

Undead 1151

Chapter 1151: Fate of Giants! (1)

Sause once again wore a broad smirk.

He wondered, because of Replicus' phrasing, if he had heard about his status from someone instead of having seen how desolate Edagon was despite being incredibly vast – as the largest continent on Aigas.

"Indeed, I am, ahaha," the Giant said. "But the tale is likely not as solemn as you think and it is too inappropriate to bring between the negotiations we were undergoing."

"Right," Replicus said. He had too many piles of curiosity floating through his head right and now admittedly, it wasn't his own idea to suddenly ask about something else. It was a product of having many voices debating in his head. "What have you decided on then? Will you show me?"

Sause gave a solemn breath and folded his arms.

"I will. Under one condition. I cannot judge the heart merely by words. I need assurance that I can truly trust you, ahaha. I suppose that will require a Tie of Exchange," he said.

Replicus didn't see a problem with this.

It was all well as long as Sause agreed to his request.

"Alright. Then, I will—" Replicus began when Sause once again gestured for him to stop.

"I will not be performing the Tie of Exchange with you, ahaha," Sause said, much to Replicus' surprise.

"What?"

"I will do it with what has become of the carcass of the Scaled Elder. He is under your command, is he not? I sensed a boundless presence earlier and a terrible heat. I can only assume..." Sause said as his voice broke lightly.

Replicus was perplexed, not just by what Sause was suggesting but also by the fact that he seemed to truly be torn about this matter. For so long, the Giant had remained a mystery to him. Sause had been a powerful creature beyond his reach, immensely knowledgeable and always casually expressing that his circumstances were things he could change on a dime. Well, perhaps not always.

Replicus never forgot how horrified Sause had been when he, Replicus, had told him that the deal for their Tie of Exchange was for the Giant to help him fight an Arch-Lich.

"Hmmm. I suppose that should work," Replicus said to the Giant.

He didn't think he had any reason to refuse.

Thus, he called upon Beyrmir and what seemed like boundless, boiling mercury spilled from him upward and rapidly constructed the mega behemoth that was the Mercurian Long-Snout Legend. Where the six limbs of the great Null Lifeform set its feet, the ground was splashed in scorching mercury. The weather seemed to change all around Edagon. An overblown version of summer rocked the world immediately.

Sause, Yuyui, Benzard, Aurolio and even Ferex looked up at the creature in both awe and shock.

"Oh my... oh my goodness..." Benzard said, his eyes bulging.

Aurolio wore an ugly look when he realised he couldn't even fathom Beyrmir's extended jaw, much less the dreadful power barrelling out of him like a limitless, scorching flood.

Yuyui was packed with more awe than fright. She seemed more enthralled by the fact that her master had something so vast and powerful as his servant, and in terms of sheer presence, it didn't lose at all to the original Jerthrax.

Sause, on the other hand...

His eyes turned glossy.

A strange look appeared on his face.

"Magnificent..." he said and a smile broke over his face.

Remnants of the history he had read long ago scrolled through his mind and as he compared them to what he was seeing right now, he couldn't help but feel that this version of his fallen Elder was more akin – in both size and stature – to that of the father of Jerthrax and Jiggorrhax: Seongssax, the Ivy.

Only a dragon of that calibre, last of the Eternal Drakkens could have matched up.

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It didn't take too long for the Tie of Exchange to be completed. The terms, as one would expect, detailed that in exchange for Sause showing Replicus the truth about the Richness of Aigas, he was not to let his ambitions get the better of him and try to steal it.

Of course, Sause was confident that Replicus, even though the Tie of Exchange was not made with him, would honour it, after all, as long as they were on Aigas, there would be retribution to be gained for the breach of the Tie of Exchange and Replicus placed a significant degree of value on his newest Apostle.

Following this, Aurolio asked Sause permission to accompany them as well. He was willing to also guarantee that he wouldn't do anything sketchy under a Tie of Exchange.

"You seem like the type to let bygones be bygones. Come on," he had said while looking at the Giant who couldn't believe how shameless he was.

Sause surprisingly allowed it, however. The look that flashed in his eyes seemed to suggest that he was confident nothing would happen to this object of interest even without the guarantees he was creating with Ties of Exchange.

If that was the case, Replicus didn't bother to give him fair warning.

Aurolio was crafty. During the battle in the Null Remnants, he had used their transfer out of Aigas to bypass the punishment of the Tie of Exchange which barred him from killing 'Skullius'.

Soon after Sause and Aurolio completed the magical contract, Sause led everyone to the far North.

On their way, they saw the devastation that had been wrought by Replicus' battle with Caxellac. It was tragic to say the least. There were signs that the continent had shifted in other regions, nearly breaking off to create a few new islands. It was rather terrifying.

New lakes and rivers had been created, and Sause made it a point to mention each and every new change with an "ahaha" at the end of every sentence.

"So..." Replicus said, still floating in the skies, "...mind telling me now how and why you are the last living Giant? I assumed there were others. A few months ago in the Labyrinth of the Yoke, you spoke as though you had people waiting for you. Or was that a lie?"

Sause gave an airy chuckle. Benzard, who was walking next to him wore an odd smile. He remembered the day he woke up in a giant bed on Edagon.

"It was no lie. There were others here. Not too many, but they were there. Giants, both old and new. It's not easy for us to reproduce, you know? One would expect that our extinction is only a matter of time, ahaha," the Giant said.

"The change in our fate began four thousand years ago, during what is called – as I heavily despise – the First Grand War. When my kind scoured Aigas, teaching all races about the Deities who made them, ahaha. I remember laughing when I heard the humans believe the Giants retreated from that war because they were defeated. Ha! Cruel, insensitive lies. We retreated for a more sombre reason."

Chapter 1152: Fate of Giants! (2)

"Scaled Elder Jiggorrhax was the one who called back the Giants," Sause said, his face stone-like and his eyes shining.

At that moment, he and everyone following after him, had reached quite a massive mountain that rose up to the clouds, penetrating them easily even when it barely seemed to be reaching its limit. It was quite wide, spotting a girth of roughly four hundred kilometers in diameter.

A set of large stairs, clearly built to accommodate Giants wound around the structure, disappearing where it fed into the clouds.

Replicus narrowed his eyes and frowned.

Strange.

It took him and everyone else around him a second or two to notice but... this mountain had just appeared out of the blue. Its seamless introduction into their surroundings would have gone unnoticed if everyone here hadn't been expecting something extraordinarily unusual for obvious reasons.

Like before, Replicus didn't have to ask.

Sause already knew where his and the others' thoughts were winding around.

"This is the Sovereign's Peak. Some of our most skilled predecessors from before the navigated time – the First Grand War and beyond – created it and applied Creeds to it in order to forever hide it from those who didn't need to see it, ahaha," he explained. "Only when accompanied by a dragon, or Dragonsson – us Giants – can one see and interact with it.

And as long as it stands, Edagon can never truly perish, you see."

Replicus was intrigued.

"Is that so? Dragonsson, huh?" he said.

He vaguely remembered that the Grinning Jester Fox, the guardian of the Labyrinth of the Yoke had called Sause something like this after the two – plus an unconscious Benzard – had exited the labyrinth back then.

As for the detail about the Sovereign's Peak, Replicus had been anxious about what exactly would become of Edagon if he and Caxellac kept fighting on the massive continent. The scale of the damage they caused, he was sure, would have levelled a landmass like Feinheath within the first minute or so. The continent wasn't nearly as dense with mana as Edagon.

