

Undead 441

Chapter 441: Cursed Man of Fortune

Yuyui yelped and hid behind Skullius subconsciously.

The Hybrid Luman was not fazed by the rage leaking from the guardian at all. Instead of backing away, he walked forward without any shift in his expression.

Yuyui grabbed onto his clothing and followed, keeping to her position of using her master as a shield.

As Bassbion appeared, her hatred and anger towards Skullius unveiled, Yagrina could also be seen, her broken stone body's head turning to the two.

Unlike Bassbion, she didn't show any ferocious expression but carefulness. Last time, when Skullius had taken away Yuyui she would have rushed up to attack him if she could but now things were different.

Because she hadn't known what Skullius' intentions with Yuyui were, and still didn't know right now, the fact that he came back with her made her curious.

She needed to employ reasonability and patience to find out what exactly was going on since the full picture was largely unknown.

Unfortunately, Bassbion wasn't about that.

"Give her back!" the guardian barked as she stomped her greaved foot, the chains on her armour clanking!

Skullius didn't render a reply to her. Instead, he turned to Yagrina whom he knew to be less abrasive from their previous encounter.

Perhaps he could have a more relaxed discussion with her.

"You said that Yuyui was supposed to take some kind of test and she failed, right? Can you tell me what these eyes she was supposed to unlock do exactly?" Skullius asked.

After attaining his ability to speak and understand other individuals, he had asked Yuyui everything about what was said between her and the Spirits in the Temple of Unlusted Tears, thus his knowledge of this.

Yagrina and Bassbion were taken aback as they heard Skullius speak in a language they could understand, different from before. The communication barrier was cut down and they could hold a conversation.

This, to Yagrina was a relief and a bigger sign that she should be calm about this as now, she could understand the full picture and possibly help the host more. This was her intent.

It was also Bassbion's intention but well...

"It's good that we can communicate now. But before I answer that, would you mind telling us why and how you took away the host of our masters' legacy?" Yagrina asked carefully.

Bassbion laid off a little of the heat and waited for Skullius' response. She also wanted to know.

The Hybrid Luman produced a soft smile on his face as he sat down, forcing Yuyui to do so as well.

"I can answer that, but you won't like my reply," Skullius responded, much to the two guardian's apprehension.

"In exchange for her freedom, Yuyui is bound to me. She is my servant for... the foreseeable future. Ah, nice words for formality," Skullius chuckled at his own wording before continuing, "As for how... You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

...!

"Servant?!" Bassbion hissed as her power flared once again.

"Sister Bassbion, wait," Yagrina said.

She too was quite shaken by this revelation but in all honesty, it wasn't outlandish. Given how she had analysed the host's nature to be, it wasn't a surprise that she would sell herself for freedom.

She wasn't the strong and determined type.

Yagrina even wagered that she didn't come here back then for the legacy. She was merely, additional company.

"I see," Yagrina said as she turned from Skullius to Yuyui. "Host, will you truly follow this man and serve him even if you are bound in some way? Are you able to live the rest of your life like this?"

Yuyui puckered her lips, her face turning sullen for moment.

Following someone...

That was the core theme of her life, wasn't it?

Even coming here was because she had been asked to follow someone else.

Now, her life was devoted to someone else's and she wasn't surprised.

Yuyui faced Yagrina.

"I'm used to it. I'm not very good with finding my own path. So... I think I can do this. Besides.. Master does feed me," Yuyui said with a subdued smile.

Though she said this however, she had one HUGE gripe about serving Skullius asides from the recent lack of food and it was unfortunately that she had been warned never to speak of it!

Ever!

"Yagrina, you are simply going to accept that the host of our masters' legacy is under someone else?! A man to boot?! This goes against everything our masters believed!" Bassbion growled with ferocity painted on her face.

Yagrina didn't say a word in reply.

She understood this too but...

"What would you have us do, Bassbion? Even in the event that we were able to kill this man and somehow break the binding he has on the host, then what? The host we have is not the one we... expected," Yagrina said with solemnity.

"If she were detained here with us, it would benefit her nothing. We cannot teach her how to awaken the Diverse Eyes and we cannot leave this place until she attained at least three. She was unable to attain more than one eye after a century and frankly, I don't think on her own, she is capable of doing that or keeping her own life."

"..."

Bassbion was lost for words.

She hadn't thought about it like this.

Of course she had exploded in rage at Yuyui before because of this but adding Yagrina's thoughts on top made her cool off.

This was the reality of the matter.

Yuyui and Skullius heard this, the latter nodding as he understood the reasoning while the former shrunk.

It was painful to hear these words.

They were... true.

Yagrina looked into Yuyui's eyes for a time before emitting a soft sigh from her stone lips.

"If the host is accepting of you and her circumstances then I...we have no say," she said as she turned back to Skullius, "As for your question. The host is supposed to acquire twelve eyes that all grant different unique abilities. Each one was designed by our twelve masters purposefully to embody what they thought an ideal woman should be."

"I see," Skullius said with the nod of his head. "So this eye that Yuyui has now, the Inhumane Eye. Does it guarantee that she will never die?"

This was something that the Hybrid Luman had been thinking of for a while.

Immortality, was a strange concept.

According to what he had learned, Fulgardt who reached the level of Divinity, actually...died.

So how could Yuyui be immortal? What were the principles behind this power?

"She can die," Yagrina said with a serious tone. "The Inhumane Eye preserves her life and everything she owns, but if the eye itself is harmed with energy from a high level source, she will die...permanently."

Yuyui gulped.

So... she could 'die die' after all.

"I thought so," Skullius said. This made a lot more sense. Hidden Classes weren't divine or invincible after all, and he should know. "And the rest? You wouldn't happen to know what they do or how to unlock them, would you?"

"Unfortunately no. I do not know what the rest do. That is for the host to know. All I do know is that each eye strengthens the host physically above the unique effects it gives. How to specifically acquire the eyes is also not for me to know."

Skullius nodded.

It seemed there wouldn't be many surprises with Yuyui.

Except perhaps her dying and reviving in the middle of the street, which was... undesirable.

Skullius was trying to make sure that he didn't screw himself over in a large city.

"Good then. What else is in this Temple? I find it hard to believe that all that is here is dead bodies and a few unimportant rooms," Skullius said.

There had to be more important stuff here.

Before Yagrina could answer this time, Bassbion was the one to rain on Skullius' parade.

"You would love that, wouldn't you? Sadly, only the host can reach the inner parts of the Temple that hold our masters' treasures. And to do that, she has to awaken three of the Diverse Eyes. The test was THAT significant," Bassbion said with a scoff.

It all went back to the fact that Yuyui hadn't completed the test.

The lime haired girl shrunk once more, feeling disappointed in herself.

It seemed everyone held expectations of her that she didn't have for herself.

It was pressuring.

"That's alright. She will awaken them soon," Skullius said as he grasped Yuyui's head.

Yuyui was surprised.

She turned to look at Skullius with a look of incredulity.

Did he really mean that?

Yagrina and Bassbion were surprised by Skullius' words, particularly Bassbion.

"Is that right? What makes you so sure?" the spirit asked with a frown.

Skullius smirked.

"You see, I'm a cursed man, burdened with misfortune. However, a certain flame told me that a part of me counters all that misery to redeem me sometimes. It's rare for something I want to fall in my lap, but when it does...' Skullius said with a grin, '...I make the most of it. Besides, I can't have someone weaker than my Apostles who are working their pelvises off burdening me.

Fashioning this thing into something worth keeping is inevitable."

The thing in question was indeed Yuyui.

The lime haired woman's eyes opened wide.

She felt a strange feeling.

A sharp throb sprang from her heart.

It was something she hadn't heard or felt in a long time - a slice of faith without judgement... coming from the same person who had made her his slave.

In the past day and a half, Yuyui had yet to fully understand Skullius and the same was true for the Hybrid Luman as well.

But in this moment, putting aside Skullius' responses to her whining for food, Yuyui felt that perhaps Skullius intended for Yuyui to be more than just a slave.

He had said it before but how could she have fully taken in all he said when she was just yearning for freedom.

Bassbion felt a semblance of guilty from what Skullius said. Now she looked like the bad guy instead of this vile man!

Skullius stood up with a sigh. He had attained the part of the answers he wanted from here.

So much for those material gains he was expecting though.

"If that's all there is, then I'll be leaving," Skullius said.

"Wait," Yagrina hurriedly stopped Skullius.

"What is it?" Skullius asked.

"I first sensed some time ago, but I feel that we are in a different space since you left. Where are we?"

"Oh. About that...." Skullius said casually, "...we're in a small world of mine. Hmm. I guess I should finally give it a name."

Yagrina and Bassbion were puzzled by what Skullius said but he didn't shed more light, instead focusing on the name to give which came to him rather quickly, considering...

"Ah, symbolism is more important, I guess. Fortune works well," Skullius said.

This world which he had won from a tough battle back then was certainly turning out to be a bright way forward, against the atrocious luck and misery.

It was fitting.

