

## D. of Pride 721

### Chapter 721- New Summons (2)

"It is believed that the Elemental Constructs were an accident of his creation and guarded his realm. However, it was all in the past, right now they are nothing but a shadow of their previous self".

Thanks to Irene's explanation, everyone present here was able to learn what kind of being the abyss brought forth.

It turned out that the towering figure composed of living flames, seemingly in a perpetual state of combustion and whose fiery form shifted and swayed, as if possessed by a rhythmic dance that only it could understand, was called an elemental construct.

Simon activated his [Appraisal] skill to observe the Fire Elemental, but then something unexpected happened. The Abyss, which usually closed after summoning a creature, remained open, swirling with an intensity that Simon had never seen before.

"This is unusual. The Abyss should have closed after summoning the Fire Elemental. Why is it still open?"

Confusion flashed in his eyes. Just as the group watched the abyss in bemusement, a whirlwind of chilling air suddenly swept through the chamber, making them shiver involuntarily.

"Master look, something is coming out?" Alice exclaimed.

At that moment another enormous shadow could be seen coming closer from the other side of the abyss.

<nullb>BOOM... a second elemental construct stepped out, this one was different than the first in that it was a swirling vortex of air and wind. Its form was an ever-shifting column of tempest, with gusts of wind spiralling around a central core.

It exuded an aura of unbridled freedom, encapsulating the untameable spirit of the wind. The one to emerge out of the abyss after the Fire Elemental was the Cyclone Elemental.

"Two elemental constructs came out... I guess it's not unusual given that I used three emblems. Could it be there is still..."

As gasps of surprise rang out from his subordinates, Simon muttered to himself in contemplation. Just as he hypothesised, the unexpected didn't end there. The Abyss, which still hadn't closed, continued to pulse and expand, defying all expectations.

Out of the swirling void emerged a third Elemental construct, its form gleaming with icy brilliance.

After the Fire and Cyclone elemental, the Ice Elemental that came out stood as a shimmering monument of frost and cold. Its crystalline body seemed to refract light, casting prismatic reflections across its surroundings.

Its presence brought a bone-chilling cold that seemed to freeze the very air around it. As it emerged, frost spread in intricate patterns along the ground, and the environment itself seemed to take on an icy hue.

Fire Elemental, Cyclone Elemental and now with the appearance of Ice Elemental, it completed the triumvirate.

Finally after the last of the elemental construct came out, the abyss stopped spinning and disappeared, leaving the space to slowly heal itself.

"Three elemental constructs as I thought so" When the Cyclone elemental came out Simon had surmised that there would be a third one. It was a simple conclusion he had drawn after examining and learning about the abyss every time he used it.

Based on the past incidents, he had noticed that when using multiple emblems at once, there would be two kinds of results. Either it would summon out a single powerful entity like Irene or Wisp that is deserving of the number of emblems or the abyss would dish out multiple beings to make up for it.

The Valkyries that were summoned after Simon used five emblems and the Elemental constructs were the perfect example of that.

That said, it was still an observation in the end, there is a way of knowing how exactly the abyss operated.

As the three Elemental constructs, each one more massive than anything Simon had ever encountered, stood as awe-inspiring embodiments of nature's raw power. They radiated an ancient energy, a display of dominance over the elements, a manifestation of primordial might and untamed forces.

Their arrival had divided the atmosphere of the Main floor into three parts. One was as hot as a fire, the other windy and the other part was icy cold.

As the land settled from their arrival, the Elemental constructs turned their attention to Simon with an intensity that sent shivers down his spine. The way the elemental constructs ignored all the other people around him, it was as if they knew Simon was the one who summoned them and was the master of this place.

<nulli>ZOOOM... At this moment, the air seemed to quiver with power as the Elemental constructs emanated a potent undulation. The elements within their chests shifted and separated, revealing the glowing cores that formed the heart of their being.

These cores, while minuscule in comparison to the towering forms of the constructs, held an incredible significance. All the three Elemental constructs revealed their core towards Simon.

Despite there being no communication between them, he immediately understood what they were trying to gesture.

Simon feeling a little overwhelmed by the situation, extended his hands. Mana surged out from within him in droves and branched into three different strands, each reaching out to make contact with the exposed cores of the Elemental Constructs.

As the connection was established, a rush of information flooded Simon's senses. He felt their existence, their consciousness, their essence merging with his own. Despite being constructs created by someone, he was able to learn that all of them had egos.

They were not mere mindless tools as they possessed their own personalities and traits, their own sparks of individuality.

The Fire Elemental's ego for example was like a roaring inferno, fierce and passionate. It burned with a desire for challenge and combat, seeking to test its power against worthy opponents.

The Cyclone Elemental's ego was elusive and ever-changing, akin to the shifting winds. It held a curious nature, desiring to explore and understand its opponents. The Ice Elemental's ego was cold and headstrong, like the heart of a glacier.

Yet, despite their distinct personalities, Simon sensed that these egos were strong, they were too simple and guileless, almost like a child.

"I guess I shouldn't be surprised that the option of your menu is even able to call forth Elemental Constructs from a realm that had long since ceased existing" Irene spoke with her lips curved into a smile.

"What do you mean?" Simon questioned.

With an expression that held a mix of awe and curiosity, Irene pointed at Simon "What I mean is that option of yours is truly extraordinary. No, saying it's extraordinary would be an understatement, after all, not only can it manipulate the Laws of space and connect with any of the realms in this universe, it can even manipulate the laws of time and connect with a realm that had been long destroyed in the ancient times".

"Everything that was in this realm was also destroyed when that world fell. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? The Abyss connected with the realm of Nexus of the past and brought forth the Elemental Constructs before they could be destroyed. That option of yours is simply unfathomable and defies all understanding".

"Ohhh" Simon rounded his lips and nodded his head, his mind swirled with awe and wonder for his option.

Although it still remained a mystery and there was much to be discovered about this option, one thing was certain, and that was everything that was summoned out of it was bound to be unique or powerful.

"Alright, enough about the cryptic and incomprehensible things. What I want to know is that are these so called elemental constructs powerful or not?"

With Irene talking about these constructs so much, it was only natural for Simon to get excited.

"According to ancient texts and legends, the Elementalist was able to harness the raw forces of nature itself. What was his purpose in creating these huge Elemental constructs, still remained shrouded in mystery. Some believed they were meant to bring equilibrium to the worlds. Others speculated that their purpose was to guard the realm, and protect the items and artefacts he created from falling into evil hands and being misused".

"No one truly knew, for the Elementalist and the realm of Nexus was destroyed and vanished into obscurity. All that remained were texts. As for how they can gain that kind of strength, you who have been acknowledged by them and created a connection, should the ancient text noting about its existence. So if you are asking me if they are strong or not, I would say they are".

"Things that are created by the Elementalist are nothing short of extraordinary, it is more so for these Elemental Constructs. However, the ones standing in front of you are nothing like the ones I learned from the ancient texts. You should have already realised the moment you made contact with it, they appear to be relatively young existences than the ones I know of".

"These constructs are akin to artificial lifeforms, creations that held the potential for growth and development. That is to say, they are yet to attain the level of power and sentience from the ancient texts. As for how they can gain that kind of strength, you who have been acknowledged by them and created a connection, should know more than me"

It was as Irene said, as the connection Simon had with the elemental constructs deepened, he began to perceive the mysteries that lay within these Elemental constructs. They were not simple tools but entities intricately woven into the fabric of the elements themselves.

And while each of them had their own egos, they were not fully matured, akin to fledgling souls navigating a vast and unknown realm. What he need to do from this point on was...

"I see, if that is the case, it makes sense why the [Appraisal] displayed their level as [Unassigned] and all of their skills are hidden".

Chapter 722- Echomir Plates

These Elemental Constructs once existed in a realm where elemental forces converged, and if he wanted them to attain the power they were meant to have, he would have to provide a suitable environmental habitat for their development.

Just as a seed needed the right conditions to grow into a mighty tree, these elemental beings required a nurturing environment to mature into the formidable forces they were destined to become.

"It's clear to me now. These elemental constructs are like young saplings, yearning to grow and flourish. I will do everything in my power to provide them with the environment they need to achieve their full potential" Simon spoke with determination.

These elemental constructs if raised in a proper environment can become powerful defence for his dungeon.

After Simon confirmed that the Elemental Construct have formed a soul link with him, he dispersed his people. As for the elemental constructs, because they were too huge for the main floor, he sent them to a different floor for the time being.

And just like that, Simon returned to his monotonous routine.

A week passed by and he was still stuck at the same level. However, his magic and skill training progressed dramatically. Now not only can he use his mana to cast spells without any wastage, he was even able to make progress in Amalgamation magic, capable of merging two Advanced attribute magic together.

The result was, the very fabric of space trembled as a vague magic took shape in Simon's palm.

"Huff... huff... I can't believe it completely drained me out of my mana just to form a single magic" Simon grasped for breath looking at a golden crimson orb the size of a baseball, slowly rotating in his hand in excitement.

It needs to be mentioned that after reaching the level he was in, the total Mana Pool he had was well over 300,000. Yet he was running on fumes only after conjuring a single magic.

There were faint traces of black tears forming around the magic, an indication of the space being violently torn apart. Not only that, the aura this magic released was so terrifying that it even induced changes in the mystical cycle of his Main floor.

