

Anrosh

Anrosh stood on top of a hill, looking out in the distance. The moon shone from behind thin clouds that moved about. It had rained for a couple of days prior and the ground was yet to dry. Beneath the hill was a large plain, soaked and muddy. She saw fire torches burn in the distance as her warriors prepared the battlefield.

She was anxious, the undead had pushed through two sects at a speed that was alarming. The reports from the refugees varied, but most agreed that the army of the undead was large. The numbers weren't confirmed, but they were anywhere from several hundred thousand to million or more undead. Too large for the smaller sects to handle.

Anrosh glanced to the side, where Reki, formerly of the Zenshuen Sect, stood looking out in the distance. The visitors had many powerful warriors, but Anrosh hadn't asked them to fight for them. The reasons for it were many; for one she didn't know them and didn't know if she could trust them at her side. And if she did, the Twilight Melody Sect would lose face, their reputation. If they couldn't defend themselves and relied on their guests, it would mean that they were weak.

Still, some had volunteered, and she had accepted. She wasn't that stupid. As long as it didn't look like they asked for help, the sect's reputation would remain intact. Perception was what mattered to sects. Both Reki and Eari had asked to come, but Anrosh had insisted that only Reki and a few of his warriors were enough. In the end, she didn't trust their visitors. They were from a sect that had been on top for a long time, and though most of the people that had come to her sect were younger, they still had slightly different ideals and ways of doing things than the Twilight Melody Sect. But Reki and Eari seemed to be in a more leadership position by virtue of their strength, and Anrosh felt better with Eari remaining back in Consequence with Zenshuen people. He was affiliated with them, but he was still Eerv's son. She didn't think that he would let them make any problems while she was away.

"How long, do you think?" Anrosh asked.

Reki tilted his head. “The advance parties are becoming more frequent. It won’t be long now,” he answered.

Anrosh grimaced. The reports indicated that the army wasn’t really tightly controlled, it was just targeted. A mass of undead lets loose in a direction. It wasn’t a cohesive formation, and some of the undead were ahead of the main army. They had already been fighting advanced parties for two weeks. Some had been pursuing people that were running away, others just seemed to be aimlessly charging ahead. But today was the day when the main horde would arrive.

Anrosh wasn’t quite sure what to do really. She didn’t have a lot of experience in leading an army, but then again, none of the other sect warriors did either. It was not how sect fought wars; it wasn’t how they trained. They trained to increase their personal power, they trained to dominate and demonstrate supremacy, power and strength. They trained to fight in small squads, preparing to fight together in a way that let them be free but close enough to support one another.

The Twilight Melody warriors in the valley beneath were spread out, squads of warriors waiting with torches illuminating it before a large forest that spread in front of them. She hadn’t been able to wait for all of her forces to arrive before she was forced to set out, but most of them were here. Tens of thousands, some Foundation, others Lords, led by Monarchs and Heavenly. They had rushed here, because it was the only place where they could funnel in the undead, where their numbers advantage was somewhat lessened. Behind Anrosh’s position, was a mountain range with one wide pass going through. It was a few thousand meters across, but it would prevent the undead from surrounding them. Which was one of the greatest dangers when fighting them, or so she has been told.

“Don’t worry,” Reki said, grinning. He didn’t seem concerned, but Anrosh understood. It wasn’t his sect that was in danger. “Fighting the undead is straightforward, at least this type is. Whoever this necromancer is, he is no Lord of Death. His army is just a mindless horde. His undead stupid and weak. The only advantage they have is numbers and that noxious cloud that they bring with them.”

She nodded her head in understanding. The numbers they were countering by the choice of the battlefield. The mountains behind Anrosh had bases that were hastily raised and prepared so that they could be defended. The pass was the width of the entire valley, so they couldn't just raise walls to block it off, perhaps if they had people with builds that could do that or if they had hired geomancers, but there just hadn't been any time for that. The many bases were where they had their support people, where they could retreat to heal and resupply, get rest. Basically, small forts. The warriors of the sect were spread out all over the pass, they would attempt to rotate and kill undead as they came in.