Now, as he came to know, there was never a need to worry about destroying the whole damn continent in the first place... somehow.

Sause set to climb the first step on the Sovereign's Peak.

"I'm afraid there's no quicker way to get to the top. We have to climb, ahaha. Apart from the Eternal Drakkens, no entity has been able to fly up or warp to the top of this mountain. We pay our respects by either clawing our way up or climbing with the stairs. Follow," he said.

The journey was treacherously arduous.

Even Replicus, who dreaded what his flying Ju`wtte might do to the others, had to use the stairs, though, thankfully, it didn't cause any damage whatsoever to the Sovereign Peak. He did, however, have to walk a few dozen stairs behind the others.

They had climbed for two minutes in complete silence, when Replicus asked:

"Why did Jiggorrhax pull the dragons back? You seem convinced that there was no way you could lose. You said as much back when we met in the Temple of Unlusted Tears too."

Sause chuckled.

"Right," he said. "Well, I suppose that much had first to do with the reason why the Giants decided to travel around in the first place. Humans and Sif realised belatedly, but our intentions weren't truly pure, or rather, they were mildly misguided. Back in those days, Elder Jiggorrhax, while rash and young, only about two thousand years old, did not desire to interact with us much.

He said we were noisy and that deterred him from hearing what Suzamete desired of him. Thus, he left us to our own devices, allowing us to roam Aigas as we wished. He believed, as sons of the dragons we would never jeopardise Aigas' integrity. Well, until we did, ahaha."

"Some of us believed that to liberate Aigas, we, the next generation of the most loyal creations of the Deities, would need to rule over all else. Who could blame us, really? The Sif were busy giving offerings to trees and seas instead of playing the role of keepers. And humans, well, humans were being humans. Driven yet cruel.

The idea to take the helm on Feinheath and Opungale was born after seeing the great division between humans, as opposed to how the Sif united under the High Family."

Replicus nodded sombrely .

"Well, I feel like that's a bit harsh," Aurolio said with a chuckle. "Cruel? Power is an order even the Deities can't monopolise. As a result, they can't control the systems it creates, can they? Among humans, it just happens to breed some rather... selfish ideals. I bet your round trip to Maqi must have taught you a lot of that."

Replicus couldn't say he disagreed. Perhaps he was a little shallow in his understanding of how the Sif worked, but he knew humans. It wasn't exactly as though humans chose to be driven. The inevitability of there being those that were stronger than others formed the systems that reigned over not just the humans, but the beasts.

Sause gave Aurolio a sharp look.

"I don't disagree. I liked how driven the humans were. Many fascinating... enlightening, philosophies were born because of that. I especially enjoyed how, amidst the shallow 'Might makes right because that is the natural order' type of opinions, there were more nuanced views, like Fulgardt's, for instance."

"Fulgardt's?" Replicus asked.

"Yeah. Fulgardt's," Benzard, who had been eerily quiet, finally spoke. "When we met" – he looked at Replicus – "I believed he was a simple man who had believed that strength was everything, not bringing anything else in his sights, but upon understanding his ideal, I found a nasty bit of irony."

"Fulgardt gathered strength because he didn't think there was such thing as freedom. He didn't believe the Deities were free either. He believed that as one gained strength, they gained greater privileges when it came to selecting who and what purpose they would serve in the grand, set scheme of reality.

He believed in this mysterious figure known as the Wanderer Who Seeds, a being he boasted was above even the Deities, above all reality. He claimed his power came from him. He hated the three

Deities because he believed them, and every other kind there is, to be deluded, attempting to steal the role of the Wanderer of Seeds."

Sause laughed.

"Well read," he complimented Benzard. "The man also believed that if given a chance to step into the role of Deity, he would decline, ahaha. He told me this before I even taught him how to breach through to a Divine State, in fact. Headstrong man, that Fulgardt."

Replicus and Aurolio were thunderstruck and Sause caught onto it.

"Yes," he answered before they could ask. "I was indeed the one who turned Fulgardt into the Immoral. Of course, to do that, I had to stay behind after Elder Jiggorrhax called us all back. I rebelled. And of course – having stalled enough – we, the Giants – were called back to be scolded and then fed to a young Jerthrax."

Chapter 1153: Fate of Giants! (3)

"WHAT?!"

Replicus, Aurolio and Yuyui exclaimed.

Sause laughed.

"I believe I prefaced all this by stating the reason behind our falling back wasn't at all so sullen. To us, it was the greatest honour and of course, the perfect punishment for acting contrary to the freedom that the Deities established on Aigas. Well, I think that's how those who were devoured felt, ahaha. I wasn't there. I merely read the records and heard a few eye-witness accounts."

"Hold on. Were your kind simply fed to Jerthrax as a form of punishment? That seems a little harsh," Replicus said.

Sause shook his head.

"No. If that were the case, we would have all been fed to the young Elder, but we weren't. Only about two-thirds were sacrificed. As for the purpose, ahaha, well, I suppose you can chalk it up to Divination.

Unlike Elder Jerthrax, who was close to reaching his prime when he perished, Elder Jiggorrhax was highly proficient in six Advanced Classes and two others that would have been the equivalent of Hidden Classes back in those times. One of his Advanced Classes was Divination.

I believe, according to his words – the records I, Benzard and many other Giants have found – he foresaw the catastrophe that followed the departure of the Deities Listafelle and Quintess. The weakening of the Rules that allowed outside cretins, undead and all to harass Aigas. He saw it all despite being none the wiser to the cause."

"For that reason, he felt it necessary to bring up Jerthrax, who was roughly five hundred years old at the time, up to considerable strength. That could be achieved by sacrificing the lives of the Dragonsson with Creeds in tow to accelerate his growth."

Replicus' curved eyes shone bright.

So many Giants were sacrificed for Jerthrax's sake and in turn to weather the foreseen danger.

'I see. The Emissary mentioned it in his narration of the Ashing of Time. Jiggorrhax used his powerful breath to patch up Aigas while Jerthrax, the second Elder protected the whole of Edagon, shielding it from the adverse aftereffects. I suppose this was what Jiggorrhax hoped.

He probably didn't know exactly how he would handle the tragedy, but he wanted to be able to protect Edagon as well if push came to shove – if he needed to do something drastic, like he ended up doing,' the Warmoth's Progeny thought.

"Interesting. I wouldn't have thought," Aurolio said, his mouth twisting.

Yuyui shivered.

"Who are more important between dragons and Giants?" she asked with a slight tremble. "I mean, Giants are supposed to be the proud descendants of the dragons, so is it really alright for them to be sacrificing themselves?"

Sause scratched his chin.

"It's not as simple as who's more important. We as Giants were never meant to surpass the dragons, only just to preserve what the dragons represented, especially the Eternal Drakkens. I always found that honourable, quite like my kin, but a bit stale. Perhaps that was why Fulgardt's ideals, while they didn't sway me, enticed my mind; they had me entertaining newer trains of thought.

I almost spilled over the edge because of him, but reined myself in at the last second, ahaha," he said. "I don't regret it though. I would have missed history in the making – the unusual progression in the power system of Aigas that was brought on by humans, shockingly."

Aurolio raised a brow.

"Unusual progression? What do you mean?" he asked.

"Territories, of course," the Giant said as he trudged on.

"Territories?" Replicus asked, confused.

