

## Chapter 187: To Those Who Are Gone

The crimson eyes of the thief gleamed with a hatred so old that it became incomprehensible. More than Louis's blood on Mirscella's dagger, it was that gaze that unsettled Priam. The Tier 3 necro he had just faced possessed the same.

*Shit!*

With his mental attributes enhancing his thinking speed, Priam needed only a fraction of a second to make a decision. How and why were questions he couldn't afford to ponder.

Mobilizing his Mist Concept, Priam summoned a dense wave of mist to separate Mirscella and Louis. The old man lay collapsed on the ground, and the cobblestones of the forum prevented Log-a-rhythm from opening a Secret Passage to secure him.

Mirscella adjusted her grip on her dagger and thrust it towards Louis. The speed of the attack caught Priam off guard. The former thief was not weak, but she had never been this fast. More concerning, no corrupted minion moved so fluidly.

Ignoring his suspicions, Priam realized that his mist wouldn't arrive in time to prevent the strike.

Using the ancient Merits of **[Moon Earl]**, Priam sacrificed a portion of his aether to merge with the ambient moisture. He reappeared between the two elders, just in time to intercept the attack. Mirscella's dagger collided with Promesse's shaft with such force that Priam was forced to kneel to absorb the full impact.

*Her strength surpasses mine!*

A second attack followed. Drawing from his Potential, Priam focused on the information contained in **[Parry]**. Aided by divine inspiration, he optimized the placement of his block, overclocking his muscles to disperse the attack's energy to the maximum.

*Lvl Up: [Parry] lvl 17  
STR +1*

The forum shook. Using his Domain, Priam attempted to kinetically immobilize Mirscella. Instead of her slowing down, he screamed in pain. A firebolt surged through his body as Priam tried to access his aether. One of his main meridians was still severed, preventing the use of active skills. Priam understood that he could only rely on his Concepts, Supremacies, and some passive skills for now.

As a third attack threatened to dislocate his shoulders, Priam summoned Pyro. Enhanced by Conquest, a geyser of flames erupted towards Mirscella. In a rage-filled scream, the creature leaped to the side to dodge.

Priam took advantage of the moment to rise. His Domain informed him of Louis's condition. A deep gash in the abdomen was bleeding profusely. Seizing the old man by the arm, Priam

tossed him out of the forum. The grass opened a passage into Log-a-rhythm where he fell, but the martial artist executed a somersault to avoid it.

"No!"

"Get to safety!" Priam shouted, turning towards Mirscella, who was launching another attack.

He parried again, grimacing as he felt his body endure the assault. Mirscella's attributes were terrifying, and without his recent level-ups, Priam's constitution wouldn't have been enough to withstand the attacks.

"Don't hurt her," Louis yelled from behind him.

Blocking deadly attacks one after another, Priam almost burst into laughter. Without aether or life bonuses, he was the one in danger. However, he wasn't obligated to face the thief in a duel. The clash of weapons was sure to attract Kazuki's attention. *I just need to survive until then.*

As if reading his thoughts, Mirscella unleashed a barrage of attacks. Retreating under the violence of the assault, Priam felt his system communicate with Log-a-rhythm.

**[Identification]** required the circulation of his aether but not his soul add-on.

*[Information from Log-a-rhythm:*

**[Necro Envoy - Tier 0(3) - Marquess - Corrupted]** - *A high official of the Necromoon. Adaptation to a new vessel temporarily occupies her soul. The Necro Concept will gradually increase the physical limits of the possessed vessel.]*

Priam paled as he read the description of the Necro Envoy. Since Mirscella wasn't mentioned, it was likely that she had disappeared entirely. Priam thought he knew why, but that wasn't the most concerning part.

Before him stood a Necro Envoy capable of facing Sumstreh. Only her recent possession of Mirscella's body prevented her from wiping the floor with Priam.

Taking advantage of a new strike, Priam allowed himself to be pushed backward towards the forest. The Necro Envoy leaped after him before an onyx lance appeared in her path.

With a pirouette, the enemy avoided impalement and paused, analyzing her new adversary.

"This thing is no longer Mirscella," Priam warned.

"I see," replied Kazuki. "Should we capture it?"

Priam grimaced, glancing at Louis. The old man looked at Mirscella's possessed body, immense grief in his eyes.

