

## Undead 341

Chapter 341: Second Benefactor (2)

Silrat promptly left with Stylla, Jac and Skullius, leaving Tulnas to entertain the new Branch Head.

The four entered another one of the rooms within the Guilds' Association which had been refurbished in preparation for meetings such as these after the damage to city.

The four sat down while a few of Stylla's guards stood behind her as a discussion that would decide the course of future events was underway.

"So that time...?" Skullius said as he wished to get the full picture.

"Yes," Stylla replied as she sipped some tea. "I had come to Inhone looking for some strong fighters to fight for my Family. Unfortunately, after Fore died in that Cluster, Bron rejected my offer saying he didn't want to be a mercenary anymore."

The Cluster which featured the Sage Monkeys had been a major point for Skullius and it seemed like this was even more so for Stylla and Bron.

It seemed that Stylla had had a mission of her own and was only posing as an everyday mercenary. While she was strong, she was looking for prospective fighters of a higher league that would fight for her in the upcoming event.

Who knew that she was actually the daughter of a prestigious family.

"Hmmm..." Skullius hummed as he processed this information.

Silrat decided to chip in at this point.

"Stylla came to issue out her proposal a few days ago but you weren't present within the city yet. I couldn't make this decision for you," he said.

(A/N: Refer to Ch.300)

Jac slapped Skullius' back again causing the Discount Human to almost topple over.

"Come on, kid. Becoming a member of the Bryne Family will do you a lot of good. Besides, you are pretty strong already. Are you scared of taking part in a few measly fights?" Jac said provocatively while chuckling annoyingly.

The Discount Human shrugged off the slap and twiddled with his fingers as he thought on this matter deeply.

"I still haven't heard enough about this to make a decision. What exactly is this for?" he asked.

"A massively wealthy household called House EverSword, one of the six powers of Pelian is hosting an event they have dubbed the 'Premium Age Royale'. In this event, any Families participate until a select few who are seen to be worthy enough by the standards of this House will be conscripted into the household as part of the EverSword House, supported financially and in terms of power.

This is the first time any House has hosted such an event. For that, I need someone like you."

"But I'm not from your Family. Isn't that like... cheating?"

"No. You don't have to inherently be part of the Family to participate. A few legal documents that will change your name and superficially add you to our Family will do. Many families are doing the same the same thing. Hiring powerful mercenaries or Stray Knights to fight for them," Stylla said as she pushed over a paper with the conditions stipulated over it.

The Discount Human looked Stylla in the eye, searching for anything that would make him understand a bit more of her motives.

From the sound of this event, it was... dangerous.

While Skullius didn't have any qualms facing strong opponents right now, he had to ensure that this was well worth it.

"Why don't you have this guy join in then?" Skullius asked while pointing at Jac.

The burly man laughed his ass off before giving a reply.

"I can't do that. I'm an official of the Association in Inhone. Dabbling in these matters would require me to leave this position and, as you can guess, I can't do that."

This to Skullius just sounded like Jac not wanting to be part of the familial hassle and a glint in Stylla's eyes perfectly portrayed how she felt about it.

"Believe it or not, it's hard to find capable fighters. Combatants from Families and mercenaries usually look down on each other. Most mercenaries I tried to recruit rejected me solely because of that which is why I had tried to switch my approach but still... I even attempted to ask those twins from the Harem's Guild but they turned me down.

You're my only hope at this point," Stylla said with a straight face that twitched a bit with emotion.

Stylla felt that if Skullius rejected, she'd had to withdraw her entry into the event.

Skullius turned to Silrat whose eyes didn't hide the fact that he wanted him to agree.

However, the Discount Human was done ascertaining this matter yet.

"Why are you so eager to join this House thing anyway if you're already a... prestigious Family?" he asked.

Stylla sucked in a breath as this question pierced her heart.

"The competition among Families is rough and joining a House would increase our status and safety. Right now I... we need it. After my brother left the Family, our strength and status took a severe hit, which is why I've had to handle much of the responsibility but my strength is not enough. This is our only chance to maintain our standing."

Skullius couldn't relate but he could smell missing details from thus story.

Fortunately, he didn't sweat the sentimental stuff and someone desperate like Stylla would surely offer a lot in return.

She would have to.

"What do I get if I compete in this? Is it even worth it?" he asked as he leaned forward in his seat.

This was what Stylla had been waiting for.

She wanted to give the illusion that she had less to offer from the start and had thus waited until the Discount Human asked for himself what was to be gained.

"I have close ties to the Reacher Academy in Genhuis City. I can arrange for you to have private tutelage with one of the Elder Mages. Surely, that would help you greatly," Stylla said.

The Discount Human perked up!

This was profound!

Frock had told him about this.

Academies.

They were specialised places where Mages could learn their craft!

Well, Energy Formers in general.

Getting private lessons with a Mage did seem attractive, even though Skullius wasn't a Mage himself.

Still, it seemed like something he could try.

"Hmmm. What else? This can't be everything you have right?" he asked.

"You will have access to all the wealth and riches of the Bryne Family. Treasures, gold, crystals, knowledge and all. Our full support will also be guaranteed in cases against offending parties and once you decide to join, we'll protect and defend you as our own. However, this will be offered in moderation until we manage to secure a slot in the EverSword House," Stylla explained.

She couldn't just go all in after all.

That seemed fair.

Treasure, wealth and knowledge.

This was also attractive in some ways to the Discount Human but what he was most interested in was support. The events of the past few days had taught him that with sufficient support, it was easier to move about and do whatever he pleased.

He had been saved by benefactors who saw his value.

For now, with how weak he was, he couldn't afford to just be moving alone.

In this respect, it was pretty worthwhile to join.

On the Association side, he would have Silrat while on the Family side, he would Stylla.

While others looked down on this, being part of either one or the other, Skullius wasn't afraid to take advantage of both.

But, all this begged the question...

"Are you aware of my...?"

"Yes, of course. Silrat already told me," Stylla said as she breathed audibly. "It made sense to me why you insisted on doing things alone and not wanting anyone's help back then. That's why this is a contract build on mutual benefit. Like your arrangement with Silrat. He gave me a guarantee it was the safest way to do things.

We'll keep things professional."

Skullius narrowed his eyes.

Most people seemed to quite fine with dealing with him despite his curse.

Stylla was gambling on this chance too.

That only meant that she had something she wasn't willing to lose which was on the line.

Something that made her unafraid of her life getting destroyed in one of the most cruel ways imaginable.

The Discount Human stared at the paper which had been placed before him on the table along with the quill pen.

Was this worth it?

Certainly!

UNCoddled in the richest of ways could be swindled by these kinds of scenarios.

It had worked so far, right?

The Discount Human grabbed the quill pen and drew a simplistic skull where his signature was required, much to everyone's surprise.

"They said all I need to do is write my consent right? Why are they surprised then?" Skullius thought as he looked at the odd looks he was getting.

"I agree to your terms then..." he said.

Stylla smiled and she felt a burden lifted from her chest though this was probably going to be a relationship where she needed to keep her emotions far away.

Silrat also sighed.

Now his backup in case the Association somehow didn't appreciate Skullius' prowess was cemented.

"I have a request, though," Skullius said, garnering everyone's attention again.

"What is it?" Stylla asked.

"There's somewhere I have to go first before we do this event thing. I'll need to go alone for a while."

"Oh. So you won't be coming with us to Genhuis City?"

"No. I can find my way there after I'm done with the things I have to settle."

Silrat, Stylla and Jac looked amongst themselves, seeing the vacancy in each others' eyes. No one else knew of this.

"If that's the case then, alright. I just hope it won't take too long. The event begins in 9 days. It's best to be back by then." Stylla said as she stood up. "I would prefer to leave for Genhuis by the end of the day. Silrat and Oliviana will be coming with me as per the arrangement.

I only hope we see you soon in the big city."

"You should arrive earlier actually," Silrat chipped in. "I wouldn't want to make the Association wait for too long after I arrive."

Skullius nodded before he cocked his head quizzically.