What did Territories have to do with this ?

"You probably don't give it much thought, do you?" Sause scoffed significantly. "Territories were never meant to be part of the system the Deities designed for the humans. They came to be when the man who formed Pelian – if that's what it's really called – formed a contract with a particularly powerful guardian beast to learn such power, transferring its knowledge to the humans.

Only then did Territories become an integral part of the Incandescent Stage. It was rather interesting when I learned it too. I understood the appeal, but of course, it had a price."

"A price?" Replicus was perplexed but couldn't find the words to properly ask every single question he had at once because Sause was moving so fast.

Sause looked at the clouds that were growing nearer and nearer by the second with a rather solemn gaze.

"Beasts were never meant to reach Divinity. Or rather, their path to it is far more treacherous than that of humans. That's how the Deities deemed it. A blockage was put in place, to steer them away

from Divinity. That is what a Majestic Territory is. An expression of the self that keeps one detained and hypnotised by a tiny glow, a tiny demesne they can create themselves as a mortal.

It keeps one's sight limited, and usually most beasts never grow out of it. They begin to think they have attained great power when there are others out there capable of creating an infinite number of such tiny demesnes," Sause explained while Replicus, Aurolio and Yuyui gaped.

"That's why higher-level beasts are compelled to stay within their Dormant Territories. They remain stalled in delusions if they are weak-minded. When humanity attained the power to use Territories, heh, I watched them slope downward, viewing the Incandescent Stage as a peak of power much too glorious and rarely advancing further.

Humans at the Incandescent Stage sacrifice their Creeds to supply energy for their Territories instead of looking towards how better else to use these powers, which, by the way, have the capacity to warp reality in their favour. How... pathetic."

Sause's audience was gobsmacked.

Majestic Territories were such things?

Blockages, he said.

Obstacles to Divinity – intentional obstacles at that!

Sause continued.

"The path to Divinity was a lot simpler before Territories, you know. Stages weren't nearly as rewarding when it came to diverse powers but they gave a straight shot to become Divine if one could weather the ninety-four Tasks and six Trials, ahaha. Of course, even with the added blockage, some humans were persistent enough.

In a Way, Territories provided an alternate course to Divinity for the rare, extremely powerful among them. Some might even say that version of Divinity is better, but who knows? And of course, I refer to Fulgardt. I helped, but he was pretty much a few decades away from finding the answer to Divinity all on his own."

The Giant sighed and laughed at the faces Replicus and the others wore.

Faces of ignorance.

"I can't believe you dared to want to see what makes Aigas Rich without understanding these little things. Ignorance sure is bliss,ahaha."

Chapter 1154: What Makes It Rich (1)

The group was soon fed into the thickets of clouds by the winding steps carved into the Sovereign's Peak.

A bit of silence persisted for nearly twenty minutes as it seemed that Replicus and the rest had a lot to sort through within their minds, though, of course, the Warmoth's Progeny processed the information faster and was thinking about further implications that came with what he had just learned.

On top of having to mull over what Sause had said, something else caused the prolonged silence.

The thickets of clouds seemed to have no end.

They continued to block the view for everyone in a manner that made Replicus, Aurolio and Yuyui doubt that Aigas was built with such a thick layer of cloud at all. The density of the clouds was also unnatural. Replicus could have sworn that as he passed through them, they sapped bits of his mana with every passing second.

Of course, no harm was done by something like this given that he could replenish it all rather quickly, but he did find himself wondering where all that absorbed mana went exactly.

It was unnatural to find an environment that actively stole mana as though it were a living thing.

Strangely, Replicus remembered the Emissary of the Immortals mentioning, in his narration of the Ashing of Time that to perform the breath that healed Aigas' Rules, Jiggorrhax had drawn a massive amount of the world's total mana. That must have included that which came from living beings. With that in mind, Replicus wondered if that had anything to do with the current sensation.

Perhaps the freedom a dragon like Jiggorrhax had to draw upon the world like that was not innate. Perhaps he had learned it because of this phenomenon by the clouds, undoubtedly created as a result of the Eternal Drakkens tempering with the Sovereign Peak.

Beyond this, Replicus found himself wondering more about the Majestic Territory.

Was it truly a tool used to limit the horizons of beasts?

Did they have alternatives then?

How would it affect him then?

Unlike his Hybrid Luman form, Replicus was pretty much akin to a beast by Aigas' terms. While he was unique, able to produce Aura and Nitros as he wished through Maximum Catalyst, thus making himself a formidable enemy to humans who usually defeated mana-using beasts with simple Genuine Incarnations, he feared that perhaps, his desire to create his own Territory... Territories, might limit him.

But would it?

Replicus had manifested two dormant Territories in response Caxellac's overwhelming expression of the self – Mors Serene Grace.

He didn't, by any means feel like the Majestic Territories he conjured were the peak of what he could achieve.

His horizons were wide.

He had been wondering – in the background – if he could learn to manifest Serene Grace too, but he wasn't too optimistic, at least not in the short run.

Mors Serene Grace as a power form required one to use their soul as fuel and have a sagely understanding of Null Life Essence, and Replicus lacked the capacity to do both in the same manner he had seen Caxellac do it.

'Well, flesh that...' he thought. 'I'll probably only be able to do it after retrieving the other portion of my soul from Somanda. Well, it will be a start...'

There was also the issue about this secret that Sause shared with Fulgardt about reaching Divinity. What was it exactly? Would Sause tell him if he asked?

Replicus eyed Aurolio suspiciously and decided against casually inquiring about such a thing.

After what felt like an hour, Replicus and the others finally saw an end to the massive wad of clouds.

The highest point of the Sovereign's Peak was yet to be seen still. The mountain seemed to only now begin to turn conical, which was quite disheartening, but to the surprise of the tourers, Sause came to a stop only a few hundred meters after the end of well of cloud.

He pressed his hand on the wall of the mountain and sighed.

As seamlessly as though it wasn't made of rock, the face of the mountain receded, creating perfectly circular hole large enough for the group to enter through all at once.

"Inside. We are close," Sause said with a strangely severe expression.

Everyone, with some manner of hesitation crawled into the hole and were immediately devoured by nigh tangible darkness; Yuyui could have sworn it was like a kind of soft adhesive. Before the hole Sause had caused to spawn closed up, she had seen the darkness cling to her hand as she waved it and then it crept away.

She shivered.

When utter darkness enveloped them, such that not even Replicus' Ju`wtte spilling everywhere could be seen, Sause's voice beckoned:

"Follow the sound of my footsteps. Should be easy to here. Or better yet, follow my voice. I believe this would have been the best time to exhaust all your questions to keep me talking. For your own benefit, that is, ahaha. It is a tricky place this one.

It's easy to get lost."

A few moments of silence passed and then Yuyui asked:

"You said there remained some of your kind even after some were sacrificed for Jerthrax. W-what happened to them?"

As she asked, Yuyui heard a sigh behind her; Benzard was following after her.

Sause chuckled deeply.

"Are you sure you want to know?" he asked ominously.

Yuyui withered.

"Yes, actually," Replicus said in her stead.

Sause remained silent for a few moments and then answered.

"We Giants are quite like our predecessors. We have difficulty producing young. Those of my people that remained after the Ashing of Time did not really multiply by much since Jerthrax's feeding. They numbered a few thousand. They held a welcoming party when I returned with Benzard," he said in a cold tone.

