

Reincarnated Avatar; I got 2 SSS-Rank Unique Skills

#Chapter 191: Holiday [3] - Read Reincarnated Avatar; I got 2 SSS-Rank Unique Skills Chapter 191: Holiday [3]

Chapter 191: Holiday [3]

[Paladin Avatar, Crimson Saint has logged into the game!]

[Paladin Avatar, Dain Ironvalor has logged into the game!]

[Elementalist Avatar, Captain Batman has logged into the game!]

[Blademaster Avatar, Reckless Storm has logged into the game!]

[...]

[...]

The sun was still rising over Miami when the makeshift gaming booth inside Echelon's villa flared to life.

LED strips bathed the room in ambient blue, towering curved monitors hummed softly, while cables were tucked neatly. Drinks and snacks lined the side counters like provisions for a long voyage.

It wasn't a gaming booth anymore. It was a command center.

A war table. A digital throne room for returning kings. Well, if shameless old friends could be called returning kings.

And every seat was taken.

The all-star squad was assembled, a motley mix of Echelon veterans and ex legends of the English Pro Alliance now part of the larger family.

Noah sat dead center, silent, calculating, and utterly calm. Gabriel lounged to the side, already sipping a drink, sunglasses still on indoors. Jonathan was mid-rant, berating his pet Summon for being too fat for tight hallways.

Ben adjusted the cooling fans under his chair even as he also logged into the game with his Avatar. "Hope this monastery's holy enough to forgive our sins from Patch 5.8".

Caleb smirked, throwing a glance at his old friend. "The only sin here is you thinking those elemental macros still work".

"Let's just start," Aria groaned, cracking her knuckles. "The trash talk is more outdated than Gabriel's Warlock build".

"I mean, in this modern day and age, who still trash talks?"

"Me". Benjamin raised a hand.

Aria groaned and glared at him.

"My Warlock build is a classic," Gabriel didn't forget her comment though as he fired back at Aria. Not Phoenix Rising's Gabriel, rather, the retired Gabriel, Nightfall's first team captain.

Aria stared at him. Gabriel stared back without shrinking; he grinned. "I mean, it won tournaments when your Blademaster was still button-mashing in bronze".

Aria smiled. "Really?"

"Of course".

Before she could retort, Nightingale's voice echoed from the far corner, calm and amused. "Don't die in the loading screen, gentlemen".

They gave each other a look and then, they focused on their screens.

~~~~~

[WARNING! You have entered an SSS-Rank Dungeon!]

[Location: Grand Monastery of Aetheryos – Outer Courtyard]

~~~~~

BZZZ!

The Avatars entered the dungeon at the same time.

As soon as they entered the dungeon, they switched without a moment of hesitation, shedding their lighthearted demeanor and switching to battle mode instantly.

The team spawned in a circle, surrounded by white stone steps and towering archways. Everything shimmered with divine energy.

Gold-accented mosaics covered the courtyard floor, each depicting long-forgotten battles, angels and avatars locked in celestial struggle.

The silence was sacred. Reverent. Holy.

Then, Jonathan sneezed and triggered a rune trap.

Silence.

And just like that, the seriousness that they managed to cultivate after entering inside the SSS-Rank dungeon disappeared.

'Uh oh'.

A beam of celestial fire roared down from the sky, scorching Crimson Saint's HP bar to 13% in an instant!

"Yo!" He exclaimed, shouting. "It's too early for divine judgement!"

"You triggered a Glyph of Contrition," Caleb said dryly. "Maybe the monastery didn't like your fashion sense".

"Your existence is the trap," Aria added.

They pushed forward, laughing, bickering, and occasionally stopping to gawk at the map design. Ahead stood the gates of the Monastic Courtyard, carved with shimmering words: Only silence passes through.

And then, they had their first encounter in the SSS-Ranked dungeon.

The gates ahead of them opened.

There, a dozen monk-like figures awaited them; hooded, faceless, levitating inches off the ground. When the players stepped into the zone, the monks raised their hands in unison and began to chant.

Soft and harmonic at first.

Then it escalated.

The monks moved as one, attacking to the rhythm of the divine chorus. It was like fighting music itself, a literally crazy design. Their abilities were choreographed; wave-based AOE attacks, echo bursts, and reflection shields.

"Interrupt the altos!" Caleb barked. "Jonathan, silence the bass line!"

"On it!"

As soon as the danger came, the group reacted seamlessly.

Yes, they were shameless veterans of the English Pro Alliance who decided to raid an SSS-Rank dungeon as the venue of their reunion party.

Yes, they were unhinged without a single shred of shame.

But, they were also masters, veterans of the revolutionary video game called Warstar. Most of them were retired, but they played Warstar for a living at the very highest level for years. And till today, they still played the game for fun.

In England's Warstar esports scene, they were the best of the best.

And now, faced against a threat in the SSS-Rank dungeon, they didn't even need anybody to lead them. They reacted seamlessly, wordlessly dividing duties among themselves with their class composition as the basis.

Healers fell back, protected by disruption classes like Psychics and at least one defensive class, a Paladin.

The other Paladins all charged forward, acting as the tank.

As for the close range DBS classes? The Blademasters, Combat Mages? They all surged forward after the Paladins, ready to attack after they stemmed the momentum of the sinking monks.

As for the AOE attack classes? The Elementarists, Gunners, Launchers, they stayed in the middle of the makeshift formation, already unleashing hell on the poor monks protecting the monastery.

Gabriel's Warlock unleashed an ancient pro level combo; Void Chime + Dissonant Pulse, interrupting three monks at once.

At the same time, Aria's Blademaster surged ahead in a blur, weaving through harmonic shockwaves, her blades singing louder than the enemy choir.

Shwing!

In her hand, the Blades of Aamon slashed like death reapers.

"Still got it," she muttered, excitement gleaming in her eyes behind her monitor as her left hand flew across the surface of her keyboard.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Beside her, Ben's fingers also danced across his keyboard and in the game, his Avatar launched a fiery glyph skyward.

"Synchronized slaughter! Let's go!"

In two minutes, the monks were down.

The battlefield fell quiet again, save for their laughter.

"I thought that mechanic was gonna break us," Jonathan admitted with a chuckle.

Noah smirked. "It tried".

In this dungeon, he didn't even need to do anything special.

This was because he was raiding the dungeon with special players. Every one of them performed their roles to perfection, making it one of the simplest raids ever to him for now even though it was a bonafide SSS-Rank 20-man dungeon.

It was like talking a walk down a park.

As they crossed into the inner sanctum of the monastery, the music dulled. The architecture turned dark, with shifting murals and floating candles lighting the way. Then came the voice.

"Unworthy echoes disturb the silence... you shall not reach the altar".

As soon as the voice reverberated, a phenomenon followed.

Suddenly, a gust of divine wind blew out every candle at once. Darkness swept over the party's screen.

"Finally," Gabriel said. "A boss with some manners".

His words barely died down when the portal flared with divine light, and then they were in.

The Grand Monastery of Aetheryos did not greet intruders with monsters, but with silence not the absence of sound, but a heavy, choking stillness that pressed into the soul.

The moment the twenty man squad stepped through, they felt it. A quiet so oppressive it bordered on violent.

Marble towers twisted like ivory spires into a storm-filled sky, fractured stained glass windows depicting forgotten saints and slain gods. The wind didn't blow, the dust didn't shift.

The monastery had not been disturbed for centuries... until now.

Nightingale was not part of the raid party, but having followed his players on their vacation, he was like a commentator in this raid.

At least, that way, he would be joining in the fun.

His voice came through party chat, low and grim.

"Don't let your guard down. The bosses here don't roar, they whisper".

Jonathan sighed. "Noah tell me again, how on earth did you get Nightingale to become the boss of your team?"

"I almost feel so bad. I mean, come on, my boss would rather visit a pool with his concubines than spend a minute of his time watching us raiding a dungeon".

Noah grinned. "Jonathan, nothing personal but when you're good, good things naturally come to you".

"Says the guy that was forced into retirement". He laughed. "I mean, we're the same age but my boss have never even told me about retirement".

"Maybe you're the one who's not good enough".

Noah smiled. "He just doesn't want to hurt your feelings".

Jonathan laughed again. "Ouch..., good one there".

Noah laughed.

Their team, an elite formation of legendary players, former pros, and battle-hardened lunatics spread out in a new formation as soon as they passed through the portal.

This time, Noah took point, as always. Aria stalked beside him, silent and deadly. Caleb's summoned arcane warden hovered just behind them, humming with kinetic energy.

Jonathan already forgot Noah as he traded jokes with Benjamin in whispers.

They advanced through the Hall of Hollow Sermons, a corridor lined with statues of hooded priests. Their eyes bled obsidian.

"I don't like this," Genevieve muttered. "I think something's watching".

As if on cue, the statues turned.

Chapter 192: Holiday [4]

"I don't like this," Genevieve muttered. "I think something's watching".

Genevieve barely finished saying this when the situation changed.

'It can't be that cliché, right?' Noah was stunned.

But yes, it was. The statues turned.

And then, from every alcove, the Preachers of Silence stepped forward; ghostly monks with no mouths, wielding censers that dripped with shadowflame. No battle cry, no warning, rather just instant chaos.

BZZZ!

Flames surged. But they barely did when Aria vanished, already blurring into action to intercept the closest Priests.

Benjamin's staff spun as he erected barriers, shielding half the team.

At the same time, Dain Ironvalor also already moved as with a bellow, his great shield crashed into the first Preacher with divine fury.

As for Noah? In his grasp, Aetherforge whistled through the air, the SSS-Rank weapon shattering a statue mid-incantation.

Motionless statues that were seemingly harmless suddenly moving, turning out to be the enemies, this was the oldest of cliché in video games. And yet, that was exactly what happened in this SSS-Rank dungeon raid. So, all the participants in the dungeon raid knew the right move to make immediately.

Even if it wasn't such a cliché, every single one of them were pro players or were once pro players. Their reflexes in-game were unmatched.