"Wait? Oliviana? She's coming too?"

## Chapter 342: Messenger

THUD!

The heavy armoured body of Revia fell to the ground.

Her figure looked pathetic as she lay down in her worn armour that was riddled with cracks and burns.

Her face looked tragic with her once pretty and clean visage that had beautiful grey eyes along with thin lips and soft skin being sullied by dirt and dried blood.

A lifeless darkness could be seen behind her eyes as she squirmed weakly on the ground, the many wounds she had over her body not having healed but bled out instead as in her body, not even a bit of blood remained.

A raspy breath crawled out her mouth as she looked before her where three figures stood, looking at her without even a shred of sympathy while the same true for six that were changing endlessly around her.

Ever since that day when she had fought with the man in the green and white mask and lost, her life, if it could even be identified as such, had become a miserable wreck.

Pain and anguish were all she could process as she wished that her sister Elita would somehow come and rescue her.

Yet, Direction was a bitch.

None of that was destined to come to pass.

The words of Valis kept ringing in her mind as she wondered if this was really what her life was supposed to be.

Were her parents' and brother's death's really necessary?

Was the path she had treaded a wrong one?

Was this really the plan of the Deities' over her?

For her to now live in the purest form of Undeath, as the man in the green and white mask had said?

An undying woman.

An immortal who was bound to scream for a normal death and yet fail to find it for the rest of her unlife?

As she twisted on the ground, dirt infiltrating her mouth and staining her teeth, she felt hollow inside as something she had struggled to keep, had finally been ripped from her just now after a week and some days of resisting.

She had tried her best to keep it within herself but she had finally run out of the strength to do so.

"The blessing has finally been stripped from her..." a man with dark hair and golden eyes said with a solemn look as he looked at the giant formation that floated in the air behind Revia.

It had a bright red hue, continuously spinning with its circular shape as it seemed to assimilate a golden white streak of energy that tried to resist being devoured.

On the ground that everyone stood, large groves were traced, carving out a massive, complex array in the well lit and enclosed space.

This was the Extreme Formula.

(A/N: Refer to Ch.271).

An etching over the earth that was said to be the central binding which kept the Deity Boron away from the rest of Aigas.

It was always unguarded and not even hidden as only a few years after searching was it found by the Evenfall.

The formation in the air thrummed as it finally swallowed the streak of golden energy, the power of the blessing that Revia had wielded.

The source of her immense speed.

The formation glowed with a bright golden red hue for a few seconds before it sent a stream of similarly coloured energy into the Extreme Formula below!

VWUUUM!

The energy dropped over the array and for a moment, a white light prevailed over the enclosure space.

Then...

Nothing.

The man with the combed over dark hair and golden eyes frowned.

"Not even an inch of progress?" he said with wrath building up slightly within his voice.

Actuass who stood with Fulina and Cyne saw the dismal result and questioned.

"Problem?"

The dark-haired man shot his gaze towards Actuass and spat out a begrudging reply.

"Of course there is a problem! The Formula isn't showing any reaction at all! The blessing was quite potent. There should be some manner of progress!" the man growled.

Actuass sighed.

"I lost one of my proxies for this, you know?" he said.

"Do you think I care for that right now? We need more Champions! It seems even the power of the 5th ranked Champion is not enough!"

Fulina and Cyne creased their brows.

"We're not your lapdogs," Fulina said. "That request of yours would require another transaction. One more favourable for us than you this time."

The dark haired man looked at the woman with intense hatred. Right now, he could give a damn about all that.

This collaboration wasn't built on friendship. As far as he knew the Green Neolists couldn't back out as they needed them as well!

This collision was built out of necessity!

He opened his mouth to refute Fulina's words.

"Naturally, we will oblige. This is an engagement built on convenience for both sides, is it not?"

It wasn't the Evenfall leader who spoke however as even he, as he had been about to spout his rage, looked towards the source of the voice.

A figure appeared a distance behind Actuass and his crew who immediately raised their guard.

"Surely that is an extravagant expense we can spare. Right, my dear Leader?"

As everyone turned, they saw a man with purple and black hair appear from the dredges of this space.

He walked confidently, his grin oozing of a mysterious confidence.

Actuass and the others didn't know who he was but the those from the Evenfall sensed something familiar within him.

While they didn't know him personally, they identified him as one of their own.

A blessing was within him, much like most of them with a familiar energy signature.

The man with the dark hair narrowed his eyes as he then addressed this new entrant.

"Who are you?" The Evenfall leader asked with a deep frown.

Guissepo grinned as his eyes showed a luminous light of revelation that made everyone even more hurry.

"I am but a messenger with an EXTRAVAGANT message from the Master..." he replied.

Chapter 343: A Grey Ending!

The man with the dark hair couldn't take this. He recognised that this man was obviously from his side, but he didn't have time for games.

What did some bottom-of-the-barrel scrub want?

How did he even get here?

Whose messenger was he?

"What are you doing here? How did you even know to come here in the first place?" he asked, much to everyone's curiosity as well.

Guissepo maintained his cheerful grin as he gazed at this man who was oblivious...

Who was ignorant...

Who was no longer wanted....

The cheery man opened his mouth to speak, his humble appearance gaining a sacredness about him over the glint in his eye that seemed to put everyone on edge.

"I am a simple vessel that has been found EXTRAVAGANT for him. For the MASTER! He saw my efforts and revealed to me a great deal of things that none of you know! Hahaha! I never knew that I, a simple man who was satisfied with dying as fodder in MASTER'S service, could be found worthy of carrying his mantle!"

Guissepo yelled at the top of his lungs with a crazed look upon his face, a purple glow beginning to suffuse within his pupils, making all the Evenfall members as well as Actuass and his group feel a sense of discomfort.

"He chose me! Erat, MASTER says you have failed! With all your years you have let him down. He grows impatient with your long-winded, monotonous tactics! He wants freedom! And for that....

I have been chosen to take your place!"

The man with the dark hair, identified as Erat turned pale before he became red with rage.

No, it couldn't be!

After all these years...?!

After all his efforts?!

Was it because he allied with the Necromancers?

But this had yielded him the best result he had seen so far!

So... why...?

No!

It couldn't be true!

"You dare tell such lies?! Only I have been ordained for this task! What would one so young like you know?! Your blasphemy shall be punished!" Erat said as his golden eyes shone with a purple light, his hand rising as it extended towards Guissepo!

While he was still frustrated with how dismal the result on the Extreme Formula was, what he needed now was some fool to vent his rage on!

The black and purple haired man showed no apprehension as he felt powers way beyond his own barrel out of Erat who bore a wrathful face!

He was calm, for he knew what he had seen.

Back then.... when that eye had appeared, followed by the creature that was born after the channelling so much Primus into the atmosphere.

That creature had been sent with a message that he saw when he looked into that eye!

Guissepo had almost gotten so much confidence to go berserk and fight back then but he held himself so that what he learned could come to pass.

Starting with this exact moment.

This exact vision he had seen where Erat would try to take his life.

'Humph ....someone who has worked enough for this Extravagance should be the one to take carry the burden of leadership for a change...' he thought as in response to the hostility, he extended his own hand, his meagre strength pitted against the flood from the man before him.

Erat was about to use his blessing to crush Guissepo, vicious waves of mana flowing to expel atrocious waves of power but...

He suddenly stopped.

....!

What was going on?!

What was this?!

His body suddenly felt limp as within him, something just seemed to be unplugged...detached from the source of his power.

His blessing suddenly resisted his control!

As if this wasn't enough to put him into despair mixed with confusion, Guissepo raised his hand higher while extending it towards Erat, the man's chin rising as he found his mouth opening without his control!

'What... how is he doing this...?!' Erat's eyes bulged as they became bloodshot. 'How...?!'

Soon, from the man's mouth, a stream of dark purple energy was pulled out, the thick waves gathering above Erat who trembled violently as he felt as if his very life energy was being stolen along with his powers!