Needless to say, he can't test its strength here; however, even without testing it out, Simon could vouch that it was strong, stronger than any of his attacks. After all, the magic was the culmination of enlightenment and achievement he had up until now.

"Let's store it there" he muttered something under his breath.

After another two to three hours, Simon was done with his training and was just about to leave the pond of serenity, when he heard a voice transmission sound inside his head. It was from Prime, the new [Administrator] of his dungeon.

The contents of his message immediately excited Simon and he couldn't help but teleport to the [Workshop].

Inside the volcanic mountain where Prime made his new home, Simon arrived through the path he created and confronted the other party.

"Is it really true that you fixed the Radiant Crown of Brilliance?" he asked.

fix it, you still had doubts about my ability?" Prime released a yellow light from its body showing that it was unhappy with Simon's "Of course, who do you think I am brat? Didn't I tell you that I will fix it, you still had doubts about my ability?" Prime released a yellow light from its body showing that it was unhappy with Simon's attitude.

"Haha, I never had any doubts about your ability. It's just that I didn't think it would be fixed so soon. Hasn't it only been a month since I gave you that item?"...

"Well, you already had all the items I needed to fix it. Normally it takes more time just to gather the material needed to fix the artefact than to repair it. However, since you had all of them, all I needed to do was set up my instruments and let my abilities do the work" Prime explained before returning back to his work.

This craftsman that he brought from the auction was a little peculiar in that, there was never a time it stayed idle. It was constantly busy with inventing, and tinkering with new items.

Of course, Prime hadn't forgotten about the Resonancer. It was working on it side by side on the other projects.

Simon observed the Lumynar at work before taking his leave. Arriving back at the main floor, Simon called forth for all of the [Guardians] and his close subordinates on the Main floor.

After a few hours, all of them gathered at the main hall of the White Palace where he told them about his intentions to leave the dungeon for a while.

"Master, you are leaving? Where are you going?" Annette questioned with a concerned look on her face.

"Don't worry, I am going out into the outside world, instead I am going to the forbidden grounds to train" Simon answered with a smile. Now that he had encountered a wall in his training that could only be breached through efforts, he has no other option but to go out and seek a challenge where he can surpass his limits.

And what better place to break the limits of the body than the forbidden grounds that was fraught with dangers at every turn?

It had been a while since Simon last cleared the fourth trial, probably around two years. At that time, he was forced to go into the forbidden grounds as there was no other place for him to run from his enemies at that time.

However, this time he chose to dive inside the forbidden grounds on his own accord.

"Forbidden grounds?!" His subordinates exclaimed. They were aware of the forbidden grounds he spoke of.

"Yeah, I will be leaving the dungeon in your care for the time being. It shouldn't take me too long this time. Keep an eye on the Tower Town and the Seven Kings during this time. Although I'm sure they won't make a move soon, if you notice anything unusual, use this"

Simon spoke, taking out two intricately crafted long black plates the size of one hand from his [Inventory].

"These are?" Annette tilted her head.

"Echomir Plates, they are made of a special material and are enchanted with a wonderful property".

Just as everyone wondered what was so special about these plates, Simon gave them a demonstration. He took out a pen from his space ring and started writing something on one plate.

And to their astonishment, whatever he wrote, also appeared on another plate almost magically.

Seeing their surprised faces, Simon finally explained "When someone writes a message or symbol on one of the Echomir Plates, the inscription instantly appears on the surface of the other plate, no matter the distance between them. The magical connection that binds the plates defies the limitations of space, allowing for instantaneous communication between individuals who possess the plates".

Using this plate, even if Simon is away, he can somewhat communicate with his subordinates inside the dungeon.

The Echomir Plates was one of the few joke items that he had created back when working on the game that actually had some practical uses.

His subordinates understood what these plates were; however, they were still worried. "Master, is it possible for you to bring any of us with you?"

Simon glanced at their faces and felt their sincerity; nevertheless, he still shook his head. The forbidden grounds was dangerous but this is precisely why he was going there. He needed a place where he can challenge his limits and break the wall limiting his progress.

Even If he could bring them to the forbidden grounds, this whole ordeal would hold no meaning if he took the help of his subordinates.

"I see, since you have made up your mind, we will not stop you. However, make sure you are not being reckless and do not gamble with your lie again"

Irene stated trying to keep an indifferent expression. Though she was fooling no one, it was clear that she was concerned.

Simon smiled, hugging the beauty in his embrace. "Yeah" he nodded. After he declared his feeling for her, he no longer bothered to hide it from his subordinates. He would show his affection openly sometimes.

And of course, there would be few people wearing a teasing smile in the background while others burned in jealousy.

"Alright then, I will be going now" he had left sufficient instruction for his subordinates and enough safeguards in place inside the dungeon. As such, even if he was absent for some time, the dungeon should still be running fine.

Thinking so, Simon took out the Transit Rock from his [Inventory] that was the gateway to the forbidden grounds and crushed it under his hand.

Previously he had cleared the fourth trial, this time his goal was the fifth trial. Simon's vision wavered and he found himself falling into the long white tunnel. Soon after, his surroundings changed and he was transported to a different place.

As his vision cleared, he found himself in a dimly lit, underground chamber. The air was thick with an ancient, musty scent, and the soft glow of magical torches illuminated the worn stone walls covered in inscriptions and murals depicting scenes from long-forgotten times.

The atmosphere was eerie and the silence was punctuated only by the distant sound of dripping water.

"So this is the fifth trial huh?" Simon muttered observing his surroundings.

He walked around the chamber for a while and arrived before a huge looming door. The door was massive and had intricate runes and patterns carved onto it. Simon touched the door and spread his senses.

As he had guessed, he couldn't perceive anything beyond it. It was as if the door was blocking his senses.

Chapter 723- Fifth Trial

His senses couldn't breach through the door.

"How could the trails be so easy" If he wanted to know what was beyond the door, he would have to open and check it out himself. Simon exerted pressure and under his strength, the door creaked open revealing another huge chamber beyond it.

Just like the one he was transported to, this chamber was empty too. What was going on? Simon observed the place before moving on to open the door of this chamber.

Again, another chamber, similar to the previous two greeted him.

"Is the Fifth trial a maze?" Just as he was thinking that, a notification popped up in front of him.

<nulli> [You have entered the Murals of Mythos. Find the right door to exit the place. Note- For each wrong door you open, your level will be suppressed. Current level 560. Warning- Malgrum the Vile knows your position and is slowly approaching you. Only death awaits if he finds you, constantly move place and avoid staying in one chamber]. This... it hadn't even been more than a couple of minutes since he arrived here and he already received such an ominous message. Should he say as expected of the forbidden grounds?

His life was in danger, some unknown enemy called the Malgrum the Vile was lurking in the Murals of Mythos and was currently approaching him. If he did not move, he would die just as the notification said.

He needed to find the right door; however, if he opened the wrong door, his level would be suppressed every time. So what should he do?

[Warning- 3 Minutes left before Malgrum the Vile reaches the chamber you are in].

Dammit, he did not even have the time to ponder, he needed to move fast. The third chamber had three doors, if he discounted the one he came from he needed to choose the right door from the other two.

However, both the doors looked the same, even the runes and patterns on them were exactly similar.

[Warning- 2 minutes remaining before Malgrum reaches you].

"Curses, there is no time. I should first open some distance from Malgrum before thinking about the right door" Simon thought before randomly opening one of the doors and rushing inside.

[You have opened the wrong door, your level has been suppressed by ten].

So he opened the wrong door huh... talk about being unlucky. Well, Simon had already expected this would be so. As a result of opening the wrong door, he suffered a penalty, his level had gone down by ten.

Simon opened his status and saw that in the row where his level was shown, he saw (-10) beside his level 560. He could actually feel his overall strength going down. However, it didn't appear that his actual level had decreased or else, his level would be shown as 550 and not 560.

This meant that the penalty of the level suppression would only be effective in this underground maze and as long as he could leave this place, his level would return to normal.

"It's good that my actual level is not affected, however..." Simon's eyes shifted towards another window that displayed— [Warning- Malgrum the Vile found your position, 3 minutes before he reaches you].

Although he had opened some distance from the thing chasing him, why is it that even after changing the chamber he was in, he only gained an additional one minute?

Simon didn't have the time to cry about it, he needed to find the right door and exit the place. The fourth chamber had four doors including the one he came from. Aside from that fact, everything inside the chamber was the same.

The Murals, the carving and even the size of the hall, nothing seemed to be different.

"Crap, he is already here" Just as Simon was observing the chamber, the notification appeared in front of him, warning him about Malgrum who was just around the corner.

Cursing once again, Simon opened some distance praying that the next door he would open would be the right one. However, his luck was pretty shitty as every door he opened turned out to be the wrong one.

"Damn, this one turned out to be a dud too huh"

Simon complained arriving in the eighth chamber. He had gained a few precious minutes from Malgrum; however, his level was now suppressed by 50. Having one's level and strength suppressed, was a pretty uncomfortable feeling especially when knowing that there is a powerful enemy after him and that every wrong door he opened, reduced his chances of survival.

"This can't go on for long, I need to find a way" Simon clenched his fists and started studying and observing the doors. He needed to make the optimum use of the few precious minutes he saved up.

