

Undead 621

Chapter 621: The Battlefield Is The Lake

As a slice of Skullius swayed, leaning away from the rest of his body while he once again pulled himself together – figuratively – and set his sights away from the sword a golden-green light swiftly burst from his body and ran through where he had been severed, stitching him up to pull his two pieces together in an instant!

It was a very fast recovery.

Skullius' now whole body zipped backwards, creating distance between himself and the enemy.

He took a deep breath.

What [Primal Caution] had warned him about just now...

'That sword is dangerous,' he thought.

Just by taking a close look at it, he had received a fatal, violent injury that he was sure could have peeled open even a Second Phase Master!

That's right.

Looking at the sword welcomed death.

He was sure of it.

The name of the sword ringing in his mind suddenly made sense.

Bashful Abomination.

This sword was so shy it would kill anyone who looked at it?

'If its a Pseudo-Mythical grade item, then I'd expect nothing less than such a ridiculous characteristic.'

The sword in the hand of the giant goblin who still didn't take Skullius seriously, evidenced by how it still sat with its back turned to him, was a chipped longsword.

No, rather it was more like a horse chopping saber, its hilt nearly the length of a regular sword – of its size – while its blade alone was nearly as tall as the goblin who wielded it.

The chipped blade had an off-white hue with innumerable scratches over it that gave off the impression of age and an unhealthy number of battles, its hilt and cross guard having a dull brass colour over a rugged design.

The air this sword gave was bewitching yet repulsive.

It was certainly enough for Skullius to be glad that he was actually blind and wouldn't mistakenly look at it ever again.

That said, he still wanted to fight this giant goblin before him but to do that, he needed it to face him with all its cards on display. If not, he would be met with too many surprises like this one just now.

First things first though...

Skullius pointed upwards, a flare of golden-green light shooting straight into the sky from the deep crater. Before it reached the swirling smoke up high, it expanded and created a vast, elegant and complex ring full of brilliant symbols that even the Hybrid Luman didn't quite understand.

That was irrelevant though.

All Skullius needed was the light produced by this ring in the sky as well as the sparks of rejuvenating spots raining from it constantly over a five hundred meter radius.

A barely perceptible halo covered Skullius because of this light, granting him a 80% increase to his overall ability and an absurd healing factor close to the potency of a Super healing potion!

[Saint Lumis' Benign Arc].

This was an evolved version of [Great Saint's Invigoration] that was beyond the level of a mere normal skill.

Its passive light had healed the Hybrid Luman just now and this active effect revolving in the sky would not cease to give the light of benign embrace to its caster!

All this would last for ten minutes and Skullius was confident that in that same amount of time or less, this battle would be over.

As expected however, even this did not make the giant goblin budge.

Skullius scoffed and spread his feet.

He held Demion's Dance and its sheath before slowly pulling the sword out.

The scraping of the green blade with its healthy sheen against the innards of the sheath registered in the auditory domain of the goblin.

Its ears twitched and it moved ever so slightly.

'So that's what it takes to make you move,' Skullius thought, verifying the glimpse of the information he had recorded from this goblin right before he decided to stop relying on Crude Vision.

Frankly, it was a bold move to be confidently standing against a Tier 11 Cluster beast with a purple core!

One with another unusual and honestly terrifying class.

A Hidden Class.

The Finite Sword god.

This reeked of extraordinary danger.

Mortal Ruin streamed from Skullius and Demion's Dance, the Hybrid Luman preparing for an attack instead of launching one himself.

...!!!

It came!

Skullius saw the goblin suddenly shoot up as an ugly, sketch-like blur even to his focused senses, the Bashful Abomination in its hand raised high.... no, it had already descended onto his head, its sharp, chipped edge already carving his skull open with shrieking bubbles of powerful mana before it even made contact....!

"Urgh..." Skullius only had the time to mutter a grunt before realising that... the giant goblin was still seated with its back turned against him and hadn't made a move at all.

....

A droplet of sweat climbed down Skullius' forehead and tap danced down the bridge of his nose.

What... the flesh was that?

[Primal Caution] hadn't warned him in time but then... was that an illusion?

No, it definitely wasn't!

A grin planted itself on Skullius' face, along with awe, happiness and an inkling of terror.

He wasn't afraid.

But he was fleshing confused.

...!!!

Once again, he was warned but this time he decisively slashed with his sword at wherever he felt the threat come from but a thick hand preceded by a large dark grey blade had already carved past his neck as it blazed by Skullius in multiple folds of miniscule time!

Skullius' body reacted violently to this!

His head seemed to fly off as his very flesh believed but in reality, he had received no damage at all, for his opponent was still seated on the ground, not even looking at him.

Gulp.

Skullius took a deep breath.

'Sword god, huh?' he thought while swallowed hard.

He was being toyed with.

An opponent with ten times more Strength, Agility, Endurance, Health and Mana could do that to him easily especially when they had a vibrant purple core as well, meaning that Skullius was massively outclassed physically by two leagues of mana!

Still...

Skullius spread his feet wider and twirled Demion's Dance in his hand.

He wore a smirk and held his breath.

It was time to take the initiative.

An intolerable burst of heat suddenly hammered the air and ground behind Skullius in fractions of a second and the next thing anyone knew, he and his sword were an inch away from beheading the goblin in its serene seated position!

Only when this scene showed did the walls of the crater shudder and crumble from the unexpected blast of energy, at the same time, the tall goblin close to meeting Demion's Dance's edge moving the Bashful Abomination to defend without moving its lower body!

Skullius grinned devilishly!

'Heh!'

The clashing of steel never occurred.

In fact, the closed eyes of the goblin shot open at this moment as it quickly changed the course of its long sword to another direction where...

CLANG!

An uncomfortable ring sounded at a dangerous low frequency!

The white eyes of the large goblin reflected the exhilaration captured on the face of the Hybrid Luman whom he was clashing swords with.

This goblin, Hobbu Bobbu, hummed.

His opponent had attacked and vanished right when he was about to parry to appear in another location at an unusual speed.

He hadn't expected that.

Skullius' figure vanished from the air and reappeared on the ground.

He watched Hobbu Bobbu finally stand up, his pot belly dancing up and down for a moment while his thin, bandaged arms twitched a couple of times, flexing unused might.

A bodacious, stifling air suddenly filled the crater as Hobbu Bobbu let loose, seemingly having decided to entertain Skullius just from that one showing he hadn't expected.

He was a bit curious.

To make things more interesting though, Hobbu Bobbu summoned a wild amount of mana and caught it in his mouth, his cheeks inflated. He then spat it all in the open but what flooded out was a vicious fountain of clear water that quickly filled up the crater!

Because both opponents had unusual abilities though, they didn't sink but stood on top of this new lake without any problems.

'What's with this?' Skullius wondered.

Hobbu Bobbu with his apathetic expression tilted his head and gestured towards this ring of water with a finger and then pointed down.

Skullius frowned a little.

'The battlefield is this lake?' he thought.

Was this some kind of rule?

"Sure," Skullius nodded and held his sword.

Surely something with the class of Finite Sword god would enjoy antics like this. Or was this goblin trying to make things interesting because it thought it could kill him easily.

Hmph!

Such hubris!

The Hybrid Luman had many surprises for this sockethole!

Chapter 622: Against The Finite Sword God

'Let's see how my swordsmanship stacks up against the Finite Sword god first,' Skullius thought.

His mana gushed onto his sword and imbued into it the full force of weight that he could now attach to a singular target.

155,000 tonnes.

With the growth in his constitution, his mana application skills as well as the general quantity of it, Skullius found that its weight property rose exponentially as well over the past six weeks!

It was unexpected by extremely welcome!

As Demion's Dance got the pale white hue over it, radiating the mana from its master, its durability was increased several fold.

As mentioned before, Skullius could apply weight either by having his mana run within or around an object or himself.

The former was effective against mana nullifying measures like Genuine Incarnations but made the target unbearably heavy even for itself own movement while the latter could be countered as the mana was exposed, but in exchange, for instance in this case, Skullius could use Demion's Dance without feeling how much it actually weighed!

The curved sword was also tinged with a layer of [Evil Darkness] in order to support it against the innate power of a Pseudo-Mythical grade weapon like the Bashful Abomination which could destroy it easily.

Therefore Demion's Dance as it was held tight in Skullius' hand had not a green blade but a black one.

'Now!' Skullius gave himself the go ahead for an attack.

Streams of thin Mortal Ruin sprang into existence in an instant, creating a flurry of blurs that created a tight knit network all around the space that Hobbu Bobbu and Skullius had designated as the battlefield!

This network of incredibly sharp Mortal Ruin surged and zipped its way towards the Finite Sword god as well, intent on slicing him to pieces!

Skullius' senses grew keener.

This was definitely not enough but it was worth a try.

Hobbu Bobbu, with his dark grey chipped zhanmadao – horse chopping saber – in hand, remained stationary as the Mortal Ruin reached him and went berserk like a rabid crayon over a blank piece of paper!

For a brief moment, it seemed like the goblin had indeed been caught in the attack but the Hybrid Luman didn't believe it. He kept his focus on the large goblin's unmoving mass.

Then...

....!!!!

[Primal Caution] warned!

"Wha..."

Skullius thought he had made a mistake in what he sensed come to pass next!

Was this real?!

In the time it took him to take a quarter of a breath, the vast network of Mortal Ruin he had created was bypassed easily by Hobbu Bobbu whose body stretched like a trail of dark green paint on the air, his body having shrunk to Skullius' size as well as his sword!

The elegant taps of the monster's feet on the surface of the water rang clearly in Skullius' senses, almost in unison and by the time he finished speaking the word 'What', Hobbu Bobbu's calamitous presence was already flying two meters from him, his sword pulled back at an angle!

'Shit!' Skullius cursed.

There was no way he could properly sense this kind of movement, let alone react to it!

...!!!

[Primal Caution] warned him again in this moment and Skullius got sick of it!

What was it now?!

To his surprise, the sword that he could somewhat make out, the Bashful Abomination, vanished from Hobbu Bobbu's hand then reappeared and disappeared again while the Finite Sword god seemed to be suspended in time!

What... what was this?!

A fierce breeze then brushed against Skullius at this same time which he ignored as he maintained focus on Hobbu Bobbu's figure which glitched and then stood on the water.

Huh?!

The earlier attack stance was gone.

The weird motion with the sword was gone.

The now human sized goblin now stood a short distance from Skullius with a deprecating smile as if everything that it had done until now made a modicum of sense!

Skullius took in several breaths to calm his mind but then...

He felt something missing from his body.

His left arm and right leg were gone.

There were precise edged stumps on his shoulder and pelvis, as if he had amputated of his limbs a long time ago!

...!

Hobbu Bobbu was amused by Skullius' confusion.

In the next moment though, a wholesome golden-green light descended and stitched together a new arm and leg for Skullius whose face had hardened!

He drew back as soon as he regained his limbs, the VergeRider armour he wore recovering itself as well.

But...

A moment later, Skullius felt the Bashful Abomination alternate in and out of existence in the hand of Hobbu Bobbu who stood still and then...

His lower body was gone.

The light above stitched up a full half of his body in a blink, restoring it before his torso could fall into the water below but in the next moment, all of Skullius' limbs vanished without the trace again!

This...!

Skullius' face hardened even more.

He realised something with this.

So this was what had happened to the goblins that had been caught by Hobbu Bobbu's attack earlier?

So this was the nature of that strike?

As soon as his body parts were restored, Skullius backed away rapidly under the white eyes of Hobbu Bobbu who didn't attack him again this time, clearly giving him time to 'process things.'

'Now that I have felt it myself I understand. Those goblins didn't vanish into thin air,' Skullius thought.

This green bastard was slashing with his sword so fast and so many times in one instance that his target would be cut into infinitesimally small particles that not even Skullius could feel after they were diced up to a certain point!

Flesh, bone and... even mana!

All of it was cut down in less than the blink of an eye.

This was the power of a goblin with the Hidden Class, Finite Sword god!

'That's how it is, huh?' Skullius laughed at himself while grabbing gripping Demion's Dance tighter.

It was absurd to contend with something like this but the Hybrid Luman didn't back down. He couldn't.

Not after being mocked by that ugly smirk on Hobbu Bobbu's face.

In fact...

[You are HYPED!]

[You are HYPED!]

The Hybrid Luman was hyped from this!

"Let me show you my own swordsmanship," he said as he extended Demion's Dance before him and breathed out.

Hobbu Bobbu prepared as well, seeing as Skullius' air shifted dramatically. He knew there was more to this opponent, which was why he was entertaining him like this.

BOOOM!

The lake rumbled as an immense heat rammed against the waters, splashing them away!

By the time these effects showed, Skullius' figure had already descended on Hobbu Bobbu, clashing swords with him!

The goblin wore a relaxed smile as its Bashful Abomination and Demion's Dance released sparks with their meet!

A flurry of generic attacks then came from Skullius which the Finite Sword god also blocked easily, sparks like flares raging around them while the surface of the water rippled!

"Hmmm," Hobbu Bobbu mumbled disappointedly.

Was this it?

Was this the limit of this opponent who seemed special from that move earlier?

Hobbu Bobbu's face grew a little sullen as he parried and blocked ordinary sword slashes from his enemy.

How boring.

Perhaps he had gotten his hopes too high—

...!!

A wild warning smacked the once large goblin's face, causing his white eyes to bulge out!

He stopped defending against the attacks coming from in front of him and swished back with the Bashful Abomination to block a sudden slit of blackish red that cut across his figure!

SHIIIIIIING!

CLANG!

The dark blade of the Hybrid Luman met the grey blade of the goblin again but this time, both opponents wore serious visages!

Hobbu Bobbu frowned a little.

This was the second time this was happening.

How did this ungreen heathen suddenly appear right behind him so quickly?

And this attack of his... It was different from the ordinary slashes he had been using before.

Had he been baiting him?

Hobbu Bobbu's eyes narrowed as he felt the air shift again!

This time, he felt and saw four images of his enemy appearing in four different locations around him, all these images with different kinds of attacks from the same black covered blade!

SHIIIIIIIIING!

What was this?!

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The Finite Sword god blocked them all within the same moment before he held his Abomination against one figure that remained in front of him.

His eyes keenly focused on his opponent who was radiating a sickening halo of death, his face so serious that it looked like he was donning a mask compared to the casual expression he had before!

Skullius held Demion's Dance blade tenderly while standing in a strange stance.

Hobbu Bobbu chose not to miss any of these movements. He had to know how the tables were turning so suddenly.

Skullius took steps to the left then to the right and for the briefest of moments, Hobbu Bobbu saw a set of silver footprints that layered themselves over the water, his opponent stepping on them immediately after!

When he did, he vanished!

CLANG!

The goblin's instincts warned him of a deadly sword attack that came from the left then another which came immediately from the right an instant later, then another and another!

From four came seven more!

From seven came eleven more!

The figure of a Hybrid Luman with a darkness covered sword was multiplied over the waters and even in the air while striking with different hideously dangerous attacks that all looked like thin slits of blackish red heading for Hobbu Bobbu!

The air was filled with Skulliuses that faded after sending elegant sword strikes at the enemy!

Sword strikes that intended on cutting the enemy moments before they even touched their opponent!

They were magnificent!

Hobbu Bobbu didn't know it, but he was facing against an elegant dance of death.

The Swindling Death's Dance!

Even if it was still incomplete, it was mesmerising, yet deadly!

A seemingly endless cacophony of steel rings rushed through the air along with sparks that were more like tongues of fire falling onto the water!

Hobbu Bobbu matched against all of Skullius' strikes with serious ones of his own!

His apprehension turned into excitement, his beady white eyes shining with joy!

An opponent like this...!

Suddenly, Hobbu Bobbu's figure moved so fast that it stretched against the tens of images attacking him relentlessly!

Since he had reduced his size, he could meet Skullius in an exciting intimate clash!

Hopefully.

The Finite Sword god's figure warped, following the pitter-patter of steps he heard from the water to find which Skullius to follow!

They were all real but there was the one to deliver the latest blow. That was the one that he had to find!

Hobbu Bobbu's body blurred, creating several figures that clashes against different Skulliuses, matching and exceeding them in speed and power easily!

....!

Skullius shook his head as he touched the waters and turned to find Hobbu Bobbu streaking towards with a trail of after images behind him!

Since [Beyond the Hype] was active, he experienced everything at 15 times the norm which helped him feel his goblin opponent's figure much better!

'Even with this, this bastard is still ridiculous!' he thought as he moved to the left and right, a trail of red painting the air after him. Hobbu Bobbu's figure grinned and unleashed a mind-numbing flurry of attacks that numbered close to a hundred, mimicking Skullius' moves!

...!!!

Skullius scoffed even under the pressure, a mass of Mortal Ruin exploding from his body as the same sharp network of thin lines but this did not deter Hobbu Bobbu or even affect him!

The attacks that came passed through Skullius like a ghostly breezes but he didn't pay them any mind.

His body had been dismantled into millions of pieces that should have been too small to see just now but [Saint Lumis' Benign Arc] wouldn't allow him to die while it was active!

He definitely could have.

It stitched him up with a golden-green light that pulled together all of his pieces before he separated, in the process giving Skullius the image of a being made of light!

The Hybrid Luman sucked in a deep breath and cut laterally against the figure of Hobbu Bobbu with all his might, a dark red slit that dimmed the light shed on these two from above appeared with an astounding bloodlust!

Skullius saw his opponent in the face of the attack... then he did not.

His hand slicing through the air with the sword had vanished, Demion's Dance flying away from being lost to his grip!

'Tsk.'

Sets of footprints appeared in front of Skullius and he followed them. Before his sword could fall into the water, he had caught it in his newly created hand and was breathing out a exasperated sigh.

His enemy didn't give him time to rest though as for the first time, Skullius saw a genuine vertical strike come from Hobbu Bobbu, his hand gripping the Bashful Abomination slashing down with unmatched intensity that stilled everything in the Cluster!

The water beneath him and Skullius parted to create a clear path to the depth of the crater.

Then...

The air parted, the clear space between Skullius and Hobbu Bobbu splitting open to reveal bundled trees, grass and healthy soils that swarmed the open!

...!!!

Skullius was absolutely appalled.

He saw the trees peak through the space as well as dirt, all falling into the waters steadily as the air allowed!

This wasn't an attack.

It was a flex!

The Finite Sword god had split open the space within the Cluster to pull out trees, grass and land from the outside world in one genuine sword slash!

Chapter 623: Extra Crazy!

This was utterly nonsensical!

Skullius had never even heard of something like this!

Could swordsmanship really do this?

Skullius had been learning swordplay from Alaris for the past six weeks. Despite how reluctant the evaluation officer had sounded when Lady Ornamont had proposed that he take the Hybrid Luman as a disciple, he had actually taught Skullius a lot.

It wasn't an everyday thing but Alaris would find time to teach and develop what he thought was Skullius' perfect style, which, according to him was the combination of speed and precision.

This had become Skullius' template for growth. He was proud of it and had even begun to get a big head.

The Hybrid Luman breathed out the shock he had felt just now.

He had thought that at the very least he could clash swords safely with this sword demon. After all, even though he was outmatched in raw stats, he had skills that could compensate massively for the gaps.

For speed, there were three specific skills he had created for situations like these for goodness' sake, but still!

At this moment, as the trees that he was sure he had seen outside the Cluster before he came in fell into the lake with a loud splash, Skullius turned into a massive elongated mass of darkness and black ribbons that shot up into the sky in the blink of an eye, nearly touching his [Saint Lumis' Benign Arc].

His focus remained on Hobbu Bobbu who raised his head to gaze at his form which started to revolve around the perimeter of the lake with a sneer.

'Tsk. What an absurdly powerful sockethole,' Skullius thought as he circled around his enemy.

This dark mass he turned into was a peak level Special skill, [Boundless Evil].

It was a skill he created to cater for travelling long distance in short bursts of time. While speed was its strongest suit, it was also very good at charging and could repel most attack even if they were at the Special level!

It cost a large amount of mana but had a lenient cooldown and hour long duration. This was a benefit afforded by something that had become a trend for his Special skill, a component of his class as the Insurgent Magnus that granted such boons.

'Let's give it another shot,' Skullius thought before his lengthy dark mass shot down towards Hobbu Bobbu in a fraction of fractions of a second!

Right before he reached within a meter of his enemy, he reverted into his Hybrid Luman form and slashed down with a deadly skill he had awakened six weeks ago, [Parting Wave]!