Replicus frowned. He didn't like the vibe Sause expounded. It was subtle yet obvious at the same time that something really bad happened.

"And?"

Sause scoffed.

"I ate them all."

...

Everyone except Benzard had their face contort, a mash of emotions too deep to be explained by singular words showing on their faces.

He... ate them?

Ate, ate?

He ate a few thousand Giants?

But... why?

Before the question could be posed, the livid darkness was broken apart by an even feistier light, silvery in hue that poured ahead, outlining Sause's image first.

A staggering gust of wind and heat also came with the light and nearly swept Yuyui off her feet before Benzard caught her and planted her down with a palm to the shoulder.

A massive pit had appeared and the overbearing glow was coming from something at its very bottom – the bottom of the hollow within the Sovereign's Peak.

Everyone was forced to temporarily cast away what Sause had just said and look down.

...!!!

Hundreds.

No.

Thousands.

No.

Tens of thousands of gigantic figures, ghostly blue in colour, and ferocious in appearance were swirling in what seemed like a vast pool of a liquid silvery substance!

They were all dragons or at least, dragon-like.

They did not give the feeling of life, yet, instead they seemed larger than it by several leagues!

Chapter 1155: What Makes It Rich (2)

Every eye looking down into the pit far, far away was enthralled, almost ensnared by the beauty and peculiar sacredness of the elements that swirled within it languidly.

Indeed, it looked to be far deeper than the distance the group had just scaled, but for the advanced sight of the experts, it was no problem to see that far and witness the grandeur borne within.

The issue was moreso in comprehending what they were looking at.

What were these figures?

What was the silvery pool with such a striking glow to it?

For some reason, even the Warmoth's Progeny felt as though he was staring at something that he shouldn't be.

It felt like he shouldn't be here.

At the very least, perhaps he should have been kneeling and making a prayer.

He felt out of place. He was conflicted; part of him wanted to stare into the massive silvery pool for all eternity, taking in the beauty of the swirling, ghostly, soul-like draconic beings swimming within it until he expired.

He, along with Yuyui and Aurolio were lost for words.

The sharp glow from all the way down in this pool reached them while retaining its shocking vibrance and a strange, furious heat bellowed out. Yuyui's face started sizzling, frying, but she didn't seem to feel it. Her eyes only reflected silver; she was completely consumed.

Sause did not speak.

He extracted a kind of spatial storage vessel and pushed it forward over the vast pit.

A vibrant soul spilled from it like some luminous jelly and fell to the bottom quickly, its light quickly dwarfed by the one from where it was dropping.

Sause's face was solemn as he watched it fall and finally reach the silver pool nearly a minute later, which was surprisingly quick. One would have thought the soul weighed tons.

This, of course, was the portion of Jerthrax's soul that Actuass hadn't been able to extract with his Territory, Deathward Maw.

It sank into the silvery pool and dissolved into it like ice in a pot of hot water.

"This is all it's about," Sause said with a severe look on his face, and finally, everyone was dragged out of their reverie in a mix of shock, fear and more than a little curiosity. "This is what you wanted to see. What makes Aigas Rich, is its history. The product of Quintess' first burst of imagination as well as the many machinations Listafelle and Suzamete came up with billions of years ago.

The Eternal Drakkens. Aigas' richest memory."

Replicus was awed.

Aigas' history?

Wait a moment...

When Sause said Aigas' history, did he mean...?

"It is quite intentional, you know, the fact that almost every living thing on Aigas harps on First Grand War, the Second, and the Ashing of Time. No one ever mentions what came before or references it at all, as though times before the wider conflict are... relics, too pure or too peaceful to disturb. It is as the Deities intended.

You see, every world requires more than just Divine, awesome powers to create. Well, if one wants it to last, it needs more than just that. A world needs a powerful anchor. A foundation.

It also follows that said foundation drains much of the powers of the Deity, leaving them, in a sense, at a heavy disadvantage – weakened," Sause said and then he pointed at the massive, blue figures swimming in the silvery pool.

"Those are the Eternal Drakkens. The oldest and first beings Quintess ever created. They were... are powerful, beyond reason, so much so that even after they perished, their souls remained. The Yormuness couldn't claim them. Of course, at their forming, the Yormuness wasn't even created yet, but even when it was invented, it couldn't draw their souls."

"Aigas was originally meant for them; one giant piece of rock for these behemoths to live and thrive. They owned what is now Opungale and Feinheath before it broke off from the now-limited Edagon. It was theirs until Quintess, Listafelle and Suzamete decided that they were simply too powerful. Their strengths forced them to leave their bodies prematurely. They were eternal beings, after all.

One by one, as the Deities added... diversity, let's say, the Drakkens were made into anchors of the world upon their deaths."

"I don't understand," Replicus said as he assumed full consciousness from the initial surprise. "What does the word 'anchor' even mean in this context? If Aigas was already created before the Drakkens were made, what purpose do they serve?"

Sause didn't look away from the distant bowl of swirling souls.

"Did you ever encounter one of the Luminants?" he asked.

"Yes, I did. I killed an Arch Luminant named Dezrael in the Labyrinth of the Yoke," Replicus replied.

"I see. Good. Then you must know that Dezrael's world fell at the hands of Fulgardt, a Divine."

"Yes."

Replicus remembered Dezrael raving about this.

"The world of the Luminants was rather shallow. It was made by one, weak ambitious Deity without much in the way of planning. It had no anchor. An anchor helps greatly in establishing greater Rules such as the ones that keep ominous evils out of Aigas. I'm sure you know how devastating it is for such kinds of greedy creatures to be let loose."

Replicus frowned.

Indeed.

On both occasions when he faced Somanda in the 'flesh' – back when he inhabited the treasure SoSei and back when he achieved Divinity, Replicus was only saved much of the hassle thanks to the fact that Somanda couldn't manifest his powers wholly because of the Rules.

"I see," Replicus said. "So, are you saying worlds need the collaboration of more than Deity?"

"Not exactly," Sause said, his face and tone still suspiciously serious. "However, it makes the deed of creating an anchor much easier. Quintess made the Drakkens and Listafelle as well as Suzamete handled the rest. It was a partnership."

Replicus nodded as did Aurolio whose eyes still shone silvery with intrigue.

So, it wasn't about partnership at all, was it? But more like planning and creating the right conditions for Rules to be established. It seemed this anchor ate a lot of the powers of the Deities to create though.

Replicus didn't know he had nearly gotten the full knowledge of a relevant case study of another such world where Deities collaborated to create a Rich world – Faaminl, Actuass' home world.

The anchor the Deities created was the Alternates they made who, instead of heading and caring for the creations of their original bodies, caused misery instead – at somewhat regulated intervals, of course.

"Well, this certainly isn't what I was expecting," Aurolio said with a chuckle.

"Yeah," Replicus concurred, but then out of curiosity, he asked Sause:

"What happens to a Deity when their world is destroyed? I mean, assuming they used their bodies to make that world, like here on Aigas."

Sause wore a grave look. His cheery 'ahahas' seemed more like a distant dream now.

"They become Corrupted," he answered simply.

Chapter 1156: You Gave Him?

Corrupted?

Replicus couldn't understand what this meant, and Sause didn't seem to be in a hurry to elaborate on what he truly meant by this word.

How did a Deity losing their world lead to this Corruption?

The first thing that came to mind for the Warmoth's Progeny was what Serenity had said about Caxellac refusing to officially transcend into Deific power. He chose to remain as a Divine instead, adding to his power with the privileges he was given by his Dominion.