Their poison they had countered in other ways. The Black Viper Sect had been poison and venom focused, and that legacy remained in the Twilight Melody Sect. Their alchemists had examined and sampled the poison from the undead that the sect warriors had captured, and they had concocted an elixir that would give them high resistance to the type of the poison that these undead bring with them.

They stood in silence, watching and waiting for everything to start.

"You should go," Anrosh told him, they had spread their strongest over the defense line.

"Right," he cracked his neck. "Good luck."

Anrosh looked at him as he jumped away, soaring through the air, then leaping again once he hit the ground. He was an Immortal, just like her, but he was more powerful. Sometimes she did feel like it wasn't fair, the fact that some people were just better than others, that some gaps couldn't be narrowed no matter what. Still, she tried her best. She had spent last three years training, despite her injuries, or perhaps because of them. It was hard, she had been in pain, in agony really, but she had pushed through. Now, she was nearly healed, she no longer had the limp, though, sometimes she did feel pain through her leg if she stepped on it wrong. It didn't bother her that much, some sharp pain was nothing compared to having your soul burned.

That experience had made her appreciate Tali a lot more. She respected the woman more now, compared to how she viewed her before, as a freed slave, a cripple. What Anrosh had gone through had been horrible enough,

she couldn't imagine the strength it took for Tali to hold on to her life after what had to have happened to her.

She was nervous, but at the same time she was eager. This was the first time that she would be responsible for defending the sect on her own, without Ryun there to deal with everything. It was a test, and she was eager to show herself. After what happened with Nayra and that man, she needed this. She was already feeling like a failure for not being able to go after her, for losing to that man in the first place. She knew that it didn't make sense, that the man that had taken Nayra was more powerful, probably older. But at the same time, she knew that if Ryun had been there things would've been far different. He rarely cared about the scale of the problem or the opponent in front of him. He just... pushed through.

Now it was her turn. She had advanced her second path over the last year, she had trained, risen in the sect as a, at least in her opinion, capable Sect Leader. She couldn't let this be the moment where she failed.

She noticed footsteps behind her, but didn't turn around.

"The forward parties sent word that they are nearly here," Lesamitrius said.

Anrosh glanced to the side, seeing the ravzor standing there with Kri, her daughter. The mother in her worried about her child, but the Sect Leader knew that they needed everyone that they could get. Kri was only Early Lord, which did put her in the middle upper range of their forces. Still, she was young, so Anrosh had stationed her at the back of their defensive line, further into the pass. Lesamitrius was the one who was going to command that part of the line, as they did expect undead to get past the front line. It was inevitable, there were just too many undead in the horde.

"We are as ready as we can be," Anrosh said, then turned to Kri. "You ready?"

Kri had her hands gripping her spear tightly, this would be her first real battle of this scale. Anrosh had seen battle like this before, in the core. She wondered if the undead would be more terrifying than the Dome monsters.

"I am ready," Kri said just as a loud horn blared through the air.

The undead were here. Anrosh nodded to herself, then glanced at Lesamitrius. "You should get back."

With one last glance at Kri, Anrosh put on her helmet and started down the hill. The shadows danced in the torchlight as she approached the front line, warriors from her sect surrounded her, all carrying their weapons of choice and bearing armor or robes in the colors of the sect. There wasn't any cohesive command, there wasn't even a line, just a bunch of small groups of people gathered around with a few solo warriors standing in between them. Anrosh was like them, without a team. Her power didn't play well with most of the others, a few of the other solo warriors were like her, having paths or aspects that didn't play well with close combat team fighting.