This was why they erupted, moving at the same time and dealing with the situation that should have been an obliterating disaster against any other team.

None of them suffered any damage from the ambush, not to talk of dying.

And they were already adjusting to better react to the situation.

"Pull left! Left flank is collapsing!" Jonathan shouted, Crimson Saint moving while hurling knives, an Assassin skill as the darkness pressed in.

But it wasn't the monks that scared them, they were able to deal with the monks. Afterall, they were dungeon monsters like they were used too.

What scared them though was the prayers. A crazy algorithm of the SSS-Rank dungeon; a whisper threading through their minds, growing louder.

"Aetheryos is watching".

"Your sins are not forgiven".

"Repent. Repent. Repent".

Players began to falter, literally because their user interface began to glitch.

Caleb cursed and rewrote his summon scripts mid-fight simply because the meaning of specific keyboard inputs were influenced, overturned, reversed, some even outright deleted by the user interface glitch.

And it was not just that, it was even deeper, more insidious and deadly. Two old-timers got mind-fractured by the psychic barrage and their Avatars logged off mid-raid!

A dungeon that force-logs an Avatar out of the game..., well, that one was surely a first in the experience of these Warstar veterans.

There was no second chance for them though because by logging out mid-raid, they quit this specific lobby, making it impossible for them to rejoin the team in the future.

Despite all these, the players were not rattled though. This was because they knew that no matter how broken the hazards in a dungeon is, Warstar is always fair. There must be something to escape this situation.

Noah narrowed his eyes. "Turn your log out speed setting to lowest".

After that, he looked ahead, at a peculiar pulpit chamber where a choir of Wailing Vestals chanted. Then, he growled. "Shut them up".

With a war cry, he led the charge into the pulpit chamber. Each one floated, veiled in divine light that burned with a false holiness.

Aria struck from the shadows, cutting through three in an instant. Genevieve's aura surged, countering the mental fog.

"Equip any resistance-increasing item if you have one," Genevieve whispered, casting a mass cleanse and exorcism.

With it, the insidious influence of the whispers reduced.

The fight ended in thunder and silence.

One last Vestal opened her eyes and screamed. Then there was nothing..., silence again.

The party regrouped, breathing hard. No one smiled. Not yet.

Yes, they were a group of oldies and talented youngsters with heads filled with lots of jokes, but at this point, they didn't indulge themselves too much.

Experience told them not to linger in profligacy too much while raiding a dungeon. Besides, this was an SSS-Rank 20-man dungeon.

All these were minor reasons though, the real reason why they didn't smile was because the path forward had opened, and on the marble stairway ahead was the shadow of a man not yet dead, holding a bell that rang soundlessly.

They could see it ringing, they could feel it, and yet they didn't hear it.

The Herald of Oblivion waited.

The towering figure ahead, draped in tattered vestments of forgotten royalty loomed over the party like a monument of death.

His bell, a twisted relic of rusted brass and tarnished gold hung at his side, untouched by the air around it; silent but not still. There was a weight to the silence that stretched on, a quiet that almost felt tangible, as though the very world was holding its breath.

Noah's hand tightened on the hilt of his battle lance, eyes narrowing as he assessed the figure.

"His aura," Caleb whispered, eyes flicking between the bell and the Herald. "It's not just holy, it's... wrong".

The Herald of Oblivion stepped forward with unnerving grace, his presence not so much felt as it was absorbed by the room.

The shadows that clung to the walls of the monastery seemed to stretch toward him, drawn to the ancient energy radiating from his very being.

His eyes were hollow, empty sockets framed by a gaunt face, not dead, but something far worse... forgotten.

The soundless bell in his hand shook slightly, vibrating the air.

And then, a voice that could not have come from human lips rose, resonating directly in their minds, echoing the unsung melodies of centuries.

"You seek to awaken the silence. You will be the last to hear it".

Benjamin chuckled nervously as he looked around, uneasy. "Did anyone else hear that...?"

On getting no response, he cursed. "These damned developers, they just had to make it so creepy huh?!"

Noah nodded. "That's no ordinary boss. He's not just a fighter, he's an enigma. A being trapped between realms, between life and death".

"It's connection to life will likely mean it's HP will be borderline ridiculous. As for its connection to death?"

Noah sighed. "I guess... let's just be wary against being injured by him".

The Herald of Oblivion raised his bell, and with a move, the very air cracked.

Suddenly, every shadow in the room swirled, forming faces. They weren't human. They were souls, but not of the living; whispering, agonized spirits that clawed at the players' minds, attempting to drag them into the void.

"Fight it!" Genevieve's voice cut through the chaos, the radiant light of her divine aura pushing the shadows back as best as she could. "Focus on the Herald, ignore the rest".

But it was too late. The first toll of the bell reverberated in the hearts of the team, a mental attack.

BZZZ!

A mental shockwave rippled through them. Every player felt the cold grip of Oblivion tightening around their minds. The world seemed to fade, blurring and warping.

"Noah! It's... it's a debuff!" Jonathan shouted as he shook his head. His face twisted in confusion and pain. "We need to focus! Don't let the silence take us!"

Then, the second toll came...

BZZZ!

...a vibration so deep it rattled their bones.

Noah felt it first; a suffocating pressure in his chest, like an overwhelming weight pressing against his heart. His vision narrowed, the world distorting as his surroundings grew darker, quieter.

The fear of forgetting, of fading into nothingness, it all clawed at his soul.

'Ah... I hate this!' Noah groaned in frustration as he noticed his Avatar glitch under the influence of the intense debuff.

His mind flickered to the memories of his time in the game, in the English Pro Alliance. The faces of his teammates, the moments of victory and joy, of camaraderie. All of it threatened to slip away.

"Shit," Noah gritted his teeth, fighting to retain his thoughts. He raised his lance high, channeling the last of his will to push against the oppressive pressure. "Stay focused! We fight for each other!"

It seemed emotional, intense, but then...

"Can you just shut up and fight?"

"..."

Noah could not retort. 'Bastard'.

Boom!

The reverberation was a physical blow, and for a moment, everything was quiet. The Herald of Oblivion swung the bell once more, but this time, he did not need to speak. A wave of raw dark energy blasted forth, sending the players skidding back.

"Now!" Noah roared.

In that instant, Aria was already in motion, her blades flashing as she launched herself at the Herald.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Her strikes were faster than the eye could follow.

But as she approached, she realized something critical; the figure before her wasn't as corporeal as it appeared. With every slash, her blade cut through nothingness, but a

ripple of distortion followed, marking the first true sign of vulnerability in the Herald's form.

"He's not real! Not yet!" Aria screamed as she retreated, realizing the deception.

Caleb shouted from the back, his Summoner hands dancing in the air as he conjured a storm of arcane wards to shield the group from the energy pulses. "He's just a projection! A fragment of something more powerful!"

Hearing these words, none of them panicked though.

They remained totally calm, their eyes flickering with intelligence, rapidly recalculating the situation and their odds of victory.

But then, Benjamin grinned. "He's not what he appears, and neither are we!" He laughed crazily, smirking.

"Time to show him the power of real magic!"

Chapter 193: Holiday [5]

"Time to show him the power of real magic!" Benjamin yelled, grinning behind his monitor...

But they weren't alone. The Wraiths of the Forgotten; faceless, shadow-clad horrors spawned around them, encircling the group in an instant.

"Damn," Jonathan muttered, his voice filled with grim resolve as he whipped out his glades, spinning into a frenzy. "Looks like we've got company".

With that, the battlefield exploded into action.

Aria and Jonathan took the vanguard this time, darting and striking against the Wraiths. Genevieve channeled healing auras while battling against the pull of the mental debuff.

The Wraiths didn't stand a chance against their onslaught, but each time one fell, another rose from the shadows, summoned by the Herald's bell tolls.

Noah locked eyes with the Herald, the final phase of this part of the dungeon had begun. With a sharp command, he led the charge toward the figure, his battle lance crackling with aetheric energy.

The Herald of Oblivion rose his bell once more, its tone discordant, filling the air with more than sound; it filled time itself.

His figure blurred as he ascended into the air, turning into an overwhelming, massive avatar of shadow and broken light.

But the power of the monastery was his prison.

This was not his true form.

This was only a reflection, only a piece.

Noah leapt forward, and the final strike rang through the air as Aetherforge cleaved the air with magic and steel in its battle lance form.

It was done.

The shadows exploded into dust, leaving behind only the stillness of the Grand Monastery.

The bell fell silent.

Then, a system notification.

DING!

~~~~~

[Your raid party have killed a reflection of the Herald of Oblivion!]

[You have triggered the ire of the Guardian of the Chamber of the Bell!]

~~~~~

Well, like they expected and as Aria pointed out, it was a fake.

The SSS-Rank level 100 dungeon, Grand Monastery of Aetheryos, like all other high level dungeons in Warstar had deep lore behind them, lore that is written in their advertisement boards to attract players to challenge them.

Of course, Noah and this group of players may all be pro players, retired and still active, the best of the best veterans but they were not reckless.

Before taking on the SSS-Rank dungeon, they read its official guide book.

The Grand Monastery of Aetheryos is a once-holy sanctuary now twisted by time and forbidden knowledge. The monastery blends divine architecture with eerie silence, filled with spectral enemies, sentient relics, and cursed high priests.

The deeper you go, the stronger the distortion becomes.

As for its final boss? It's a being called the High Ascendant, Aetheryos himself.

There is a process and structure to get to the final boss. Apart from the final boss, there are 5 phases, locations in the SSS-Rank dungeon.

The first phase is the Courtyard of the Silent Choir.

A sprawling marble courtyard littered with cracked statues and decaying hymn books. The enemies are Choir Wailers and Faithbound Knights.

Choir Wailers are ghostly monks that debuff players with Silence and Confusion. Faithbound Knights are tanky melee foes with divine resistance.

It is the location that they arrived in first after entering the dungeon.

Phase 2 of the SSS-Rank dungeon is the Hall of Echoes. Long, cathedral-like halls where every step echoes unnaturally.