The same apparently was true of Fulgardt, though Replicus wasn't sure it was for the same reason.

In any case, it seemed the responsibility that came with becoming a Deity somewhat contradicted their immense strength if held recklessly.

Replicus' phantoms created a plethora of images about the Deities of Aigas losing the land, which was Quintess' body, the sea, which was Listafelle's, and the sky, Suzamete's. Did that mean that, for the former two, they would become Corrupted too despite being far away – presumably?

"What is Corruption?" Aurolio was the one who asked, growing a little impatient that the oh-so knowing Sause hadn't rushed to elaborate what he meant despite knowing they were oblivious to its meaning.

Replicus listened raptly.

"I don't know," Sause said with a small smile, his eyes still staring into the large pit. "That much is beyond my comprehension and no record of it lies on Aigas, on Edagon."

It came as quite a shock that there was something Sause didn't know to both Aurolio and Replicus. Yuyui puckered her lips.

"I suppose there is only so much beings like myself can know. Well, I'd say you've learned plenty today though, haven't you? You have become the first" – he glanced at Benzard – "in a while to see Aigas' true secrets."

Indeed, it couldn't be denied that the trio had learned quite a lot, and several questions remained between them.

"Your other self has the soul of a Corrupted Deity in his possession, Skullius," a voice spoke from within Replicus and he nearly jerked in surprise.

'What? What do you mean?' he asked, frowning.

"Your other self procured such an item capable of sealing a Corrupted Deity. A highly dangerous artefact. I only hope that he hasn't managed to tame the entity within using the artefact in the time that I've been gone."

Serenity had hurried to retreat within him after helping to safely stow away Stylla's soul in Beyrmir. Replicus had stowed the guilt-stricken Ferex within his most formidable Apostle's scales as well. It would have been a chore to have him follow after them on foot in his current state.

Replicus tensed.

Skullius had acquired such an item with a Corrupted Deity?

How?

As this shocking information was shared, another shocking bombshell was revealed.

"Curiously, the one who gave that item to your other self" – Serenity gave a dramatic pause – "is that pale man."

...!!!

Replicus was flabbergasted.

What?

Aurolio had given Skullius such an item?

Where the hell would he have found such a thing and why in the world would he willingly give it up?

Replicus glared at Aurolio, who, upon sensing his gaze, turned to look at him.

"What?" he asked with a scowl.

Replicus weighed several options, but before he could stop himself, he was already asking:

"Where in the world did you get an artefact with the soul of a Corrupted Deity?"

...!!!

"Huh?!" Aurolio donned a look in-between fear and bewilderment.

Benzard and Sause turned to look at them, as did Yuyui, their curiosity rising. The Giant looked to have been hooked up to a tank of intrigue. His severe-looking face faintly disappeared.

"Answer me," Replicus said coldly to Aurolio.

The pale man maintained a tense expression before scoffing.

"Right. I almost forgot you and him are the same. You seemed the same before at least," he said and waved his hand. "I wonder, does your benefactor talk to you as it did him. I remember stopping her from interfering when I was talking to that guy, Festos, I think. How does it work for a clone like you?

Does it talk to you too? Are you even the clone or the original?"

"Stop stalling and answer me," Replicus said and the burst of Ju`wte around him intensified. He even went as far as summoning the Fallen Reincarnator's Shadow, which everyone felt pulse with deadly power.

Aurolio frowned.

He didn't like the feel of that weapon; not one bit.

He sighed.

"Fine. It's not like it's a secret anyway," Aurolio said before muttering 'fuck' under his breath. "I bet you with your Null powers, you get access to a stash of weapons and all, right? I've read in my Book of Alignment that Null Life – which I wasn't too familiar with until a few months ago – has a treasure, unlike Undeath and Voided Death Essence, one that others covet.

Well, Void gives her champions gifts after they choose to become her bearers. Three gifts; and we don't get to choose what kind they are. That page was one of the gifts I received. There's nothing more to it."

Replicus frowned.

"Hmm. That may be true," Serenity said, validating what Aurolio's explanation. "Void has access to everything that her darkness spans across. She can provide some truly terrifying artefacts outside of worlds – objects without claim."

'Really?' Replicus thought.

For real?

He had had the thought, upon learning that Void was the literal void outside Aigas right now, but it seemed surreal. Void was practically boundless, but somehow, she wasn't absolute.

Giving Aurolio a sharp look, Replicus asked:

"Why did you give up such a powerful weapon?"

"Weapon?" Aurolio made a face not unlike that of one forcing himself not to laugh. "Do I look like I fancy fighting with weapons to you, Four Arms? Even if I could subjugate a Deity on my own, I wouldn't want to cultivate strength like that. I don't even know what a Corrupted Deity is! It was better for me to trade that thing for something with some fucking value to me."

Replicus' eyes further narrowed.

He didn't find a reason not to believe Aurolio.

During the fight across Null Remnants, apart from the horn he used to disorient Jerthrax, Aurolio didn't really use weapons to fight. He seemed to value strength cultivated only in one's body and expressed as such.

Replicus scoffed.

What a simple yet foolish mindset.

Perhaps Aurolio thought that the Skullius he met back then wasn't going to be able to use the artefact at all, deluding himself that he had the advantage in whatever exchange they had, but now... if Skullius really was stronger than Actuass and still growing stronger...

"You've really made things complicated for me," Replicus said scathingly to an Aurolio who raised a brow, a bead of sweat dropping from his temple.

"I think," Sause interjected dangerously, "this is better handled away from my ancestors. As curious as I am, I wouldn't dare allow you to argue in a place like this."

Chapter 1157: Serenity's Goal (1)

Leaving the heat and silvery glow was a major blow for the party – at least those in the party who had yet to see it before today.

Replicus, even in his mix of emotion didn't forget to give one last long look before turning and allowing Sause to lead the way back through the darkness. Once they were dipped back in darkness, no one was able to look at the others. They simply followed Sause's voice and footsteps and started once again to descend the Sovereign's Peak.

Replicus allowed himself to mull over the revelation about the well full of the Eternal Drakken souls.

He didn't know what he had expected, but what he had seen had been a far cry from his own theories – and he had had many, for obvious reasons.

An anchor was needed to create a world and that pool was the anchor; something of an object of immense power created by the Deities at their own expense.

It was strange how much larger Aigas had just become to Replicus even though he had been convinced that the long trip to Edagon would leave him feeling as though this world wasn't quite as large as it would seem.

'I wonder what Suzamete would have done if Actuass' goal was to somehow take possession of that pool. Would she have allowed it? Probably not,' Replicus thought.

He didn't think Suzamete was stupid. Well, not anymore. Ever since Replicus realised that there was a grander purpose as to why Suzamete let Actuass leave with him instead of detaining or killing him, he had begun to see her actions in a bit of a new light.

She likely had the interests of Aigas at heart more than most people would think – and the general populace seemed to doubt it very much.

Perhaps she would storm down to Edagon herself – to the Sovereign Peak – to stop anyone from tainting it with thieving hands. Though, it was probably impossible. She likely needed a vessel like the others, and that didn't seem possible to do in a short span of time.

Speaking of thieving, Replicus attempted to look at Aurolio, failed and settled for creating a very life-like image in his head.