Chapter 442: Finally, Genhuis City!

"Ahahahaha!" a sophisticated laugh echoed within the crowd. "I'm sure this visit to one of the biggest cities in the nation will be absolutely stellar, ahaha!"

"That's right, milady. I never thought I'd get to see so many people flooding into the city at one time. The event we are in for this time will likely be most memorable."

"Ahahaha! You don't have to tell me twice. It's unusual for one of the six Houses to make a move like this. Do you reckon it's in response to the tension regarding the Royal family's decision to ally with the Sif?"

"Hmm. I'd say that's reasonable. Or perhaps it is a way to quell the rising tension with a good show."

At the gate to Genhuis City, nine queues could be seen, all with people impatiently waiting to enter into the enormous settlement that was hidden behind giant walls that seemed to have been built yesterday!

They had a dull brass colour with hints of gold on them, something that would keep bumpkins who were new to travelling outside the smaller communities out there, staring in awe.

The wall rose up to ninety meters with a width of almost sixty meters, patrol camps and sturdy towers steadily perked on top of it with several Knights standing aloof and looking down from them.

Getting pass this wall, even at a micro legal level was no easy feat, but for these past few days, the security was a bit lenient.

House EverSword had stressed that they wanted as many people as possible to get a chance to participate and even more people to get to spectate.

That said however, everyone, regardless of status had to wait in line first, each one having a designated purpose and demographic that made it.

The first two lines, if one looked from the gate, were reserved for very important figures whose rank outshone nobility like individuals from renown Families.

There weren't that many of these **ORIGINALLY**, but in this case, given the context and in terms of the initial announcement given by House EverSword, quite a bit of them have shown up as it was merely three days before the beginning of the event.

The next two lines were comprised of nobility and important benefactors.

Nobles in this world were not among the Families or Houses.

They were more like small groups ordained by either High official Capital Service members like Governors or by the Heads of Families to run the micro aspects of apportioned areas.

They were essentially delegated parties lifted in name as a result.

In truth, Pelian was so large that all the current Families and Houses could not claim all the land and resources to leave nothing behind, especially when considering the PHENOMENON that stopped the progression of all living things for several millennia after the Second Grand War.

This ensured that land apportionment and development lagged so much that it barely seemed like time passed between the ages.

The nobles helped to cover for the large burden that still existed, their purpose being integral to the workings of Pelian.

The rest of the lines were reserved for the general majority and overseeing the swift movement and vetting were the top notch Capital Service Knights of the City who were adorned in gold and silver armours, white capes draping behind them.

Each held a formal and serious temperament that demanded to be taken seriously and with at least six present along every line, there was no room for disorder or commotion.

Between the lines were spaces for people exiting the city or those who were deemed ineligible for entry due to various reasons, thus smooth flow of all activity was permitted.

"Hey, I heard that the venue for the event hasn't been disclosed yet. Does this mean that the Maul Dome isn't where this thing is happening?"

"Hmm. Where else would they hold such a large scale event? We're taking almost all of the Families in Pelian gathering here."

"I don't know. I guess we'll find out."

"Ay. Who do you think we'll see in the event? Some prestigious Families who have been in hiding, new ones?"

"Of course it's both. I'm sure everyone wants to get into the EverSword House. Ah... I wish I had been read to become a fighter. I probably would have been a good one. <Sigh>.

Direction can be so cruel."

"That's probably not true considering you're a damn good carpenter."

"...yeah."

"Ah, excuse me. If you don't mind my asking, why does it seem like the City is a little bright from here?"

At this moment, a scrawny man who looked to be in his sixties asked this random group of chatting young men.

"Oh, you don't know?" one of them asked.

"Know what?"

"Don't worry about it. It's always best to see for yourself when you enter the city, hehe."

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Hours later.

"Hello, good sir. May I have your full name please," a pretty woman who sat on a lavish desk at the massive gate asked with a smile.

There were up to six of these desks with formally dressed Capital Service representatives who admitted people in after asking some questions and taking payment where necessary.

Two Knights were stationed by each desk, protectively standing guard and monitoring all movements.

"Festos Dawn," came the reply from a man who donned a simple yet fashionable white shirt and dark pants.

His blank eyes locked against those of one of the Knights at the desk, a strange brewing of tension occurring for a second.

The woman nodded, completely oblivious to this as she scribbled down in her book rapidly and turned to the man's side.

"Is she with you?"

"Yes," the man replied with a rather uncomfortable smile while giving a quick stab to the lime haired girl at his side's ribs with his elbow.

The girl winced and wore a smile, tearing herself from the stupor she had been in. Her lime hair was a bit ruffled up, showing that her journey here hadn't been... conventional.

"Yes, yes..." she randomly said as she focused on the woman at the desk.

"What's your name?"

"Yuyui Yuyui Yuyui."

"What?" the woman at the desk asked quizzically.

"First name Yuyui, second name Yuyui, surname Yuyui."

"R..right..." the woman said as she noted down, the Knights at her side looking closely at Yuyui before looking at each other.

The woman then turned back to the man who was Skullius and asked, "Are you a permanent resident of Genhuis or is this a visit?"

"It's a visit."

"Have you been here before?"

"No."

"Do you have any forma—"

"Actually..." Skullius cut off the woman, "...I have this."

Skullius said as he pulled out a fist sized red and blue disk with an insignia branded onto it.

The moment the woman at the desk saw it, her visage shifted from portraying general politeness to showing a look of understanding.

"I see. You are the one from the Bryne Family. Someone is already waiting you," the woman said as she turned to one of the Knights at her side, giving him a message.

The Knight turned, walking into the gate almost ten meters behind the desk before returning five minutes later with a tall but thin man who wore a pair of black rimmed glasses.

He had light grey hair and an anchor style beard that matched the shape of his face well, his demeanour with his hands behind his back showing respect.

The man reached Skullius, his eyes fixated on the disk Skullius had as he then gave a nod of acknowledgement, though drops of sweat trickled from his brow.

He felt uncomfortable about something.

"Master Festos, it's good to see you in person. Please, come with me," the man said a barely noticeable tremble that was quickly hidden by his training.

Skullius expressed mild surprise as he and Yuyui who was not sure what was going on followed the man, slowly approaching the vast opening to the city.

"My name is Daggs. I am an attendant in the Bryne Family household. I will escort be escorting you to the Family's residence in the city," the man explained.

"Oh, I see," Skullius said. "Let me guess, Silrat told you to come here didn't he?"

Daggs smiled awkwardly. He had been tasked with waiting for Skullius at the gate for the entire day.

"Yes, Master Silrat did say so. He said you have habit of arriving at the last minute."

Skullius chuckled at this.

He and Silrat were starting to understand each other pretty well.

Chapter 443: Don't Flesh Up So Soon!

It had taken a while for Skullius to reach the front of the line. He and Yuyui had had to wait for roughly four hours, which in truth was quite fast considering how long the queue was.

Arriving here this quickly could only be attributed to Skullius sprinting the rest of the distance from where he had been.

What a sprint it was.

Yuyui could barely believe the speed Skullius was moving at as even seeing the view of her surroundings during the speed run was impossible for her.

The service at the gateway into Genhuis City was pretty efficient, a feature Skullius noted to be a sign of how different this city was.

A sense of deja vu smote him as he stood in line, making him think of the first time he had reached Inhone City.

It was just a little while ago, the circumstances he had been in being vastly different that time.

Sigh, harder times.

Standing in the line that fed into the small city back then while eavesdropping on conversations happening all around him had been his pass time and the same applied in this situation.

Though Skullius' natural sight was missing, he could pretty much 'see' everything through his extraordinary senses though with a lot of deficiency when it came to detail.

Skullius had thought of using [Basic Evil Sanction] to collect information from some of the individuals blurring out pinches of detail that he needed but the Knights standing guard had discouraged him.

These Knights were different from the ones he was used to. They had a certain air about them that was... dangerous.

If Skullius had to guess, some of these guys were the Capital Order Knights that Bek had talked about, their strength greater than that of ordinary Knights.

Given the fact that [Basic Evil Sanction] was a Special skill, he doubted its activation would go unnoticed.

Therefore, Skullius continued eavesdropping while making sure Yuyui didn't get into trouble. For some reason, he just got the feeling that it was necessary to keep a close eye on her.

To ensure that he didn't look suspicious, Skullius had worn an ordinary get up, the design sponsored by the first set of his armour, the Casual VergeRider which could morph into any type of clothing he desired so long as it was... casual.

The thickets of snow blanketing over the ground as well as the visible white breaths leaking from everyone around, displayed that the cold was ever strong here as well.

However, many people within the queues did not wear overly warm clothes as most of natives to this region were not afraid of the cold.

It was a staple of their home, after all.

Skullius decided to dress casually as well to blend in.

Yuyui was covered as she didn't look anything but ordinary with her oversized clothes.

Now, as Skullius chuckled at the prospect of seeing Silrat's face when he noticed how different Skullius was, he felt something strange.