The purple mass pooled overhead only for a short period before it streaked towards Guissepo who held it within his hand like a condensed ball under the shocked eyes of the rest of the Evenfall members.

Erat plummeted to the ground lifelessly, his eyes having rolled over while his skin became a sickening mash of colour.

Guissepo emitted a grunt as he played with the energy that danced in his hand.

His eyes then turned to Actuass whose hazel eyes peaked from the mask, showing nothing but calm and a bit of curiosity.

Fulina and Cyne on the other hand, were quite rattled though as they assumed that something was going to go down, their guard having risen to the peak.

Actuass raised his hand to put them at ease though.

"Management issues?" he questioned with a relaxed voice.

Guissepo smiled at this man.

"Not anymore. An easily recognisable face was needed is all..." he replied casually before he walked over to Actuass, reaching merely inches away before he continued. "MASTER told me that I should keep you around. You're the centrepiece of everything we want to achieve. Such high and extravagant praise, is it not?"

Actuass breathed out an audible breath.

"Is that so?"

"It is. As extravagant evidence... how about I allow you take the girl. Just as you wanted to do in this first place."

"Hmm..." Actuass hummed as he slightly titled his head, his hazel eyes narrowing a bit.

He hadn't told anyone about that.

Curious.

Guissepo backed away with a wide smile while gesturing towards Revia who was wheezing for air.

The masked man only took a second before he walked towards Revia and crouched down, his hidden face looking down at her.

The girl gritted her teeth as diluted rage could be felt from her entire, exhausted visage.

Actuass didn't focus on this though. He stretched out his hand towards her and said a few words that made the girl's eyes tremble.

"You're the only one in this world who understands that pain can be an eternal phenomenon. You could keep sinking in it and all its cruel variations for the rest of your undeath.... or you could be my pawn for a time while you await the day you successfully kill me and free yourself..."

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A distance from Inhone City, Skullius walked on a footpath as he looked on ahead.

An ethereal-looking yet material robe with a dark blue hue draped over him as it fluttered in the hot wind.

Around his neck, a silvery small skeletal figure the size of a fist with horns over its head could be seen as it held together the robe for him, its sockets tinged with a subdued blue torchlight.

This was evidently the Limitless Body Null Demon Hound that had miniaturised its body and created a robe with its Unliving Thread for the Discount Human.

Skullius looked back one more time at the city he was leaving behind.

"Tsk. I forgot to say goodbye to Frock. Hmm? Is that even necessary? That's a weird thought," Skullius rebuked himself.

'I have 6 days to roam around freely. That's enough, right? Maybe. Silrat can be stingy dammit! I can pick up quite a bit in those days though. Hopefully on clues about these too,' Skullius thought as he peeked into the storage of his Null Demon's Aegis of Damnation, looking at two things he hadn't checked on since the Tremur Forest.

Things too complicated for him to figure out.

But this was just an afterthought.

The abundant Enriching gems in the second spatial storage on his finger were something he was looking forward to absorbing as well.

When he did, he would get to see what [Flesh It Like You Mean It] which was Lv.9 now could do once it evolved.

Kek...

Bless Silrat!

The Discount Human then addressed someone else he was less trusting towards.

"You better not screw me over, you tomato-loving sockethole," he said.

"RELAX O FLINGER. WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER, ARE WE NOT? HEHEHEHE! I'LL GET YOU STRONGER IN NO TIME. THOUGHYOU TREATMELIKEGARBAGEBUTFORGIVENESSISONEOFMYSTRENGTHS," Sila said with a loud grumble.

"What was that last part?"

"OH, NOTHING TOMATO FLINGER!"

"Hmm..."

Suspicious.

Skullius ignored the rest as he set onwards.

"Whatever. I'm not going to neglect a part of myself like I've been doing. While my Discount Human grows, my un-undead self must rise too! Isn't that right Red bro?!"

Red Rage who was crammed in the spatial storage grumbled while wondering why he wasn't just allowed to live in the larger space within that mysterious staff his master had acquired.

However Skullius wasn't thinking of this as he simply charged forward!

Another journey with promised fortune awaited!

## Chapter 344: The Grand Conflict

### The Second Grand War.

The event that occurred during the period of Patkmas Yujgi, the Emergence of the Pillars as recorded in the books of the current age.

It was an extraordinary event that came after the Giants were driven from Feinheath and Opungale by the powerhouses that arose from the teachings of these behemoths.

The irony of it was amusing and then some but it wasn't limited to merely that...

As the Purity took hold, consolidating the belief in the Deities despite the entire war that had risen with the very entities that taught of these sacred beings, a certain peace seemed to wash over the continent.

The Purity spread its influence, creating large temples for communion with the Deities or at the very least attempts at doing so.

The creation of relevant classes like Priests and all was yet to fully be realised in these times.

Faith was something that predated the coming of the Giants and for some reason, sentient creatures remained with the idea of idolatry regardless of how advanced they became.

From praying to rivers and trees, they turned to devoting themselves to beings they couldn't see, but unlike with the natural forces they had given their reverence to, the Deities 'spoke'.

They gave guidance to all that sought it. Guidance in Direction that most would not want but needed to follow anyway.

In this, none could Discount that the Deities were true and thus belief did not wear out.

In fact, it exploded and in its grand rise, it gave birth to another group of people who chose not to build temples for worship but to imitate the Giants who built shrines.

This group quickly grew, mainly being comprised of men and women who believed that they... were nothing.

Their bodies and souls were not profound but held collective importance that needed guidance into the next life after death.

They believed all life was created for naught but the mundane work of keeping Aigas as beautiful as it could be, keeping the bodies of the Deities clean and sacred by constantly making known to all things what Aigas was.

For that, they discarded the self and embraced a sense of oneness, much like the Giants.

They believed the Giants' calling was to make everyone aware of their lifestyle which was seen fit for them to receive the revelation of the Deities first over the humans and the Sif.

This group called themselves, the Unnamed Keepers.

The Purity shunned these men and women who were dubbed as cultists instead and warred against them, hunting them down and putting them to the sword.

It wasn't a simple slaughter, however, as this group had the means to protect themselves as well.

This feud was but a portion of the age that came after the Giants' departure, unfortunately, as amidst the culling on both sides, a new party entered the fray with a sacrilegious belief that tore the war between the Purity and the Unnamed Keepers apart.

Fulgardt.

One of those who awakened incredible powers in the Patkmas Yujgi, a Hidden Class.

He was a man of great stature and a powerful presence that did not need the fondling of mana.

His raw, bodily air was like that of a world when he was merely a scaler of the Stages much like every other warrior on the continent and this sole appearance of his was what demanded everyone's attention before he made his intent known.

His desires and words shook not only Feinheath but even Opungale, as they were a challenge to the world.

His message spread far in only three days, everyone who was close to any channel of information hearing the words of the man who would be known as the Immoral.

"I have received revelation. Enlightenment. While you quarrel among yourselves about which way to praise the Deities, these beings who were once worms like us, treading on the dry dirt, now masquerading as gods, I have received a message from the one, the true one. The Wanderer Who Seeds..!"

Such words.

Such bold words.

Who was this man to declare something like this?

A brute from the nation of Maqi with too much strength and naught much brain to think.

That was the sentiment that all shared.

Yet, his words did not cease and neither did he sit still for long after appearing.

"I am emboldened by a vicious power that tugs at my very blood. The purity of light and the evil of the darkness pull me in two, yet they declare the same thing of me... That I slay all who bow to falsehoods!"

Thus were his words.

No more a mere verbal expression of intent but a warning of the imminent death and destruction that would come for those that worshipped the Deities.

And surely.... death and destruction came.

This one man who was thought to be alone cast four more shadows over the world as he wreaked havoc with them in tow.

Four more monsters with Hidden powers much like himself.

Among these was a man that Fulgardt called his most trusted friend.

Quilforg.

A man of great power and of similar vision much like the other three that composed of this order of rebels to what had been determined as the natural order of the world.

Quilforg believed that as Fulgardt had said, there was no need to praise and adore the Deities.