A tall dark red slit was carved as Demion's Dance sliced down at Hobbu Bobbu, a whistle of air crying loudly in the process!

Contrary to Skullius' expectation, the Finite Sword god didn't evade or parry conventionally!

He simply... grew back to his original size, along with his Bashful Abomination!

.....!

This sudden action alarmed Skullius, causing him to abort his attack. A set of silver footprints appeared behind him over a large stretch of distance. When he stepped on these, he vanished from close view.

"<Sighhh>," the Hybrid Luman landed on the water with a dissatisfied face, his senses giving him the full picture of a eighteen meter tall goblin that chortled softly at him, clearly entertained by his helplessness.

'I imagined my speed would count for something but no. The gap is too big. He's not even fighting me seriously.'

A blazing shot of heat came from in front of Skullius pushing him back another stretch of distance from Hobbu Bobbu.

He needed a little break.

This skill just now was also part of Skullius' trusted trio of speed skills, [Instant Blaze Charge].

He had forged it after taking inspiration from the Fire Breeder he had seen back in the Creeping Chill Cluster that used 12 lit flames behind his back to propel himself forward in the air.

Unlike that same application, Skullius chose to use a concentration of extreme heat instead of flames which would launch him forward at rapid speed but for shorter distances.

'I'm sure even Alaris would have a hard time facing this big sockethole,' Skullius thought. 'In as much as I would like to blame the sword, I'm certain this bastard is just that good with a sword. Everything in this Cluster seems to just be gifted with incredible Classes. Hmm. But if that is the case, what DOES that sword actually do? Harming anyone who looks at it shouldn't be its limit, right?'

Skullius was right about Hobbu Bobbu simply having astounding skill as his class implied. In fact, the goblin hadn't shown some of the more ridiculous abilities up his sleeves, most of which were actually being brought to the surface because he had a really good weapon. One that ensured that his specific intents were met.

The earlier stunt where Hobbu Bobbu created water enough to fill the crater was actually sponsored by his class. As a Finite Sword god, he could manifest components that created his 'ideal' battlefields. In this case, since there had already been a hole, he simply filled it up with water even though he had nothing among his abilities that could generate basic elements!

With such abilities, Hobbu Bobbu was very confident and frankly, he was interested in seeing what this opponent would churn out next.

Skullius saw the glint of amusement and was irked.

A voraciously amount of mana burst from his body, towering into the sky. As did, Skullius sheathed his sword with a harsh breath.

'It's decided then. The combination of [Elite Swordplay] and the ever incomplete [Swindling Death's Dance] isn't enough for a Sword god, heh.'

Skullius shook his head and brought his hands close together, locking his fingers.

The surge in his mana made Hobbu Bobbu expectant but the sheathing of Demion's Dance disappointed the goblin.

His opponent wasn't going to use his sword anymore?

What a pity.

The eyes of the goblin turned dull and apathetic once more, just as they were before the fight started but Skullius laughed out loud at this.

This guy was something else, huh?

Skullius finally exposed the thousands of tiny light spots around his mana core, swiftly revolving around it.

They were the reason the air was turning heavy, waves washing outward from where he stood.

A total 4,000 super compressed portions of mana were at the Hybrid Luman's disposal.

Since the incident at the Bryne Family Estate, he had taken the issue of lacking enough mana for his big moves very seriously and thus at all times, Skullius had a vast amount of spare mana for use.

Swordsmanship wasn't going to work here.

But what about this?

A radiant light suddenly bloomed violently from behind Skullius, covering a width of over 300 meters and taking to the sky. It maxed out at a height of 700 meters before taking a solid shape. A very complex shape.

It was gigantic mass of golden white bones made of light, thousands of skeletons making its canopy with variations in the number of their sockets depending on which height they were placed!

Mist hissed from their gaping mouths while large black leaves grew at the very top of this construct, lessening the lighting around the world.

The Precept of Light, the Preeminent Attegoth was here!

It was much larger than before and tremendously more powerful, exuding a vast presence that would make weaker opponents feel tiny physically and metaphorically!

Hobbu Bobbu's eyes grew lively once again as he saw this marvellous thing.

What was this?

A divine tree?

A sacred statue?

The goblin's instincts warned him and he fully released the authority he had as a Cluster beast of high calibre.

His purple core exhumed an ungodly, invisible pressure that collided with that of the Preeminent Attegoth, causing a cold, harsh breeze to set around the entire Cluster!

The world grew tens of degrees colder!

Hobbu Bobbu then got in a stance while cautiously focusing on Skullius who was laughing at him with ridicule.

"Now you want to take me seriously?" the Hybrid Luman cackled.

"Unfortunately for you, I'm feeling extra crazy today!"

Skullius wore a mad grin while his blind eyes opened wide.

VWOOOSH!

His mana growled!

Following this, shadows suddenly spawned over a very wide range, their forms circular in shape!

Thousands of objects were dropping from the sky, their masses comically colossal!

Hobbu Bobbu looked up as did the goblins from all over the Cluster.

The world hummed.

These objects that pierced through the veil of smoke had immense weight, so much so that breeze caused by Hobbu Bobbu's unleashed presence grew violent as they fell slowly!

What were these objects?!

Well...

They were enormous [Beads of Malevolence] the size of large towns!

Skullius had maxed out the skill [Bead of Malevolence] to Level 10 only to find that it didn't have growth potential at all.

But that was alright.

He just needed the same balls anyway as with enough mana and control, he could do things like this!

"Don't look away, sockethole," Skullius called in a cold voice towards Hobbu Bobbu who snapped back his attention at him. "I'm far from done."

From Skullius' spatial storage ring, stacks upon stacks upon stacks of weapons flew out, all branded with the mark of half a glowing golden skull!

Some were large.

Some were small.

But all of them were Unique to Legendary grade weapons collected from the Association, from Clusters and from human enemies!

Swords, spears, polearms, glaives, war hammers, shields, axes and even staves could be seen!

Over them all, Skullius' mana bellowed around and within them, giving them immense amounts of weight!

Skullius could impart the property of weight even to mana that wasn't his own as long as he linked it to his mana core. However, distributing the weight property to the 15,781 items he had out right now drained his mana extremely quickly.

He couldn't maintain it for long!

To ensure durability and impact though, this was worth it.

Hobbu Bobbu frowned.

This was the calibre of fighter he was up against?

He hadn't expected that.

This was quite surprising but he wasn't too alarmed or afraid.

Skullius knew that this goblin was probably still confident.

Heh.

Luckily, he was also pretty confident. He knew each and every effect that all these items had. In fact, now that he had the [Omniscient Thought Cracker], the memory of these weapons' abilities were more effectively stored and used to form an elaborate plan!

"Go!" Skullius said as he gave a command that the Precept of Light executed quickly!

The massive [Beads of Malevolence] dropping from the sky slowly suddenly blurred, causing a deafening shriek in the air and thousands of explosions that erupted into calamitous gusts of wind all around the Cluster!

Before a breath's worth of time could pass, one of the massive balls was already upon Hobbu Bobbu with its immensity from the right!

At the exact same time, two hundred of the weapons hanging in the air also blurred, zigzagging intentionally as they rushed towards the goblin!

Also...

The Hybrid Luman moved, silvery footprints appearing in front of him that took him away at an atrocious speed!

This was Skullius' third and most powerful speed buffing skill, [Destined Warp Steps]!

With it, Skullius could manifest up to 100 sets of prints at once, placing them wherever he wanted to go – literally anywhere. The distance between each set of steps couldn't exceed more than 400

meters but as long as Skullius matched his feet with the first set of steps he created, he could move at 12 times his usual maximum speed, his movements following the trail he had set accurately!

At each set of prints, Skullius had half a second, devoid of the external time flow, where he could do whatever he desired before continuing with the sequence he had laid. This made instances where he appeared as multiple individuals possible!

This skill had had the tag 'Greatest' attached to it before it too was influenced by the power of the Insurgent Magnus like [Boundless Evil]. As a result, though, it had grown massively stronger than it was supposed to be.

Skullius' figure appeared high in the sky, holding a long brown spear in its hand.

He grinned with pure malice that bellowed out as Mortal Ruin around him as he cocked his arm and threw the spear with all his might at Hobbu Bobbu below!

The power of Gravity was applied!

The spear tagged with Skullius' mana was pulled by the ground underneath the water on which Hobbu Bobbu stood on, causing the spear to hurtle madly at its target!

This, the [Beads of Malevolence] and the two hundred plus weapons rushing through the air was the ecstatic Hybrid Luman's first full power assault...!

Chapter 624: Unevenly

How would the Finite Sword god get out of this one?

Skullius was truly excited to see it.

This guy probably could pull out some bullshit move to perform such a feat.

As the spear he had just thrown descended, as well as the other weapons and [Beads of Malevolence] drew close to the tall goblin, Skullius saw a divine development take place!

An inhumane grin etched itself on his face as the hype he felt peaked from the gobsmacking scene that came!

Hobbu Bobbu swiped with his sword to his left in an extraordinarily quick manner, everything around him seeming to have been exposed to a speed diluting force!

His face grew solemn.

...!

In Skullius' senses, he felt once again the notion of whether or not Hobbu Bobbu was holding a sword become incredibly doubtful. In one fraction of time, he clearly sensed that the goblin was swiping with the Bashful Abomination against the massive hurtling [Bead of Malevolence] and in another, it seemed like he was merely using his bare hand!

Was bro using his sword or not?!

Regardless of which it was though, the result was nothing short of grand.

With his finger or the tip of his sword, Hobbu Bobbu touched the surface of the speeding black orb and it shattered into hundreds of millions of dark shards that blew quietly around the entire area!

....!!!

Ridiculous!

This was done to [Evil Darkness]?!

This wasn't dispersion, this was destruction!

Immediately after, Hobby Bobbu's arm swiped through the air again and with his finger or the tip of his sword, he met the incoming spear's sharp, speeding point!

Instantly, the weapon shattered like glass, as if it had been smashed against an indestructible surface!

Next, the Finite Sword god's hand blurred again, moving at an imperceptible speed all around him, striking nothing but the air it seemed.

But the deafening noise that followed spelled clearly what was happening.

It was the sound of two hundred plus Unique and Legendary grade weapons being sliced into pieces, only... it was impossible to see because all these weapons vanished without a trace, their remains reduced to something finer than dust!

'Incredible! I get it now!' Skullius thought while dropping from the air with a vivacious energy. 'This sockethole has mastered the sword to a degree where him and a sword become indistinguishable from each other! That sword's probably an accessory! Something enhancing whatever he can already do somehow!

Indeed. This analysis was true!

Though Skullius had strained his body and his [Omniscient Thought Cracker], he had managed to just barely discern the skill level of his opponent.

The conclusion? It was impossible to kill him outright!

Not with his current level.

He could however, attempt to defeat the goblin through means he could never see coming!

The rest of the weapons floating behind Skullius shot in his direction, rallying around him. With the Preeminent Attegoth, he had full control over them and he didn't even need to focus on any individual one. His immediate desires for all of them would be carried out by the Precept of Light.

Sadly, most of these weapons couldn't do anything at all to his opponent given what Skullius had just witnessed. At least the goblin wouldn't give them the chance to.

The only possible exception to this rule were five distinguished items among the masses.

Just by how they looked, it was easy to see how different they were from the rest as they had one thing in common.

They were large. Too large for most humans to handle normally.

One was a double axe, a dark blue hue over its handle along with a stylish, silver coil over it. Its blades were a shiny grey and light wisps of a certain energy could be seen swimming over them.

It was Null Life Essence.

The others were a pair of estocs – thin bladed swords that look like rapiers – their blades tinged with a pristine white colour and at their bases rough blackish red hilts.

The fourth was a slick full set of golden brown armour with block shapes of crimson over its entirety. It looked feminine from the helmet to the greaves and was easy on the eyes, a flirtatious air about it.

The last was a tall, crooked staff made of blackwood, rot looking to have covered most of its length. At its head, pieces of it arched towards one empty point that didn't spot a magical gem, as other staves usually had but it was a powerful item still.

The King's Matted Glory, the Paired Interregnum, the Conforming Trickerteer and the Medial Whisperer of Charms.

All five of these were weapons Skullius had attained by using [Unbound] on each with 10,000 Null Life Essence Points or more!

They were cheat codes the lot of them!

'With these my chances at victory have grown slightly. All I need to do now is find a chance to touch that ugly Sword god and I pretty much win. Haha. Easy enough!' Skullius thought, his attention being on a particular one on his five artefacts.

His opponent gazed up at him until he wasn't.

He was gone in a breath.

...!

Skullius was warned by [Primal Caution] once again but he had already prepared beforehand. His reaction might have still been too slow when compared to Hobbu Bobbu's speed, but at the very least, he managed to get his five weapons out of the way!

'Shit!'

As his weapons flew up to safety, Skullius felt all the ambient mana around him as well as the light coming down from [Saint Lumis' Benign Arc] and the sun disperse.

It was being sliced apart by the unseen Hobbu Bobbu!

Heh.

The concept of slicing away literal light, leaving a darker space was....

Mana, Skullius could understand but light?!

Seriously?!

This was really bad!

The golden-green light from [Saint Lumis' Benign Arc] was being cut off from Skullius, meaning he wouldn't be able to heal if-

WOOOOO...

A soft breeze passed by Skullius and he instantly knew what was up!

His body started to fragment, as if particles of sand were spewing from his skin!

There it was!

He had been diced into millions of pieces!

However...

The Hybrid Luman had had his hand on Demion's Dance's hilt all along in case of a situation like this!

His body was immediately restored by the use of the sword's innate ability, [Irisa You Whore] which restored his body to its full health as well as topping up his mana reserves in the process!

This was fortunate but sadly, this ability was limited in its use even after Demion's Dance was fixed and enhanced by the blacksmith Alaris had assigned to it.

Skullius' enemy on the other hand, had an unlimited supply of hands.

Skullius used [Destined Warp Steps] immediately to reappear a distance away on the ground in an instant, but sadly, his still felt the light eroding away everywhere he went!

Hobbu Bobbu was keeping up with him!

For a fraction of a moment, the large, overbearing figure of the Sword god appeared as a hazy image behind Skullius, the Bashful Abomination in its hand!

At that time, the sound of thousands of massive objects rang wildly with violent tornadoes ensuing as they rushed up to bash into Hobbu Bobbu's fleeting existence, but the first ones to arrive were shattered like glass into hundreds of millions of pieces like the first, effortlessly!

As this occurred, Skullius zipped away again, but it was no use.

More droplets of sweat trickled down his face as more [Beads of Malevolence] dropped down to smash into his enemy but without avail!

'I can't stall. I can't defend. I can't even see the sockethole let alone touch him,' Skullius thought with urgency.

In the brief span of time between the large masses of [Evil Darkness] being destroyed by Hobbu Bobbu though, he had the Precept of Light execute something he had hoped he'd get to use when he had gotten things in order.

It was time for attempt number one!

The large blackwood staff high above with each and every one of Skullius' special weapons, the Medial Whisperer of Charms was used.

Over its gem-less head, a set of crusty red lips appeared out of thin air and spoke in a very loud voice that was heard all throughout the Cluster!

"My holder says, my wielder deems. All who hear this voice call must be "Trapped in Day Dreams."

...!

These absurd words travelled from the staff and echoed over and over again through the winds, travelling far and wide to reach all living things within the Cluster!

This decree came from a weapon that had been Legendary before Skullius used [Unbound] on it, making its actual strength scale up to low level Mythical grade weapons!

As such, what the Medial Whisperer of Charms called out actually came to pass!

Millions of goblins suddenly stood still, their eyes looking distant and cloudy as they gazed in different directions blankly.

It was utterly unnerving.

It was as if the world had stopped moving.

Cities stopped functioning.

Even the panic from the wild effects of the grand battle taking place were paused as most of the goblins found themselves in dreams of whatever they desired.

Be it carnal desires, spiritual wants or even righteous needs.

Every one of the green creatures to hear the calling voice was ensnared in a dream even if they were the infamous Tier 9s!

"..."

Red Rage had been in a heated battle with one of these powerful goblins when suddenly, it stopped moving, its jaw slacked as it swiftly fell into a dream!

That's right.

The Apostle looked up and saw the blackwood staff up high in the sky.

He hated that despicable object.

It had an air of familiarity about it that he didn't like and also, its ability to enact what the user willed was practically cheating.

Was his master putting an end to his fun exploration already?

On the main battlefield, Skullius thought this exact same thing as he watched the figure of Hobbu Bobbu kneel on one knee, struggling to retain consciousness.

It was working!

Even a Tier 11 could succumb to the effect of the Medial Whisperer of Charms, Sword god or not!

'I thought it wouldn't work,' Skullius thought as he felt his opponent turn helpless with a smirk.

The Medial Whisperer of Charms could enact whatever the wielder desired as long as they managed to give a phrase to the staff that rhymed with the first sentence: My holder says, my wielder deems.

This was a caveat that demanded creativity. The only things that the staff could enact had to rhyme with 'deems.'

Skullius could manage though. The only thing he hated was the long cooldown.

Without wasting even a full second, the Hybrid Luman drew Demion's Dance and dashed towards his enemy to slice off his head!

He wouldn't waste such a glorious opportunity!

Besides, being slaughtered while wandering in a dream was poetic!

...!!!!!!!!!!!!

Suddenly, the most horrific alarm bell burst within Skullius' body as a tragic warning screamed within his body!

What?!

His enemy was down!

This was the time to strike!

His body grew stiff as [Primal Caution] tried to stop him but he powered through, storming towards the kneeling giant!

Only...

The giant wasn't kneeling down helplessly, it seemed.

His figure grew hazy, alternating between kneeling and standing upright in fractions of a second!

What?

Whaaaat?!

In the variation of time where Hobbu Bobbu was standing upright, the Bashful Abomination had been planted on the ground and the Finite Sword god had his large mouth open, his fingers locked to create a complex seal!

In the next moment, an energy with a similar depth to a world blasted out from Hobbu Bobbu's feet like a torrent of waters from the sea!

It wasn't *Aura*.

It wasn't *Mana*.

It wasn't *Primus*.

But *Skullius* knew it very well!

His face sank as he felt it!

A *Majestic Territory* was being cast.