'I almost got the impression that that bastard intended to do something to the silvery pool, but I doubt there is anything he could do about it, even without his Tie of Exchange to Sause. Sause seemed less wary about him,' Replicus thought.

It seemed worlds and Deities had a lot more to them than he anticipated. He wondered if his other self, Skullius, knew anything about it. Well, since he was being affected by Fulgardt's wills, perhaps some of the Immoral's knowledge was filtering through him.

Sensing his thoughts, Serenity immediately confirmed Replicus' suspicions. Indeed, Skullius seemed to know about worlds through the WILLS of Fulgardt.

'I see,' Replicus said direly. 'If he knows that much...'

"For now, I think you should worry about his skillset. I can tell you all about what he has learned, but some of the more detailed powers of his Hidden Class were harder for me to see. Unlike you, he didn't allow me to freely interact with him from the moment he awakened.

Fulgardt's influence in him is quite powerful, and that's not to mention Fulgardt's appalling understanding of the guidance field."

Serenity, who was aware of Skullius' interaction with Fulgardt in the Reflection of his soul before he awakened, explained the terrifying fact that Fulgardt had been the one who constructed the Tasks and Trials for Skullius all along, as he (Fulgardt) had revealed!

...!!!

'What?!' Replicus was alarmed. 'It was Fulgardt?! But how? How could he manipulate the guidance field, VOW, I mean?'

"Because the guidance field isn't the Voice of Worlds. It is merely an extension of the Voice of Worlds. It adjusts itself accordingly when introduced to a new world, adapting to the Rules of said world while attached to its user. For a Divine as shrewd as Fulgardt, it isn't really surprising that he was able to do this, and besides, he didn't make any dark, or impactful alterations.

It didn't pose an issue for him to guide your way, after all. Though still, I wonder..."

Serenity began to trail off. She wondered if Wyrrim had noticed Fulgardt's interference or not, not that it mattered anymore.

Replicus went into deep thought.

Indeed, he was going to need all the help he could get. If he knew Replicus' new power set...

A thought then struck him.

'You know what Corruption, don't you?' he asked Serenity.

She sighed.

"Yes, however, it comes in so many forms that it's pointless to give you examples. In any case, you should be aware that once a Deity is Corrupted, they change mentally. Their views become skewed. Sometimes it can be for the better, but most times... it's for the worst."

'I see... That's not very helpful.'

*

The wall to the Sovereign's Peak opened and once again, the group was scaling down the mountain, Replicus a few dozen steps behind the others.

He kept a close eye on Aurolio, who, while feeling his gaze, didn't turn to meet his eyes this time.

'Serenity,' he thought, 'What exactly would you have wished for me to do with that pool? This conflict between you Parallels... does it simply entail winning the Richness of a world for you? Is that what Void and Emmae expect from their bearers too?'

Replicus had proclaimed openly before that he wasn't loyal to Serenity and wouldn't do her bidding just because she asked or because she was the one responsible for his powers.

He still had to understand her objectives and now seemed like the perfect time to learn of them.

Serenity sighed.

"That is the general idea. We three share only that in common, however. The reasons... our reasonings for why we do this are different. I suppose you could say we each expect different results from the powers we eventually amass, from – yes – harvesting the hard work of Deities. My goal in particular is a little... it's a little broad. Frankly, it's a bit complex.

I worried you wouldn't be able to understand it before reaching this kind of power," she said. "You could only have reached this Tier by braving storms that no ordinary being could physically and mentally. And if not that... I didn't believe a person like you could accept killing worlds for my sake. At least not without the full picture."

This was why Serenity had attempted to stop Aurolio from telling Skullius the details he knew. She was familiar with how limited the information in the Book of Alignment was. It painted the Existential Parallels as destroyers and irascible anomalies – takers.

'What's this goal – your end goal? Say you harvest enough of what you need, what is this grand objective that you are working towards?' Replicus asked.

It had been especially strange to him that Serenity had kept this from him, but now he at least understood a bit about why she did so. The old version of him probably wouldn't have thought her different to Somanda who made him mine mana for him for a thousand years in Deadmanland.

Serenity had done well to hide the purpose of being a bearer of Null Life from him, in Replicus' opinion.

Now, he hoped it was something worth the wait; something that could drive him to actually consider fighting alongside Serenity.

Serenity took a great pause.

"Becoming what I am had its fair share of prices and permanent restrictions. We as the Existential Parallels are a step above the Deities in strength. It was such great power at first, when we each created our own paths out of extinction. However, being as powerful as us requires a lot of nourishment. It's a punishment – a kind of curse.

If we fail to meet a quota, our penance is... well, we, alongside everything we have created, will be destroyed. Everything except our bearers, at least," she said with a sombre tone. "Beyond needing Rich worlds in order to continue existing, I... desire to leave this reality and flee to another."

Chapter 1158: Serenity's Goal (2)

'What...?' Replicus thought, astonished.

Sause had begun to speak to the others ahead of him, but he barely registered what they were saying because of how bewildered he was at Serenity's words.

'Leaving... this reality?' he thought.

Serenity made to confirm, but she heard something from above that Replicus didn't. A sharp hum that rang in warning.

She immediately knew...

Wyrrim was warning her to tread carefully about what she was about to reveal. If she mentioned HIM...

Serenity sighed. If she had a body right now, she might have shown signs of intense perspiration.

"Yes," she said to Replicus. "You have always known that there are many other worlds since you were in Deadmanland, right? There are multiple realities as well, though they are not nearly as

numerous as worlds. There exists... only three. We are currently in one of them and I want to flee to another."

Replicus remained silent.

He and his phantoms went into furious thought.

Realities?

How did one even define a reality? A collection of worlds?

Sensing his confusion, Serenity elaborated a little.

"Reality is wider than you think. Worlds are innumerable within one, yes, but there are also places where Deities and Divines live if they strip themselves from their worlds or choose not to create one for the time they were allowed. They are known as Breaking Chasms; there are plenty of such places, but of course, they also aren't nearly as many as worlds.

They are, however, much, much bigger by comparison. The collections of these Breaking Chasms in a wide, sheltered space is what a reality is."

Replicus reeled.

Reality Chasms...

Immediately, a thought struck him.

Could this be where Quintess and Listafelle were?

It seemed like it seeing as there wasn't anywhere else they could go.

If Serenity's goal for leaving this reality was that much of a hassle for her, it stood to reason that no Deity could pull it off.

'Breaking Chasms... Are they like holes in reality or something?' Replicus asked.

"Something of the sort," Serenity replied succinctly.

Replicus paused, thinking deeply.

'So, if I understand this correctly, Void and Emmae are after different things too, right? They don't have any intention of leaving reality as well?'

Serenity gave a strange pause.

"...I think so. They have been ahead of me for a very long time. Unlike me, they've had many bearers scuttling around the vast reality, gathering energy for them. The purpose of this – beyond surviving, of course – I'm not sure, however. If they simply desired to leave, they likely would have done so by now," she then replied.

'Why do YOU want to leave?' Replicus asked.

Serenity grew tense.

The intense stare from above pierced her through Replicus, though the Warmoth's Progeny didn't feel a thing.

It was another warning.

"I can't exactly tell you that, at the moment. I don't have the right," she said with a bit of a bitter tone.

'The right?' Replicus said. His forehead creased. 'What do you mean by that?'

"There are things I am not at the liberty of telling you, Skullius. Please, forgive me for that," she said, leaving Replicus stunned.

