

Undead 181

Chapter 181: Champion In The Isise

Feinheath was the second largest continent. It fell behind Edagon, with Opungale, which was both a nation and a continent being the third.

From an aerial view, taking into account the natural boundaries used to demarcate where one country began and ended, Emeradis was to the north, being the largest out of the three nations in Feinheath.

Maqi was to the West and Pelian to the East, both having similar sizes as the overall shape of Feinheath looked like a three leaf clover.

The structures of the temples were also made in this way, with making their likeness akin to Feinheath being one of the less important reasons such a design structure was chosen.

When it came to pure self-taught devotion to the Deities, none of the cities in Pelian came close to the Isise where a certain Paladin Champion was going on a call to duty.

The Isise were three small cities in the East which had established a grand connection both economically and politically because of their collective respect and reverence towards the Deities.

In these three cities along with the villages and towns between, one would find the most welcoming and kind hearted people with smiles that bordered on comical.

The temples in these cities, which were relatively close, were always crowded, not by those seeking to serve as mercenaries, but by those that simply wished to hear the profound message and will that the priests bore from Suzamete, Quintess and Listafelle.

It was quite the interesting arrangement as even extremely efficient trade routes and communication lines had been secured to ensure that sharing of resources and knowledge was never impeded between the three cities.

Within the carriage which carried a golden white hue along with the symbol of the Purity, the three point star, the figure of Revia could be seen.

She sat near the window, her hand under her chin as she displayed how utterly bored she was.

A breeze flowed in from outside, rustling her hair but failing to make her bat the eyelids over her beautiful grey eyes.

Sigh....

She wasn't at all looking forward to the duties that were waiting for her as on top of a Grand Priest, a High Order Priest had settled in the central city within the Isise.

Due to the pleas of the many devotees, the Purity had sent a Priest one stage higher than a Grand Priest in order to head the ever growing congregation of true believers in this place. Preserving such devoted folk was extremely important to the Purity as many had strayed from what they called the truth.

There was also another reason such an individual was sent though.

In terms of hierarchy and duty, the Priests were at lowest level, followed by the Grand Priest and then the High Order Priest.

A High Order Priest oversaw an Order, a channel through which specific instruments of divine power passed on the will and strength afforded by the Deities. It was a lineage of sorts, one ordained not by flesh and blood, dictating the will of a certain Deity or so the Purity believed.

Divine power was kept in specific natural treasures of high grades that carried with them Divine Blessings. These would be used as conduits through which an established Order would grow.

All those who were seen to be fitting could be initiated into an Order and become Priests, with the common Priest being the recipient with the least connection to the Divine Blessing and the High Order Priest being the individual with the strongest connection in an Order. They also bore the duty of overseeing these conduits of Divine Blessings.

The Grand Priest whose connection to the Order was much greater than that of a Priest, had the duty of overseeing the activity headed by Priests.

They made sure a Priest's connection to the Order had not been severed either through malpractice or other ills stemming from external causes as the Order was the channel through which Directions to the masses were passed down.

The clapping of hooves on rough ground seized as the carriage in which Revia was in finally entered the paved road of the central city in the Isise, Evic.

Just the appearance of the white coloured carriage caused merry cheer to bloom among the masses as they honoured the coming of a Paladin Champion into their city.

'No wonder these folks are being targeted by the Evenfall so much. They show too much zeal over the simplest of things. Ah~. I wish I'd stayed with Sister Elita for a bit longer,' Revia thought as she saw the scenes going on outside.

She hated the attention of these fanatics that almost felt forced as opposed to simple gestures of kindness and of course... courteous, hot men.

The men, women and children leaping lightly as they waved, whistles and the flowers thrown towards the carriage in bundles as well as the many sweet words about blessing her and her devotion all served to make her mood sour.

Even the Guilds in the Isise that constantly fought off the emerging Clusters didn't receive this much praise or welcome.

This was one of the things that reminded Revia what she hated about the Purity. How strict and rigid they were in terms of their duty. Refusing to deal with problems that were supposedly only meant to be taken care of by the nation and not them, yet they desired the praise from the masses.

Several Knights in distinct silver armours belonging to the Purity stood on either side of the road in which the carriage moved.

It was a gesture of respect that was noticeably different from the reception that Elita had gotten. The only difference between these Knights and those that went with Elita though, was simply their point of origin.

'To think I'd become someone worth this much. From 'that'?' Revia thought as she felt the carriage come to a halt.

Her memory spun backward as it dipped into parts of her past that she preferred to keep hidden under the thick blanket of loss but Revia quickly shook her head before exiting the carriage.

'That's not all there is about me. Yeah. There's more. So much more...'

Chapter 182: Her Story

"My precious little girl. No one will ever be as beautiful as you."

"Really, father?" she giggled with glee, a juvenile sense of pride gushing through her body at the words of her father who seemed to know it all.

He was a great warrior she knew. One who protected the world from monsters that spontaneously appeared from rifts carved in space.

"Of course! I'll protect your innocence and beauty for as long as I live. That's what I'm here for, right?"

"Right!" the little girl cheered as she danced in her father's embrace, coddled by the bliss of ignorance and the thick muscles on his body, honed through training.

"Do you think so too, mother?" the girl turned to the figure of her wiry mother who looked pale, bags visible under her eyes with the colour of her irises dimming.

"Hahaha! Your father is always right, dear. If he says it, then it's true. And you know you'll always be my pretty daisy in the..." the woman said, dragging out the end of her sentence for her beautiful silver-haired daughter to finish.

"In the rose garden!" the girl yelled in joy.

Ever since her mother had told her the tale of the lonely daisy in the garden of roses, twisting it from a tale of loneliness, into one that preached the beauty of being unique among those that looked the same, she had cherished the story, calling herself the daisy that stood out amongst the many.

"Hahaha! That you are my darling. And when you have brothers and sisters soon, you'll also tell them the story, making sure that they know they are just as special. Can you do that?"

Hearing the words of her father, the little girl leapt up high, ecstatic at the prospect of being a big sister. She could already imagine herself marching down the village in a straight line with chubby brothers and sisters that shared the same silver hair as her and her father. Or it could be that they could have the same brown hair as mother. Whichever way it was, she wanted chubby siblings!

"Yaaay!" she called.

Her mother smiled weakly as sweat trickled down her brow at the what her husband had said.

He even turned to her after making the declaration, with a determined glint that sought to breed.

He wanted a son.

Nomatter what it took.

His fatherly smile vanished for a split second as he and his wife shared a brief moment of conflict without the need for words.

The sickly looking woman who grew thinner by the day shuddered, as if she could almost hear her husband's intent.

'Before whatever illness you have claims your life, you will give me a son.'

The woman couldn't refute. Despite what her weakened body howled, her mind refused to disobey.

That was how it was.

That was how it would always be.

And no one knew why.

These undercurrents were unknown to the little girl at this moment, as while she happily leapt up and down while being held by the large arms of her father, she couldn't possibly have foreseen what would happen next.

Nine and a half months later.

An inhuman screech tore loose as a brown haired woman pushed with all her strength, her full effort into giving birth to the child that her husband by her side so desperately wanted.

The local women who aided her did the best they could to support her, one of them who was well versed in herbs and alchemical compounds that enhanced human faculties, doing her absolute best to ensure that her friend had a safe delivery.

Yet...

After quite the number of hours, the eyes of the woman who laid on the bed rolled as she felt strength leave her. Her illness had taken a lot from her, including a quarter of the weight she had nine months prior.

Apparently, her flesh coiled around the child, the womb grasping around the baby within as if to devour it.

This made making an incision on her belly to extract the child difficult as all sought of organs even pooled to the abdomen as if wrestling the child's birth.

The woman was fading fast, yet the baby's head was nowhere in sight.

It was hard to believe.

What was wrong?

What was this biological phenomenon?

"Don't give up, woman! Push! Did you suffer all those months so you could die without achieving your purpose?! Don't be selfish enough to leave on your lonesome after making me wait for so long! I will haunt you in the afterlife if you dare waste my seed on your way to the Under!"

The woman's husband boomed, bringing her consciousness back as she then fought off the rippling pain, numbness, weakness, the haemorrhaging, the sting in her eyes and doubts with the dutiful vigour she always had towards her husband.

'For my husband! For my little girl! I must...!'

She pushed so hard that she bled from her eyes and nose grotesquely and with a final primal scream, the baby finally tearing loose from the strange entanglements of flesh in the womb!

Two scenes occurred next.

The first being a cause for joy while the other, was too depressing to think about.

A child was born, alive and well despite the horrendous ordeal.

A mother died with a slight smile on her bloody face, unable to see her own child before being claimed by death.

In the midst of the new-born child's cries, the women around mourning the tragic death of a friend, one man happily confirmed that his second child was male and sighed in relief.