[Author's Note]

Demion's Dance was repaired and enhanced but the skills didn't change. Only their effects which had been limited due to it only being partially fixed by HammerDown Gruff have been restored to their best:

~~~

[Demion's Dance]

-Unique-

A beautifully crafted sword given to Demion on his birthday by his lover, Irisa, to commemorate his legendary battle with Escus.

-Damage-

40,000-55,000

-Durability-

100,000/110,500

-Special Effects-

•40% increase in speed

[Skill: Epic Memory]

Regardless of the user's level of power, they are able to fully replicate the raw movements and a portion of the attack power that Demion demonstrated in his battle with Escus.

---

[Skill: Irisa You Whore]

The remnants of the unfaithful Irida shower the user with healing light meant for her side lovers each time they sustain an injury, bringing them to full health. This effect only occurs thrice a day.

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Chapter 625: That Is All You Are...

A Majestic Territory!

A true Majestic Territory!

Just like Azila's.

Just like the Grinning Jester Fox's.

Just like Idris'.

A dominant energy erupted from Hobbu Bobbu with a restrictive authority, looking like waves that intended to take a solid shape but couldn't quite do so. Despite this though, their power was staggering, almost causing Skullius to lose his will to fight in the moment they appeared!

This was different from the low level divine energy, Primus.

No.

It was something beasts could naturally exude past the 10th tier and the very foundation to creating a Majestic Territory.

The energy known as Nitros!

Unlike humans, beasts could bypass the need to forge mana into Aura and then Perfect Aura to then reach a state where they could utilise Nitros to create a Territory. They could just head straight to that level as long as their genetics allowed them to reach Tier 10!

So what was Nitros?

It was a type of Divine energy but one with a more rigid form that was hard to mould, unlike Aura. It was desired immensely but foreign beings.

To make it into what you wished, you needed skill and familiarity with different types of energies. The feel and control over power was what needed to be flexible within the user of Nitros, otherwise even after attaining it, they wouldn't be able to create what they desired with it.

In short, Nitros was the foundation to what all Divine beings used to forge worlds or large planetary bodies and as such, if a human reached the Incandescent Stage where this was possible or a beast reaching Tier 10, their effective pathway to reach Divinity was opened!

As this dreadful energy exploded out of Hobbu Bobbu, though rather slowly, tinting everything, even space itself with a glaring white hue that erased the description of the surroundings like paint on the world, Skullius found his nerve and immediately responded with the best countermeasure he could find!

A colossal explosion of darkness enveloped him, the Precept of Light as well as the creeping Nitros in an instant!

At the same time, Skullius drew on his four weapons in the air as well as the thousands still hanging above him.

Sadly, his casing of darkness was easily wrecked by the slowly structuring Nitros which ate it away, painting the world in rough white instead of black!

'I've been trying to get used to fighting with opponents with Territories but not finding one for so long made me relax. If only I'd taken Red Rage's words earlier to heart,' Skullius thought with annoyance.

In all the Clusters he had been in so far, none of the Cluster beasts or Generals had a Territory, which was why he carried on with this relaxed approach.

Then again, even if he had been expecting Hobbu Bobbu to have a Territory, it wouldn't have counted for jack since bringing him down was already a treacherous endeavour.

The good thing about this however was the fact that this goblin didn't seem to be proficient in using his Nitros or Territory at all!

The energy wasn't flowing to form a true shape!

It was simply flooding out, trying to capture Skullius.

'Bro must have practised wielding the sword so much he neglected his general progression as a beast above Tier 10,' Skullius thought. 'If he had erected his Nitros quick enough, I would have been trapped with no means to defend myself. Even with everything I can do now, I'm confident to say I would have been dead.'

Because Killin Max had a Dormant Territory, Skullius had studied all he could about these things.

Naturally, Nitros was Nitros but it varied in strength according to the strength of a beast or the strength of a human combatant.

In its most basic state, it could ERASE ALL unprotected aspects of the world in its way and halt the function of ALL energies and items within its created space provided they were COMPLETELY ENCASED in the Nitros.

In short, it was possible to resist, but only if you were quick enough to do so before being trapped by a solid shape of Nitros – a Majestic Territory.

If Skullius let himself get trapped, all of his skills and tools would become useless.

All of them.

But now, since his opponent, even from his face showed that he was struggling to create a simple trap with his Nitros, Skullius had to take this chance.

The only reason Hobbu Bobbu had even used this was because he was indeed being affected by the call of the Medial Whisperer of Charms. Enacting his Nitros protected him from it.

'The staff failed and is on cooldown. So now...' Skullius' gave the Precept of Light behind him an order and the King's Matted Glory, the double axe above him streaked through his darkness towards the giant goblin!

At the same time, his figure sank into the darkness still present around him as a vast amount of mana surged within him.

The King's Matted Glory reached Hobbu Bobbu rather quickly, but a dazzling flash of light smacked into it, this being Hobbu Bobbu showing that he still had his prowess as a Sword god to rely on!

Unfortunately, this shallow strike didn't work against the double axe!

It was stronger than the other regular weapons and had been fed multiple measures to increase its durability, thus it didn't shatter from the same force!

Instead it shone with a light blue radiance and released pulsing streams of Null Life Essence that successfully bashed violently into the giant goblin, causing him to reel back, almost stumbling in the Nitros pooling from his feet!

For the first time, Hobbu Bobbu showed a look of shock on his face!

This energy hit different!

Literally!

It wasn't like mana!

From being struck by it, he felt a significant threat!

In the same moment he took to think about the Null Life Essence, the Hybrid Luman took action, appearing right before him, his hand touching the goblin's bare chest as he activated an overpowered Special skill!

Darkness streamed from him and entered Hobby Bobbu but...

[Your enemy has resisted!]

[Your enemy has resisted!]

"What?! Is it because I'm..."

It was time for Skullius to become shocked now as he had thought for sure that he had won in the nick of dire time!

He just had to touch Hobbu Bobbu and it would be over right? But why..?

The Finite Sword god resisted the effects of his Special skill?!

Hobbu Bobbu, on feeling Skullius' presence near him immediately struck with full force at an insane speed, leaving no room for the Hybrid Luman to dodge or evade.

Skullius was ready for this violence though, as with his hand on his hilt, he managed to restore his body immediately after it felt like it was about to fall apart!

Unfortunately, Hobbu Bobbu seemed to be way ahead of him, having recalled that Skullius could do something like this. Thus the Nitros that he was having a hard time trying to pull together quickly started to swirl in order to create an entrapment!

...!

Not good!

Skullius tried to use [Destined Warp Steps] but quick radiant slashes from an unseen sword sliced them up as soon as they appeared, nomatter how quickly he created them!

'He's been paying attention to all my tricks. He knows how I move now,' he thought with mild dread as he found that he was close to being ensnared in the Nitros!

If he came into contact with it, he was sure he would be deleted out of existence. Now, with Hobbu Bobbu's large figure looming in front of him, paying rapt focus to every one of his moves so as to destroy any means he had of escape, the Hybrid Luman truly seems beat.

Skullius stared down the Finite Sword god with narrowed eyes while dropping from the air.

The large King's Matted Glory flashed into his hand as he quickly covered it in [Evil Darkness], his other hand stretching out towards the other THREE special artefacts left behind in his cradle of darkness that housed the Preeminent Attegoth and thousands of floating weapons!

On seeing this, Hobbu Bobbu moved, this time the swishing of his hand with the Bashful Abomination abundantly clear as he slashed past Skullius and his own gathering Nitros to strike at the massive veil of darkness and the Precept of Light in the distance!

The darkness was overwhelmed, instantly unravelling like a loosely woven tapestry while the Preeminent Attegoth was shattered into particles of light!

Hobbu Bobbu grinned. Skullius' powers were no more.

All he had now was the large double axe in his hand which was no longer supported by the Precept of Light.

The half skull glow over it started to dim, proving Hobbu Bobbu right.

Skullius breathed out a harsh breath.

Man, did he bite off a bit more than he could chew.

As he fell, he snickered at himself.

The power creeping had caught up to his growth pretty fast.

"Hau Kaka..."

Skullius heard Hobbu Bobbu finally speak, his image seeming to grow larger as he expressed genuine satisfaction at seeing Skullius lose.

This invader had thrown everything he had at him but had still lost.

His swordsmanship could not stack up to his. Not by a long shot.

His strange ability to control thousands of weapons and summon giant orbs from the sky was a joke.

And now, he could only let himself be trapped within his infant Territory to be toyed with. To practise even.

What a foolish end!

A fitting one.

Hobbu Bobbu guffawed inwardly.

"Hahahahahahahahahahaha!"

The giant goblin suddenly heard the defeated Skullius laugh out loud.

Hmmm?

He raised a brow.

Why was this little creature laughing?

Was it to cope with the loss?

Was it mourning disguised as laughter?

No. No. No.

Skullius was laughing with a joyous expression on his face as he dropped.

Somehow, Hobbu Bobbu felt a shrill chill and frowned.

In the small fractions of time where he and Skullius had exchanged so much, he observed all that he could but found nothing amiss.

Then why was this bastard laughing?

When Skullius was done, he gazed up at the giant goblin with the most condescending crescent shaped eyes possible and muttered eerily.

"You really fell for it. You know nothing other than swordsmanship, huh?"

What?

In the next microsecond, this figure of Skullius falling changed.

A massive amount of mana burned away from the Hybrid Luman's body only to reveal that... it was a complete set of armour!

One with a golden brown hue and block shapes of crimson!

This...!

It was...

It was the Conforming Trickerteer, one of Skullius' special upgraded artefacts!

The half a skull mark faded from the chestplate of this set of armour as the Preeminent Attegoth was destroyed, leaving this puppet without the means to function!

The large amount of mana supplied had made it last this long: three seconds after the Precept of Light was destroyed but no more.

Within it, a blue mana core vanished, one that had been made by an individual who understood the makeup of cores to an astounding degree!

It was a fake mana core.

Hobbu Bobbu became flustered as right now, he couldn't understand the how, why or what of this situation!

Impossible!

If this wasn't Skullius then wher-

"I failed from a distance and with a puppet as a medium. How about now though?" a voice sounded from Hobbu Bobbu's body.

Skullius was standing on the Finite Sword god's shoulder while placing his hand over its neck, a thin dark purple coloured stroke outlining his figure and his presence as a whole.

One couldn't even tell he was here until he spoke.

Not even the Finite Sword god!

Was this another Special skill?

Tendrils of [Evil Darkness] were digging into Hobbu Bobbu's skin right now. Actually, they had already begun doing so since Skullius appeared on Hobbu Bobbu's body moments ago.

The giant goblin was stunned and wanted to move but it was already over.

He was deceived.

He was strong but not strong enough to discern deception.

From the moment the Hybrid Luman sank into his darkness, the goblin's grip on the battle had already slipped.

"Now that I think about it, your class is fitting. Even though you are a Sword god, that is all you are. Finite, because your limit is with a sword," Skullius said with a voice oozing of deprecation.

At the same time, he proceeded with using the only skill in his arsenal that was born from the fusion of two Insurgent Magnus skills fully.

He had attempted using it earlier.

It was made from the fusion of the evolved version of [Basic Evil Invasion] and [Basic Evil Sanction]...

[Immoral Authority].

Chapter 626: Immoral Authority!

Skullius had been telling the truth.

It was impossible to kill Hobbu Bobbu outright.

That's why he had devised a series of plans to take him down without the need to overpower him with raw strength.

Using the Medial Whisperer of Charms had not worked against Hobbu Bobbu as the first attempt, and the King's Matted Glory had only served to distract the giant goblin without inflicting damage.

From there though, that was when Skullius had intricately lined up the cards to victory.

When he had sunken into the darkness, he had gathered a vast amount of mana, the exact same amount that he had in his mana core. Because of his continuing growth in manipulating mana in general, Skullius had mastered the ability to create a basic mana core. A fake one.

While hiding himself in the darkness, he had dragged the Conforming Trickerteer and inserted his mana into it, activating its unique ability; the power to morph itself into a duplicate of its user which could emulate their thoughts, speech, abilities and even their favoured tools passively.

The results with this were not as impressive according to Skullius' standards but luckily the same thing could also be done actively with golden brown set of armour.

The downside was that this required the user to do absolutely nothing but focus on the Conforming Trickerteer, which would limit their movement and require an enormous amount of mana.

For Skullius, that was unacceptable. He needed to act while the Trickerteer did its part, thus he had planted the half a skull mark on the Legendary item to let the Precept of Light handle its motion.

With the fake core he had created planted in it, the Conforming Trickerteer had acted as Skullius from the moment it rushed to touch Hobbu Bobbu's chest and failed in its attempt to end the battle. Only when the Preeminent Attegoth was destroyed did Skullius finally make his move with a layer of dark purple outlining his figure.

This was something Skullius had wanted to designate as a simple ability, a skill he had created for stealth's sake. To hide his presence when he needed without doing anything flashy.

[Absolute Zero].

Fortunately for him, the same principle that applied to [Boundless Evil], [Saint Lumis' Benign Arc] and [Destined Warp Steps] from his Insurgent Magnus powers also gripped this skill, making it vastly more powerful than it should have been.

Now it not only hid his presence effectively aside from his voice, but all other features about him could be masked as long as he willed it. For higher tier opponents, the effect might not be as perfect, but if they were distracted, it worked like a charm. Even against a Tier 11 Finite Sword god!

That said, what was this intervention from Skullius' Insurgent Magnus Class?

Well, it was the same thing that happened to his [Wing of Embrace], changing it to [Wing of the Just], a more powerful variant.

[Just Light] favoured the abilities [Saint Lumis' Benign Arc] and [Destined Warp Steps] while [Evil Darkness] favoured [Absolute Zero] and [Boundless Evil], transforming them into better versions of what they were supposed to be!

Pheeew....

Skullius took deep breaths as tendrils of his darkness dug into Hobbu Bobbu's body, their coil strong enough to reach the walls to his defences.

But of course they would be a fight. This bastard was still a powerful Cluster beast after all, one with a proud personality and probably high levels of mental discipline.

Unfortunately, that wasn't enough in the face of [Immoral Authority].

If Skullius had only been using even the evolved form of [Basic Evil Invasion], he would have failed without a doubt. However, [Immoral Authority] was a mix of this and [Basic Evil Sanction]. Its power was to dig into a target's mind and body, using their deeds as a consolidating basis.

Like [Basic Evil Sanction], [Immoral Authority] considered how much 'evil' there was in a target.

Skullius figured that the giant goblin wasn't some blameless saint, proof of this being the fact that Hobbu Bobbu had killed hundreds of his own earlier without mercy, which, to [Immoral Authority] qualified as evil.

As such, this evil within Hobbu Bobbu was moulded by Skullius to shatter the giant goblin's resistance easily, the Hybrid Luman's consciousness invading the Finite Sword god's mind, memories and secrets!

'Ah...'

Skullius felt as if he was sinking into an ocean full of living, squirming fish, these fish being swimming memories that he imposed his consciousness onto in order to absorb all the knowledge Hobbu Bobbu had!

He sucked in the goblin's thoughts through the metaphorical darkness he had and...

...!

It was a tidal wave of information!

He saw it all.

678 years.

That's how old Hobbu Bobbu was.

He saw everything from when the Hau Kaka goblin was born. To his memories as he slowly grew up while being tended to by a... rather hideous elderly goblin with an honestly horrifying face!

Was it age?

Was it lack of skin lotion?

Urgh.

Who knew?

As the memories kept flowing into Skullius steadily, he watched Hobbu Bobbu spend more time with this old female goblin, his body growing with years as well as his strength. From these events, many things started to become clear to Skullius.

'I see. So that's how it is,' he thought.

Everything he saw next made even more sense.

No wonder he saw many anomalies here!

The stream of information continued.

The strenuous training Hobbu Bobbu did as it was revealed to him with excruciating detail, his intense physical routine and growing pride as he became an unmatched champion even among the OTHER goblins was astounding.

How the goblin grew out of the circles of normal folds of his kin and entered an ascended state of existence where he was revered...

Where even this world recognised him enough to give him a powerful natural treasure...

Everything sank into Skullius down to this very moment and after what truly seemed like 678 years, Skullius finally returned to the present.

Hobbu Bobbu's frame had fallen onto the ground, the wild waves of Nitros that had been present having disappeared.

Skullius had fallen along with the Finite Sword god and the last wisps of darkness were sinking into him from the goblin.

The Hybrid Luman took a very, very deep breath as [Immoral Authority] finalised his gains.

Yes.

His gains.

[You have acquired the memories of the 'Hobbu Bobbu']

[A part of 'Hobbu Bobbu' now lives within you permanently as a shard of darkness]

[Due to the wide disparity between the target and the user, recalculation and modification of gains is mandatory]

Skullius' flesh quaked and rippled.

The memories he had received ran wildly not only in his [Omniscient Thought Cracker], but within his body as well, as if trying to make his flesh recall what they represented. They could not yet accept that they had a different host. But still, they would try.

It would have come as a shock to most, but [Immoral Authority] was unlike [Basic Evil Sanction]. When Skullius used it on someone, he would actually be able to extract deeper memories... as well as their skills!

[Recalculation and modification has been completed]

[Due to the user not having the class 'Finite Sword god', lesser versions of the extracted skills will be given]

[You have acquired 'Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art']

[You have acquired 'Unmatched Sword Sense']

[You have acquired 'Lost Wraith']

[You have acquired 'Swordmaster's Quiescence']

['Just Light' has deemed 'Lost Wraith' profound enough to latch onto, changing it to 'Lucent Apparition']

As these notifications came in, Skullius twitched with his eyes rolled up, his blood vessels thrombin unhealthily, expanding and contracting as if funnelling bags of data into different facets of his body!

Truly, this was an incredible boon.

Powers that came from a Sword god rushed into Skullius, all of them at the peak of the Special tier of skills and with nigh limitless potential for growth.

Skullius felt it all being processed by his body.

"Ah..."

It took a full two minutes for him to finally come back to his senses as he took deep breaths.

"Haha... that was wild," he said while stumbling to stand.

The first thing he did was turn to the giant body of his opponent.

Hobbu Bobbu was still alive but just like everything that he had used [Basic Evil Sanction] on and now [Immoral Authority], he became an empty husk that had challenges in having coherent thought.

"You really were strong," Skullius said as he sent a burst of Mortal Ruin to decapitate the giant goblin.

This was the first time Skullius was wounding Hobbu Bobbu since their fight.

Ridiculous.

He couldn't help but shake his head.

With the giant's death...

[You have killed (XI) LV521 Hau Kaka Goblin. 12,765 EXP awarded]

[Congratulations, you have killed a Cluster General]

The cumulative mana experience from the Finite Sword god was drawn towards Skullius in a massive tide that came from both its body and soul!

This was easily the most experience Skullius had ever gained since his awakening!

Considering that having a blue core meant that it was harder to harvest experience, with even strong Advancement Stage experts netting him 29 to 40 EXP a pop, this was nothing short of incredible!

Hobbu Bobbu truly was a monster!

"Cluster General, huh?" Skullius gave a short laugh as he gazed upon the guidance field notification.

From the giant goblin's memories, he had discovered a chilling fact about this Cluster.

Yes, Hobbu Bobbu was a Cluster General as he had surmised before, but he wasn't THE Cluster General.

"This is the first Cluster I've seen with more than one Cluster General," the Hybrid Luman said.

Indeed.

There were two Cluster Generals within this world!

Chapter 627: Flirting

The fact was true but Skullius wasn't concerned. The other General was different from Hobbu Bobbu. In fact, his inferences from before had been right on the money, the only difference being that he probably wouldn't have too much trouble with this other Cluster General.

"I didn't know it worked like this. Is this common knowledge?" Skullius said while scratching his chin.

Whatever.

He wouldn't concern himself with this for now.

He stored Hobbu Bobbu's body inside his spatial storage after extracting the 65 Null Life Essence points it had, a truly large difference from the 20 the other goblins he had seen gave.

The body of this large Tier 11 Cluster General was bound to net him a few more Plasma coins. Potions and other magical items could be made from highly mana conductive creatures such as high level Cluster beasts, thus their value was really high.

Even if Skullius didn't go to the Association with this, he could still get plenty from it. The higher level Clusters were rare and harder to clear, after all. Thankfully, they also took longer to be breached by the beasts inside. If it was any different, the situation in the entirety of Aigas would have been vastly different.

Skullius scrolled through his new skills next, looking through their descriptions.

His body was still reacting to the information and these new powers he had gained, his flesh twitching from time to time.

[Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art].

[Swordmaster's Quiescence].

[Lucent Apparition].

[Unmatched Sword Sense].

The powers related to the sword.

"I can't believe my proficiency in the sword has just jumped up so drastically just from this. Even now I feel like..." Skullius said while moving his hand up and down.

Every movement of his seemed... sharp and surreal, a bit like how Hobbu Bobbu's movements were.

Also, he felt incredibly light. As if he could soar up and down naturally.

This wasn't an unknown mystery for him though as with Hobbu Bobbu's memories, he quickly deciphered the fact that this was the Finite Sword god's developed Sword style influencing his body.

The Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art!

This was the style that Hobbu Bobbu had crafted for himself.

A transcendent sword style that Skullius felt contended with Alaris' overpowered Sword technique.

Now, he had it for himself.

Ha.

It was insane to think about though.

Even with what Hobbu Bobbu had shown, Skullius still thought Alaris would win in a battle.

Weeks ago, Skullius had discovered that the evaluation officer was a more dreadful monstrosity than he had imagined. It was only a mere guess but he thought Alaris also possessed a Hidden Class. He had to. That was the only way for this to make sense.

'The Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art. It's weakened though. It's far from being the same as it was when sockethole used it,' Skullius thought with deep sigh.

This was what the guidance field had warned him about.

But who was he to complain?

This was already too go-

"<Sniff, sniff>. I'm alone again. No one will ever hold me anymore. <Sniff>. What am I supposed to do now?"

Skullius heard a soft voice speaking and sniffing sorrowfully.

He was alarmed at first but realised that [Primal Caution] hadn't gone off, meaning he wasn't in danger. Probably.

He searched around but there was no one.

'Where did that voice come from?' he asked himself while widening his senses.

"<Sniff>. I should have known this would happen. He was getting too excited and too proud. That was a death flag. I was so stupid! <Sniff>."

Skullius' face hardened as he heard the voice once again.

Wait.

Because this had been so sudden, he had discarded the jumbled memories he was sifting through, deeming them to be separate from this situation.

But as he calmed down and let the memories from Hobbu Bobbu flow, Skullius instantly understood.

His focus shot to the ground, identifying the source of this soft voice.

It was the Bashful Abomination!

The chipped dark grey sword with a brass hilt.

It was mourning softly with a feminine voice.

Skullius walked over to this weapon slowly, its mass which was so large that it was impossible to handle with his size almost giving the illusion that he was delusional, that a sword like this couldn't possibly have such a soft feminine voice, much less speak.

As Skullius inched his way closer, he spoke in a light tone.

"Hey there."

Everything he understood now about this situation told him to be as careful and caring as possible.

"Hmmm?" the soft voice seemed to recognise that Skullius was directing his words at it.

Panic ensued.

"DON'T LOOK AT ME! DON'T YOU DARE LOOK AT ME!" the Bashful Abomination screamed with a shrill voice that caused Skullius to come to a halt.

"I'm not looking at you. I'm actually blind. I can only sense that you are there," Skullius said, trying to be as calm as possible. It wasn't in him to be like this but for now, he had to. "If I was looking at you, you would have automatically slashed me up by now, right?"

"..."

There was a moment of silence as it seemed the unmoving sword was contemplating.

"That... that is true," the sword said. "You're the one who killed Hobbu Bobbu, aren't you?"

Skullius sighed.

Was this a trick question?

"Yes I am. There were no hard feelings," Skullius defended himself.

"But you mocked him before you killed him. I sensed hard feelings there," the sword responded with a slightly begrudging tone.

Skullius gnashed his teeth. For this, he definitely wouldn't apologise.

"Yes I did. I was only speaking the truth. That sockethole toyed with me, flaunting his strength. I had to get him back with a phrase or two," he said while standing upright.

"... Hobbu was a bit proud. And stupid. He never let me do something different. He only wanted me to do the exact same thing he did everyday."

Talk about betrayal.

Hobbu-san wouldn't be pleased to hear this slander.

Another stretch of silence passed between the two, both not knowing what to say.

The absence of the rain which had stopped a while ago made it a bit more awkward for 'sort of' man and giant sword to just chill without doing or saying anything.

That was until the Skullius broke the ice again.

It wouldn't be a problem to make a move on someone else's sword when they were dead. Right?

"So... since the ugly mug is dead, do you want to maybe... uhm..."

"Yes?"

"I was thinking maybe we could..."

"Hmhmm?"

"You know? Hook up? Bind ourselves?"

"Oh. Is that really alright?" the Bashful Abomination asked with an even more shy voice.

"Of course. You're definitely a troph-, I mean a prize."

"Oh! That would be great! But... is he alright with that?" the sword asked.

"He? Who?" Skullius questioned.

At that moment, he felt something on his waist wiggle angrily!

A torrent of angry emotions blasted Skullius' insides from the companion strapped to his waist, Demion's Dance!

Right.

Skullius had another commitment.

He was cheating in his sword's presence.

How despicable.

But hey! Skullius never signed the was poly-sword-gamy sheet!

Why should he stop here?! Because Demion's Dance wouldn't let him hear the end of it?

Perhaps.

'This skill is definitely a curse,' Skullius thought.

How was he able to communicate with swords so suddenly?

The answer was the recent addition to his arsenal of skills, [Unmatched Sword Sense]!

With this skill, Skullius gained the ability to appreciate components of swords through his senses; their durability, the type of material used to make them as well as the forging method used.

Most important of all, through [Unmatched Sword Sense], Skullius would be able to communicate with swords!

This was not to say all swords could talk but as the Hybrid Luman inferred with the information he had, old swords, typically those with unique backgrounds, gained a robust consciousness over time and he could hear their thoughts.

With Demion's Dance, he could only feel its raging emotions, which told him a lot about the difference between it and the Bashful Abomination.

In any case...

"It's alright. HE will get used to it," Skullius assured the giant sword he was having a conversation with, a bright smile etched on his face.

The dark grey sword seemed to think for several seconds.

"Will you really take care of me?" it asked.

"Of course I will. Look at how shiny and beautiful this guy is," Skullius said while pulling out Demion's Dance from its sheath and showing its unchipped, even blade with a glossy sheen.

This was convincing.

Those curves. That shine.

The Bashful Abomination could barely imagine what it was like to be taken care of like this. Hobbu Bobbu only cared for fighting and wouldn't even use his sword unless he absolutely needed to, much less clean it.

He had a very strong 'the blade is me' energy, choosing to exercise his power with his body before anything else.

"Well? I'll even find you a beautiful sheath to... HIDE in," Skullius said, sweetening the pot. He said this while pointing at Demion's Dance's sheath, thinking that perhaps this sword didn't know what he was talking about.

...!

"REALLY?!" the Bashful Abomination screamed.

The word HIDE worked wonders as Skullius had hoped.

"Of course!"

"Take me!"

"Gladly!"

Just like that, the Hybrid Luman had won.

Somehow, this experience felt vaguely familiar though. It was like he had done something like this some time ago with another timid individual.

Oh well. Who cared?!

Skullius reached in to touch the large sword and it immediately shrank, reaching a suitable size for his grip.

"You'll be bound to me, right?" he asked.

"Absolutely!" the Bashful Abomination replied.

Since Pseudo-Mythical grade artefacts and above bonded with their user, disallowing anyone else to use them, Skullius had found the opportunity with Hobbu Bobbu's passing.

It was quite weird that Demion's Dance bypassed this binding and recognised him as its owner even though it was a mere Unique grade tool.

Perhaps the weapon was just that special.

The moment Skullius felt the feel of the long sword, a rush of wild power exploded within him, bringing forth another intense reaction from his body!

At this moment, both the bonding process and Skullius getting access to the Bashful Abomination's special effects happened simultaneously.

He was almost overwhelmed by the mad boost in power and this was just from handling this damn thing!

He gnashed his teeth and suppressed the urge to scream into the air with a harsh breath.

"Damn! Just how strong are you?!" Skullius asked while taking a look at the sword's stats with his guidance field. Now that it was bound to him, he wouldn't be punished for looking at it with Crude Vision.