He, Yuyui and Daggs were approaching the entrance to the city, a wide gap where people were entering and exiting freely.

But...

Skullius stopped.

He frowned.

Daggs stopped to turn to Skullius, Yuyui instantly coming to a halt as she dashed over to her master while clinging to his arm.

She knew to trust her master when it came to noticing things that many others wouldn't.

"Master Festos...?" Daggs said with concern... and apprehension.

"Daggs... what's going on? What's this... presence over the city?" Skullius asked while turning his white eyes to the man sharply.

He could feel an unusual... pressure that lightly bore down on the city, starting from just a meter ahead of him.

Daggs' eyes narrowed for a moment.

So far, his impression of Skullius was turning out to not be as Silrat said at all.

The question that Skullius posed served to make him consider two things.

'Is he truly blind?' was the first thing he thought and then...

'Strange. I thought only powerful individuals could sense the pressing effect of the Daylight Dominion? It's only possible to see the sun once you enter the bounds of the city too so...?'

Anyone entering Genhuis City for the first time would notice the odd brightest coming from above and not the pressure this object bore down unless they could interpret the weavings of the make to some degree.

So Skullius...

These thoughts haunted Daggs only for a brief moment, with his enquiry over whether Skullius was blind or otherwise stemming from the simple fact that his eyes looked strange – white with a blank feel to them.

There was proving to already be that much mystery behind this man, even more than Silrat summarised.

Unfortunately, in response to Skullius' question...

"Please forgive me, Master Festos. Master Silrat warned me about your... condition. I cannot provide you answers myself. However, in anticipation of what you might want to know..." Daggs said as he reached into the breast pocket of the suit he wore and pulled out a piece of paper folded immaculately, handing it to Yuyui instead of Skullius.

"Master Silrat wrote down the basics of what you need to know immediately after entering the city."

Yuyui grasped the paper before looking to Skullius who shook his head with a subdued smile.

"I see," he said but refused to move before having this sensation explained to him.

"Yuyui, read it," Skullius instructed to which the lime haired girl promptly went began doing so.

" 'I'm sure you have been developing ways to get around your curse during your short journey. Well, I have been too. Filling you in on this information could have been done when we meet but unlike in Inhone, we can't afford to be careless here...' " Yuyui read.

" 'Festos, the sun you see above the city is a surveillance technique of the City Guardian of Genhuis City, Daylight Dominion. Everything the light touches in the city is relayed to him, so make sure you do nothing to attract attention. Additionally, if you look around, there are seven tall towers scattered around the city.

They belong to seven powerful Diviners who constantly monitor the situation within the city as well, so once again... I stress, don't do anything funny.'"

" 'As if that isn't enough, a large power should be visible to the East of the city from the gate. The one that looks like it is made of diamonds. That's the Academy. The place where special individuals are trained, in particular, Mages. These guys are not like Terian. They are incredibly dangerous.

Keep to yourself until you and Daggs reach the residence. And for the love of Quintess make sure he doesn't die.'"

That was it.

Skullius hummed as he swallowed up all this information.

There was a sun above the city and it was someone's technique, huh?

Seven Diviners and an Academy with powerful Mages?

'It seems like Frock wasn't wrong. In comparison to this, Inhone might as well be a template of the real deal. Ah, I miss that sockethole,' Skullius thought.

As he was lost in his sentiments for a brief period, a set of heavy footsteps came from behind the three, approaching them.

"Is there a problem here? Please move out the way, you are compromising the order we set up."

A Knight decked in a slim silver and gold armour spoke. It was a woman.

Vibrant waves of energy swam around her, leaking from her to compel the three to move.

"There are no problems, Lady Knight, we will be moving along," Daggs said respectfully. "Master Festos?"

Skullius nodded as he took a step forward.

'This is just surveillance, right? So it shouldn't be a problem,' he thought as he entered the bounds of the city.

The moment he and Yuyui entered, Skullius grit his teeth lightly, Yuyui looking up as she was prompted to by a soft light in the air.

"Wooooow..." the lime haired girl marvelled as she understood what she had been reading now.

The sun.

It was less glaring than she thought. Outside of the bit of light it produced, it was more like a nicely painted image on a canvas.

A smaller sun giving a light peach coloured heat and hardly any heat.

It was magnificent.

Skullius, unlike Yuyui felt the pressure from the sun a bit more clearer.

This was definitely a high level technique.

It was profound.

He truly felt like he was being watched.

Chapter 444: The Full View

The innards of Genhuis City were spectacular.

The city was so large that the entry and exit activity at the gate didn't feel as crowded or stifling as one would see from small cities despite the rough population of this city being, at an estimate, close to sixty million.

Disorderly arrangements of hawkers and merchants at the front of the city were not evident. The Capital Service made sure that distinguished guests wouldn't have to be met with that when first entering into the city.

Neat streets paved well with stonework and concrete could be seen branching into the systematic districts, yet their beauty was masked by the snow.

Everywhere one went, there wasn't a shack where some hooligan made a base of operations but a formal shop or cabin at the very least where one would sell their wares, the ones one would see here being some of the more renown stores.

Among the low built stretches of buildings, larger ones could be seen standing out in different locations all the way up to the very centre of the city a vast distance away where one could see a massive mansion.

This belonged to the Governor, along with the catered lands around it.

Yuyui, unlike Skullius who couldn't see anything, was witnessing everything that Silrat had written with vibrantly glowing eyes.

"Master! There's the seven towers that this rat person you keep talking about wrote! Oh and the other tower... woow it's so beautiful!" Yuyui said with a cheer while also gazing up.

The sun...

She finally saw it!

The seven towers she saw were tall but very lean, evidently not made for the habitation of multiple people. They were scattered about, their positioning being strategic as they covered equal portions of the settlement.

Seemingly ordinary bricks and blocks made them, giving a mundane visage to their look but no one actually believed such a face value analysis.

As for the building Silrat said was the Academy....

It was indeed quite beautiful.

It stood out, to say the least.

Its girth was perplexing.

The shiny exterior which looked like it was made up of shield like pieces of diamond that sparkled in the light with a silvery blue hue, was more than enticing, causing a strange glittery effect that attracted people's eyes.

The shape of the tower in its almost 300 meter ascent was like that of a screw, woven up on its mass from a broad base as it went, up to the sharp peak.

Unfortunately, Skullius couldn't see all this.

While his sensory range had vastly increased, it couldn't cover much of this vast city, not that he had expected it to in the first place.

Right now, to ensure that he was aware of everything happening in his immediate surroundings, Skullius was using a skill he developed using his Inner and Outer Domains as a template.

Actually 'developed' would be an overstatement as the skill only came into existence after Skullius used the repetition card unconsciously.

This skill was called [Koten Machi].

Just like with most of his cases of repetition, a skill was formed, though unnamed, as was the case with [Perfect Night Domain] and [Bead of Malevolence] when he first attained them.

Skullius had to name the skill himself, which he did by borrowing the words meaning 'near' and 'far' from a local dialect he had learned from one of the bandits he met.

He had taken a liking to it.

'Koten' was near and 'Machi' was far.

The skill description also made sure these ranges were specified as Koten was Skullius' absolute zone of sense, maintained at a radius fifty meters while Machi was a whopping mile.

What was unique about this skill was that it forcefully incorporated [Elevated Mana Manipulation] into Koten to ensure that Skullius could pick up on anything and everything.

Still, all this didn't measure up to having sight when in this specific circumstance and Skullius was not sure using [Crude World Projection] was a good idea.

"If I may, Master Festos. Are you perhaps... blind?" Daggs finally decided to throw out the question he had been meaning to ask since he retrieved Skullius from the gate.

The Hybrid Luman turned to him.

"Yes I am. But don't worry, bro. I'm aware of my surroundings," Skullius replied.

"Yes! Master might be blind, but he can see everything! He even notices things right before they happen!" Yuyui said excitedly while bouncing up and down like a child.

One had to wonder...

How old was she before the Temple fiasco?

'Master?' Daggs wondered.

What was the relationship between these two?

Also, was Yuyui implying that Skullius was precognition?

Yuyui wasn't lying.

Even if she was quite lost in the times, she could tell when some things were...unnatural.

Skullius often noticed a lot of things. Too many things.

While fighting some of the bandits, it almost seemed like he had precognitive abilities at times because of the way he fought. Or perhaps he was just fast?

Yuyui didn't know exactly but she knew it was weird.

The answer though, was...

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[Beyond the Hype | None ]

-Passive-

Every aspect of the user's being naturally processes all information fed into it at twice the normal capacity.

-Active-

When the user is excessively excited, the <CURSED BLOOD CELLS> will be supercharged, producing an artificial form of adrenaline that allows the user to process information with every aspect of their being at fifteen times their current capacity.

Mana Requirements: ---

Duration: ---

Cooldown: ---

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The skill, [HYPED] which forcibly evolved after being funnelled with energy by the [Luminant Seed], was responsible for this.

"I see," Daggs said as he sweat lightly.

This was one of the combatants hired and signed into the Family for the Premium Age Royale.

