

Undead 371

Chapter 371: We've Been Outsmarted

The cold breeze flushed away the bits of sunlight that had been prevalent through the day, the Discount Human and the man with the pauldron on his shoulder feeling the full brunt of it while sitting over the roof to one of the more of the expensive inns in Harifrast.

The cold town looked beautiful with the many variations of light that were sprinkled all over it, with some much brighter ones illuminating the abundant sights in the town, highlighting them even in the night to attract customers.

Fully milking such things was not a foreign thing after all.

"Is it really alright for us to be here, bro?" Skullius asked as he looked down where the crowds were still skittering around even though the cold had grown several degrees stronger.

Before Bek could answer however, Skullius quickly corrected himself.

"Stop! Stop! I know. Its the wrong question right?"

Bek turned to Skullius with a blank face that barely showed any life.

"I was about to praise your shockingly convenient question but it seems you haven't yet grown from our short experience together. Your life essence must be wasted on your looks than your actually brain," he said with a blunt tone.

Skullius gnashed his teeth.

It had been quite some time since he and Bek had met.

Frankly, while they had had many conversations in between their time of meeting for the first time and now, it seemed like Skullius had barely scratched the surface to this guy.

To be fair however, the same was true for him.

After quite a lot of trust building exercises (mostly including arguments and threats), Skullius had decided to accept Bek's proposal, following his shutting up of Sila who kept raving madly in his mind of course.

Given how Bek was though, Skullius decided to hold off on telling him about his curse.

Two reasons supported this.

First, because the man was generally unlikeable and less likely to help him in any way.

Second, because the man didn't throw away his honour as a Knight it seemed. If he identified Skullius as some sort of threat or abomination with now cruel his curse could be, he might as well purge the Discount Human. Besides, he already knew too much about Skullius and telling him about UNCoddled could lead the man to pry every secret that Skullius held.

Or rather that Festos held.

Now, the two were on a stake out on a position that Bek claimed to be the best for watching the areas where most of the refugees were living in.

Apparently, the Town Leader had reluctantly allowed them to occupy the open spaces away from relics and important sites in the town.

Mild social responsibility, one could call it.

"I will indulge you," Bek said as he shifted his feet on the snow covered roof. He decided to still answer Skullius' question. "It's rare for Harifrast to hire a Capital Order Knight or higher. In most cases, they do not have the funds to sustain the employment of such for long."

However, while they denounced the Capital Service, they still hire quality Knights that are more capable than pathetic pigs who swing swords these days."

"In short... yes. We are safe."

Skullius sighed.

Was this guy a loner?

He tended to drag out answers for simple questions with a lot more fluff.

Solitude was probably his friend for some time and he was just churning out word after word unnecessarily.

Wait!

Was his interjection of how Skullius' questions were wrong a ploy to make Skullius ask more open ended questions for longer conversations?!

Who knew?!

"You sure are confident in your strength. If you're this strong, then how come you're no longer a Capital Order Knight?" Skullius asked while playing with the snow he had scooped in his hand.

"Reasons that someone like you can't comprehend. My evaluation of you is terrible so far. Try to make an effort," Bek said before he raised his hand and extended it outwards, pointing forward with his index finger. Another meaningless gesture when Skullius looked at it.

"Do you know where people go after death?" Bek asked.

Skullius didn't expect this sudden change in the topic.

Where did people go after death?

That was tricky, especially for him who had lived in death for quite a long time. Sort of.

For where the Discount Human was supposed to go though, it was brutally clear. Eerily clear, so much so that he didn't want to think about, but now he wondered, where would people in Aigas go after death?

"I don't know," he replied.

"Of course you don't," Bek said as he withdrew his hand. "Neither do I."

The dull eyes of the former Capital Order Knight strolled over the souls that pulsed in the streets, shrieking with happiness and enjoyment.

"The doctrine of the Deities says that each person goes to the pure space of the Deity that gave them their Direction and blessing at the start, if they lived a good life, that at some point followers of the three Deities will meet in a singular place and be happy while those who refuse the will of the Deities and those who shy from the doctrine will be cast out in the dark and empty Tunatsche, the space outside the influence of the Deities..."

'Is that so...?' Skullius thought. "That sounds infinitely better than my fate if I were to die.'

"Do you believe in such a thing?" Bek asked.

"I don't know. It could be true."

"Is that so? If that's what you think, then I have answered your earlier question... partly."

"Huh?" Skullius questioned in confusion.

"Your earlier question. The better one. About why these strange people are abducting the sick and injured. Their objective lies in something related to this. That is my theory."

So this guy was doing it again...

"I don't know who they are but their purpose is a bit clearer. Their souls are clad in similar blessings, shielding me from ascertaining anything about them."

The Discount Human nodded while taking this in.

'So he really can see souls. At least I get to confirm it. The bastard won't spill anything about himself and his weird powers consciously,' Skullius thought.

He currently had his [Elevated Mana Manipulation] spanning a vast area so as to see if it pick up on anything else. Any fluctuations in energy, weird mana signatures and all.

At the same time, he had instructed Ferex to scout around for anything weird.

Truth be told, he didn't want to have to do this any longer than he needed to.

There were objectives he had to fulfill.

Time passed as the night crawled deeper into reality, the people loitering around disappearing with the minutes and hours.

The view of the town was clear with both individuals' higher level sight emboldened by their strength and yet still, nothing was happening.

"Hmm..." Bek suddenly hummed as he stroked his beard, his eyes beaming with focus.
"Interesting."

"What?" Skullius asked.

"We've been outsmarted it seems," Bek said as he stood from the roof, his hand gripping Skullius' jacket.

The two vanished from the roof top as it seemed that Bek had found something.

Chapter 372: Short Glimpse

VWOOSH!

With a gentle breeze, Skullius found himself looking at a wide corridor with beautiful decor – a red carpet on the floor and what seemed like a white and gold wallpaper on the wall which was plastered with multiple large portraits.

Multiple doors were scattered on either side of this corridor, all of them with tags that represented the commercial service provided in this building that the two had just burst into.

Indeed, it was an expensive inn.

The Discount Human only took a second to collect himself as the sudden speed he had been exposed to was way beyond what his body could get used to within a short span of time.

Beside him and Bek who removed his tight grip from his jacket, Skullius saw that there was a large, closed window, quite the mundane thing to stare dazedly at but for the Discount Human, it led him to speculate all kinds of crazy things.

'Did we just pass through the window without breaking it?' Skullius thought, gobsmacked by this inference.

He didn't have much time to dwell on it however, as Bek's whisper flowed into his ear.

"Don't say a word..."

This wasn't a command that forced the Discount Human's body to act accordingly like before however.

Skullius didn't question this and kept his mouth shut.

He fully concentrated on his [Elevated Mana Manipulation] which spread wide and collected all sorts of information from the surroundings.

Naturally, he wasn't a Healer as Bek thought and he definitely wasn't some powerful Energy Former with transcendent perception towards energies of different kinds.

He had let Bek keep thinking he was one because he didn't want the man to pry.

How else would one be able to heal people of many different kinds of diseases and injury besides using skills related to a Healer class... or from having a powerful blessing, which to be fair was pretty distinguishable from a skill.

Still however, Skullius was determined to play his part.

SQUEAK...

A door approximately nine meters away emitted a low squeak as it opened wide, Bek becoming alert.

"Stay close," he whispered to Skullius as a strange burst of energy covered the corridor up to the halfway point from where the door which was opening was located.

A man emerged from the door, dressed in casual winter wear.

His emergence from this room would have appeared normal... if he didn't have the body of a woman in a silk dress slung over his shoulder!

The man's eyes immediately darted to his left where Skullius and Bek were positioned, showing a hint of wariness.

The presence of these two was muted to an unnatural degree and only his peripheral vision had alerted him to their presence.

The man took action immediately, flicking his hand up to reveal a white marble-sized stone which he flung at the wall on the other side!

The moment the marble hit the wall, it dissolved into the immaculate decor on the hard surface, creating a warp of sorts with a whitish tint that retained the designs on the wall but with creepy curves and distortions!

Skullius' [Elevated Mana Manipulation] picked up on the unique signature of this phenomenon.

The Discount Human guessed this was some sort of spatial effect but... with how he had experienced space manipulation himself on the mountain in his mini-world, he could tell that there was quite a big difference when this effect he was seeing was concerned!

The man with the body of a woman over his shoulder hurriedly shot towards the warped space but before he could finish taking his first step, he felt something grab his throat tightly and raise him into the air!

Bek had already crossed the distance and caught the man!

The body of the woman fell to the floor and Bek, with his awareness washing over her, confirmed that she was still alive from the pulse he sensed.

"Sneaky. I've seen many of your friends use these to escape me. It's not going to work this time," Bek said as he concentrated mana into his hand and sliced off the man's arms!

SHWP! SHWP!

The limbs came off swiftly but then...

...!

"This is new."

As Bek diced off the limbs, the blood he expected to flood out from the severed parts didn't come.

What occurred instead was eerie and unexpected.

The entire body of the man slowly transitioned in colour from a beige tone that was dominant over his skin to a white one, his features turning rigid and hard as soon, a doll remained.

It had marks and balls at the joints with no features on its face at all.

Bek narrowed his eyes.

"They have such things too?" he thought before his senses picked up something else.

...!

The former Capital Order Knight dashed back at an incredible speed, his eyes squinting over the body of the woman.

He had sensed something below him.

The red carpet started to warp and get painted with a whitish hue, the floor turning into warped space around the unconscious woman who immediately began to sink in!

"Bek!" Skullius called, ignoring the 'don't say a word' rule. "There's more below us!"

The former Knight nodded as he darted away from the current circumstances, grabbed Skullius and flashed into the floor below, near a downward stretch of stairs.

On this corridor, four individuals were swiftly exiting from line of doors, carrying bodies of unconscious men, women and children, two having already created warp spaces on the walls while one had created one above where the body of the woman from before was emerging!

"Go downstairs and handle the others," Bek instructed Skullius while pushing him down the steps that descended.

This time, Skullius' body quaked as it was not a mere suggestion.

The Discount Human wordlessly followed the instruction, his body carrying him forward only for the first few seconds!

'Damn this!' Skullius thought before he whipped out the Elimparidis Stone Staff.

Strangely, his steps which had been silent before started to gain a crisp clap as they met the floor.