*

Life changed for the little girl born to a once dotting father and devoted mother who passed. She had wailed bitterly at her passing, not knowing that this was the point where everything she believed would turn out to be have been a ruthless fantasy.

Her younger brother became all that her father saw and cherished. Even as he took on multiple requests with his Guild, leaving the girl to tend to the child along with a hired maid, he only saw the young boy in his sight.

Of course, he awaited the day would grow up enough for him to impart all that he was.

No longer did he set the little girl upon his lap and call her the most beautiful.

Instead, she was given a new calling, which she was made to follow religiously.

"It's your duty to protect your brother! He's your responsibility. When he grows up, he'll protect you in return."

"But father... Am I still the most beautiful girl? The pretty daisy... in the rose garden?"

All the little girl remembered after asking this question, was a frowning face etched with so many wrinkles marking the displeasure of the bulky man before her that his visage looked several shades darker.

Then came a terrifying voice.

"I don't care whether you turn into a daisy, or a rose or fucking dandelion. Whether you're in a garden, or a grave. Whether you retain your beauty or become ugly. Whichever form you take, you will always protect your brother. Do you understand?"

Perhaps it was the same traits she inherited from her mother than spawned this. Or maybe it was her father who naturally had the ability to make people docile.

Whatever it was within the little girl, spawned a soft, "Yes", from her mouth.

And she did what she agreed to do.

Her life was devoted to her brother.

Every single threat that came his way became her own.

She learned to fight from her father just so could defend him, enduring strenuous training just to keep up with the voice that constantly told her to fulfill what her father had demanded of her.

Whatever her brother wanted to eat became her problem.

Whatever he needed to drink was her duty.

Whatever he needed to learn became her responsibility.

As she grew, she became numb to everything else, becoming solely focused on a single goal.

Then, after three years...

Her father passed.

He was killed on a raid to clear a blue Cluster along with his entire Guild.

This girl who wasn't so little anymore, mourned his passing along with her brother, but with this event, her father's words gained more weight.

'Whichever form you take, you will always protect your brother.'

She followed this religiously.

Unfortunately, the small village in which she lived had changed over the years. Her father's bad reputation as an apathetic psychopath making her life a living hell.

Even the women who had helped in her birth couldn't help her and her brother because of their husbands who despised the man.

Reality was that people looked for the smallest excuses to relieve themselves of the duty of kindness.

Fantasies of heroes and heroines with good hearts growing like grass within the world were

brutal diversions towards reality.

The girl learned this well.

In the cold, in the heat, in the barrels of poverty, it was left up to the girl to fend for her brother.

She took on different forms within the garden of roses.

Using her outstanding beauty, she turned from being a mere pretty daisy as she saw the world in the real light, unbiased by naiveté, into whatever she needed to be at a young age.

The world didn't coddle a pretty daisy.

She did it for her brother.

Unsurprisingly, the world welcomed whichever form she took especially if it tended to please carnal desires and get hard work done.

Four years passed as she gained little and used it all for her purpose, migrating from village to towns to cities until she became a mercenary.

A rather fine one that grew in popularity quickly because of her talent.

She began to earn better.

She gained recognition.

She gained praise.

Yet...

None of this eclipsed the voice in her head which constantly called for her watch over her brother. And so she did.

Until...

In an ironic twist of fate, the same mysterious illness that plagued her mother, suddenly emerged as in her brother as he grew and claimed his life before she could do anything about it.

That was when the girl's purpose, which she had tried her damndest to keep, had ended up being for naught in the end.

An endless river of tears would have been seen if the human body supported such.

The cruel reality and mystery of what her life was supposed to be, became nothing more than her haunting thought that brought her to the brink of madness.

Despite how she had sold her flesh to degenerates. Despite how she had toiled in rough and hard fields. Despite how she had awakened to her talent as a marvellous fighter.

Whatever form she took, wasn't enough to stop her brother from bleeding out from his orifices as his body shrivelled, growing pale until he died.

The girl was ready to follow her brother in death. To go to where ever the afterlife was as her purpose was stripped from her.

But...

On a particular day, a certain man donning thick robes appeared where she lived unannounced and turned her life around with a few words.

"Fear not, dear child. The abhorrent events of your life were preordained. The Deities have a grand plan for you..."

Chapter 183: Would One Such As I...

Revia took a deep breath to calm her mind. Indeed, she was something more than a just a tool. Despite her upbringing, everything that had happened had a reason.

Or so she was told.

That's what she had to believe.

She climbed out of the carriage and walked towards the massive building with elegant exterior decorations, different from the temples in other cities.

Extra details that enhanced the temple to make it a more divine looking structure than it was were added.

Three large faceless statues carved with the utmost level of care were at entrance, wide gaps in between them being the passages that congregants would use to scale up the wide and clean steps into the sizable opening that led within the temple.

Apprentice Priestesses and Priests would welcome the joyous entrants with handshakes, smiles and even hugs, the entire atmosphere being devoid of anything but positivity.

Revia looked at this scene from below, her grey eyes tracing along the pristine statues of the Deities.

'Direction is it? Is this really what I'm supposed to be doing...?' she gave in to momentary doubt.

Were the events of her past really necessary for her to reach this point? Was it all really ordained and fair?

She didn't really know.

Perhaps. But only a single reason prevented her from denying it outright.

When she was grafted into the Purity Knights after having been saved by the man who had appeared at her door, she had met the one person who has truly delivered her from the darkness that welled in her after her brother's passing.

Elita.

Her sister.

The one who reminded her of her femininity which got to be enjoyed by vile men before she could. Her strength which was used to ease the burden of cruel personages before she could use it for herself.

She gained individuality through the ever-smiling and encouraging sister who saw her as nothing else but a younger sister who needed her guidance and love.

That was why she had a semblance of belief in the Deities. Because she had found someone who looked out for her for a chance.

Revia unconsciously smiled.

Her mood became a little better.

'If this is were I'm supposed to be, then I'll save you too sister. Just wait for me,' she thought before scaling up the steps into temple.

On this journey, she found the people climbing along with her parting to give her space to walk up unhindered.

They all smiled and greeted her warmly to which she reciprocated with a warm smile of her own and a dignified nod.

Though this was different from the genuine welcome she had gotten from Emeradis, she wouldn't be so rude as to dismiss these people's goodwill as she was truly happy that they at least seemed to find purpose and joy in this.

Upon entering the temple, a stretch of well positioned benches in neat rows with a gap inbetween diving them into two sides appeared.

The air was surprisingly cool within, the decor of white and gold giving one who entered here for the first time a sense of awe.

Glistening gems were fitted to the walls on either side along with small sparkling trinkets that produced starry lights. The ceiling far above had vertical, closely knit and painted beams in neat columns as they faced down, creating a beautiful collective arching aesthetic when one looked up.

Almost half of the benches were occupied as upon entering, everyone would grow silent, respecting the sanctity of this place.

Up ahead, a man in robes that lightly touched the wooden tiled flooring was addressing two Priests in a hushed tone.

He had sliced back blonde hair and eyes that had begun whitening due to his old age, blindness slowly kicking in. His skin was deeply wrinkled with his earlobes drooping, with each word he said bringing a loose tingle of his flesh.

Even with these features, one couldn't dismiss the thick aura radiating from him as he donned thick white robes along with red scarf which had a line of three-pointed stars all around.

He held a tall silver construct akin to a staff, which was fitted with a bright, blue orb at its end that released a rainbow coloured flare.

Golden carvings were etched upon this tool and as the man held it, his figure gaining a faint halo that demanded respect.

Revia walked up to the three as she then knelt down on one knee and bowed her head.

"High Priest Valis... I am here to serve," she said with a tone that depicted a silver of intimacy under a sea of formality.

"Ah, my child. I'm glad you're finally here. It has been quite the long time since our last meeting. Rise..." the old man said with a voice that oozed of care and joy.

Revia stood and smiled lightly.

"Since when did you grow so formal with me, child? I thought your sister taught you to be anything but that."

"I couldn't just leap up and cling to you like a brat in front of the congregation now could I?"

"You... make a fair point. Though, I would wager the Deities wouldn't disapprove of an old man accepting a child's embrace after all these years. You've grown so much."

Revia smiled brightly.

Even if she doubted many in the Purity and perhaps even Deities themselves, she couldn't doubt this man.

High Priest Valis.

The same man who had dragged her from the depths of pain and sorrow all those years ago, replacing her aimlessness with hope that there was something else for her out there in the world.

She saw him as her father and he saw her as his daughter, as besides from all the work in the Purity, he had the air of a fun old fart with a light-hearted personality.

High Order Priests were generally addressed as High Priests. Calling them by their full title each time would be quite excessive after all.

The tool in his hand, the silver staff with the bright blue orb, was the conduit for the Divine Blessing of the Deities.