~~~

[Bashful Abomination]

<Pseudo-Mythical>

A sword carved deep in the depths of ambitious soils to aid in the growth of a newly risen General. Its origin and birthplace as well as the time it spent there gave the weapon a unique trait where anyone but its chosen master will be fatally wounded if they gaze upon it.

-Damage-

362,000-375,000

-Durability-

234,800/465,890

-Special Effects-

•+64,500 to Agility with Absolute Conversion

•+40,900 to Strength with Absolute Conversion

•+20,000 to Mana with Absolute Conversion

---

[Skill: Make A Wish]

The sword can impose on itself an affix – any unique ability that its master desires. Said ability, if too powerful for the sword to enact, will be downgraded to a reasonable proportion but not wholly changed. A single user can only create one affix and it cannot be changed after finalisation.

Current affix:

<Increase Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art proficiency by 475%>

~~~

Skullius felt a wave of weakness in his knees.

That singular skill...

Did he just read it right?!

Chapter 628: He Knows

Hobbu Gogo stopped stirring.

It had grown quiet.

Too quiet.

She had sensed this a few minutes ago but had been too absorbed in mixing thoroughly the concoction she had in the cauldron almost as large as her 12 meter tall mass.

This object was nearly as ancient as she was, its exterior rusted and its dark colour fading with nearly as many callouses and wrinkles as she had. Her sagging light green skin tumbled as she turned from the huge cauldron, her beady white eyes turning to the doors to this room in the distance.

Her five guards, all Tier 9 in strength, were still stationed behind these doors, though they seemed tense.

It was probably because just as she was now realising, they were concerned about how the goblins in the capital had suddenly stopped moving, all gaping while caught in dreams.

She could sense all this faintly because of her strength.

Hobbu Gogo narrowed her eyes and licked her pasty lips, a twitch of her head to the left flicking her black locks of hair aside.

A magical effect had probably smitten the city but because her compound was shielded by her most advanced set of stacked runes, she and the guards had been spared this unexpected effect.

Hmm.

Were there invaders?

Shouldn't Hobbu Bobbu have already taken care of them?

Yes.

He should have. That was his duty after she had raised him for so long and given him an extraordinary gift that far exceeded what she gave to the other enlightened goblins chosen to guard the eleven cities outside the capital.

Hobby Gogo's head twitched to the left again and soon after she rose to stand up, she waved her hand causing the brimming blue flames under the cauldron spawned by large runes on the floor to be dispersed which halted the heat supplied to the boiling pale orange liquid in the large container.

This batch wasn't ready yet, but her senses told her that danger was afoot. She hated to waste the limited ingredients she had as from the countless shelves in this last room, it was evident that she didn't have much left to use but...

Hobbu Gogo wore a deep frown.

This was frustrating.

Each batch of this thick concoction which she called the Enlightening Ill had to boil for 47 hours under the effect of the special properties of the cauldron. Once it had cooled, it could be supplied to strong goblins that she saw fit, the base prerequisite being that they had to be Tier 7 or higher.

Exactly 25 litres of the Enlightening Ill had to be consumed by each goblin to guarantee a massive boost in strength as well as an awakening for the that usually came in the form of distinct classes; unique, unheard of Classes that would manifest after a range of 15-25 days after consuming the concoction.

There were many losses when Hobbu Gogo chose the wrong goblins to give the Enlightening Ill. Not all of them were strong enough to handle it. In fact the success rate was only 45% whenever she supplied this prized creation of hers to 100 selected goblins.

To remedy this, she had resorted to using a better way of choosing whom she gave the Ill.

A circle of different runes appeared around Hobbu Gogo's right eye at this moment, all of them tinged with a pristine white light as they slowly revolved around it.

As a Shaman of a high level, Hobbu Gogo had an advanced mastery of runes. At least, she had lived long enough and worked hard enough to earn such power and knowledge.

The Mundane Grovel Runes.

Runes given by the earth, as she interpreted them.

She was a master at these.

They were simple and a lot weaker than the more complex ones that Mages used but they were very efficient.

Reinforcement, Protection, Empower, Sealing, Enabling, Temporary Storage and Conjuring.

These were the seven uses that Hobbu Gogo had unlocked so far.

The set of runes around her eye right now were forged to Empower and Enable her declining sight, allowing her to see properly and without having to worry about physical obstacles which came with the perk of even being able to look into the innards of living and non-living things.

...!

Hobbu Gogo saw the view outside of this room and she was appalled.

Something was terribly wrong.

The stacks of runes outside her manor that protected against potential threats had been breached and from the looks of it, this had been done just now!

But how?!

Without her permission not a single goblin in this world could pass that barrier of runes, nomatter how hard they tried!

Not a single goblin....except Hobbu Bobbu!

She had taught him how to create a space for himself through the stacked runes. A space that would only last for a single second.

Was it him then?

No.

She would have sensed him by now. She knew all the goblins' presences individually, especially Hobbu Bobbu's, the one she saw as her own child.

Hobbu Gogo snapped her fingers and a myriad of runes of different colours appeared all over the room in strategic positions, each with different functions.

The old goblin scanned the area around her mansion, scrolling past the stationed guards as she scrolled to the left from the right.

Nothing.

Hmmm.

She then turned her head back to right as she scrutinised every detail and...

...!

What?!

The guards stationed by the doors were... gone!

But they were here a second ago!

What was going on?!

Not a single trace of them was left, except for the mana passively leaking from their bodies which remained hanging in the air but without a source!

Another encirclement of runes appeared around Hobbu Gogo's right eye to enhance her sight. If she were 200 years younger she would have agilely rushed up to see what was happening but the intent and strength to battle had declined with her age. That was why she had resigned herself to making her kin stronger instead, partly so that she didn't have to.

As she erected another means to enable and empower, Hobbu Gogo saw it!

A figure blinked into existence behind the doors.

It was a small creature, much like a normal goblin in stature but atrociously hideous!

A dark purple halo was around it, attempting to mask its presence but now, she could see it clearly.

This creature had light auburn hair with orange tips and ungreen skin on its body that was adorned in leathery outfit with a hood behind it and chains wrapped around its waist in a horrendously edgy showing.

This creature opened the doors and looked a bit surprised to see the giant goblin staring right down at it.

This creature, to Hobbu Gogo's surprise gave a short laugh and spoke.

"Of course [Absolute Zero] won't work on you," it said as it took confident steps forward.

So this was the creature that had dispatched five of its Tier 9 guards in an instant?

Hobbu Gogo, with an enraged face stretched out her hand at this little creature and activated one of the runes set within this room. One which was on the ceiling.

The activation was instantaneous as in a breath, her enemy was caught in a cylindrical red light that had four white runes around it!

This was a network of runes made to seal Hobbu Gogo's target and strain their physical strength!

Against someone like this whom the old goblin couldn't hope to beat with her dulled reflexes, Hobby Gogo chose to utilise a physique weakening rune network set.

Immediately after, as she saw her target immobile, Hobbu Gogo activated another set of runes which were on the floor that opened her Temporary Storage over this invader and spilled a hissing black liquid over him!

It was a vile poison that she had created with the cauldron, its potency so great that one small vial's worth could kill Hobbu Bobbu within a minute!

As it fell, Hobbu Gogo enacted another set of rune which were meant to-

"I know ALL your secrets."

...!

Suddenly, the voice of her invader sounded from her left side!

Shockingly, he was not the recipient to her attack in the seal as she had thought!

He had a green sword in hand, seemingly ready to strike with a grin that belonged to the devil while looking up at her!

"Poor thing. You're deaf from your left side, right? I'll make this quick," Hybrid Luman said as he swung his sword, much to Hobbu Gogo's horror.

No.

It wasn't that she was afraid of his strike.

That wasn't why she was horrified.

It was because, this invader's green sword kept blinking in and out existence, creating doubt as to whether or not he was actually holding it!

...!

Chapter 629: Reining In More Gains!

The Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art.

Hobbu Gogo recognised it with but a glance.

The ability to move like a ghost and sever matter with a smooth, elegant swish that was gorgeously... ghostly, was everything she had seen Hobbu Bobbu refined over the span of his life.

Before she knew it, the giant goblin had both her hands severed into small cubes of flesh and bone by a fence of Mortal Ruin that appeared only for a brief moment.

The pain from this, she barely felt.

It was overwhelmed by a sense of heavy grief and sorrow at what her ancient mind could already put together.

Hobbu Bobbu had been defeated.

The fact that this enemy suddenly had his technique, to her who understand the intricacy behind Classes and their power, meant that at the very least, he had bested to a degree where it was impossible to recover from.

The giant goblin's eyes turned vacant as she slumped to the ground listlessly.

Skullius did not follow up with any other attacks.

He did not feel the fervour that had been in Hobbu Bobbu.

Hobbu Gogo did not seem like she could muster enough strength to put up more of a fight.

In fact, Skullius knew she couldn't. He had seen everything about her from Hobbu Bobbu's memory and had used it to his advantage. Her deep connection with Hobbu Bobbu was very important to her.

Skullius knew how to open the stacked runes around the large manor and knew all the defences erected within it. As a result, he had been prepared for whatever Hobbu Gogo could churn out and had exploited the fact that Hobbu Gogo was deaf from the left ear – the result of a tragic accident to the left side of her head that caused a sporadic twitch.

She had a delayed reaction to everything that came from that side.

'She seems intelligent enough to realise what has happened,' Skullius thought as he watched the giant, immobile goblin stare blankly at the ground.

In her head, a sequence of hundreds of memories were running like a tape.

Skullius stepped forward, flashing over to Hobbu Gogo's shoulder where he placed his hand and activated [Immoral Authority].

A surge of darkness penetrated the goblin's body, invading and breaking through her defences which weren't all that strong right now. If she were in her right state of mind, she would have put up quite a fight but Skullius felt no extraordinary resistance.

The goblin had her fair share of evil that was transformed by [Immoral Authority] into darkness but just like one would expect, it didn't matter much now.

Hobbu Gogo was 1,442 years old.

She had an eidetic memory, which meant that everything she saw and experienced since the day she was born was etched into her brain!

She was born special with an outrageous amount of mana that sustained this world and in addition to this, she was one of the few Shamans in this world, beings that understood nature and the elements to an unfathomable degree. The fact that as a Shaman, the 'ghost' of her predecessor hung over and aided her, helped her grow rapidly.

She developed a sense of responsibility in the process that eclipsed that of her peers, becoming dead set on bringing their race up in power, for longevity's sake.

Hobbu Gogo's primary focus was in the use of natural elements, like plants, soils and gems to create edifying potions for her race. This was what she deep dived all her mental strength into for the longest time.

Thus as she began the hundreds of years of trial and error while using large amounts of the resources, something that the other goblins disapproved of, she was met with resistance.

If there was no result for 123 years, why continue to waste away the product of their nigh barren lands? Wasn't it better to be satisfied with this? With living as a free community that barely had anything to have conflict over?

Hobbu Gogo's answer was a no.

She wasn't satisfied.

In fact, when the other goblins tried to stop her, she used powers unbeknownst to her peers to slaughter them, leaving herself as the only high level goblin. With no opposition, she used the abundant time and ingredients to continue her research which succeeded 233 years later.

This success and her growth in strength caused a bubble of massive power to erupt from the world, recognising her hardwork with rewards. Her already enormous mana resources grew as did her powers which were refined, no longer only limited to the mundane understanding of basic nature but the generation of Mundane Grovel Runes!

To aid with her agenda, Hobbu Gogo found a large cauldron stuck deep within the earth by the directions from her evolved class soon after.

The Hundred Foils Edifying Cauldron.

It was a Pseudo-Mythical treasure that Hobbu Gogo found to have formed roughly 400 years ago, as if anticipating her birth and growth!

With it, her experiments saw true success and after concocting the first ever vial of Enlightening Ill, Hobbu Gogo asked for a volunteer among her kin to consume it.

For this, she did not take a violent approach as if it worked, she could earn the respect and reverence of her kin without having to be dictatorial.

Sadly, no volunteer was found.

All the goblins saw Hobbu Gogo as a being who constantly tasted failure for many years. How could they entrust themselves to this with confidence?

What if they died... and for nothing at that?

This specific spell of trepidation and anxiety was what kept all the goblins away.

All... except for Hobbu Bobbu.

The lone goblin stepped up with a clear glint in his eyes.

It wasn't that he trusted Hobbu Gogo. It was the fact that he saw opportunity. If he grew strong from this, it would be enough to change his life.

His kin were weak.

Though he hadn't seen a glimpse of other creatures in the world, he was certain that goblins were weak. Only Hobbu Gogo was at a high level.

And this wasn't satisfactory.

If there was chance that this would change, he would take, rather than letting fear keep him from growing.

The goblin stood firmly under the pleased glow of Hobbu Gogo's sight and was rewarded with a surge in strength that till this day remained unmatched.

'I guess this love went both ways,' Skullius thought while observing all this.

Hobbu Gogo viewed Hobbu Bobbu as someone who saw the vision as much as she did and thus she embraced him, giving him more attention than the other goblins just for his rightly placed mind-set.

She nurtured him personally.

She grew him intimately.

'No wonder she's so crestfallen.'

Soon, the bajillion memories sifted through Skullius' mind wholly, giving him a splitting headache that made him grunt and plop down.

He gnashed his teeth, his body twitching and twisting once again as the insurmountable amount of memories he received tried to convince his flesh that they belonged.

It was torture.

This was worse than when he dived into Hobbu Bobbu!

The rewards were equally as grand though.

[You have acquired the memories of 'Hobbu Gogo']

[A part of 'Hobbu Gogo' now lives within you permanently as a shard of darkness]

[Due to the wide disparity between the target and user, recalculation and modification of gains is mandatory]

[...]

[Recalculation and modification complete]

[Due to the user not having the class 'Epic Variety Shaman', lesser versions of extracted skills will be given]

Of course, this was to be expected.

Skullius couldn't wait to see what he got.

[You have acquired 'Lesser Gravel Rune Mastery']

[You have acquired 'Advanced Potion Making']

[You have acquired 'Rune Assimilation']

'Oh...' Skullius expressed wonder.

This was incredible!

He already expected it but it was good to confirm that he now truly had the ability to use these simple runes!

This had been his biggest desire ever since he had seen the runes over the wall to the first city he and Red Rage had breached!

Having something like this gave him a wide variety of options to work with in combat.

"I hope I have enough time to refine all this into my style of combat. Until I meet with Replicus, this might just be the last major set of gains I get," Skullius said to himself as he waited for his body to adjust to everything he had just absorbed.

He took a deep breath after it was done.

Hobbu Gogo looked lifeless as expected but Skullius wasn't ready to kill her just yet.

He walked over to the giant cauldron and touched its surface.

It was bound to Hobbu Gogo so he couldn't bind it without killing her. For now, he chose to leave it be.

After this, Skullius checked around, sensing the shelves upon shelves of plants and other ingredients as well as potions that Hobbu Gogo owned.

He had been right about collecting them before, though this stash far eclipsed what he had found outside the city.

What a haul!

Skullius wanted to grab all these but he thought of a better idea.

He grabbed Hobbu Gogo's body and the two turned into an elongated mass of darkness and black ribbons that sped through the open doors to land within the streets of the goblin capital after passing the stacked rune barrier.

The goblins were still ensnared by the spell from the Medial Whisperer of Charms which he had used earlier, swimming in dreams all along. This truly was a testament to the staff's power as the duration of its effect could last up to half an hour, though with variations existing because of power differences.

As he stood among the crowds with the armless body of Hobbu Gogo at his side, Skullius raised his hand high.

"First, let's clean up," he said before snapping his fingers.

"BREAK."

Chapter 630: Finishing A Side Adventure

"BREAK."

With the command from the Hybrid Luman's mouth, the sound of hundreds of thousands of mana cores shattering rung in the air in a messy rhythm that irked the ambient mana.

This was true treachery.

The goblins affected by the clutch of [Greatest Mana Crafter] which had a vast range, did not even know that they had died as their consciousnesses were still trapped in the sweet enclosure of wishful thought.

Of desirable dreams.

In many ways, this could be considered a very merciful way to be die as if one recalled, having the mana core broken outside safe conditions, was a harrowing experience.

Furthermore, even if there were powerful existences among these goblins who had profound enough control over their mana cores to resist the grip of the Insurgent Magnus' skill in mana manipulation, they could not exercise it with their minds cast elsewhere.

As the dead or dying bodies of the goblins slumped to the ground, Skullius focused on the outrageous bursts of mana rising from the victims and called the function of the only other mana manipulation skill he had.

[Greatest Mana Attraction].

The mana coming from the goblins, in wild disarray as it was suddenly stopped and darted towards one direction in an instant, as if pulled on by a mana magnet!

Such was the function of this cast skill, after all.

It attracted all the mana its user could sense to them as long as they wished for it and above that, it could also be used to condense it all into minuscule sizes.

These functions were displayed as the streams of bountiful mana rode the unseen air to reach Skullius who stood amid the corpses, each predetermined amount being compressed into the size of a pin head before being sent to orbit around the Hybrid Luman's mana core.

The process was finished within a minute, prompting Skullius to begin moving around to another section of the goblin capital where he couldn't reach with [Greatest Mana Crafter].

Figuring that he might as well do something else while replenishing his extra mana reserves, Skullius summoned the Bashful Abomination from his storage and hung it on his shoulder.

A thick cloth had covered its entirety, this being Skullius' safety measure against accidentally killing off someone he didn't want to be unalived.

"It's been a long time since I've been back here," the sword said.

"Really?" Skullius questioned.

"Yes. Hobbu Bobbu didn't like to stay inside the city. He would usually train his skills outside. Somewhere remote. If not, he would be sitting outside the city, meditating."

"That's hard core."

"It is. Haha."

Skullius didn't think talking to a sword would be such a casually relaxing experience like this. Or maybe it was because the Bashful Abomination was just that friendly after having been bound to someone who actually promised to treat it right?

Who knew.

"So, are you ready to make a new affix? I can't wait to see what you choose for yourself," the sword said enthusiastically with a bit of a wiggle.

Since each user got one chance to place an affix of their liking on the sword, Skullius, as a new user of the Bashful Abomination could remove the previously assigned affix for a new one.

"I don't know yet. This is something I should really take some more time to think about. It would be an absolute waste if I just choose to enhance something I can already do. For now that doesn't seem

like the right answer. I want something different. Something powerful that I can rely on," Skullius said while killing another large group of goblins to absorb their mana.

The Bashful Abomination was pleased with this answer.

This hiddenly meant that Skullius wanted to have it represent an external trump card that he could use when all that he had was irrelevant or inadequate!

In other words...

"I am really special, aren't I?" the Bashful Abomination squeaked with a voice oozing of low self esteem.

"You sure are," Skullius reassured.

Jeez.

He was now trying to affirm to a Pseudo-Mythical grade treasure that it was special. How ridiculous.

From above, a golden figure launched itself below, arriving in front of Skullius with a smooth landing.

"You truly stole the enjoyment I expected from this excursion, Master," Red Rage said with a bit of fury noticeable in his voice. "I loathe that staff of yours."

"Deal with it. I was in a life or death situation and I had to use all of my cards to survive," Skullius responded.

The Pelvic Arbiter shook his head disappointedly at these words, his sight then going to focus on the wrapped up sword that was longer than Skullius was tall with a fold of his arms.

"For someone who was in a life or death situation, your take aways sure came sweet. Is that an additional sword?"

Skullius breathed out exasperatedly.

He then threw out three glass boxes at Red Rage's feet.

"There! Alright?! Can you stop nagging me now?" he huffed lightly.

Red Rage perked up.

Within the glass boxes were five Tier 9 goblins that Skullius had knocked unconscious. These were the guards stationed outside Hobbu Gogo's manor. Skullius had knocked them out and stored them in a breath before, intent on giving them to Red Rage, though probably not in as begrudging of a fashion.

The glass boxes allowed for creatures that were alive to be stored within lesser storage vessels. A convenient aspect to their make.

The Pelvic Arbiter quickly picked up these spoils with a happier air about him.

"You see? That wasn't so hard was it, Master?"

Skullius gnashed his teeth.

The nerve.

"Dear master, who is this?" the Bashful Abomination asked.

"An irritating piece of my life," Skullius replied.

Right then, the march of a group of monsters registered in the silent city as Red Rage's army entered.

He had flown ahead, leaving their march to the capital behind and now they had caught up.

As they entered, Red Rage proudly introduced the results of their journey.

"Despite the setbacks, I'm pleased to inform that many of children are ready to evolve. Some even awakened more unique abilities from their bloodlines and will be very useful in future operations," he said.

"Good for you," Skullius said with little interest. "Anyway, I was planning on storing this entire city in the Elimparidis Stone Staff but since you're here... tell me if you'd want it for your beasts."

Red Rage took a moment to think over this. This certainly would benefit him as this city was the best among all the others structure-wise.

Also, it seemed like there would be quite a lot of useful material if a little digging was done within it and Skullius was willing to let relinquish most of these gains to Red Rage's storage, the freakishly long cape.

"I'll take it," the Pelvic Arbiter said.

Skullius and Red Rage exited the crackling split in space with halos around them.

The Cluster had been successfully cleared.

Red Rage had let his monsters slaughter all the remaining goblins in the Cluster before Skullius finally dealt the last blow to Hobbu Gogo, causing the separate space to hurry their exit.

The Hybrid Luman could quite happily say that the gains from this one Cluster run were the greatest he had gotten since he began this entire journey and his Apostle could concur as most of his army had evolved twice during the last stretch of murder, making him highly anticipative of the time he was going to spend analysing all the changes.

This was mood between master and servant was rising... until it wasn't.

Skullius' smile slumped as he felt the presence of three, clingy people ahead of him.

"If I didn't know any better, I'd say you've been enjoying hiding from me," a sweet voice called from one of these three individuals.

All good things definitely did come to an end eventually.

Chapter 631: Stalkers

Lo and behold, people Skullius had attached the moniker of 'stalker' to had finally caught up to him despite his efforts to keep his activity hidden. For the past six weeks, Skullius had gone under the radars of many including these three.

Until now.

"Don't look so excited to see us," Darwel said sarcastically with a dazzling smile. She was adorned in a beautiful, transparent silver dress that exposed the shorter white one underneath it.

On both her sides were the figures of her loyal guards Viccil and Sevill who bowed to Skullius respectfully.