He was outside of Bek's range of effect. Apparently, the man had active some strange power that erased most of their traces, including sound.

Upon reaching the corridor to this floor, Skullius saw two men who looked shockingly similar to the one he had seen first on the floor he and Bek emerged on, dragging four bodies!

Their attention was drawn to Skullius the moment he appeared and they looked to prepare to escape instead of fighting.

The Discount Human didn't give them any time to react as he immediately used [Jump] to appear behind the two men!

The Staff immediately disappeared into Skullius' ring and he quickly launched a heavy punch to the back of the head of one of the two men, the impact sending him flying with his head being smashed apart!

Before the other could show any kind of reaction to this, the Discount Human was already upon him as well, dishing a high kick to his neck!

The man slammed into the wall, his neck having bent unnaturally, but his face didn't show any signs of pain or shock.

Instead, his body lost colour and turned into a white doll, much like the one from before.

The same happened to the other man.

'What are these?' Skullius thought as he reached out to touch them.

Bek flashed before Skullius and looked at the two dolls. He had quickly finished off the bastards he was facing and locked the people who were being dragged away in one room.

"This is different from what I've been up against. They seem to be changing strategies," he said. "Also, it just occurred to me that these people are not just attacking the refugees. The locals are targets too. The rumours that led us to believe anything other than that was probably part of their strategy to cause some kind of internal conflict while they took advantage of the situation."

Skullius' brow rose.

"So even the locals too? But why hasn't anyone mentioned it? Shouldn't there be rumours about that too?"

"They are obviously covering it up. Even in such a tense situation, you still find the time ask foolish questions."

Damn it!

Skullius swallowed a lump and let this insult pass.

"So what shall we do, smart man?" Skullius asked with a roll of his eyes.

"Do you sense any traces of their activity?"

The Discount Human closed his eyes and expanded his senses with [Elevated Mana Manipulation]. His skin tingled as it also seemed to sense oddities as always.

Then..

"Again?!" Skullius said out loud and immediately, white coloured warping shapes appeared over the dolls and the four bodies on the floor, quickly sipping them into the distorted spaces!

Bek could have rushed to grab the victims but he figured that these space warps were not stable as there was the possibility of him ripping them apart due to them already being held firm by the dancing space.

"Can you sense where they lead to?!" Bek bellowed.

"No," Skullius replied with a tight expression. "There's nothing else in the entire building."

The former Knight hurriedly gripped Skullius and the two appeared outside with a single burst of speed!

Bek expanded his senses to see if he could catch a glimpse of any other activity but there was nothing.

He couldn't clearly sense the intricate makings of spells and high level skills like an Energy Former but he could discern the basics as well as soul related signatures!

Yet...

Nothing.

Once again, Bek sped with Skullius, the two appearing outside the town.

"Anything?" Bek asked to which Skullius strained his sense.

...!

"Yes! Yes there is!" Skullius said but the problem was...

"There's seven different energy signatures like those space things, in seven different directions! They are escaping!"

Bek expanded his own senses only to find the remnants and traces of mana around the exterior of Harifrast.

These people were escaping indeed, but...

"Not yet. They can't get far, even with spatial means. Let's pick one and follow in that direction," Bek said before he once again dashed away with Skullius...

Chapter 373: Uh Oh!

Skullius had thought that Bek was fast before but this time, as he felt and saw the surroundings flashing past him with incredible speed, he couldn't help but be awed all the more.

He had tried using his guidance field on Bek but much like he had expected, he could not see his stats.

The difference between their strengths was too great, though Skullius thought he could probably see his stats if he was in his Penetrator form.

As they flashed through the snow covered road with rich vegetation that grew regardless of the cold, Skullius felt Bek stop, the man holding the Discount Human firmly so that he wouldn't fly off or experience any internal damage.

"We are far from the town but I wager that these people won't stop just because they have been caught. They won't retreat for the night," Bek said.

Near the two was a small woodland with tall pine-like trees that created a dark space underneath them regardless of their spaced arrangement.

Beyond this woodland was a small hill and then high ground on which a few clustered villages could be seen, smoke coming from the chimneys of the houses within these settlements while bright lights heavily pronounced the presence of civilised life.

Apart from this, Bek saw nothing else and even his senses didn't tell him anything else.

For the past few weeks, he had two encounters with this strange group of people and on both occasions, they had managed to escape him.

These two events happened in two separate areas but both locations were near Harifrast, which is why Bek had been patrolling around the area, looking for clues.

One would ask why he bothered when he was no longer a Capital Order Knight.

Weren't his duties unrecognised and unrewarded?

Well, it was true.

Bek had no reason to continue trying to solve problems everywhere he went, especially with something as complex as this.

However, what else was a Knight to do?

A Stray Knight was still a Knight.

A dream couldn't be quelled so easily and even if it could be trampled on, Bek was willing to push through.

It wasn't a matter of righteousness at this point, but one of finding a purpose.

After the incident that had occurred 7 years ago, he was more than willing to keep his mind occupied until he settled and found what he wanted to do with his life.

His new life.

And now, there seemed to be something...

"Do you have any OTHER means to scout ahead? Surely you don't stupidly invest all your focus in healing, right?" Bek said as he turned to Skullius.

The Discount Human was annoyed, but when his eyes met Bek's, he was surprised to see a sort of eagerness within the man's eyes.

He seemed... desperate.

But why?

Skullius' lack of knowledge on this man was allowing for this anxiety and curiosity but he didn't intend on pursuing it.

"No," Skullius said. "They are probably gone."

The Discount Human really didn't want to get mixed up in this anymore.

The dolls, the weird space warps...

He felt like it was probably not a good idea to see what was at the end of all this.

This whole situation had the word 'danger' written all over it.

If possible, Skullius wanted to dodge having to deal with it if he could.

Bek scoffed.

"Is that right? Let me ask properly then," the former Knight said before he gave Skullius a sharp look, his mouth opening to ask again. "You have another way to scout around the area, don't you?"

Skullius' body trembled as he felt an authority shake him down, squeezing an honest answer out of him.

"Yes," the Discount Human promptly said.

'Shit!' Skullius cursed inwardly.

This guy!

"Use it. Now," Bek said with his dull eyes showing a weird mix of indifference and zeal.

Skullius gnashed his teeth, trying to resist but it was futile.

'Damn it! Ferex was left behind in Harifrast! This would definitely be the best time to attack!' Skullius thought recalling how Bek's speedy departure from Harifrast had left him without his trusty Hound.

His body moved on its own, a certain skill being activated that he didn't want to show as he feared it would definitely peak Bek's interest.

[Crude World Projection!]

A dark image burst from Skullius under the gaze of Bek who showed mild surprise as he watched it ascend with all its humanoid glory and clear features.

It halted in mid-air and Skullius found himself free from Bek's hold.

The Discount Human's body slumped to the ground, laying motionless in the thickets of snow.

"I see," Bek said as he stroked his beard. "You're not a simple man after all."

Skullius glared at Bek with furious eyes but the man didn't seem intimidated.

He didn't even show much interest in Skullius' Projected form.

"Relax, idiot. I don't care about your secrets. Hurry up and see what you can find up there," Bek said as he noticed the hostile and anxious gaze of Skullius.

While he was a bit interested in how this form didn't possess any traces of Skullius' soul, it wasn't anything he would be shocked by.

Hmm?

The Discount Human was surprised by this.

This man didn't care?

He wasn't interested his powers at all!

'Seriously?' Skullius thought with a sprinkles of apprehension.

He couldn't quite see Bek's expression clearly as his vision was just a mix of black, white and grey which obscured contours to the face, but this man seemed to legitimately not care about anything other than finding the people behind the dolls and kidnappings.

In that case...

Skullius shot up into the sky at high speed.

He stopped only when he was a bit over four hundred meters in the air and started to scout around.

The wider world was expressed in his eyes as he could see far beyond.

He looked around in all directions, wondering if he would find anything suspicious at all or if this was just a waste of time and mana.

The only thing that he could see was the white snow, the trees, the hill and...

Wait.

What was that?

Skullius' vision honed in on a certain image.

Of all the things he had been looking at, this was the darkest around. So dark that it looked out of place, demanding attention for its appearance!

He hadn't seen it at first because it was quite far, roughly 30 miles behind the cluster of villages and the hills.

This image... it also seemed to be moving!

Moving was an understatement actually.

It was speeding away at a ridiculous speed!

It was hard to tell what it was exactly but it was humanoid from what he could tell and behind it, it drew a large carriage that housed... human bodies!

The details weren't clear but Skullius could tell a human shape when he saw it, especially with how it was clearly outlined with grey and black!

This visual image though...

'This seems awfully familiar too. A moving dark image....kind of human...' Skullius thought. 'Bro, why do I feel like these exact circumstances have happened before....'

Once again, Skullius felt a relatively familiar feeling with this.

This adventure was just marred with things to recall, wasn't it?!

'Right! That time... back when I wanted to complete the 10th Task!' Skullius realised when he had experienced this.

"Are these the same people?!"

Skullius started to descend as he saw that wasting time would only result in whatever he was seeing getting further away and thus, he had to hell Bek.

He was halfway in his descent down to the snowy ground when...

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! FINALLY! FINALYYYYYY!"

A loud voice reverberated through the air, drawing Skullius and Bek's attention.

...!

"You have got to be fleshing with me..." Skullius muttered in utter terror at what he was seeing.

He hadn't expected it at all.

He thought dealing with Bek's mission would be the only obstacle for him to face but now...

Bek also expressed mild surprise as he turned his head.

"TOMATO FLINGER! FORTUNE HAS DECIDED TO TURN TO ME AT LAST!"

The voice of Sila echoed out boisterously as it came from... the Discount Human body which now stood with billows of mana flaring from it!

The Grim Tower General had found his time to shine!

Chapter 374: Aggression!

The piece of soul of an old general swam in an endless pool of ecstasy.

Several conditions had lined up perfectly for him without his knowledge, allowing for him to attain and take control of Skullius' cosmetic body!

Another opportunity to relish in the sensation of livelihood!

This body he had attained however, was unusual, but he could care less for such trivialities.

Just a few seconds ago, he had been trapped by the WILL of this unnatural existence that had somehow bonded a piece of his soul to its own, shutting him off from the body's senses and experience.

Being shut off for him was akin to being trapped in a dark room where nothing from the outside could penetrate.

It was void of any and all forms of information, making it a space where one could easily go insane.