It had many functions, which depended entirely upon the type of Blessing bestowed upon it.

While the Champion Paladins held individual Divine Blessings, they were more personalised and contained, while the ones within these treasures held and overseen by High Order Priests were usually more powerful and capable of a wider range of effects.

"Has there truly been a rise in the activity of the Evenfall in the Isise? Even with you around?"
Revia asked in a hushed tone.

Valis sighed in exasperation, dismissing the Priests and motioning with his head for Revia to follow him several steps from the first line of benches.

"It's not exactly clear what the trend is going to be. I fear that Elita's warning may have been inadequate but not unwarranted. I have been feeling restless of late. I feel that something terrible will occur in the future. It turns out that I'm not the only one who shares this sentiment.

Apparently, that ghost of a man Erlton the Reader appeared a few days in Eofel, telling folks the same in his own... musical way."

Revia looked visibly worried.

Was this such a big deal Could there be a threat that the Purity couldn't handle?

Both notorious groups, the Evenfall and Green Neolists had only been an object of nuisance for a long time. Nothing more.

Was there something else behind this?

"Perhaps it is my old bones that have grown wary because of the constant chase I've had to endure with those Evenfall heathens. But, your presence here brings me some much needed relief," Valis said with short chuckle.

Revia felt jittery.

She couldn't get used to being praised and relied on in this way. It felt so... redeeming and refreshing.

Her determination to her goal became even more reinforced with this.

"Now, you can just sit down and hear the message for the day and then we can have a lengthy chat afterwards."

"Yes, High Priest," Revia said with a bow and a smile as she went over to the front bench where one of the congregants gave up his seat for her.

Revia looked ahead, awaiting for the High Priest to begin his sermon to the congregants when someone beside her respectfully called for her attention.

"Miss..."

Revia turned to this man only for her pupils to dilate in shock.

"Would one such as I be allowed to listen to the message of the Deities?"

Beside Revia sat a man in a white and green mask...

Chapter 184: Villain

*Pant, *pant.

Revia's raspy breath could be heard as she breathed in and out, cold sweat trickling down her brow. Her eyes were wide open as she looked nowhere but downward.

Her focus was only in one place as she made sure to not let the object of her focus out of sight.

Many questions drifted through her mind as she hung up on the ceiling of the temple, her feet supporting her suspension as they pressed against the painted wooden beams that on either of her sides to give her balance.

'Who is that?!' she thought to herself as her brain went into overdrive.

She recalled clearly how it had all happened and her instincts had flared, causing her body to literally vanish and appear fifteen meters above ground within fractions of a second.

Her movements had been quick and silent, issuing less sound than a whisper as none of the congregants had noticed anything amiss even now.

Valis had sensed it all though.

He was also extremely anxious.

His thoughts and Revia's were the same.

'How did I not see or sense this person before?!

The old man warily gripped his staff tightly as he prepared to deal with the oddity while Revia also did the same. But both of them couldn't attack carelessly or else they risked the many lives in the temple.

"I will have to postpone the giving of the message for the day. Could everyone leave for a while?" Valis said to the congregants as with his words came confusion and hushed chatter that was replaced with prompt cooperation seconds later.

Revia's hands were on the sheathed sword at her side as she narrowed her eyes, condensed mana beginning to layer around the sword for one brutal strike should this assailant even try to make any excessive movement.

Surprisingly, this figure did not move as the congregants left the temple. It didn't seem as if he was interested in them at all.

His half green and white mask that hid his face betrayed no emotion.

He donned what looked like a dark linen hood jacket that reached his knees, similarly coloured pants along with knee high simple boots with a rubbery heel adorning his body from the waist down.

He silently sat at the bench with his hands clasped against each other as he was deep in thought.

"Who are you? I sense a thick energy of death around you. Are you someone from that infamous heretic organisation?" Valis asked.

There was no response.

"What is it that you want?"

Still, no answer.

At this point Revia was ready to strike. She was sure she could kill this man before he could defend himself, which was ironic when she herself considered that her first instinct when she sensed his presence a minute ago, was to create distance between her and him.

She couldn't forget that sensation. It barely registered as a mere presence.

It was suffocating!

It was like blinking, only to find a hideous wide maw with sharp grotesque teeth opening up to devour you!

Faced with that for a moment, she couldn't help but retreat.

She had wanted nothing more than to run away in that moment, but now, she had collected herself.

As she was about to draw her sword...

"My name is Actuass. Yes, I'm a member of the Green Neolists. In fact, I am its current head."

The man finally answered.

Revia held herself.

"As for what I'm after..." Actuass said, his head turning to Valis and then up to Revia above. "It's you..."

Revia knitted her brows as she felt a jab towards her pride.

"You want to kill me?" she asked while grinding her teeth, the High Order Priest below beginning to raise his staff.

"Kill you? No. I'm not the one who wants your life. Rather, I'm interested in your death."

"..."

Valis and Revia were both equally confused about this.

Wasn't that the same as saying he wanted to kill her?

"Oh. It's become apparent to me that it's true... you ALL don't know that there is a difference in forces that exert both life and death."

Actuass sighed under his mask.

Suddenly, Revia felt something wrong with her. The same was true for Valis.

They both felt something leak from them and spill outwards. It was in miniscule amounts, but because of their levels of power and natural awareness of their own bodies, they felt it vividly.

It was quite the uncomfortable feeling. Whatever left them held a warm about it that they felt was essential but...

They grew even more hostile as Valis went on to point his staff at Actuass, a star shaped white light being emitted from the blue sphere at its end that quickly began to circle around Actuass, increasing its velocity to horrendous levels to the point where only a hazy white sphere could be seen around the immobile figure of Actuass.

This was one of the skills of this legendary artefact that Valis held, a skill stemming from a Divine Blessing!

Impenetrable Star Prison!

As long as the star continued to rotate around the target, exiting outside its influence was impossible.

Also, all attacks that came from the target would not be able to escape from within.

Yet... the enemy was unfazed.

And the feeling of something being sapped from their bodies didn't stop!

"You can't stop it. Not even I can either. I'm sure that feeling is driving you mad. Losing something but not being sure what it is and where it is going. Would like me to enlighten you?" Actuass asked with a cold yet apathetic tone.

Revia wanted to attack in this moment, but many thoughts of caution were swirling in her mind.

What if increasing her proximity to this enemy made whatever this feeling was even worse?

She had discarded all arrogance after constant lectures from Elita. She wouldn't wager her speed against an enemy like this without further information.

The enemy seemed too relaxed. What if he had a backup plan and drawing close to him gave him exactly what he wanted?

The man had just said that he was here for her after all.

While she was locked in these thoughts, Actuass continued to speak.

"It's an odd thing that happens when I face opponents with hostile intent. They start to lose their lives before they can even engage me. That is... what you're losing right now... is your life energy."

...!

WHAT?!

Revia and Valis were appalled!

This was a lie right?

This man..!

Just facing him caused an odd phenomenon where they would begin to lose life energy?!

Revia closely sensed this energy and monitored her body.

With her fine control, she found that this might actually be true!

The qualitative changes within her for the past few seconds did indicate that, if a percentage was to be used, she had lost 0.002 of her strength!

Valis raised his staff again to attack, but this time, Actuass gave him a stare but made him leap back!

From the white and green mask, the hazel glow of an eye, peeked to give him a sense of dread.

"It's rather cumbersome that I have to tell my opponents this detail every time for maximum benefits on my part. Usually such an advantage is kept hidden but... now that you know, your body is in panic and is trying to seal off the leaking life energy within. And it eventually succeeds."

Valis and Revia both frowned as when they thought about this, it turned out to be true.

The life energy that was leaking from their bodies suddenly stopped and as if to eagerly affirm Actuass' words, their bodies instinctively scrambled to find a way to stop the leaking of life energy as soon as he mentioned it!

And now, the ominous flow stopped as what happened next shocked them to their cores!

Instead of the dreadful evil they thought to be under way, a massive surge of power erupted from their bodies. If it was to be calculated, it would be more than 30% of their total strength, bursting to enhance their natural abilities!

Did this energy just give them a buff?!

What was going on?

At this point, Actuass stood from his seat, even while the bright star revolved around him.

"All beings lose life energy superficially. That's what causes aging and death. But for you, your bodies have temporarily sealed off all escape routes for life energy entirely on response to well.... me. Of course, this causes a huge boost to your strength and now, we can begin."

"You underestimate us. Even without a proper understanding of what you just said, I am of the mind that you're merely arrogant if you think you can kill us both in a confrontation?" Valis questioned as a golden barrier appeared around him in a fantastic fashion.

Actuass' body began to leak black and bright green fumes that obscured much of his body.

He extended his hand, from thin air, a skeleton appearing with a tall dark shade of green, cracks visible on its skull as with a flickering transition all its parts fully formed.