The enemies are Echobound Sentinels and the Voice of the Past; the former being the statues that are immune to ranged attacks unless marked by magic, while the latter being illusion-type enemies that mimic team members' moves.

It was not even an hour yet since they entered the dungeon and yet the raid party was already in Phase 2. It was where they fought the Echobound Sentinels before suddenly encountering a reflection of the Herald of Oblivion.

They were reasonably surprised. After all, the Herald of Oblivion should not be in Phase 2. Rather, it was the mini boss of Phase 5, the final phase of the SSS-Rank dungeon before meeting the final boss.

Phase 3 is the Reliquary of Lost Kings; a chamber filled with shattered relics, thrones, and sarcophagi. Unlike in the first 2 phases, there is a mini boss in Phase 3, King Varnas the Hollowed.

The mechanics was straightforward. King Varnas absorbs relic energy to empower himself; players must disable relics to stand a chance at winning.

King Varnas also curses the entire raid party unless a player voluntarily wears the Crown of Burden found in its domain, a relic that makes the player suffer 50% stat penalty but also makes him capable of damaging Varnas.

That is where the raid party was about to go after surviving the first encounter with the Herald of Oblivion's reflection.

As for Phase 4? It's called the Spiral of Testimony. A vertical, spiral staircase ascending to the heavens; each step a flicker between time periods.

The enemies are Time-Drunk Acolytes and Temporal Crawlers; the former being enemies that shift between child, adult, and old age forms, with the later being speed-based mobs immune to CC (crowd control).

The mechanics is also simple and like Phase 3, it has a mini boss. In Phase 4, environmental time shifts affect cooldowns; some shortened, some extended.

As for the boss, her name is Chrono Confessor Elyria, a mini boss that teleports through time to counter roles.

And then Phase 5, Chamber of the Bell. It's a vast obsidian cathedral centered on a suspended, ancient bell. And of course, the mini boss is the Herald of Oblivion.

The mechanics? The Herald rings his bell every 30 seconds, applying stacking Oblivion debuff. He also summons Wraiths of the Forgotten and siphons memories to disable random skills, a truly devious ability.

And then, the final boss, High Ascendant Aetheryos.

There is very little recorded about the High Ascendant in the dungeon guide book, just that he's a golden, radiant being bound in chains of light and shadow atop the monastery's highest altar. With cracked wings and eyes sealed shut.

As for the reward structure? Apart from the lighthearted reunion that this dungeon raid was, they were also attracted by the reward structure of the dungeon. There's a guaranteed SSS-Rank Relic equipment, 3-5 skill points per player, and the Title- Echo Slayer of Aetheryos.

There is also an RNG Loot Pool for legendary enchantments, transcendence scrolls, and a unique mount- Seraph of the Broken Bell.

Till date, Lord Doom was the only Avatar in the video game to have a mount.

Other players and their Avatars wanted to replicate his feat.

And now, having blitzed through Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the dungeon already at record time, the raid party moved on to the next.

...

The 20-man raid team stood at the threshold of a massive obsidian gate, carved with regal reliefs of ancient kings; some triumphant, others weeping, all of them crowned.

As the gates opened, a wave of cold, metallic air whooshed past them, almost like a sigh from a thousand-year-old tomb.

They entered the Reliquary of Lost Kings; a vast subterranean hall lit by chandeliers of everburning soulfire, suspended above rows of sarcophagi clad in enchanted gold.

Marble statues lined the aisles, each depicting a fallen monarch from the Age of Splintered Crowns. The floor was a mirror-polished obsidian slab, reflecting their footsteps with unsettling clarity.

At the center was a throne of silence, built from grave-silver and blackened bone, surrounded by six towering royal tombs.

Each was sealed by ancient magic; and each contained a Wraith King, a cursed sovereign who once ruled with pride, now reborn in eternal torment.

Their objective was simple. To open the path forward, the team must defeat all six Wraith Kings; each with unique mechanics before awakening the true monarch entombed beneath the Reliquary.

They didn't know about the true monarch entombed beneath the Reliquary, but they did know about King Varan the Hollow who was instructed in the guide book, meaning he was the core figure of this phase of the SSS-Rank dungeon.

King Varan is part of the six Wraith Kings, the strongest. A spectral juggernaut wielding a two-handed sword and mirror clones.

Every 30 seconds, he splits into duplicates with inverted attack patterns.

But King Varan was not the only threat. There is Queen Althissa of Thorns, a Wraith Queen that wields necro-vines and summons spectral courtiers to charm players. If not broken, charmed players turn against their team.

Then King Duram of the Drowned. A powerful Wraith King that drenches the battlefield in ghostly seawater, creating zones of suffocating.

And then the Twin Kings of Flame and Frost. As soon as the players entered, two coffins opened at once. Both Wraith Kings must be fought together. If one dies before the other, it resurrects the second.

The final Wraith King is King Malrik, the Regretful. An insidious Wraith King that traps players in illusions of their worst fears.

Players must solve illusion puzzles to free their Avatars of the mind hex or face execution by guilt-phantoms.

Unlike the first 2 phases of this SSS-Rank dungeon, Phase 3 was the real deal.

Noah finally imposed his will on the raid team. "To win, we have to divide ourselves into four elite subgroups, each led by a veteran to handle a tomb".

"Personally, I'll lead a team and find the Crown of Burden to take on King Varnas the Hollowed. He's the most dangerous".

No one objected. Noah looked at them, waiting for a volunteer.

"I'll lead a team to take on the Drowned King". Gabriel said calmly; not the retired one, but Dain Ironvalor's controller.

"I'll lead a team to take on that King Malrik". Jonathan said.

That left one last team.

Noah looked at the other, then spoke. "Aria, Caleb, you both lead a team to take on the Twin Kings".

"What of Queen Althissa?" Aria asked.

Noah smiled. "Leave her... for now".

"Due to the nature of her powers, she's more of a territorial boss. She won't leave her territory till we invade".

"So, let's leave her for last".

Chapter 194: Holiday [6]

30 minutes later...

[Your raid team has slain the Mini Boss: King Duram of the Drowned!]

[Your raid team has slain the Mini Boss: King Malrik, the Regretful!]

[Your raid team has slain the Mini Boss: King Varan the Hollow!]

[Your raid team has slain the Mini Boss: The Two Kings of Flame and Frost!]

[Your raid team has slain the Mini Boss: Queen Althissa of Thorns!]

After an intense 30-minute series of encounters, including near-deaths, clutch heals, and one accidental friendly fire from a charmed Benjamin which they absolutely roasted him for, the final tomb shuddered open.

BZZZ!

The ground trembled, the floor splitting apart to reveal a stairwell descending into a buried throne room beneath the reliquary.

It is there that the true monarch, the Nameless King, sleeps.

But as they prepare to descend, the sound of rattling chains and weeping choirs echo through the chamber.

Then, from the darkness below, a message scrolls across the HUD.

~~~~~

[Phase 4 Initiated: The Spiral of Testimony!]

["Warning: Entry is irreversible."]

~~~~~

"That confirms it," Jonathan muttered. "There is no Nameless King, King Varan the Hollow is the main boss here after all".

Without a word, they continued moving.

Even their jokes reduced now because they could tell that after Phase 3, they won't have the leisure for petty jokes anymore. The dungeon was getting harder.

They entered a room.

The room they'd entered was shaped like a vast cylinder, as if they'd stepped into the inside of an ancient tower turned on its head.

And stretching infinitely upward, coiling like the body of a sleeping dragon, was the Spiral of Testimony; a staircase carved from ethereal light and astral stone, suspended in a void of floating parchments, drifting quills, and shattered hourglasses frozen mid-spill.

There were no walls, only constellations mapped in runes, glowing softly. Some pulsed, some screamed; every step up the spiral was an act of remembrance.

A giant, spectral inscription hovered above the base.

["Only the worthy may ascent the Tower of Truth. Only those who have lived... may rewrite time."]

"Sounds catchy". Benjamin muttered with a grin.

No one replied him.

As the group took their first step onto the staircase, the dungeon shifted into a vertical gauntlet. Waves of enemies didn't rush at them though.

Instead, the past did.

KABOOM!

All hell broke loose as the raid party pounced on the dungeon monsters that were supposed to pounce on them.

Like before, they didn't need any body to lead them. As soon as the beings of Phase 4 of the SSS-Rank dungeon emerged, they approached them with instinctive knowledge of which class was better suited to deal with them.

And so, they hunted them down with ruthless impunity.

Every few dozen steps, the team was halted and forced to fight echoes of their past; bosses, battlefields, and even fragments of former versions of themselves from earlier in the game.

There were 3 distinct trials in the Spiral of Testimony. The first is the Trial of Origins, a fierce gauntlet where each team member of the raid party faces their own level 1 self in a 1v1 illusion battle. Weak in stats, but dangerously pure in fundamentals.

Then the Trial of Division, where the group is randomly split into four squads of five and forced to solve time-manipulated puzzles while fending off corrupted NPCs from Warstar's old beta era.

And finally the Trial of Echoes, a ghostly replay of their very first defeat as a team plays out again; but this time, the enemies have been scaled to level 100.

They must conquer it to prove growth.

This SSS-Rank dungeon never got tired of finding ingenious ways to end the lives of its challengers. It was hell bent on it even. But this time, its challengers were not regular players, they were insidiously knowledgeable and extremely powerful.

All the while as they fought against the trials, the environment kept growing more surreal; quills begin writing battle logs midair, and quotes from the team's own past echoed in the wind, spoken back to them by unseen voices.

And then, after surviving all the initial threat... the final ascent.

At the summit of the Spiral awaited a floating platform bathed in twilight; a circular observatory with a shattered telescope hanging above like a fallen crown.

There stood Chrono Professor Elyria, suspended above the platform in a dress made of layered scrolls, clock hands, and golden typewriters. Her hair was silver, braided with hourglass chains.

Her eyes? Mismatched, one mechanical, ticking slowly... the other, a bottomless black void.