Tragic it was.

And yet, the WILL of the unnatural existence he was tied to, the one whose soul he was patching up like an organic stitch, vanished.

The moment it left, it was as if the dark room he had been left in suddenly gained a doorway, as the pressure that usually bore down on him within it disappeared, leaving him.... free.

And now...

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!" the voice coming from the Discount Human body had a low pitch to it, giving the impression of a manlier being.

Of an ancient being.

"IT'S ALL FLOODING INTO ME! ALL OF IT!" Sila called as he spread his arms and raised his head up to the sky, the expression on his new face being that of a madman - eyes bulged with a wide grin that was watered with saliva that flew off whenever he expelled his words!

...

Skullius couldn't help but tremble!

"I SEE! I SEE! THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED TO HIDE?! THESE MYSTERIES! THESE POWERS! THESE...

SECRETS!" Sila yelled, something happening to him that Skullius immediately caught onto!

"NO!" the Projected form of Skullius exclaimed!

This...

Sila was extracting everything about him!

All his memories!

All his experience!

All his knowledge!

EVERYTHING!!

'SHIT!'

The olden Tower General lowered his head and firmly set his gaze on Skullius.

"HOW EUPHORIC! ISN'T THIS VERY SCENE IRONIC, TOMATO FLINGER?! HAHAHA! OR SHOULD I SAY.... SKULLIUS!"

...!

"Damn it!" Skullius cursed, but then, he recalled.

He could just return to his body and stop all this madness before it proliferated into something worse!

The momentary shock almost prompted him to forget such an obvious solution!

Skullius' Projected form darted towards the cosmetic body with immense speed, reaching within a meter of it in less than a second!

He reached his hand out towards his cosmetic body, but then...

...!

With a staggering amount of unseen and imperceptible force, like a powerful magnetic repulsion, Skullius was pushed away!

His dark form spun as it sped away from Sila, twirling in the air for dozens of meters before Skullius forcibly stopped himself with controlled flight!

The expression on his dark face was one of unparalleled shock!

How?!

How was he rejected from his own body?!

If anything, it was easier to return to his body while in his Projected form!

Bek who was witnessing all this without as much as a word raised his brow.

What a fascinating development.

Sila guffawed as he pointed at his chest.

"IT SEEMS YOU DO NOT KNOW HOW TO USE THIS! QUITE FITTING! RELICS LIKE THESE BELONG IN THE HANDS OF LEGENDS LIKE MYSELF!" Sila mocked Skullius before turning his gaze to Bek who stood without doing anything.

He has been mindful of this man's movements and now he was sure the former Knight would intervene.

The Tower General dashed back, creating a distance of more than 40 meters between him and this man whom he had warned Skullius against, his back to the expansive woodland.

Spirit Wardens, as rare as they were, were a troublesome bunch to deal with.

"Are you done with your lover's tiff?" Bek asked with his dull eyes languidly resting on Sila.

"YOU COULD SAY THAT. THOUGH I WILL NOT BE TAKING ANY FLOWERS AFTER THIS DIVORCE," Sila said with a wide grin and keen eyes.

"Witty," Bek said as he turned his gaze to Skullius who came to float beside him. "You were stupid enough to let this one take over your body?"

"I didn't know this would happen!" Skullius growled in frustration while gazing at Sila who remained with a grin in the distance. "I have to get back into my body!"

The Discount Human felt brimming emotions as he saw his own body being used, half of it being white with the other being black in his vision.

He didn't know how this had happened, but from his inferences, it definitely had to do with him leaving his soul in his body whenever he used [Crude World Projection], something he noticed during his encounter with Somanda back then.

As for why he wasn't able to return to his body..

'Is Sila using the Fruit of World Myths to keep me out?' he thought with a sliver of terror running through him just from thinking about this.

"Relax," Bek said interrupting Skullius' thoughts. "Even though he's possessing your body, nothing has changed. The strength within your body remains the same. His soul is too weak to effect any increase in power."

Skullius turned to the former Knight as hope started to build up within him.

Bek raised his hand and pointed at Sila in the distance, his index erect in that direction, while his thumb pointed to the skies.

This seemingly meaningless gesture was used once again, only this time.... it wasn't without meaning.

A very pale blue glow shrouded Bek as he languidly gazed forward, something eerie beginning to take shape from this glow of energy!

Skullius backed away immediately as he felt a horrendous threat, Sila donning a serious visage as he prepared for what was to come.

"I agreed to purge you of this little soul in exchange for assisting me. You wouldn't mind me rewarding you a little early, would you?" Bek said.

A hazy, distorted, humanoid image with a distinct appearance, half of it hideous and the other beautiful with its entirety not too clear to Skullius, appeared!

Its long hands traced Bek's own and firmly gripped them, the man's skin turning pale from the elbow all the way to his index finger which started to generate a pale blue orb of light that unsettled the unliving shit out of Skullius!

'What the heck is this...?' Skullius thought as he drew away even further, greatly perturbed by this creature and the small trace of unique power currently pointed at Sila!

SCREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

A deafening shriek suddenly boomed from the odd silhouette around Bek making Skullius' Projected form, the air and the snow vibrate horrendously to the point that the entire area looked like it had been smeared with a gaussian blur effect!

At the exact same moment, the glow at the tip of Bek's finger brightened up and then vanished immediately after!

...!

Sila's eyes bulged!

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

A turbulent force that was both spiritual and physical hurtled forward following the disappearance of the orb of light that was nurtured at the tip of Bek's finger!

It hadn't been erased out of existence, but it merely turned invisible at the moment of launch, the horrendous power packed within it causing even Bek to be pushed back!

The hazy creature around him steadying him to the ground so that he wouldn't fall!

The catastrophic impact reached Sila before anyone could blink and upon contact, half of the entire woodland behind Sila was obliterated, snow and dirt flying in a radius of over 200 meters!

Skullius' view was covered by the white and brown of frozen water and hard ground that rose up to thirty meters from the shocking explosion of unseen force, multiple outward rings of shockwaves ploughing through everything they touched!

This level of destruction...!

There was no mana to be traced, no conceivable energy form that Skullius was familiar with!

Nothing!

And yet what ensued was jaw dropping!

The Discount Human simply looked at the catastrophic scene before him with trepidation and fright!

His thoughts had shifted to something else aside from the power released however...

His body...

His beautiful cosmetic body...

Was there even a trace of it left after this...?

It took a full two minutes for everything to settle, the flying snow slapping the ground from the height while dirt desecrated the sanctity of the pure white.

"Hmmm. I'm still not very good at precision," Bek said while looking ahead.

Skullius merely gaped as he didn't even know what to say.

Since he was still alive, it meant that at least his soul survived the blast but...

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! INTRIGUING!"

Sila's voice bellowed out!

...!

Skullius looked to where the voice was coming from to see something emerging from the piles of snow and dirt!

It was his Discount Human body!

The jacket and shirt he had worn was completely destroyed, his torso being left as a bloody red fleshsickle with chunks of flesh missing along with all the skin!

The face was the same, with the bone being visible along with bloody meat mince and bulging eyes, the scene being made more grotesque by the absence of hair over this figure!

The body's hands up to the elbow were missing, Sila heaving in deep breathes but not with traces of panic and fear, but sheer enjoyment!

Almost immediately, skin began to weave itself over the Discount Human body, flesh being moulded through bubbles of flesh that repaired and restored it to its peak condition within seconds!

Sila closed his eyes and stretched his arms out once more with an ecstatic grin.

Bek on the other hand had a sudden shift in the glint within his eyes.

"I see," he said as he turned to Skullius. "You should have told me that you were housing a soul at the Incandescent Stage, you idiot."

Chapter 375: Raw INSANITY! (1)

A soul at the Incandescent Stage?

Skullius looked at Sila in the distance who was half buried in the snow, his chest rising up and down as he huffed in breaths while the body he inhabited rapidly regenerated, courtesy of [Great Saint's Invigoration].

Right...

Sila had said that before. This man was past, esteemed warrior.

Bek shook his head.

"That was a pretty stupid thing to leave out. Nomatter, I'll just have to try harder. Getting a bit closer for a concentrated hit will do," the former Knight said as he refocused his attention on Sila.

The aged piece of soul was high in the clouds.

The attack just now was powerful but by utilising the utmost limit of the current strength of his Incandescent Stage soul, he had managed to resist getting destroyed in one blow!

It wasn't easy and even now, he could feel his soul quivering from the impact.

'As expected of a Spirit Warden. What a powerful spirit attack that was. He's still fairly weaker than the ones I've met in the past however. And that spirit around him...' Sila thought.

Indeed, with his soul now taking the helm of this body, he could see the creature around Bek clearly.

A Spirit.

Something normal humans couldn't see even if their strength scaled up to the Master Stage.

'My soul is already exhausted from resisting that one attack. Luckily for me, I have a power source to nourish my soul,' Sila thought, feeling the dormant soul of Skullius.

A soul without a WILL!

The best nourishment for another soul and a powerful, pure energy source!

The Tower General sifted himself out of the snowy dirt, his hands shifting up the snow a little as he smiled coyly.

'There...'

He then faced the two people before him.

"Why don't you come over here and let me purge you? You don't have enough power to fight or escape me. Besides, me and this idiot are kind of in the middle of something. We're short on time, you see," Bek said while making some rather expressive hand gestures.

He took steps towards the cosmetic body as he spoke, the image around him seeming to flicker out of existence, leaving his lone figure bare.

"YOU ARE RIGHT! THE PEAK OF MY STRENGTH IS LONG GONE BUT... DON'T YOU DARE LOOK DOWN ON ME, BOY!" Sila said as his body flooded out with mana from the Discount Human core.

As he did this, Bek frowned.

He felt a bit uneasy.

Sila's soul started to gain a brighter shade of colour, inching its way over Skullius' own soul bit by bit.

Within Sila's consciousness, he decided to properly arrange his first set of cards to play to escape this predicament.

'Hmph! I only have three CREEDS within this small piece of soul I have. It should be enough. I will not be disgraced by that tomato flinger anymore. I will keep this body.'

The old soul then opened mouth and spoke in a chilling voice.

"This is my CREED. I give up my sight permanently IN EXCHANGE for a permanent increase in my alternate sense and spatial awareness!"

OOHM!!

Skullius' flesh body rippled, a lowly wisp of power blowing outwards from it!