From its dark sockets.... red flames burst forth with a luminosity and intensity to caused the space within the temple to turn several shades darker!

Actuass then turned to Valis who was bewildered by the ferocious strength in the skeleton this enemy had summoned.

"Like I said," Actuass said before looking up again where Revia's energy was beginning to melt the ceiling as she prepared a powerful attack with her eyes like a hawk's and her hand grasping so tightly to her sword that it almost choked.

"Someone else wants your life. I merely want your death. When I'm done with you... You'll never see an afterlife."

Chapter 185: Formidable Strengths

Life energy.

A concept that many had grown too used to, to think deeply about.

Life energy was essentially the sustenance for one to continue being alive.

In Aigas, it was a result of the harmony of the powers of Suzamete, the skies, Quintess the lands and Listafelle the seas, contrary to the chaotic aspect of the combination of their energies that formed Clusters.

Simply put, every living organism was born with a vast amount of life energy, with some rare exceptions that would die early existing all over the world. As one grew, its quantity would diminish as it leaked from the body constantly in small amounts, however, its quality grew with age, experience and stimuli like mana core progression, class advancements and Enriching gems.

The result of this qualitative change was natural returns to the body in the form of more strength, a boost in potential, as well as prolonged life.

Still... life energy didn't fully correlate to strength, meaning it couldn't be used as a substitute for true power for long periods.

Yet Actuass knew its ins and outs.

This was thanks to his vast well of experience, as well as his Advanced class which afforded him a very unique <Undeath Concept>.

The skeleton that Actuass summoned stood still for a while with its sockets flaring madly as red flames rose within while emitting a scalding heat.

It opened its mouth to release a burst of unknown energy before its neck creaked, its head turning to Actuass.

A crooked voice came from it, addressing the man.

"Are you truly in that dire of a situation for you to summon me a second time already?"

Actuass' body which was partly engulfed in his green and black smog moved ahead as he then replied.

"At this moment, I don't have the means to go against two legendary treasures. And two Divine Blessings as well, might I add."

"Hmmm. Intriguing," the skeleton said as it turned to Valis and Revia.

Valis sensed the atrocious waves of power emitted by this thing and almost suffocated in fear.

It was monstrous!

He could have sworn that this was the most dangerous presence he had been in his entire life!

The green skeleton's flames began to recede into the skeleton's sockets, becoming only wisps of red as it uttered its final words before changing its disposition and presence entirely.

"Ah.... so you were here all along? Perhaps it won't be so long after all..."

No one in the temple understood what the skeleton meant or even heard it properly as it was just a passing whisper.

The horrifying waves of power it emitted vanished after that, the skeleton that remained having a unique air still but nothing compared to what it had before.

Valis realised this as his heart finally settled, sensing that the obscenely evil thing had departed.

"What kind of foul creature did you summon?!" he barked at Actuass.

The hooded man did not render a response as he merely pointed at the hazy sphere around him which was actually a bright star revolving around him at top speed.

Actuass had already seen through the properties of the [Impenetrable Star Prison]. None of his own attacks would be able to make it out of the prison and he would only get shredded if he tried to move through it. At least right now, that was true. Therefore...

"Break it," he commanded the now mute skeleton which mechanically moved forward and touched the hazy sphere, red sparks and rough scratching noises being emitted at the point of contact to the point where they looked like a sparky fire!

In that moment, the atmosphere changed vastly, as while the skeleton attempted to rupture that prison around it and Actuass, a figure seamlessly entered the [Impenetrable Star Prison] while everything around looked to be completely still!

It was Revia!

She had analysed enough.

Now was the time to discard all unnecessary thoughts and simply attack without remorse!

Within her scabbard, a silver katana with golden markings on its surface silently shot out as she then immediately swiped it at Actuass' neck from behind!

The figures of Actuass, the green skeleton and even Valis stood completely still with obscure reflections of themselves rising from their bodies like distorted souls in this image where only the Paladin Champion moved!

Her blade spoke no ill against the air as it cut apart anything in its way, reaching Actuass' neck without a hitch!

However...

MBING!

A loud crash sounded as the windows in the entire temple shattered, the entire building emitting a low rumble of vibration from the impact that ensured between a legendary steel sword and... bone?

The katana had struck the green bone from the skeleton which had shocking switched places with Actuass!

Revia's eyes remained firm even as she wondered what was going on.

Actuass had escaped the entrapment of the star as when he appeared before the sparky clash that had been happening between the star from Valis' staff and his skeleton milliseconds ago, he had squeezed through at the weak point that had been created!

He immediately dashed back after his escape, his hazel eye glowing through the eye hole of the mask, showing nothing but calm!

The skeleton also didn't wait as it dashed forward, knocking against the [Impenetrable Star Prison] with a burst of sparks before exiting it and bulleting forward at an exceedingly quicker speed than Actuass!

Soon, it was out of the temple, while Actuass stood in the space that divided the benches.

He knew that one of the top five Paladin Champions would definitely have been given a legendary weapon to defend herself and a High Order Priest would naturally carry the symbol of their Order, which was the staff that Valis wielded in this case.

This information had been fed to him by his new allies who knew their archenemies best, which, as a strategy, had worked like a charm.

In response, he brought a counter. A semi-organic item with hints of sentience which was of a vastly superior rarity.

The green skeleton.

Truthfully, it wasn't his and he could only use it thrice with this being his second use.

Actuass stretched out his hand to the side, an arching green ring of strange runes that quivered incessantly appearing on the floor.

"Let's start with some basic necromancy," he said as green energy gushed from the middle of these circular runes that looked like a deep and dark pit.

All of a sudden, as if intent on cutting off the proceedings to his flow, the continuous thrums of a heartbeat were heard through the temple, echoing in a rather unsettling fashion.

BA-DUM! BA-DUM! BA-DUM!

The sound emanated from Revia whose eyes had never left Actuass up to this point.

She hadn't lost sight of him at all. She didn't let the green skeleton distract her from her real enemy. Since he was close, she matched his flow, not being too fast in her approaches so as to critically dissect what his intent was.

It was only now that she decided to use an ample portion of her strength, unleashing her Divine Blessing!

The thrums of heartbeats became stronger and stronger until

flakes and dust fell to the floor from the temple.

'She's getting serious...' he thought, a hint of amusement hidden deep in his mental voice.

Chapter 186: Stalemate, I Think...

Revia had always been fast.

Speed was her key tool as when she first became a mercenary, her lack of strength due to her young age was eclipsed by her agility which made her a deadly weapon of carnage when lethal weaponry was left in her hands.

This was taken to an even more ridiculous level when she was found to be worthy of joining the Paladin Champions and granted a Divine Blessing.

<Hearts of Clarity>!

This Divine Blessing granted her three silver, ethereal hearts that would appear in her chest and seamlessly create threads upon threads of veins within her body, supporting all her flesh and organs and enhancing them for a staggering increase in speed!

Without it, Revia could use short bursts of incredible speed to overpower her opponents quickly before they could even engage her but these bursts usually required some long cooldown periods depending on the distance travelled.

This was why performing these in rapid succession was impossible for her, otherwise, she would have blitzed Actuass multiple times over. At least from what he had shown so far.

With the Divine Blessing, she could spam these bursts of speed for long stretches of time and manage some extremely insane movements that would bewilder any ordinary combatant.

'She's getting serious..' Actuass thought.

From his ring of green coloured runes which expanded to cover half of the floor of the temple on his side, devouring benches within its space where nothing could be seen once it fell in, skeletons began to rise!

They were all decked in rusted armour which still had hints of the lustre from its prime, chipped and cracked bones that were saturated with thick undeath energy and hollow sockets that flared with greenish black flames!

They all held weapons that looked to have made names for themselves back in the day, as different from lower level undead, they all held dignified stances and howling, exposed cores ranging from bright white to bright blue!

A little more than two hundred of these appeared as Actuass then pointed at Revia, wordlessly commanding the army to attack her!

The well furnished floors of the temple ruptured as these powerful undead burst forward with seasoned steps, launching a flurry of attacks with their weapons!

BA-DUM! BA-DUM! BA-DUM! BA-DUM!

The echoing of hearts continued to beat as the undead approached, Revia having sheathed her sword while gazing ahead languidly.

Then...

The Paladin Champion became decked in a brilliant layer of obscure light that outlined her figure which vanished for a fraction of a millisecond, and then...

MBING!

A familiar noise rang out, this time its intensity blowing apart the floors and walls of the temple nearest to the doors like a bomb!

However, this wasn't the only development, as tens of thousands of small fragments of bone flew in all directions at lightning speed, Revia having decimated hundreds of high level undead in an instant and off chapter!

Fine powder and tiny pieces of bone were shattered as Revia had obliterated all the undead and went on to attack Actuass at an even greater speed than before!

Yet...