"It has been a long time, Lord Luminant Festos," they both said in unison, much to Skullius' cringing funny bones.

"How did you find me?" he asked.

"You do know that if I truly wanted to impose on you without regarding your opinion I could have, right? I have the Governor's son seeking my glance at any and all costs and he in turn has a wide array of means to track anyone," Darwel said as she took steps to reach closer to Skullius.

Right.

She wasn't wrong.

At the end of the day, Skullius' means of hiding weren't extraordinary. They mainly relied on the fact that he wasn't all too well known. No one really cared for what he was doing except for a select few individuals.

Perhaps the illusion of Darwel not dropping by the Bryne Family Residence every day or so after the first couple of times made him think his basic incognito utilities were actually working!

Damn it.

"You've made your point. Now, what do you want? I have plenty of things to do here," Skullius said in a harsh and blunt tone.

"Could you be any more tactless? I just wanted to see what you were up to. You've had your fun going about your business alone for now. Let us tag along."

Skullius deflated even further.

"Well, I was just on my way back to Genhuis City," he said.

"Didn't you just say you had plenty of things to do here?"

"I was being too optimistic."

Skullius began strutting in a completely different direction than the one he had intended to go in before, the manner in which he made his motions making Darwel giggle.

"There goes all the dignity I attached to the name Luminant. You definitely aren't what my parents will be expecting," the El Sif said.

"I don't think I've ever presented myself with dignity," Skullius defended his dishonour. "And, I don't think I'd like to present myself to your parents."

Darwel began laughing. If there was anything beside Skullius' hidden bloodline that amused and fascinated her, it would be his personality. She discovered how much she enjoyed talking to such an eccentric character like Skullius after the first few times she did as she had promised – barging in on him within the Bryne Family Residence only to be kicked out minutes later by the Hybrid Luman.

His tone, his temperament and random inclusions of words like sockethole, flesh and bones where they did not fit grew on her especially.

"I don't think either of us have a choice in that matter. Though, I was actually thinking about introducing you to my parents as a lawfully wedded husband the first time I go with back to Opungale. The look on their faces would be hilarious!" Darwel pitched with a devious smile.

Sevill and Viccil felt a chill run up their spines. As did Skullius.

If that were to happen, Skullius would be dead before Darwel even had the time to explain herself!

"Your Highness..." Viccil began.

"It's a joke, Viccil."

"Mas-, Ahem...Sir Festos. I'll be going back to my post," Red Rage who felt like the odd one out here suddenly said.

Everyone turned to him.

"Ah, I barely noticed you there," Darwel said with a dismissive glance.

'LIES!' Red Rage hissed in his mind.

He had been introduced as a devout follower of Skullius during the first time that Darwel and her crew intruded into the Bryne Family Residence.

As such, he hadn't been taken as a key character, especially with fact that in open areas, Red Rage usually kept his long cape hidden, as he had done after leaving the Cluster just now.

"You can go," Skullius said to which the Pelvic Arbiter responded by weaving through the trees of the woodland they were passing through at a rapid speed, disappearing from sight.

This wasn't a tactic retreat.

It was a desperate escape.

Just like Skullius, Red Rage did not wish to become a well known figure.

To ensure that the subject did not hang on his Apostle, Skullius quickly introduced a new topic.

"Since we're already at this point, please tell me you know other methods for me to get to use [Son of Luserus]," Skullius asked.

Darwel wore a baffled look.

"Wow. That's all you have to say? I told you how to visualise and you up and skipped our mandatory meet ups thinking it would be easy to use that ability with just that. Now that it hasn't worked, clearly... You are VERY bold."

"Thanks for the compliment."

"It's really not," Darwel shook her head with an exhausted smirk.

"In any case, I was going to drop by to speak about this eventually so what's the problem here?"

Skullius once again began defending his dishonour while Viccil and Seville silently followed them as they trekked through the woodland.

That was until Seville stopped, her long ears twitching.

Her eyes suddenly shot towards her left, her focus reining in on a particular spot.

Viccil after noticing Seville's halted movement also stopped and wordlessly lowered her stance.

Skullius and Darwel saw the grave reaction from the two and raised their guard.

What was going on?

Sevill could hardly call what she had sensed just now a threat or even a sentient creature watching them. She couldn't confirm what it was as it had only showed itself for a fraction of a moment, not enough time to appraise it.

However, as someone trained to always be on high alert, she wouldn't disregard anything that she perceived, even if it was just a passing wisp of malice.

A few minutes passed like this.

No one made any movements.

Even Skullius held himself back.

If Sevill and Viccil had noticed something that even he couldn't then that meant it was probably out of his league one way or another. Besides, they were far stronger than him, so he might as well let them handle the situation.

"It's gone," Sevill said as she turned to Darwel. "I've scoured a ten mile radius from where we are. Whatever it was that I felt is gone."

Darwel nodded while relaxing from the tension she felt.

She had faith her guards and in the fact that they took her sensitive identity just as seriously as she did.

Even leaving the city without informing anyone hours before had been after Darwel tussled with the two.

Skullius on the other hand was left shocked by the simple sentence Sevill had uttered just now.

'I've scoured a time mile radius from where we are...'

What the flesh was that supposed to mean?

Was it a matter of semantics?

No. That couldn't be it.

For people as dedicated to keeping Darwel safe as these two...

'Is she trying to say that this whole time... she was...?' Skullius found this hard to believe.

He had his senses stretched out for miles and he didn't sense Seville move at all!

Still, he kept his cool and took a breath.

What mattered was that the situation at hand was settled. Sort of. If Seville said the threat was gone, then it was probably gone.

*

Hidden unnaturally within a partially leaning tree 13 miles away from the group of four, a rather tall woman dressed up in the thick fur of a white ice bear shifted uncomfortably.

"Too keen. That confirms it then. I can't carelessly advance. Opungale has growing its strengths too it seems. <Sigh>. I have already dragged this on for too long.

I hope the First Horn won't have my head for this," this woman said to herself while crawling out of her hiding space.

With nimble movements, she followed her targets from this outrageous distance while making sure not to let out even a sliver of her presence.

Chapter 632: A MUST In Time!

Genhais City.

Governor's Manor.

Two gentlemen sat in a large room with a rigid air revolving around them. From the looks of their faces alone, the contrast in detail – stern with slight wrinkles of fury against relaxed skin and a carefree smile, one could already discern that the topic being discussed called for no small amount of tension.

The guards and servants who had been stationed in this room had been extremely grateful to be excused as a glimpse of the proceedings had told them that the already unfriendly relationship between these two was going to shoot up several degrees in that same dark direction.

"Rearren, whatever it is that you are planning.... It ends now. The Premium Age Royale must be cancelled," the Governor made his case with aged wrinkles building on his forehead to support his stance visually.

He finally made his move after some lengthy deliberation.

The reason for this was partially because there was a building suspicion that he was made known to by his subordinates and partly due to the fact that there was civil unrest that he could already see on his own.

Something ugly was taking hold.

Rearren EverSword upon hearing this wore a deeper, less dignified smile while his eyes narrowed in amusement.

"Why the sudden call to end the event of the century?" he asked calmly.

"Don't play me for a fool, Rearren. I know full well that you walked through the doors to my manor expecting this. Cut the pretence!" the Governor shot.

The EverSword House head took a moment before responding.

"Fair enough. What has driven you to act finally? You have been against this since the beginning," he said.

The Governor scoffed in disgust.

"For you to act like you don't know that more than 10,000 people have died since the beginning of your little event is disturbing. Every single one of these people had the Control Seal you introduced for the Royale! You'd be a fool if you thought the world would chalk it up to a mere coincidence!"

"People die everyday, common folk especially. Why should it mean something more profound when they just happen to have the seal? It's been a growing trend all over, has it not? There are tens of millions of excited people attending the Royale now," Rearren gave his answer with a low voice.

The man seated opposite him clutched the bridge of his nose.

Shameless!

This wasn't denial!

The Governor had wanted to believe that something else was at play but no.

That didn't seem to be the case.

He slumped back into his seat and kept his serious gaze on this man.

"I know a little about Creeds, Rearren. Incandescent Stage monsters like you can impart strange conditions on anything in the world in exchange for restrictions. The Royale rules, the lavish venue and this seal. There are a lot of Creeds used to make this whole thing possible, right? I underestimated your goals. You're as conniving as I've imagined.

Proud. Arrogant. But if you think I'll let these deaths go, you have another think coming."

Rearren gave a short laugh.

"Proud and arrogant? I'll take it. As for my goals, you couldn't possibly fathom what an idea from someone like me would look like. I am not preoccupied with mourning the deaths of defenceless commonfolk who die miserably by stumbling to a fall in the road or from catching a cold. Only someone like you would read too much into it," he said, his fist supporting his cheek on the armrest.

"The Premium Age Royale will not stop. In fact, the second Preliminary Round will end quicker than the first since 97 individuals out of the 234 were disqualified. Before long, the true event will start and end before you know it. Why don't you be patient?"

The past month and a half had seen a rapid progression in the Premium Age Royale. Some contenders died, some conceded and some were swallowed by others in more ways than one.

By disqualified, Rearren moreso alluded to the last group, contenders taken forcefully taken out of the event by one woman than anything else.

Vali Kinn.

A lot of the lower level contenders had withdrawn because of the deals she had been offering which to Rearren wasn't exactly a problem since he wanted to weed out the weak with the Preliminaries anyway and the process was quickly ramping up.

In the Royale, contenders who were disqualified would have the Control Seal removed and they could go about their lives normally, which stressed the fact that the combatants were safe.

With 137 contenders left, some of them being Vali's thralls who would only be surrendering without a fight so that they could leave the Royale, the second Preliminary Round was going to be a dull 28 day stretch with a measly 10 match days.

The same was not true for the witnesses though. They could not withdraw from participating and fulfilling their role, an aspect of this whole thing that made many suspicious... behind the fact that many of these witnesses were dying outside the event in ridiculous ways of course.

"Patience? If you continue to be stubborn, I'll have to request the assistance of the Purity or the Royale Family. They wouldn't turn a blind eye to this," the Governor said with unyielding resolve.

"Go ahead. No one is stopping you. My defence will be the exact same if I'm ever faced with them. Besides, the Control Seals are set to continue the routine transportation to the venue even without the intervention of the Game Master. I can't stop them. You'd have that to deal with that even if you rally sizable support," Rearren said while leisurely setting one leg on top of the other.

The problem THAT MAN had told him to prepare for was finally rising, but he was sure, nothing would stop whatever was coming.

The Purity Headquarters.

The triangular space situated in an undisclosed location once again welcomed the union of seven distinguished figures who sat behind seven small netted doors that were distributed at different heights on one wall.

At this time, an unusual guest had visited, but without nearly as little tact as the last lute strumming guest.

"Your request for an audience truly surprised us, Helda. A Diviner from the first generation of the Seer's Height like you need not walk the distance to speak to us," a voice came from the topmost door, directing a scarcely seen level of respect to the old woman standing in the middle of the room.

"This matter is sensitive and in need of closed doors. Yet I feel you may already have an inkling of it," the old woman said.

She was one of the seven Diviners in Genhuis. The oldest one of the Diviners of the Seer's Height, the same whom Ruhrees had asked for help when a Grand Priest was murdered in the Temple.

"I have seen a treacherous chaos ahead. It is murky and thick. The array of colours and storms it will cause are... are greater than any of us can comprehend. The folds of the past will twist backwards and the opposite will also come to pass. I do not know what to make of it," she said with a distressed face that genuinely showed anxiety.

"When your young Paladin came to me seeking assistance with the death of a mere priest, I thought you may have your backsides too relaxed so I came to warn and seek enlightenment myself. What do the Deities say of this? Have you heard?"

A chilling silence crept within the hollow space after this old woman, Helda, had introduced her case.

She was clearly disturbed.

"We know."

A reply came from the same voice that spoke last time.

"Erlton the Reader beat you to it," another said.

"He warned that a coming disaster that cannot be prevented will swallow the world but we are to sit on our hands. All of us. Those that do not know must remain in the dark until it comes to pass," another voice added.

Helda frowned.

"The Reader? He is not a bumbling fool after all?" she said quizzically. "Why must we not do anything?"

Another silence ensued.

This time, it was of hesitation.

An unnerving answer then came.

"Apparently, just as with the Ashing of Time spurned by Jiggorrhax the Abiding Madness, what is to come **MUST** happen and nothing can stop it."

Chapter 633: Congested Evils

Maqi.

"Amusing. You mean to tell me that she cannot find a chance to assassinate a single sheltered Sif?" a kingly figure, a beast of a man with a huge, frightening frame said with a powerful voice. "Is this not too much err to allow?"

"Please do not take it as this, First Horn," a stout old man with a wise looking face pleaded with a bow. "My disciple is a perfectionist. She prefers to take her time and strike only when she feels that her move will deal the most fatal blow possible but without anyone figuring it out the who, how and why."

The giant man seated on a very beautiful and rather artistic throne scoffed, a stream of mana leaving his nostrils.

Such paltry reasoning.

"Am I to excuse the habits of a failure masked as sharpened expertise?" he uttered.

"No, First Horn, but I believe out of all our forces, she is the best one for this specific job. She may not be the strongest but the plan was to kill the Sif princess in a way that gives the illusion that Pelian did it, sparking a war between the newly established allies, and she can perform something like that perfectly."

"Your manner of speaking spells to me that her habits are not the only reason for this disgraceful delay. Spill it. What else is the problem?"

The stout man grimaced.

"First Horn, it appears that the Sif princess has not been leaving the city she is living in often. Said city is guarded by a powerful Incandescent Stage expert, has the presence of a Paladin Champion and in addition to this, she has two extremely dangerous guards that follow her everywhere."

The man seated on the throne paused in thought.

"Should we have employed the assistance of the Mages from Emeradis then? They are the ones who sculpted this round about way of creating the desired conflict. Perhaps their magics would assist," he said but in a strange tone of voice, as if testing to see what the man he was addressing would say.

"No, First Horn. We have no need of their aid with something so trivial. Please, give my disciple more time. She would rather commit suicide than to fail at her area of specialty. Besides, this added time gives us some more room for preparation. Warring with Opungale will be no easy task," the stout man tried to convince.

The passive gaze of the First Horn lingered over his face for a while.

In his mind, he had already begun to think that perhaps sending a Shamanic Mage would have been better instead. Perhaps discarding this little play-around would have been an option too but he wasn't that hasty.

"If she fails to do it within the next two weeks, I will have YOU kill her," the large man declared with a straight face.

"Thank you for your consideration, First Horn," the old, stout man prostrated with a silent sigh of relief.

Guissepo sat on the white platform silently, the absolute silence around him with a dash of shudders from the chained Cluster General outside the stadium being a soothing melody that he had involuntarily grown to enjoy since being imprisoned here.

Sure, this was definitely a horrendously boring part to play in the grand scheme of things, but the sacrifice was what empowered the functions of what was intended for the Premium Age Royale.

He breathed out a sigh.

His grumbling stomach which hadn't tasted food in a while made way for memories that actually made him smile.

Extravagance.

The very thought of how shallow he had been when he joined the Evenfall made him laugh.

Sleeping on an empty stomach all those times while others who lived close-by didn't see a lack of anything – ointment for the skin, food for the belly and sustainable shelter – had birthed a hideous devil within him that cast blame and responsibility on people who didn't have the mandate to better society.

The actions of those in charge could be questioned but those who were simply well off but weren't willing to share? They could only be judged from afar and scorned inwardly but not struck down openly.

It wasn't their duty.

A hunger-fuelled rage didn't give Guissepo much opportunity to think that way back then.

He cursed those who lived and flaunted their extravagance.

He loathed them.

He hoped they would die gruesome deaths and meet him and others like him in a collective afterlife where the hurt or blessing was the same.

"Hehe," Guissepo laughed.

He stood up and paced along the platform.

His motivation had grown.

He wasn't the same nor was his motivation.

At least that was what he thought.

Now he looked forward to a LIFE where the hurt and the blessing was the same!

'If its extravagance that is to be had, let it be for all. If it is misery, let it be for all. Even with three gods present, this world has never known extravagantly rich peace for all. Even a fourth god won't guarantee it, but in that time where chaos reigns, everyone will be wallowing in the same suffering,' he thought with a bright smile.

This was his advanced ideal.

This was what he was yearning to see.

Petty? Perhaps it was but a dog from a ruined society wouldn't be a complex mastermind. Guissepo didn't need to be.

And perhaps Boron saw that too.

The memory was still vivid in the Game Master's mind.

When that dreadful creature, the Galemonger, had come to rescue him when he was imprisoned in Inhone City, it had shared a vision with him that was soaked in the Primus burning from the eye it manifested.

Primus that he and the other cultists had been funnelling into Clusters, producing empowered monsters!

Guissepo had seen a stream of events through that eye. Visions that led to a certain point.

What he was striving for right now.

So far, nothing had stopped the course to his goal and that was confirmation to him that nothing would ever going stop what was coming.

Why this was shared to him, Guissepo didn't know.

Perhaps he was just motivated enough.

Perhaps a simple mind was what Boron, the Traitorous Deity of the Under sought.

Regardless of what the reason was...

"I cannot wait to see the fourth HERALD rise. This will be more extravagant than the Grand Wars!"

Chapter 634: The Definitive Status!

The group of three approached Genhuis City gates before the sun even contemplated to follow its routine dip into the horizon.

It had been quite the long and chatty journey for Skullius and as he felt the city grow near, he was a little relieved. Finally, perhaps he'd get to leave this mostly unwanted company soon. He had a lot of things to do and confirm after all.

Besides that, he was really getting uncomfortable because of two additional members to their group that kept speaking in muffled voices that only he could hear.

Vicil and Sevil's swords.

With [Unmatched Sword Sense], Skullius had started to hear these two weapons which were at the Mythical grade level speak from time to time, distracting him immensely. They weren't fluent in their speaking or even coherent but they did. Since Skullius didn't talk to them, they were oblivious to the fact that they could be heard, which honestly made for a freaky experience.

This unusual ability wasn't the limit of [Unmatched Sword Sense] though, surprisingly.

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[Unmatched Sword Sense (Special) | Lv.40]

You attain a passive extreme understanding of any sword. How to wield it, how to care for it, how to hear its LIVING SOUL and how to swing it. In addition, you gain the active ability to bring out 200% of any sword's potential, even if its durability is gone.

Mana Requirements: 1000 (I) Mana Points, 100 (I) Mana Points every minute

Durability: ---

Cooldown: None

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The fact that these weapons could speak meant that they weren't forged in a normal way – they didn't have a normal history – but weren't special enough to be on the same level as the Bashful Abomination, shockingly, even though their grade was higher.

The fact that Skullius owned two extraordinary swords whose traits went above the norm and tickled upon the level these ones were brought no small amount of anxiety to Skullius.

Was his luck truly standing for this?

"We're going to have to split up here," Darwel suddenly said while turning to Skullius. "I can't let people know I was out of the city."

Skullius wore a solemn look.

"Is this how you usually are back home?" he asked.

"I wish," the El Sif replied with a cheeky smile, her twinkling eyes going on to stare at the Hybrid Luman as if looking for something hidden within his white sclera.

She then summoned a rolled up piece of parchment and gave it to Skullius who handled it with unsureness.

"What is this?" he asked.

"Since our brainstorming may and may not help with getting you to find out how to find your true form, I wrote down everything I know about Luminants and Elf Sif by extension. Some of it, at least," she said.

"Some of it?"

"If I give you everything I know, you'll probably start trying to run away from me again. I might as well keep the rest as a bargaining chip."

"That's underhanded."

"Is it? Is it, really?" Darwel asked while getting a bit too close to Skullius who drew away. "I'd be willing to give you all the information you need if you make visits to my quarters VOLUNTARILY, you know?"

"That phrasing sounds... wrong," Skullius pointed out.

"It's perfect as it is," Darwel defended herself with the swish of her cherry hair aside. "But I know you probably want to avoid me, hahaha."

"I'm trying to escape the attention."

"But Lord Luminant, we can protect you from any danger on this continent. Please trust in us," Seville said sincerely, prompting the Hybrid Luman to turn to her.

'Protect me? I don't think anyone in this world can,' Skullius thought.

"For now, I'd feel better off if we limited contact. This world is every bit as dangerous as what you consider to be your greatest threats."

With that, Skullius didn't look to want to continue having this constant persuasion fest. The three understood it and let go of the matter.

Even though none of them had mentioned it, Skullius had grown by a massive degree since the last time they had met. It was hard to believe that he was the same individual from a month ago really.

This is what put Darwel, Seville and Viccil at mild ease and also confirmed that despite being part human, Skullius was definitely a Luminant.

"Fine, but if you are in trouble, don't hesitate to call us. We'll help out within anything you want," Darwel said as she took steps back, Viccil and Seville doing the same with bows of respect.

In the next moment, the three disappeared into thin air.

Phewww.

Skullius took a deep breath.

Finally.

Some silence.

*

It didn't take the Hybrid Luman long to enter the city. With his sporadic goings in and out of the city, he had grown to become well-known at the gate by the different shifts and his high rank as a mercenary gave him more leeway than before.

Still, he remained a more vaguely recognised figure as what he did when he went out remained a mystery to most.

As soon as he stepped into the city, Skullius coated his body with a layer of Null Life Essence.

With some tutelage from Red Rage, his control over Null Life Essence had improved, but it was still nowhere near his proficiency in mana, thus he didn't rely on it for combat.

Because of the Null beast he had summoned back in the Fire Breeder Cluster, he knew that Null Life Essence could be used for defence but he was still lacking in this. He had only increased his mastery to be able to adhere to what Red Rage had surmised – that Null Life Essence deterred Divination.

Since no one else could see it, Skullius wore a layer of it openly when entering Genhuis City to guard against the prying of the seven Diviners. He hoped there was actually some effect to it.

While heading home and thinking that he would submit the carcasses and evidence for his excursion to the Guilds Association later, Skullius checked his status to familiarise himself again with everything he had earned.