And so, as seconds ticked by, he continued to stare and observe each of the doors. The eighth chamber had eight doors, all of which were huge in size and had intricate runes and carving drawn on them.

After a while, Simon stepped back and collected his thoughts. From what he had observed up until this point on, the clue seemed to be in the paintings of the door.

Each of the doors had a different painting on them which changed every time he came to a new chamber. For example, one of the doors had a carving of a mighty being holding a powerful looking staff that was inlaid with three large gems.

Another door showed a serene garden with exotic flora and fauna, while yet another displayed a battle between celestial beings and shadowy demons.

Simon's eyes scanned the doors once more, his mind racing to decipher the hidden message behind the changing paintings when

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[Warning- Malgrum has found your position]... the notification arrived once again.

This Malgrum the vile was really persistent, even after he opened so many doors and created a distance, this thing was still able to detect him in no more than a few minutes.

"I can't let him catch me" The murals on the chamber depicted Malgrum to be a vile looking creature with hundreds of arms and a monstrous body. It was huge like a giant and possessed enough might to destroy numerous kingdoms and empires.

In the murals, it was depicted as a symbol of terror that brought disaster and calamity to the land. Uncountable kingdoms and beings perished under it until it was finally brought down by two warriors, one holding a shield and the other a sword.

They looked very much like the two mighty warriors he had encountered on the second floor.

Was the second trial somehow related to the fifth? Simon wondered. However, he didn't have the time to sit back and learn history, he only had three minutes left to get away from here.

In any case, it was clear from the murals that Malgrum was strong and only a being of the calibre of the two warriors can bring him down. Simon had a hunch that even the Finger of Ozymandias was no match against this creature, it was on a level that Simon couldn't trifle with.

Just like the notification had said, only death awaited him if he was caught, as such he needed to get away from here as soon as possible.

Simon hurriedly opened a couple more doors to create some distance, he only breathed a sigh of relief after arriving at the 13th chamber.

By now, the level suppression had become quite stronger and his level had fallen by (-100). That is to say, the strength he currently possessed was around level 460. Although his rank remained the same, it was by no means a good feeling.

Fortunately, he was able to create a precious couple of minutes. There was no second to spare, he need to find the clue to get out of here and clear the trial.

The Fifth Trial was definitely trying to hint at something, he needed to find the right door before his level was completely suppressed.

Simon had been thinking for a while, he had started the trial with a level of 560; however, right now he had already lost about a hundred levels. The feeling of getting weaker aside, he only had a limited number of levels.

What would happen once he ran out of level? What would happen to the penalty? Would he still be able to open the doors? If his level reached zero and he was supposedly unable to open any more doors, wouldn't he die once Maglrum caught up to him?

At that time, he wouldn't even have the power to even resist. A shiver ran down his spine just as those thoughts arrived to him. He thought that he had made ample preparation to tackle the forbidden grounds; however, it appeared that he still underestimated it.

The horrors here were truly worthy of the name Forbidden Grounds.

There was no time to waste, Simon started deciphering the murals and the engravings on the door.

"G..a..e... Gae... Gaelen the shield..." Simon frowned as he tried to read what these murals were trying to tell. However, it was clear that his [Language Comprehension] skill was far away from being able to completely decipher them.

At this moment he couldn't help but wish Lucine was here. If only he had her aid, then all of these complex runes and writing wouldn't have been a problem.

"There is no point in thinking about her, I need to decipher what little I can on my own" Simon glared at the murals with bloodshot eyes. His survival was at stake.

Chapter 724- Fifth Trial (2)

Simon tried to decipher the meaning behind the Murals and after a while, his breathing became composed and his mind cleared up as if entering a mysterious state. Unbeknownst to him, Simon's left eye started reacting at this moment.

Like a circuit pattern, the golden light spread across from the left eye and almost covered half of his body. The letters and runes that had once appeared meaningless now held clarity and purpose.

Each stroke seemed to convey a message, a narrative that had been waiting to be unveiled. The story began to take shape in Simon's mind, revealing a tale of valor and sacrifice.

In the murals, he saw two warriors depicted in vivid detail. Gaelen Sunguard, a figure with a stalwart stance, held a shield adorned with intricate patterns. The Shield of Oath, it was called a symbol of unwavering dedication and unyielding protection.

By his side stood Veridian Sunblade, a warrior of noble bearing, wielding the Sword of Dawn that radiated a warm and radiant light.

The story told of their quest, a journey to stop the relentless advance of Malgrum the Vile who the threw the entire realm in chaos and darkness.

As Simon continued to decipher the runes, the story unfolded further. The warriors had faced trials that tested not only their physical prowess, but their inner strength and convictions.

They encountered challenges that pushed them to their limits, forcing them to confront their own doubts and fears. Through the murals, Simon was able to learn about the epic confrontation between Gaelen, Veridian, and Malgrum.

The battle was fierce, the clash of light against evil, strength against malevolence. The warriors' determination and the power of their bond resonated with the very essence of the realm.

In a climactic moment, Gaelen raised his shield of oath, its radiant energy forming an impenetrable barrier against Malgrum's evil energy. Veridian's Sword of Dawn blazed with brilliance as he struck, his every movement infused with the light of dawn itself.

The battle reached its peak, the struggle of wills and power echoing through the ages. And in the end, it was Gaelen and Veridian who emerged victorious.

With the combined strength of their spirits and the power of their artifacts, they sealed away Malgrum's malevolent providence, halting his advance and preserving the realm from his darkness.

Simon's eyes widened as he absorbed the entirety of the story. For some reason, he was now able to fluidly read and understand the murals.

"Gaelen Sunguard and Veridian Sunblade... so these were the names of the two warriors".

He had met the statues of the two warriors back when he was clearing the second trial. At that time, he was very impressed by the powers and the little bit of history he learnt about the two brothers.

It also turned out that they had been the heroes who stood against Malgrum's threat. They had shown courage, sacrifice, and an unbreakable bond. It was too bad that one of the brothers fell to the evil side leading the Jury to make the two brothers confront each other.

With a deep breath, Simon stepped back from the murals. Now that the story was revealed to him, he felt like he got some clue as to how to proceed from here. His eyes shifted from the murals painted in the chamber and towards the doors.

He quickly scanned each of the doors and tried to decipher the hidden meaning behind the changing engravings on them. Thanks to the number of doors increasing with every chamber, there were now thirteen doors in total, each with a different engraving and runes, in front of him.

Well, to be exact there were twelve discounting the one he came here from. In any case, it was clear that each set of doors represented a different story, a unique narrative that held the key to his escape.

For example, one door showed a mighty figure sitting on a throne with a crown on his head. the figure in the engraving had a powerful gaze and exuded an authoritative aura. Another door showed a dragon, leveling a piece of land with its powerful breath.

While another showed a serene garden with exotic flora and fauna, a battle between celestial beings and shadowy demons, ancient battlegrounds, mysterious rituals, and otherworldly landscapes. Each image seemed to tell a story.

"I feel like there is more to these paintings than what meets the eye" His heart pounded as he recalled the murals within the chambers. The second trial and the fifth trial both recounted the tales of the two mighty warriors, it had to be related somehow.

As Simon observed the doors, he finally seemed to realise something.

"These engravings on the door, they are not some random painting but a scene from a story. All the doors depict a certain part of some story".

There was no mistaking it. Although it might look like he was opening wrong doors till now, it was not exactly the case. Simon had been keeping an eye on all the doors, their positions, the engraving and runes on them and even the chambers.

That is why, he could tell that each of the doors were definitely following a part of the story. If so then could it be that the doors were inviting him to step into those stories, to become a part of the narratives they depicted? Or could it be that the challenge lay in choosing the right story to follow?

<nulli>[Warning- Maglrum the vile has found your position. Two minutes remaining before he catches up to you]

Simon ignored the notification and placed all of his attention on the doors. Soon, one of the doors caught his interest. He approached that door and glanced deeply at the painting depicted on it.

A round table and numerous vague figures sitting around it. Although it was hard to make out the appearance of these people from the drawing, the atmosphere and engraving on the door made one feel a heavy suppression instinctively.

Below the round table, although barely noticeable were two figures, one holding a shield and one a sword. Further below them was a city with tall walls and numerous buildings.

The engravings on the door were a little strange in that it depicted a hierarchy. The round table, or more precisely the people sitting around the round table were at the top. Below them, were the two warriors and further down was the city.

The chain of command, that is what the painting was depicting.

"The two warriors in this door look a lot like the shield and sword warriors".

If he remembered correct, he had learned in the second trial that the two powerful warriors, Gealen and Viridian used to serve a Jury. Could it be that the round table was the jury who once made the two brothers kill each other?

<nulli>[Warning- Malgrum the Vile has found your position, 1 minute remaining before he catches up to you]

The second and the fifth trial, Gaelen and Viridian, the murals, the doors and the stories they followed. At this moment, Simon finally found the clue, the pieces finally clicked and he knew what the fifth trial was all about.

Without any hesitation, he opened that door and rushed in.

<nulli>[You opened the wrong door. Applying penalty, your level have been suppressed by -10].

Simon did not bother to think about the notification and kept on opening the doors that depicted a part of the story of the two warriors.