They stood in silence, everyone already knew what to do, there was no one shouting orders like in the armies of Kingdoms and other non-sect factions. The forest before them was deep and dark, and Anrosh kept her eyes on it. She heard them before she saw them, a sound of thousands of feet running over the ground. She raised her eyes above the treeline trying to watch for any of the flying undead. The reports said that they had seen some karura zombies flying around the army. She could see nothing, the light of the fires made it hard to see beyond what they illuminated. It didn't even matter, they had a few anti-air groups in the line, and two flying groups ready to fight. The Twilight Melody Sect was predominantly human and demasi, but they had members of other races as well.

She turned her eyes back to the forest, waiting as the noise got louder and louder. It sounded exactly as she remembered, an army on the march. Louder than the monster swarm, as loud as the charging of the monsters in the Tournament City. And then, she could see shapes moving through the forest, moving fast. She, and every other warrior in the line pulled out elixirs and started drinking them. The most important among them was the poison immunity one, which Anrosh downed first. She drank others that would boost her stats and stamina regeneration, but she didn't have a lot of them.

The first of the undead charged out of the tree line. A zombie, eerie blue light shining out of the eye sockets. Half of its face was decayed and it was missing one arm, in the other it carried a short sword. The armor that it wore was broken with arrows sticking out of it. Another charged out, wearing a simple farmer's clothes, its state of decay much better. Another noise filled

the air, an eerie low rumbling of air moving through throats without any attempt of making proper sounds.

That in itself was like an assault on the mind, and perhaps it was some low tier attack. More of them were coming out in a staggered fashion, dozens spread out with no formation or guidance. The warriors waited, the few undead crossed the clearing beyond the tree line and reached them but died quickly. The warriors didn't advance, they waited for the enemy to come. And Anrosh pulled Kagehime out and hefted her large diamond shaped shield. It was night, so her stats increased by 5% from Kagehime's ability.

"This isn't much of a challenge," Kagehime said. "There is no mastery to them, just savage onslaught."

"But there are so many of them," Anrosh said. "That is a challenge."

"You sound like Ryun and his woodcutting, but I guess that you are right, there is a lot of them."

Kagehime quieted as an undead reached Anrosh. She stepped to the side and cut its head off.

The ground was shaking, her sense picking up on it, and she knew that the bulk of the undead was near. And then they exploded out of the tree line, hundreds, thousands of them moving like a single living beast, ravenous and ugly, covered with mist that leaked out of them and covered them like a blanket.

Anrosh didn't have to give out the order, as soon as the undead neared the front line of the defenders, flaming arrows were released from somewhere behind her. The arrows fell on the charging undead, and they missed, hitting their real targets. The oil soaked ground ignited and fire exploded in a line stretching the entirety of the valley. Anrosh watched as the undead burned, and still came forward. The fire didn't pain them, but it did kill them eventually. The burning undead zombies fell as the fire burned through their sockets, and their brains cooked inside their heads.

Then the wind picked up from behind her as warriors and support personnel with air and wind powers used them and blew the blazing flames back into the forest, catching the trees on fire, burning more of the undead. It wasn't going to keep for long, she knew. The rain had soaked the trees and the ground, the fire was going to burn only as long as they used their powers

to keep it burning. But it was something at least. Still, the flaming undead charged through the blaze.

Anrosh was ready as they undead started reaching her line again, a handful at a time. A zombie swung an axe at her head, but she smashed it away with her shield, sending the undead flying away. Most of them were weak, raised from lower tiered people, she didn't even need to use her abilities in order to fight them. But they were unending.

Anrosh activated her technique, and **{Glacial Armor}** surrounded her, covering her metal armor with a layer of crystallized **Absolute Cold Qi**, then she used **{Arctic Ward}**, to imbue Kagehime with cold damage.

A zombie that was in a terrible state of decay reached her, somehow without being on fire, probably because the drake didn't have any clothes on. Its scales were falling apart, the flesh beneath putrid and rotting away. The drake's snout was missing the bottom half, and its tongue was hanging out, the claws on its hands were narrow and half of them broken. Its eyes were blazing with a harsh blue light as it charged without any heed to danger, a mindless monster that followed a single instruction, to kill anything in its way. Green gas was leaking and surrounding the drake, the poison that some of the zombies had. Anrosh didn't know if that was one of the necromancer's powers, to imbue or cause some of his undead to leak it, but it didn't matter in the end. With the elixir that she had drank she was highly resistant.