~~~

[ Name : Festos Dawn ]

[ Level : 18 ]

[ EXP : 100,565/741,150 ; <Task Pending> ]

[ Core : Blue ]

[ Class : Insurgent Magnus ]

[ Race : Hybrid Luman ]

[ Inv. Status : Still doomed ×2 ]

-----

[ Stats ]

[ STRENGTH (I) : 28,970 ]

[ AGILITY (I) : 28,762 ]

[ INTELLIGENCE (I) : 42,851 ]

[ ENDURANCE (I) : 28,968 ]

[ LUCK : Atrocious? ]

-----

[ HEALTH : 70,995/70,995 ]

-----

[ MANA (I) : 103,200 ]

-----

[ Null Life Essence : 12,000/12,000 ]

-----

[ Skills ]

[ Greatest Mana Crafter | Lv.89 ]

[ Great Celestial Counterfeit | Lv.1 ]

[ Celestial Hack | None ]

[ Ungodly Flames of Debauchery | Lv.19 ]

[ Null Extraction ]

[ Static Limbo ]

[ Null Life Aura | Lv.8 ]

[ Graceless Hunter (Special) | Lv.4 ]

[ Instant Blaze Charge (Special) | Lv.28 ]

[ Bombardier Bangster Fist Art (Special) | Lv.34 ]

[ Greatest Mana Attraction | Lv.15 ]

[ Elite Combat Arts (Special) | Lv.5 ]

[ Elite Swordplay (Special) | Lv.2 ]

[ Parting Wave | Lv.9 ]

[ Primal Caution (Special) | Lv.22 ]

[ Undaunted Calamity (Special) | Lv.23 ]

[ Beyond the Hype | None ]

[ Swindling Death Dance (Incomplete) ]

[ Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art (Special) | Lv.45 ]

[ Swordmaster's Quiescence (Special) | Lv.30 ]

[ Unmatched Sword Sense (Special) | Lv.40 ]

[ Lesser Gravel Rune Mastery (Special) | Lv.20 ]

[ Rune Assimilation (Special) | Lv.10 ]

[ Advanced Potion Making (Special) | Lv.12 ]

[<Class>]

[ Evil Darkness Meshing (Special) | Lv.50 ]

[ Evil Darkness Creation (Special) | Lv.43 ]

[ Immoral Authority (Special) | Lv.10 ]

[ Just Light Creation (Special) | Lv.67 ]

[ Just Light Meshing (Special) | Lv.49 ]

[ Boundless Evil (Special) | Lv.25 ]

[ Saint Lumis' Benign Arc (Special) | Lv.11 ]

[ Destined Warp Steps (Special) | Lv.55 ]

[ Crude World Projection ]

[ Seramoro, Oblivion's Edge ]

[ Bead of Malevolence | Lv.10 (Max) ]

[ Perfect Night Domain | Lv.7 ]

[ Wing of the Just ]

[<Racial>]

[ Son of Luserus (Special) | Lv.1 ]

[<Arts>]

[ Pseudo Evil Veneration (1%) ]

[<Oddities>]

[ Binds of Fukal ]

[ Fruit of World Myths ]

[ Omniscient Thought Cracker ]

----

[<Affinities>]

[ Evil Darkness - B ]

[ Just Light - D ]