The Fifth Trial wanted the challengers to find the right door, so of course many would think that there was a right door among the options. However, Simon realised that wasn't the case.

There was no right door, more precisely the right door wasn't among the options. To exit from this place, one needed to find the right door and to do that, one needed to open a series of wrong doors.

That said, simply opening some random wrong doors won't do, as it would simply lead you to a dead end until your level is completely suppressed and you are no longer able to open any doors and can only wait for Malgrum to reach you.

To find the right door, one needed to follow a specific story from amongst the many stories the doors followed. The Fifth Trial wanted the challengers to realise that and follow the story that was depicted on the murals.

That is to say, follow the story of the Gaelen Sunguard and Viridian Sunblade.

<nulli>[You have opened the wrong door...]

<nulli> [You have opened the wrong door...] <nulli>[You have opened the wrong door...]  
<nulli>[You have opened the wrong door...] Simon continued to suffer the penalty and he could feel his strength growing weaker every time.

Nevertheless, he did not stop, the penalty couldn't scare him. He knew that his deductions were right and he continued to follow his instincts.

Soon, he reached the Twenty Third chamber, and by now his level was suppressed by (-200). Yet the look in Simon's face did not waver, he walked towards one of the many doors in the chamber and after confirming that it was the story he was following, he opened it without any hesitation.

To his surprise, as soon as he stepped into the Twenty Fourth chamber, the periodic notification that announced him opening the wrong doors, did not arrive this time.

Instead, another notification that told him that he was very close to clearing the trial, appeared before him.

[You have reached the Hall of Mythos. Defeat Malgrum's remnant to exit the trial].

Chapter 725- Re-Enact the Mythos: Simon, Gaelen, Veridian Vs Malgrum

It was as he had thought, following the story of the two mighty warriors was the right answer. Had he randomly opened the doors thinking one of them was the right one, he would have long run out of levels.

Thankfully, he had arrived at the Hall of the Mythos at last, now all that was needed was for him to defeat Malgrum to clear the trial.

That said, how was he supposed to defeat an entity that the trial warned him to avoid earlier as it meant certain death? The answer lay in the hall he was in.

Simon shifted his attention from the notification and glanced at the hall he was currently at. The place was enormous, its vastness resembling that of a coliseum or an ancient stadium.

The ceiling of the hall soared high above, disappearing into darkness, and the air carried a sense of anticipation and gravitas. The walls were lined with magical torches that emitted a gentle, flickering light, casting intricate shadows across the worn stone surfaces.

At the centre of the hall, Simon's gaze was drawn to two monumental statues. Carved with impeccable detail and precision, the statues stood as imposing sentinels on either side.

One depicted Gaelen Sunguard, his figure commanding and resolute, holding the shield of oath high above his head. The other depicted Veridian Sunblade, his stance noble and his Sword of Dawn pointed skyward.

The statues although looked like a lifeless stone; they emanated a palpable energy, an aura that seemed to echo the spirits of the two legendary warriors. It was as if their presence was etched into the very stone from which they were carved.

Looking at the layout of the hall, Simon couldn't help but be reminded of the time when he faced the Second Trial alongside Lucine and Denzel. The familiarity of the situation instantly made him realise what would occur next and what he needed to do to defeat the creature that was coming after him.

The story that he had followed led to the two warriors fighting and defeating the vile creature and now he must re-enact the past and defeat Malgrum himself.

That said, he did not need to fight Malgrum himself, even though the other party was just a remnant, it would simply be suicidal for him to face an opponent like that at his current level. Not to mention he was currently suffering from level penalty and his level was reduced by 200. There was no way he stood a chance.

But that was precisely why the statues were here. He might not stand a chance against the creature from the ancient times that brought calamity to the lands and wiped out countless kingdoms, but the statues can.

Simon had personally seen how powerful these statues were on the Second Trial not to mention the ones in front of him looked even more lifelike and powerful. If it was Gaelen and Veridian, they definitely stood a chance to defeat Malgrum.

With a deep breath, Simon stepped towards the statues. If the Fifth Trial resembled the Second, there definitely has to be that thing. Simon's eyes glanced towards the feet of the statues where he found a small shield and a sword silently hovering near each of the statues.

The shield and the sword was the device that controlled the statues. In the second trial, he used the shield device to control Gaelen Sungaurd to win against Viridian Sunblade. The presence of the devices meant that statues could be controlled.

Just like he had thought, the trial was telling him to re-enact the story from the long past, thus the name, Murals of Mythos.

With determined steps, Simon appeared in front of one of the statues and grabbed the device lying in wait for him. At that moment he heard another notification alerting him of the choice he made.

[You have chosen to wield the Blade of Dawn. You can now control the sword bearer, Veridian Sunblade. Since you have chosen the sword, the shield will disappear].

The device that Simon chose this time was the sword. It was different from the time in the Second Trial where he chose the shield. The stage, the statutes and even the intention of the trial might be the same in some aspects.

However, this was the Fifth Trial, he was not fighting against the other statue, but against an evil creature from the ancient times. What he needed right now was not the shield that could defend, but the blade that could attack and slay the entity that was after him.

Well, a large part of the reason why he chose the sword over the shield was because Simon himself used the sword. He was more adept at wielding it than the shield. His [Sword Mastery] skill had also evolved to become [Thousand Sword Mastery]. A skill that would be ranked Rare Class Ancient tier at the very least.

Simon observed the sword and got himself familiar with it. It was made of some peculiar material, had a sleek design, a long sword handle and the insignia of the sun.

Although it felt a little different than the Crimson and the Burnt Sword he was used to, Simon believed that it wouldn't take him long to get used to it.

<nulli>Swoosh... he started brandishing the sword, the blade made intricate and fine arcs across the air. Each move and slash had the deep understanding and skill that Simon held over the sword.

Just as he was practising with the sword and getting used to it, a notification appeared in front of his eyes.

<nulli>[Warning- Malgrun the Vile knows your position, 1 minute remaining before it reaches you]

Almost at the same time, another notification appeared before him.

<nulli>[The final part of the Fifth Trial will start now. The replica Blade of Dawn is activated. You are now able to use three skills of the legendary sword. Ut Videaris Victores]. The final part of the Fifth Trial was starting, and the two gigantic statues of Gaelen and Viridian started becoming active as they hummed as if alive.

In the midst of the tension that hung in the air, Simon's heart beat with a mixture of nerves and excitement. He tightly clenched the sword in his hand as a droplet of sweat trickled down his face.

The battle next would decide his fate, whether he would clear the Fifth Trial or die trying. It would be a lie to say that he wasn't nervous; however, more than that, the emotion that he was feeling right now, the feeling that was overflowing within was... excitement.

The exhilaration that he felt when challenging an opponent that was far stronger than him. If you think about it, he was about to face an opponent from the ancient times. A creature that spread terror and calamity all over the land.

The unknown level of power it possessed, the abilities it could unleash — all of it added to the exhilaration that surged through Simon's veins. He was about to confront an adversary who hailed from an era long past, a time of legends and myths.

<nulli>[Warning- Malgrum the Vile has found your position. It is about to appear]

And finally, the warning from the notification came in big bold red letters.

A sudden ominous chill enveloped the place and the entire chamber seemed to hold its breath as the tension reached its peak. And then, as if answering Simon's own anticipation, the door across from him shuddered.

The massive entrance trembled on its hinges, the sound of metal scraping against stone filling the air. It was time. With every nerve on edge, Simon's gaze remained fixed on the door as it slowly swung open.

As the door parted, the colossal form of Malgrum emerged. Simon's eyes widened at the sight before him.

The creature's sheer size defied comprehension, it had hundreds of limbs and a body that was grotesque and distorted. It resembled a monstrous being from the abyss, chains coiled around its

limbs and an aura of darkness enveloping its form. Cancers and growths marred its flesh, giving it an otherworldly and abhorrent appearance.

As if a sudden epiphany hit him at this moment, Simon finally realised why all the doors here were so huge. He had wondered about it ever since the start of the fifth trial. Now the answer presented itself in front of him.

It made sense now that he thought about it, the doors were huge because they were made with Malgrum in mind.

The hideous appearance of the creature that somewhat resembled hecatoncheires was one thing, but what captured Simon's attention the most was the door it dragged behind it.

The door was immense, its size seemingly enough to just fit through the chamber's entrance. Chains extended from the door and wrapped around Malgrum's body, binding it like a prisoner.

The door's surface was etched with intricate runes and symbols, pulsating with an eerie energy. It was as if the door held some hidden power, some connection to the entity itself.

As Malgrum moved, the door emitted an ominous resonance, as if it held secrets long forgotten by time. The moment Simon saw the door, the creature was dragging behind, he instinctively understood that it was the exit he was looking for.

The door that the trial told him to find, there was no doubt about it, it was the right door.

"Haha" A laugh bubbled up from deep within Simon, a mixture of amusement and astonishment.

Chapter 726- Re-Enact The Mythos: Simon, Gaelen, Veridian Vs Malgrum (2)

Simon smacked his face and gave a bellowing laughter. Why wouldn't laugh? It appeared that the trial was designed in a way for the challengers to find the right door sooner or later.

Regardless of the fact that they were able to solve the puzzle or not, Malgrum the Vile would surely find them and at that time, the door he was dragging would also appear in front of them.