So far, all he knew was that he was freakishly sensitive and... he was blind!

Why was he blind just three days before the event began?!

The attendant breathed out the frustration he felt inside and nodded.

He didn't have anything else to say or ask lest he get a heart attack from it.

The feud within the Bryne Family was going to get even more monstrous.

The three passed through various corners and streets of the city, Yuyui enjoying the abundant sights that she hadn't gotten to see in centuries.

Things had changed quite a bit.

Time waited for no man, they said and for a brief moment, the woman felt a bit disheartened to know that while she was trapped, no one cared.

Everything and everyone moved on as if she never existed in the first place.

The sorrow bore down on her as she silently bit on her lips, but when she looked at Skullius, remembering what he had declared to Bassbion...

'I'm someone's convenient solution,' Yuyui thought.

As Skullius had put it, he had found her right when he needed her.

She had purpose.

She was needed.

A smile bloomed on her face once more.

A rather lengthy walk later, characterised by lots of turning, bumping into strangers and grabbing Yuyui before she could assault food stalls, the three finally reached an area less populated by the majority.

Only those with class could be seen, carriages moving up and down a clean street decorated with large houses and fountains.

It was like a district for the wealthy.

When sensing the many carriages going in and out, Skullius couldn't help but wonder why he hadn't been received by carriage as well.

He would have loved to explore the city, if that was the idea but it was of little use to skim through the surroundings when he couldn't see.

It didn't take long for Daggs to come to a halt before a rather beautiful compound with a nicely cut lawn and a expansive mansion within its bounds.

Though there were many of these, they came in different shapes and sizes, brief distances between them to allow for some amount of privacy.

"We are here," Daggs said with a comfortable sigh.

That long, awkward journey was not pleasing at all.

Fortunately, someone hurried to deliver him from the continued depressing presence he had had to 'enjoy'.

On one of the stone benches on the lawn, a young girl who looked to be between ten and twelve years old rushed up to meet the three.

"Lady Terese," Daggs gave a short bow to which the girl waved him off, her eyes remaining planted on Skullius and Yuyui.

Suddenly, the girl broke into a laughing fit while pointing at the two, much to their confusion.

"Hahahahaha! One of these two is big sister Stylla's fighter?" she asked mockingly with a squeaky voice that stabbed Skullius the wrong way, more than even her words which showed a clear cut lack of respect ever could.

"Big brother's fighter is waaaay better!" the girl said with a childish snort.

Chapter 445: Luxuries, Templates and Gasps!

Terese found no reaction from the two whom she had knowingly provoked, much to her disappointment.

She wore a funny frown as her lower lip made an upwards arc that caused the skin beneath it to get wrinkled up, her arms folding in annoyance.

Skullius chuckled inwardly.

'This city will probably be dishing out socketholes for free. If it turns out that way, I won't have to worry about people dying left and right,' he thought.

The figure of Terese kept its childishly upset visage while glaring at Yuyui and Skullius begrudgingly. It was obvious from the girl's appearance that she was related to Stylla - the uncanny resemblance they shared in their facial features barring the hair.

Unlike Stylla's firey hair, Terese's was ash blonde and tied into pigtails that accentuated her young age pretty well.

She donned a long blue dress that reached her knees, revealing her healthy limbs that spotted neither blemish nor bumps.

One could tell from a single glance that she was a spoiled brat.

Wishing to dispel the advent of an even worse atmosphere than the one he was coming from sinking in, Daggs hurriedly chipped in, whipping up some quick introductions.

"I present Lady Stylla's younger sister, Lady Terese," Daggs addressed with a bow to which Terese puffed up her flat chest.

Skullius nodded half respectfully while Yuyui awkwardly gave a clumsy curtsy, much to Terese's displeasure.

Uncultured fools!

"I'm sure you have already guessed but this is Master Festos and his...uhmm.. associate. He will be representing the Family as per his agreement with Lady Stylla," Daggs continued, pretending as if he wasn't once again drowning in a stale atmosphere.

"Hmph!" Terese harrumphed with a sharp look in her light blue eyes, her high nose, which was raised naturally depicting how she already didn't like Skullius.

A grown man's first impression in front of a child was to entertain each sentence of what they said dammit!

"Festos, huh? That's a weird name. And you? What's your name?" Terese asked Yuyui after jabbing at the unresponsive Skullius.

"My name is Yuyui Yuyui Yuyui," came the reply.

"What?"

"First name Yuyui, second name Yuyui, surname Yuyui," Yuyui said proudly.

"...Right..." Terese gave a weirded out one worder.

Before any more words could be spoken...

"Lady Terese, is everyone here?" Daggs respectfully inquired.

"Hmm? No. Sister Stylla went out and Mister Silrat and that midget went to the Guilds Association," Terese replied.

"I see," Daggs said. "Allow me to take our guests inside."

"Fine," Terese said. "Carry on."

The girl finally gave up on this interaction as she returned to her bench.

Daggs sighed and motioned for Skullius and Yuyui to follow him to the mansion.

A fresh atmosphere could be smelt and felt, with a cooling effect that promoted a sense of ease.

This line of compounds and mansions were the residences of Families that lorded over lands within this region built by the Capital Service as a gesture to promote the continuation of a good relationship.

The Governor oversaw the entire region as a whole but it was owned and controlled by the Families within it after all. The rights and rules he had over the land were divided between him and the Families to a reasonable degree, more of the micromanaging of intrinsic affairs largely being stripped from his grasp while the macro side was his own.

These mansions and lavishly big compounds that bordered on estates, were to distinguish the Families from everyone else while they were in the city in cases of events such as the Premium Age Royale where extended lodging was required.

Upon reaching the entrance to the mansion which was a four story building with a cross like design from an aerial view, the four guards at the entrance nodded in acknowledgement to Daggs, Skullius and Yuyui before one of them opened the double doors hiding the interior.

The three's steps echoed in the quiet space that was spic and span, polished and shined floors, vases and chandeliers being what one would first see.

Large windows that invited the natural light in completed the beautiful aesthetic, making Yuyui marvel once more, the carpets and fancy furniture complementing everything in a classical manner.

"I will arrange for food and drink while you wait. Please take a seat," Daggs said with a smile while his heart pounded.

Having to ensure that he picked his words well each time was such a challenging affair. Not as challenging as the prospect of dying for being nice though.

Skullius and Yuyui took their seats on lavishly comfortable couches, with the latter smiling intensely at the idea of food and drink from this expensive looking household.

What would it taste like?!

While Yuyui was occupied with these thoughts, the Hybrid Luman had begun dissecting what Terese had said, as it opened his mind to the idea that he wasn't fed the full detail about his participation.

'That girl said there's someone else signed into this Family other than me, right? So multiple participants really can come from the same Family, huh?' Skullius thought.

It seemed there was going to be endless comparisons between him and this other person if something wasn't done about it.

Soon, two women dressed in maid outfits came with trays of food.

One was laid before Skullius on the table before him while another was placed before Yuyui.

The maids promptly left after bowing respectfully.

'It feels weird to be treated like this,' Skullius thought.

A bow?

If he told the version of himself that had just been imprisoned after an interrogation with Damilla that he was being bowed to and served food like this, that Skullius would probably call him a lying sockethole.

On both his and Yuyui's plates were large succulent pieces of roasted meat smothered in a piping hot cream coloured stew. On the side was a small bowl with mashed potatoes that gave off a lovely aroma, much to Yuyui's grin and Skullius' indifference as he didn't quite have the sense of smell yet.

He didn't know why he couldn't have everything all at once. He wasn't a Discount Human anymore damn it!

Yuyui started drooling intensely, her body seemingly about to dive into the plate when Skullius grasped her shoulder.

"Behave. The food isn't going anywhere..." he said while releasing a presence that caused Yuyui to shudder.

"Yes master," she said as she grabbed a fork on the side and started eating.

Skullius didn't have much experience with cutlery and as weird as it was, he was forced to copy how Yuyui used the fork to eat.

Eating while imprisoned and on the run was rather... inconvenient and didn't support lessons on etiquette.

Skullius stabbed the meat on the plate and placed in his mouth, his teeth sinking into it.

...

"Hmm...."

The Hybrid Luman sank into his seat while emitting a hum of pleasure.

His eyes closed as he let the hot juices wash over his tongue, the favour contaminating the stale taste that was in his mouth before.

This was fleshing delicious!

Skullius almost felt the desire to apologise about looking down on flesh!

Who knew it was this divine in the mouth?!

Certainly not anyone from Deadmanland!

Yuyui at his side was already close to finishing the meat as well as the potatoes on the side. She enjoyed the taste but was more enthusiastic about filling her stomach.

"Master! Hmmm... hmgnh... this isf sfo goodm...hmmm..." Yuyui said as she stuffed her face, her words barely understandable.

She grabbed the large glass of cider at the side of her plate and chugged it down, Skullius following suit.

The Hybrid Luman savoured the taste.

Since he didn't have any point of reference it was hard to compare but, his body reacted positively to this.