Zombies were as strong as they had been in life, only without any restrictions, they didn't feel pain, they didn't stop if you cut off their limbs or impaled them. They didn't care if they damaged their own bodies. The only way to stop them was to destroy the brain.

The drake leapt at her, its claws reaching for her. Anrosh activated **Defensive Stance** and raised her shield. She took the entire weight of the undead on her shield, she bent her knees, feeling a sharp pain in her leg but ignoring it with her stance's increased pain tolerance. Then she pushed up throwing the drake back into another group of undead coming at her. They tumbled to the ground, but didn't stay there for long. She saw a few dozen of them gathering, some on fire, others not. The blaze in the forest had already died down and the warriors all over the line were engaged in fighting scores of the undead, while hundreds more came through the fire and mud.

The drake charged again with a group of ten other zombies. Anrosh took a deep breath, then released her **Absolute Cold Aura**. Her Qi left her core and the temperature around her started to drop quickly. All her cold related powers were boosted by her **Grand Absolute Cold Transcendent** perk, her stats increased because of her attunements, both of them increasing her stats when fighting in the cold. And she could feel the effects of it all immediately. The mud beneath her feet started to frost and freeze and the fire on the monsters charging at her started to die out. The drake swung at her as she stepped closer and took the attack on her shield, then she retaliated. Her Qi moving through her body she activated her **{Arctic Onslaught}** technique. It was a channeled technique, which meant that she wouldn't be able to use anything else, but she had her **Greater Qi Anchor** for that.

With her strength raised, she swung Kagehime and cut the drake's head in half, destroying the brain. The other zombies swarmed her, and she waited for them to land the first strike. The moment they did, she moved cutting through them like they were made out of paper.

A blurred form smashed into her from the side, she barely managed to get her shield up in between them. She was pushed back, but her feet dug into the mud, and she halted the attack. She pushed back throwing her attack away and looked to see a large minotaur with bulging muscles and strange twisted legs. Immediately she realized that it had to be some kind of true body, and she cursed. The Cultivator zombies were far more dangerous than others, because all the physical changes that the body went through were retained in undeath. A Classer zombie would only have the Classer's stats, but a Cultivator would have both the stats and every passive power that the body itself held in life.

The minotaur zombie wasn't as decayed as the others, so she presumed that it had been recently raised. The zombie charged again, moving incredibly fast. Anrosh released one of her five anchors, with **{Glacial Shaping}** she froze the air in front of her. The zombie entered the area, and it came to a near stop as its feet froze in the mud on the ground. She charged and let it swipe at her shield before she cut it in half with Kagehime. The upper half still moved as she stomped on its head and smashed it to pulp.

Her sense warned her just before it was too late, and she jumped back. A flying karura zombie swept down from above, hitting the ground hard. She saw more of them flying above, fighting her warriors and being taken down by arrows, javelins, and powers. She focused her mind and used her **Grand Frost Shields** perk. Three shields made out of ice formed around her, orbiting her and protecting her from attacks. She focused on the zombies around her and let the small shields protect her from attacks from other directions.

A group of zombies near her overwhelmed one of her warrior teams and she used **Grand Frost Charge** through the zombies attacking her. Spikes made out of ice rose in her wake and impaled the undead that had been surrounding her. She reached the team, and her aura slowed the zombies enough that she could interfere. She cut two down and saw one of the warriors about to be in trouble. She used **Frost Reinforcement** on her shield and a layer of frost covered it, increasing its durability just as she activated **Intercepting Block** and charged across the field at three times her usual speed. She used **|Greater Block|** to stop an attack from an undead carrying a large two-handed hammer intent on smashing a sect warrior's head. The attack had enough power to push her to her knees even with her skill and she grimaced. It was another Cultivator zombie, one with very high strength or some kind of body that made its strikes stronger. She pushed back and threw the hammer away, then used **|Crescent Swipe|** to cut through the hammer's handle and cut off the undead's head. It didn't know how to move away, how to survive, it cared only to attack.

