

# Undead 1431

## Chapter 1431 Missing Piece

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The only thing Kenno managed to find some happiness in was the fact that Kintar had been wrong.

She had surmised that the crystals all around Aigas were the threat that Boron had devised, but she was... only technically wrong. The crystals seemed to be a defence mechanism or at very least one part of the real tool that Boron was using. There was something else inside the reddish-purple crystals, and even for Red Rage, they were hard to make out.

Well, the fact that Kintar had missed just that little detail was enough for Kenno to find some vindication against the O so perfect Unlimited Star.

He couldn't help but feel sour. He couldn't believe Skullius would force him to go help Red Rage and Kintar after all he had been through. He wasn't even helping right now, as a matter of fact.

While Red Rage was on his 60th try in using [Executive Action: Brilliant Order] on one the crystals they had found east of Feinheath over the sea, he was lazing about on its surface.

What could he do?

Kintar had dealt with the swarms of Cavern that had been passing over them on their way to Opungale. She immobilised all 139,000 of them without even lifting a finger. How was Kenno to compete with that? Since then, he had laid down on the water to watch as Red Rage tried to giving orders to the crystals unsuccessfully.

The Apostle had patience, Kenno had to say.

Even Kintar had grown tired of watching, and had gone to pursue the other mission the boss had given her.

She was to try and find where Fulgardt was.

Kenno imagined that was going to be a task and a half. Sure, Kintar was very competent, but could she really locate a Divine being like Fulgardt?

'That bastard is scary. I didn't think I'd meet anyone who could impress on me that kind of fear again unless they were a Deity,' Kenno said, recalling that moment when Fulgardt had dropped from the sky, riding a giant deer head with Rias. It had been unreal.

That nonchalance, that confidence, that knowledgeability...

Fulgardt was the kind of man who could fiddle with another Divine between his fingers. He had toyed with Skullius' emotions, praying on his weaknesses.

But to Skullius' credit, he had dealt the first blow to the Immoral. It was Fulgardt who had had to match the Hybrid Warmoth – to get him back for the humiliation in Maqi.

That thought gave Kenno some semblance of relief.

'It's not like I doubt the boss, but maybe Kintar is right,' he thought. 'Maybe the mindset he adopts just isn't well suited for the kinds of battles he's about to face in the future. I wonder what that was...'

The Unlimited Star thought back to when he had just arrived on the battlefield earlier with the Doom Knight and Araeyn.

Something had happened to Skullius. He had seemed lost for a moment, as though his soul had just... left, leaving his body standing there, still and defenceless for a few moments.

Even though Skullius had brushed it off and even led everyone to a victory (that was stolen), Kenno never forgot.

Among the Unlimited Stars, except for Yuyui, he had been with Skullius the longest, and he'd seen Skullius' lows before. The Null Lifeform always snapped out of them somehow, overcoming them with false chronicles (absolute lies), raw overwhelming strength, and in some cases, witty, resourceful plays, but this time...

Kenno was sure this thing troubling Skullius was different.

Skullius told his Troops a majority of his background, but not all of it. He had never told them about the Doom Factors, at least not in detail. He always mentioned consequences that would follow if he didn't get his soul back from the Arch Lich who made him.

'I guess we'll see how it turns out when the time comes. For now...'

Kenno rose from the water and walked up to Red Rage who was getting ready to aim his finger at the crystal again.

"Just admit it, you underestimated the power of this crystal," he said to the Apostle with a yawn.

"Quiet. I'm almost done. This is delicate work," said Red Rage. He might have looked more stunning now, after earning the First Rank, but Kenno was too tired and impatient to care anymore. The dream-like effect of seeing the Apostle's glass-like form for the first time had long expired.

"Delicate work my starry ass! This isn't working. Admit it so that we can discuss a different way to go about it."

"I said be quiet. I never claimed it would be easy using a Skill on an object imbued with Divine level powers. If you're getting impatient, find something to do. Find a mop and clear the sea. That should quell your boredom," Red Rage snapped.

Kenno fumed.