This was the life.

The two continued to eat, with Skullius almost calling the phrase "Penetrator who?!" in his mind, yet he soon tore himself out of the bliss.

He wasn't a glutton and he didn't even finish the food in his plate. Eating was just an activity to drive away the side effects his cosmetic body would punish him with in the name of acting... natural, after all.

'Right... Since I've reached Genhuis City, I should probably get my objectives straight. Besides going for that Aptitude whatever with Silrat, I'll need to register at the local Guild's Association. Wait, is it needed since I have an identification already? I'll have to ask,' Skullius thought while the sounds of a fork hit a plate bore on his ear from the side.

He would have loved to get it done today but the sun was looking to jump over the horizon in an hour or two. It was probably not a good idea to wander without anyone who knew the city.

'This time, I think it's more efficient if I raid Clusters as the Penetrator. My Luman body has experienced enough growth for now and I've only ever needed it to hide from humans. Now I have a little more freedom. Level 4 shouldn't be too far if I hunt several blue Clusters and above...'

His goal of levelling hard was about to come to fruition and he was looking forward to it. There were many things he was aiming for with his Penetrator mostly.

For one, besides the levelling, he wanted to get a blue core for this form and while he was at it, see if he could get an affinity with Spatial Lightning.

His Penetrator form was already proficient with Lightning... kind of, so maybe...

'There's nine days till [Bringer of All] comes off cooldown. The Premium Age Royale will have begun by then sadly...' he thought. 'On top of this, I have to meet a Mage who can teach me more about the core and possibly how to combine skills. 'Radiance' should be something I have access to without having to activate all those skills individually.'

Fortunately, Stylla had promised Skullius an opportunity to have some form of tutelage with a Mage and that was his solution, provided nothing went wrong.

The last agenda on Skullius' list was the evolution of two particular skills of his that were nearly ready to experience the change.

[Elevated Mana Manipulation] and [Revenant Flames of Ecstasy].

The former was the one he was most interested in.

He could feel it.

Unlike with its basic and advanced form, this skill was about to experience a truly qualitative change!

He could only imagine what he would be able to do with it then.

As Skullius was in the middle of stacking his thoughts, the double doors to the mansion were opened and two familiar figures... two familiar mana signatures, registered in his Koten.

A man with crushed garnet coloured hair that reached his shoulders, satin grey eyes placed over an oval shaped face and an athletic build stepped in, followed by a short lady with blonde hair tied into a fish tail, her dark eyes that mismatched against her hair turning to the figures of Skullius and Yuyui ahead on the couches.

"Ah. Look who it is. Late, as expected—" Silrat who had worn a look of relief upon seeing Skullius, began when...

...!

Both he and Oliviana suddenly dashed back, their bodies burning with their respective Full Body Auras!

What... what was this monstrosity?!

Chapter 446: Hybrid 'Troll'

...!

FWOOOSH!

Both Silrat and Oliviana were suddenly put on edge by something that sprang out of nowhere!

A menacing pressure, like a harsh mix between the chill from a mountain height and a swift shock from a spark of electricity blasted against their bodies, flesh and bone quaking at its presence!

All this came from before the two in a mad rush, temporarily turning their bodies from manual to autopilot!

Was it...?

Silrat was the one who had recognised Skullius despite the major differences in his appearance all because he had been heavily anticipating his arrival today.

His statement which was cut short was the one that alerted Oliviana by his side that this was Skullius but then...

Their defences had been triggered by this vicious and terrifying presence that threatened to devour them whole!

The billowing of their power as it was rapidly increased by the activation of their Auras caused a change in the air that was picked up on by the guards at the door!

The armoured men rushed into the mansion as well, only to back away as they felt an immense sense of threat!

What... what was this?!

How could one feel as if their armour was frozen from a terrible cold, yet at the same time worn out from an unreal source of heat?!

One of the four trembled as he looked to the source of the threat which was sitting on the couch comfortably, unable to even draw the sword at his side!

Everyone turned stiff, much to Skullius' delight.

Of course... it was all the doing of the Hybrid Luman.

"Haha," Skullius laughed lightly, dispelling the deadly presence he had released just now.

Yuyui who had been stealthily reaching for her master's left overs on the table was confused on what the tension was about.

Everyone was looking constipated and ready to fight for their lives!

What was wrong?

Soon, the guards as well as Silrat and Oliviana felt the tense atmosphere which almost felt rock hard, lighten up with the Hybrid Luman's short laugh.

"The hell?!" Oliviana yelled with a sweaty, scrunched up face while Silrat breathed out and rubbed his temples.

"It was only six days..." the man mumbled, the words barely leaking from the gaps in his teeth.

"You were only gone for six damn days! What could have possibly happened?!" the former Guilds Association head bellowed at Skullius who smiled even more at this.

"A whole lot more than you can imagine," the Insurgent Magnus said.

...

It took a bit of time for the guards to relax and even Daggs had come running after hearing the commotion.

He had wanted to avoid spending more time with Skullius than needed but that seemed impossible.

Now, he was seated with Silrat, Oliviana, Skullius and his mule.

The Hybrid Luman was narrating briefly what he had been through, but only the parts that he knew would freak Silrat out.

"YOU LOST YOUR MANA CORE TOO?!" Silrat shouted while shooting up from his seated position.

"Yeah, bro. It was insane. I mean, I don't know why that man was so intent on fighting me but...whoooo... he was really strong. If I had been even more unlucky, I would have had my soul crushed..." Skullius said with a sigh of relief, blaming everything that happened to him on Bek.

Explaining that a soul within his soul had temporarily taken over his body would have been...hard to digest for Silrat and everyone here after all.

The former Branch Head didn't know just how much he was gambling with Skullius' existence as a whole, as he didn't know much about him.

Skullius intended to feed him more details about his powers now that they were in it for the long haul together.

Also given that he understood a bit more about the Tie of Exchange now from his conversation with Sause, he thought he might as well start trusting Silrat a bit more.

For now however, he would troll.

"So... how on earth are you... What did you..." Silrat stammered with a pale face while Oliviana had on a look of disbelief.

Daggs was speechless.

In all honesty, he was quite pleased that Stylla wasn't here to hear this, else she would keel over.

Unfortunately, it was only a matter of time.

"That's not even the thick of it, Silrat," Skullius said while holding back a chuckle. "On top of all this, I can't even see. I'M BLIND!"

Silrat slapped his face as he sat back down.

Sweat was practically flooding from his skin as he wondered how much was true and how much was obviously a joke.

Skullius' eyes which were something he had been keen on asking about though, were white, which meant that this was one of the truths.

Did this bastard not know how much he was risking?!

He wasn't betting aimlessly!

When he told Tulnas that he knew that he wasn't the only one who could recognise the value of individuals like Skullius, he had meant it.

He could tell that this man was special and was gambling on him, but...

This game was growing more and more dangerous.

He had some sleepless nights worrying over how Skullius had been doing while doing out there. He knew the man was a magnet for trouble but he had entertained the idea of letting him explore whatever he wanted to.

He didn't really have a choice.

Now...

"Relax, Silrat," Skullius said with a smile. "While I'm not lying about all this stuff, it's fine."

"Fine? FINE?!" Silrat anxiously boomed. "Festos, nothing you say reassures me that everything will be fine! You skimmed through the details of all that happened within this week and even after all that, you still haven't mentioned who this woman beside you is?!"

Yuyui whom Silrat gestured to sat up straight with a nervous look.

She had been silently listening to everything without making a sound while dreading becoming the object of conversation.

A lot of good that did.

"I know. There's no need to tell you everything right now, is there? Besides. I mean it when I say I'm fine. As I am right now, I can ensure that what you're getting out of me is better than what you were going to get before. You and Stylla that is..." Skullius said as he sipped on his cider, which was the only thing remaining of the food he had left..

"Really? A few days ago, I'm confident I could have smashed you into the ground before you could use all those weird skills you have but now, you feel like a completely different person. Even if you tell us to calm down, we still need to know the truth. No one just... changes like that," Oliviana chipped in a sharp look on her face.

Just based on that terrifying presence that Skullius had released earlier, she was sure that he was more than what he was letting on.

Skullius folded his hands and considered Oliviana's words.

"That's true, I guess," he said. "Well, I suppose I could tell you two fundamental changes I went through. For one, yes I did lose my mana core but I forged a better one in the past few days. Also, I managed to complete my Trial and break into the Advancement Stage..."

"..."

"..."

Oliviana and Silrat were lost for words.

Say what now?

"Let me get this straight..." Silrat said while clutching the bridge of his nose.

He needed a bit more clarification on this.

Were he just an ordinary man, what he had heard in just the past couple of minutes was enough to give him heart attack but this... this would reanimate him long enough to inquire what the actual flesh was going on!

"Your core was destroyed in these six days and you reforged it within this same stretch of time?"

"That's right," Skullius confirmed.

"And also, during this same amount of days, you managed to finish a Trial?"

"Yes."

Oliviana shook her head and stood.