Her silver blade once again found its fangs biting into the hard bones, the ribcage this time, of the green skeleton that had gone out of the temple some time ago!

Revia frowned, the brows above her grey eyes making a funny wiggle to show her annoyance.

'So nomatter the distance, he can just switch positions with this thing?' Revia thought as she then frustratedly grumbled.

The green skeleton remained stationary before her as its ribs didn't let up with her sword.

High Priest Valis was still hidden within his golden barrier, watching with cautious eyes what was occurring. He wasn't unaware of Revia's capabilities and thus wasn't surprised with her display.

His focus had been on the skeleton that had rushed out, his worry going towards the fact that it may have started slaughtering people left and right!

Shockingly, it appeared that this wasn't the case.

The skeleton had merely been waiting a vast distance away from the temple, standing absolutely still.

Now, it had taken Actuass' place, defending him from Revia!

Without delay, Valis struck the ground with his staff, a massive bright star appearing above him with a golden white light that sprang a positive light on the surroundings!

It shot into the air, vanishing through the ceiling as if it didn't exist as it then settled high in the sky, causing the people's attention which had been drawn by the explosion at the temple to be pulled toward it instead.

It became akin to a second sun but without the additional heat as it gave a reassuring light.

Hazy golden barriers instantly began to cover everyone in the city.

EVERYONE!

The hearts of the many were soothed as they felt an unbridled sense of warmth and protection.

Within the temple, Valis immediately called out to Revia who was facing against the green skeleton which didn't respond to her presence.

"Revia! I have all the civilians under the protection of the Blessing. Fight! Don't hold back!" Valis yelled.

His staff had the Divine Blessing called Star of the Night, which was very well geared towards supporting to a terrifying degree with all its skills having something to do with a star.

"Yes, High Priest," Revia replied in a formal tone as she then vanished from the temple, warping space dancing on her initial position.

The speed!

The top five Paladin Champions within the Purity were given titles according to their most prominent traits.

Revia's title was 'She Who Can't Be Caught', a reference to her immense speed which she then progressively demonstrated.

She appeared a millisecond later within the city above a rather rocky road within a portion of the residences where she brought down her katana with intense speed that warped the figure she had suddenly rushed to!

Everything remained still, with suspended hazy duplicates of the everyone in the vicinity hanging above them!

As her sword dropped on her enemy, Actuass, who had appeared almost twelve kilometres into the city, his stance showing that he had been in the middle of a dash, it happened again!

MBING!

The skeleton's figure replaced Actuass who appeared back in the temple, with his hazel coloured eyes doing their best to focus!

Yet...

He felt a dreadful and cold sensation coming towards his neck and then...

Switch!

He appeared in the same street as before, finding the ground still in the process exploding with molten rock about in a wide, hundred meter crater, sinking houses within itself, only for his figure to flash into the temple again, where the same level of destruction was beginning to occur too!

Revia was trying to attack them at the same time but... distance was the problem.

No wonder the skeleton had rushed away back then.

This effect was effective as long as the two were away from each other, especially against her, and it also seemed automatic!

Revia stopped for a while as she then perked atop one of the buildings while looking at the two.

'This is ridiculous. Is this to tire me out or something? No. There's definitely something else I'm missing.' she thought, her brows wiggling again.

BOOM! BOOM!

All the places where she had clashed with that freakishly strong skeleton, which were just two, exploded in earth shattering sequences that caused the millions of people in the city to scream and become anxious.

Actuass who finally had some breathing room sighed as his vision focused. He looked around and saw the people around covered in protective barriers.

"That almost completely cuts off my alternative moves," he said before shook his head. "Basic necromancy won't do it seems. How about advanced necromancy?"

Actuass extended his arm again, releasing another ring on the ground, this time smaller than the previous.

From it, a freshly dead corpse appeared and lay on the ground, donning a rather exquisite armour with glowing circles of orange atop of its black and sleek exterior!

Thick green wisps of energy entered the body as within no time, the corpse rose from the ground and looked vacantly ahead with its discoloured eyes!

Revia narrowed her eyes as she wondered what this man was about to do.

It didn't seem like the same cheap trick from before.

"I used to be a believer you know?" Actuass said as from his body emanated a thick layer of greenish black fumes.

"I can tell when someone's faith is faltering."

Even though quite a distance existed between him and Revia, his voice reached her just fine.

"Do you think mind games will work on me?" Revia said back, her voice also travelling the distance between where dust and crackling rock from the destruction emerged, highlighting the shielded civilians who sustained no damage from all this.

"I wouldn't call them games but... indeed, they do seem as such. SoSei, attack."

SoSei was the name of the green skeleton, and as soon as it heard the command, it jerked, its red socket flames changing to blue.

Chapter 187: The Fifth Vs. Three (1)

After summoning the first corpse which he 'brought to life', Actuass conjured another circular ring of runes from which spawned a second corpse that was once again invaded by the greenish black fumes that rose from his body.

It was a woman this time, her skin pale, which contrasted well with her aged and dirty pair of dark pants and off white, thick shirt.

Short, brown hair had grown on her body during her years of life but nothing else but a once pretty face could be determined with certainty from her features in her current state.

These two corpses stood before Actuass as on top of jerking and twitching about in their positions, their decoloured eyes gained greenish black pupils, this development bringing forth a change in their demeanour as they both took deep breaths.

While this was happening, SoSei, the green skeleton burst towards Revia with a speed that eclipsed that of anyone other than the Paladin Champion in the city.

It ran into houses and the shielded people before shooting up with a horrific force as it flew towards Revia who was perched atop one of the higher roofed houses.

Her attention had been on what Actuass was doing but for a brief moment, she gave this skeleton her attention, her agility and dexterity when she clasped her scabbard and blade handle with such a quick motion being so fast that she had more free time to decide on what to do next.

Right when SoSei reached her, pulling back its arm and launching a textbook straight punch at her, Revia felt the intense level of weight behind the punch vividly!

She literally felt the winds howling as they gathered, preparing for the eruption that would ensue should what this creature's version of a casual punch landed!

'One of these is enough to tear me apart even with my armour....' Revia thought as her brows wiggled.

Her figure vanished like a ghost right when the punch arrived, a cataclysmic explosion flattening anything within a 70 meter radius!

The ground sank in on itself even when the skeleton had hit nothing but the house, just the sheer force behind its punch barreling into the ground like a massively heavy sphere digging into the crust!

Revia's image flashed a few tens of meters away from the scene, sixty civilians behind her donning terrified expressions as some began to vomit.

They had all been saved by Revia from the area as even with the hazy light barriers shrouding them, the Paladin Champion wasn't sure if they would have still survived that massive attack. The power of Valis' staff was probably stretched thin.

She vanished once more and appeared before the skeleton which then dashed towards her, its speed increasing with each step on the shattered ground!

Revia felt the bubbling of power within her.

The boost she had received from back when Actuass gave that strange monologue was acting up again!

Her life energy continuing to pile on within her body while being unable to escape!

From the initial 30% increase in her strength, she could tell that now, she was 55% stronger as her muscles greedily held in the life energy which was supposed to leak out with time!

Just as Actuass had explained. Her body was unconsciously reacting to losing too much of the life energy, an supposed effect from facing this mysterious man.

'I don't know what I can do to stop this. It feels like breaking the natural flow of nature. I have a feeling that my body normally can't just stop leaking life energy on its own. This man probably has the means to force his opponent's bodies to develop this ability. It's probably temporary too, meaning I'll burn out soon. Is that what he's hoping for?

Heh, if that's the case, I'll do what I do best. End it quickly!' Revia thought as the faint light around her intensified.

At this point, SoSei was right before her, preparing to launch some more amateur hour style attacks at her!

She had to deal with this skeleton first to get to Actuass, but so far, it had shown itself to be impervious to damage from her attacks.

This meant...

"I'll just try a little harder..!"

SoSei swung its fist in a straightforward and childish manner towards Revia's face, the force behind the punch being almost twice as heavy as the previous one!

Revia bobbed her head, ducking down!

A flurry of punches came from the skeleton, each being dodged by Revia whilst carrying a force that generated whirlwinds behind her that blew structures apart!

Revia dodged as she sought for any weak points on this skeleton. Head, chest, arms, legs.

There didn't seem to be anywhere she could hack until it broke!

As the skeleton furiously launched these powerful attacks that eventually turned into mini tornados that ravaged the city of Evic, its speed increased substantially, its footwork improving during this exchange which wasn't an exchange!

From the way it looked, this thing would only keep on increasing in power and speed!

Revia knitted her brows and decided to go on the offensive. She might as well try to hit this thing with her strongest moves before it grew to rival her in the one thing she was confident in.

Speed.

To do that, she had to cut off it's growth.

She withdrew her sword and flung it with incredible speed into the sky behind SoSei!

The object flew while creating a white trail in the blue skies illuminated by the large star, Revia switching to blunt damage dealing!