...!

Skullius reeled back as he sensed and saw IT!

The vibrant silver pupils on his cosmetic body lost their lustre, becoming indistinguishable from the white of his eyes!

'What's happening?!' Skullius thought in a panic.

"This is my CREED! I sacrifice my mana core and all its potential growth IN EXCHANGE for equivalent physical attunement of the highest order!"

...!

The Projected form of Skullius felt the core that was in his cosmetic body shrivel up, decrease in size and in its white shine before dissipating like flakes of light!

His mana core...

It vanished and there was no longer any traces of it in his body!

But his flesh...

VWOOOSH!

[Your mana core is destroyed]

[+650 to STR, AGI and END]

...!

Two notifications appeared before Skullius and Sila at the same time, the Tower General grinning with glee while Skullius' trembled with a sombre expression!

The cosmetic body that Sila inhabited released a shocking blast of energy as ever so slightly, it grew more muscular, but the real desired change, physical attunement, occurred inside the body, cords that connected intricately to every single part of the muscles and blood cells were created!

At this moment, the snow was parted as Bek flashed right in front of Sila with a serious expression, his finger viciously jamming onto the Discount Human body's temple!

SCREEEEEEEE!

The creature that had been around Bek before, the spirit appeared, grabbing his hand and turning it pale!

Bek's movement was so fast that Skullius hadn't even seen it and when he finally saw Bek with that devastating attack he had seen before at the ready...!

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!" he yelled as he darted forward.

Bek ignored him as the glow from the tip of his index finger grew!

Sila unexpectedly didn't struggle to escape but finished stacking his first deck a shot breath before Bek's attack was released at this very close range, with greater strength and an unstoppable desire to obliterate him!

'This is my CREED! I sacrifice the... skills [Artless Dodger], [Manassault] and [Greater Communication (I)] to bolster the skill [Untouched]!'

The last CREED was made within Sila's mind, the effect being instantaneous as an astounding result bloomed, shocking both Skullius and Bek!

The former Knight who had been about to end Sila was suddenly blown away, his figure flashing across so fast without clarity or stability and crashing into the snow over a hundred meters into the distance!

Skullius was awed by what he saw, a stream of notifications popping in his vision that added to his 'what the actual flesh' streak!

[Greater Communication (I) has been sacrificed]

[Artless Dodger has been sacrificed]

[Manassault has been sacrificed]

[The skill 'Untouched' evolves twice, becoming the skill 'Revered']

Skullius didn't have the time to analyse these notifications however as...

BOOOM!

Where Bek has tumbled to, the ground shook and exploded upwards as the former Knight rose from the snow which he had been pushed through, his finger once again aiming at Sila as snow fell off his body!

The olden Tower General whose blind eyes showed an ugly ferocity with his wide grin growing wider as blood leaked from the corners of his lips, emitted a provocative energy in response, his next cards being played!

The atrocious attack from Bek was launched once again, this time, its unseen might degrading everything in its path like a hungry beast with astonishing speed as it went, razing away the snow and dirt with a shrieking vibration that turned everything into a disgusting blur!

At the same time Bek attacked, Sila reached into the snow with his hand, his every move producing hazy after-images as it had shockingly reached the epitome of fluidity!

His hand retreated from the snow, barely having taken a quick breath's worth of time, a green, curved blade with a golden hilt being seen firmly held within it, its shiny glint even in the night being mesmerisingly immaculate!

Demion's Dance!

Sila wielded the blade with a powerful grip and slashed with a beautiful upward slash that drew a luminous diagonal line in the air at a speed that was almost impossible to perceive!

The movement!

The stance!

The power!

The elegance!

SHIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIING!

EVERYONE felt it!

The presence of death in the hands of a true master of the sword!

The shriek of true power which sought to dice all things in a neat slit!

Bek's attack which was inches away from Sila by the time he swung Demion's Dance collided with the deadly slash!

...

'...Ah...' Skullius stammered as he saw the absolute insanity that was revealed in front of him!

The world turned a few shades darker, the snow EVERYWHERE around the three turning black as the calamitous sword slash whose steel ring in the air continued even after the attack was executed!

This one slash completely silenced Bek's spirit attack, the earth shuddering as it was gouged into cleanly, the air along with it as a meter wide gash was opened deep in the ground and into the air all the way up to six miles away!!!

GRRRRRRMMM!

The ground trembled as it was split, the air blow in opposite directions after being slashed apart!

FSSSS! FSSS! FSSSH!

The arm on the Discount Human that had cast such a dreadful slash, exploded into chunks, blood leaking from it as the power released was just way beyond what it could take!

Yet...

Sila's grin grew even wider as he cackled eerily into the air, a flurry of notifications blasting his and Skullius' vision continuously at this moment!

[You are HYPED!]

[You are HYPED!]

[...HYPED!]

[...HYPED!]

[...HYPED!]

...

Chapter 376: Raw INSANITY! (2)

BA-DUM!

BA-DUM!

BA-DUM!

The <HEART> beat with vigorous intensity within the body of the Discount Human, Sila feeling a grand rush of excitement from having a body again!

One that didn't experience pain!

One that didn't have the hideous downsides of a natural body!

This was perfect.

The [HYPE] blood cells within the cosmetic body started to glow, multiplying rapidly and colliding with each other as they produced a strange form of energy that gave flesh a wild sense of drive for activity!

The skill [HYPED] was in effect, following the sheer joy that Sila was experiencing, giving the boon of him experiencing everything at ten times the norm!

'What a waste! All this power and you squander it, barely using it to its fullest capacity, tomato flinger. Hmmm. Still, I must commend what you have achieved in such a short amount of time. However, I shall do much, much MORE!' Sila thought as he looked on ahead.

He was blind at this point, no longer being able to see anything but in exchange, his other senses were bolstered greatly and his spatial awareness was incredible to the say the least.

With his feet on the ground, he could ascertain the shapes of everything attached to it, feeling motions and sensations through his skin which had already become sensitive following the upgrade of [Flesh It Like You Mean It].

But of course, this wasn't enough.

There was something else that we could use to make the detriment brought by his lost sight very much worth it.

His feet kicked away the darkened snow and dirt, revealing something other than Demion's Dance which he had hidden in the snow after extracting it from the spatial ring.

The Elimparidis Stone Staff!

This was a planned ploy he had made before he lost his mana core and after this and Demion's Dance, there was one other...

Sila flicked the staff with his foot and bit on it, the staff now wielded from his mouth.

The moment this occurred, the cosmetic body which now didn't possess a core with the dry mana channels that ran from the now void place at the base of his abdomen thirsting for energy, lightened up, the mana from the staff connecting itself to the Discount Human body!

10,000 Mana Points were at Sila's disposal now!

Under normal circumstances, unless a magical item had skills that it could cast on its own, an individual without a core couldn't use the mana it had for their own convenience.

However, because the Elimparidis Stone Staff was a high tier natural treasure with absolute conversion, burning past the weaknesses of weak artefacts was too easy!

This was something the Tower General had accounted for following his absorption of all of Skullius' memories his mind whipping out different plans for attack in seconds!

Sila felt the mana channels in the body burn with power and immediately took action.

[Great Saint's Invigoration!]

[Elevated Mana Manipulation!]

Two skills gained the fuel for functionality, Sila's arm which had exploded before regenerating while a vast pool of mana flooded the area over hundreds of meters!

The Tower General found his ability to trace through everything within the area vastly easier and more intricate as with his mana swiping over all objects, he could identify everything that could have been missed by his alternate senses on land and in the air!

This was it!

The true 'vision' needed by the warrior!

Demion's Dance which had fallen after the cosmetic arm exploded from the power released was picked up again as Sila watched his enemy emerge from the distance.

Bek had a more serious look to him now.

He had been fast enough to dodge the insane sword slash but this had just served to make him recognise how much of a problem this man before him was going to be.

He turned to Skullius who was in the air, palpable waves of rage and fear flooding his Projected form.

"He's using your abilities right? I'll need you to tell me the ones I should look out for the most. Including the one he just used to push me away," Bek said.

Strangely though, Skullius looked at the man with a look of confusion.

"What? I can't understand what you're sayin- Oh, damn it!" Skullius said, recalling midway through the sentence that his means for communication, [Greater Communication I] had been sacrificed!

Bek also looked at Skullius' figure with narrow eyes, realising that he couldn't understand the language the floating Projected figure was speaking.

"Well, isn't this mighty perfect!" Bek said before feeling a chill on his back, his head quickly turning to the left where a figure had flashed to, staff at the teeth with Demion's Dance, the dreaded sword leaving a white trail as it cut through the air at a mad speed!

Bek's eyes shot opened as he ducked with even greater speed and....

SHIIIIIIING!

BBBBBBBOOOOM!

The world almost lost colour as total decimation followed everything behind Bek, including the dark snow with callous cruelty!

The former Knight's body regained its pale blue cover like a surge of controlled energy and with ridiculous speed, Bek launched several jab punches to Sila's face!

The Tower General felt the mana and exotic energy brimming within them, each with the capability to blow his torso into a mince factory with ease and to stop such a thing from becoming an eventuality, Sila activated the newly formed skill [Revered]!

An opposing force immediately roared from body wrestling against Bek but this time, he was expecting it.

'There it is again!' Bek thought.

Opposite him, Sila was expecting him to expect this, knowing full well that it might not be successful!

Thus the force emitted by [Revered] only managed to slow down Bek's punches, allowing for Sila to dodge, his movement rippling with after-images that showed how efficiently every bit of his expanded stats were being used!

'He's become much faster. No, its more than just that. It could be his blade amplifying his power... especially when considering that earlier sword attack...' Bek thought as he drew back, his hand reaching into his pocket to retrieve a small navy blue cube.

His mana flowed into it, a light streaking out of it to reveal two objects.

Rapiers!

Bek held them both in his right hand, their thin, shiny, silver blades resting in-between his fingers.

The rapiers had sky blue, cone-shaped guards with outward bulging dotted patterns over them.

The former Knight held a rapier in either of his hands and swished them through the air.

After he was done feeling them out...

"Sera. Come," he said in a low tone of voice, the pale blue energy around him growing bright, reforming the creature that had been around him before.

This time however, it appeared not with a hazy image, but a rather clear one, its distinct appearance with the different halves becoming more vivid.