"Well... I'm going to grab some ale. I can't deal with this while my mind is sober," she said as headed off, Daggs attempting to escape by saying he would grab her the ale but she refused.

Silrat sighed.

"Alright, alright. This is a good thing... this is good thing... this is a good thing..." he said to himself as he took deep breaths.

He was ready for a long journey of commitment until Skullius reached his full potential but sheesh...

Skullius wanted to add that he now had a blue core as well but... that was enough surprises for one day.

"Let's leave this out for now. Who is this girl?" Silrat asked while gazing at Yuyui.

Skullius turned to Yuyui who nervously cleared her throat, getting the hint to introduce herself.

"My name is Yuyui Yuyui Yuyui," she said.

"Huh?"

"First name Yuyui, second na—"

"Her name is Yuyui," Skullius cut in bluntly, growing tired of this girl's signature introduction. "I found her in a certain temple. I'll show you soon."

"Really? Does she know about your...situation?" Silrat asked with concern.

"Oh yes she does. In fact..." Skullius said before raising his hand as he made a chopping gesture which instantly alerted Yuyui to the danger!

"NOOOO, DON'T KILL ME LIKE THAT AGAIN, MASTER!" the poor girl screamed as she guarded her face with her hands.

Skullius chuckled while retracting his hand.

A demonstration would probably clear up why he was with Yuyui but given where they were, it would be inconvenient.

"Kill you?" Silrat asked with a puzzled expression but Skullius waved him off.

"Don't worry about it. You'll understand it all soon," Skullius said as he leaned in closer. "Right, I was going to ask Stylla but I should probably run this through you first. How soon can I gain access to the weapons and treasures she talked about?"

Chapter 447: Familial Conflict, Gullible Mule

Silrat was a bit taken aback by this request.

Already going for the weapons and treasure cache?

Skullius did have a kind of interest in weaponry that he vaguely portrayed at times but it didn't seem like a form of greed to own plenty of weapons. He himself barely used them, as far as Silrat knew.

The former Branch Head could wager that there was something he didn't know but he couldn't pry as the Tie of Exchange he signed with Skullius didn't support complete transparency.

"That's not hard to arrange but unfortunately, Stylla probably won't be back until tomorrow. If you've met her younger sister then you'll know that she quite...insufferable," Silrat said with a sigh of hidden hatred.

He was still releasing the tension from before on top of having to think about that brat.

"The brother on the other hand, probably won't take to you very well considering that there have been disputes between him and Stylla."

"Is it because they are clashing on which representative is better?" Skullius asked while leaning back.

"Something like that. Stylla neglected to mention in full that her Family is currently in a dire situation. The division in the household is... dramatic. There's already a bitter fight about who should be entrusted with the Family and that... is the root of it all," Silrat said.

"One of the only rules known about the Premium Age Royale as of now is how each Family can have up to twenty representatives. If possible, the younger sister Terese would have employed her own fighter for some more friction."

The rule Silrat mentioned had been spread out by the messenger who had announced the Premium Age Royale two months ago.

Skullius scratched his chin.

"What's causing this? Why are they fighting?" he asked.

There had to be a deeper reason, right?

"Apparently, the Head of the Bryne Family, their father, is ill with an unknown ailment. As a result, managing the Family has been left to Stylla and her brother and thus this result."

"An unknown disease? Even a Healer or something can't cure it?"

"Yes, apparently multiple Healers from the Temple failed to dispel it. And I say dispel because some of these Healers claimed it felt more like a curse. Now what's risen from this is the rumour that one of the rival Families might have hired some band of renown criminals to get the father cursed," Silrat explained.

"A band of criminals?" Skullius muttered with a frown. "I met quite a few groups of thieves and such on the way here. Why are so fleshing many of them?"

"Get used to it. Those low level thugs you met don't even compare to the real deal. In these parts, companies of criminals are common, so common that the Guilds Association has to work in tandem with the Capital Service to hunt them down."

"Really? Then how come that wasn't the case in Inhone City? Clusters were the main problem, right?"

"That's because Inhone is in an isolated region, places where the Royal Family has declared free from ownership by Houses and Families. The history behind it is a little convoluted so I'll spare you the details but... the idea is there won't be many thieves when there's barely anyone rich to steal from.

Besides no one can hire any of those guys in that dreadfully poor region," Silrat said before changing the subject.

"Let's chuck that whole discussion aside, shall we? I need you to get ready for the Aptitude Evaluation Test tomorrow. People have already started doubting that you actually exist since you decided once again, on a last minute entry."

Skullius nodded with a smile as he then looked to Yuyui at his side who was fiddling with her fingers.

Due to his plans, he began wondering if he should incorporate Yuyui into his plans so soon.

She was a non-combatant with essentially no skills geared towards offence.

He would have to groom her but only if she had a Talent for anything other than devouring the world as some kind of hidden boss.

While thinking of this, he posed another question to Silrat when he thought of the word 'talent.'

"What differentiates a regular evaluation in the Guilds Association from this one? Are there additional benefits for me specifically that I should be aware of if I impress?"

Silrat answered while standing up, depicting that he clearly had something else on his agenda.

"Well, there are certain privileges granted depending on the rank you attain after the assessment. I know what you're thinking. You probably want your freedom, don't you?"

"Hmmm..." Skullius hummed in response, neither denying nor agreeing.

The truth was from the vibe he was getting from Genhuis City, it was impossible to do anything with guaranteed privacy.

"You'll be allowed such if you get a high enough ranking in the assessment. For now, I have some issues to handle, but I'll fill you in on the whole detail tomorrow. In the meantime, Daggs here can arrange for you your living quarters," Silrat said as he gave a sigh and walked out, going up the flight of stairs while rubbing his temples.

This short discussion with Skullius had already done a number on him and Skullius found this infinitely amusing.

'A good enough evaluation, huh? That's interesting,' the Hybrid Luman thought.

"Please, follow me. I'll show you to your rooms," Daggs said with a defeated wind from his lips.

Skullius and Yuyui followed the poor man who was still sweating quite a bit, the three going through a long corridor, turning down multiple paths before reaching one of the bedrooms.

It seemed strange to Skullius that this mansion was largely so empty.

Were these the only people living here?

A few guards, a few maids and this sorry guy?

Really?

Skullius wanted to probe but unfortunately, he would not receive an answer for obvious reasons.

A scan of the entire mansion with Skullius' Machi had told him that indeed Stylla and her brother were not here.

Perhaps he would get to meet her tomorrow as he had to sate his curiosity over multiple things.

"This will be your room, Master Festos. I will accompany your...guest to her own," Daggs said.

"That won't be necessary," Skullius said as he grabbed Yuyui's hand, pulling her over. "I'll need her for the night."

"..."

Daggs froze.

Need her for the night?

Had he failed to get some hints about these two's relationship?

Could it be based on profanity or worse yet... love?!

These thoughts whirled in the poor attendant's mind only for a moment as he hurriedly nodded, bowed and rushed away.

Skullius and Yuyui entered the room which was quite big.

All things necessary for one to feel comfortable here could be found.

A large bed with warm and fragrant sheets, a neat and wall and nice lighting from the ceiling, all this plus a large window to expose the view of the outside.

It was perfect.

Skullius breathed out in relief at the luxuries he could sense, sitting on the bed.

Yuyui gawked at the large bed before diving onto it, her figure bouncing up and down while Skullius took out his ring.

The sun was yet to set but there was evidently nothing left to do but relax.

Unfortunately, that wasn't an option for Skullius.

With how he had structured his growth plan for the future, he might as well use all the free time he could afford.

The WILLS of Fulgardt were helpful in this regard.

The mind-set and niche way of thinking required to make a powerhouse out of himself quickly was something Skullius had lacked before.

Now, he had opened a way towards it with the WILLS, the WILL OF CUNNING helping him understand the most efficient ways to use the resources and time at his disposal.

And for now...

'I'm still yet to get a complete grasp on Distorted Gravity. Even if my mana contains the properties of it, and that of weight, I can't use any skills relating to that high level concept at all. I need [Epiphany] for this as well as... a good sacrificial lamb,' Skullius said while turning his head to Yuyui.

The lime haired girl felt her master's piercing gaze and quickly turned, quitting her repeated bounce.

"Yuyui, how do you feel about acting as my human shield for at least two hours? It will be hard though. You'll probably be dying by getting zapped by lightning or squashed into the ground by Gravity.... buuuuut, it won't be so bad~," Skullius said with 'kind' smile.

Yuyui froze and shrunk back.

She obviously didn't want to.

Dying by lightning?

That was too new!

"Uhhmm...I..." she stammered.

"If you do this, I'll take you out to eat for half a day in the city as a reward. How's that?" Skullius said to sweeten the deal.

Though Yuyui was human, Skullius subconsciously started to soften up to her. He was used to being surrounded by Apostles whom he eventually grew appreciative of and the same was inevitable with Yuyui.

Still though... no one would accept something so ridiculous!

Who would agree to dying an unknown number of times over hours?!