"...If we can," Priam decided. Perhaps one of the rewards from the Sun Shop could bring back the old thief.

As Kazuki nodded, Mirscella opened her mouth.

"I don't think you can," she said in English before leaping towards the forest.

Stunned by the corrupted's speech, Priam and Kazuki reacted a moment too late. The Envoy's speed was terrifying, and she vanished between two trees. Only the characteristic sound of fractured bones confirmed to Priam that the creature's attributes were limited. *She is using Micro!*

Seeing Kazuki leap in pursuit of the Envoy, Priam rode his mist to intercept her. The corrupted dodged an **[Unrelenting Thrust]** without stopping. Priam crossed through the fog twice more before stopping as his severed meridian prevented him from recharging his aether.

Avoiding all the hidden bio-traps, the Envoy reached the Log-a-rhythm barrier in a second. A hoplite sentinel lunged at her, trying to slow her down. With a disdainful movement, Mirscella blocked the mech's metallic fist and slashed.

A dark aura covered the blade of her dagger as it effortlessly decapitated the armor.

With a slight nod, Mirscella evaded a javelin thrown by Kazuki's mech. Her body lost its colors, and the Necro Envoy passed through the barrier. Giving them a final mocking smile, she disappeared.

Kazuki screamed in rage.

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"Mirscella Tsevskaia is dead," confirmed the Guardian of Secrets.

Priam felt a twinge in his heart as he saw Louis lower his head in misery. The old man was holding his stomach, refusing treatment until he had answers.

"How could a Necro Envoy reach the heart of our base?" growled Kazuki. His subordinate had been beheaded simultaneously with his mech, and the Champion was furious.

"The Tribulation erased Mirscella's mind," Priam theorized. "On a spiritual level, she was dead. Even though Log-a-rhythm's barrier absorbs much of the Necromoon's light, it's imperfect. Her physically healthy body made her a prime vessel for an Envoy... Am I right?"

"The Tribulation erased her soul rather than her mind, but you're correct about the rest," confirmed the Guardian. "From the description you gave me, her Tribulations were mental. These are particularly dangerous as the Concepts target any psychological weakness."

"Mirscella wasn't weak," murmured Louis.

The dwarf sighed. "Perishing to the Tribulations is not weakness. From Tier 1 onwards, they kill more than old age. Mirscella was the first to succumb, but certainly not the last in your group." He turned to Louis. "Her heart continued to beat, and her features weren't tense. She didn't suffer."

Louis remained silent.

"So, any death can awaken a corrupted," summarized Kazuki, looking at the pyre being erected behind him. The hoplites were watching their comrade's corpse, waiting to burn it. No other corrupted would wake up in the heart of their base.

"It's a good idea to burn your dead," confirmed the dwarf.

Priam watched the hoplites gather dead branches in silence. Rose, Myuri, Alain, and Blueberry hadn't triggered any Tribulation yet, but it would come. *As if I would accept seeing them die without doing anything.*

"You... You told Rose she could resurrect her mother." Priam refocused upon hearing Louis's voice. "Can Mirscella...?"

*Secret Wallet: - 8 Iron Coins.*

Priam had taken it upon himself to pay for the old man's questions. If it could help Louis sleep better at night, it was worth it.

"Everything is possible in this world," replied the Guardian. "However, some deaths are more final than others. Mirscella's soul wasn't corrupted by the Necromoon, so resurrection is possible. However, the Tribulations erase any spiritual trace. A ritual won't be able to restore her soul. She was a Tier 0, so you'll need a Mythical Resurrection Token."

The smile that was forming on Louis's face froze, sensing the dwarf's somber mood.

"Is there a problem?"

"Mythical is a rarity hard to access at your Tier; your soul can't even accept a skill of that level of rarity. It's the kind of Token that appears as a reward for the ninetieth wave of the Colosseum."

Priam groaned upon hearing that. The Colosseum's difficulty increased exponentially with the number of waves. Maybe he would reach the ninetieth wave, but if he obtained such a rare Token, he would keep it for his father or one of his close friends.