[ Distorted Gravity ]

~~~

Looking at the long list of skills brought a smile to Skullius' face. This was the definitive arsenal that he wanted to keep as it wasn't riddled with meaningless and useless abilities any longer. With the addition of the skills he had just gotten from the two Cluster Generals, the Hybrid Luman felt that discovering how to fuse skills was probably one of the best things he had learned to do.

With these skills that all had purpose, he felt more... intact.

The only downside he could think of was the fact the stronger skills were claimed by his Insurgent Magnus powers that were starting to be more active. Abilities like [Boundless Evil], [Destined Warp Steps] and the likes were now included as Class skills instead of normal ones, meaning that they stronger but couldn't be accessed in his Penetrator form.

Slowly, his two forms were growing more and more apart.

'Hmmm. I'm getting closer and closer to the Second Trial. Only two more levels left and I'll be entering the Master Stage,' Skullius thought, remembering the gruelling Tasks he had received from Level 11 up till now.

They were all related to his Class and they got progressive harder, which was why his [Evil Darkness] and [Just Light] abilities had grown so quickly. He had been forced to level them up with constant use.

That said, with a bit of research though, the Hybrid Luman had found out something unnerving. Something that reminded him that his existence was truly... odd.

Apparently, Tasks continued to vary for everyone else. While they did get specialised as one got stronger, they still had a wide range. For Skullius, he found that the variety only got more and more stunted, which led him to ask himself...

Where were these Tasks really coming from?

Everyone else received Tasks from the Deities but Skullius... since he couldn't be blessed by these gods had to have a different being behind him, creating these Tasks for him.

At first he thought it was VOW bro, but his line of thinking shifted.

'It's probably Fulgardt. A piece of his will is attached to me and the Class I got when I received his legacy. When I got stronger last time, the guidance field showed me that this will gives me a bit more of his powers with each major leap I get in strength. The bro reached Divinity and with how his corpse moved on its own in the Labyrinth of the Yoke... he's probably not dead in the mortal sense...'

This was how Skullius viewed it.

It wasn't something amusing to think about by any means but it was best to attach his mind to this theory. It kept him vigilant.

In any case, Skullius was happy about the gains. He couldn't wait to experiment with the large cauldron and the Bashful Abomination.

His growth still reflected even now as every time he met someone with a sword, he felt a light ringing from it that singed vague emotion and thought, all of which was blasted towards his mind.

This simple fact made the Hybrid Luman quicken his pace to the Bryne Family Residence.

On arriving he found Daggs sitting on the couch and enjoying his tea.

As soon as the attendant saw him, he shot up from his seat to greet him respectfully but Skullius quickly stopped him in his speedy tracks.

"Don't be so jumpy."

"Ah... right. Welcome back, Sir Festos," Daggs said shakily with a horrible smile.

"It's good to be back," Skullius replied. "Where's Stylla?"

Daggs' nervous smile turned into a grim one, his face turning to a more sombre shade.

Skullius instantly understood from the drop in the attendant's enthusiasm.

Chapter 635: Be Real With Me

Stylla, since that day at the Bryne Family Estate, had never been the same. She had brought back from the tragic event a figure full of rage, determination and negativity that couldn't be dispelled.

Worse yet, this mix of dreadful malice only continued to brew as the days went by, especially after the match days in the Premium Age Royale where she was forced to see Setkh's face again.

Each time, it was as if she had been forced to swallow spoonfuls of a horrid reality mixed in a with a 'Screw you' from the universe that kept her mood down in the slumps.

Slowly, dark bags started to form under her eyes as she worked tirelessly, her frame shrinking as she barely ate and spent more and more time with her unconscious father in his bedroom. No one could pull away Stylla from this road she was treading.

Not Skullius, not Silrat, not Ed, not even her own sister Terese who grew increasingly worried.

It was a sad sight.

Skullius knocked on the door to a lavish guestroom and waited a few seconds for a response.

There was a bout of silence with no reply for a while, until a sickly voice, raspy and full of reverse cheer whispered a hollow 'Come in.'

Skullius entered the room with the squeak of the door and found the view he expected.

Beside a large bed where a handsome man lay enshrined in a pristine light created by clustered runes, the figure of Stylla could be seen staring unblinkingly onto it.

Her red hair had long forgotten the taste of a comb and grown sick of the simple rinse of water as well as the uncaring drying from a towel. Her once fair skin was losing its healthy sheen and the rosy tinge of heat was lost from her face that looked as apathetic and pitiful as could be.

One could rightfully ask if this truly was Stylla at all after comparing her now to what she had looked like before.

"Stylla..." Skullius voiced with a serious visage.

The red head didn't show a reaction.

Skullius sighed.

This presented the same thing he had grown to know from Stylla's new, gloomy mannerisms.

She wasn't in the mood for small talk or any talk for that matter.

But he could squeeze important stuff in.

"Were you uh... were you able to get them all to meet with us?" Skullius asked.

Stylla's body that had been hunched over in its seat sat up straight.

"Yes. You'll be able to meet them after the matches tomorrow," Stylla replied without turning her head.

"Great. You told them that we will meet at your Estate, right?"

"...Sure."

Skullius frowned.

'Hey, hey. What the flesh is that supposed to mean? It could mean anything. Sure, I did? Sure, I can set it up to that place instead? Sure, knock yourself out with a serrated bat?!

What did it mean?!" he raged internally.

"Will you be coming?" the Hybrid Luman asked, though he suspected a damp answer already.

As expected, Stylla grew silent for quite some time, probably to foreshadow that she was in fact, as Skullius guessed, not coming with him and Silrat.

The Hybrid Luman sighed again.

He had thought this would make Stylla get better, gradually. It was a huge undertaking and would require focus after all. Unfortunately, the opposite happened.

Skullius had told Stylla back at her Estate that he wanted them to cooperate. To build something together. Something similar to what Replicus was doing but in partnership form.

Stylla had agreed, which had led to him, her and Silrat brainstorming ideas over what kind of growth model to pursue.

The general idea Skullius had pitched when he asked for them to actually cooperate instead of use each other through convoluted means was for him to invest in the Bryne Family. If he and Stylla worked together, they could raise the Family to its feet again.

Skullius proposed this after revealing to Stylla that the Premium Age Royale wasn't as simple as it seemed, which forced her to take Skullius' deal seriously.

She eventually agreed and the three had gotten to trying to find ways to make the Bryne Family look attractive. Money, resources and exclusive objects of trade they could harness.

So far, these had been achieved.

Skullius had gone on a lot of exclusive missions for the Association along with handling his own private excursions.

The combination of these had earned him close to 100,000 Plasma Coins between the mission rewards, taking criminal loot for himself and selling off rare Cluster beast and Cluster General carcasses!

This amount was used to rebuild the Bryne Family main mansion and modify the Estate accordingly – improving the view as well as the infrastructure.

Those from the previous batch of servants serving in the Bryne Family who stayed, refusing to abandon the Family for any amount of gold were rehired to maintain the expanded farms, the new mansion and the renovated compounds while a new batch, one made of able Foundation Stage experts was employed to head the auxiliary personnel.

Silrat, with his information gathering sought and found Advancement Stage and a few Master Stage experts who were added to the total number of guards in the Family, after Skullius formed contracts with them of course.

Resources such as armour, spatial storage, carriages, tools, clothing, livestock and more were procured by Silrat largely, while Skullius brought a bit more from his unexplored means.

In a month and a half, the Bryne Family Estate had changed so much that the locals were surprised, a bit frightened even. The thick, but beautiful wall erected around it, making it seem like some kind of impenetrable fortress intimidated the inhabitants of the lands under the Bryne Family.

All this said, Stylla's gloom was not fazed as even now when the most important phase of their growth plan was afoot, the red head refused to participate.

"Why don't you want to come?" Skullius asked the forlorn Stylla.

She heaved in a breath and finally turned to stare at the Hybrid Luman with lost eyes.

"Haven't I done enough?" she said with a feeble voice.

"Enough? When we're just getting started?"

Stylla shook her head and gazed out the window.

"I've been thinking... Ever since Setkh left the Family to do whatever he wanted to do so long ago, I leapt at the chance to take the reins to the Family. Soon after, I discovered that the weight crushed me and I couldn't handle it alone. There was no reward there.

Even after Setkh returned, I found that the small relief it gave that at least I wasn't alone, even if I didn't trust him, was never going to last," she said.

"But here I am. Trying. I can't get rid of this anger in me. It's the only thing keeping me going. Setkh... I'm trying to keep together everything he ruined for this Family but...

can I even do it? Will this work with me at the helm again? I am too weak for this. I'm nothing like father. I'm afraid of making mistakes again and not seeing things I should be able to see if I'm to run the Family. And...

I can't stand with you tomorrow. I'd rather stay in the shadows."

Skullius leaned against the wall and tilted his head.

Weakness? Anger? Mistakes?

Really?

This was what was keeping Stylla holed up and afraid to act?

A nerve was struck.

A chuckle came out of Skullius' mouth, much to Stylla's surprise.

The Hybrid Luman gazed at her with his white eyes.

"If some of us could give up just because we made mistakes or were weak or angry, life would be a breeze, wouldn't it?" he said with a ridiculing tone that Stylla didn't miss.

A flash of tamed fury ran through her eyes.

"Right. Maybe that's why you should stand in for me. You're brave, bold and strong. You never doubt yourself. That is someone the Family needs right now," Stylla said, subduing her emotions.

"So I should do all the work while you hide away in your own petty fears feeling sorry for yourself? Give me a break. You think by doing this you're proving that you know yourself and your limits but it's all just an excuse to give up," Skullius said with a sharp tone.

Stylla's body trembled and she balled her hands into fists while rising from her seat.

"My fears are petty? Oh, sure. You'd know everything about that, right? Since you've been to the Under and back and have been through the worst the world has to offer," she hissed weakly.

"Maybe I have. In fact, I actually HAVE been to the worst of places and back. And you know what I can tell even without seeing with my eyes? A coward."

Stylla opened her mouth to release a hot breath that carried a chunk of her frustrations. Her face turned red and she pointed at Skullius only to lower her hand and take another puff of the cool air to calm down.

"Good then. I'm a coward who doesn't know who she is and what the fuck she is supposed to be. But don't you speak to me as if you weren't an aimless, paranoid, dense little Mage when we first met. If it wasn't for Silrat, for Uncle Jac and me where the fuck would you be now? Stop acting tough... like..."

like you know who you are and where you're going with so much clarity that everyone else turns into an idiot before your oh so mighty view, Festos!"

...

This time.

It was Skullius' turn to twitch in a bit of rage.

There was truth in what Stylla said and it stung quite a bit, forcing Skullius into thoughts he usually tried to avoid.

Who was he...

Where was he going...

Chapter 636: The Conflict In Identities

The question of who and where.

Stylla's words brought to light some of Skullius' concerns. Perhaps because everything in his life happened so fast, he had failed to fully digest it all or find time to properly find the answers to these questions.

But in the end, Skullius' mind had found itself... doubting.

After all was said and done, the person who truly understood how much he had changed was Skullius himself.

He was no longer the little fragile skeleton that landed within the Tremur, got beaten, forced to scurry away and scrounge for power in some and unfortunate conflicts. His mind, body and soul from back then were vastly different from what they were now.

Fragments of him had started getting chipped away before he knew it.

Wait.

Where they even fragments of him or something else entirely?

This went back to the fact that Skullius didn't know which he was. Which he truly was – a human who lived a currently unclear life on a distant, dying world as Somanda said, a moronic, braindead and full of shit little skeleton that spent the better part of a 1000 years mining mana gems for an Arch-Lich, or a fearless, powerful inheritor of two devastating powers who was going to change the world.

Hmph.

If the same Skullius who once bragged to his fellow skeletons about Somanda caressing his skull were to hear that he would become such a force to reckoned with, he would call Bonet over and have a hard laugh at the joke. The same was probably true for the currently vague version of himself from when he was still alive.

Skullius released a rough breath under Stylla's accusing eyes.

She was right.

The Hybrid Luman had changed.

Back then, while living under the doomed AND cursed status effects, his life was mostly strife with little benefit. He feared death but pushed through with everything he had to get what he desired.

Him leaving the dread he had of death when fighting Bassbion was the first time Skullius broke through an abstract fear all on his own but...

'Maybe I really...' he thought.

Maybe he really was losing himself as he begun to fear.

The very same day he felt like he overcame a huge obstacle, was the same day murky traits that weren't his invaded his being, anchoring themselves through the legacy he had gotten.

The <WILL OF UNDERSTANDING>.

The <WILL OF BRUTALITY>.

The <WILL OF CUNNING>.

The <WILL OF BLOODLUST>.

These were fragments of thought and existence that sank and dissolved into Skullius, forcing him to change.

He was never really smart. Maybe he was in his past life but not when he was a skeleton.

He was never a brutal existence. He was just a psychopath who didn't have notions of human norms.

And with these changes...

"You know what, Stylla?" Skullius said while dimming the fury that had been building up within him. He then laughed at himself while clenching his face which brought hints of anxiety over Stylla's visage.

"I've changed. I received help and I grew. And lately, I have been getting a big head because of everything I've been earning. I'm rich, I'm strong and I'm special. Even if I don't fully know who I am or where I'm going, I'm still making my way forward. You don't need a fleshing journey of self discovery that lasts for weeks or months to move on.

I should know."

Stylla flinched.

"And are you getting the answers you want while blinding doing whatever you think is the right choice?" she asked with a stern expression.

Answers?

That's right.

Camilla, his adopted sister, the girl he frequently saw...

His unusual ability that staved away the atrocious luck he was supposed to have from time to time...

His incomplete soul didn't give him the answers through normal recollection.

Even Serenity refused to shed some light.

"They will. If I get all the power I can ever find, memories, self realisation and fulfilment will follow. Isn't that what all creatures want at the end of the day?" Skullius said with an immovable conviction.

Stylla stared deep into his eyes for several moments before she dropped to her seat and sighed.

"Like I said. You never doubt yourself. Someone like you should be heading the Family for now. Maybe I'm just too... normal," Stylla said, shifting her position to once again stare into the light guarding her father.

"I'm sorry about what I said. I'm pretty keen on defending myself. But I'm still not going to meet them. You and Silrat will do it."

Skullius sighed exasperatedly and exited the room.

What a handful.

Maybe Stylla really wasn't built for this after all.

'Tsk.'

The people that he and Stylla were talking about were representatives from Families on the same level or a bit higher than the Bryne Family. Using her connections as well as her father's, Stylla had called for a meeting so that she, Skullius and Silrat could pitch their attractive resources available for sale.

This was all in order to form alliances.

Perhaps loyalty had died when Stylla's father was cursed but the bond built from mutual benefit could stand the test of multiple lifetimes even if the original individuals to forge an alliance had long passed.

The trio had several resources to pitch already but now, with Skullius' new [Advanced Potion Making], there were more options on the table that he wanted to add, provided that he tested the limits of his abilities first, that was.

This was a lesser concern however.

This exchange with Stylla was really going to mess with the Hybrid Luman for a long time.

The more he pushed on, the more he found that his identities grew and all of them wanted to claim his soul.

He was the Luminant, with a supposed true self that he could awaken through [Son of Luserus].

He was the undead. Well, he was. Not anymore.

He was the Eternal Storm Veil Penetrator, connected to the mysterious otherworldly being known as Serenity.

He was the Insurgent Magnus, the legacy of the most vile human to walk on Aigas.

And soon, a more terrifying identity would grace Skullius in the future. One that was recognised everywhere.

'What's even more scary is what Sause said about that power...' Skullius thought as he looked at himself.

Seramoro, Oblivion's Edge.

On the same day that he inherited the WILLS, one of the Nine Seeds of the Fruit of World Myths had almost taken him over.

It was a power that Sause warned against because it was a form with heavy ties to Fulgardt. It had changed his appearance when he used it – making Skullius' hair long and dark, giving him a second face and gifting him power that had rocked even Fuwin's Majestic Territory!

But it left no room for Skullius' consciousness.

The Hybrid Luman was wary of this.

"When I get stronger again, I might lose myself to the more WILLS that will awaken in my body. The stronger I get, the more I'm likely to... No. I won't allow it. If Fulgardt is devouring me... I'll have to devour him too.

I've already created something similar with the last resort card I've placed on Sila. If push comes to shove...' Skullius thought while hardening his face.

The future looked both bleak and bright at the same time but moreso bleak if he didn't play his cards right.

Come to think of it...

Skullius summoned Demion's Dance.

The tale of Demion, Escus and Irisa.

Frock had hinted at this before but it was only a few weeks ago when Skullius got to truly understand the story behind his green blade.

A tale that seemed to foreshadow what might happen to him, surprisingly.

Chapter 637: The Tale of Demion, Escus and Irisa (1)

Seven millennia ago, in the far East within Pelian, there existed a Family once, one that reined over expansive, rich lands. The lands were so rich that from their soils, the finest crops and fruits grew, the rarest breeds of quality livestock could be reared in the climate and from the overall uniqueness of the domain, the most powerful and beautiful of man in Pelian were born.

Legends passed by man said that a blessing ran through the waters of the four rivers that bled into these lands from the sea, a blessing from Listafelle that gave the normal soils high fertility and the living things that drank from them heightened qualities. They claimed that the waters drew impurities in the air and cleansed them, alternating the climate as well, shockingly.

Later, doubt suffocated this legend as bold wanderers tried and test the waters, literally, but nothing changed even after constant consumption, leading many to believe that it wasn't the waters that were special, but the act of dwelling in these expansive lands for extended periods of time.

It was the land that protected its people, they surmised, after all, hadn't the giants preached that Quintess' body became all the lands in Aigas? Some of these lands were bound to naturally have abnormal qualities like this!

Yes, that made sense!

These rumours spread like wildfire and soon enough, many more were recruited into this belief.

Before long, these expansive lands were given the name 'Quintess' Paradise' and all man coveted them and the beautiful people that resided within them.

The Family that ruled over these lands was called the Bewatered Family and had a mighty force of 7,000 men that were rumoured to be as strong as three others at the same level of power!

Also, since the lands were so rich, the ores and minerals found within them produced fine weaponry and armour that gave the army a defining edge against other clustered combatants.

When the expected formal declarations of war were waged against the Bewatered Family for their lands, they came out the victors each time, which fuelled the burning desire from their enemies, the intense motivation that spawned from it edging over the bounds of what was legal and allowed.

Fortunately, the men defending the lands of the Bewatered Family were also sufficiently motivated. One could only hope to think why.

Not only was the lord of the lands a kind and honourable man, he also rewarded each effort given for the good of the lands adequately, garnering the unyielding loyalty from his men.

But that wasn't all. Actually, it wasn't the thickest of it.

The Head of the Bewatered Family had a beautiful daughter.

Irisa was her name.

Her beauty was said to be so surreal that reflective surfaces – water, glass, glossy steel – couldn't depict her face. Whenever she stood before them, she appeared faceless, the details of her visage so mesmerising that she usually had to wear a veil, otherwise whenever she passed, time would stop moving, as did all productivity.

And if the enemies of these lands were ever to know that she existed... the lord of these lands always shuddered at that thought.

Irisa was also kind like her father. Still, she went out of her way to interact with everyone, including the men that fought for their land.

She had been taught so.

She had been educated since she was young as to why it was important to give these men respect.

To bow in their presence and motivate them sufficiently.

They were ones responsible for their peace.

They were the reason why she could live without worry.

And thus her late mother who rivalled her in beauty had told her to use her otherworldly prettiness to garner the simple praise from men, just as she did.

Therefore, her fair gaze from beyond a silver veil, her fair hand outstretched for a loyal kiss and her sweet voice that encouraged the might of the seven thousand men was their motivation.

Nomatter what, Irisa would never lose her home if she had the means to stop it.

The victories her Family procured kept piling on until the treachery of greed overcame the meaning of the law.

Six Families banded together and assailed the lands one night, killing all who stood in their way to reach the Bewatered Family Estate. The rich lands – Quintess' Paradise – were soaked in blood that night. That of the common folk, that of the seven thousand strong and that of the lord of the land.

Several were spared as ornaments and objects of entertainment. Human trophies with excessive beauty so fine it had to be preserved and enjoyed on selected nights.

Hmmm. The satisfaction wrought was sublime.

The blood these six Families failed to spill however, was that of Irisa and two guards that her father had assigned to protect her without her knowledge. Only when the lands were burning with fire and hatred, the legacy of the Bewatered Family falling, did these two men rise to save Irisa and flee with her elsewhere.

These two men were Demion and Escus.

Irisa mourned bitterly for 65 days in their care following the fall of her Family until the need to move on held.

She and her two guards went to another land far to the West, escaping the loathsome terror of the six Families that plundered the land.

During this journey, she grew to know the two men who protected her wholly.

Demion was an upright man, loyal to a fault and strict on duty. His strength was bottomless determination that allowed him to persevere despite not being gifted with extraordinary powers.

Escus on the other hand, was a loyal guard but he did not believe in honour at the expense of living as he wished. The prospect of his power was his defining trait. He was very powerful and had been one of the strongest among the seven thousand strong, only stripped of rank because of his immovable mind-set and beliefs.

Irisa appreciated both their qualities as both were willing to give up their lives for her. She was lucky she didn't have to share a fate worse than death if ever found with them by her side.

Thus in their travel, the three had to wear veils around their faces as outside their lands, their beauty would attract too much attention, moreso for Irisa.

For a good seven months, the three found a good place to live and integrated themselves shakily among the natives without staying for two long in one place. After all, sporadic interactions demanded that they get comfortable enough to remove their veils and show their faces.

If they did so, that would be the beginning of all the tragedy, something neither of them wanted.

However, this so called tragedy was inevitable, because sooner or later the three would grow comfortable with their escape from the chaos and this comfort would allow for the boiling human emotions and needs that had been repressed from the tension to finally take hold.

Naturally, this started with Irisa, who admired Demion's stature. His aloofness and the bright fire of firmness that was aglow in his steady gaze melted her heart.

What's more, when she casually seduced Demion, he refused to be taken by the temptation, warding away her advances with a solid face that did not betray the ferocious demons underneath, egging him to give in.

Be it turning his head to 'accidentally' glimpse at the full view of a pair of fine, fairly large breasts with snowy skin bundling them into delectable shape, entering his room to find a naked woman sprawled under his sheets or having a strangely experienced, soft hand caress his masculine sensitivities from the blue...

Demion had persisted.

He had persisted until the wall he built was finally scaled and torn down violently by the mad beasts that had been pooling on the other side.

He gave in, and when he did, he did not hold back.

He didn't care anymore.

If Irisa desired him, he would take her.

After all, he would still fulfill his duty afterwards, perhaps with even more vigour.

On the night that he satisfied his lusts fully, feeling the last shards of guilt and doubt fade away with every thrust he gave the warm, soft and ravenous body under him, the sparks of jealousy grew in Escus who was there to hear the moans of desperate pleasure.

Peace decisively took a hike.

Chapter 638: The Tale of Demion, Escus and Irisa (2)

Irira and Demion openly showed off their intimacy since that day. There was no point in hiding it. Demion felt like keeping it a secret from Escus would only serve to make him feel like a fool, especially if he should find out about it in other ways.

Naturally, he didn't know that his fellow guard already knew and was boiling with rage. Rage from jealousy and from something else he knew.

Escus might not have been the most honourable man in the world but while in the company of someone he viewed as incredibly noble like Demion, he had been forced to conform to a more civil persona. In a way, he respected Demion and saw him as something of a moral compass.

That was why it was such a heavy blow when he found out that this man he thought was better than him and strived to emulate, was fucking the person they were supposed to protect. For him especially, like any man who had seen Irira, burning feelings squirmed within for her. Maybe not love but the searing passion to bed her as well, even with what he knew.

Escus was also a little angry for Demion because he didn't know...

How cruel.

He was the one being considerate here.

Yes. That had to be truth. Or an excuse.

In light of this development, Escus sought to change the status quo. That was why he made a proposition to Demion.

Over the past few months that they had been travelling to settle West, the trio had made a habit of gathering information on the current state of where they settled temporarily in order to ensure that it was safe. They did so through various means; eavesdropping, paying information merchants among other methods.

Not all the information they acquired was helpful as it could be rumours about foreign affairs, lazily put together town gossip, or... stories about an ancient underground city that held a legacy.

Demion, Escus and Irisa had heard quite a lot about this rumour during their travels, but at the time, only Escus paid it much mind.

After all, it had something to do with attaining more strength.

Escus' proposition went like this:

"We were charged with keeping Irisa safe but are we such cowards that we can't even think of seeking revenge against those bastards who robbed us of our home?"

Demion was surprised by these words. Not only did they sound blind but also... empty.