Her voice reverberated without moving her lips.

"Time doesn't move forward. It spirals. Around every truth is a thousand lies... and yet here you are, trying to climb higher".

"Then let me test your version of the truth".

"See if you're worthy".

DING!

~~~~~

[WARNING: You have encountered the Mini Boss: Chrono Professor Elyria!]

[SSS-Rank Boss: Phase 4 End Guardian]

[HP: Five rotating time cores]

[Core Mechanics:]

>Timeline Shifts: Every 30 seconds, the battlefield shifts to a different version of itself (Past, Future, Frozen, Fractured)<

>World of Rewrite: Elyria targets one player at random and rewrites their skillset temporarily, turning damage spells into buffs or healing spells into hexes<

>Chrono Collapse (Ultimate): Stops time entirely for 8 real seconds. During this, each player is isolated into a vision of their biggest regret. They must press a sequence of keys tied to their memory to break free<

~~~~~

The Grand Monastery of Aetheryos is a new SSS-Rank dungeon, but it was already extremely famous in Warstar circles.

This is because of all its challengers, none had ever passed the Chrono Professor yet. Phase 4's guardian was the final boss stop for challengers so far.

To make it easier for challengers, the developers showed the core mechanics of the mini boss to the challengers, and still, they can't defeat her.

Can this raid party do it this time?

These veterans didn't think about something like that. As soon as they set their eyes on the Chrono Professor, they exploded into action.

It was a chaotic battle against the Mistress of Time and yet they were not wiped out in 10 seconds, giving them the opportunity to settle down.

And once they did, they grabbed control.

A fierce, fast-paced, and brutal battle followed. And like expected, killing the Chrono Professor was not going to be easy.

Genevieve resisted the rewrite of the Mistress of Time, managing to purify the Fractured Timeline and dispelling all status effects in a clutch moment.

Caleb, after being rewritten into a berserker class used cold logic to counter Elyria's own time algorithms, causing her to stutter and lose tempo.

Benjamin, of course, kept on shouting like a maniac.

"I'm never on time, but this joke? Hehe, right on schedule!" He grinned before detonating a perfectly-timed spelltrap, triggering his unique skill too.

Aria and Noah combined for a heart-stopping moment as both Blademaster and Combat Mage exploded, moving, attacking as one.

Reckless Storm uses Flashcut Delta while Lord Doom launches a spatial lance through a frozen timeline window, causing double piercing damage across two timelines, dealing devastating damage to the Mistress of Time.

Jonathan and Gabriel managed the defensive aura patterns in sync, swapping barrier timings like seasoned warriors of the clock.

And finally, the powerful boss was in the throes of death.

In her last breath, Elyria looked at them and muttered. "Perhaps... this version of the story was worth remembering".

With that, she disintegrated into stardust and parchment.

DING!

[Your raid party has received a Time-Warped Skill Token (×1 each player)]

[Your raid party has received the Chrono-Elyrian Relic (Legendary SS-Ranked Accessory – Adds 'Temporal Resistance')]

[Unlock: Phase 5 – Chamber of the Bell!]

...

The Spiral of Testimony had been unlike anything they'd faced. Not only did they get the boss kill, but they also got the first clear of phase 4 and the first Chrono Professor Elyria kill.

Now, on a terrace just beyond the summit, the group emerged through a glowing portal into a suspended resting point: a wide marble balcony jutting out over a sea of drifting stars, like the edge of creation.

No monsters. No traps, just silence and a calming aurora of blue and gold light filtering through the sky above.

A large obsidian bench stretched along the edge. Some of the veterans collapsed onto it. This SSS-Rank dungeon was truly a unique one, as it was the only dungeon with rest points for players.

In this rest point, the group got the chance to leave their Avatars in the game and wind down back in their villa.

Benjamin flopped down dramatically, arms flailed. "I just fought a younger, dumber version of myself... and he still had better pickup lines".

"And to think we got rewarded with an SS-Ranked accessory for it," he chuckled. "I guess this means, never give up on life, right?"

Aria leaned against a stone pillar, breathing hard but grinning. "Tch. Past or present, you're still garbage".

Benjamin sighed. "You wound me, queen of blunt-force trauma".

Caleb was hunched over a flickering holopad, muttering. "Timeline transitions... randomized input keys... I swear if that boss had one more paradoxical phase I was going to uninstall reality".

Jonathan approached, chuckling, towel around his neck. "You almost did. That paradox loop nearly cooked the servers".

Genevieve sat on the ground, eyes closed, meditating. The threads of Elyria's illusions still tugged faintly at her mind, though her heartbeat was finally steady. "She wasn't evil. Just... tired. Like a teacher with no students left".

"It's crazy how I can relate to her. Bosses in Warstar are so much more realistic these days".

Noah, silent for the most part simply sipped a cup of coffee.

Nightingale walked up to him. "You saw it too, didn't you? That bell... it's not just décor".

Noah didn't look away. "I know. It tolls when something ends, or when something has to end".

Gabriel stood with arms crossed. "I've cleared some wild dungeons in my time. But I've never felt a warning like this".

Jonathan chipped in. "It's the sound you hear right before silence".

"Or a bad date". Benjamin added.

"Shut up". Everyone glared at him; Benjamin chuckled.

But just then, Nightingale looked at his watch.

"Rest time's up guys. Ready yourselves, the next trial begins".

Chapter 195: Holiday [7]

Rest time was over.

The party emerged from the Spiral of Testimony, breathless and awed, their rest time notwithstanding.

The final tick of Professor Elyria's clock still echoed in their minds. But what greeted them now was silence; deafening, suffocating silence.

As soon as the players logged back into their Avatars, they passed through the next veil and stepped into the chamber for Phase 5 of the SSS-Rank dungeon.

DING!

[Unlock: Phase 5 – Chamber of the Bell!]

Bzzz!

They disappeared and stepped into a hall, a gravity-defying cathedral of inverted stone and sky.

Before them loomed a vast, cathedral-like hall of black marble and bone-white spires. The Chamber of the Bell was not illuminated by flame or crystal, but by the glow of memory itself.

Faint images flickered in the air like ghostly projections; forgotten lives, regrets, lost moments, each suspended in time like dust in moonlight.

At the very center of the cathedral was the Iron Bell, massive and tarnished, suspended from chains as thick as tree trunks. It did not ring. It did not sway. But it exuded an oppressive weight, as if reality held its breath around it.

As they moved deeper, a voice trembled through the air; not loud, but ancient. Cracked and ageless.

"Those who dare toll the bell... must bear the toll upon their soul".

And then it descended from the shadows; the Herald of Oblivion.

BZZZ!

The Herald was not a demon or undead, but a walking paradox: a humanoid clad in robes stitched from pages of erased history.

Where its face should have been, there was only a shifting void. It walked without sound, yet every step rippled the air like thunder.

The mechanics for the battle against the Herald of Oblivion was straightforward.

The Herald has 8 abilities. The first is Null Vow, a skill that silences active skill for 3 seconds when players are hit by its echo-wave scythe.

The second is Bell Resonance. Every 30 seconds, it tolls the Iron Bell. When it does, all players lose 10% of their HP and have their positions shuffled randomly within the room. Area awareness becomes critica.

The third ability is Oblivion Marks. Once triggered, it applies stacking debuff to targets hit consecutively. At 3 stacks, the target is temporarily erased, vanishing from the field for 8 seconds.

And then the final ability, Scream of the Unremembered. At 50% HP, the Herald rips open a portal revealing forgotten versions of players' past enemies. A swarm of phantoms attack for 30 seconds.

From the beginning, the Herald struck, leaving the team disoriented.

Clerics couldn't cast as fast, Blademasters lost their timing, while Summoners' control weakened with each toll. The random teleportation created chaos in positioning, forcing Echelon's veterans to fall back on instinct and raw synergy.

But most importantly, what bought them the chance was Caleb's item.

After keeping it hidden since, Caleb finally used his S-Ranked item, Hell's Key, summoning a legion of demons from the depths of the Demon's Temple.

Before the raid, they already discussed this point specifically, including when Caleb was supposed to use the S-Ranked item.

This was why as soon as an army of demons surged out, fighting on their side, the team reacted instinctively in tandem like parts of a single living entity instead of separate players and Avatars challenging the dungeon together.

Genevieve adapted first, using light anchors to triangulate party positions after each Bell Resonance as she took advantage of the demonic chaos.

Caleb, with his Demonic army on his side, he did more, activating a skill that bound spectral threads to allies so even when scattered, he could pull one back to safety like a marionette pulling his puppets to safety.

Despite the team adapting, despite the demon army, the Herald remained elusive, punishing any Avatar who got greedy with Oblivion Marks.

Noah, fighting as Lord Doom as one of the main vanguards was erased once after experiencing what he later called 'eight seconds of utter nothingness,' a black void where even thoughts struggled to form.

Noah lived, totally fine behind his computer.

But his Avatar? Lord Doom?

Lord Doom was doomed, confined in utter nothingness for 8 seconds.

Despite all this, one HP at a time, the fearsome raid party kept on chipping away at the HP of the Herald of Oblivion.

When the Herald approached 10% HP, it began unraveling, its robes tearing themselves apart, showing visions of ancient wars, crumbled cities, and a forgotten throne, then...

BOOM!

With a scream that shook the Bell and shattered the cathedral windows, the Herald charged one last time.

The mini boss went for its ultimate final move.

But they didn't let it. As soon as it moved, Reckless Storm moved to intercept as in mid-air and with a precise Blademaster execution art, Aria struck.

{Heaven's Split Fang=}

At the same time, Benajamin also struck, also unleashing an Awakened level skill in the critical moment.

{Starfire Tempest=}

2 Awakened level skills combined, aided by multiple other skills that immobilized the Herald, keeping it in place, and then...

KABOOM!

After an impact that shook the very foundations of the cathedral, with a bloodcurdling wail, the Herald of Oblivion was suddenly no more.

Dong!

The Bell tolled one last time. This time by its own accord, and then it disintegrated into glowing dust.