With a flash of brilliant light, she launched 550 jab punches into five different sections of the skeleton with her full strength; head, chest, spine, pelvis and shoulder!

The sounds that ensued caused those with weak hearts to faint as they were akin to multiple thunder strikes ringing all at the same time!

SoSei drew back while all around, the ground couldn't take it, shuddering and wailing!

Yet... no damage registered on SoSei at all!

'I shouldn't be surprised..' thought Revia before she dodged a fistful of seemingly rage filled blows from the skeleton before launching an epic uppercut into its chin!

A circular arc exploded outwards, SoSei being launched upwards like a rocket, flying at an angle towards the trail that had been left by the sword milliseconds ago!

Revia stormed from her position, appearing a very long distance away, near the borders of the city in the air as shockingly, she caught the blade she had thrown and sheathed it while staying afloat!

She got into stance as SoSei whom she had punched with all her might flew in her direction!

Her eyes honed in on this figure as she drifted in midair at a slower speed, clutching the blade and the scabbard with unreal focus.

"First UnForm Blade Technique, Rend!" Revia called, drawing her sword with a barely discernible light as when it came out of its scabbard... it could not be seen except for its handle and guard!

However, a crackle and thundering screamed, echoing across the city as it almost seemed like the sky had shattered like glass!

After the ferocious noise, something flew towards the crust from the altitude at breakneck speed and blew a wide crater into ground that ignited with flame momentarily!

After this attack, Revia's hand could be seen vibrating at an intense frequency as she descended, her eyes zooming through the dust to see if she had managed to do any damage.

The result...

A shallow but long mark could be seen running from the SoSei's back, running from its shoulder blade, ribs and spine in a slanting fashion.

Revia smirked.

'It's better than nothing. Now to—'

Revia suddenly plunged to the ground at a ridiculous speed that left even her stumped!

She was pulled to the ground, slamming face down into the hard crust of Aigas before she even realised what was happening!

...!

After she left a human shaped crater into the ground, she instantly responded by extending her mana outwards to support herself but still found it to be extraordinarily difficult!

Slowly, she barely managed to crawl up, lifting at least one leg off the ground from a kneeling position.

Revia gritted her teeth as she looked ahead, her eyes bloodshot as she felt an immense tugging on even her skin!

A bulky man in a sleek, dark armour with orange rings all over it stood with his arms crossed in front of his chest with his one foot before his body in a stomp!

He was over a kilometre away but Revia felt this strange effect bubbling from his body which released explosive waves of power, the greenish black in his eyes giving Revia a bad feeling.

When she looked at the ground, she saw it sinking into itself like a swirling whirlpool, rocks and all but it wasn't real. It was just a realistic illusion to enhance the effect.

The more she looked at it, the more she felt her body loosen as it was dragged back down, her mind losing focus!

The Paladin Champion shook her head and mustered more of her strength as she stood.

With her body mostly stabilised, she finally saw the terrible scenes around her which resulted from the strange technique!

Chapter 188: The Fifth Vs. Three (2)

Hundreds of the civilians were dead!

Despite the golden lights shielding their bodies, they were still crushed down by the powerful force that strongly pulled everything down!

It seemed that the parameters for what was considered protection were not all accounted for in this scenario and it was tragic to see the result.

Broken bones protruding through flesh, ruptured organs and ghastly expressions could be seen everywhere as blood pooled, some of the bodies actually being squashed beyond recognition.

Revia's face scrunched up in fury. She felt little sympathy but a sifting river of rage built up within her.

If there was something she hated, it was failing at her objectives.

Her mind had still not broken free from the shackles of her family blood. Something she was indoctrinated into would stick but probably for the wrong reasons.

It had been the case with her mother, after all.

She was supposed to protect the people at all costs. No matter what form she took! She had to be the Paladin Champion that followed protocol and saved lives, maintaining the image of the Purity!

Yet she was already beginning to fail.

Valis who was a distance away had a hard expression on his face as he gushed mana into the staff, the star in the sky growing larger and brighter until its light eclipsed that of the sun at this time of day, a bright orange ring appearing around it to make its effect on the people below more profound!

The world around became several shades darker due to the light but the many remaining civilians had their hearts soothed a bit more as the glow around them was reinforced.

Revia clasped her blade tightly as she faced the man who had a particularly relaxed face, still maintaining his stance.

He was using a rather powerful martial technique.

The Grounded Body Limiter Art!

A powerful technique that moulded mana into the ground, manipulating gravitational properties in order to restrict enemy movements and in cases of weaker combatants, instantly kill them!

Revia caught the figure of the woman who had been summoned by Actuass standing atop a dilapidated roof as her greenish black eyes locked onto her while emitting a strange power with a semi-traceable feel.

"These two... why do they feel like..." she thought as her eyes scoured around the city, finally locking onto the figure of Actuass was sprinting towards Valis at top speed!

"That bastard!" Revia cursed as it suddenly clicked in her mind.

This man had probably used a devastating attack that could by-pass the protection of the star in the sky in order to force Valis into rendering more of his attention to the civilians, leaving himself susceptible to attacks from Actuass!

Actuass was intent on killing Valis too, Revia came to this conclusion.

Despite what he said earlier, he was aiming for the old man too!

Revia's skin cracked as the downward pull remained tremendous, but her body exploded with power as she zoomed towards Actuass, but at a much slower speed than her usual peak!

She felt the boost to her strength increasing!

It was more than 70% now!

Ridiculous!

In the process of speeding ahead, flakes of her skin tore off but she didn't care!

Did this bastard think that this much was enough to hold her down?!

BA-DUM! BA-DUM!

The three ethereal hearts in Revia's chest thrummed and beat at an ridiculous speed as they supported her heightened speed!

Revia appeared right in front of Actuass, her body glowing with a bright halo that outlined her lean figure!

Her body became lighter as she felt that she had escaped the range of the [Grounded Body Limiter Art], becoming even more eager to finish this assault quickly!

She released an insane amount of murderous intent as she slashed diagonally, intent on carving Actuass up. This was personal now!

She might not have felt the same when it came to other people like the civilians dying as that merely her a standard part of her job, but when it came to Valis, her mind was overtaken with rage for a moment!

"Second UnForm Blade Technique, Distorted Killing!" she called, her hand vibrating once more while her sword could not be seen!

The air trembled and released sparks as Revia's sword struck with a speed beyond Actuass' reaction speed, going for his waist to blitz him through his chest and shoulder!

What happened next, she did not expect.

Her one leg suddenly sank deep into the ground, a horrendous downward force drawing her leg into the hard crust!

She instinctively looked down and it worsened, her eyes being fooled by the downward spiral on the ground that drew in her mind!

In that moment, where Actuass had been, SoSei appeared, but only briefly!

Revia sensed it but couldn't react as her foot was being sucked in by the intense gravity which singled it out, light fractures appearing in her bones!

The green skeleton vanished only to be replaced by a figure in a bulky dark armour who launched a nasty hook punch with a warping energy around it's fist into Revia's chest!

A shattering noise echoed as Revia's armour was crushed, her body being flung like a ragdoll over a broad distance!

The Paladin Champion wheezed and drew in rugged breaths as the pain from the strike settled in!

Her mind was thrown into disarray for a few seconds as she spat out blood, crashing into the ground moments later!

She had barely recovered her senses when her experienced body warned her of danger!

The figure of Actuass and the armoured man were rapidly closing in on her!

The confusion almost threw her off.

Wasn't Actuass headed for Valis?

Didn't he want to kill him?

Wait! Was that just a diversion?!

"Damn it!" Revia cursed as she forced herself to stand.

She saw Actuass covered in the greenish black smog around him, dashing at super speed and wondered.

When she saw the man and woman who had been summoned, she felt something familiar in them.

As she focused on Actuass now, she understood what it was. This advanced necromancy he spoke of.

But even though she understood, this only made her all the more frightened of this man's capabilities.

He was controlling those two bodies!

No, that was an oversimplification. He was imposing his consciousness on both of them, moving them and using their techniques in addition to keeping his own body functioning too!

The way the bulky armoured man moved, and the look in his eyes along with the aura he exuded. It was all tainted with the frightening presence of Actuass she had felt when he first appeared!

'He's... a monster!' she thought as she grit her teeth, but she would not run from this challenge.

She wasn't done yet!

Actuass launched himself towards Revia with his hands beginning to brim with a green energy that irked Revia!

This time, the Paladin Champion first paid attention to the body with the [Grounded Body Limiter Art] which was behind Actuass, preparing to use the technique again and she zipped her way towards it, reusing her Second UnForm Blade Technique, Distorted Killing!

Revia's blade was a legendary item with the ability to adapt to its user's traits. The more unique the traits, the more profound its stats in sharpness, damage and speed increased.