"Aren't you supposed to be some kind of graceful knight?" he said. Where was the harsh tone coming from?

But right then, a short figure warping beside him nabbed his attention.

"Oh, for goodness' sake, you'll give me a heart attack, you midget!" Kenno cried.

Kintar wore her signature creepy smile.

"If that much scares you, you should renounce your status as an Unlimited Star," she said.

"Why are you two so mean?" Kenno grumbled, looking between Kintar and Red Rage. "Anyway, did you find anything?"

Kintar shrugged.

"Nope. I did a thorough search. I'm positive Fulgardt isn't in any known place on Feinheath, Opungale and Edagon in any of the different timelines."

"Edagon? You searched that far?" Kenno asked, frowning.

"Yeah. It was a little tricky in one of the drapes of time, but I managed. He's not there. Why do you ask?"

Kenno swallowed his petty fury. Sure, as he was now, he could warp to Edagon as he pleased without worrying about the harsh conditions prohibiting a safe journey there, but hearing that a fresh Unlimited Star like Kintar, who hadn't weathered the first journey there with Skullius could also do it...

Well, Kenno hadn't been on that first trip either... but that wasn't the point!

"So? Either Fulgardt is so good at hiding that even a freak like you can't find him, or he isn't on Aigas at all?" Kenno said.

"Or he's in a Cluster or Stagnant Space or in some hidden pocket of a different time I couldn't see through. It's hard to tell. But in any case, if he's making it so difficult to find him, he's probably preparing for something big."

Right after she said so, Red Rage gave a loud cry in some majestic sentence:

"Contraption of hidden intent, forged by a fell Deity with grudges as vast as darkness' blood, I command you in the name of Skullius Festos Dawn, reveal your secrets to me! Open your unliving heart, and tell me the desires of your maker! In return, I will %\$%&^!"

...!!!

Kintar and Kenno shuddered.

They hadn't heard the last bit of Red Rage's declaration.

What was that?

They had heard the Apostle sprout sentence after sentence before, but none of those others had featured this in return bit.

They were expecting another failure by the Apostle, and thus they meant to ask what he had done just now... but something interrupted.

A brilliant light poured from the crystal, growing more and more radiant as the seconds passed.

It had worked!

[Executive Action: Brilliant Order] was about to give a fine result.

And it did.

What the trio heard turned their faces into pale sheets.

So... so this was what Boron was hoping for!

Chapter 1432 Gurrion-Lavaan's Passing

1432 Gurrion-Lavaan's Passing

"The job was pretty hard on him. He always used to say that he wouldn't have come here to monitor the Purge Banner and manage the bounty hunters if he had found a female from his race. Well, sadly – perhaps you wouldn't know – but females from his race were few and far between. To reproduce, the males had to... well, I'd rather not talk about that."

Skullius, Serenity, Sila, Weaver and Araeyn were still unsure about what to make of the being expositing to them. He – if he could be attached to a gender – was making them tea in the padoga kitchen. He claimed even Serenity would be able to enjoy it, which baffled them all, including Serenity herself. She swore she had no idea what that thing talking to them was.

"When he passed" – the thing sniffled – "I wish I had called more of his friends. It was just me and his Apostles. He said he didn't care for anyone else attending his funeral. I always thought that was a lie... but maybe that's how he really felt."

Skullius had something to say about this, but when he saw the thing, a large sheet of paper cut into a flimsy humanoid shape, handing him a grey mug filled to the brim with a hot vapour-like substance, he wore a polite smile, accepted the mug and swallowed his question.

Everyone else followed suit. Only Weaver looked unperturbed by the sight of the creature. He even gave a "thank you" to the creature.

Only when everyone held a mug and was snug in their seats did the paper cut out sit on his own chair, stare at them and wipe a tear from his face. It looked drawn on, as did his eyes, mouth and every contour that attempted to express the details on him. It was dull, flimsy work.

Serenity finally tore herself from the questions of how in the world a creature like this could be a decent evolutionary path. She gave a sip of the vapour in her mug and to her surprise, she could taste it. It swept through her humanoid flame body, spreading to the tips of all her appendages. It gave her a tingly feeling that she had never felt before.