She raised her eyes to see everyone around her fighting. Zombies reached her, but her aura damaged them even before they could take a swing at her. She fought, from time to time a stronger zombie would come, but she was more powerful and the undead were dumb and straightforward. Then, a sea of undead exploded out of the forest, hundreds of them just in front of her. The long-range capable warriors of the sect fire in the distance, hitting the mass of the undead, but doing little to stop or even slow them. The undead were climbing over their own fallen, just a mass of limbs flailing in her direction. She hefted her shield and triggered another of her anchors. A copy of her, made out of Qi rose next to her, standing in the same position.

Before she could do much else the mass of undead hit her. She braced her shield in front of her, but was still pushed back. The undead surged at her and around her, most simply moving beyond her position. Her aura was freezing the weaker of them around her. She caught a few skeletal looking undead have their bones freeze and just stop moving as ice covered their joints preventing them from working. The zombies were lashing out at her with weapons and limbs and teeth, but her armor covered with her Qi held. One side of her was covered by her avatar, and the others by her shields. She focused her mind and used **Frost Ring**. A ring of frost exploded out of her, amplified by her aura, freezing the ground and the undead's feet, crawling over their bodies. She moved, pushing all around her and hacking with her sword, bashing with her shield, and her avatar did the same. The brittle undead shattered.

She was still in the center of a large mass of undead and they ran across the fallen, reaching for her. She triggered another of her anchors and both she and her avatar unleashed **{Arctic Sword Storm}**. Blades made out of Qi came into being around them, and then attacked on her command, hacking the undead apart.

She and her avatar were killing dozens every second, but it didn't matter. Hundreds were surging all around her. The other warriors were stemming the tide too, but she could tell that many had gotten by them. This was a weakness of the sects, they didn't fight like a cohesive force, they couldn't hold the line as well as other factions could. They had to rely on their power over everything else. Anrosh tried to think only about killing the undead, knowing that every one that she killed was one less for those behind her to worry about.

She didn't know for how long she fought, but she was getting overwhelmed, her avatar was buried under a mountain of undead and immobilized, and the only reason she managed to stay standing was because of her aura and the fact that in the cold she grew stronger. She fought almost mechanically, blocking and retaliating, destroying undead's heads or cutting off limbs when she couldn't get to the brain.

A lucky spear thrust got through her block and hit her armor in a spot where her **{Glacial Armor}** had been broken before, punching through the

weakened metal and into her flesh. She cut the shaft of the spear with Kagehime leaving the spear inside her hip. She didn't have the time to get it out as an axe hit her shoulder and bit into the armor there, almost getting all the way through. A dozen small wounds appeared on her body, and while her regeneration was boosted by the cold and her Qi it wasn't enough.

She activated her **Fighter's Heart**, ignoring all the pain for the rest of the combat. She knew that it was dangerous, the pain gave valuable information, but she had little choice. She used [**Frost Deflect**] and bashed another attack away, sending a wave of cold in that direction that froze a couple of the undead. Then she used [**Frost Dash**] to smash into another with her shield. Cold around her was released again, the temperature reaching such low points that even the air was damaging the undead. Every zombie that got near her stumbled, slowed, their skin started to crack and break. What little fluids they had inside them froze and grew into crystalline shapes that damaged them from the inside. And still they came at her.

The weaker ones couldn't even approach her now, their brains froze the instant they neared her, but the others just climbed over them, or pushed their bodies forward. Anrosh felt like she was being suffocated by the bodies of the dead. Horrible faces with flesh torn and scales hanging from them. Rotting skin and frozen blood, all surrounded by a cloud of poisonous gas that made it hard for her to even think. Each breath filled her lungs with its putridness, and despite the elixir she was starting to feel its effects. Her body was slowing, her grip loosening.