"To what end? If we two go back there as we are or even with hired mercenaries, we stand no chance against the force that assaulted us that night. And if we die..." Demion said while glancing at Irisa who hadn't been invited to their discussion. "...we would have failed at our one assigned mission."

Escus scoffed.

"What if you had the hidden power from a legendary powerhouse? Would you join me then?" Escus asked.

The noble of the two was startled and when Escus elaborated on what he meant, Demion grew suspicious.

Weren't these merely rumours they had heard of on the way? Why would they risk their lives for something that was uncertain?

Escus appealed to Demion for five days.

With each setting sun, he gathered information on the rumoured whereabouts of this place and why no one had claimed this legacy yet.

The location was fairly hard to find but Escus eventually located it and discovered that there was a very peculiar restriction on entrants who desired to enter this underground city.

Whenever someone attempted to reach the entrance to this place, an engraving would etch itself on the hard ground, declaring the stipulations for those deemed legible for entry.

'Only one who is pure of heart, whose hands has not yet claimed 100 lives can enter.'

This was the restriction.

Sadly, this weeded out a lot of people. The common folk couldn't enter because they feared they lacked the strength to endure what was inside. Strong warriors couldn't enter because more often than not, they had slain more than a 100 people.

The news of this requirement created a rumour that made many reluctant to even try to find this legacy, thus making its existence as most likely a lie prominent.

Escus pulled on Demion to this information and had him confirm it himself.

Then, he urged him to enter this lost underground city since between the two of them, Demion had less blood on his hands as he had never been in the local army back home.

After the conflict of thought for days, Demion felt that perhaps it was worth a try. After all, there were some who returned alive and well from this underground city and he was quite stronger than some of them. Irisa did not like the idea and even contended against it, but Demion stressed that Escus was right.

If they could acquire this legacy, avenging their people would likely not be impossible anymore and as a man who kept to the idea uprightness and justice, he couldn't pass up this chance.

Thus, against Irisa's wishes, Demion became one of the many challengers to enter the mysterious space underground, the Ruined Starlight City of the Nameless Conqueror.

On the same day Demion went on his excursion, Escus made his move.

Avenge their people?

Pfft!

That had been an idea he made up to appeal to Demion whom he knew simply couldn't resist to act upon it.

His heart was pure but Escus' wasn't.

He was different from Demion who hadn't been part of the army when he was chosen by the lord of the land to keep Irisa safe. He had been one of the Commanders years before and stripped of his rank because of his personality.

Thus, his honour was non-existent and he knew things Demion didn't.

He took Irisa on a short trip to a major city where wealthy and powerful figures usually congregated for important and casual fellowships because of the luxurious amenities within the settlement. While in this city, Escus said something brought Irisa chills, something she had been sure both Escus and Demion did not know since her father kept a tight lid on it.

"I know the 'duty' you and your mother upheld. As beauties that transcend anything, even within our the lands, as special as you are, you bedded the mightiest soldiers under your father to keep them... 'motivated', didn't you? Your mother and now you," he whispered to her ear with a sharp voice.

"Your father was always so weak. He failed to keep the army that was so loyal to his father before him under control. When he failed to garner respect on his own, he made you and your mother whores to the army, right? I wonder, does your body really possess the natural property to revitalise and edify any man's strength a dozen fold in a single night? I only heard passing rumours.

Did you enjoy doing it? Are you planning on using dear ol' Demion? Do you even love him or are you just craving your old life?"

As he said this, Escus removed Irisa's veil in the middle of a populated street road and the world around her seemed to stop as her full face was revealed.

Everyone's eyes were attracted to this woman who seemed out of place. Men, women and children alike fell under the spell of Irisa's divine beauty.

First there was awe, then admiration and then spawned greed.

Irisa was terrified.

There was no way she could escape being snatched by any one of the powerful men whose eyes were already fantasising about having her as a prize.

In this desperation, Irisa turned to Escus who grinned at her sullen, horrified face.

"Beg me to save you," he said. "Beg and plead me to take you far from here, away from the foreign greed."

Irisa could not believe her ears.

To beg Escus?

That's right. He was a powerful man, the heights of his strength having been publicly recognised as among the most powerful back home. He could protect her.

Demion was not here to save her.

If she refused, she would have to entertain one of the tens of devil's drooling at her in this moment and thus, she could only oblige.

The devil she knew was better than the devil she did not know.

And this devil she knew was elated.

Escus wrestled everyone who so much as glanced at Irisa with longing, slaughtering them all brutally without sustaining any wounds or being tagged even once. He laid waste to the entire city thereafter and did as he said – taking Irisa for himself far away.

What he knew of Irisa did not deter his want of her as any man would and with this, he had won her while Demion had gone off to find something that he probably wouldn't succeed at finding.

His chapter began.

Three months later, Demion emerged from within the Ruined Starlight City, changed and strong.

He had succeeded in claiming the legacy of the Nameless Conqueror, much to the locals' disbelief as many a century had passed without anyone being able to claim the powers of this mysterious historic figure.

The people sang his praises and some gave him gifts, asking him to overthrow the Families that loaded over their lands and take power instead but Demion focused on one thing first.

Irisa and Escus were gone.

At first he thought a threat had driven them away or harmed them but from what he heard, the two had simply up and left.

If Demion were his old self, it would have taken him some time to figure out what had happened but now, or rather doubt it hard before believing it, but with the mysterious change that sat over him, his paranoid and broader view, his wrath instantly rose.

Had Irida and Escus left him just like that?

Did Irida betray him for Escus?

Had it been their plan to send him away so that they could escape with each other to another land?

But wait.

Escus was stronger than him before, he could have just... No. Did he do it this way out of pity?

Demion's fury burned like a wild fire.

Instead of searching for these two frantically though, he took up the offer of the people who admired how he had done what others had failed at.

He began to conquer, as his newly acquired Hidden Class, the Appetent Guzzler, desired.

From the West to the East he invaded and claimed, making his search whenever he settled to bring lands under his rule, something his old, noble self would have never done. The needless shedding of blood, the excessive killing even to those who were blameless... this was not Demion, but the Appetent Guzzler, the Nameless Conqueror's will.

A mere eight months after Demion began his journey, he reclaimed his home land, killing and burning every single inhabitant to 'cleanse' the rich lands that weren't his enemies' to take. None of the six Families that had conspired to claim the Bewatered Family lands were spared and truly, it would have been a sweet revenge, if he didn't have to enjoy it alone.

The fact that Irida and Escus were not here to celebrate with him burned his soul and he found himself searching once again, using his connections to look everywhere.

On one fateful day, Demion's men finally found Irida and Escus.

No. Rather, Escus seemed to want to be found, finally. Their meeting was inevitable at this point. The whole nation knew of this risen conqueror and Escus had heard of him too, knowing full well who he was.

When they met, Demion was torn to find that Escus and Irisa had had a child and the beauty of the Bewatered Family was pregnant with another!

The flames of boiling emotion couldn't be contained within his body.

So he had been right. He had been betrayed after all. The small hope he had that there was something else that caused his lover and his friend to flee died with the sight he saw and he drew his blade to kill Escus with a bold sword technique that the Nameless Conqueror before him had forged for himself.

The Swindling Death's Dance.

Chapter 639: The Tale of Demion, Escus and Irisa (3)

Escus did not show signs of fear.

Admittedly, his greed had dulled his judgement on that day a year and a half ago when he saw Demion enter the Ruined Starlight City. He had not thought his friend's determination alone would allow him to claim a legacy that many had failed at winning for themselves but here they were.

He had been wrong.

It seemed that determination and a righteous heart was what won in the end.

Escus' lust for Irisa had also brought him here, where the world would either devour his or Demion's blood and will.

But regardless of how much the odds were stacked against him, Escus would not allow himself to fall. In preparation for Demion's wrath that would definitely find him someday with or without the legacy, he had scoured and found a weapon to defend himself just in case.

A Mythical grade Spear with the name Letting Dawn Space.

While wielding this weapon in preparation for battle, Escus had turned to Irisa who was watching the unfolding events from a distance with tears running down her eyes and spoken his last words to her.

"I should have known. When even worldly objects refused to see your face, I should have gouged out my eyes back then."

Amidst Irisa's mourns, the battle between the two men had ensued. It was a catastrophic battle that lasted a little more than day as even with Demion's new might, Escus had contended brilliantly with his Mythical spear.

Sadly, the uncomforming former Commander was killed in the end, falling under the Appetent Guzzler's full might and the treacherous motions of his sword technique that were quite literally, a mesmerising dance.

The result of the battle was another meaningless death.

Demion had looked to Irisa with his spear deep in Escus' chest wanting to kill her too, but he stopped himself. His true will held down the urge for senseless murder.

He took the woman as well as her child in, going on to settle with her back in her birth lands where he ruled with a growing empire.

Demion no longer felt any affection towards her, but she still did. Burning embers of what Escus had thought was a mere craving for her past life of pleasing men were actually true love born within Irisa from finally meeting a man who resisted her outer beauty.

Demion didn't know it, but there had never been a spark of attraction between Escus and Irisa at all. She had merely lived with the man, serving his lusts day by day, which she saw him grow old with rather quickly, soon turning to demanding that she bear his children.

Truly, lust was finite.

To try and win Demion back, Irisa gifted the Appetent Guzzler a weapon of unknown origins.

Perhaps it was a trinket she had found in passing on their journey.

Perhaps she had found it in the months she and Escus spent trying to find peaceful solitude?
Perhaps he had given it to her for self defence.

Whatever it was, on a very special day, Irisa gave this sword to Demion, hoping to show that she was grateful for being delivered from Escus. That their battle and its result had freed her.

This weapon was a Mythical grade level object with a green curved blade and golden hilt.

The eyes of the Appetent Guzzler had shone with wonder when he saw the sword and upon wielding it, traits that Demion felt attached to became imprinted on its blade with the power of 'truth.'

The grim battle with a friend, the betrayal from a lover and his new might.

Demion never forgave Irisa and they grew apart as the days went by, with the Appetent Guzzler wanting to conquer more while Irisa focused on becoming a mother.

Then, as if the world had finally decided to enact punishment against Demion, a man from one of the Six Houses of Pelian acted against this conquer, finally.

A man by the name Uriyal Shannazah.

In a single day, in a single hour, he ended the legacy of the Nameless Conqueror and brought down his growing empire in the still recovering and still maturing nation of Pelian.

As if direction chortled with ridicule at their lives, Demion's body was sealed back in the Ruined Starlight City, the entrance to this mysterious place destroyed by House Shannazah.

Irisa and her children were taken by some unnamed invaders after the fall of Demion's tyranny and their fates were anything but pleasant to their last days.

...

When Skullius thought about this story, he couldn't help but grimace at its tragic ending. If he ended up sharing the same fate as Demion – being sealed back where the last holder of his power perished – that would be tragic.

He imagined that the Nameless Conqueror was also defeated by some horrifically powerful expert who showed up out of nowhere to put him down, which was strangely poetic.

Ambitions trampled in their rise twice.

Skullius wasn't that ambitious or evil, though, he did wonder how exactly Fulgardt had died. That part of history wasn't recited very well. All he knew was that Fulgardt attained Divinity through some emotional trigger and became so vile that he was called the Immoral. He crossed worlds to abduct powerful beings and commit atrocities that most weren't even aware of and after that...

what exactly happened?

Damn it!

Would Skullius' end if he was consumed by Fulgardt's powers be good or bad?

Who knew?

As he gazed at the green blade, Demion's Dance, Skullius found himself wondering again.

He got that this sword used to be more powerful than just a measly Unique grade item in the past, but its properties now were so weak that he wasn't sure if there was something that still remained of its former glory, trying to push it back to its height?

Was it still special?

'We'll find out someday,' Skullius thought.

He entered his room and held the Elimparidis Stone Staff to transport himself into Fortune. Once there Skullius took deep breaths and looked around, appreciating how far he had come. There were

a few additions to the overall world, especially where the stout mountain had been. Skullius had replaced the massive hole there with something else.

But that was not important right now.

Skullius flashed his way into the thick forest where he felt most uncomfortable.

He sat on one of the branches to a large tree while overlooking the canopies of the surrounding shorter vegetation.

Perfect.

"Now let's see what all these skills can do," Skullius said as he immediately chose to begin with [Lesser Gravel Rune Mastery].

Because he had the memories from Hobbu Gogo, he didn't have to start from scratch to learn how these runes worked. In fact, if not for the fact that the full capability of the runes was nerfed in his hands because he didn't have the relevant class, Skullius would have been able to use all the Rune networks the old goblin could!

'It's weird that these Gravel Runes are constructed from an appreciation of nature. Well, the land in particular hence the name. If I was a complete beginner, I'd only be able to manifest the runes on the natural ground. Hmph. I can't imagine only being able to use these runes to filter running water or something,' Skullius thought with a scowl.

That would have been depressing.

The full capabilities of the Gravel Runes included reinforcement, empowerment, enabling, protection, sealing, temporary storage and conjuring.

Skullius was only limited to reinforcement, sealing, temporary storage and protection right now. Maybe it would change later but for now, this was all he got.

The Hybrid Luman infused mana into his finger and traced the shapes of seven runes in the air. As he drew, the runes, bright and pristine as they were hung in the air steadily, their brightness egging on Skullius to use them.

Skullius smirked and extend his hand into the space where he had drawn these runes.

Surprisingly, his arm sank in, as if swallowed by a watery, conforming surface of blank space where the runes were drawn on!

Space rippled as Skullius' hand moved around within the unseen fold of the newly created temporary storage. It looked as if his arm had been severed from the elbow if one looked from a side view.

"Nice," Skullius said.

This was the Temporary Storage function of the runes.

The space afforded wasn't too big and Skullius couldn't store things forever in there – there was a time limit of 40 days till his stored items were spat out – but there were benefits to it.

There was no need for an item, a conduit, to use for the act of storing, meaning that Skullius didn't have to worry about losing all his stuff when the medium for storage was harmed. Also, Skullius could access this storage from anywhere. It wasn't like setting up the runes here firmly placed the storage in Fortune. It was anywhere he wanted it to be as long as he assembled the runes correctly!

This was convenient!

Though Skullius already knew, he grew excited to check out what the other runes looked like when he was using them!

Chapter 640: Exploring Convenient Spoils!

Skullius had a lot of fun playing with the Gravel Runes. For the sake of research, as well as amusement, he stored and released objects from the temporary storage to extract more information about the other limits and potential upsides of using this form of spatial containment.

The additional findings were exciting.

Just like spatial storage tools of various kinds, the temporary storage rune network allowed him to store non-living objects and could preserve perishables or items prone to degradation through the

passage of time. Taking advantage of this feature, he tried to store more complex things just to analyse the extent to which he could exploit this new addition to his utilitarian arsenal.

To his surprise, fire, pressurised air, mana, water vapour, among other like-mannered matter could be contained uniquely within this space mainly because Skullius could manually control the shape and size of it – though the aforementioned limit still stood.

Essentially, the storage was conforming, something basic storage rings couldn't do!

In more ways than he had imagined, this was far better than his conventional means of storage, more than he had initially thought at least.

Additionally...

"Can I also...?" Skullius said as he drew the same rune network for temporary storage in the air thrice.

As he imagined, his arm sank into the first established storage. It was the same size as before. He retrieved his hand and extended it into the other network of runes above it and... it also dove in!

This worked a third time with the other rune network as well!

"Hahaha. I'm only 20 times behind that old hag but this is cool too," Skullius chuckled.

Surprisingly, he could summon a limit of three temporary storage spaces, all of them the same size as the first – the size of a small house.

What made this an even more appealing discovery was that these storages, after a close inspection, were linked to Skullius in a more intimate fashion than the storage objects, though the process of access could be said to be a bit more time-consuming since the runes needed to be created every time the user wanted to reach into the storage space.

For lesser efficient users, this could be a detriment.

Luckily, through Hobbu Gogo's memories, Skullius new a way around this drawback, even though he wasn't too slow when summoning the runes.

Removing the attire protecting his torso to reveal toned muscles sculpted under his blameless skin, Skullius, with his finger, began carving the rune network over his abdomen with mana, burning his skin in the process. After the runes were fully drawn above his belly button with a crispy, slightly bloody look to them, Skullius wore a sheepish smile.

"I'll have to make sure that I don't erase this whenever I use [Saint Lumis' Benign Arc]," he said to himself.

Carving the rune network on a surface near a mana source was a great way to shorten the time for activation. In this case, the runes were near Skullius' mana core and the groves he had made over his skin acted as a mechanism to have the mana traced into the form of the rune network quickly.

It wasn't the best solution but it was something. With enough self awareness, it would be nigh instantaneous.

Skullius then drew two more networks on his abdomen and nodded in satisfaction.

"Now, instead of storing excess mana around my core, I can store some more in the temporary storage."

After analysing the temporary storage, Skullius checked the other functions of the Lesser Gravel Runes. Protection was pretty straight forward. Once more, Skullius found the network to have a stacking limit of only three times.

Once the networks for protection – Skullius knew four types – were erected around him, the Hybrid Luman found that the strongest could defend against a total of 10 hits with more or less the same amount of power behind his previous full 30,000 ton raw physical attack.

This wasn't pretty bad in Skullius' opinion, though this version guaranteed no protection against non-physical attacks. The two other types he knew could resist obscure mental attacks and lower forms of debuffs while the last worked best against elements. Sadly, the other high level rune networks were pretty much untouchable with his current Mastery level which would rise in due time for sure.

The reinforcement runes he was currently able to use buffed mana, strength and endurance by an exact factor of 2.5 times and likewise could also be stacked only three times.

At this point, Skullius felt like Ferex who relied on a similar system to strengthen his physical attributes.

Funny.

After inspecting the runes, Skullius drew the Bashful Abomination.

"Ah, dear Master! Are you ready to imprint your own affix?!" the sword shouted enthusiastically.

"Not yet. You're pretty desperate for that, aren't you?"

"Desperate is a strong word, dear Master. I prefer a classier way of depicting my emotions. Like begging or grovelling. That sounds about right. Hmph. I may be made of steel but I'm sensitive," the sword said with a subdued voice leaking bits of bashfulness.

"...Right. Anyway I just wanted to test something out. I get the uses of the [Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art] and [Unmatched Sword Sense] but I want to see what I can do with [Swordmaster's Quiescence]," Skullius said as he removed the cloth around the zhanmadao, revealing its deadly silver chipped blade that was longer than he was tall.

For some reason, Hobbu Bobbu's memories were a bit fuzzy on the use of this skill. Was there some big secret that even [Immoral Authority] couldn't glean?

"Oh! Oh! Do it! Do it!" the Bashful Abomination cried excitedly, urging Skullius despite not knowing what he was talking about.

Skullius laughed and shook his head while feeling a pair of imaginary eyes trying to burn through his skull from Demion's Dance at his waist.

This wasn't the time indulge the jealous sword.

With a drawn out breath, Skullius activated [Swordmaster's Quiescence] and...

His body relaxed.

The state he entered was unnatural, foreign even.

Skullius couldn't see without [Graceless Hunter] but in this moment, he experienced a sensation through his four sensory abilities that gave the illusion that he was not standing on the ground but was floating way up in an unfamiliar, rippling space but without the usual burden of complex thought, worry, anxiety, fear or even heavy judgement.

He felt his figure streak up through a massive, thick yet soft blanket while he held the Bashful Abomination, the relaxation he felt utterly dominating his mind.

Skullius couldn't put together his own thoughts but shockingly, several bundles of ideas and images were fed into his mind.

Before he knew it, mystical sentences started to flow out of his mouth involuntarily.

"The cold blade fashioned in steel, the searing orange piece yet to be carved clean and sharp by the judgement of blunt force..."

"The wind slain under the whispering sharp edge, the seamless trail where the blade descends..."

"The scream of doom on contact, the shivering slide and tight grip only won over by doubtless determination..."

As Skullius muttered, his body moved on its own and gripped the Bashful Abomination firmly in both hands within the strange space.

The Hybrid Luman held up the sword, his left hand leaving the hilt to slide up past the cross guard to affectionately caress the blunt side of the blade.

He intended to swing.

To swing hard.

To swing sharp.

But...

Skullius' <CURSED HEART> beat fast.

Then it beat faster.

When it began beating at its fastest rate, a sudden tremor rushed through his flesh and bone with a treacherous shuddering vibration that shattered the illusion around him!

"Huh?"

Skullius blinked.

The sensation he had been lost in just now vanished. He was holding the Bashful Abomination up but had suddenly stopped.

['Ghost Rending Divine Sword Art' has levelled up!]

['Unmatched Sword Sense' has levelled up!]

['Parting Wave' has levelled up!]

['Elite Sword Play' has levelled up!]

"What the hell...?!" Skullius exclaimed.

Every sword-related skill of his, except [Swindling Death's Dance, had levelled up... just by him using [Swordmaster's Quiescence] once?!

He didn't even use it for the full duration... seemingly.

Seriously, what the hell?!

"Dear Master, are you alright? I'm sorry. I had to pull you out from that trance before you sank in too deep," the Bashful Abomination said apologetically.

Skullius held the sword down, more than a little puzzled.

"Wait, you're the one who stopped the skill? Was that violent feeling at the end your doing?" he asked.

"...Y...yes but please don't be offended, dear master. It's just that... this is how I remember Hobbu Bobbu losing all interest in everything except swordsmanship. He kept drawing himself into this illusion until... until he was addicted to that feeling. I'm bound to you so I can tell what it's like.

I'm sorry I overstepped," the sword explained.

Skullius was silent for a while.

An illusion, huh? A trance.

That was a pretty effective one.

"Is using it once enough to make you... addicted?" Skullius asked the anxious sword.

"No but... with the way things were going, if you used me as you were about to, I feared you might destroy this home of yours with the way you were standing. You'd be fascinated by such power first then...get drunk with it."

"Destroy this... Oh, I see," Skullius said while scratching his head.

Destroying Fortune in a single swing of his sword? Was that what the sword was implying?

That sounded absurd but strangely, he believed it. While in that state... perhaps he could, especially with a Pseudo-Mythical grade sword.

After giving it a bit of thought, Skullius re-checked the description of [Swordmaster's Quiescence] which didn't quite expose what the skill did as well as the experience.

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[Swordmaster's Quiescence (Special) | Lv.31]

A sword master, after reaching a certain calibre can enter a state of flow, peace and immersion within their mastered craft. This state is only a once in a lifetime opportunity for most practitioners but for a true sword master, it is an ability used through simple choice.

Mana Requirements: 20,000 (I) Mana, 1500 (I) every minute.

Duration: 10 minutes

Cooldown: 20 hours

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This description didn't do justice at all to the skill but then again, Skullius had seen several skills he had which had this style of description – barely enlightening.

Was the guidance field unable to fully glean through the secrets of the skill or was it influenced to not give full details? Depending on how one looked at it, these were two different things.

Whichever it was didn't matter though, because this skill was actually incredible!

Skullius paced his attention back to his zhanmadao.

"You didn't overstep. I appreciate you stopping me. There are many things I don't know yet and this is definitely something I should remain wary of," he said, putting his sword at ease.

The Bashful Abomination was exceptionally exhilarated to hear this!

"I'm glad I can be of use, dear master," it said before directing a burst of condescension at Demion's Dance. "Let's see you do anything useful, fancy hilt!"

The green bladed sword hummed in rage.

Skullius chuckled.

Who knew it could be this lively without any humans around?

His mood had been soured a bit by how powerful and dangerous dangerous the abilities he acquired from Hobbu Bobbu could be, so the Hybrid Luman decided to put off testing out the remainder of the spoils from that Cluster – the cauldron, its herbs and Hobbu Gogo's other skills – to explore another new skill he had earned.

The mysterious [Celestial Hack].

Skullius sat down, feeling that this unevolving skill might have quite the kick upon activation and used it.

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[Celestial Hack | Lv. None]

With the Omniscient Thought Cracker as a prerequisite, send your awareness beyond the folds of worlds, of certain Rules and ethereal barriers to visit spaces within the SAME TIME junction, provided a sturdy image as a reference.

Mana Requirements: None.

Duration: 2 minutes

Cooldown: 10 days

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Just to test out what it was capable of, Skullius imagined something he thought to be simple and more vivid to him. The specific image he conjured would not only test the maximum extent of the ability but would be helpful in allowing him to check the status quo related to a particular group at the same time.... if [Celestial Hack] actually worked that was.

"Here goes," Skullius said, putting the image in his head, more specifically within the [Omniscient Thought Cracker] and calling on the might of [Celestial Hack].

In that instant and the several that followed, Skullius found himself stumped, emotional and lost for words with what he saw...