The blade could adapt to Revia's vibrations, its form supporting high speed movement to the extent that it would appear formless from time to time!

The blade dug down the armour of the reanimated body after a short clash with the protective gear, deconstructing the fleshly shoulder into burning, sizzling and sparking, meaty cubes!

The sword was almost halfway through when...

MBING!

The figure of the armoured man was replaced with SoSei, the green skeleton's hand being balled into a fist and launching up in an arc around Revia's arm, appearing to have already been in motion as it fiercely collided with her jaw!

The woman saw stars for a moment, blood shooting from her mouth from the intense strength behind the punch that had caught her off guard!

Luckily for her, it seemed the punch didn't have the same strength as last time as SoSei had been out of proper form but Revia felt her jaw crack quite a bit still!

Her mind spun but she forcefully drew back her mental faculties.

'What's... happening?! This attack and the last... It's almost like... they know how I'm going to move beforehand!' she thought as she rolled on the ground, a suppressing force pummeling her body down with a great intensity!

Revia moaned in pain as she then felt a flurry of punches all over her body which forced her to raise her hands up, protecting her head despite the pain resulting from this!

She felt her armour chipping as coils of green energy eroded it, clanks and clicks resounding as with every punch she received, she felt her defence waning!

"This is bad...!"

Revia gnashed her teeth and rolled back a distance from the assailant, the instant she stopped warranting a heavy kick in her abdomen that blew her away!

This was undoubtedly from SoSei!

Again! How did the damn thing know exactly where she'd roll over to?!

How could they predict her movements like this?!

How did they know?!

How....

Revia's eye suddenly shot towards a certain direction, her grey eyes reflecting a woman with short hair whose eyes were locked into her unblinkingly!

Then it hit her!

'Is she a Diviner?!

Chapter 189: The Fifth Vs. Three (3)

The reanimated woman who was still perched atop a high building had a lazy gaze that followed Revia's now slowed movements.

It made sense to the Paladin Champion when she finally settled her mind, standing up straight after crashing to the ground, the pressure from the powerful art bearing down on her.

'The way my leg was singled out and sucked into the ground at the critical moment of my attack, how that green skeleton countered my Distorted Killing instantaneously! It wasn't a coincidence! She probably knows what I'm going to do next!' Revia surmised as she gazed at the woman.

Chips of steel armour fell from her chest where she had been punched with dents and slight cracks on the positions where Actuass had stormed her with a flurry of punches while she was grounded.

Blood oozed from Revia's exposed chest, a grievous bloody bruise that was almost caving in being visible!

The Paladin Champion spat out blood and pulled herself up while gazing at her two assailants, one of which immediately stomped down, causing a low quake that doubled the force from the [Grounded Body Limiter Art], which made Revia's skin flutter as she tried to resist being forced down on her face!

She gritted her teeth and powered through it.

She still had a lot to analyse about what had happened a few seconds before.

The disorienting switches for one.

It appeared that SoSei was the anchor for switching. It could swap its position with Actuass and the armoured man seamlessly which posed a problem for Revia especially now that moving at her top speed was nearly impossible.

The optimal option would be to take out the Diviner but that required blitzing her before she could be switched out.

From her analysis, the switch for the reanimated corpses wasn't as fast as with Actuass himself, as evidenced by how she had managed to slice into the bulky armoured man before with Distorted Killing.

Perhaps it was done on purpose to lure her in, but she had to bet on something and this was it.

Once more, a massive surge of strength burst violently from Revia, the trapped life energy within her raging madly as its quality intensified, translating into strength that made it much easier for her to handle the hold of the [Grounded Body Limiter Art]!

90%!

She took a deep breath and a stance.

Her brows wiggled again. The tension from before had not afforded her this luxury but now, the habit slipped out.

'To what end is this increase in my strength? If this man really wanted to capture me, as he said, shouldn't he let my life energy flow out until I'm weak, instead of inciting me to keep it within me? If I keep growing stronger...' she thought but cleared her mind soon after.

Indeed. What was the point? It all seemed contradictory.

The bulky armoured man dashed towards Revia, his arms becoming enveloped in the same warped energy that had wounded Revia before!

Revia rushed to meet him as she swung her sword in a perfect lateral arc, the bulky man dodging the speedy strike and launching a hook to Revia's side!

The Paladin Champion twisted her body with great difficulty to avoid the attack as she found that leaping up was nigh impossible!

She narrowly avoided the blow but then a quick flash which was the bulky man's fist rapidly smashing towards her face, greatly surprised her!

Again!

She was being read!

There must have been a mental link between these four for information to be passed so efficiently!

She swiftly ducked under, barely being missed by the deadly attack but then a heavy sensation pressed against her with a vehement force that pushed her back, a knee having bashed against her injured chest!

Revia groaned but quickly held herself.

Immediately after this, a blast of green energy shot against her armour which made her lose balance!

This came from Actuass who was ten meters beyond, stretching out his hand while billows of green and black fumes raged around him!

The imbalance Revia suffered was enough for her to be unable to respond to the vicious downward flying kick that came from the armoured man's greaved foot!

BAM!

Revia's head was smacked down, the pain resounding within her entire body!

For a moment, she felt weightless, but she resisted death that came in such a smooth cox and swung her sword while infusing a third of the mana she had remaining into it!

Unfortunately...

MBING!

BASH!

The armoured man was replaced by SoSei which was already launching a powerful straight punch that parted the air towards her!

Revia was completely unprepared for the attack and that was the point!

A turbulent typhoon exploded ahead as the punch connected with its target, the ground leaping up at the force that seemingly foretold the doom of the fifth ranked Paladin Champion!

Yet...

SHIIIIING!

A bright white light that outshone even the star in the sky suddenly emanated from the typhoon as in that instance, the world stopped, a truly mind boggling scene erupting next!

Hundreds of hazy figures with a likeness of Revia appeared around Actuass, the Diviner and the Warrior!

They all held their swords tight with aggressive visages while stationed in all directions, the world seeming coming to a stop!

Anyone who could have seen this image would have marvelled but alas, no one could except perhaps, a certain green skeleton!

The hundreds of swords equally divided between three targets all rained down at a speed that was impossible to defend against with the current abilities of these three!

Bright explosions raged in the hundreds, causing the city to rumble and crumble while the civilians hugged each other tight and quivered in fear, hoping that maybe... just maybe, they could put this behind them after a few days when they cheered over the enemy's defeat!

Smoke and dust mushrooms rose within the air, spelling the great amount of power exerted!

Valis had watched, but seen nothing, yet he knew what had happened.

He used every bit of mana he had in his core to charge up the star in the sky to protect all the remaining civilians.

He had told Revia to go all out after all, so protecting everyone was his responsibility.

Soon, everything cleared and amidst the dust and heated rock, destroyed houses and all, blotches of blood and bone mixed with ash could be seen where the armoured man had been, chunks of dark metal sprinkled over like flakes.

Wood and mud stained the blood of the Diviner who had been eviscerated, nothing of her remaining.

Where Actuass had been... a green skeleton stood, its bones full of deep gashes that dug into it!

It barely looked intact, the blue light in its sockets still flaring vivaciously.

"I thought as much..." said Revia as she stood, covered in a strange mix of a white halo-like light that constantly revolved around in her strange forms.

Her power had effectively exploded over the 100% mark and with this, she had executed her strongest UnForm Blade Technique, True Omnipotence, which she could only use once a day before.

It could unleash up to 420 doubles of herself with roughly 80% of strength which could only use her physical attacks once before dissipating!

She had been saving it as a final move to use along with the effect granted by the stage she was currently progressing in.

Now however, she felt like she could use it up to two more times.

She had used it right before she could be obliterated by SoSei's punch which saved her along with dealing with her troublesome opponents!

"I knew this skeleton would prioritize you over your corpses. Come out..." she said with a stern face while turning to her side.

The hooded figure of Actuass appeared from the dust as the light in his hazel eyes remained the same.

"Indeed," he said while eyeing the power currently being displayed by Revia.

This was it.

"Do you want to surrender now, or should I just beat you to death with the strength you have granted me?" Revia said as the intensity of the white glow around her increased.

"That certainly would be an ironic twist," said Actuass with exasperation present in his voice. "They certainly didn't give me enough information about you... No one mentioned you to have such a freakish sword technique..."

Actuass raised his hand as green and black wisps of energy coiled around it.

WHOOSH!

A thin white line appeared from nowhere and cut off his arm, the limb falling down with a thud.

Blood oozed from the wound but Actuass didn't show much of a reaction.

Revia had slice his arm off so quickly that even SoSei couldn't react! She hadn't even moved from where she stood.

Revia was faster now!

"Tell me. Who is 'they'?" she asked.

Instead of a response, Actuass' hazel eyes behind the mask glowed green and a stupendously acrid energy roiled and gushed backwards, rushing towards the hundreds of civilian corpses that had been crushed under the [Grounded Body Limiter Art]!