He believed that his friend had truly been enlightened.

That an existence worthy of the title of TRANSCENDENT had shown this man something grand and resplendent!

Why was his faith in Fulgardt so strong?

Well...

The might that this friend of his displayed was easily the barest of answers.

Cutting down tens of powerful elites with Hidden Classes much like him within a few seconds was as sinister as it could get, especially when considering that all these men and women were further in their Stages than the Incandescent Stage where Fulgardt was at the time.

Yet... none of the fights he engaged in lasted more than a minute whether he was swarmed or otherwise.

How he fought, how he brutalised the believers of the Deities whether they were from the Purity or the Keepers and mocked their blessings and belief as he laid his feet over their heads...

This wasn't casual MIGHT afforded by any Deity.

This was atrocious MIGHT from somewhere else entirely.

It had to be.

Quilforg relished in their movement as they went, tearing down shrines and temples alike and watching the normal people cower behind each other as under Fulgardt's oppressive might, they could only denounce the Deities.

In a measly year, the entirety of Feinheath was forced to recognise this man as a threat to all things.

He and his group of 'fanatics', that was.

The death toll in the one year of his debut almost culled the continent of all its newly risen powerhouses who had fought in the First Grand War!

Were these people insane?!

Why would they actively choose to fight against the entirety of Feinheath and potentially Opungale as well?!

Why would they injure the legacy of humanity?!

Who was this Wanderer Who Seeds whom they devoted themselves to?!

The confusion and chaos called for all those who believed in the goodness of all that they had learned to band together once again for another age of war.

A warring between humans!

Billions joined hands for the sake of the Deities while thousands chose to join Fulgardt and his movement, for not all believed in the righteousness of the three beings that were said to make up the world.

In the wake of this terror that was only yet to fully ripen as the numbers continuously swelled for Fulgardt's side, 'he' changed his mind.

'His' sudden change afforded much needed help in the next many years that it took for Fulgardt to taste defeat and it is his records that detail the intents of the Immoral as written to this current day and age, beginning with simple words that portrayed his immense emotion.

"I only realised later that what I thought I believed in this friend of mine was false. I did not relish in causing pain and crushing what others held as a crutch as he did. Crushing belief. Crushing hope. I had been manipulated by the light and dark he exhumed without even knowing it. Perhaps it was his way of making sure we would not clash on the matter but still...

I strayed from him after conjuring all my might... He was to fall at all costs. For Aigas' sake..."

Chapter 345: Nine Voices

Present time...

"Have all responsible parties been awarded for the provided intel?" a solemn voice spoke.

"We are processing it as fast as we can. The young man who spearheaded the ordeal is in good books with the Purity and is as devout as even our inner members. We want to make sure he and his team are compensated sufficiently."

"Good. A young Tamer with a good record for communion and assistance to the local temples. He is deserving indeed. Now that we know the Neolists and the Evenfall are in cahoots, we can have this talk that most of you have wanted to dodge all this time," another voice, much like the first, a bit muffled, spoke.

A rather triangular space could be seen, three walls ascending high up to reach the ceiling where a luxurious glass with representations of the olden leaders of the Purity was immaculately placed also being visible.

The walls that reached that point were as beautiful as could be, an expensive garnish making them glisten with their starry design spelling out the central belief of this faction – three point stars.

Seven small netted doors with neat frames were attached to the three walls at different heights, this arrangement depicting the various levels of authority, as only a single one was above the rest.

Dark and unclear silhouettes could be made out behind the nets – no more than mere smudges of shapes that could not be discerned with most trained eyes to make them out – bringing a rather ominous visual, especially considering that the light from the glass ceiling streamed down to illuminate the figure of a male Paladin Champion who stood in the midst of the room, answering the raining questions and reacting to the words spoken.

"What is there to talk about?" a raspy and aged feminine voice echoed from one of the netted doors. "Tis but another conflict we have to deal with in our imperfect history. Everyone here knows of the undead and everyone here knows of the Traitorous Deity, Boron. Is it that surprising that these two groups would finally choose to collude against us after being thwarted for so long?"

"There is much to talk about, actually. I have studied these heathens in detail," a younger, male voice was heard. "While these two parties came millenia after we had established our organisation, they are the pioneers of certain events as you already know."

"The Neolists' appearance brought the sudden descent of powerful undead armies that raided our Sacred Forests for Nitros, while the Evenfall brought chaos to our societies. Even after all this, they have failed to prevail against the strength of our Champions and we have attained victory for the most part. But..."

This young man's sudden pause brought an eerie silence to the large space as a sense of suspense was built up.

"Am I the only one who has felt the differences in intent behind these two groups? It is as if, someone new has taken the reigns. We have lost a Paladin Champion to this man whom Valis spoke about who claims to be the leader of the Neolists and now, the Evenfall has caused a great disturbance with the Cluster incident.

I feel we need to work together with the Capital Service to stop this problem before it goes beyond our control."

An uncomfortable tension and insufferable silence swarmed the room as the Champion who listened took in a sharp breath to maintain his cool.

Working together with the Capital Service?

This was something that the second speaker had hinted at only for it to be spelled out without riddle.

"Elder Peilin. The Capital Service and the Purity remain as separate entities for a reason. In terms of efficiency, we are vastly superior and muddling us with those fools will only sully our strength. Surely no one else sees this absurd claim as valid ..." the aged and raspy voice sounded.

"I also disagree. The Purity has many duties that require us to remain separated from the Capital Service. If that facet was a good enough help, we would have them assist us with the Retention. Because they are unreliable, we've had to secretly rely on the Sif to help make sure that no ships or individuals wander beyond the Central Boundary.

This should give you some idea of what I mean, should it not?"

The Central Boundary was a position on the map of Aigas that marked the halfway point between the North and South.

Up North was the land of Edagon where the Giants had come from but it was a great distance away from even Opungale which was a few miles to the North East of Feinheath.

The Purity, seemingly unbeknownst to all the other nations, was cooperating with the High Family of the Sif to ensure that NO ONE travelled beyond the Central Boundary.

There were those bold enough to want to explore further and discover where the Giants had come from and many an expedition had been crafted.

Such was the mind of humanity.

But it could not be allowed.

Many reasons spawned this.

Those found to venture up to the forbidden point would either be killed or have their memories altered before being sent back home depending on where they came from – largely no one from Maqi or Opungale would be killed.

The one who oversaw this continuous operation known as the Retention was the strongest Paladin Champion, Boldstar, and under his watch, none had ever crossed the Boundary.

"I second what Peilin says," the voice of a middle aged woman defended the younger male who had suggested getting the Purity to work with the Capital Service. "Unless you want to lose another Champion in the top 5, I suggest that we work with them. It's not a matter of pride anymore, lives are on the line.

If our Champions can at least inhabit major cities, our response to the potential threats of the future will be minimised. We have even lost a second Champion because of you lots' stubbornness!"

A short pause grew after this new voice spoke, making the Paladin Champion in the midst sigh.

This was another cause of debate.

The fate of Elita.

"Any word of Elita since that day, Ruhrees?" the young man whose name was Peilin asked from behind his netted door which was near the very bottom.

"Unfortunately there is none. She seems to have just vanished and there is no way for us to track her down. Even our best Diviners were not able to find anything," the Paladin Champion, Ruhrees answered.

"We can't be sure why she disappeared? For all we know 'tis the fulfilment of the ministration I received from the Deities! Her blunder in Eofel was the perfect opportunity for us to put an end to her line before it was too late and yet the lot of you refused. Hmph! You thought merely imprisoning her would do, but now, perhaps someone finished the job for us!"

"Ministration? Fool! Admit it! No such thing was said from the Deities! Her family line should not dictate her fate to death. Imprisoning her and confiscating her title was not a biased decision on our part.

She did not deserve death!"

"That does not matter now, does it?! The deed has been done! You'll thank me when the stench of her line no longer haunts your sleep!"

"ENOUGH!" a voice boomed from the highest netted door, causing the debate to end.