She roared, a sound made out of frustration and sheer weight of everything around her. She couldn't die here, not like this, she had too much responsibility, too many people who trusted her even when she herself hadn't always lived up to that.

She activated **Grand Frost Endurance**, and her skin hardened into ice, her endurance surged increasing by 500%. She felt her regeneration stop and knew that she wouldn't be able to use her abilities anymore. She triggered her **Grand Frost Shields** again, replacing the ice shields that had been broken, she used them to gain room as she was being pushed from all sides. She swung her sword, using **Fighter's Strike** with her **|Crescent Swipe|** to cut a dozen undead down, giving herself more room.

She pushed with her feet and soared up into the air, above the undead. She saw just a mass of undead, and her heart faltered. The darkness was everywhere, the torches gone, she saw light flashes as the warriors fought surrounded by the undead that seemingly had no end. It was enough for anyone to give up, but she wouldn't. She had learned from those around her, she knew that no matter what, she should always push forward. No matter how bleak things appeared to be, how hard it all was. She just needed to stand and survive. She raised her sword up above her head and used her perk.

Grand Frostfall activated and a massive blade made out of ice came into being above her. A moment later she sent it flying down toward the ground. It hit in the middle of the undead, throwing them back with the impact and cracking the ground as it impaled deep into it. Then a wave of sharp frost aura expanded around it and spikes rose from the ground impaling every undead for a hundred meters in all directions. Anrosh fell to the ground, breathing hard. Her core still held a lot of Qi, but she had expended a lot of her stamina. She was regenerating it fast, but she knew she couldn't fight like this for a long time. Her warriors managed to get into the clearing her attack caused, and she saw them push the tide back slightly. But there was still no end in sight of the undead.

She wondered how the other parts of the line were doing, how many undead had gotten through the pass. They knew that some would get through, it was never their intention to stop them completely, merely cripple the army and then deal with the stragglers.

Zombies ran over the spikes and around them, heading toward her. Anrosh raised her sword and got ready to fight. Then, her **|Greater Threat Sense|** blared a warning. She barely managed to raise her shield and use her **|Greater Block|** when a zombie charging at her exploded, sending a blast of green energy in all directions. The force of the attack hit on Anrosh's shield, and picked her up, throwing her through the air. She fell on the undead corpses, hitting something sharp with her back. She groaned and rolled as she heard more explosions all around her. She raised her head and saw zombies charging the warriors and exploding, destroying even their own in the process.

She coughed, feeling sick, and realized that the explosion also released the poison. She managed to get back to her feet and look around, seeing warriors dying and the undead overwhelming them. The necromancer was here somewhere, nearby at least. He had to be in order to do whatever it was that had caused some of the zombies to start exploding. She tried to look and see if she could spot him, but the weak light from above as the moon slowly turned into the sun was insufficient for anything other than to show her just how many undead there were all around them.

The mass of the undead was coming for her, through the green mist surrounding them. Their eyes blazing with unlife, uncaring for anything. Their bodies shuffling in a twitching and broken manner, their mouths open with wheezing sounds coming through creating a symphony that spoke only of death.

Anrosh hefted her shield and Kagehime, all she had to do was stand, never give up.

Then the sky broke apart.

* * *

Tali

Tali stood on a cliff overlooking the pass in between mountains. The battle beneath had been raging for hours, the torches blazed and the fire that the defenders had set had dimmed but still burned in places. They had arrived just after the battle had started, too late for her to give Anrosh any input. She knew that their plan was a good one, as far as it went. There wasn't much else that they could do or that she could offer. The necromancer had grown his army uncontrollably, and just unleashed it in a single direction. They were lucky that he wasn't the type that could upgrade his undead, otherwise this would've been a much harder fight. Still, he had the numbers, and sometimes strength didn't matter compared to that, she knew that firsthand.