That was insan-

"I'm in!" Yuyui instantly responded with a rarely seen look of seriousness.

Chapter 448: A Prediction of Note!

The depths of night finally shrouded the massive city whose clamour didn't cease. At night, in the snow covered streets, the only change to occur was the bright lights that would create an epic spectacle in every street and corner, highlighting the images of moving people going about their business.

The second sun in the sky was nowhere to be seen as with the coming of the night, its owner would give it much needed release, leaving the City underneath without light nor aerial surveillance.

Yet, none dared to aimlessly start major commotions within the city as many factions...many powerful factions were on the lookout.

The caped Knights would be patrolling the streets, their presence garnering both order, a few nods of respect as well as the skittering of common thieves into dark, hidden spaces like rats.

The same was especially true for those who lived around the base of the massive tower that maintained its beauty even in the night.

Even regular people could feel the billowing waves of mana arching around it, as well as see the distinguished people going in and out of it.

No one caused trouble anywhere near this tower as the rapid response to any form of offense here was something that was impossible to escape.

Apart from this, the lean towers strategically placed around the city were also active, lights being seen at the tops to show that the people nesting here were very much alive and well.

And as one would have it, it was in one of these towers that a rather serious meeting was taking place...or rather, it was about to.

A young lady with curly red hair, adorned in a cloak to cover her appearance and status entered the inviting door before her with her head lowered.

As soon as her full figure passed through, the entrance behind her was closed as the individual who let her in gestured silently for her to sit on a bench slapped against the wall.

The young lady did so as she then looked ahead of her where the figure she was here to see took a seat on a small stool that seemed to want match the small room.

Cracks were common on the walls, with the sounds of vermin chittering echoing behind them, cretins of different types and portions rushing about.

This wasn't the same for all the other rooms in these lean towers but only this one fit for the meeting taking place at this moment.

"I see you are relentless in your need to know the Direction designated to your Family. To think you would wait for me for a whole month..." the individual who sat on the stool, facing the young lady said, "...Is it desperation?"

"Desperation, depravity, desire... I don't care what you call it. If I wanted judgement I would visited the Temple and publicly disdained the teachings of the Deities. All I need are answers," the young woman said with a hard expression.

"<Cough>. I see," a hard cough escaped the mouth of the figure who sat before the woman – an old man with what one would call strings of white hair falling from his head to massage his wrinkled forehead, his eyes shockingly still vibrant with a brown hue that told of naught a lapse in his sight at all.

"Yet, Lady Stylla... do you know that there is a price for peering too deeply into the secrets of what lies beyond our eyes? Some prefer the mystery and surprise that comes with not knowing....Truthfully it causes one to try harder and chase after a dream with vigour. Do you not yearn for that feeling?"

The lady, who was Stylla, adjusted her sitting position, shuffling her legs under the cloak.

"You would say this to me when you know that I'm doing all this for my father? What adventure can I go about looking for when someone with the ability to evade even your eyes set their sights on my family, starting with my father? No one can cure it. No one even knows where to start..." Stylla said with a bitter expression.

The old man scratched his cheek with a sigh.

That was indeed an odd situation.

Gosh it felt like his wise words were misplaced.

No! More like ill-timed!

Even his advanced Divinity caught nothing of this evasive individual who cursed the Head of the Bryne Family.

It was strange to him. Such a minor character...

Why waste the effort?

Why try so hard?

His thoughts were his own though as he continued to converse.

"Your words are true. It is perhaps not the exciting kind of mystery..." he said.

"It is not," Stylla shot with a huff. "I tried turning myself into something I'm not, confused on whether I would really have to lead the Family even with my limited potential in the Family Technique. I thought about... participating in the Premium Age Royale as a representative of the Family but..."

"That would be unwise. You and your brother were not blessed with enough talent for it. Your father may very well be the last one capable of exhibiting a great resonance with the Twin Contrast

Technique," the old man said. "A shame. As a fourth child in the Family, to have to bear this after three of your own siblings deserted... It must be hard..."

At the mention of this, Stylla secretly gritted her teeth and took on a serious visage.

"I came here to ask whether my representative has a chance. Winning... however that is decided by the rules, is not what I'm looking for. As long as his display is enough to get us noticed by House EverSword... that is enough for me. Maybe then..."

with a large pillar of the nation as support, I could help my father," Stylla said with an unshakeable resolve.

The old man wore a smile.

"What of your brother? Have you no faith in him and his choice?"

"Please answer my question," Stylla said with impatience, her soaring fury indicative of how she felt about her sibling.

"Very well..." the old man said as he stretched out his hand. "May I?"

Stylla was already used to this.

She laid her hand in the old man's and took a deep breath.

Divination was a special practise where one could look backwards and forwards in the trajectory of the string of events in the world.

With growth, using items that could aid in gaining a foothold of exactly what one wanted became unnecessary but looking to a future result was always challenging.

Still, the old man before Stylla was a master at his craft.

He had been in Genhuis City for more than five decades as one of the Grand Diviners protecting the city, never once considered to be replaced.

How Stylla was even talking to an esteemed figure like this was not because of her own connections, but her ill father's and even with that, she had had to wait for a month before getting a second audience with the man.

The old man held Stylla's hand gently, his focus immediately taking him far, whisking him into the trajectory of Direction ahead where he felt the calls of many paths.

Yet, as a veteran, the only man quickly reeled himself in, not succumbing to immense curiosity but to the task at hand.

His eyes closed as he twitched, soft trails of condensed mana leaking from him, wrapping around him and Stylla in a magnificent fashion.

It was beautiful to behold and mesmerising to see all these lights and...

...

The old man suddenly sucked in a deep breath and started to cough vehemently!

...!

Stylla was alerted as she hurriedly tried to ask what was wrong but...

The old man gripped her hand firmly, applying a tremendous amount of pressure.

"I... I see...I see....!" the old man stammered as his eyes shot open, their colour now being foggy grey!

Stylla hurriedly concentrated all her mana into her hand which was nearly crushed by the old man's sudden exertion of force on her!

He was seeing something!

What was it?

"What do you see?!" Stylla asked in a panic. "Is there a chance?!"

The old man's face turned dark.

"No... not that! Not such triviality!" the old man bellowed. "You.. Oh.. I see you and that man...oh Quintess!

I see a... a... magisterial creature behind you...! A...a King... is about to descend! I...I do not understand...

but... it is a King... one... with no renown of this world! I see it! Through this man you have invited...

a... a King will descend!"

Chapter 449: Certified Guinea Pig

"GYAAAAAAAAAAAAA! Master! Master don't throw me like that! That's not safe! That's dangerous! I'll die again!"

"That's part of the point!"

WHOOOSH!

The figure of a terrified Yuyui rushed through the air but only for a few brief moments before smashing hard into the ground!

On the top of the stout mountain, the Distorted Gravity would not allow such insolence. Who would dare rise into the air without copping a feel of the ground?!

Preposterous!

Yuyui grunted as the force pulled her harshly against the hard ground, dragging her deep as if to rein her in!

At the same time when she fell with a such a force, one of the stone pillars around shot up into the air at a ridiculous speed, blowing off a shiver-inducing shockwave that could be mistaken for a harsh tremor!

'She didn't get blasted by the lightning this time...!' Skullius whose four sockets blazed with a blue flame said as he analysed what was beyond him..

He had flung Yuyui just now in order to analyse the effects of the high level concepts on this mountain on the Pinnacle Occuluthon, the lime haired girl of glutton legends.

This was one of the many tests he had been carrying out with her as her being a meat shield was not necessary this far from the dome that housed the mysterious natural treasures he was after.

Instead, Skullius wanted to aid his use of [Epiphany] with some visual aid on the effects of these concepts.

It wouldn't exactly help much when he knew the damage they caused to him.

He wanted to see a fleshy human bag get sniped by the effects for a better understanding.

'Strange... I've seen it before but... what is that effect. Every time a powerful gravitational force applies on something, one of the pillars shoots into the sky...!' Skullius thought.

His skeletal body was hunched over to disallow the gravity from taking advantage of him so crudely, his finger scratching against his chin.

'Is it some kind of exchange? No, that doesn't make any fleshing sense. Why would the pillars go up then? Gah!'

The depiction on the guidance field that showed Skullius to have an affinity with Distorted Gravity but without even a rank, was rather annoying for Skullius. It was worse when he realised that the affinity he had, the effect of his mana which he had worked hard for, was stuck on being regular Gravity without any special traits.

Perhaps they were yet to manifest...?

Who knew?

Skullius trudged his way to Yuyui who remained laying flat on her face.

Transforming back into his Penetrator form now was harrowing as he could feel the sense of weakness that came with it.

His Hybrid Luman body was so much stronger now and the roles were reversed in an unfunny manner.

Also, although he had assimilated the WILLS of Fulgardt in his soul, he found much of the effects subdued when he turned to his Penetrator form.

Skullius pulled on Yuyui from the waist, adjusting the grip of both his hands to below her arms as he raised her up. Now, it seemed like she was a kid being held by a tall monster.