The individual behind this door had remained silent throughout the entire discussion and debate, taking in all the information for a final decision.

Now, with his powerful voice and intent that demanded silence, everyone spoke no further and listened to what he would declare.

"I want to here no more about the Champion Elita. Her fate cannot dictate our direction in terms of how we shall handle the current evils we face. Peilin's words hold some truth. Will we only discard our pride when Pelian is in flames? The Second Grand War taught us to set aside differences in dire times. We shall coordinate with the Capital Service, nomatter how foolish they tend to be.

That is MY decision."

The Highest Elder had spoken and his words needed no affirmation for it was final.

Those who wished otherwise could only grumble inwardly while those who had supported this from the beginning rejoiced silently.

This matter was done.

Or so everyone thought.

THRUM!

The melody of a lute danced from the strings that were strummed at this moment, as a certain man appeared in all his youthful and blonde glory.

He sat on the floor a distance from the Paladin Champion who instantly turned with the ferocious powers he possessed gushing out with immense hostility.

The tension instantly rose but the man who had mysteriously appeared, strumming his musical instrument charmed it with a soothing ballad that quelled all with haste.

"Shall I, the Holder of Mysteries,

Give you counsel O foolish seven,

For you know naught, the truth of the gods,

For you know naught, the minds of the divine...."

Chapter 346: Unknown Collusions

Maqi.

Large trees rose into the sky, their canopies fettered with the harsh light that bellowed brightly from above.

Their thick green leaves barely swayed as there was no wind to make them stray, their barks holding moisture that spoke of the current cool and the recent heavy rain.

Below these trees that seemed to be the sole populating species marring this forest, muddy grounds could be seen where reptilian beasts waddled with their scaled bulks while keeping away from a certain radius where monstrous waves of power were diffusing into the air.

High up on the branch to a massive Yukione tree that bore apple-like fruits with a blood red hue, their size akin to that of a man, five figures sat upon it – four on chairs that seemed to sprout from the massive branch itself and one who seemed comfortable being seated on the moist bark.

"Quite the interesting meeting place. I expected a lavish room with fine drink," a man donning what looked like a baggy robe said with a light smile, his heavy lashes making his eyes twinkle.

The man was bald with no facial hair to speak of, but his skin was smooth with a golden tan, contrasting his small pink lips and eerie white eyes.

He could see perfectly however, as the white was not of the blind.

The robes he wore seemed more like blankets that hid his body and rejected any visual attempt at guessing his physique.

"This is not Emeradis or Pelian. We are not biased to such finery. To swords or common weaponry that do well to make everyone's capability the same. Do you not know that the finest asses are cultivated from sitting on the raw wet trees and drinking directly from the source?" an elderly woman who sat over the branch said with a mocking, yet proud smile.

She wore something akin to a large, dry hide with little furs, different shades of grey over it as it was shaped like a dress that covered only up to her bosom.

She had a shaved head, with long tufts of white hair only being seen at the very centre, much like an old style mohawk.

Her swollen eyes that only revealed her dull blue eyes through narrow slits and her wrinkly skin told of her more than a 100 years of life, as did her words...somewhat.

One look at her was enough to determine wisdom and power beyond the common bounds.

The power of a variant of Mages only cultured by Maqi.

Shamanic Mages.

The bald man smiled to the old woman's response as he pulled on the large red fruit overhead, feeling its plumb and juicy innards.

"I will not argue with your words. There are no finer women in this world than in Maqi. However, Emeradis has no bias towards the common swords like Pelian. Knights and such... they are primitive concepts. Or have you forgotten?"

Pelian is the youngest among all the nations in Feinheath. So young that it tends to make the most foolish of decisions. Do you not agree, First Horn?" the bald man turned to the giant of a man who sat on the largest and most exquisitely crafted chair made from the hard flesh of the Yukione tree.

His thick chest was bare and a well furnished reddish-orange hide was strapped around his waist, over a free pair of black pants that were made of a material akin to silk.

His eyes that looked much like those of a beast with yellow pupils that constantly dilated, flickered as he entertained this figure.

"It is but the err of a sprout. Pelian has little strength to give it any form of security in the event of a war. Only six households are worthy of any mention in the entire nation. Let us not punish them for their folly," the man said in a voice that transcended the realms of 'deep.'

The other three people here dressed much like this large man, merely listened to the conversation between the three as they had not right to speak when the Head of the Nation, the First Horn, was present.

This was even true for the young man who sat to this man's right, his appearance being the splitting image of the man on this throne.

The bald man hunched over and looked at the First Horn with a pleased look.

"I am pleased we are on the same page. I have been sent to deliver a proposal to you by the Monarch. He also does not wish to assault Pelian for this. That would be... counter to our productivity as humans. Therefore..." the bald man paused as his eyes turned sharp.

"...is it not better to strike Opungale instead?"

The First Horn's eyes did not show any reaction and neither did the rest of his body.

"Amusing," the old woman who sat on the branch said with a hideous grin. "You bring the concept of such a large scale war to us so casually... Don't you know, war is the richest sea from which our people drink and thrive from?"

The bald man's smile grew wider.

"Of course. Aigas has been far too peaceful. Rats who try to instil fear through crude means bore us as they do you. Necromancers and foul pawns. Let us ignore them and strike the real prize. We have plenty a reason to wage a war, many a sailor who return home with distorted minds, many a warrior who lose the taste of war over the seas...

and a gnashing annoyance at seeing those filthy long ears..."

The old woman burst into raucous laughter while the First Horn remained stern.

The tall and bulky man took a few breaths before giving his response.

"Why look for reason in it? If blood is to be shed, let it be shed in the purest of ways. With no excuses or pretence.... but with raw carnal instinct!"

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Genhuis City.

A slender figure with just enough fat in the right places walked out with her moist body dripping droplets of water that halted in mid-air a moment before they touched the floor of the luxurious bedroom.

She pulled on her long, cherry hair, squeezing out the humidity within it which manifested as lumps of water that floated from the hair and halted in space.

Her naked figure as she elegantly walked over to the large windows that showed the massive city beyond could not have looked more mesmerising as with the curtains open wide, the sunlight made her curves and skin shine.

Her long ears twitched as she sighed.

"This is so much better than home..." she said as she stretched her hands while moaning. "I should enjoy this while it lasts."

As she said this, from her back, two streams of golden peach lights bloomed.

They brightened and wiggled like the wings they were, fluttering as their owner desired as if they were being stretched out after a very long time.

To one who looked from the side, it would be like seeing an ancient forger grab a hold of two wisps of light and stretch them like pieces of soft wire, watching beautiful peach patterns meld over them.

Such a phenomenon of absolute beauty caused a change over the body of Darwel as her identity wasn't limited to just being a daughter of royalty.

The glistening of her skin as the wings appeared, as if glitter had been immaculately sprinkled over, as well as the flood of power that burst from her body in this moment represented her mixed blood as a higher form of existence entirely...

Chapter 347: The Deity-sent man!

In a certain living mass that had a bold and domineering design that expressed the might and wealth held by the House, a brief meeting had been organised to initiate a glorious new beginning that was expected to bring forth a new path that couldn't be forged by the power of the Imagining Technique alone.

A red carpet was laid over the dark tiled floor that led up to both ends of the hall, creating a rather sacred look that demanded remembrance and the preservation.

A man and a woman were standing behind a young man that was evidently their son, the man looking at him with fervent eyes that showed pride while the woman's eyes were calm with just a little bit of trepidation.

The young man before them was kneeling respectfully in the opposite direction, with his head lowered.

He had dark hair with blue fringes at the bangs that draped over his forehead, combed over to the left, a round face with large honey-coloured eyes and a button nose that had a faint natural brush at the bridge.

As he knelt, his left arm which touched the ground to support his entire body could be seen with a dark, thick bandage around it that hid its appearance in a curious fashion, but everyone in the room knew what was hidden.

In fact, it was the very reason that the figure this young one was kneeling to was here.