It was just that at that time, the challenger would have no means of resistance, their only fate would be to die. Had Simon also failed to solve the puzzle, his fate would have been the same.

However, he solved the murals and followed the Mythos to reach the hall that had the answer to defeat the creature in front of him.

It was a strange sentiment, to find excitement in the face of danger and the unknown. But for Simon, this challenge had ignited a fire within him, a burning curiosity to conquer the obstacles that lay before him.

His heart pounded in his chest as he faced the monstrous entity before him. The anticipation, the thrill, and the realization that he was about to engage in a battle that could very well determine his fate — all of it surged through him like a torrent.

And then, in that split moment, as Malgrum's eyes locked onto Simon's, the world seemed to hold its breath. The air was charged with energy, signalling the start of the battle.

<nulli><nullb>GWRAOOOARR... A thunderous roar erupted from the creature as it extended its numerous hands to squash Simon beneath its weight. Though before those massive appendages could find their mark, the statue of Gaelen Sunguard, brought to life by the trial's magic, stepped in to shield Simon from the impending assault.

The statue's immense shield absorbed the blows, each impact sending shockwaves through the chamber. Simultaneously, the statue of Viridian Sunblade hummed to life, its hand extending toward Simon.

Almost at the same time, the sword he held in his hand trembled, resonating with the sword that the statue wielded. It was a connection that only one who held the Sword of Dawn could understand.

The sword's vibrations urged Simon forward, and in that moment, instinct guided his actions. With a leap, Simon vaulted onto the palm of the Viridian statue and perched himself upon its shoulder, matching the eye level with his enemy.

Now that he was fighting alongside Viridian Sunblade, he no longer felt like an ant compared to the massive size of Malgrum the Vile.

<nulli><nullb>GWRAOOOARR...

The chamber shook as the creature gave an enraged roar at its former adversaries.

<nullb> BANG... BANG... BANG... its attacks became more frantic and numerous, pushing Gaelen's statue until it almost hit the wall. Although Gaelen was able to hold his own, he alone won't be able to handle the creature, Simon or more precisely Veridian also needed to join the battle.

"Let's do this" With a battle cry, the two of them rushed towards Malgrum and joined the battle.

Should he say as expected of Veridian? Even though it was just the statue of the mighty warrior from the ancient times it still held some of Viridian's powers. His movements were precise, swift and powerful.

As the sword danced in his hand, Simon felt like anything was possible at this moment. And so within the massive hall of the Fifth Trial, a cataclysmic battle unfolded. The colossal statues of Gaelen and Veridian clashed with the monstrous Malgrum, each blow resonating like a thunderclap.

Simon's focus was unyielding as he guided the movements of the Viridian statue. He felt a rush of exhilaration coursing through his veins, the clash of metal against flesh merging into a symphony of battle that consumed his senses.

<nullb>BANG... BANG... as the barrage of attacks came from Malgrum each blow powerful enough to easily squash a level 500 being, the Gaelen statue held its ground. Its shield became a barrier between Simon and the monstrous entity.

Every strike reverberated through the air, yet the statue remained resolute, a guardian of ancient valour. However, Malgrum possessed numerous limbs, it wasn't possible to stop all of them.

That was where he and Viridian came in. The statue of the mighty sword bearer, it was a vessel of offence. It moved with an uncanny grace, its steps nimble and agile.

As if responding to Simon's thoughts, it evaded Malgrum's sweeping strikes with an otherworldly fluidity and counteracted by mirroring all of his movements down to the very last detail.

Looking at them, it wouldn't look like the statue was being controlled by Simon, instead, it was as if they were two halves of a single whole. The statue seamlessly followed his movements as if it

possessed a sentience of its own, responding to the rhythm of battle with a precision that defied explanation.

Thanks to that, Simon was able to release numerous sword slashes to cut down the many limbs of the creature and put pressure on it.

It needs to be mentioned that the opponent, Malgrum the Vile possessed a tough hide that was comparable to the scales of an Adult Dragon or the Finger of Ozymandias. This gave the creature an extremely high defence and made it exceedingly difficult to damage it.

The only reason why Simon was able to hurt Malgrum was because Viridian was the one performing the sword slash. If it was just him, forget about being able to defeat it, even if Simon used up all the cards in his arsenal he doubted that he would be able to injure it much.

As the battle intensified, Simon commanded Viridian to unleash a [Wide Horizontal Slash] followed by a [Cross Strike].

The statue's movements mimicked his own, and together they unleashed a rapid barrage of sword slashes that cleaved through Malgrum's limbs. However, how could it be so easy to defeat a creature from the ancient times that once had thrown the entire realm into chaos?

The creature's resilience defied their efforts, and it retaliated with an onslaught of its own. With a speed that belied its massive form, Malgrum regenerated its lost appendages and lashed out with newfound ferocity.

The hall shook as their attacks collided, a symphony of destruction that resonated throughout the chamber.

The clash continued, the hall bore the scars of their conflict, its once-grand architecture now reduced to rubble and ruin. Debris scattered like stars across the firmament, and crisscrossing cracks ran everywhere, a testament to the raw power of the ongoing battle.

Amidst the chaos, an error in judgement cost Simon dearly. A powerful blow from Malgrum struck the Veridian statue, but Simon felt the impact as if it were his own body. The force of the strike sent him and the statue hurtling across the hall as they crashed into the walls with a powerful momentum.

The taste of iron filled Simon's mouth as blood spilled from his lips. Although it was the statue that received the blow, Simon felt as if he was the one who bore the brunt of the damage.

He puked out a few mouthful of blood and commanded the Veridian statue to stand back up. When he looked back at his status, he saw that his HP had plummeted. A single attack from Malgrum had shaved half of his HP.

Wouldn't he die if suffered another blow like that?

The trials up until now weren't this extreme, they allowed him to make some mistakes. However, starting from the fifth trial, Simon realised that even making a small mistake from this point on would cost him dearly.

The forbidden grounds wouldn't be as forgiving as before. He wouldn't be as lucky as to survive the next time he made a mistake like that.

Although he was prepared and knew that his life was at stake here, the blow this time really drove this point home.

Simon hurriedly willed the statue to stand up and join the battle. However, at this moment, the movements of the creature became a little erratic.

Malgrum's limbs shifted, giving way for his hideous visage to surface. A light shined from its open maw and the next thing he knew, a torrent of energy surged forth and a blast of devastation that erupted like a tempest.

The destructive force engulfed the space before him, obliterating everything in its path. The hall shuddered, stone and debris reduced to nought but dust.

As the smoke and chaos filled the hall, Simon's heart suddenly seized. Amidst the clouds of dust, he could see that light shine once again, but this time it was... aimed towards him.

All sounds suddenly disappeared as the next blast was fired towards the statue he stood upon. At this moment, his instincts screamed that death was imminent.

But at that moment, Gaelen leaped forward, its immense form interposing between Simon and the onslaught.

The Shield of Oath hummed, brilliant rays of light manifested out of it and created a barrier, a radiant defence that absorbed the brunt of the Blast from Malgrum.

These Legendary artefacts, even if they were just replicas, they still possessed a part of the power of the original. As he looked at the barrier erected by the other statue, Simon was reminded of the notification that he had received at the start of the battle.

<nulli>[The final part of the Fifth Trial will start now. The replica Blade of Dawn is activated. You are now able to use three skills of the legendary sword. Ut Videaris Victores]. If he was not wrong, that should be one of the skills of the legendary shield.

#### Chapter 727- Luminous Judgement

In that case, Simon took a deep breath and allowed his skill [Thousand Sword Mastery] to communicate with the sword. At that moment, the sword became like an extension of his and he could clearly see and feel three distinct skills rested within it, waiting to be harnessed.

Across the battlefield, smoke and sparks erupted from Malgrum, after it fired the second blast and for a second there it looked like its overall power had decreased.

Could it be... A realization dawned upon him. This was the opening he was waiting for. Smoke and sparks erupting from Malgrum was a telltale sign that the creature couldn't unleash that kind of destructive power continuously. Doing so, would render it immobile for a while.

Without wasting a single second, Simon tapped into the power of the sword. Gathering his energy, he charged the sword with the essence of the sun. The blade blazed with radiant energy as he unleashed the first skill, Solar Flare Strike.

<nulli>[Solar Flare Strike]: Unleashes a devastating sword swing that releases a blinding burst of solar energy upon impact, searing and staggering enemies caught in its range.

Simon gave a resounding battle cry and swung the Sword of Dawn, releasing a blinding burst of solar energy upon impact. The strike cleaved through the air with unparalleled force, searing and scorching Malgrum as it made contact.

<nullb><nulli>GWROAARRRR... The creature gave an agonising cry for the first time since the start of the battle and thrashed around. A deep gash marred its tough hide, revealing the grotesque sight of its internal organs.

Seeing this scene, Simon's eyes shined with excitement. "So powerful!!!" The Sword of Dawn was not regarded as a legendary sword for no reason. A single skill from it was powerful enough to violently distort space. What would happen if he used the other two skills?

And this was just the replica, how powerful was the original sword? Simon couldn't help but yearn to possess a sword like this. However, it was too bad that the sword had traces of divine magic bestowed on it.

If not because of the trial, he might not even be able to hold it without being repelled. Putting those thoughts aside, the attack earlier had shown him a way. He could finally see the signs of victory.