The pale side which was hideous had long hair, its appearance wild as if someone had violently ruffled it, a face with lanky, droopy skin that formed layers below a hollow eye socket being seen.

The other half had a face with supple, youthful skin and pink lips, a beautiful blue eye with shiny twinkles like those of stars swimming within it.

"Bek..." a sonorous voice with recurring echoes following after it sounded came from the creature whose lower half faded into a ghostly tail.

"Split for me," Bek said.

With his words, to everyone's shock, the spirit behind him pulled itself apart, the hideous side and the beautiful one being torn to form two parts that swiftly darted into the two rapiers that Bek held!

'Ugh...' Skullius grunted inwardly.

Sila grinned without a care.

"A LOVER, IS IT? YOU TWO BRING A WHOLE DIFFERENT MEANING TO THE WORD COMPLICATED," he taunted, the words barely coming out comprehensible with his teeth biting the staff.

"It IS complicated," Bek said, a luminous pale glow tinting his rapiers.

On top of this, a neon golden orange light exploded from Bek, causing a thunderous rumble on the ground!

...!

'Genuine Incarnation,' Sila thought with a scoff.

The light formed two revolving rings with floral patterns over both of the cone-shaped guards on the rapiers, a harsh outline elegantly highlighting Bek's body with his raw power increasing by a staggering amount that far exceeded that of Full Body Aura!

"This should be enough to cut down an arrogant soul like you, shouldn't it?" Bek said, the pale blue glow over the blades of his rapiers brightly flashing!

"A SPIRIT CANNOT HELP YOU ESCAPE DEATH. THEY ARE NOTHING BUT LIES THAT REALITY TELLS TO THE LIVING TO QUELL THEIR FEAR OF THE INEVITABLE!" Sila boldly declared through his clenched teeth, a broad ridiculing grin plastered on his face as he raised Demion's Dance.

His first strategy for victory was proving ineffective.

The skill [Epic Memory] from Demion's Dance which currently only allowed the user to borrow a fraction of the strength of Demion along with his sword technique was the one he was using to produce such devastating slashes.

With his strengthened body, born from the sacrifice of a mana core, he could perfectly coordinate and effectively use every bit of his new speed and strength to draw more strength from the sword!

Furthermore, with [Revered], the evolved version of [Untouched], a skill he had learn and fashioned after the battle with the Monkey Sages who used a similar skill to mitigate damage to their bodies, he could limit the potency of Bek's attack and even disallow him from reaching within his range.

Admittedly, he had never used it before.

[Revered | Lv.1]

Call upon a repulsive force that draws away living and non-living targets depending on the level of mana they possess. An addition of 1800 Mana Points may be used to select a single target to keep away for a 5 minute duration.

-Caution-

Difference in strength between user and opponent affects the skill.

Mana Requirements: 800

Duration: ---

Cooldown: 30 seconds

~~~



The aforementioned strategy could be rendered ineffective now that Bek had used his Genuine Incarnation, becoming stronger as a result.

And surely...

FWOOSH!

The brilliant figure of Bek with his rapiers burst behind Sila who was mid blink, the weapon in the former Knight's right hand vibrating with an astonishing frequency that made a terrible ringing noise!

**WIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!**

Sila had only barely started to realise that there was an enemy behind him when his entire body was blasted with the vibration!

...!

"Urgh..." Sila grunted as he felt the vicious quivering wave affect him, sweeping away the snow while make everything in his body, including his soul shiver!

No!

It wasn't merely shivering!

It was...

As Sila's soul trembled, he felt something off!

'Is he trying to break down my soul?!' Sila thought as he truly felt the integrity of the piece of soul dwindle, and entire ethereal structure starting to....fragment!

Bek didn't stop there, as with his left hand, he slashed down with his other rapier, the incomparable might that thundered down on Sila crushing his body and soul into the ground with a screeching noise that emanated from the weapon!

SCREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

The noise was so unbearable that blood flooded from the cosmetic body's orifices, the legs getting smashed down as bones and tissue burst apart, half of Sila's body becoming anything but solid!

Sila felt his soul start to emit flakes, his face tearing apart even before the rapier had actually made contact and yet...

'HAHAHAHA! HOW BRUTAL!' he thought, the blood rushing through him making sure that he took in each play of this scene!

Right before the rapier stomped him into oblivion however...

FWSH!

Sila appeared a distance away, his body rolling as a blood mess stained the snow.

Without elapsing even three seconds, Sila used [Great Saint's Invigoration]'s active effect to immediately heal every part of his body, his new feet steadily standing on the snowy ground.

The moment he raised his head though, the point of a rapier was already touching the skin of his forehead, a dismantling screech exploding from the sword!

And yet...

SHIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIING!

With a swift movement and horrendous speed as well as power, Demion's Dance slashed through the air, striking at Bek's rapier!

PWAAAAAA!

The collision of a weapon meant to deliver death and a Spirit infused rapier with the strengthening of a Genuine Incarnation ensued, the chaotic rupturing of air, the ground and the mana around following it!

Skullius rose up, escaping the devastation that completely devoured the entire area, the remnants of the woodland included!

'This is ridiculous!' Skullius thought as he watched the darkening of the snow proliferate while an intense vibration broke down matter outside the range of a blast that obscured what was happening next!

Within the chaotic hurricane of dark snow and dirt, Sila's body looked shredded but it was intact, his hand regenerating from having exploded once more and yet the aged soul still grinned!

He looked at Bek who was just now, steadying himself after being blown away by the enormous force but without damage over his body.

'Let's move on to this...' Sila thought, his hand swiping over the hilt of Demion's Dance to its pommel and then to beyond!

As he did this, a chain of darkness... of [Evil Darkness] was created, linking Demion's Dance's pommel to something that was still buried under the layer of sandy snow a distance away...

The final piece that Sila had prepared beforehand from one of his strategies...!

Chapter 377: Raw INSANITY! (3)

As the dark snow flew around, yet to settle from the clash three seconds ago, Bek twirled his rapiers, preparing to use this chance to launch another attack.

'He's durable and it seems my speed won't remain an advantage for long. He must have done something to his sight given the look of his eyes. All his reactions start before he even sees me...' Bek analysed.

His rapiers flashed with their glow, the man's eyes turning softer.

"I won't make you do this for long. Just endure a few more seconds, Sera," Bek whispered to his rapiers.

Suddenly, a billow of force traced the flying snow and dirt with ridiculous speed, Bek raising his guard as he twirled his rapier to defend.

But...

When the object that was hurtling towards him was revealed, he knew he had to switch tactics!

Evasion was better!

A long and large spear was flying towards him!

Its form was partially hidden as with its movement through the wisps of obstruction, a layer of all the flying matter was created around it!

'Its slow... I can dodge. But he knows that...' Bek thought as the spear approached with its shocking speed!

His eyes darted behind the spear where he expected a dangerous follow up.

'I won't fall for it,' Bek thought, his mind set on this second wind and his hands ready to dish out a lethal blow.

He moved to the side, getting out of the way of the attack when...

...!

The former Knight's senses flared with caution against fatality, Bek raising his head where to find Sila grinning in mid-air with Demion's Dance raised above him, promptly slashing the curved green sword down with elegance and cruelty!

SHIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIING!

Bek frowned intensely as he brought his rapiers together in a cross guard, the refined Aura from his Genuine Incarnation being pumped into defence from the incoming attack!

Sila grinned!

'Fool!'

The cataclysmic slash pounded against Bek's defence, another calamitous eruption digging out the ground and mutilating the space!

Bek gritted his teeth while handling the crushing power but then...

...!

His senses once again warned him of a fatal attack, his head turning behind him where he found Sila now on the ground with his sickening grin on full display again as looked released another swing of Demion's Dance!

How was he moving so fast?!

This speed! Even Bek with his advanced speed wasn't able to keep up!

Be it movement or attack speed!

He was being bested!

No!

That wasn't it!

SHIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIING!

The arm of the cosmetic body rippled as the flesh couldn't handle this swing which was laced with even more power than the last!

BOOOOOM!

The result was terrifying!

The obscurity that the two were fighting in was parted with the raw power that came with the incomplete [Swindling Death Dance], a slick trail of the power flashing through a great distance!

A bright golden orange hue flickered intensely in the way of the seemingly insurmountable force that was packed into the strike!

It was Bek who was buried within his neon light of Genuine Incarnation, maxing out his output of Aura to barely managed to defend and dodge the full brunt of it so as to ensure his survival!

Unlike the previous times when he managed to come out unscathed, several gruesomely deep gashes could be seen all over his torso, face and legs!

Sila backed away as he yanked the chain which was made of darkness, the weapon he had just flung for a two pronged attack returning to his hand.

It was a spear almost twice his height which rested in hand, its thickness about the same size as his arm. It had a maroon shaft littered with thorn like protrusions, a thick, sharp-edged silvery blue blade that had two shorter, curved blades at its side at the head.

Over its rather... terrifying appearance, there was something that would catch others' attention when looking at it.

A veil of blue energy could be seen at the spear's head, rustling over the three blades' edges as it gave the impression that it was constantly sharpening the weapon!

~~~

[Hedoness Easper's Lord-Slayer]

<Unique>

A grand spear forged for Hedoness Easper, the second Foregeneral under the Null Devil, a masochist who thrived on feeling pain and instilling it while in battle.

-Attack-

30,000-45,000

-Durability-

60,000/60,000

-Special Effects-

- 50% piercing damage

- 35% chance to ignore defences

- +20% to Strength

[One Sight]

The spear accrues speed with each successive throw at the target. Subsequent increase ranges from 5-40% depending on the result of each throw. Usable five times a day.