"I will defeat that wave," declared Louis. Priam was struck by the determination in the old man's voice, and even Kazuki nodded solemnly. *He will succeed or die trying...*

"...There's something else. It's not certain, so I won't charge you for the information," the Guardian said after a respectful moment of silence. "Karma is one of the seven Concepts

that govern this Universe. Many legends speak of exceptional beings who chased a dream with such intensity that Karma offered them a quest. I believe it happened to Rose's father."

Louis widened his eyes. "Are you saying that if I prove my worth, I'll receive a quest to resurrect Mirscella?" His voice trembled slightly.

"If your quest allows you to transcend your potential and show something interesting to the Concepts... yes."

"Thank you," Louis whispered before turning to Priam. "I need to rest." With those words, he turned away, leaving a dark puddle of blood where he had stood.

Despite the pain, a new flame lit up in his eyes. The old man had a purpose.

Priam, Kazuki, and the Guardian remained silent. All three knew that such a quest was of unimaginable difficulty. To resurrect his daughter, Anatole had sacrificed his life and the lives of tens of thousands of humans. Despite his genius and unparalleled aether mastery, he had to sell his soul to succeed.

Priam and Kazuki thanked the Guardian before approaching the pyre.

"Mirscella spoke English," pointed out Kazuki. "She has access to the information in Mirscella's brain. We must assume she knows our weaknesses."

"By launching an attack now, she could surpass our defenses. It's time to spend our Sun Points to strengthen the base," declared Priam.

"The base and its occupants. Eiji would still be alive if his armor had been more resistant."

Priam wasn't sure about that. The Envoy's Aura seemed mastered. However, faced with the hoplite's grief, he kept silent. After all, reinforcing the base's occupants was still a good idea.

"I saw you've got a new weapon," remarked Priam.

"I bought a rare spear for nineteen thousand Sun points," replied Kazuki, showing the weapon that had repelled the Envoy. The onyx alloy seemed to absorb light.

"Don't you prefer an epic spear?" Priam asked. The hoplite would quickly outgrow the rare spear.

"As a Viscount, rare is the highest rarity the Shop offers me," grimaced Kazuki. "Even if I could, an epic weapon costs at least fifty thousand points. It's going to take me forever to slaughter so many corrupted."

Priam had the advantage of being able to destroy hundreds of basic undeads per second, but that wasn't the case for Kazuki.

"Each Soul Tier or Noble Tier multiplies the value of a corrupted by ten, and it accumulates," revealed Priam. "Killing a Tier 2 Viscount would earn you ten thousand points, and make you a Marquess as a bonus."

"You make it sound so simple," replied Kazuki. "It's the kind of fight where I would put my life on the line... But you're right; I need to access the best offers in the Sun Shop."

*That's why Sumstreh wants me to become a Prince, Priam understood. Even with five million Sun points, I can't buy the item he wants.*

### **Sun Shop:**

**Resource**  
**Item**  
**Fragment**  
**Territory**  
**Medicine**  
**Lottery**  
**Auction (Locked)**

...

### **Item:**

*Short Iron Sword (10 points) - A basic short iron sword.*

*Blade length: 59 cm; Handle length: approximately 10 cm; ... ; Blade width at the tip: 1.5 cm; Weight: 1.2 kg.*

...

*Ragnarok Herald (Spear) (495,000 points) - They will reject the message; they will fear the messenger. Customizable dimensions. Ten copies.*

"The limit for a Marquess is five hundred thousand points," said Priam. "But the best available weapons are of epic rank. I suppose one must be a Duke to access the Legendary rank."

"Do you have things to prioritize buying?"

Priam's Assistant had compiled a list of some interesting items. Among them were manuals to enhance resistances or Titles' and prerequisites' lists. A series of puzzles and brain teasers to master his aether caught his attention. *It could propel me to epic rank for **[Aether Manipulation]**...*

The complete collection cost almost four hundred thousand Sun points.

"You're short of points," Kazuki guessed with a smile.

"The richer I become, the more I realize how poor I am," Priam feigned lamentation. He remained much richer than Kazuki. "Let's start by hiring a merchant. The Auction may offer

weapons cheaper than the Shop. A second-hand Legendary weapon will always be better than a brand-new epic one."

According to the Guardian, the presence of a Forum, a Merchant, and the Menhir of Secrets would unlock the Auction option.

"I agree. It's also an opportunity to learn more about this world," said Kazuki.