Since that was the case, Simon pressed on with newfound fervour, his attacks relentless. He didn't allow the creature a single moment to recover.

The Sword of Dawn blazed with the brilliance of the sun, cleaving through one of Malgrum's limbs after another. The limbs that were cut down, still had the flames of sun and thus couldn't regenerate.

With Veridian Sunblade as his trusted partner, Simon orchestrated a complex choreography of battle. The Sword of Dawn danced across the air, its radiant blade made beautiful arcs across the air, wounding and injuring the creature.

Malgrum's agonising cry echoed like a symphony of suffering and the prelude to victory. However, the battle was far from over. Malgrum's resilience was beyond Simon's wildest dreams, and the extent of its power was something that he had yet to see.

The creature that once struck terror into the hearts of many, a creature from ancient times that had plunged realms into chaos, stood before him in all of its grotesque glory. The very embodiment of fear, whose malevolent presence sent a shiver down one's spine, revealed its ugliest fangs at this moment.

An unsettling atmosphere suddenly engulfed the hall and in front of Simon's astonished eyes, an unusual phenomenon unfolded. The many tumours that protruded from Malgrum's body began to detach, each forming into its own hideous creature.

The sight was akin to a birth of horrors, these newly formed entities swarming the vicinity, lurching and crawling with an ominous energy. The battlefield became a nightmarish scene as they advanced, adding another layer of chaos to the already intense combat.

Simon's heart pounded seeing these horrors being born one after another right before his eyes. He finally understood the extent of devastation and terror it brought to the lands in the ancient times and why numerous civilisations perished under it.

After all, if it could produce offspring like that, it was no wonder it became an embodiment of fear and took the two mighty warriors several days and nights to bring it down.

These tumorous horrors might look tiny but that was only because he was standing on the shoulders of a seventy two feet tall statue. Individually, each of these horrors were around seven to ten meters tall. What's more, they resembled their parent in appearance and were all above level 700.

A realm that was considered a catastrophe in this day and era and the creature produced dozens of them just like that.

"No wonder the trial said that only death awaited me if I got caught by Maglrum. It turned out that even its offspring is this strong, so how powerful it itself was?"

Although the [Appraisal] was unable to display anything about Malgrum due to the level difference, that in itself told much about the creature. What's more shocking was that this was just a remnant, how strong was the actual creature from the ancient times?

"Haha, there was no way I would have stood a chance against this on my own" Simon laughed.

He thought that he had seen the vastness of the world during the Auction and Hexennacht. However, he couldn't be any more wrong. The mighty Demon Dukes who once seemed almost invincible to him before, were just a bunch of children playing kings in the absence of the mighty.

The actual kings were those lurking in the shadows without bothering to show their faces in the open, the ones that have survived through the ancient times.

Malgrum in front of him was the proof. The ancient creature and the horrors it produced, a lineup like that could no doubt drive even the bravest warriors to madness.

However, in front of such a challenge, Simon laughed as exhilaration coursed through his body. His mind focused on the battle at hand. His blade danced and weaved, each strike aimed at exploiting the vulnerabilities he'd discovered.

He knew that even with the Sword of Dawn's power, victory wasn't guaranteed. Malgrum remained a formidable foe, and its grotesque offspring only added to the complexity of the battle.

Every moment was a struggle, a test of endurance and skill against an ancient terror. And so as the battle raged on, the hall became the battleground from the ancient times. The legends of the two warriors who stood against the terror known as Malgrum, was being re-enacted inside the halls of the fifth trail.

Deep cracks spread like abyss, spread everywhere, space collapsed, laws distorted and huge debris fell down from the ceiling. In front of this titanic clash that unfolded in a crescendo of unparalleled power, the Hall was no longer able to contain their might.

Soon the walls of the hall disappeared revealing a dark black abyss behind. Anything that fell there would disappear forever or would wander into the unknown. Just a look at it was enough to give one the chills.

Simon made sure not to fall into those cracks.

As Malgrum's attacks became even more fierce, he called upon the second skill resting within the sword [Luminous Parry]. The skill allows the wielder to create a defensive barrier of light with a swing of the sword, effectively nullifying incoming magical attacks and projectiles.

Using the [Luminous Parry], Simon seamlessly defeated the attacks from the main body and counter attacked using his sword skills and [Solar Flare Strike].

As for the tumorous horrors, Gaelen took care of them. Using its Shield of Oath, it diverted almost eight per cent of oncoming attacks on him, becoming an unparalleled shield in this battle of mythos.

All deadly onslaught rained on him yet the shield bearer who carried the portion of the will of the original warrior, remained firm and unyielding.

"Yeah, we can't let Gaelen outshine us" Standing on its shoulder, Simon sensed the emotions coming out of the statue.

Gaelen and Veridian were both mighty warriors, brothers and rivals in their own right. The intensity of their competition was mirrored in the fierce battle that unfolded before Simon's eyes.

Neither would be content with being outshone by the other, and that sentiment was deeply ingrained in the actions of the statues. As such, responding to the emotions and sentiment coming from the Veridian statue, Simon too gave his best.

In the heat of the moment, as the clash reached its peak, The statue of Veridian and Simon melded into one as their movements synchronized with an uncanny precision. With each swing of the blade, they cut through the tumorous horrors that assaulted them.

In tandem, the statue of Gaelen shielded Simon from attacks, becoming an unbreakable bastion against the tide of malevolence.

And then as if displaying the might of the original wielder of the shield of oath, the statue of Gaelen unleashed a skill that defied the limits of the battle. With unparalleled might, it charged forward like an all powering tidal wave, crashing into Malgrum with a force that echoed through the shattered remnants of the hall.

The collision opened a momentary window of vulnerability in the creature's defences.

NOW!! Seizing this chance, Simon and the statue of Veridian raised their swords high, channelling their combined energy into a single act.

The Sword of Dawn blazed with an ethereal light as they activated the last of its three skills, the most potent of them all — [Luminous Judgment].

Chapter 728- Mysterious Book

Luminous Judgment... One of the three ultimate skills, of the Sword of Dawn. It channels the might of the heavens to rain down divine energy upon a designated area, causing a cataclysmic explosion that obliterates foes and leaves a blazing aftermath.

As if the very heavens seemed to respond at his moment, divine energy converged above Malgrum forming a cataclysmic explosion of light and power. The ground shattered, air hummed, space collapsed and a blazing aura enveloped the hall.

In that sublime moment, time seemed to halt. The world of the forbidden ground was eclipsed by the brilliance of Luminous Judgment.

Inside the Hall of Mythos, the statues of Gaelen and Veridian became motionless, their role in this monumental battle fulfilled. Their forms fell to the ground, as if the will that had driven them had completed its purpose and faded away.

"Huff... Huff..." Simon huffed on the ground, his body aching and his heart racing. The aftermath of their battle left him battered but alive.

He gazed around, wondering if Malgrum had been defeated. The dust and debris began to settle, revealing a shattered landscape where the creature had stood. Half of the hall had been obliterated by the cataclysmic power of Luminous Judgment, leaving behind a chasm that seemed to defy the very fabric of reality.

The shattered remnants of the floor revealed a void that yawned open like a maw, hungrily consuming everything in its reach. The battle's aftermath was a scene of utter devastation, a testament to the titanic clash that occurred here.

In this cataclysmic clash, everything collapsed into the void, leaving only the door that Malgrum dragged with him behind.

Surprisingly, even after being in the AOE of the Luminous Judgement, the door and the area near it seemed to be fine.

"This should count as a win, right?" Simon muttered to himself, his voice tinged with fatigue and disbelief. Malgrum had disappeared, it was difficult to know whether they were obliterated by the skill or had fallen into the void.

Other than that, he was still out of sorts after activating that powerful sword skill.

[Congratulations, you have defeated Malgrum the vile and successfully re-enacted the past. Your actions and karma are being recorded. Calculating rewards... your rewards have been set. Please proceed through the door to collect your rewards].

As if answering his question, a notification appeared before him, alerting him of his triumph against the ancient force of terror. The complex runes on it started rotating, the door pulsed with a mysterious energy, and the chains around it came loose.

There was no doubt about it, this the door that the trial asked him to search for, the door that led to the exit.

That said, Simon didn't rush toward the teleport circle immediately. Instead, he took a moment to catch his breath and allow his expended energy to slowly replenish.

His body felt heavy, every muscle aching from the exertion. Though he hadn't utilized much of his mana reserves, the sheer physical and mental strain of the battle had taken its toll. The sheer magnitude of the battle, the unimaginable power that had surged through him, left him feeling dazed and disoriented.

He was still grappling with the reality of what had transpired, the fact that he had stood face to face with an entity that had once thrown realms into chaos. The awareness of his own vulnerability lingered in the back of his mind.

He couldn't shake off the realization that a single strike from those towering beings would have been enough to shatter him. The disparity in power between them and him was staggering, yet the very same power disparity ignited a genuine desire within him.

He yearned to reach the realm of power where Gaelen and Veridian, these powerful ancient warriors stood. To comprehend the world from their perspective, and to fathom the depths of their strength.

Everything that had transpired in the trials, seemed to have propelled his ambitions even further. True, the objective might seem farfetched and naive given that his current self was stuck at a wall he encountered at level 560.