-

[Eversharp (Passive)]

The edges of the three blades constantly undergo refinement, such that they remain extremely sharp and capable of a constant flow of damage.

~~~

Sila held the spear in one hand, its thorns digging through his hands.

The chain which connected to Demion's Dance was in his other hand and he twirled the blade around casually while keeping his senses focused on the surroundings.

'Let's see how you will deal with this. If I can get rid of you, I will be free to do as I wish,' Sila thought.

Within him, his meagre soul had grown quite a bit from feeding on Skullius' own, slowly repairing the damage he had accrued from the earlier hit.

Sila took a step forward, intent on attacking Bek who was well prepared for it when...

FLSHH! FLSHH! FLSSH!

...!

From the [Evil Darkness] chain he was twirling, tens of long spikes viciously protruded, rapidly impaling his hands, then into his body and coming out the other side!

Several were aimed at his head but Sila quickly ducked it to the side!

'Damn you, tomato flinger!' Sila thought in distress.

Skullius who had taken the opportunity to deal damage to Sila wore a determined face.



"YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO MY SOUL?!" he bellowed.

The moment he had seen [Evil Darkness] appear, he had gone straight for the kill, after all, his Projected form was more proficient in manipulating [Evil Darkness] than his Discount Human body!

In this contest, he was going to be the winner!

Furthermore, the aged soul had just provided him the means to fight with as all this time, without [Evil Darkness], he couldn't do anything!

While Sila was busy wrestling his own chain that was obstructing him, a horrendous vibration bashed into his body, catching him off-guard and sending him flying!

While he was still air born, the radiance of Bek's rapier as it sped through the air emanating from the floral ring of a Genuine Incarnation around it illuminated Sila's body!

The rapier had already reached and penetrated his chest by the time he thought to use [Jump] again and as such, he appeared a distance away with the sword stuck within him!

WIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!

An intense vibration coupled with a loud noise stormed through Sila's body, once again bringing an unwanted dose of fragmenting damage to his soul!

"This bastard! I see... His technique involves disrupting the soul through sound and vibration! Urgh...!" Sila thought before he grabbed the hilt to the rapier to pull it out!

[Revered] was starting to fail him as to use it, he had to be capable of reacting to his enemy! Furthermore, its secondary effect was not guaranteed to work on Bek who was much stronger!

As if the current predicament wasn't enough, the chains he had fashioned darted towards him and bound him firmly!

Skullius who was in the air made sure that his hold wouldn't slip in case Sila had other surprises and while the old soul was held down, Bek's second rapier jammed into the Discount Human body, a shriek of noise making Sila growl in pain!

Right after stabbing Sila, Bek's hand flooded with mana as he prepared to purge the old soul!

"HEY! YOU'LL KILL ME TOO!" Skullius bellowed but Bek ignored.

His sense of duty, his senses and his instincts told him that it was better to erase these two right here, right now otherwise...

"NYOT YHET!" Sila roared through his mouth that still had the staff in it.

Mana stormed from the cosmetic body, [Revered] being released but much too late as Bek was much faster in his chop which blazed with flaring mana, the Spirit within his rapiers rushing out to cover his hand and grant him the full ability to erase the soul that inhabited the Discount Human!

Bek's hand slammed into Skullius' head, the skull rupturing with bloody chunks as the soul within it started to disintegrate!

At the same time, a flood of [Evil Darkness] tore madly out of Sila, rapidly covering him and Bek, with the latter finding that his hand grew terribly slow in this mass of darkness!

The Discount Human body's head had been crushed halfway, but the persistent soul within it was still alive!

[Jump] was used once again as Sila appeared outside the rippling cloud of darkness that he had created to save his life.

His head rapidly healed through [Great Saint's Invigoration] but his soul did not.

Both he and Skullius who was furious looked at the notification in front of them, displaying that Doom Factor 2 had reached...52%!

"YOU SOCKETHOLE!!!" Skullius bellowed from the sky, Sila looking at him with a mocking glare.

The Projected form of Skullius rapidly wove the darkness that was trapping Bek within but he wasn't fast enough as a golden orange figure darted out but with slower than normal speed!

Bek took in deep breaths as the Spirit around him screeched!

He had immediately used his speed to escape the darkness that had tried to erase all his physical capacity.

He settled his heart which had been made to panic a little at seeing the vast darkness and then faced Sila.

"How long do you want to do this? You'll lose sooner or later. I'm only going to keep piling on damage to your soul," the former Knight said as the Spirit behind him split up once again and inhabited his two rapiers. "Give. Up."

Nothing happened.

As he thought, his last words which were meant as a command didn't do anything to Sila.

'It doesn't work on an Incandescent Stage soul, it seems. Even if they are very weak.'

The brilliant light around Bek grew brighter as he fully expended his Aura, the rings of Genuine Incarnation around his rapiers' guards expanding to show it.

Skullius couldn't understand what Bek was saying but he had already caught on to the man's intentions.

He was madly furious at both these individuals but there was nothing for it. He had to fight.

"It looks like its every man for himself now," he said, moulding the [Evil Darkness] into tens of orbs that surrounded him.

All three men stood in the different directions, the tension of what was about to occur thickening.

A one v. one v. one!

"FAILURE IS NOT SOMETHING THAT WILL BURN OUT MY WILL TO FIGHT, BOY," Sila said to Bek as he spread his hands apart, a chain of [Evil Darkness] rapidly forming to connect between Demion's Dance and the Lord-Slayer which were a distance away from him and each other.

Before Skullius could take advantage of this, a stream of [Just Light] covered the chain, immediately cutting off the Projected individual's control!

...!

"You can't weave this light proficiently now can you, TOMATO FLINGER?!" Sila bellowed, the chain reducing in size to bring the two weapons to his hands.

"DAMN IT!" Skullius cursed while Bek got ready to attack in the next moment.

Sila grinned once again as he played his final card!

A stream of SERENE energy flowed from him and expanded in a two meter radius around him, with a blue glow.

It softly whirled with beautiful visuals, like a cloud taking a vortex shape.

...!

" [Null Life Aura]?!" Skullius exclaimed in surprise.

However, this was not the thick of it.

What came next both enlightened and gobsmacked the hell out of his mind!

A red flame burst with a bright light that tinted everything in a bloody hue, layering over the blue aura that surrounded Sila with grand ferocity!

The heat!

The flame!

The power!

It caused a cascade of steam to rise with crackles, the heated ground rumbling madly underneath it!

The flames burned in a vortice around Sila whose figure became distorted by a mirage!

What was this?!

Skullius was shocked!

Bek's forehead wrinkled!

"WATCH CLOSELY, FOOLS!" Sila said before a RADIANCE overtook his already illuminated image, giving a white luminance that spelled the start of a thrilling climax...!

Chapter 378: A Shady Twist

The Revenant Flames of Ecstasy!

Seeing them layered over the light blue circular area around his commandeered Discount Human body, Skullius couldn't help but gain a shocking revelation!

Or at least a glimmer of it!

'[Null Life Aura]... this is how you use it?' he thought while analysing.

On top of this, the light of Skullius' Pseudo skill 'Radiance' also covered the Discount Human body, making Skullius turn from intrigued to nervous.

Sila had truly decided to use everything he could at this time and Skullius didn't let the aged soul manipulating his body out of sight!

'I was never able to use Demion's Dance to draw out that much power for my own use but Sila can now. It's probably because of whatever he did to my mana core. That and Radiance could unleash so ridiculous speed but... Tsk! If Doom Factor 1 catches me without a core and with the mana from the staff running out...' Skullius thought with perilous horrors hanging on his shoulder.

On the other hand, Bek narrowed his eyes as the red flame before him reflected in his eyes.

A ferocious heat wave flared from the brimming flames that partially hid Sila's luminous form, burning the air and creating exaggerated mirages all around while the ground quickly melted into lava!

'This heat. I don't think getting close is a good idea, even with my Genuine Incarnation. So...' Bek thought as he pointed his rapier forward, its blue tint blinking multiple times as it released a low hum.

Sila behind the flames grinned.

'I won't be falling for that again.'

Sila released his grip on the Lord-Slayer spear and held the chain attached to its end instead, his other hand holding the hilt to Demion's Dance firmly!

With lucrative motion, he started to spin the spear through the chain he held, the entire weapon rotating at an angle in the air at rapid speeds that caused a powerful gust of wind to blow over from him!

A scorching gust of wind!

Following this burst of moving air, Sila dashed forward, but his movement was beyond ridiculous!

From the ring of fire that was surrounding him, to the luminous light that covered his body, Sila vanished for fractions of a second before he turned into a ferocious, long exposed ray of light that charged towards Bek!

...!

The former Knight was shocked to see that even he had lost track of Sila before he turned into that streak of light that was hurtling towards him now!

The scorching wind and the noise from something whipping against the air reached him just after he blinked and a spear moving so fast that it was blurred, dropped from the air along with a red hue that carried an atrocious amount of heat!

Bek's first instinct was to block but he quickly changed his answer to the assault in the next moment, his body drawing back as the rapier he had extended forward released a loud noise!

**WIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!**

The spear was still descending fast enough to catch up to him but he bet on attacking Sila whom he knew wouldn't recklessly rush into danger - the soul damage from the vibration!

The blaring heat came, instantly turning the a around the former Knight into a hellscape!

Bek slashed with his other rapier towards the incoming streak after making sure his timing was right!

Unfortunately for him...

'I get it now! The blood in this body is rushing around in a frenzy and the flesh is tingling madly. The purpose of this... skill, [HYPED]... I get it now!' Sila thought as with Demion's Dance, he parried Bek's rapier perfectly!

The green blade gained a hot, hazy outline and in striking against Bek's rapier, madly lit sparks bloomed with noisy sputters!

Bek gritted his teeth as he felt the heat rising with the instant appearance of a ring of fire around him as he was in Sila's range!

Strangely, as he looked at Sila's bright image, he found the man's leg bulging and exploding into bloody chunks, the same happening to the thighs and arms but they instantly regenerated immediately after!

This body simply couldn't handle all the stacked stat amps!

Bek quickly bolted three meters away but as he stepped on the ground, the Lord-Slayer which also sizzled with a wave of unforgiving heat as it swung with a [Just Light] covered chain attached to it, razed through the air laterally towards him!

The former Knight ducked in a hurry, the spear passing above him but Sila had already prepared another attack with Demion's Dance, slashing up with great power!

Bek's eyes flashed as he advanced close to Sila, his rapier striking against Demion's Dance before it could properly strike!

'Heh! Smart!' Sila thought before he drew on the Lord-Slayer against, swinging the chain of darkness and launching a flurry of attacks with the spear attacked to it!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Eruptions occurred over the ground and on Sila's body as he seemed to cruise over the lava building around him, racing over the molten land as if running on a smooth hard surface!

Each time the flame covered Lord-Slayer touched the ground, it would cause a deafening explosion with a red flame rising up, towering into the sky without a care while an expansive shockwave demolished everything it touched!

Bek countered every strike from Sila, but the heat...

It strangely penetrated his Genuine Incarnation!



The former Knight suddenly moved his hands quickly, the half of Sera in one of his rapiers rushing into his hand with Bek promptly pointed it at Sila who...

...!

The aged soul grinned as he had already launched a high kick towards Bek's hand before the man even pointed steadily at him!

As a result, Bek's form was disrupted for but a fraction of a second and prior to him countering with his other rapier, Demion's Dance was already halfway to his neck, stuffed with every bit of the Discount Human body's strength!

Bek felt a phenomenal chill right up his spine as the blade licked the air, already beginning to cut him before it reached!

SHIIII-

...!

Yet...

Sila abruptly halted his slash midway and bolted backwards with extreme speed, Bek being confused at first but also leaping out of the way the moment he felt IT!

BRRRRRRRRROOOOOOM!

Tens of orbs made of [Evil Darkness] flashed from the sky and abused the ground that had already been punished by the intense battle, its integrity shaking immensely!

The Projected form of Skullius waved its hands, tens of the orbs that he had made speeding through the air as they attacked both Bek and Sila!

'That was too fast! I can't believe he can move that fast with my body,' Skullius thought in awe.

He had barely seen Sila move as a bright streak before explosion after explosion rocked the ground with his and Bek's figure barely being discernible in the flying dirt and snow!

'Damn it! How on earth do I stop this?! I feel my soul getting devoured slowly!'

Bek breathed out the tension he had felt just now as he gathered his focus.

'That...was dangerous!' he thought, sweat dripping from his brow intensely. 'My attacks aren't working on him anymore. It's like he knows my combat habits! But... figuring that in just a few short exchanges...?'