As for who this figure was, a green mask with a half white side over the face spelt all about his identity. The shivering hooded figure at his side merely watched without revealing who they were as well, curious as to what the strange man in the mask intended.

"Rias EverSword. Do you have any words to say that guarantee that you, as the next heir to the EverSword Household will remain loyal to me, my consorts and ideals?" Actuass spoke in a demanding tone that did not emit desperation or haste but authority.

The older man behind this young man who had been identified as Rias, wore a grin as he expectantly waited for what his son who was merely sixteen years of age would say to express his allegiance.

His talent and mannerisms had allowed him to reach this point.

He had faithfully observed the years of solitude required for one to completely hone the House Technique and his power was vastly superior to even his when he was of this age!

He brimmed with joy at seeing that the House had not yet failed Actuass.

The young man with a straight face raised his head and faced Actuass who donned a long simple brown robe tied with a rope at the waist and spoke.

"My words would mean nothing no matter how bold they are. My actions however, are and will be a better indication of the firm belief I have in your ideals. I'm different from Reon. I have completed the tasks required for the sons of the House and I have the power required to back the House. I will not stray. Take me and use me as your own."

Rias' father trembled with joy while his mother could only smile weakly.

Seeing her son wholeheartedly pledge his fealty to this... man...

She felt a strange mix of emotion.

A part of her was glad that Reon had run away and done what he believed was a better fulfilment of his life, though he gotten entangled in this snare still.

Even further, it seemed he had died a lonely death.

Her thoughts and sombre emotions were her own however, as she watched Actuass walk up to Rias.

"Good. You have much work to do," Actuass said before turning to the older man who looked to want to leap up. "The Premium Age Royale?"

"Everything is set! Many of the registered Families have already arrived in Genhuis City. In a few days we will begin and at the end, you will have what you seek, Master Actuass," the man hurriedly said.

Actuass nodded and turned to the hooded figure behind him that kept shivering.

"Do you understand a bit of it now?"

The figure hesitantly nodded much to the masked man's satisfaction as the glow of his hazel eyes gleamed behind his facial cover.

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There was a vast region as one went on up North within Pelian from any direction.

There would be a chilly breeze at first, a stifling cold next and then colossal glacial structures that were constantly slapped by dangerously cold winds which carried flakes of snow.

These extreme conditions were not the current focus however as the main point to follow at this moment was a certain large town called Harifrast.

At this time, thick blankets of snow could be seen all around covering most of what could be seen in a beautiful white camouflage that made everything pristine.

Not a single soul alive was not donning something to warm their flesh as the slightly vicious winds would blow from time to time.

This did not stop the many people who lived in Harifrast from going about their businesses though, as the hawkers sold their products, carriers carried their customers and the baths... oh the baths enjoyed the year long rounds of customers who would come to the fine establishment to dip themselves in warm currents.

Some men and women with well maintained appearances that were identified as attractive to the opposite sex would entertain the customers in various ways, the weight of the pocket dictating the limits of the treatment these customers would receive.

This was a high tier business in the Harifrast indeed.

Yet, it was only one of the more prominent ones in this town as there was another one that had the potential of grabbing quite a bit of coin with many being none the wiser, if the 'entrepreneur' so desired.

To the west of the town, where less of the more economic activity thrived, a crooked wooden shed could be seen, thickets of snow cementing the space between the logs that made it.

Icy blocks mixed with the white completely covered the roof that looked to want to fall at any moment, but this did not dissuade the column of dozens that waited patiently for their turn to enter this gloomy shed.

There were those with missing limbs, those with grievous injuries, those with illnesses among many other conditions that required medical attention all looking to the front anxiously.

The Deity-sent man in there....

They all hoped he would serve longer.

Within this shed which currently had its door closed, a woman was looking in awe at her own hands, turning them in all possible ways.

She suddenly started to tremble with tears rolling down her face as she looked at the figure before her, seated on worn stool with a tender smile.

This man...

She could swear she wouldn't forget him ever in her entire life.

His long, auburn hair, his glistening silver eyes and rich skin that seemed unaffected by the snow...

He... he was too good a man to be true.

She knelt as she bawled out and gripped his hand.

"Sir... sir... thank you very much! I can't... I can't... my hands..."

I thought I would never be able to hold anything again! <Sniff>... May the Deities bless you bountifully sir!" she said in a sincere voice.

The man cocked his hand in a disgust for only a split second but retained his kind visage again for her sake.

He nodded at her words and patted her hands.

But it seemed this woman was not done.

"Oh kind sir! You have done something too grand for me to simply walk out and forget! Is there anything I can do or he—"

"SHSHSHSHSHHHHH!"

The man suddenly planted his index finger on the woman's lips, halting her sentence with a smile that made her blush.

"I need nothing for my service, fem- woman. My duty is to help where I can," the man said, making the woman nod silently as tears kept flooding down her cheeks.

Deep within however, the man's thoughts were not so kind.

'I already got what I wanted from you. Having you melt on me will get me into trouble you sockethole.'

Chapter 348: He Likes What?

As the evening was quickly approaching in this cold town, the recently acknowledged healer closed shed and walked away from his make-shift establishment from the back, hiding from the many who still sought him.

"Pheww...." Skullius breathed out as he rushed away and slid his hands into his pockets.

His hair which had grown to pass his shoulders in the past two days kept getting in the way of his vision, making him constantly have to swing it away by swaying his head from time to time.

Frankly, it was quite annoying but from the side, to those who looked at his slightly bulky figure hidden under the thick, sand-coloured jacket he wore, this action of his looked kind of... ahem.

'It seems UNCoddled isn't as dangerous as I thought it was. Well... it is dangerous but as long as someone doesn't get to express that they want to help me, they won't have to die an agonising death! Kek!' Skullius thought as he wore a smug grin.

The Discount Human had learned from the time with Ginie and with Terian that him helping people didn't cause any problems with UNCoddled!

Him healing the gaping hole from when Guissepo blasted the little girl open and him patching up Terian in his most recent big fight had not caused him any issues.

Then what?

Skullius decided to take more risks! If he could mitigate the consequences, he could gain many benefits, such as levelling up his skills while using the pretence of kindness!

Humans really loved that sort of stuff.

Especially the poor.

And in the case that many people melted to the ground... well that wasn't exactly his problem, especially in this town.

'[Luminous Healing] is already at level 8. Better yet, I learned a lot of its applications aside from regenerating limbs...' Skullius thought as he viewed his guidance field.

Many would ask why Skullius had chosen his sole healing skill as the first thing to tackle.

Well... that would be explored later.

Ever since he came to Harifrast this morning, Skullius had discovered it to be a more pleasant place to relax in for several reasons, despite the obvious detriment of the terrible cold which contrasted the heat he was coming from.

When he entered this region, he had cursed with each bone expletive he could expel from his mouth!

It was terrible!

It horrible!

It was fleshed up!

And yes, he could FEEL it now!

Who made this weather?!

It had taken some time for Skullius to even decide to continue on as it wasn't of his own will to come here.

"Tomato flinger, are you going to take me to that place or not? It won't take that long. I just need to see it! You promised! I helped you get yourself out of trouble back then! Don't you dare back out!" Sila who had become tame with his volume blasted the inside of Skullius' mind with flaring emotion.

"Relax, you sockethole. It hasn't even been a day since we arrived here. Give me some time, alright?" Skullius responded.

'You aren't going to that ridiculous establishment again, are you?! You just went there a few hours ago!'

"So what? I'm not allowed to have fun now? Especially when I actually can?! Well flesh your ass bro! I'm going there anyway! Wait!

Gah! This again!"

'What?'

"Nothing! Just don't talk to me about this anymore!"

Skullius huffed as he stomped ahead, the voice of Sila merely grumbling as he said no more about this matter.

In truth he just hated to see Skullius relaxing while he was stuck in a bubble that disallowed him any sensations at all.

Tch.

Skullius passed through the town streets were everything was still as lively as ever.

As opposed to most towns he had seen, this one had many visitors from foreign cities and villages.