However, it was precisely this realization that fueled his determination. Every challenge, every encounter, and every victory in the trials was a step towards breaking through that barrier.

He needed to bridge the gap in power, to close the chasm that currently separated him from the realm of legends.

As his breathing gradually steadied, Sword thoughts drifted to the sword in his grasp — the replica of the Sword of Dawn. A weapon that had played a pivotal role in the clash, channelling the essence of sun and sky.

Yet, as he examined it through his [Appraisal] skill, he sensed a faint, lingering trace of energy.

[Replica of the Legendary Sword of Dawn, Quest Item] There was no other information, it was as if the sword had expended all its might to aid him in that climactic confrontation, leaving behind only a husk of its former glory.

With a sigh, Simon realized that the sword had fulfilled its purpose, at least for the time being. It had aided him in overcoming an insurmountable challenge, and triumph over an ancient terror. He carefully sheathed the sword and stored it inside his inventory.

After a while, as he finished recovering somewhat, he made his way to the door. It was time he exited the fifth trial.

As he slowly opened the door, he was enveloped by a blinding light that wrapped around his form like a cocoon. The sensation was both exhilarating and disorienting, as if he was being transported through time and space.

When the light finally began to subside, Simon found himself standing in an awe-inspiring hall, illuminated by the radiance of countless treasures. The hall seemed to be filled with it, its walls lined with an assortment of riches that dazzled the eye.

Gleaming gemstones, sparkling crystals, and precious metals adorned every inch of the chamber. Ores of unimaginable quality were scattered in abundance —

"These are Mithril, Ehterealite, Chronium and even the elusive Admantium" As Simon checked the ores that were lying around his feet, his eyes couldn't help but widen in surprise. One could feel the excitement in his voice.

These precious ores that are extremely rare that even his dungeon was unable to produce at the current stage, this hall was overflowing with it. More than gold or any other treasures, what excited Simon the most were these ores.

It needs to be mentioned that at this current moment in time, what Simon required the most was not any treasure nor any training resources, he had his dungeon for that. What appealed to him most was the ores that he lacked.

He needed higher quality ores to manufacture the more powerful Andromedas and Warmachine. If you think about it, what's limiting the [WorkShop] from producing more powerful warrmachines were higher quality ores like the Admantiaum and Orihalcum.

Once his dungeon had a steady supply of them, Wisp could built a better and stronger manufacturing line. At that time, producing all kinds of fearsome Warmachine from that will no longer be a wishful thinking.

"As expected of the wealth of the forbidden grounds" Simon finally understood the words that Lucine said to him once, why so many people were attracted by the forbidden grounds. It's because the treasures it held that could change the destiny of a person.

The treasures here were just from the fifth trial, Simon couldn't help but wonder what kinds of rewards were waiting for him in the upcoming trials.

As he moved further into the hall, his gaze was drawn to a collection of artifacts that seemed to pulse with their own mystical energy. Grimoires with intricately carved covers exuded an aura of arcane knowledge, while weapons and armour of unparalleled craftsmanship shone with an eye catching light.

[A] tier artefacts, one looks was enough for Simon to tell that they were no ordinary items, they were the embodiment of ancient craftsmanship.

As Simon observed the arrays of treasure in the hall, his eyes were drawn to a raised dais at the centre of the hall. There, atop a velvet cushion, rested an object that seemed to radiate a subdued yet profound aura.

It was a book, its cover adorned with symbols that seemed to dance with hidden meaning. The mere sight of it stirred something within him, a curiosity and longing that he couldn't ignore.

"Is this book beckoning me?" Intrigued, Simon approached the book and gently lifted the book from its resting place. At that very instant, when his fingers touched the book, he felt a connection being established.

The feeling was mysterious and appeared for a fraction of a second. It was so short that most people would pass it off as nothing but passing feeling. However, Simon clearly felt that something within came from? After being unable to spot any change within him, he had changed the moment he held the book.

"Strange?!" He frowned unable to determine where that feeling came from? After being unable to spot any change within him, Simon shifted his attention back on the book.

As his fingers brushed against the cover, he felt that it was both ancient and mysterious. Unable to contain his wonder any longer, he opened the book, only to stand rooted in shock the next second.

The book he thought would have pages filled with intricate illustrations, arcane symbols, and writing, was... empty!!

Did it make sense?

Why was the book empty?

Wasn't it an ancient item, a treasure from the forbidden grounds?

How can it be empty?

For a second there, Simon felt like the being who created this forbidden ground and trials, was trolling him. But on second thought he shook his head thinking that it might not be the case.

Chapter 729- Sixth Trial, Snow Lands

Could it be that the actual treasure was hiding within its pages? Simon continued flipping the pages but all the pages were empty, there was nothing recorded inside the book.

Stunned, Simon used [Appraisal] but to his shock, his skill failed to work.

What did that mean?

It needs to be mentioned that after evolving from [Analysis] the [Appraisal] skill was much more powerful, he was even able to spy on the status of enemies he couldn't before. Yet the book in front of him couldn't be appraised.

It was not that the skill had failed but that the skill had been blocked. Simon had no doubt now, this book was definitely a treasure or else it wouldn't be able to block his skill.

That said, even though the book was a treasure its pages were empty. It did not dampen Simon's mood, on the contrary, he became even more interested. After all, it needs to be said that what Simon did not lack the most were treasures and artefacts.

His [Ga?????] option was more than sufficient enough to produce all kinds of treasures. In fact, Simon's space ring was full of so many artefacts. However, this book was clearly different, not even the appraisal can see through it.

Simon excitedly kept the book his [Inventory] and stored the mountains of treasure in the hall in his space ring. Once he returned to his dungeon, he would study the book and try to figure out its mysteries.

It only took him a couple of seconds to store everything there was inside the hall. After sweeping the treasury clean, Simon placed his attention on the teleport portal shining on the other end of the hall.

Now that he had cleared the fifth trial, he had two options on him. One was to continue the trial and go on to challenge the sixth trial which the teleportation portal led to. Or end the trail here and return using the Transit rock.

Simon mused for a moment. Before making his decision, he took out a black slate from his [Inventory]. It was clearly the Echomir Plates. Seeing that there were no writings and instructions on the black surface of the plates, Simon realised that there was no problem in the dungeon.

"In that case, I will proceed forward" he made up his mind. The goal behind coming to the forbidden grounds was to breach the wall that was stopping his growth.

After that last fight, Simon had new insights and enlightenment. He could already feel the wall collapsing. Just a little bit more.

Since that was the case, Simon proceeded towards the teleportation portal without any hesitation. His goal, the Sixth trial.

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On a snow covered mountain inside a cave, a group of adventurers numbering more than twenty, were currently recuperating around a campfire. Fire crackled and the aroma of roasted meat filled the cave.

Unlike the freezing temperature outside, the cave was much warmer. However, the heavy atmosphere inside betrayed that feeling.

"In the last week, we lost contact with Franco's team and now Euan's team isn't responding either. It is possible that..."

An adventurer opened his mouth to report with a heavy heart. However, he did not complete his sentence. Though even without him needing to, everyone present here knew what their fate was.

"Dammit... what kind of trial is this? This is simply sending us to our death, this is no trial" one of the adventurers who couldn't take it anymore, roared in grievance.

"Calm down Warren, you are too agitated. Leader is yet to speak, so how can you run your mouth like that and drop the morale of the team"

Another adventurer spoke out to calm the situation. However, it didn't look like the situation could be eased out so easily by him with a few words.

Warren who had been feeling aggrieved, turned towards the leader. Seeing the other party all silent, he couldn't help but grit his teeth.

"Say something leader, we have already lost so many brothers on our side. We started the sixth trial with more than a thousand people, now no more than fifty of us remain. If even Eaun's team doesn't return, there will be even less of us. Don't tell me leader that you still want to continue even after that?"

That's right, this group of adventurers were currently challenging the sixth trail of the forbidden grounds. However, the sixth trial far exceeded their imagination both in danger and difficulty and slowly chipped their morals and spirits.

As could be seen from the aura of despair that surrounded them. In this past month the number of people they lost to the sixth trail, far outnumbered the people they had lost while clearing the other five trails.

Of course, if you only see the number of people, it wouldn't seem like that. However, the adventurers who could reach here were all either powerhouses or elites of the elites in the outside world.

How can they be compared to the ordinary adventurers? In terms of value and strength, they were each dozens of times stronger than any level 400. Many of them were even above level 500.

Their vice leader was someone who was about to join the ranker and as for their leader, he was a bonafide ranker who had recently made a huge name for himself in the Mainlands. The current 7001th rank holder.

At the words of Warren, all the adventurers turned their attention towards the leader, waiting for his instruction. Donned in an impressive mythril armour from neck to toe and equipped with numerous [S] and [A] tier artefacts, the man emanated an awe inspiring and oppressive aura.

His blue eyes were like two gems shining with a brilliant radiance and his bearing was like that of an expert who had gone through numerous life and death situations. Even while facing the question and desperation of his comrades, the look of confidence did not falter from his face.

If Simon saw that face, he would immediately recognise it after all, this man was one of his enemies whom he hated to his very bone, the adventurer who had driven him into a corner more than two years ago in the kingdom, Godwin.