The battle wasn't going too well, she could see it as the battle went on. There were too many undead, far more than they expected. She saw a great

display of power in one part of the battle line, the world twisting itself as someone used something powerful to shatter the line of the undead and take apart a good few hundred meters of the forest in front of them. It was an amazing display, but it didn't matter when more undead just filled the gap, crawled over their dead.

She closed her eyes and wondered what she was going to do once they fell. Once the undead went through the sect. The warriors that were left behind wouldn't be able to defend against this, they would die and join the necromancer's army. She suspected that many would flee, and perhaps she could go with them.

She opened her eyes and realized that she was just fooling herself. She was not who she used to be. She remembered her talks with Ryun and knew that she agreed with him in many things. One didn't leave what belonged to them, and as much as she tried to pretend, she was a part of the sect. It was hers too now.

The four warriors around her were looking down at the battle, the others had all gone to help, but these four had insisted on protecting her. All were in the Lord Realm, and she knew that they wished that they could fight. And so Tali made a decision. She turned away from the battle and sat down. She couldn't help as she was, her power felt so close, but it wasn't yet there.

Once, she wouldn't have done this. Once, she would've valued one eternal item over the lives of an entire sect. She pulled the totem out of her storage and placed it in front of her, not caring that anyone could see it. The warriors around her all came from the Wolf's Grove, they were those who had joined Ryun when he first came into the Infinite Realm. She trusted that they would not betray their sect, despite the fortune that was now in front of them.

She felt the totem affect her, and she focused. She had never attempted this before; she was too afraid that she was going to mess up her healing process. Now, she was willing to risk it. All things in the Infinite Realm were Essence, so it stood to reason that the totem healed her somehow with Essence too. She remembered the way that Ryun spoke of Cultivating, of pulling in the Essence into his core by extending his willpower over it.

Slowly, tentatively, she expanded her will and reached out. Her skills had recovered, but she hadn't tried to use them yet. Now, as she focused her will for the first time in three hundred years, she felt the strain on her mind on her soul. She didn't stop.

She pulled at the Essence around her, trying to focus only on what the totem was releasing. And then, she found it. With an effort of will she pulled at that in, and she felt it entering her body, her soul. The healing sensation intensified, her body straining under the effect. It was... hard, not exactly painful, only... it felt as if she was trying to move a mountain with her bare hands.

She kept at it, focusing her will, pulling, excluding everything other completely. The battle and the warriors around her might as well not have existed. She was inside her own small universe, pushing toward her power that was just there under her fingertips.

And then... then she felt it give, her soul healing enough that her Cultivation was finally freed. She felt her cores and the power inside of them. Everything changed in an instant as her perks came back fully, the world changed.

She opened her eyes and sighed. She felt for her core, seeing the small amount of Qi inside of it. The second core inside of the first one, was also nearly empty. Some of the Qi had to have regenerated as she healed, but she had expected them not to be full. She stood up and saw the warriors around her look at her strangely, as if they were seeing her for the first time. Perhaps they were.

The moon had turned into the morning sun, the battle had continued, the undead filling the valley pass. More time had passed than she had realized.

Anatalien Far Solla pushed her cloak away, releasing her hidden wings. She unfurled them and stretched. She wasn't healed fully, she knew. She was feeling drained, but there were things that she had to do.

She glanced at the warriors and smiled, then stepped off the cliff. For the first time in a long time, she felt the wind surging around her. She closed her eyes and enjoyed it for a moment before she spread her wings and flew. She pushed her strained will and used **|Mine Are The Winds, And The**

Sky to let the air move her, finding the right current with **|Perfect Air Current Sense|**. She moved quickly, getting above the center of the battle. The flying undead came for her and she evaded, reaching for her first core, pulling her **Sky Qi** and moving it through her body. It came slowly, the unused conduits straining with just the little **Sky Qi** she was trying to use. She knew that she couldn't risk doing too much, she couldn't risk damaging herself. Finally, she had enough Qi and as the undead came, she used **{One with the World}**. She felt it fill her, her stats increasing and her connection with the sky around her get established. Her Qi was that of a concept, of everything that filled the space above ground. The wind and the clouds, the rain and the air, the grand sensations that people felt when they looked up. All of that was hers to command. The undead came and she slapped it away, shattering it to pieces. She commanded the **Sky** and so she told it what to do, the Essence around her obeyed and she sent the rest of the undead tumbling down toward the ground. Once she was free she looked around, seeing an area where ice and cold reigned.