As soon as the Herald of Oblivion died, the chamber opened slowly.

Behind the Iron Bell's fallen altar stood a great sealed arch, and behind that... the final phase of the SSS-Ranked dungeon, the unnumbered phase: The Throne of the Forgotten King.

The team paused, staring through the ruins of the cathedral, breath heavy, faces marked by time and silence.

Noah muttered. "We're at the end".

Jonathan simply nodded, a rare seriousness in his voice. "Then let's make it count".

Benjamin chuckled. "I guess our vacation is about to end. I enjoyed this one".

Their Avatars moved.

Through the archway behind the shattered Bell, the team descended not upward into glory, but downward, into oblivion.

A spiral staircase of broken marble wound into an abyssal void. Every step they took echoed like footsteps in a tomb. There was no music, no ambient hum, not even a boss room gate; only growing sense that the world above was being left behind.

The system didn't announce the next phase. The HUD dimmed, player names flickered and time seemed fractured.

Then, at the base of the spiral, their boots hit ashen stone.

Before them stood a massive hall, ruined and hollow, its sky eternally grey. Faded banners of kingdoms long dead hung like forgotten memories. Smashed thrones, cracked swords, and armor turned to rust littered the floor.

And at the far end, atop a slanted dais, he sat.

The Forgotten King.

The final boss of the Grand Monastery of Aetheryos.

He was neither man nor monster. The Forgotten King was a figure clothed in silence; tattered robes, an ancient crown of rusted bronze, and a throne carved from memory itself. His eyes were shut, his breath shallow.

Aetheryos? Maybe this was him. Maybe that was his forgotten name.

When the team stepped forward, his eyes snapped open, two glowing crimson embers. And then he spoke, a forlorn emotion forever locked in his tone.

"I was once the greatest among kings. Aetheryos, Lord of the Realm, King of Kings. Then they forgot me. So I made a kingdom from silence".

He stood slowly.

And as he stood, the world trembled.

Then... the final battle began.

No hesitation. No lengthy cut scene, just straight-up battle.

Unlike the other mini bosses that they faced where their abilities were shown in the guide book, they were facing the Forgotten King blind. Even in the guide book, the Forgotten King was forgotten, which made this final battle an even more harrowing battle.

But they didn't falter.

Lord Doom led the charge, parrying with Aetherforge in its greatsword form while Dain Ironvalor tanked directly, his shield glowing crimson with every echoing impact. But the Forgotten King seemed always one step ahead, as if he had fought this battle before.

When Benjamin cast his signature Elemental Convergence, the king interrupted with Time Severance, freezing the entire team in animation and stepping through them, placing dark runes on their backs.

The fight resumed with a detonation, sending the team sprawling.

They were chipping at the king's HP, but they were losing, totally dominated by the domineering Forgotten King.

Yet, they never gave up.

Every second as the battle, after every clash, they learned, understanding its abilities, its combat preferences, and its A.I mannerisms.

This was a raid party formed by the best of the best of England.

They communicated their findings and thoughts, making all of them learn together, adapting to the harrowing battle.

At 40% HP, the King discarded his name and memory. Then, his form turned spectral, vast, and looming. His voice no longer spoke in words, but in feelings.

The worse thing? Its abilities also reset with it, changing completely.

The raid party was back to square 0.

In the chaos, players fell, the first since the dungeon raid started. The old vanguard, Gerard was struck down saving Caleb. Two of Gabriel's squadmates were erased during Final Requiem. The team began to falter.

And yet, they didn't give up.

Aria roared, stepping into the center, covered in blood, activating her S-ranked unique skill to turn into a Battle Goddess.

BOOM!

She slashed through five memories at once, exposing the King's heart. Riding her momentum, her surviving teammates attacked with vengeance.

Genevieve, near her limit, whispered one last benediction.

Aria's Reckless Storm died.

But in the chaos, Noah saw the opening.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

His fingers flew across his keyboard in a blurry mirage.

On the screen?

A flash. A spear of radiant twilight. And a cry that shook the entire server.

Lord Doom's battle lance struck the killing blow.

"WE REMEMBER YOU!"

The Forgotten King's memories screamed eerily in tandem.

And with that, the Forgotten King was slain.

Chapter 196: Holiday [8]

Lord Doom struck the killing blow to the Forgotten King.

As the SSS-Rank dungeon final boss faded into motes of light, there was a brief flash of light, and then the victory cutscene.

BZZZ!

The throne shattered.

The sky above the Grand Monastery opened, for the first time in eternity. Light cascaded down, burning away the ash.

Each member of the 20-man party was granted a Title of Remembrance, even those who died during the raid that were revived by the dungeon algorithm after the Forgotten King fell.

A choir of distant voices played, and the world above remembered again.

But that was not the end, because a golden ring chimes once.

And then, a system alert echoes across the player interface.

DING!

~~~~~

[System Notification: Your raid party has cleared the SSS-Rank Dungeon successfully, Grand Monastery of Aetheryos!]

[Difficulty: Ascendant Mode]

[Clear Time: 1 hour, 43 minutes, 57 seconds]

[Bonus Objectives Achieved: 5/5]

[MVP: Lord Doom – Tactical Orchestrator/Final Blow/ Crown Phase Savior]

...

And then...

[REWARD SEQUENCE INITIATES]

Each team member who was part of the raid party floats above a radiant sigil. The sky parts as golden relics descend from above, one at a time.

[Title Unlocked: Echo Slayer of Aetheryos!]

[Effects:]

>+10% damage against enemies influenced by time, memory, or divine elements.

>Passive: Grants party-wide +2% cooldown reduction in all group content.

>Visual: Adds golden spectral wings that shimmer and vanish after a few seconds.

...

[Your raid party has triggered Guaranteed Rewards for All!]

[SSS-Rank Relic Reward– Class Specific]

>Each player of this raid party has received a Relic-tier item directly tied to their main class, styled after the Monastery's twisted divine aesthetic; halo-like motifs, broken scripture, clockwork elements, etc.

[Combat Mage Avatar, Lord Doom has been rewarded with a Symbiotic Spectral Sword: Lance of Split Aeons!]

>Lance of Split Aeons: When striking, has a chance to cause a time fracture, allowing a skill to be cast twice within 1.5 seconds.

>This is a Symbiotic Spectral Sword. It can be merged with another sword, fusing its ability into the new sword.

[Blademaster Avatar, Reckless Storm has been rewarded with an Item: Mantle of the Timelost Duelist!]

>Mantle of the Timelost Duelist: Increases parry frames and grants a ghost step that trigger post-teleport.

[Summoner Avatar, Enlightened Flame has been rewarded with an Item: Chains of Binding Oaths!]

>Chains of Binding Oaths: Summons deal more damage to targets afflicted by memory bleed, a new mechanic introduced in this dungeon.

[Paladin Avatar, Dain Ironvalor has been rewarded...]

[Paladin Avatar, Crimson Saint has been rewarded...]

[Elementalist Avatar, Captain Batman has been rewarded...]

...

[Your raid party defeated the Grand Monastery of Aetheryos at record time!]

[Skill Point rewards have been upgraded!]

[Your raid party has received 500 Skill Points to be shared between all members of the raid party!]

...

[Your raid party have been rewarded with Currency + Crafting Materials!]

[x5 Aetheryte Cores – Required to unlock Ascended Gear upgrades.]

[x300,000 Raid Tokens ( used for crafting cosmetics and reforging relics).]

...

[Your raid party have been rewarded with an RNP Loot Pool – Rolled per player.]

...

[Your raid party have been rewarded with a Personalized Cutscene: Memory Relic!]

~~~~~

At the center of the platform, an ancient, half-broken bell rings once more; quiet, intimate. Each player walks forward and touches it.

And then, a unique cutscene plays for each individual, tied to their journey and trails in the dungeon, and how they interacted with the lore.

After this, they each receive a memory relic that forms into their hands, one of a kind accessories that embody the personal legacy of the dungeon.

Unlike the guaranteed rewards that were SSS-Rank though, the memory relics are S-ranked items and equipment.

And then, it finally stopped raining rewards.

Silence.

After a few seconds of silence, the 20-man team slowly recovers and regroups. Some check their loot in stunned silence. Others danced, shout, or slump back in disbelief.

The raid may have seemed like a walk in the park, but it was anything but that. They only conquered it because they were focused and determined when it mattered.

As for the rewards? They were blown away.

Till date even in the English Pro Alliance, SSS-Rank equipment were a rarity in the game, exclusive stuff. To get even one of them for a miracle.

And yet, conquering the SSS-Rank dungeon rewarded them with at least 1 SSS-Rank equipment each.

Noah stood at the front, arms crossed, a small grin tugging at the corner of his mouth. "Right, alright, now to the real boss fight. RNG".

Genevieve spoke up. "Guys, let's just roll respectfully, okay? No need for..."

"Respectfully?" Benjamin interrupted her with a grin on his face. "I've already sacrificed two cooldowns and my dignity. I deserve something shiny, you know".

Genevieve glowered.

Aria waved her arms dismissively. "You only lost your dignity when you called your fireball a 'hot date with destiny', Ben".

Benjamin acted shocked. "Me? When did I say that?"

Aria looked at him and scoffed.

Noah grinned. "Roll phase. Let's see who the Goddess of luck loves the most".

[ROLL 1 – Legendary Encantment]

[Rolling for: 'Divine Requiem – Aethefire Enchant']

[ROLLING...]

DING!

[Captain Batman rolls a 94.]

[Crimson Saint rolls an 88.]

[Misty Rose rolls a 73.]

[Enlightened Flame rolls a 46.]

[Dain Irovalor rolls a 60.]

[Reckless Storm rolls a 98.]

[Noah rolls a 2.]

"..."

[...]

[...]

At the end of the 20-man roll, a few participants, Noah especially was left completely speechless.

Aria grinned. "Bow before me mortals. This enchant is mine. First person to beg nicely might get a screenshot".

She snatched the enchantment without hesitation.