The former Knight swished his rapiers as he warded off the orbs of darkness darting erratically towards him!

Sila who was facing the same twirled the chain on the spear side and used it to strike away the orbs, his figure flicking up Demion's Dance which had fallen after his arm exploded again and darting forward while reverse handed the blade with a newly formed limb!

His target was naturally Bek once again and his speed as he completely struck away the darkness orbs was incredible!

'I'll use the cover of these orbs to launch a decisive strike. The mana from the staff is quickly being depleted and probably takes quite some time to recover. Ha! Fascinating! If taking this man down proves too difficult, I'll just have to go for the more out-of-box solution...'

As Sila darted forward, Skullius ground his teeth as he found that the man was barely hindered by his attacks!

In some instances he dodged and deflected before the orbs even reached a considerable distance from his body!

The aged piece of soul weaved through with incredible mobility as when he was a few meters away from Bek who kept darting around, dodging and blocking...

'What..!'

WHAAAAAAM!

A massive force bashed against him with overwhelming might, knocking Sila tens of meters away!

Bek and Skullius expressed their dumb faces of surprise as they saw the Discount Human body roll and crash into the remnants of shattered trees!

'What happened?' Skullius thought with a frown. He hadn't done this and from the looks of it, neither did Bek.

However, barely a millisecond passed before he realised what this was!

Sila quickly rose as his senses scoured around the area, looking for the location of this new threat but...

'I can't sense it. It's that Hound isn't it?' he thought as he drew back.

Surely, the massive figure of a dark brown wolf-like creature cautiously moved over the ground while keeping its eyes on Sila.

Of course no one could see or sense its mass and by extension the extra limbs it had grown.

Ferex had immediately rushed over when he felt his master flash from the town.

To increase his speed, he had maxed his size and grown two additional limbs, the result being his arrival on the scene rather quickly.

At first seeing his master's Projected form, which was a first for him, and on the other side, his master's body which was moving at the same time was peculiar, but his deep instinct as well as rationalisation of the situation – judging between a grinning maniac and a desperate humanoid figure of darkness – he had ascertained the Discount Human body to house the enemy.

The flaring mass of flame around Sila remained ever bright and ever hot but it was no longer an advantage for him.

Naturally, as an Apostle of Skullius, Ferex wasn't affected by the flame and getting in close range for an attack was very easy, especially with the effects of the mutation.

Sila frowned and drew back.

'At this point, I might just be wasting my time. Even with my advanced senses, I can't pick up on that damn creature's presence. The last thing I need is an unwanted wild card roaming around with an absolute advantage,' Sila thought as he drew Skullius' spatial ring from the pocket of his tattered pants and stored the Lord-Slayer.

He had salvaged the ring earlier after his hands blew up the first time.

'These twos' agenda here was probably to find THEM, though I'm sure they do not know who they are dealing with. Haha. I'll have to confirm that for myself too. Skullius using his Projected form was to follow on that lead so...

from the looks of it...' Sila thought as his mind raced over to when his consciousness had emerged from the space where he was sent to each time Skullius didn't want him to speak.

Upon seeing through the Discount Human's eyes following the freedom he felt, Sila had seen Skullius' Projected form looking at a certain direction for a prolonged period before it hurriedly raced down, probably to notify Bek.

'Judging by the position he was in earlier in accordance to where I was standing...' Sila thought, his senses and [Elevated Mana Manipulation] acting to familiarise him with the environment.

'I see...'

FWOOSH.

Under Bek, Ferex and Skullius' eyes, the Discount Human body suddenly vanished!

Evidently, this was [Jump] being utilised again and Skullius frowned.

'Is he running away?!'

Skullius immediately sent a mental message to Ferex. 'Can you find him?'

The Hound responded by showing his full figure that was covered in the Pseudo-Spirit Walker's Hide and bursting in the direction that it felt the Discount Human body.

Skullius immediately bolted through the air as he followed after Ferex. Bek on the other hand creased his brow as he saw the large figure appear out of nowhere and dart in a random direction.

'Is that another one of this man's hidden cards?' he thought as he quickly dispelled his shock. 'Nomatter, I must follow anyway.'

Bek immediately rushed after the two, his speed being much faster.

He immediately caught up to them before they travelled far.

"I'm sorry it has turned to this but then again, I can only blame you for foolishly unleashing such a dangerous terror," Bek said as he faced Skullius' Projected form which quivered in rage.

"Whatever happens, I owe the honour of my old life your soul... and that fiend's."

Without giving Skullius a chance to reply, Bek shot forward.

Having ascertained the direction in which Sila went from where Ferex was going, seemingly leading Skullius there, he felt Skullius' absence from the new battle could help.

Now, he just needed to change his tactics which Sila had seemingly gotten used to.

"Damn it!" Skullius cursed.

Far beyond them, the figure of Sila was dashing at mad speed towards the location of a certain individual who was part of something bigger than most people of this different could even fathom.

Something old and dangerous.

'Perhaps if I provide THEM with some precious items from Skullius' ring, they'll grant my wish,' Sila thought.

He suddenly turned his head, seeing a bright golden light fast approaching his position.

"How tenacious. Unfortunately for you, I won't be dying that easily," Sila said with a grin, the staff which was now wielded with his hand brimming with light as he used another one of the limited charges on the skill [Jump] to further the distance between him and his enemies.

Chapter 379: New Enemies?

Sila resumed his mad sprint immediately after appearing a large distance away from Bek, his collection of skills bolstering his movement speed as he dashed across.

The flames around him as well as the [Null Life Aura] had died down following his shuttling speed as he didn't need them anymore. For now he could depend on [Jump].

Naturally, he was well aware of the limited amount of [Jumps] he had left.

The Elimparidis Stone Staff didn't grant unrestrained teleportation after all, instead gathering the energy within Dimensions, or magical structures that were stored within its gem to power [Jolt Ray] and [Jump].

Unfortunately for Skullius, he had only managed to attain the staff after the Galemonger had spammed these two limited skills quite a bit.

Sila kept his eyes forward as he searched for a trace of the individual or individuals he was searching for.

Unfortunately, he couldn't track the memories of Skullius in his Projected form and as a result, he wasn't sure exactly what the younger soul had seen.

Behind him, a luminous golden streak was already beginning to show, Bek being relentless in his goal.

Sila scoffed and used another [Jump], his figure vanishing and appearing dozens of meters away.

This time, upon focusing his sights ahead, he finally saw it!

'There we go!' Sila thought.

Quite a distance away, a bland-looking carriage, barely decorated with anything that showed any kind of love for woodcraft could be seen behind a certain woman who donned a red and green cloak with a hood over her head.

Her face was hard to identify from the distance and also, there seemed to be something shrouding her figure, obscuring certain details while others remained vivid.

Sila's eyes honed in on this woman and he delightedly prepared to use another [Jump] when...

'Oh, I've used up all of them...' he thought.

[Jump]'s charges were finished.

Instead of dwelling on this however, Sila raced ahead eagerly.

The woman he saw before him seemed to look in his direction without a change of expression and pulled out... a knife from her cloak.

The object was small but intimately decorated with strange marks that were similar to simplistic waves of water or rather wind on its silvery blade while the handle was of an off-white colour.

There didn't seem to be anything special about this knife at first glance, but it was more than special.

The woman seemed to feel the air with her dark and slender hand, rustling over a small space before she suddenly stabbed the knife forward!

She stabbed the air?!

The knife she held sank into the world before her and the woman carved with it downwards, a crooked skit being relieved on the dark spot of the air that mirrored the night!

She had opened a tear in space and immediately after she carved it out, it started to lengthen upwards on its own, its figure becoming a crack in space that stood tall and slightly wide!

A blue hue flooded around the crack, brimming with micro streaks of white that highlighted the edges of the cracks in the space.

A blue Cluster was casually formed!

The woman then pulled on the large carriage behind her with the bars attached to both its sides and sank into the Cluster!

Sila who had watched all this merely narrowed his eyes and halted when he reached the crack to the Cluster.

'The ability to open premature Clusters with tools. Ferrying around bodies both dead and alive. Men and women without the slightest traces of magic within their bodies. It is indeed them,' Sila thought with a serious expression.

He touched his chest and breathed out a sigh while feeling his growing soul.

'I'll stack it all on them,' he thought before entering the Cluster.

Bek showed fifteen seconds later, his brightly lit figure hesitating only for a bit before he leapt in as well.

\*\*\*

Skullius and Ferex followed in the direction that the Hound felt its link to Skullius originate from.

They had travelled a great distance when suddenly, Ferex sent Skullius intent through their mental link.



"Huh? My body just disappeared somewhere?" Skullius asked with a hint of panic.

The only reason he didn't flip out entirely was because he felt that his soul was still intact but beyond that, he was afraid that perhaps Bek had done something.

In all truth, he was rooting for Sila to somehow escape so he could at least clear the chances of obliteration but even if that happened, he still didn't know how to deal with regaining control of his body.

For now, he had his orbs of [Evil Darkness] flying around him to ensure he had the means to fight off both Sila and Bek.

It was his best shot.

After what felt like a minute and then some, Skullius and Ferex finally saw a Cluster in the distance much to their shock.

'Could that be why Sila suddenly disappeared?' Skullius thought. It made sense that if Sila was running away, he'd rush into a Cluster to muddy the conditions of his confrontation.

It also seemed like his only option when Skullius considered that he didn't have limitless mana to spend.

Without wasting time, Skullius dashed into the Cluster, Ferex following afterwards.

He didn't have the time to think too deeply into the more cautious concerns he had.

...

What was revealed to Skullius upon entering into the Cluster was... a vast world with some peculiar oddities.

First was...

"KILL THEM! THEY ARE NOT SMARTER THAN US! WE ARE SMARTER THAN THEM! YOU HEAR?! WE ARE SMART! FLING YOUR HOLDERS!"

A loud voice along with chaotic noises of violence blasted into Skullius as he looked on.

Second, the ground wasn't a steady patch of land that wholeheartedly accommodated two-legged creatures. Rather, it was a massive layer of sludgy mud that flowed this way and that over a rather enormous, uneven platform that ended in falls at the edges where the semi-liquid dirt was spilled into the third strangest thing that Skullius could ever behold.

A crazy mash of colours that constantly emitted a dangerous hum could be seen over the edge and beyond the platform as well as over some parts of the sky, creating abrupt changes to the design that this world was taking!

It was like an unfinished painting as beyond this platform where semblances of shrubbery and trees were sprinkled in, too immature to even show themselves from the mud, weak looking structures could also be identified, like large igloos made of mud!

Skullius could only guess that they belonged to the strange...creatures that he was seeing battling against Bek and Sila ahead.

These twos humanoid creatures.

They had light blue skin with white natural tribal markings over their chests and arms.

They were bald, with their physiques being eerily similar, except for a special group of three that Skullius could see, but the main takeaway, as far as their forms were concerned, would be their lower halves.

Below the abs and the chest pads that were indistinguishable from human sets, thick worm-like tails could be seen, having a pale and almost transparent tone that was...disgusting to say the least.

Think veins, tubes and all sorts of fleshy organs could be seen without blockage, which was nauseating.

'Urgh... hideous,' Skullius had a side thought as he grimaced.

Hundreds of these creatures were rushing around the far-from-level platform that mimicked hills and mountains in other areas as they battled the two individuals Skullius was here for!

It seemed they were having some difficulties with mobility.

One of the three creatures that Skullius had seen to have bigger builds and wiser looks suddenly turned his way and bellowed with gusto.

"ANOTHER MINDLESS INTRUDER HAS SHOWN UP! HAFUMAN, KOTAMAN, SHOW HIM HOW SMART WE ARE!"

The two creatures beside this one, a bulky blue humanoid with an especially long wormy tail and a seemingly feminine one that covered her chest with a dull cloth rushed towards Skullius while slithering through the mud at astonishingly fast speed!

Both reached to their sides where... books appeared, attached to strips that wrapped around what seemed like belts around their waists which had also spontaneously appeared!

Skullius frowned and looked behind him where the crack could be seen now closed, waiting for the Cluster General to be defeated to reopen.

To his side, Ferex had disappeared, probably having gone into hiding for a surprise attack on the many creatures.

'Argh... do I have to waste time with these?' Skullius thought as he prepared his orbs while checking the status of the bulky creature which was yelling out orders left and right.