Some were wealthy visitors that brought the town astronomical amounts of coin which gave this place with better standards than most.

Aside from it being a simple cold town, there were a variety of frozen sights to see that many would come to see, such a frozen pool at the very centre of the city which constantly emitted a haze of cold while maintaining the shape of a large splash.

This pool also had a unique trait besides its beauty alone.

Apparently it could grant a beautifying effect to anyone who stood still a meter from it for an hour. The limit was roughly a single person a day and the effect lasted up to a year, which was a relatively attractive effect.

Naturally, this was something the rich would hunt for as opposed to the less fortunate but still, this icy construction caused a stream of the rich to regularly waddle into the town.

This wasn't the only site however, as there were many other places around the town with an equal or grander built and beauty, some restricted to access but powerful Knights.

On top of these visitors, at the current time, there were many individuals who had poured into Harifrast while fleeing from the Clusters that plagued everywhere on Feinheath.

Some were injured and hoping for help as they ran away from their villages in search of closer places that could offer them help.

Skullius had taken advantage of such with his arrival which had limited his exploration of the rest of the city.

Before he knew it, he had strategically opened a free medical service booth that was flooded with customers in minutes.

After walking for quite the distance, the Discount Human finally arrived at the place he desired.

An expansive wooden cabin with enticing woodwork that teased the services provided inside appeared in view.

A neat pathway of masonry led into the place that Skullius sought once more with a grin.

It was indeed as one would think, a hot bath establishment which went by the name 'The Hot Swan'.

On entering into through the door, Skullius saw the familiar wood and stone interior that had dozens of people walking about in the steamy space as they headed to the great number of pools tens of meters ahead.

'Ah...!' Skullius felt a wave of excitement but he hurriedly calmed himself.

Things were different now. He couldn't just get too excited.

Still though, the comfortable heat fondled his body as he removed his jacket which he had stol-bought from a kind hawker along the road when he first arrived.

This was the stuff.

He walked a few steps in and found the familiar booth where one would pay for the service they wanted but before he could rush up to it, a curvaceous lady with blonde hair bordering on harsh gold sauntered up to him and wrapped herself around his arm.

She wore only a long towel over her body, her short height being a strategic advantage on her part as it forced men taller than her to look down and fall into her glistening cleavage made by two plump breasts that rested over said man's arm.

Skullius looked down at her with a quizzical look.

"Hello sir. Welcome to our humbly hot establishment. Uhummm~. I'm sure you've come for a very nice time. I can guide you to the best baths and even personally get you heated up if you'd like. Hmmm~.

Would you prefer a more tame service, or..." the lady said as she loosened her towel, her eyes remaining steady as she stared into the Discount Human's.

Skullius raised his brow and was about to give a reply when...

"H-huh?"

The woman suddenly found herself rising into the air and being pulled away from Skullius forcefully!

Something gripped around her waist lightly.

Something she couldn't see.

"Huh?! What?! W-what's happening?!" the woman panicked as she couldn't figure out what was happening, her eyes looking to Skullius who opened his mouth and closed it again after finding no appropriate words to speak.

Right then, the woman was flung away towards the steamy ponds beyond Skullius' vision, disappearing into the waves of steam with a loud splash!

Skullius sighed helplessly.

"You don't have to be so overprotective, you know. I'm not sure how to feel about this personality of yours, bro..." Skullius said as he recalled to the mad flurry of events that had happened two days ago.

Chapter 349: Cosmetic Body! (1)

Two days before...

Within the Elimparidis Stone Staff's miniaturised World.

"What? You want to train? Alone?" Skullius asked with a brow raised as he slid into his spatial ring two items that he had just upgraded with [Unbound].

One of these items was the Fleeting Ghoul's Adornment which he had promised himself to upgrade in future and well, the future was now.

Red Rage nodded in response to Skullius' request for clarity while pointing downwards.

"You want to do it here? Why so suddenly?"

The Apostle raised his arm and made a muscle gesture while simultaneously sending his intent to his master.

"You feel like you're growing weak compared to me and him?" Skullius asked as he pointed at the large dark blue beast that rested beside him.

Red Rage nodded.

Oh.

Skullius hadn't expected this.

Was this the reason why this guy was kind of moody since the fight with the Galemonger?

In his opinion, Red Rage wasn't weak at all, especially when he used [Incandescent Attire of the Omnipotent Pelvis-Hegemon].

Then again, when compared to the Limitless Null Demon Hound, he could understand why Red Rage felt this way.

His new Apostle seemed to have a lot to work with despite the RESET flaw while the Pelvis-Boar-Man was yet to fully unlock the true potential behind his powers, such as his Class as the Tempered Bone Hegemon as well as the other skills he used.

Ever since the Tremur, the Apostle seemed to have lost his rapid growth. At least that was what he felt. Or rather, he had beaten quite a lot as even in Inhone, he had barely managed to kill three Bulk Terrors while the new Apostle had beaten dozens of those easily.

"Well, if you need it, I can't stop you. Might as well put that [Blessing of Serenity] to good use," Skullius said as he patted the Apostle's shoulder. "But... don't you dare start thinking you're not good enough for me. You've saved me many times over before. Get stronger if you feel you need it.

I'll be waiting."

The Pelvis-Boar-Man nodded with a bright flash of light piercing from his sockets to show his resolve.

[Apostle Red Rage approves of your decision. +10 favourability]

"That must really mean a lot to you..." Skullius mumbled to himself as he checked the guidance field notification.

When one thought about it deeply, it made sense. For this once murderous sockethole, having his ability to take care of threats stripped by the continuous growth of the enemies that they were facing was devastating and he was motivated to regain it through a retreat.

"I should probably ensure that I'm stronger by the time I have to enter that Premium Age thing too," Skullius said to himself as he recalled the bit of knowledge that Stylla had told him above the basics of this event he had to participate in.

The Premium Age Royale.

'There are three opponents that you should be especially wary of. They are considered to be most challenging people to fight among all the other participants you will see. One of them is considered the strongest, the other is considered the most dangerous and the last is considered the most unpredictable. Their names are...'

This was the detail that Stylla had shared.

Apparently, before all the participants had even arrived, these three well known individuals were already considered as worth looking out for.

'Then besides my most powerful skills, I should also have my support abilities in their best forms,' Skullius thought while scrolling through his skills on the guidance field. '[Luminous Healing] is probably going to be important in the upcoming fights.'

If I could use [Lanterns of the Pure] again, it would be even better but unfortunately, I still have 15 more days until [Bringer of All] comes off cooldown.'

When considering how much he had to heal up during fights with strong opponents, Skullius decided to level up his sole healing skill out of necessity.

[Lanterns of the Pure], the Limitless Body Null Demon Hound's ability which he had access to in his Ogwulf the Limitless form was not available even if it would be the best choice and thus his only options for now were [Irisa You Whore], his sword's skill and [Luminous Healing].

"Alright then. Time to do what we're for," Skullius said as he looked at the lush forestry, sea and mountain ranges around this place.

He intended to thoroughly explore this world and see all its hidden perks. There had to be more to it than the Enriching gems.

That, and...

The Discount Human inserted mana into an extra ring on his hand, and thousands of Enriching gems fell out!

From the purple red to red gems, there was a bountiful amount of these that Skullius needed to absorb before he was completely saturated.

As a rule that had been made known to him, he could only absorb energy from a 1000 purple gems before his body refused to draw any more, 2500 purple red gems and 6000 for the red ones.

While it seemed like this inflated stat figures for those who absorbed such values in Enriching gems, the issue lied in the quantity of the gems.

It was harder to find gems higher than red, as their amount even in higher level Clusters was dismal.

Skullius brushed all these thoughts aside however and sat down, grabbing two gems in each hand before he started rapidly pulling in the wisps of white energy within the purple-red and red gems.

Soon, familiar notifications began to appear over his vision as the powerful energy from the gems worked their wonder over the flesh of the Discount Human.

[Your flesh and bones are augmented. A factor of 3 applies]

[Your flesh and bones are augmented. A factor of 3 applies]

[Your flesh and bones...]