Benjamin was stumped. "98? Rigged". He accused. "You probably hacked the dice".

Aria looked at him in disdain. "I'm not the one who plays in gambling dens".

Noah sighed. "I've defeated gods, but apparently I can't beat a girl with luck stats maxed in attitude".

[ROLL 2 – Transcendence Scroll]

[Rolling for: 'Transcendence Scroll – Skill Evolutio Token']

[ROLLING...]

DING!

[Enlightened Flame rolls a 99]

[Crimson Saint rolls a 92]

[Reckless Storm rolls a 12]

[Misty Rose rolls a 41]

[Captain Batman rolls a 0]

[Lord Doom rolls a 100]

The moment that Caleb's Avatar rolled a 99, he jumped in excitement, already celebrating his win. When Benjamin rolled a 0, it created a chain reaction of laughter in the gaming hall, till the next roll was displayed.

As soon as Noah's roll was displayed, the hall quietened in shock.

'The heck!' The same thought went through everyone's mind.

"I rolled a 92 and I'm not even second best". Jonathan lamented.

"No. No way. 100?!" Caleb felt grievant.

Noah chuckled. "You know what they say. God gives his strongest upgrades to his most broke Avatars".

"And I rolled a zero. That's not even on the dice". Benjamin felt like crying.

"It's not," Aria agreed with him. "You just suck".

[ROLL 3 – Unique Mount: Seraph of the Broken Bell]

[Rolling for: 'Seraph of the Broken Bell – Celestial Mount']

They almost all did a dance as soon as they saw what was at stake, and then with conviction, they rolled the dice.

[ROLLING...]

DING!

[Misty Rose rolls an 89]

[Dain Ironvalor rolls a 10]

[Enlightened Flame rolls a 57]

[Captain Batman rolls a 77]

[Reckless Storm rolls a 90]

[Crimson Saint rolls a 1]

[Lord Doom rolls a 91]

Silence.

Deep, suffocating silence, then...

"Noah... don't you dare". Genevieve turned to glare at Noah, forgetting about her monitor completely.

Noah chuckled nervously.

Aria also glared at him. "You've got TWO of the drops already! Greed incarnate!"

He chuckled again. "Can't help it Aria. The mount chose me".

Benjamin stared daggers at him. "You're gonna ride that thing like some sort of holy tax collector".

Noah stared back at him. "Correction. Like a divine warlord with style".

Of course, they were not taking that lightly, not with shameless lords like Jonathan still without one of the drops.

The group bickered, complained, and mock-threatened to hack the dungeon, all led by Jonathan. Of course, it was all banter. Deep down, they were all smiling.

They just cleared the hardest dungeon in the current version of Warstar in less than 2 hours, and even the RNG didn't dampen the victory.

As the final loot screen faded, Noah mounted his new mount, the Seraph, wings flaring golden as the broken monastery crumbles in the distance.

But before they logged out of the game, having been holding himself back since, Gabriel could not anymore as he stepped before Lord Doom with his Dain Ironvalor. "I'll trade you 2 A-Ranked equipment and an event-exclusive skin for it, you in?"

Noah looked at him. "Pass".

Gabriel sighed and cursed slightly beneath his breath. "Okay. How about the Astral Wyrms, Crimson Fang of the Abyss, seven hundred premium tokens, and I'll include that animated 'Heartspark Victory' emote you wanted".

Noah grinned. "Now you're talking". He raised his hand to his chin in thought. "...Throw in the limited-edition Bellcaster cloak skin and you have a deal".

Gabriel gritted his teeth. "Shameless bastard". He muttered.

Noah smiled. "You said what?"

"Nothing". Gabriel looked at him. "Deal".

Noah's smile widened. "It's nice doing business with you, captain".

Chapter 197: A nice time in Miami

Miami, U.S.A...

The sun hung low over the crystalline waters of Club Echelon's private vacation villa, casting golden glints across the infinity pool that overlooked the vast, cloud-brushed sky of the Avatara Isles.

The villa like was extravagantly modern; sleek marble flooring, sound-reactive lighting, and zero-gravity lounge pods but right now, it was just home to tired champions enjoying the warm afterglow of conquest.

The 20-man team, now unofficial legends of the Grand Monastery clear, had claimed every square meter of the poolside.

Drinks clinked. Laughter echoed. Flip-flops were discarded with no regard for elegance.

Benjamin floated lazily on a giant inflatable duck, shades on, a mock cocktail in hand. "I swear to the gods of RNG," he said, gesturing with his plastic umbrella drink. "If Aria

flexes that crit combo from Phase 4 one more time, I will drown myself in this pool and respawn out of shame".

Aria, lying on a recliner in an obscenely expensive bikini she claimed she somehow got as a dungeon drop didn't even look up.

"Cry about it, duck-boy," she said, stretching lazily. "I hit a 71-chain combo with cooldown desync. The server should've handed me the MVP title and a statue in the Grand Monastery".

"You got MVP because Noah forced the rest of us to peel mobs like onions for you, right?" Caleb asked, who was wearing full sunblock under an umbrella, reading patch notes on a waterproof tablet.

Hearing his question, Benjamin burst out laughing, spitting out the cocktail he was drinking. "Wow, hahaha, that was a good one".

"Caleb, tell me, you're changing, you were never this funny".

Caleb chuckled. "People change".

"Yeah Caleb," Noah said from his shaded hammock. "But to be fair, I think peeling mobs is your hidden fetish, bro".

"That is slander". Benjamin looked flabbergasted.

Genevieve, sipping something green and suspiciously potent chuckled. "Oly slander if it's false".

Laughter erupted.

Gabriel, leaning against the railing in a sleeveless shirt that did nothing to hide his ripped in-game avatar, was busy adjusting the saddle on the projection of his newly summoned Seraph of the Broken Bell.

The mount had a hidden fiction to actually project it into reality. Though it was just a virtual projection, it was still a cool sight to see.

The radiant mount floated beside him, shimmering smugly.

"Alright," Gabriel said, clapping his hands. "Team Phoenix Rising, time to roll out". He looked at his teammates. "The new season is starting soon, and I'm not about to show up jetlagged because you degenerates wanted to sunbathe for a few more days like retirees".

His team, equally glamorous and cocky, were already packed. Selene, his second in command waved at the others. "Try not to get soft while we're gone".

Benjamin paddled the duck float toward them with tragic effort. "Take your stupid shiny bell horse and go, you dopamine junkies".

Gabriel smirked, walked past Noah, and muttered. "Nice doing business with you. You got five days max before you regret trading it".

Noah, sipping a drink that looked far too classy for a poolside scene, didn't even glance up. "In five days, I'll be riding a dragon that pisses lightning. You can keep your wind chime".

Gabriel laughed. "You're really insufferably annoying".

With that, he joined his teammates, waving goodbye to the rest of the raid party before leaving.

Team Scarlet Rose, led by Jonathan already left yesterday.

Watching them leave, Aria stretched again and rolled over. "Good riddance. Now there's more alcohol and pool for us".

"Don't drink too much!" Noah glared at her sternly.

Aria flinched slightly at his tone, then casually waved her hand. "Relax, I'm just taking a few cups. Nothing enough to affect my finger coordination".

Genevieve raised her drink.

"To bad decisions and legendary clears".

"Cheers". The rest responded with smiles.

The laughter resumed. The sun lingered. For one last day, they were just players... shameless, sun-soaked, and victorious.

...

The next day, their vacation came to an end.

Team Echelon returned to England.

They had a great time in Miami.

And on that same day, in the Warstar channel in England, there was a nation-wide English system announcement.

Having gone all out with the promotion, drawing attention to the announcement that was scheduled, millions of Warstar fans in England turned to the Warstar channel on the scheduled time.

The black screen faded into gold-engraved letters, as an epic orchestral hum rises. Amid the hum, text appears in ancient font.

[ENGLISH SYSTEM ANNOUNCEMENT – 08:00 SERVER TIME]

["They said it couldn't get bigger."]

["They said they'd seen it all."]

["They were wrong."]

The TV screen cut to rapid flashes of the 11th English Pro Alliance season, last season's highlights; from Crimson Saint's skill strikes, to Dain Ironvalor's fury, and then to the epic final of the Warstar RPG Champions League.

The voice over was deep, commanding, and electric, adding more emotion to the recap highlights.

"Champions of Warstar... brace yourselves".

The music exploded, rising to a crescendo as the voice continued.

"The 12th SEASON of the English Pro Alliance begins in two weeks!"

"The battlefield has evolved. And so must you".

"3 teams were relegated out of the English Pro Alliance after last season, and 3 new teams will be promoted this season".

"The Team Registration Deadline is in 5 days".

"The Draft Board Reveal is in 7 days".

"While the first matchday of the 12th English Pro Alliance is in 2 weeks, 14 days".

On the screen...

CRKSH!

The logo of the English Pro Alliance shattered before reforging itself into a sleeker, darker version, the '12' now surrounded by a spiraling ouroboros.

And then, the closing line appeared in red-gold text.

[ENGLISH PRO ALLIANCE SEASON 12:]

["No Gods. No Kings. Only Champions."]

...

England, London, Club Echelon HQ...

12 days before the start of Season 12 of the English Pro Alliance.

The great black-glass tower of Club Echelon loomed proudly over the skyline of central London, a bastion of elite gaming culture nestled in one of the most expensive blocks in the city.

Their private floors, lavishly designed with neon-lit corridors, holo-display walls, and the scent of imported coffee buzzed to life as Team Echelon returned from their vacation in Miami, U.S.A.

They finally returned from their post-raid vacation.

Lord Doom already had a crazy reputation in the new server before even becoming associated with Club Echelon. Once he was associated with the newest club in the English Pro Alliance, his popularity only grew.

It truly exploded after his identity reveal as God Noah.

And once again, now, after leading a raid party and dominating the Grand Monastery of Aetheryos, he and his teammates were no longer just feared, they were mythologized.

But Noah didn't believe in resting on legends.

