

Overwhelming

It didn't take long for more monsters to start climbing out, bursting out of their holes like an endless stream. Karya and Tali began sending attacks down, but it was quickly apparent that something was wrong. Karya's flames washed over the insect-like monsters and did nothing. The monsters were no longer burning. Oh, they were dying in droves. Tali's attacks were splattering them across the ground, swatting them out of the air, her blasts of Bond Qi disintegrated them. But without Karya's fire doing anything, the swarm was bulging, even as they died, they were bursting out through the corpses of those ahead of them, an unstoppable horde. Individual they were weak, far weaker than Hastur's monsters had been. But they seemingly had numbers without end.

He saw the monsters on the ground scattering in all directions, trying to escape. Erdania held her line, cracking the earth as she increased Gravity and flattened any that got close.

Karya adapted quickly, instead of using fire as the main attack, she used its side-effects. Explosions of fire started sending the monsters flying everywhere, the physical part of it did damage them. Not enough though, the horde was gaining ground.

"Immune?" Selia asked.

"If so, it is incredibly fast. It seems like they are only immune to fire. Is it a limitation, or did they not suffer enough damage from other sources to gain an immunity?" It was an issue. The monsters didn't look any different in shape, but Ryun's eyes could tell that some of the Essence that made them was different. "We should join them, end it quickly."

Selia nodded, and a moment later they both activated the Presence of the Eternal Hunters. What were two minds suddenly melded into one with two bodies. The Reaper and the Scythe. A single field spread out from them, filling the sky above the dome, a part of the flying swarm was in their range, and they felt their stats grow.

Their senses sharpened, their combined mind found it easier to grasp such great weight. The monster horde seemed without end, they marched and flew through the core of the mound, an unending swarm of so many shapes that they couldn't even begin to count. Their perception of time slowed as they leaned on the Reaper's **Greater Swift Mind**.

The Scythe changed, the body grew as they assumed the Lindwurm Paragon Evolved form. A cloak appeared around the Scythe and their control and willpower soared, they used the **{Mantle of Gathering Twilight}** on both of their bodies, different effects, one allowed them to shift stats of the Hunter and raise wisdom, while the Huntress enjoyed a firm boost to all stats and an additional to endurance and vitality.

They burned half of the Hunter's Qi supply to increase the body's stats further. Together, in complete sync they shaped a technique with two bodies at the same time, melding their Qi together.

A giant spear made out of **Sanguine Flame Qi** exterior, crystallized and powerful came into being as a technique nestled into its core, a charged **{Final End}**. A **{Pulsing Impact}** was layered on top of the spear, and with an effort of will, they sent it down, flying toward the tip of the mound. Karya and Tali flew by them, heading high above but still in the range of their aura, feeding them more stats.

The spear pierced through the top and they followed it with their eyes and senses. Near the halfway point of the mound, the technique detonated. A sphere of **Oblivion** expanded from the mound, erasing everything it touched. Nothing could survive their combined attack. The

swarm died inside as did those unlucky outside that had been close enough. Most of the mound was erased. Support fire from Tali came around them, swatting the few survivors that were headed their way. Their stats dipped, but then quickly started to rise again. They had opened the mound, could now see the swarm inside. More were climbing out, some flying, it did not seem like they had any end.

They shaped the same technique again, a **{Hollow Spear}** then charged a **{Final End}** in its heart. It was their construct, and so it counted.

Boost Object — they used to increase the destructive properties of the **{Final End}** part of it.

Improve — was layered on it to contain the stronger technique.

Lastly they used **Mass Projection** — and the sky was filled with spears.

A moment later they started to fall. Thousands of them fell and pierced through what was left the mounds, they fell around the ground covered with monsters trying to escape. A moment later they detonated. A thousand black spheres filled their sight. The swarm on the ground, in the mounds, in the sky, they all disappeared, dead forever.

The ground where the Dome once stood was disintegrated, a crater now stood as a monument to what there once was. Still, at the very bottom of the mound, the last part of their hive remained. They could sense now what they couldn't before. There were six massive monsters

inside, and with every breath they threw out more monsters from giant bulging orifices on their rears.

The Reaper dropped from high above, the Scythe following at a slower pace. Monsters flew out, a slower tide, but still significant. Spears flashed and killed those that came close to the Reaper. The Reaper landed and moved through the mound, releasing their power. The **Oblivion Aura** spread from them disintegrating everything it touched. A moment later they used **Oblivion's Mirror** and the swarms attempting to overwhelm him and push through their aura went blind. Space flickered as the Reaper moved, eroding it with every step. They moved through the swarm that blocked his way, sliding through the holes in space their power created.

His eternal armor, withered and fell into pieces, it was powerful, a copy, yes, but perhaps even more powerful than the original was. Bright Star made it so. It didn't matter, in the middle of the remaining swarm he was the most powerful. Nothing could survive the onslaught of his Aspect. The Essence around him crumbled as **Oblivion** made itself manifest.

