald revealed, demanding of a strong will and immense power?

Indeed!



This place was a Labyrinth, the resting place of a warrior who wanted to grant challengers the opportunity to gain what he had cultivated over the years.

There was definitely a way to overcome each stage of the trials in store and acquire outlandish might.

Would fighting weaker opponents count him as worthy to inherit the strength of someone who was known to seek strength to such a frightening degree that his moniker became 'Immoral'? Certainly not.

At least that is what Benzard thought.

Besides, if it was just about surviving, Benzard was pretty confident in being able to escape if things got too hairy.

...

Before him was a half-human, half beast. It towered over him even when it knelt down, bound by a thick yoke in the darkness.

A human face coupled with beastly features like fox ears at the top of its head, large canine teeth and red fur that covered its entire upper torso except its chest could be seen on it.

This creature didn't look hostile, but it sure as hell didn't take kindly to seeing a weak human saunter its way and stare at it so casually.

The fact that this creature wasn't hostile - as the intersection would have had Benzard believe - was merely a half truth.

"Will you also try to kill me?" the creature asked with a straight face, a faint glint lighting up in its eye.

Benzard did not give an answer. Upon seeing that it was bound, he reined in his extra caution and vigilance, taking the time to scrutinise every detail available.

'It speaks in the Known Language, which means it bothered to nurture friendly relations in its past. At least I hope. Can I get anything by talking to it?' Benzard thought.

"Hmmm. Let me give you a piece of advice, challenger. Nothing awaits you at the end. It's too much of a price to gain what's ahead. You humans care for the future and family almost as much as my kind do. If you have hopes for such, I advise that you leave this place," the man-beast said.

Benzard frowned.

"You really think I'd believe that?"

The man-beast didn't answer. It simply lowered its head and closed its eyes.

'Some piece of advice. I didn't come all this way for nothing. I'll see it through to the end. I need this! I need strength that defies logic! Only then can I be free from this sorrow and helplessness that you left me with, Eobald!'

Benzard didn't bother conversing anymore as what he needed to do was pretty much clear. These captives were merely here to be killed, not reasoned with.

Fulgardt wouldn't orchestrate a charity where he had to make friends with these bound creatures, right?

Regardless, something was meant to happen.

In less than a moment, Benzard's sword had left its scabbard and whipped its way towards the man-beast's throat!

THK!

The shaggy hair and flesh of the man-beast barely ruffled under Benzard's strike, which greatly shocked him!

'What?!' he thought. 'I didn't add my natural element, but I packed a significant amount of mana into my strike just now! This should have done some damage at least!'

Benzard scowled as he pumped more mana from his core and swung his sword again!

A white flash lit the space with a steady and vertical motion as it sought to split the man-beast in half, but...

The result was the same.

The sword failed to penetrate the creature's skull, as if the man-beast was protected by something or possessed an invincible body!

'What's going on?!'

The man beast didn't flinch. He kept his head hung as if he wasn't fazed at all by the attacks.

In that moment, something within Benzard's chest nagged at him, pushing against his mana core.

'Hmm? That again? What happened back then? Is there something wrong with my core or did something really invade me?'

Benzard being an expert who had mastered his body significantly, breathed out as he searched for what it was that suddenly began to nag at his core.

His senses created a blueprint of what was possibly happening within him, his mind travelling over the muscles, blood vessels and bones until he saw his bright blue core that was stationed in a separate section of its own!

It looked like a bright, glimmering world that oozed of life, thick and brilliant veins spreading from it and reaching into his body!

'What is that?'

A small black ball was latching onto the bright core, shifting ever so often with vigor and shaking the mana core a bit.

Benzard's first instinct was to remove it from his core and examine it separately.

He produced thin wisps of mana from his core that grabbed onto the small ball of darkness and began trying to yank it away!

However, as soon as the wisps tried to pull the small lump of darkness, the mana that made them was greedily absorbed by the lump!

The lump of darkness wiggled as it then went on to draw more mana from Benzard's core incessantly!

...!

'Damn it! What is this thing?!'

Benzard was shocked by this sudden development.

He wanted to create more wisps that could grab the lump of darkness and yank it away but the result was something he feared.

Soon, the lump of darkness began to grow, bubbling creepily until it suddenly expanded outwards, creating thin tendrils that rushed into Benzard's body!

Benzard's consciousness immediately disconnected from his literal introspection, and he found himself looking at the man-beast, back in the outside world!

Before he could exclaim the question of what was happening again, a strange sensation ran through his body and he vaguely felt a strange connection to the darkness that was around!

Benzard's superior sensory capabilities and awareness of his own body had allowed him to notice these minute changes even with the low rank of his new affinity immediately, unlike Skullius.

His body felt like it was being supported by that lump of darkness!

Now that he looked at it, the darkness around him was very strange. It was not just a lack of light. It was too thick to be called that.

Was this the same thing that was within him?

'Come to think of it, it reminds me of the darkness from that place...' Benzard thought as he remembered the first path he had gone through.

He raised his hand towards the darkness and his keen eyes noticed a fluctuation within him as well as a change that occurred with the darkness he tried to get a feel for!

He moved his hand as he looked at the darkness and it shifted towards his hand slightly after the influence of the dark lump resonated with him.

'Interesting,' Benzard said with a light smile. 'It's something I can manipulate?'

\*\*\*

Reon had just exited the space where he had been blasted by both a deep darkness and a stellar light.

When he faced the choice of the two paths with different presences, he didn't hesitate much before entering the one with the weaker energy signature.

His usually calm demeanour was long gone as he felt uncomfortable about the current state of events. Everyone was split up and there was no guarantee that the others were alive.

Nothing made sense anymore.

Why were they risking this in the first place? It would have been better if they were together, but...

"Your ambition is the one that has killed the last of us, Benzard," Reon said with a deep, bitter scowl.

Upon entering in the dark space that held a weaker but hostile enemy, he calmed himself and prepared to launch his quickest attack at the sight of his enemy, but...

"Oh... I finally found another one, ahaha. A rather weak one though."

Reon's heart almost stopped as he saw a huge, bald and naked man munching on the head of an frail-looking geezer dressed a set of grey robes, struggling to free himself the giant's grip and the yoke!