This was why after returning to England, he gave his team 1 day of rest but the next morning, they were back in action.

The team assembled in the sprawling digital war room. Giant screens displayed the English Pro Alliance (EPA) Season 12's new mechanics, patch notes, draft potentials, and real-time factional maps.

All the updates and new maps that would be integrated and used in the new season were also projected before them.

The A.I.-powered training sim pulsed in the center, already calibrated for what was coming.

Noah, now in full leadership mode stood with arms crossed before a live hologram of the draft system. He was calm, commanding and deadly precise.

"Twelve days until the season starts," he said, his voice even. "That's twelve days to break bad habits and lock in rotations. Twelve days to recover, not just recover but to return to our best state and aim to exceed it. No excuses".

Aria leaned against the side railing, idly cracking her knuckles. "Tch. You act like we're rusty. I just wiped a dungeon boss with my slippers on".

Caleb glanced over, adjusting his glasses. "You also triggered three traps and almost got the cleric killed".

Benjamin, on a hover-chair chuckled. "Yeah, but she did it stylishly. Let's give her half a medal".

Genevieve, serene as ever just sighed and pulled up healing logs. "All I know is you all keep getting hit on purpose so I'll have more fun healing. Please stop".

Apart from the starting V for Club Echelon, the club already secured its 2 substitute players. After all, 7 pro players were needed for a club to compete in the English Pro Alliance, not just 5.

The 2 substitutes were old and new. The first was of course, Jeff, the 17-year old teenager controlling a Combat Mage Avatar who took lessons from Noah directly. He was more of an introvert; mostly quiet, but in-game, he had ice-cold precision and instincts.

And then Rosalind, a Hexblade Warlock controller. Aria recruited her after discovering her talent in her boyfriend's hometown, Birmingham City.

She was a volatile genius with attitude to match. Fast rotations, and razor-sharp sarcasm that could compete with Benjamin.

They both stood near the edge of the sim, watching, evaluating, waiting for Noah's cue.

Noah looked at them. "You two aren't benchwarmers anymore. Substitute doesn't mean passive, it means you're ready the second someone hiccups".

"Cool," Rosalind said, smirking. "So when Aria eventually rage-quits, I'm in?"

Aria looked up with venom.

"You wish. You'll get in when I die, which is never".

Noah coughed. "Ahem... let's hope it never comes to that".

Jeff simply nodded, checking his crosshair calibration.

"I guess... let's start training then".

Chapter 198: Buzzing excitement

Team Echelon was complete.

A team with a core of big names of the English Pro Alliance. But the truth remained that more than half of the team comprised of legends of the game who had been retired for almost a year.

Yes, they kept on playing the game, but not at the professional stage.

No matter how good Noah and his teammates were, no matter how legendary they were, this was still the pro alliance.

If they wanted to dominate again, they had to be diligent.

They had to train.

Knowing just how important it was, Noah set disciplinary rules for team Echelon making sure that every player took training with the utmost importance.

And then, under his leadership, training began.

For the first 3 days, simulation gauntlets began with Faction Warfront mock-ups, forcing the team to practice trust and betrayal mechanics.

Considering that they would be fighting together in a grueling 38-matchday season against not just ordinary players, but professional players just like them with mostly the same skill level and training diligence, Noah knew more than anyone the importance of building and keeping camaraderie.

Trust among teammates was very essential to string together a successful season in a professional Warstar League Alliance.

This was why their first round of training, Noah emphasized on it.

From Day 4 to Day 6, he switched their training focus to role reversals in 1v1 public coliseum arenas. Noah sparred individually with each member, adapting their core weaknesses.

It was a no brainer that Noah was the best player of team Echelon. Not just that, his Avatar was the most well-equipped and strongest of the team.

He was still the guy to beat.

Aria especially loved this training session. It gave her the avenue to challenge Noah to her heart's content, fighting till her fingers ached.

It gave her endless joy.

For the 2 days of this intense training session, none of them managed to beat Noah once. The ones who came closest was Aria, and then Caleb.

Noah mostly beat the others convincingly in 1v1 duels.

And then by Day 7 to Day 10, Noah changed the training focus again. He combined rotations, team duels, and synchronized strike training under legacy ascension pressure.

This was a step-up on their trust and cooperation in team battles. They didn't just train their ability in team battles and how much they could cooperate though.

After all, they would be fighting against real opponents, legends just like them.

They would be clashing against the likes of Dain Ironvalor and Crimson Saint.

Even Stinger of War.

After his first season since inheriting the Battle God Avatar, Noah's successor in team Cyber Squad already grew into his Avatar, embracing it fully.

This new season, they would be even more competition for the league title, the more reason why they should train to be at their best.

During the period of Day 7 to Day 10, Noah presented an online chart that he created, listing out all their opponents for the new Warstar Alliance season.

[12th English Pro Alliance Clubs:]

>Phoenix Rising.

>Scarlet Rose.

>Juggernaut.

>Cyber Squad.

- >Lionheart Legacy.
- >Oblivion Knights.
- >Shadow Dominion.
- >Imperium Tyranus.
- >Nightfall.
- >Blazing Gryphons.
- >Avalon Sovereign.
- >Stormborn Esports.
- >Cerberus Core.
- >Exo Genesis.
- >Steel Bastion.
- >Pendragon Esports.
- >Helix Nova.
- >Crimson Crow.
- >Cross Guild.
- >Echelon.

These were the 20 teams that would be competing in the new season of the Warstar English Pro Alliance, the 12th season of the Pro Alliance.

Last season, 3 clubs were relegated after only making the bottom 3 in the league table: Titan's Ascent, Phantom Vortex, and Midnight Revenants.

Apart from Echelon, the 2 clubs that secured promotion by buying the spot after fulfilling the other requirements were Cross Guild and Crimson Crow.

Crimson Crow is a veteran pro club that has been in the scene for a while, going in and out of the Pro Alliance. But Cross Guild? Just like Echelon, they were an entirely new club that was created recently.

During Day 7 to Day 10, with Gabriel, Aria's boyfriend asking as their game analyst, they worked on dissecting their opponents even as they trained.

After all, like they say, knowing your opponent already takes you one step closer to victory.

They learned about their possible opponents; their strengths and weaknesses, their game preferences, they studied their best players, Avatars, and their preferred playstyle.

Of course, more attention was put on the 2 giants, Scarlet Rose and Phoenix Rising, Scarlet Rose especially after the change during the pre-season.

This season, Jonathan finally stepped back, relinquishing authority over Crimson Saint to his successor, Chris.

In return, he took Chris' old Paladin Avatar to use to mentor his successor for one final season in the English Pro Alliance.

Why did Jonathan not just leave?

Well, the answer was simple. This season was a special one. Just like Noah and his friends, Jonathan also wanted to play in the World Championship. This was why he wanted to make his last stand for glory in tyrannical fashion, even if he was going to do it from a more support role this time.

After Day 10, from Day 11 to Day 12, Noah changed focus to full dress rehearsal. He organized behind the scenes friendly games with other pro clubs that would be competing in the English Pro Alliance.

Most rejected his request. After all, most clubs have made upgrades to their teams and Avatars during the holiday period.

They didn't want to reveal the changes in their teams to their rivals too early.

And so, Noah was able to organize only few friendly games but each one was a learning experience for his team.

It was just 1 year but Noah felt like he had been away from the English Pro Alliance for a year already.

'I feel rusty'. He grinned. 'But I'm ready to work my way back to fitness'.

By the end of the second week, Team Echelon wasn't just back, they were sharper than ever.

And Noah? He sat alone on the balcony of the club building that night, headset off, gaze on the glimmering city, quietly murmuring.

"This season... I'm taking everything".

His eyes burned with fire.

...

It was weekend.

The atmosphere in England among Warstar esports communities buzzed with excitement and anticipation.

It was that time of the season again.

It was as if the entire nation had awoken with a shared heartbeat.

From Manchester to London, from Birmingham to Bristol, the streets thrummed with the same electric anticipation... matchday 1 of the new English Pro Alliance season had finally arrived.

After two weeks of pre-season hype, patch debates, team transfers, bold predictions, and endless speculation, the waiting was over.

Outside major Pro Hubs, in massive, high-tech viewing arenas sponsored by league clubs, crowds lined up as early as 6 AM, draped in jerseys, waving holo-banners, and singing club chants with reckless joy.

There was a certain emphasis on a new fanbase in London... Club Echelon.

Club Echelon fans wore their signature obsidian-black hoodies, faces lit with confidence and expectation, yelling at the top of their lungs.

"Fear the Apex! Rule the Game! All hail the Black Throne!"

In London, there was a just 1 hegemon at first... Cyber Squad. The most successful English Warstar club ever, but the days of Cyber Squad ruling the city of London were long gone now.

In the old days, no one ever expected another club to topple Cyber Squad's rule in London. But these days, it was all Phoenix Rising and Dain Ironvalor.

And now, against all expectations, a 3rd hegemon was rising.

The 3rd hegemon was not rising because of merit, winning the Warstar RPG Champions League like Phoenix Rising did. Rather, the new London hegemon was rising entirely due to star power.

God Noah, Sword Saint Aria... those names were legendary names in Warstar esports communities and the English Pro Alliance in general.

Gathering them in one team, a new team, it was inevitable that Club Echelon would rise to fame even without playing out their first season in the Pro Alliance yet. The hype around them was annoyingly crazy.

It was not all Echelon though. Other club supporters held nothing back either; whether it was the sky-blue of Juggernaut, the crimson of Scarlet Rose, or the golden yellow of Phoenix Rising, every fanbase was armed with chants, memes, and irrational faith.

Drone cameras zipped overhead. Giant billboards flashed countdowns and animated player spotlights.

Fast food chains offered 'Season 12 Buff Meals,' while streamers were already live, shouting over predictions and pre-game trash talk.

On social media, #EPA12 trended on #1 across all UK platforms.

Fan accounts posted spicy edits: Noah in a king's robe, Aria with devil wings, Benjamin edited into a bowl of soup with the caption: 'Elementalist Soup is BACK, BABY'.