The Reaper moved at a slow pace, flickering in between space. He could not move faster, for the sheer amount of monsters took time to destroy with Oblivion, and stepping through holes in space was not as fast as he could move normally. Everything rippled around him.

Monsters started to reach him, to attack him. Ripping his body that rippled and repaired itself immediately after. The monsters were killing themselves to try and harm him. A dozen strikes, and then they did no more, the Reaper's immunity kicked in. But there were so many, coming from so many different angles. They came close and detonated, splattering the Reaper with an Essence that corroded and twisted other Essence. The Blight? It didn't matter, it only took Oblivion a bit longer to

deal with. Still, they drained from the Reaper's core, and so they burned the Essence in his car to replenish the Reaper's supplies back to full.

They lashed out with techniques formed out of the Oblivion Essence filling their surrounding. Orbs of techniques appeared all around the Reaper, the lances of **{Twilight Cutting Flicker}** cut the monsters down. The Scythe approached, and with her Qi they crafted a **{Armor of Laqrud's Scales}**. It enveloped the Reaper, empowered by their perks, powerful enough to survive in the center of Oblivion, for a time at least.

They had the minds of them both, they were the Presence of the Eternal Hunters, and as the Aspect of Oblivion spread, they could understand the differences in the individual powers they held. One was Creation, the other what preceded and what followed its conclusion. Conflicting, yet perfectly natural.

They knew that they could not lean on their Aspects in the same way, not while joined like this. Their might might be greater together, but the Presence of the Eternal Hunters, the amalgam of the Reaper and the Scythe, was not connected to those Aspects, it could only use them. But an appreciation of the other's Aspect did form inside their combined mind.

Something spread through the Essence, a meaning without substance. Like Oblivion. It hurt the Reaper, it reached up to the Scythe behind and hurt her too. The Blight, the monsters were killing themselves to create it, they could sense it now.

Oblivion Ascendancy surged, and the Reaper's regeneration soared, the Scythe flame ignited inside of her and burned the Blight out.

They were getting closer to the end, where the giant monsters dwelled, birthing thousands with every minute that passed. And then something

changed. A new wave of monsters came and Oblivion didn't stop them. They flew through the air, as if the Oblivion couldn't touch them anymore. A few **{Twilight Cutting Flicker}** **{Twilight Cutting Flicker}** techniques confirmed the truth when they failed to cut the insects buzzing in the Reaper's direction. From behind, the Scythe shaped and sent spears in their direction, piercing and killing them with ease.

Adaptation, they knew, they saw. Most of the monsters were dead, but they saw a new wave, thousands born every moment, coming up. Oblivion did nothing to them now. Immune to what had killed the ones above them.

Scythe shaped spears and sent them down, piercing through the monsters in droves. Just one Essence at a time, it seemed. Problematic, but not an issue.

The monsters that were spawning them were close and vulnerable now. The immunity was created by them, the Presence of the Eternal Hunters realized. And they could not change the immunity of the entire swarm at whim.

They had burrowed a hole down next to their lair. What had been millions was now thousands. They pulled back out of the mound and into the air, then raised the Reaper's hand and cast a beam into the sky, eating the light. A signal. There was enough death on the field by now, they could not adapt that fast.

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“Did you record that,” Kael said as he watched, almost in disbelief at what he was seeing.

“I am,” Maya responded. He glanced over at her, seeing her eyes moving quickly as she gripped the device tightly. It was just a simple recording array, but it let them record more than what they could see and feel. After, they will go over what was in there and come up with plans, counters. If there even was any.

He turned his eyes back to what was in front of him. The window they were watching through was maintained by Berion, warped space into a kind of a mirror.

“They are very powerful,” Ber commented.

This was Kael’s nightmares made real. What was anyone to do when faced with such power? There was nothing to do but to bow your head and follow. How could you give voice to the people when people with such might existed? Especially if those that held it believed that they were better just because they had more of it. A Slavemaster was not put on his high position because he was chosen for it, or because he was a good and benevolent ruler. No, he was there because he had the might to make others his slaves.

All of them were the alike, even if they didn’t call themselves the same. The Domes could no longer contain them, Kael saw it clearly in what was unfolding before him, even if he hadn’t let himself believe it before when they watched the first two.

He didn’t say anything more. He just watched as a giant whirlwind of black mist rose and swallowed everything in its way. As the maelstrom of death burrowed deep into the ground, a notification rang out. The Dome was defeated.

He would find a way, for all of those who would never have the chance to do anything but follow the powerful if he didn't.

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Ra'azel looked around his forge. It was mobile, of course. It was the first thing he had created in the Ethereal Realm. Now he looked at his creation, an amalgamation of the parts he had harvested but didn't use. It would serve its purpose, to distract, and perhaps draw his target out. With a grin he turned his attention to his tools. It would be best if he prepared sufficiently, he did not want to make the same mistake again. With an effort of will and soul, he started the grueling work of preparing his gear. He did not hold great power through contracts anymore, but he had the time to prepare.

Soon, he would find the secrets of this Framework, and then he would tear it all down.