Yuyui who had a bloody face and several fractures sighed in resignation as she looked into Skullius' sockets.

"You're even more cruel in this form, Master," she said.

"No, I'm not. I was kind enough to offer you a reward in exchange for your sacrifices, wasn't I? It's a cheap price when you think about it," Skullius responded, genuinely praising himself for his thoughtfulness.

Yuyui rubbed her sore nose.

"Well yeah...but you seem to enjoy killing me. You never do that when you're in your handsome form."

Skullius paused for a bit.

Handsome, huh?

"I do enjoy venting with a little violence. On you that is... But look at the bright side. At least you get to die in a variety of ways and quickly get used to it."

"But that's only good for you!"

"Well yeah, bro."

As mentioned before, Yuyui only had one gripe with Skullius.

That was this monstrous form.

After she had been captured by Ferex following her terrified sprint on seeing the Penetrator for the first time, she had slowly started to get used to it.

Of course she didn't exactly believe the claim Skullius kept pushing to her brain... that HE WASN'T AN UNDEAD, but with time, it seemed plausible.

It... SEEMED plausible.

She wasn't fully used to seeing it yet as she much preferred the more human form that she took to be kinder.

"Now come on, prepare for another throw," Skullius said as he carried her like a plank.

The lime haired girl sighed.

Her master was fully taking advantage of the fact that she had powerful mind, supported by the Special skill she cultivated within the Temple, [Broken Mind].

It was one of the reasons she had managed to retain her sanity, besides from keeping herself busy with singing and tree eating of course.

Once more, Yuyui was airborne, her body violated in a violent way.

This time, a bolt of grey lightning darted from the sky and smashed into the poor girl, her figure turning bright before she vanished.

'Let's see... Will there be any difference?' Skullius thought, his skill [Epiphany] passively taking in the information about the surroundings concepts.

A short moment later, Yuyui appeared, dropping from the sky as she was pulled onto the ground violently!

"OOOWWWW!" she screamed on her landing, and started rolling around while holding the back of her head.

"Huh?!"

Skullius was surprised to see her in one piece.

He rushed to her through the weight of the world and picked her up, retreating with her to a less burdensome space.

This was the first time Skullius had seen this.

Every time he was smitten by Spatial lightning, he would be taken into the Stagnant Space for a time before being spat back into the world but either with intense burns or sharp fatal cuts, some that cleaved him in half.

For Yuyui to come out unharmed this time when she had been slaughtered multiple times by this phenomenon earlier...

"You're alright?"

Yuyui turned to Skullius with a half pouting expression, her eyes showing shadows of tears.

"No," she replied.

Skullius' sockets flared.

He didn't care for Yuyui's response right now as the fact of the matter was...

'This is an interesting concept. It's more than just an element for offense or traps! Can it be used for... transport?'

Could it indeed.

Chapter 450: Eccentric Is A Woman!

A distance from the stout mountain where a Penetrator was having illuminating thoughts, a certain large Limitless Body Null Demon Hound was standing on its two hind legs.

Its body, adjusted for this fiendish look as always, was taking in thick bursts of pure mana from the verdant forest, its feet submerged in the mud.

Over its Unliving Thread which formed a bulky mass over its skeletal structure, giving it a beefy visage, droplets of water could be seen. The humidity here was unreal.

On its abdomen a red pulsing light kept lighting up and dimming, as it kept up the continuous production of Unliving Thread, the current version of this which could only reinforce the Hound physically.

The Limitless Body Null Demon Hound had the capability to attain a new kind of Thread with every evolution but they all had a malleable nature to them by design.

Ferex was playing around with this, along with the abilities he learned from a certain race of beings that would have become a problem if left to grow and worse yet...

Escape their Cluster.

The Bookworms.

Unliving Thread spurned from the Hound's body, tangling and tying itself into uniform wisps that forged a book that was held within one of Ferex's hands.

This was the Innate Holder that Ferex had used a combination of [Amorphous Sampling] and [GENIUS!] on in order to copy. The one belonging to the Bookworm known as Kotaman who used [Reinforcement Magic].

Even with all this said however, only a few spells from the actual holder were replicated as the powers that the Bookworm race were too unique.

Their continued existence could have triggered an evolution of Magecraft but sadly, that ship had sailed.

The spells that Ferex had managed to salvage were...

[Malleable Junk Cover], [Brutish Grunt's Gauntlet], [Firm Rage], [Boost] and [Edged Clunk].

Three of these spells, which were represented by arrays on the pages of the book, were armours while the rest were spells geared towards enhancing physical attributes like strength and toughness.

The convenience of using these was that there was no need to focus on casting, as the array produced the effect. Also, there was no cooldown or limited duration, as the only thing one needed to worry about was the supply of mana!

Using one would be spectacular but for Ferex, his aim was to create a body that wasn't so easily susceptible to damage. A body apart from his Hound form that was capable of steadily dealing damage as well. His upright form wasn't that different from his original form, which was disheartening.

His race was supposed to be innovative and clever but with only roughly nine days since his birth, the advent of these new ideas was quite slow.

The Hound wanted to be more useful and to be true to the name of his race.

And thus...

WHOOSH...

As mana coursed through his body, like splatters of light over its bulk, miniature arrays started to appear over its body!

They appeared in the dozens at first, covering its limbs and then its torso, giving a harshly powerful reinforcement!

With enough mana, Ferex could create an unlimited number of arrays over his body, continuously compounding something like the simple array [Boost] which granted him a 10% to all his stats on top of himself to give a theoretically limitless boost in power.

Alas, it wasn't that simple.

A level up was required as Ferex was yet to fully coordinate the resources and power needed to create something like that, but it was only a matter of time.

Despite the obstacles, despite its FLAW that demanded a RESET after each and every intense fight that Ferex was involved in, erasing all his skills and experiences in the process... he would find a way.

The lit sockets of the creature turned to the distance.

A 'veteran' Apostle was working hard to ensure he remained relevant as well.

Well, Ferex was doing the same thing, hoping he would remain useful.

"This is not all your father can offer, is it? In my... proud opinion, this is the epitome of tasteless junk masquerading as the classy touch of a rich home," a young looking woman with long navy blue hair said with an unimpressed gaze.

The two ladies that sat on couches at both her sides, their hair also having varying shades of blue, merely nodded in agreement as their opinion was not required. Only concurrence was needed of them.

These two ladies were donning long, white dresses with a turquoise blue coloured insignia of a sea horse-like symbol with white spots going through it. The addition of these glorified holes honestly gave it an appearance akin to fancy cheese but no one cared.

This pious dressing was in stark contrast to how the woman who had just spoken was dressed however, which was surprising.

"I'm sorry if the mansion doesn't meet your standards but we can't tear it down and build a new one when the city is already packed with visitors here for the event."

Opposite the three women, sat a man with brown hair made into a quiff, his handsome face which had a generic, yet traditional masculine jawline, showing a fierce determination that refused to buckle under the weight of the status of this woman.

This man was the Governor's son and even if the woman before him, with all her sexual and intellectual charm, fought back against his authority, he wouldn't budge.

"You're quite stubborn for someone who came here to advise against my participation in the Premium Age Royale. If you don't want me to participate, why don't you start by showing a little... favouritism?" the woman with the navy blue hair said with an alluring smile, her body leaning in as she crossed her legs, which were barely hidden by the skirt she wore.

The man opposite her breathed out without allowing his gaze to wander. That would be...disastrous.

"The Kinn Family is an important part of Pelian. If needed, I doubt it would truly be hard for your Family to be made into the seventh House. No other bloodline on the continent has the capability to continuously produce Energy Formers without fail. Your Family is essentially the largest producer of Healers in Aigas. So yes, your participation in a death game as the Head of the Family is not advised.

There's too much risk."

A smile crept on the woman's face.

Amusing.

"What if it's the thrill of risk I want? Not from retarded bands of assassins that want to wipe out my entire line or from some horny fuck who wants me to birth a 'special' child for their Family. I want to taste something uniquely dangerous," the woman said.

"Why don't you challenge Aurolio Velanqi then? Isn't he the most powerful man you could ever fight at your level?" the young man asked with a brow raised, hints of frustration surfacing through his voice.

"That's a different kind of risk," the woman said with a bored sigh. "A duel is too ordinary. That's why I look forward to fighting him in the Royale. 'Fight' is a bit much. Maybe I'll poke. I don't want to die after all."

At that moment, a dog rushed into the room, leaping into this woman of repute's arms.

It had black, silky fur and lanky ears that dropped from the sides of its head.

Its tail wagged as it barked with joy at its master who patted its head but with far less enthusiasm.

The young man was distracted by the strange affection between the Head of the Kinn Family and her dog for a second before he asked once again...

"So I cannot dissuade you from this?"

"You cannot. Unless..." the woman said as her gaze then turned to the ceiling and the walls, "... you tear down the walls, that Quintess forsaken ceiling and replace it all with a wall of attractive, well endowed nude men instead. Yes, that would be eccentric enough. A better start to our discussion."