~~~

[Name : Bragmaster]

[Tier : 6]

[Level : 78]

[Class : None]

[Race : Bookworm]

[Inv. Status : Feeling particularly smart]

[Stats]

[Strength (I) : 760]

[Agility (I) : 320]

[Intelligence (I) : 905]

[Endurance (I) : 200]

[Luck : 76]

[Health : 34,470/34,470]

[Mana (I) : 1200/1200]

~~~

Chapter 380: Hype Build-Up, Trash Payoff

The Bookworms.

A race of humanoid worms with incredible natural aptitude for magic that rivalled even those titled as the most talented mages.

The only thing that limited them was how they were not born with an innate understanding of magecraft. Their race allowed them to automatically access powers that they had no right of choice over.

As a result, most of them didn't have a class as their abilities were centered around the same thing, though extraordinarily unique per each individual.

When Bookworms matured to a certain age, a belt would appear around their waists. With it, a Bookworm could conjure an unlimited number of mana saturated books.

These books were called Innate Holders, though by this point, they were not imbued with any specific magical properties except the ability to discharge the mana they held all at once.

With further growth, a Bookworm could finally gain a signature magical property exclusive only to them. They would have to select an Innate Holder of their choice to imbue this property, focusing on the blank pages of the Holder for varying periods of time for something wondrous to be effect.

Sooner or later, depending on talent, the pages of the Innate Holder would be imprinted with arrays, one per each page, with every single one being a spell that can be used.

All the spells generated would be governed by the magical property awakened though and they did not all appear at once.

All this said however, the Bookworms could have been a powerful race, if someone had not opened their still developing race and Cluster to monsters that far outclassed them in strength and skill.

Sila and Bek stood in the thick of the chunky mud, their feet being submerged within it. Both could agree that the biggest obstacle to them right now was this sticky sludge instead of the raining attacks coming from the Bookworms!

Hundreds of white paged books with thick covers of different colours were being flung from all directions by Bookworms who yelled out expletives!

Most them were yet to mature enough to develop a magic property and thus, they could only fling their holders!

The books struck Sila and Bek, the mana within them igniting for bright explosions that released vibrant bursts of noise!

Bek was unaffected by these attacks with his Genuine Incarnation nullifying the attacks entirely as they were mana-based. Sila on the other hand was slicing the books into pieces with incredible speed, stopping them from exploding in his face.

As said before, the never-ending storm of books wasn't the problem for these two. The problem was the thick mud that they were standing in.

It wasn't merely ordinary mud. It was thick, reinforced by mana tremendously to such an extent that when both Sila and Bek had entered the Cluster, their legs had eventually become stuck, movement with their legs becoming an impossibility without any form of intervention.

The Bookworms however could move freely, their lower halves rushing over the mud quickly as some of them raced towards the two enemies!

'Weaklings!' Sila thought while looking at the swarm of Bookworms.

He held Demion's Dance firmly and swung viciously, a trail of light following the tip of the sword!

SHIIIIIIING!

Bloody bodies littered the ground with the one slash, the mud gaining a dark hue, different from its natural brown colour!

The storm of unending attacks had prevented Sila from doing this sooner.

At the same time, with the staff he was now once again biting onto, Sila channelled the mana into his body, an encirclement of light blue energy covering his body!

A red flame gushed out with great ferocity over the light of [Null Life Aura], the heat it produced burning the muddy sludge around Sila's legs!

The mud hardened quickly, allowing for Sila to break free.

He then dashed ahead with the ring of flames following after him, burning the mud and turning it hard enough for him to run over!

'I can't find that woman anywhere even though I entered this Cluster not much later than she did,' Sila thought, his eye darting to Bek who was a bit of a distance away. 'I'll find an opportune moment to cut him down after scouting for that woman.'

Bek on the other hand looked agitated.

His focus wasn't on the Bookworms but on Sila who had freed himself of the muddy binds.

"Sera..." Sila said, the Spirit inhabiting his hand and rapier streaming out and appearing above him whole. Sera wrapped her arms around Bek and started pulling him out.

Bek focused the Aura around his feet to push away the mud, making Sera's job all the more easier.

Soon, Bek was free and he grunted in displeasure as he saw the Bookworms bolting towards him.

With just a single rapier, the former Knight swished rapidly, arcs of golden light making an effort to trace the movements of his sword. The result was the complete decimation of any of the Bookworms that came within five meters of the man, their bodies being ripped apart without the rapier even touching them.

Bek refocused on Sila who was cutting down enemy after enemy

'If I can attack while he is distracted, I could pile on damage,' he thought but...

...!

His senses suddenly picked up on a familiar presence, forcing him to turn his head.

Nearly a mile away on the enormous muddy platform, a large carriage with two extended bars on both sides appeared in his sight.

A dark-skinned woman wearing a cloak with a hood was pulling it along, her feet and the wheels of carriage not sinking within the mud like him and Sila!

What?

As Bek eyed this woman, noting the familiar visuals he could see from her – a layer of abstruse protection shielding her soul from his eyes – he narrowed his eyes upon coming to a realisation.

'She's...' he thought, his mind hopping off the 'Kill Sila train'.

The woman also turned her head, a strange, unsettling smile etching itself on her face before she turned back to where she was going.

Beyond the muddy platform and towards the expansive mash of colour at the end of it!

'You won't escape from me again!' Bek thought.

Unlike Sila who was a recently emerged threat, Bek decided that capturing a member of this mysterious group was vastly more worthwhile.

Besides, he hadn't been searching for them for no better reason other than to appease his honour as a former Knight.

If what he had heard was true then...

...



Skullius' vision which was set on the two enemies that he was supposed to fight, temporarily got drawn away by a red flame that roared from the distance.

'He's using [Revenant Flames of Ecstasy] again? How? It has a long cooldown!' he thought.

With Sila's rampage there was also a constant stream of notifications that kept blinking in Skullius' sight.

He didn't have the time to entertain more of these distractions however, as the first of these stronger looking [Bookworms] reached him.

The Bookworm had dark hair and golden eyes, its masculine look being quite fierce.

This was the one that had been called Hafuman by the Bookworm that was flinging commands everywhere.

It held a somewhat thick Innate Holder the size of a smaller tome, an old orange cover over it.

Hafuman opened the Holder and tore a page from it which he held between his fingers as he eyed Skullius who floated in mid-air.

'These two are Tier 5. I better not waste my time on them. They probably can't harm me anyway,' Skullius thought before raising his hands to direct his orbs for an attack.

Hafuman beat him to the punch though, as he flung the page he had torn towards Skullius.

"Random Magic.....whatever happens next!"

The page glowed bright before dispersing into glitter that flooded in all directions, with a beautiful array of colour!

The visuals were incredible.... and that was it.

"That's it?" Skullius said with confusion.

Hafuman who was stuck in his throwing stand had droplets of sweat trickling from his brow.

Yes.

That was it.

This spell... was just the simple conjuration of glitter...