Godwin looked at his comrades and spoke with a composure that betrayed the predicament they were in.

"Eaun will not die and as for going back, it is not an option. We have stepped on countless lives to reach this stage, countless brothers have given their lives to help us. What face we will have if we back out now? For the sake of our brothers, we cannot back out even more. We will clear the sixth trial and return triumphantly. I give you my words".

Godwin clearly held a high position in their hearts. If he was saying so, then they definitely had a chance to clear it.

After his self assurance speech, the gloomy mood inside the cave was instantly swept away. Even Warren who was the most anxious, settled down a little. Godwin did not say anything more and allowed his fellow brother to recuperate their injuries.

"Raven you are here. Did you find Eaun and the other groups?" Godwin stood up from his seat and asked.

After a while, a group of people walked inside from the entrance of the cave. The person leading this group was also someone that Simon recognised.

"Raven you are here. Did you find Eaun and the other groups?" Godwin stood up from his seat and asked.

Raven nodded his head and pointed behind him. A group of people were being carried by his team on a stretcher. Blood seeped out from their bodies and seeped into the snow on the ground painting it red.

Although they were still breathing, they were still injured.

"Eaun!!" the adventurers inside the cave exclaimed. The group of people being carried on the stretcher were none other than Eaun and his team who had gone missing three days in the snow filled land of the sixth trial.

"Are you alright? Mages quickly cast healing spells"..

"Here take some potion"...

"Dammit, those monsters are too ferocious"...

"They are not only fierce, but their numbers are also clearly a problem"...

The adventurers immediately came to aid their brothers and became busy healing their injuries.

On the other side of the cave, near the entrance, Godwin stopped in his tracks and glanced at the vast white world outside. As far as the eye could see, it was all white outside. Treacherous mountains stretched into the horizon, arctic clouds covered the sky and snow storms filled their vision.

"The situation doesn't look good. This snowstorm is even more ferocious beyond those mountains and the snow reaches till your hips. It is impossible to fight there. On top of that the special restriction of this place that makes the snow slowly chip our strength and makes us weaker is like a nightmare. At this rate, the raid will end up in a failure"

Raven walked up to him and reported. Godwin did not turn around and simply continued to gaze at those mountains in the distance. It was as if his gaze could see through this endless white world.

"Did you find the Abomination?" he asked in a low voice.

"Un" Raven nodded his head "You were right, that thing is beyond those mountains. I went there to investigate personally. However, when I looked at that thing, all the blood in my body turned cold and I had goosebumps all over my body. Can we really defeat that thing? What are our chances?"

Godwin was silent for a while before taking out a pendant "Don't worry, we can win this. Once our level recovers, we will immediately besiege it".

Chapter 730- Snowsquall Drakewings

[You have arrived at the Open Space: Snowlands. You will be affected by the special restrictions of this place and slowly lose your level. Defeat Abomination before it wakes up. Time remaining- 3 days 23hrs]

[Warning- As it is an open space, there are other challengers. You can work with them or kill the Abomination alone. Rewards will be calculated based on individual actions. Total number of challengers at present- 44]

As soon as Simon arrived onto the sixth trial, a notification appeared in front of him. After reading the notification, he understood where he was and why there was only snow all around him. However even then...

"Why is it that even after I cleared the fifth trial, I'm faced with another situation where my level is suppressed again"

Simon was annoyed. Be it the fifth trial, or the sixth trail, they both suppressed his levels making him a little irritated. He thought that he would be able to fight to his heart's content after arriving at the sixth trail and break through the wall restricting his growth in one go.

However, who would have expected that his level to be suppressed in the sixth trial too. Simon could tell that the sixth trial was a little similar to the first trial at a glance in that it was the snow brushing past his body that was chipping away his strength.

Nevertheless, it was different. The sixth trail was called the snow lands and it had different rules and objectives. In this trial, he had to kill the Abomination to clear it. However, how could it be so easy to clear the sixth trial?

The trail from this point on would only get more dangerous where it would not be unusual to lose his life. He cannot make a single mistake. If it was him from a few years ago, he had no doubt that he would directly rush towards the enemy without considering anything else.

However, time and experience had changed him. He was much more level headed now. The first thing he did was not the search for the enemy but to search for a base. Any challenger who had passed the first trial would know that the special restriction that the trail warned about was the snow.

The more one is exposed to the falling snow, the faster your level goes down. A simple solution to this was to avoid the snow. That said, it was not possible to avoid it even if one uses magic. Be it if its fire magic, earth or any other magic. The special snow can bypass all magic.

The challengers can only rely on the natural terrain to hide from the snow. Simon had to find a shelter before anything else.

Fortunately, it wasn't too hard to find a shelter. He quickly spotted an empty cave and used it as a shelter to hide from the snow. After a while, his level returned back to normal. Simon aligned his back onto the cave walls and stared at the notification.

Although the sixth trial looked like all the other trials he had faced up until now in essence, there were certain things that made him frown. Firstly the time limit, it was four days. It was unknown how big the snowland was and where the enemy he needed to defeat was located.

As such, it was hard to say if the time limit was short or long. It might be his personal feeling or just some intuition, but Simon felt like the time limit was supposed to be more than four days but for some reason, it was only four now.

Secondly, the name of the enemy he needed to defeat sounded very familiar to him.

"Is this Abomination the same one" Simon muttered. The Abomination he had in mind was the terrifying experimental subject he had encountered in the third trial. He had seen the creature in the Historia and knew that it was very strong. So strong that the past him wouldn't even dare to challenge it.

There was a huge difference in levels between them at that time. And since the Historia wasn't complete, Simon did not know what happened of the powerful experimental subject and the children that were in that facility.

If this Abomination was the same Abomination he had witnessed in that facility, the battle would be quite tough. Other than that fact, there was also the thing about the Sixth trial being an open space and there being other challengers.

"44 huh... if it also includes me, that means there are 43 other challengers in the sixth trial. Does the Open Space mean that we will come into contact with each other if we want to defeat the enemy?"

It never occurred to Simon that there might be more challengers tackling the forbidden grounds than him. It was mainly because finding this place was very difficult, one needed the Coordinator to enter this space.

Aside from that fact, one also needed to be chosen by the Master of this place to enter the trails. He knew the last fact because Lucine had told him. she also told him that it was very difficult for a person to get the recognition of the master of the Forbidden Grounds.

The reason why Simon got it was because there were many unique things about him but he mainly believed it was due to the Fragments of Pride. If he was chosen because he possessed the Fragments of Pride, didn't it mean that the other party also had something unique within them.

Perhaps the holder of other fragments.

Simon did not believe that all the other 43 challengers were all chosen by the master of the space. After all, one can also bring their companion and subordinates with them inside the trial. It was something that he realised long ago.

As long as one had the transit crystal they can come inside the space of the forbidden grounds and enter the trial along with the challenger. Even Simon could bring his comrades with him.

If there were other challengers, naturally they could too. As for how to get the transit rocks, a bountiful of it is rewarded after every successful trial clearance.

The presence of the other challengers made the Sixth trial even more complex, with new variables. Other than that there was also the Finger of Ozymandias.

"Why now of all times? Could it be that there is something in this trial that is resonating with the Finger of Ozymandias?"

Ever since he appeared in the snow lands, he could feel like the curse energy inside the finger was going out of control. He could see the traces of curse energy coming out of his space ring. This was even after he subdued the finger using the [Dominitor Control] technique that Irene had taught him.

What was going on? Why were there so many unknown variables in the sixth trial?

Simon observed the Finger of Ozymandias for a long time and saw that there was no other reaction. Since that was the case, he could only put the thought in the back of his head and focus on how to deal with the current situation.

The Open Space made him uneasy, the other challengers had already arrived here before him. What if they defeat the abomination before him? Would it still count as him passing the trial?

Although the notification did say that the reward would be counted from individual actions, Simon had no intention of giving the other challengers a chance to defeat the Abomination.

Of course, if the challengers were more powerful than him or if the abomination was the abomination he had in mind, then it would be whole other thing. Or else, Simon wasn't going to back down easily. At the very least he had to be the one to deal the enemy the last hit.

Making his resolve, Simon dived out of the cave. Unfurling his large pair of demonic wings, he tore through the sky at a high speed and observed his surroundings.

Just as he had expected the place was extremely vast, and the entire land was covered in snow. White snow greeted his eyes everywhere he looked. It was very hard to make any sense of direction of where one was going in a place like this.

Even the [Mental Map] skill that Simon relied on for navigation was no use here. He wasn't surprised after all, it was the same case on the other trials too.

Then the visibility of the place was very low too. The snowlands was devastated by a huge snow storm all year round, even for Simon who was a Demon Earl, it was hard to see more than a couple dozen meters around him. So one could imagine would happen of other people.

"How early the other challengers came before me? Could it be that they already located the target?"

Anxious, Simon continued to fly at a high speed while maintaining a low altitude. His body was battered by the snow and his level dropped visibly. However, he continued his pace and surveyed his surroundings.

He was not worried about losing his way because he had placed an item back inside his cave. The item was called Harmony Stones and was another joke item that he had drawn from the [Ga?????]. This item had no other use than being used for navigation.

The only unique aspect of the Harmony stone is that one can break the pieces of the stone and the pieces will always locate the other pieces no matter the distance.