He couldn't imagine what kind of authority she was talking about.

If she and the other Existential Parallels were above even the Deities, then what authority could she possibly...

It struck Replicus immediately.

'Is VOW involved?' he asked.

He had recalled that on their way to Edagon, Serenity had mentioned how hers and Void's powers needed to be regulated because they were too great, too unusual.

It stood to reason that someone governed that as opposed to this being a function of reality or whatnot.

"Yes," Serenity said in an unconvincing tone that made Replicus frown.

He had a feeling he wasn't going to be able to extract more information in this vein, thus he switched to a line of questioning that might perhaps help him decide if working with Serenity was a good thing. The fact that if for whatever reason, Serenity perished, he, Replicus, wouldn't perish alongside her relaxed him a little, but he wasn't totally convinced that was true.

'Is energy the only thing you need to escape this reality?' he asked.

"No. There are two other things I will need... but I am also not at the liberty of sharing what they are. Not yet. Perhaps... if you choose to pledge your loyalty, I may give you that information."

This didn't quite fly with Replicus.

'That's hard to do without all the details I need. I fear offering my fealty will be a permanent thing. I wouldn't be able to back out, would I?' he said.

And it wasn't something he could back out from indeed. This was why Serenity didn't respond immediately.

Replicus wasn't the only one who was skeptical about the goals of his benefactor.

Aurolio was too. He had known about Rich worlds for a long time, but prioritized developing his personal strength above that. He had wanted to test his limits and grow for personal fulfilment, which was why he made the deal for Skullius to help him acquire the Null creatures – the Null Badubs – which the Arch-Mages of the Reacher Academy in Genhuis City had caught back then.

He didn't yet see a reason to proudly declare his loyalty to Void, even though he had threatened to kill Skullius for the sake of the enmity that was supposed to exist between the Existential Parallels and their bearers.

"You don't need to give me an answer right now. I didn't hope you would. We have greater concerns at the moment, don't we? Let us focus on those for now. It is in both our best interests if you manage to defeat your other self and with the power that will be produced upon your merge charge against Somanda. I feel what you manifest at that time will be a great starting point," Serenity said.

Replicus was surprised by how reasonable Serenity was being with this subject, but then perhaps he shouldn't have expected otherwise. She had been fair to him for the most part. She had helped him in every active circumstance she could ever since she could interact with him a bit more.

'Thank you. Yeah. I have a few problems that need a great degree of solving before I think about storming off to extract the anchors of Rich worlds,' Replicus affirmed Serenity's stance.

Chapter 1159: Open Mystery To The Far West

While entertaining the thoughts of his phantoms – and studying the phenomenon caused by the white clouds around him – Replicus spared some attention to what Sause was talking about with the others. Aurolio seemed to question him about minor details surrounding Edagon and about how Benzard ended up here in the first place.

To that, Benzard himself freely explained how he had been a part of the Ideal Ark, quite a prestigious Guild in Inhone and then told the dark story of how his close friend, a brother even, Eobald, who had been the leader of the Ideal Ark, had confessed himself to be a necromancer.

He explained how he and the other members of the Ideal Ark had pursued Eobald, feeling betrayed, to the Tremur Forest, and how he (Benzard) met Skullius.

It was strange to Replicus how casually Benzard used the words "foolish", "unfair" and "prejudiced" to describe that version of him from the Tremur Forest – and before he was brought to Edagon.

The Warmoth's Progeny had noticed his shift in personality and ideals earlier when he gave his condolences for Allora's death, but now, as the man gave an honest narration of that tale from all that while back...

'He's really changed...' Replicus thought.

Benzard gave no excuses for his actions – the way he, Irlen, Reon and Denille treated Skullius on the journey to the Labyrinth of the Yoke.

He then went on to explain how he received a Hidden Class fashioned by Sause while they were in the Labyrinth, and only then, did the Giant interrupt him.

"Well, in all honesty, I never really intended for all THIS to happen afterward. I ended up giving you my power after he" – he turned to Replicus – "almost killed you with that nasty Veneration art, ahaha. Unfortunately for me, I couldn't just abandon you after that.

I had to nurture you and the power I had given you, which is still incomplete because I am alive, sharing the powers that must all be flowing through you, ahaha."

Replicus recalled the bit Sause referenced.

He had been standing at the door that was guarded by Fulgardt's corpse, Reon and Benzard assaulting him. He had then used his Veneration art which swiftly killed Reon, but Sause had indeed managed to save Benzard.

'Old times...' Replicus thought almost fondly.

If the product of those times wasn't the reason he was planning how exactly to beat the living daylights out of himself right now, he might have sniffled humorously.

'I wonder what would have happened if Skullius' goal was to find the anchor too. What even is that bastard's goal? Fulgardt wanted to go against the Deities back then, but that can't be what Skullius' aim is, right? It doesn't make sense anymore...' Replicus thought, realising that the longer they trudged down the steps that indeed, for now, Serenity's quest could wait.

It wasn't just about fighting Skullius anymore.

It was wiser to wonder what exactly he was doing right now.

Serenity seemed to know a lot about his aims, but she had left while he was still working his horrible wonders.

She had told him that indeed, she would tell him all of it, but he couldn't help but want to force all the information out of her already.

Still, he waited as they continued their way into the wad of cloud.

Something had sparked his interest from the conversation ongoing before him.

"...it's the same as the one Sause has. Since there's a lot of... vacancies, I help in keeping Aigas' secrets that are etched onto Edagon. Just like what happened this time, there's always going to be a threat to this place. The necromancer just happened to be the first. I've come to know that there aren't really any absolutes in the world," Benzard said after Yuyui inquired about his role.

Aurolio nodded and then with a fold of his arms and a daring look to him, he asked:

"Speaking of Aigas' secrets, is Amanas also another mystery you can't comprehend? So far, I've only read that Amanas can't be breached. Even when your kind" – he pointed at Sause – "did your little tour to fuck up our lives, you weren't able to get into Amanas, were you? Or was that perhaps another thing we weren't supposed to know?"

Sause's expression didn't change at all. He had adopted a lighter, freer visage since they exited the opening into the Sovereign's Peak he had caused.

Indeed, the human records told of how the Giants reached every continent except Amanas, which seemed to be walled off by some kind of barrier.

Aurolio wasn't sure this was credible anymore.

"Well, that part is true. We did indeed try to reach Amanas and spread the truth of the Deities, but we were restricted. Unfortunately, this is one internal mystery that none know anything about. No

record from the Drakkens or their lesser draconic offspring tells anything about Amanas," Sause said solemnly, "It is a strange place. Its purpose isn't known to anyone but the Deities, I'm afraid.

Whatever it was made for... it seems the time has not yet come for that to be revealed.

This news was rather disappointing, so much so in fact that the group spent the rest of the way through the clouds in silence.

Replicus had been wondering if Amanas was some kind of red herring created by the Deities when the guidance field flashed in his face.

[Process Complete!]

[Configuration 3, 'Embryotic Stuffing' has successfully been formed in your body!]

Replicus was stunned at first, but a wide grin soon split his face in two!

Finally.

It had taken three hours, but the third configuration to his body which he had made after the request to own two extra arms and to create a nervous system linking his Phantoms to his limbs had finally finished rendering!

Replicus looked at the damage to his body which was still healing very slowly – his lost lower arm and gouged torso, eaten through by the appalling effect of the large palms from Caxellac's Serene Grace.