Priam mentally confirmed his selection.

*Merchant I (5,000 points) - Summons a Merchant. Requires Shop or Forum. **ACQUIRED.***

*Merchant selection... Scanning your territory... Match found.  
Your territory and location match the criteria of two Merchants.*

*Ymir - Tier 0 - White Elf (47%) / Skulc (30%) / Others (23%)*

*Ymir Saharn is a wandering merchant who has spent his life traveling through the Wandering Islands. Thanks to his iron will, he easily controls the impulses of his Skulc heritage.*

*Commission: 15%*

*Galina - Tier 1 - Ogre (100%)*

*Galina Ikorg is a merchant formerly based in Elopee. Her tendency to crush bad payers' skulls earned her a century-long sentence in Elysium.*

*Commission: 20%*

*Note: Merchants are not hostile to the Lord or their subjects at the time of their summoning. The System cannot be held responsible if strained relations lead to negative consequences.*

"... Let's go with Ymir. If the System doesn't manage after-sales service, a Tier 1 can be a danger."

"In any case, we don't have space for lodging an ogre."

A white sigil appeared on the forum floor in front of Priam. Drawing in the ambient aether, the symbol began to activate.

*Ymir Saharn will be teleported to your territory in two hours.*

"That must be to prevent users from hiring an army of guards or healers at the last moment," Kazuki grumbled upon seeing the announced wait.

The Sun Shop was a tool, not a weapon.

"It might be for the best. It's time to pay our respects," said Priam, turning towards the clearing. A few hoplites were carrying their comrade's body towards the pyre.

"Now that Eiji fell in battle, I wonder who will be the second," Kazuki murmured. Mirscella's Tribulation had been inevitable, but Priam knew Kazuki blamed himself for his subordinate's fate. If they had been stronger, he would still be alive.

Priam remained silent. His encouragement would have sounded hollow.

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In the center of the clearing, the wood crackled beneath the tall flames. The smoke wafting upwards seemed to tremble at the sound of Kazuki's voice.

"As the sun sets on the battlefield's embrace,  
A warrior's journey finds a resting place.  
In the hallowed grounds where heroes repose,  
His spirit ascends on the path they chose."

The hoplite dirge resonated within Priam, stirring half-buried emotions. As the soldiers sang in unison, humans and Blueberry remained silent. All took the moment to reflect and mourn.

On the pyre, a flower burned alongside Eiji Tanaka. Today, their group had lost two people, but only one body was freed from the Necromoon's terror. Louis, a bandage on his stomach, seemed determined to track down the second. Tears of rage and pain streamed down his weathered face.

While the music gripped his heart, Priam watched his loved ones. The Guardian had been brutally clear. Mirscella was the first to fall, but wouldn't be the last. The Necromoon, his rivals, the locals, or a Tribulation would claim them sooner or later. Who would be next? His father, a non-combatant? Rose, with a life ahead of her? Sphinx, sold to a tyrant?

Priam wanted to roar in the face of this inevitability. Despite the progress he had paid for with blood and tears, he remained weak. The more he loved, the more he had to protect.

The funeral song died on the hoplites' lips, and Priam locked eyes with Kazuki. The two rivals were thinking the same thing.

As the wood crackled, breaking the clearing's silence, Priam let the flames carry away his hesitations. In this world where anything was possible, there was only one way to defy fate.

*I must become stronger.*

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*Status:*

*PHYSICAL:*

*Strength 491 (+2)*

*Constitution 856*

*Agility 473*



Vitality 765  
Perception 685

**MENTAL:**

Vivacity 421  
Dexterity 538  
Memory 318  
Willpower 925  
Charisma 585

**META:**

Meta-affinity 418  
Meta-focus 350  
Meta-endurance 296  
Meta-perception 204  
Meta-chance 230  
Meta-authority 30

Potential: 1941 (+1)  
Tier 0

Sun points: 48 122 (-5 000)

**[He Who Eludes Death]** charge: OFF. Reloaded in 11 hours 34 minutes 40 seconds.

**[Tribulation]: Three Tribulations pending.**

Future Tribulations delayed until:

Time: 166 days 12 hours 7 minutes 33 seconds.

Next thresholds: 6 attributes > 600 / 3 attributes > 900