Instantly, the bodies jerked, rising up as broken bones reconnected superficially, flesh repairing itself while the victims' eyes blazed with greenish black light, fumes rising from their bodies.

Revia frowned.

Desecrating the bodies of dead.

This was unacceptable.

Was this the man's last ditch attempt at surviving?

Revia didn't spare any of her strength as she moved to end Actuass before he could fully reanimate the hundreds of civilians.

An Aura rose from her body, rushing along her bloodied silver hair as she attacked.

Actuass sighed inwardly, feeling slightly annoyed at this development.

'I suppose I have no choice. I didn't think I'd need to use it. Hopefully it lasts long enough in my state...' he thought before he muttered a few words that changed everything.

<Undeath Concept, Reverent Soul>

Chapter 190: Unsettling Conclusion

The constant sizzling almost masked the words being spoken.

The flames and dust gave a deep sense of solemnity to the scene in place.

And solemn it was.

What had seemed like the relieving end had suddenly changed into something else entirely.

"As I thought. I can barely use it in this state. Yet the results weren't so bad..." a man in a green and white mask said.

Half of the city was littered in flames and black, charred ground that was quite brittle yet hard still.

The other half was merely riddled with the scars of the earlier fight and not the one that followed, between the Paladin Champion and the masked man.

Actuass looked before him.

Millions of people covered in halos of the protection provided by the star above... knelt deeply on either of his sides, their bodies prostrated to him as their heads even touched the ground humbly!

All of them without exception, men, women and children had soft glints of green in their eyes as they fervently bowed in neat rows while leaving a straight gap between them for Actuass to pass.

There was total and utter silence except the sounds stemming from falling debris and crackling fire.

"Hmmm..."

Actuass' image didn't look as intact as it did before.

His hood was torn, his clothes worn out and dirtied with dust and blood.

His mask was cracked, his hair slightly burnt while his missing arm was quite noticeable.

He sighed before beginning to limp his way through the gap created by all the civilians of Evic.

He was headed towards quite the far distance away where the figure of Revia was leaning against a large stone block.

Her armour had holes in it, chunks of it digging deep into her flesh! Three ghastly wounds on her exposed flesh, one being a hole opened up in her abdomen from where her pulsing organs and damaged spine could be seen while the others were gruesome gashes that looked to have been caused by a sharp, yet crude weapon.

As she sat on the hard ground, blood pooled at her thighs, her silver hair cut and burnt as she vomited mouth after mouthful of blood!

Her one eye was bleeding over her cheeks, the eyelid closed while a series of multi-coloured bruises were all over her face.

Her sword was at her side, cracked pitifully, its lustre no longer present.

Strangely, the life energy within her kept bubbling and growing but it could not heal her. Thus, it continued to roil within her body, boosting her resilience to the pain instead since there was nothing more it could add to her strength when she couldn't move.

Valis was a few meters away, heaving in deep breaths. He wasn't injured at all, not physically at least.

He was paralysed by some strange effect that he didn't understand.

He had initially thought that the battle was over when Revia used her third and final sword technique but that had turned out to not be the case.

With the uttering of strange words, Actuass had become a absolute monster for three minutes, unleashing power that made the High Order Priest lose his will to fight in that moment!

How Revia had been brutalised in the most horrific use of Undeath he had seen so far was traumatising. He couldn't believe what he had seen.

The people he had been protecting all this time had now created a silent parade where they bowed towards Actuass.

Ridiculous!

Now, he could only watch as Actuass reached the heavily injured body of Revia who was hanging her head while taking in raspy breaths of air while choking on her blood.

Actuass had passed through the long procession of bowing civilians patiently until he reached his destination.

Revia raised her head to face him, her mangled body and broken bones not allowing for any further movement.

"You're tougher than I thought. It makes me believe that I was right about you. I can't imagine that you learnt to be this strong because of your faith," Actuass said.

Revia merely looked up at Actuass and shook her head weakly, a furious expression on her face.

"I can understand. As I said before, I was once a believer but I failed to comprehend what the Deities wanted from me. I was doubtful and I still am. I sense the same in you. You hesitate but follow along because its the only thing you can do. You lack an aim."

Revia looked at Actuass hatefully while the light in her eyes remained strong. She wouldn't be swayed.

What Actuass was saying was mostly true. While she cared for Valis, she didn't share his absolute faith in the Deities.

She had been planning on getting Elita out of her detainment against the will of the Purity for Deities' sake.

That proved that she didn't much care for anything else.

Who would believe that their entire family died for some vague reason fabricated by who knew what?

Was everything that happened to her truly preordained?

Revia spat blood at Actuass' feet in contempt.

"I said it before. Mind games won't work on me. Just kill me..." she said determinedly.

Actuass remained silent for a few moments before crouching in front of the female Paladin Champion.

It was a shame. He really wished he could rope her in.

"I remember what you said quite clearly. However, you seem to have forgotten what I said," Actuass spoke in an eerie tone. "Someone else wants your life. I'm only interested in your death..."

Before Revia could question what this meant, Actuass pressed his thumb and index finger on Revia's forehead, a numbing sensation running along the woman's body voraciously!

Revia's eyes opened wide as she felt something dark and repugnant gush into her body from Actuass' fingers, targeting the growing life energy within her!

The lime green energy that kept pulsing and bubbling was wrapped by the repugnant energy that had a greenish black hue and then...

The bright, luminescent life energy suddenly began transitioning from its lime green colour into a bloody crimson with a very dark shade!

Its concentration was immense as almost all Revia's life energy was turned into this dark one which was, predictably, Undeath energy!

Revia was terrified at this point.

The sickening energy within her body not only felt cruel and evil but it wrestled against her Divine Blessing which was within her body also!

Luckily for her, Actuass didn't plan to use her as his personal storage.

The vast and thick amount of death energy was sucked into Actuass' fingers and absorbed into his body with a terrifying howl of the surrounding space!

Valis' eyes bulged in shock while he tried to wrestle the paralysis!

What was this?!

Was this seriously the same Green Neolist group that they failed to take seriously all these years?!

After the Undeath energy was extracted from Revia, she felt extremely weak, her body now letting her feel the immense pain that she had lost the resilience to withstand!

She screamed and tumbled as the pain was immense.

Her reserves of mana were depleted in the fight and now she couldn't do anything to strengthen her body!

She rolled on the ground in pain as tears rolled from her eyes!

This pain!

It was too much!

It even eclipsed the pain that had almost led her to suicide when her brother had died!

She couldn't stand it!

'Sister... sister Elita please help!' she subconsciously called in her mind, screaming with a mental voice while screeching on the outside in pain. "Please sister....save me..."

Actuass watched her writhe.

"Unfortunately for you, if I will it, you can roll around here in pain for eternity. I have transformed most of your life energy into undeath energy. This means your potential to die from any circumstance had been completely stripped from you," he said. "There is no place for you anywhere else that isn't this brutish hellscape we call Aigas."

Revia's eyes opened wide in shock.

What?!

"You cannot die. You are immortal in a way. Even if your body perishes, your soul will find its way into another body and continue with cycle of the undying. In the purest way, you are an undead. Death is an undeserved gift to all living things. Those who would abuse it wantonly don't deserve to abide in it."

Actuass delivered these words before smacking Revia at the back of her head, knocking her out.

He turned to Valis who unconsciously shuddered while trying to free himself.

Actuass opened his mouth to speak but his mask suddenly cracked and fell, revealing a youthful face that instantly turned nervous, then terrified!

The hazel coloured eyes on this face suddenly dimmed, turning into a light shade of brown instead.

The individual behind the mask suddenly panicked and screamed in pain as he grasped his shoulder.

"ARRRGHH! What's going on?! Where am I? What happened?! What happened to my arm?! ARRGGHHH!" he screamed as his eyes darted to and fro.

Strangely, this panicking and terrified face suddenly shifted again in demeanour, turning stern as the eyes turned from brown to hazel once again.

'<Sigh>. I almost lost my connection to the vessel. I really overexerted this body with my concept it seems...' thought Actuass before he addressed Valis as he had intended.

"Be sure to spread the word."

Actuass pulled out a scroll which he unfurled after grabbing Revia's unconscious body by the hair.

This scroll had a familiar aesthetic as it was something that the Green Neolists normally used often.

An Arcane Teleportation Scroll!

It was similar to the ones that Eobald and Skullius had used with the flame effect but this one was different.

The once masked man inserted his mana into the scroll and symbols surrounded his figure and Revia's, lighting up their bodies before a terrific tornado bloomed initiating their travel!

The Arcane Teleportation Scroll, Gales!

Just like that, Actuass left the cult-like scene of millions of innocents bowing within a burning and broken city under the eyes of paralysed High Order Priest....