Skullius' body continued to enjoy minimal changes as he continuously absorbed the energy in the Enriching gems before him under the gazes of Red Rage and the still unnamed Apostle.

The Discount Human's stats soared and at the same time, one of the skills he had levelled up.

['Flesh It Like You Mean It' has reached LV10. Would you like to evolve it into its next form?]

Skullius grinned.

This was one thing he had been hoping for and he couldn't wait to see what he would get.

Unlike all the other skills he had, this wasn't a normal skill.

It was a Supreme skill.

While he didn't understand how he had a skill of this level even with his core, given the knowledge he had on the hierarchy of skills in this world, he was greatly expectant.

There had to be some really good returns, right?

"Yes," Skullius affirmed.

The moment he did, his flesh bubbled and ballooned, beginning to shiver intensely!

'The flesh?!'

Skullius did not expect his body to suddenly become a large ball that hid all his features, his clothes tearing off as the flesh he held turned elastic over the bones underneath!

Ripples ran along it as pulses of unknown energy streamed through it vehemently!

Red Rage and the Limitless Body Null Demon Hound backed away as they gave space.

They did not sense any danger and thus did not rush to any action.

As the Discount Human grew, he started to float while a continuous stream of notifications flashed before him, giving him peace of mind.

No.

It was more than just peace of mind.

It was excitement and joy.

Yes!

This skill was definitely worth its rank!

Chapter 350: Cosmetic Body! (2)

['Flesh It Like You Mean It' has evolved into 'High Cosmetic Body']

[Your body is currently going through reconstruction and grand augmentation]

[Please be patient...]

These were the first notifications that Skullius received as his body started to float.

Within him, he felt changes that raced through his entire being, giving him a... vague feeling of familiarity.

Soon after, Skullius' ballooned flesh began to deflate, twisting and coiling as it shrunk down to a smaller size.

[Your new cosmetic body is nearing completion!]

[You have gained the bodily function, 'Sensation.' You can now perceive contact, temperature and your odd surroundings]

FLSSSSHHHH!

Skullius' body downsized to form a slightly taller version of his earlier self that still didn't have a face or hair but a slightly darker skin tone.

On his body that had been a plain blob, wriggling movements began to occur as it started to gain contours and marks that depicted which part of the cosmetic body they were amidst the flurry of notifications.

[You have gained <STEEL BONE FRAME>!]

[You have gained <HEART>!]

[You have gained <RUSH BLOOD>!]

[The formation of a blood network in your cosmetic body has been completed. Your <HEART> begins to pump <RUSH BLOOD> into your blood network!]

[Generation of <HYPE BLOOD CELLS> begins...]

Skullius felt something burst within him like a river!

No.

It was like hundreds of little rivers flowing in different directions in his body!

They all seemed to connect to something in his chest, to the left.

THRUM!

THRUM!

THUMP!

Mana surged towards Skullius' chest as he felt something start to beat with a powerful rhythm that actually reverberated through everything within his cosmetic body!

The new blood vessels!

The new sturdy forming flesh!

Everything shook with the beat of this <HEART> including the just formed steady bone frame that was in no way like that of a regular human!

Skullius felt everything within him react to this powerful organ in the best possible way!

[Your <HEART> strikes with the energy of forced life!]

[+50 to all stats]

[Generation of <HYPE BLOOD CELLS> completed!]

[The natural skill 'HYPED' has been awakened!]

Over Skullius' cosmetic body, a magnificent face appeared, fitted with his signature silver eyes.

Highlighted skin appeared over his cheeks with thin lips and a roman nose making for a handsome, distinct visage.

Light auburn hair grew over his head like silky strings, stretching over past his shoulders as Skullius then took in a breath, his chest rising as it clearly depicted his well-defined muscles of a slightly bulky figure that had a small increase in height.

The Discount Human sat down on the ground and looked at his body with a broad grin.

A cosmetic body.

One with perks that normal people wouldn't enjoy.

This was... incredible.

Unlike before, Skullius felt the wind over the little hairs that had appeared over his body. The moisture and cold was apparent to him now as he felt it vividly.

Sensation.

His body was a bit sensitive now.

Such things he couldn't detect... now he could.

However, did this mean he could feel pain now?

This thought process was cancelled out by the subsequent notifications that came into view however.

[A random skill from the 'Fulgurant Bone Penetrator' will now be selected for your permanent use in the 'Discount Human' form]

There it was!

Skullius had hoped levelling up [Flesh It Like You Mean It] would eventually lead to this and fortunately, he was right.

[Flesh It Like You Mean It] or now known as [High Cosmetic Body], seemed to intend to eventually bring together Skullius' two selves!

What a profound development!

[The skill 'Null Life Aura' has been selected]

'Heh, I thought as much,' Skullius thought as he rubbed his chin with his fingers.

It was highly unlikely for him to receive a racial or class skill from the Penetrator.

Therefore, a general Null Life skill that he hadn't used before had been selected!

Skullius smiled.

The skill evolution had ended and the results were magnificent.

They exceeded his expectations.

He touched his chest and felt the <HEART> pulsing, the <RUSH BLOOD> racing within his body as a result.

He had also received a skill from this whole phenomenon.

The skill [HYPED].

As Skullius was about to look up the details of the skill, he felt the wind blow somewhere on his body.

Somewhere peculiar.

Somewhere in the middle.

The Discount Human set his eyes below to look and found...

'What the flesh is that?'

An organ protruded from his body. One that he felt a great sense of familiarity and camaraderie towards but... he just couldn't put his finger on what it truly was...

He poked it like a snake but it showed no reaction.

He rubbed it but it still it not move.

He strangled it but... nothing.

As a bi-product of his actions, he found that he was still incapable of feeling pain as after trying all sorts of shenanigans over this... third leg, nothing registered in his body.

'Guess we'll see what it does later on,' Skullius thought as he returned to the task of checking out the skill [HYPED].

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[HYPED | Lv. None]

When the user feels extremely excited, the <HYPE BLOOD CELLS> will supercharge to produce a stream of artificial adrenaline that will jolt the cosmetic body into a hyper state of activity where the user will process all things at ten times their current ability.

Mana Requirement: None

Duration: None.

Cooldown: None

~~~

"Hmmm..." Skullius pondered.

A skill without mana requirements, duration or a cooldown.

"Allows me to process all things faster, huh? Does this mean I'll also learn things faster?"

Such a peculiar ability.

The terminology used didn't exactly make it easier for Skullius to comprehend what exactly the skill did.

It seemed powerful though, given the right circumstances. Skullius would eventually know what it could really do so he didn't try to ponder over it some more.

Instead, he turned to [Null Life Aura].

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[Null Life Aura | Lv.2]

An expansive influence of the user anchored on their chosen affinity. It bears a Serene but potent effect on enemies and the user.

<Affinity : None>

-Effect-

None

~~~

Skullius kept looking at this skill's description.

This was the second time he had checked it and this time wasn't different from the last.

'I still can't figure out how it works. Maybe it needs Null Life stuff to work? But wouldn't that make it useless when I'm in my Discount Human form?' he thought.

The Discount Human sighed and also put thoughts about this skill away.

All in all, this was an exceedingly good experience.

Skullius put on some new clothes before he finished absorbing the spots of energy from the Enriching gems until for both types of gems, he had reached his limit.

The effects firmly settled as they left the Discount Human feeling as powerful as ever.

"Now. Let's see what's under there, shall we?" Skullius said as he rose and walked up to the shore preceding the vast sea ahead.

The vibrant waters awaited as they seemed to hide something that Skullius could vaguely see even from here.

An image was constantly obscured by the ripples above the face of the water from the winds.

Something large nested below these waters and as the new owner of the Elimparidis Stone Staff, Skullius needed to investigate.

This was a home of his now wasn't it?

He had to know every nook and cranny of it.

"How about one last adventure before you start your training, Red bro?" he turned to the Pelvis-Boar-Man and asked.