"This is... good," she said. She would shown her surprise if she had a face.

"Thank you. That means a lot coming from you," said the paper cut out with a little bow. A crooked, drawn-on smile appeared on his face. "I'm sorry you missed Gurrion-Lavaan. He would have loved to see you, I'm sure."

The individual Serenity had been hoping to see for some insights about all that the Nullmancer Class could do, had sadly passed on sometime between Serenity's last visit to the Null Verse and her current. He was a powerful Nullmancer named Gurrion-Lavaan; he had all ten Apostles, all Ranked and all with Traits.

He was a force to be reckoned with even without the Apostles, however. The point of the Nullmancer Class didn't only have to do with summoning creatures, after all. It was supposed to quickly enhance the comprehension of foreign magical concepts in the user.

The paper cut out was a friend of Gurrion-Lavaan, a fellow guardian and monitor of the Universal Purge Banner, Unnio Lak. Apparently, he and Gurrion-Lavaan were on equal standing as guardians in the padogas. He had received the group after seeing them circle around the collection of padogas, searching for the late Nullmancer.

"How did he perish, if I may ask? I'm sure he had retired," Serenity asked while the others were still reeling from how good the 'tea' was.

Unnio Lak's roughly scribbled lips trembled.

"Yes. He had retired, but he still wanted to watch the Banner. What races and individuals would be knocked off and which ones would find their way onto it. He had a sick obsession, I'd say," he said. "One day, a bounty hunter came by. He wanted to eliminate a fierce colony of Haunted Shacks in the North. They had seen a dramatic rise on the Banner because of how their rapid evolution. They disguised themselves as ruins and poured out attractive energies across solar systems, luring young, enthusiastic wanderers. They had been taking too many lives. For a time, the numbers almost rivalled those of the Timeless Adamantine Beetles even though they were only ranked tenth. As you can imagine, we were glad someone volunteered to get rid of them."

Skullius narrowed his eyes.

He recalled the Adamantine Beetles. He had been offered an evolutionary option like that when he reached the Fourth Tier. They were magnificent creatures that could replicate indefinitely and could come up with counters for any attack that reached them. They were a nice choice, but their Flaw was rather terrifying.

An Adamantine Beetle could spill out a series of miniature beings with an appearance and powers similar to theirs. These extras would go off on their own after birth and grow stronger, but inevitably – eventually – they would hunt down the original to kill them. It didn't help that they could change appearance, making it hard to see them coming.

Skullius had hard-passed on the option. He wouldn't have liked to live a paranoid life where he saw everyone as a potential enemy.

Unnio Lak continued. He sounded somberer than before.

"Bounty hunters can register with us first before going on a hunt for any of the creatures on the Banner, or they can come with evidence of the kill afterwards and grab their reward. Null Life Essence signatures from the kills suffice. We'd seen cases of both means millions of times by then, so perhaps that day, we were just too complacent," he said.

"The bounty hunter was not bounty hunter at all. It was a creature on the Banner disguised as a valiant warrior, come to knock a few of us guardians off the Null Life subscription. We were no strangers to some of these abominations coming to erase their names from the Banner, but in the last three million years, none of them had ever tried to fight us directly. The bastard was powerful. Really powerful. It took nine of us to kill him and we lost three during the fight. We soon found out later that it was an alliance of these fiends on the Banner. This fake bounty hunter was supposed to kill a few of us and then after a few million years, others would strike once we had forgotten the incident. They wanted to destroy our organisation and then take over management of the Banner. That would be a disaster, especially if they managed it without anyone knowing. We guardians are hermits who stay locked up in our padogas half the time, after all."

"Gurron-Lavaan was injured during the battle. Well, he was poisoned. The enemy had been an Espoxes Apothecator, a vile practitioner and brewer of Null Life poisons ranked twenty-sixth on the Banner. It was unfortunate, but...not even Gurron-Lavaan could have survived having his Null Life Core poisoned."