She tried to think of how much she could risk, her will was already drained and she didn't think that she could use her fruit techniques to their fullest. In the end she knew that she had to risk something, and so she settled on her will, not wanting to strain her Cultivation more than she was already.

She flew above the forest, where the bulk of the undead were.

She focused her mind and reached for her willpower.

|I Shatter The Sky|

The world around her broke apart, the sky tore open. Cracks appeared in space and spread all around her reaching for the ground and hitting the forest, Essences of all kind exploded out of the cracks and caused everything to shatter. The trees broke apart, the air twisted itself and light bent. Everything went insane for a moment in time. The boundaries high above her cracked and **Void** slipped through, but only for a moment. Her skill lasted for barely an instant, far less than she had been capable of before. Her will ran out, but it was enough. The undead main body was broken, the ground turned in on itself and the undead torn apart. The cracks in space healed and whatever was beyond it dissipated.

She breathed quickly, trying to keep herself in the air and her mind awake. She saw the warriors of the sect fighting again, pushing the undead. But there were still too many of them for it to be done so easily. She focused on her eyes, closing them for a moment. Then she opened them and saw. She looked at the connections between the undead, the Qi concept that rested in her second core. The **Bond Essence** was faint, invisible to all but those who had it. She followed it from the undead horde to a hill behind the forest, the place where the originator of the bonds resided, the necromancer. She flew away, moving the last of her **Bond Qi** through her body and getting a technique ready, so slowly that it was almost painful for her to hold it. But she knew that she wouldn't have the time to shape a technique in combat.

She found the necromancer on top of a hill surrounded by a handful of undead. Each undead equipped with armor and items that were obviously of good quality.

She landed in front of it, surprising him. The necromancer had an almost shocked look on his face. He had seen what she had done, he had to have known that it was her.

Her technique ready, she waited.

The necromancer recovered quickly. He didn't speak, for which her respect grew. Fools wasted words and in situations like this. You acted or you died.

He raised his hand and sent his undead forward. She saw that by the way they moved they weren't zombies, they were smarter, better than that. Revenants perhaps, or maybe something else, she didn't know enough about all the different undead types.

They were strong, all immortal at least in life. The necromancer had stolen their bodies. Perhaps inflicted True Death on them if their bodies were required for their immortalities. She sensed them activating their powers and she spread her hands as she released her main path's fruit technique.

{Empty World} spread out of her. **Bond Qi** hitting everything and breaking apart the bonds that held things together. The ground collapsed into dust as the bond of dust essence, of stone and metals, broke apart and the ground just became a collection of individual Essences. The undead collapsed as well, their armor breaking apart into fine mineral fragments,

their bodies breaking apart into flesh and blood and bone, falling apart, flowing away in their individual components. The wind around them broke apart into individual air essence and remained stationary. She didn't reach the necromancer, she was too weak to make her technique large enough. He watched as the ground rolled away in something resembling a sand avalanche, taking with it the pieces that used to be his undead.

She was breathing heavily, her wings keeping her in the air as the necromancer stared at her in disbelief. She forced herself forward, flying at him. Her other technique, **{One with the World}** was still active and she slammed into the necromancer before he could react. She sensed him try to do something, but before he could she grabbed his head in both her hands and squeezed. His bones cracked and she crushed his skull between her fingers, blood and gore exploding in all directions, covering her face. She landed on the ground and gasped, her technique leaving her. Then she collapsed to the ground, and everything went dark.