If there had been no timer for the process of creating it, he would have used the Embryotic Stuffing immediately after sending forth the [Nullmancer's Wretched Reaper of Ugly Divinity] – his new Reverse Supreme skill – towards Caxellac in fear of dying to the Null Devil King's attack.

But that would have been a mistake.

Evidently, the dire damage he took could be healed over time and wasn't worth wasting a precious trump card like the Embryotic Stuffing.

'Good!' Replicus thought gleefully.

Now, he had completely exhausted all the primary benefits to reaching Tier 4. Well, all except one – In-Verse glimpse – and he wasn't sure he wanted to use it just yet.

Chapter 1160: Departure From Edagon

Upon reaching the ground, everyone seemed to view Edagon in a way different light from before. Yuyui looked as though she was seeing it for the first time, a dazed look plastered on her face as she looked around at the land and the slopes.

Well, it then occurred to her, first among everyone else, that Edagon was changing. It was healing itself!

"Look!" she pointed into the distance, where a particularly massive mountain that Sause had casually pointed out – before they rose up the Sovereign's Peak – had not, in fact, been lying in a pile like a stack of giant uneven rocks before Replicus fought Caxellac was.

It had somehow been restored during the time the group took to rise and descend the immense, sacred height now behind them, slowly becoming hazy, like a memory.

Replicus and Aurolio looked over. The vast lands were indeed being restored. The portions that had been split off into small, separate islands that drifted away swimming back to merge with the original.

The Warmoth's Progeny scratched his chin.

It had been a minor detail, but Sause did mention that Aigas was originally one giant continent over which the Eternal Drakkens had lived and thrived before succumbing to their immense innate powers.

The way he explained it seemed to hint at the fact that these creatures didn't even have paths for progressing in power at all, that rather, they were born with powers that were comparable, perhaps, to the scarcely explored Stage, the Beyond the Veil Stage, which came right before Divinity.

'Weird. So that version of Aigas then formed Feinheath and Opungale and that mysterious Amanas... I guess there are still too many mysteries that the Deities imbedded into Aigas. I admit, I

am very curious now. But there isn't really any way to force that information out of the Deities, is there?' Replicus thought.

Serenity obviously concurred.

"Yes, yes, very cute detail," Aurolio gave a disinterested remark to the state of the continent. "Well, since there really isn't anything else I can glean – and quite frankly anything else I'm interested in – I will take my leave." He gave Sause a glance and wore a sly smile. "Of course... that is unless if you are tempted to reveal why you turned this place into a desolate, glorified museum."

Sause's face contorted slightly.

Aurolio was asking about why Sause had eaten his fellow Giants. Everyone seemed to recognise that it was probably a sore subject, but Aurolio pretended he didn't reckon so.

Sause narrowed his eyes dangerously.

Whether or not he was going to offer some kind of answer – perhaps a blood one – however, remained up in the air, for Benzard spoke in his stead.

"I think you've absorbed your fair share of secrets. You even learned a lot more than you were supposed to. You SHOULD leave," he said sharply, his eyes staring deeply into Aurolio's.

For a few moments, the Voided Deathform and Sausifillis' successor locked sights, a mild sense of hostility brewing between them.

Aurolio then chuckled.

"Fair enough," he said and then he glanced at Replicus, said nothing, and simply vanished into thin air.

Yuyui looked immensely surprised and Replicus scoffed.

<Quick Spawn>.

He had nearly forgotten that Aurolio had a higher tier of Patronage Rank with his guidance field than him, which offered him some more functionality with the universal construct. An ability like <Quick Spawn> allowed Aurolio to instantly transport himself to a place he had marked with the guidance field's <Marked Spots>.

'Well, it shouldn't be long before I have access to that,' Replicus said and then gave a sharp glance to Yuyui who still looked mildly interested in Aurolio's 'trick'.

The lime-haired girl had also been given the guidance field by Skullius a while back, with the lowest Patronage Rank possible. She rarely used it though, and to be fair, it didn't help her much because of how weak she was – identifying the levels of enemies on this side of the world wouldn't work for her because of how much of a difference there was between her and them.

'I should probably help her become more familiar with it now that she has decided she wants to stay and fight,' Replicus thought.

Come to think of it, he had given the guidance field to Kenno too.

"I suppose you will want to discuss the matters surrounding our Tie of Exchange,ahaha?" Sause said, his face loosening.

Replicus snapped his head up to his face.

Right.

He had one guaranteed ally in his promised journey to Deadmanland.

Sause's strength was immense, something Replicus could definitely rely on. The Giant had been able to survive fighting off the BoneTender, Incandescent Stage Stylla and Aurolio at the same time. He seemed to have been doing well enough before Replicus and Yuyui intervened.

What was even more valuable than Sause's strength, was his knowledge. He had a deep understanding of universal concepts such as the soul, which, against an Arch-Lich, would be invaluable.

However...

"Not yet. I have matters to attend to first. I can summon you using the fingernail you gave me, remember? I will call on you when I'm ready to begin logistical planning," he said to the Giant.

Sause sighed and sat down.

"Well, I dread that, I truly do. Whatever possessed me to think your request of me back then couldn't be something like fighting true incarnations of Undeath, is beyond me. Very well. At least when I leave with you, I will have a capable guardian left to defend Edagon," he said as he reached for Benzard with his large hand and patted... his entire body.

Benzard's feet sank into the ground.

Replicus gave Benzard a deep stare.

"Looks like you didn't lose purpose after all. You ended up receiving a good Class and you are protecting the entire world in a way more meaningful way than before," he said. He had heard, back then, Benzard's struggles with purpose as he spoke with Denille, Irlen and Reon. He had been enraged at losing it after Eobald's betrayal.

Benzard wore what looked like a sad smile.

"Yeah. It came with a cost though," he said.

"Yeah," Replicus said.

An awkward silence reigned for a few moments.

"W-well, we better get going too!" Yuyui suddenly said while bouncing on the balls of her feet nervously.

"Right," Replicus said. "We should. We'll be on our way then."

He felt he had a lot of questions, but the answers didn't seem like things he would get right now, or things he needed to know anyway.

Why Sause ate his fellow Giants...

What the secret to Divinity was...

Well, he would soon be faced with the Giant again.

"I will see you soon," Sause said with a wide smile.

Yuyui's Eye of Moving opened in her palm and she pointed it at Replicus from the distance.

At once, the Warmoth's Progeny felt a vicious pull and it was as though Aigas sprinted backward around him while he rushed ahead.

A few moments later, his feet rested on the ebony sea and he heard a few gasps.

"Boss!"

"Master!"

Grim and Pherdanta were the only ones to audibly react to Replicus' and Yuyui's arrival.

Araeyn, Yagrina and Bassbion didn't seem to bat an eyelid, while the figure sitting close to Pherdanta merely jerked in surprise.

Replicus glanced to his immediate right.

Yuyui was panting hard, blood dripping from her nose in concerning volumes.

She gave Replicus a huge thumbs up before puking some more crimson and collapsing forward into the water comically.

'Honestly. She was that determined to move us here at the expense of her health? Well, her health...'
Replicus thought as a strand of Ju`wte rushed to coil around Yuyui who seemed only half-conscious. She had worn herself out, stretching her capabilities way beyond the norm in the last four or so hours.

A smile broke on Replicus' face.

He never would have thought that the timid, weak, greedy girl from all those months back would grow to become such a dependable ally.