A viral video showed a classroom pausing an exam so students could check the live roster draft announcement.

At home, living rooms across the country turned into war rooms. Kids skipped school. Offices were half-empty by noon.

Even pubs replaced their usual footie streams with Warstar coverage, pints raised as if it were the World Cup.

Old-timers debated the golden season of the past, the God Noah era, wondering if the King came back to rule or if his decision to return from retirement was a mistake.

Teenagers screamed every time their favorite player's Avatar flashed onscreen. Families gathered with snacks, hearts pounding in time with the countdown timer.

And then...

As the clock struck 3 PM, the digital whistle blew.

The first match of the matchday loaded in.

The casters screamed.

And England lost its collective mind.

The Pro Alliance... was back!

Chapter 199: Season 12 begins

[English Pro Alliance- Season 12:]

[Matchday 1:]

>Phoenix Rising vs Stormborn Esports<

>Time: 3:00pm<

...

>Avalon Sovereign vs Cerberus Core<

>Time: 3:00pm<

...

>Cyber Squad vs Lionheart Legacy<

>Time: 3:00pm<

...

>Pendragon Esports vs Exo Genesis<

>Time: 3:00pm<

...

>Scarlet Rose vs Steel Dominion<

>Time: 4:00pm<

...

>Shadow Dominion vs Echelon<

>Time: 4:00pm<

...

>Cross Guild vs Helix Nova<

>Time: 4:00pm<

...

>Crimson Crow vs Nightfall<

>Time: 7:00pm<

...

>Oblivion Knights vs Blazing Gryphons<

>Time: 7:00pm<

...

>Juggernaut vs Imperium Tyrannus<

>Time: 7:00pm<

This was the fixture of the English Pro Alliance that was released by the English FA days before the D-day.

The first game to open the season was between the reigning league and champions league champions, Phoenix Rising taking on Stormborn Esports, a mid-table team of the English Pro Alliance.

It was not the only game that would be played at that exact time.

Avalon Sovereign would also take on Cerberus Core, the bestial class-dominated team while Cyber Squad would also take on Lionheart Legacy, another blockbuster encounter at the opening hour of the new league.

The final game starting at 3:00pm was between Pendragon Esports and Exo Genesis, 2 bonafide mid-table teams in the English Pro Alliance.

All the games were predicted to be blockbuster encounters.

After all, not only were fans starved of professional Warstar games, properly whetting their appetite for the new season. Another reason was because the pro players themselves had a good 2 months to properly rest and recover from the previous grueling season of professional Warstar.

Now, they returned fresh and burning with zeal to take on the new season.

At this stage of the season, especially the first matchday, every single one of the 20 clubs in the English Pro Alliance resume with aspirations.

Having had a proper summer to rest and reboot, they felt invincible.

All of them were ambitious, aiming for the absolute top, the league title, and the playoff spot.

This is why matchday 1 games are always exciting and interesting.

Now, it was D-day.

The London Coliseum, Phoenix Rising's home stadium was an erupting supernova of noise and anticipation.

From the early morning, crowds in red and gold surged through the streets, chanting old fight songs, waving holographic banners, and wearing limited-edition Season 12 jerseys emblazoned with "We're going for the 5th".

Last season, led by their captain, Gabriel, Dain Ironvalor's controller, Phoenix Rising managed to do the impossible, completing the 4-peat against Scarlet Rose in the final of the Warstar RPG Champions League as they became only the second English club to achieve 4-straight championship wins in their history.

They were also only the other club in England apart from their city rivals, Cyber Squad to have 4 league titles and Warstar RPG champions league titles.

This season, just like every other club, Phoenix Rising was ambitious.

Their fans fueled the flames of their ambition.

This season, they wanted to climb to the top of the English Pro scene and win it all again, securing their 5th champions league title to officially match Cyber Squad's record, matching them as the Kings of England.

It was not going to be easy. After all, this was not a regular season.

Not only was God Noah and his friends back out of retirement, Scarlet Rose was predicted to be even better than last season after Chris inherited the Crimson Saint and since Jonathan lingered to mentor him for one final season.

Not just that, their city rivals, Cyber Squad were back. This season, they seemed like a team again and it was a fearsome proposition for any opponent.

Despite all the competition though, Phoenix Rising's ambition was not dented. Rather, it only ignited with more passion.

And then...

2:30pm.

It was here.

In London, food trucks already lined the outskirts close to the London Coliseum. Drones zipped overhead, live-streaming fans belting club anthems and flexing cardboard cutouts of their favorite players.

Inside, the stadium pulsed like a leaving beast.

Spotlights swept across the crowd. The colossal central screen played an emotional montage of Phoenix Rising's legacy; from glorious wins to painful losses, and of course, Gabriel's viral speech from last season's elimination match, now immortalized in club history.

The commentators quickly took over, their voices slicing through the rising roar of fans.

Tariq, the male commentator started.

"Here we are, folks... Matchday 1, Season 12!"

"And what better place to kick it off than right here in London, Warstar's ancestral home, where Phoenix Rising are ready to scorch the pitch once again!"

Melissa, Tariq's assistant seamlessly continued. "That off-season was chaotic; new metas, club transfers, drama, memes, and enough roster shake-ups to break the internet. Of course, Echelon too".

"But right now, it's go time. All eyes are on Phoenix Rising. This is where all the theorycrafting ends, and the grind begins".

Tariq continued. "And you know the fans have been starving for this. Just look at that sea of red! Gabriel's name is getting chanted like he's some kind of war general, and honestly? With the way he plays, he might as well be".

"The pressure's on," Melissa chipped in. "And everyone wants to know, is this Phoenix Rising's season where they would take the throne from Cyber Squad or the one season where they'll finally falter?"

While the commentators spoke excitedly, the players already moved.

Phoenix Rising players walked out first.

The players walked onto the stage in formation; Gabriel at the front, flanked by the rest of the starting five.

Unlike most other top clubs of the English Pro Alliance, Phoenix Rising was one club that didn't undergo any major change during the summer. Not even their reserve players underwent any change.

All the changes to the club took place at the administrative side away from the game-playing pros.

As soon as the iconic 5 appeared on the stage, the crowd erupted.

BOOM!

Phoenix Rising fans sang their captain's name at the top of their lungs.

The game was yet to start, but the fans were already celebrating like their victory was assured. It was crazy. Confetti rained from above, amplifying the jubilant atmosphere that took over the stadium.

The technical side behind the scenes added to the flames as augmented reality projections of blazing phoenix wings flared behind them as their anthem boomed across the arena.

After them, Stormborn Esports' players finally entered the stage and the reception was glaringly different.

Compared to the deafening welcome that the Phoenix Rising players received, the reception for their opponents could as well have been a whisper.

Matchday 1 had begun, and in London, it felt like the rebirth of war.

The players entered their gaming booths.

[LOADING...]

The Avatars loaded into the arena and without hesitation, the game started.

[FIRST ROUND: INDIVIDUAL BATTLE]

For the first individual battle, like expected, Dain Ironvalor stepped up for Phoenix Rising to the tune of even more cheers from the fans.

Stormborn Esports' captain also took the stage to challenge his legendary opponent.

Yes, every club was indeed ambitious at this point of the season since a new and fresh season was just starting but as soon as Stormborn Esports' captain entered the same arena with his legendary opponent, Gabriel, Dain Ironvalor, he felt all his confidence drifting away like dust in a storm.

His confidence faltered, somber realism replacing his previous enthusiasm.

His Avatar was a Witch class, one of the more esoteric classes in Warstar. But this afternoon, nothing esoteric was enough to save him from the jaws of the most tyrannical Paladin in the game, DAIN IRONVALOR.

The battle started, and it was a one-sided affair.

Gabriel didn't even let out a sweat. Against the ageing captain of the opposing side, to him, it felt like a walk down the park.

He thrashed him, losing just 12% HP in the process.

---<VICTORY>---

The first victory in the individual battle round went to Phoenix Rising.

The second individual battle didn't go any different, Phoenix Rising claiming an easy win. On the third individual battle, a Blademaster represented Stormborn Esports and for the first time, it was a fair and tight duel.

But in the end, it was not enough, Phoenix Rising won again.

They were inevitable.

[Phoenix Rising: 3 points]

[Stormborn Esports: 0 point]

By the end of the individual battle round, Phoenix Rising fans around the London Coliseum were belting out chants of glory already.

In the 3 vs 3 battle rush, Dain Ironvalor almost completed a 3v1.

He was killed only after pushing his third opponent to red health already. For Phoenix Rising's second Avatar in the 3 vs 3 battle rush, defeating an Avatar whose HP was below 10% was a walk in the park.

Phoenix Rising also won the 3 vs 3 battle rush.

[Phoenix Rising: 5 points]

[Stormborn Esports: 0 point]

They were on their way to a flawless victory on matchday 1!

The energy of the fans in the stadium hit a crescendo.

For Stormborn Esports, their only hope of not making an embarrassing start to the new season was to win the team battle and secure a point, but against Phoenix Rising, that was highly unlikely.

The prediction was right because less than 10 minutes later...

---<VICTORY>---

[Phoenix Rising: 10 points]

[Stormborn Esports: 0 point]

The first game of the 12th season of the English Pro Alliance was a thriller.

Phoenix Rising secured a flawless victory against Stormborn Esports.

Chapter 200: A legendary matchday [1]

---<VICTORY>---

[Phoenix Rising: 10 points]

[Stormborn Esports: 0 point]

The first game of the 12th season of the English Pro Alliance was a thriller. Phoenix Rising secured a flawless victory against Stormborn Esports.

It was the perfect debut game for the new season that the media and the league organizers could have ever wished for. A perfect thriller, an exciting game filled with dominance, skill, and finesse, all sponsored by a legendary Phoenix Rising team led by the increasingly legendary Dain Ironvalor and its controller, Gabriel Ironwall.

Gabriel Ironwall... it was not his surname and yet that was what Gabriel was called these days, and it started after Phoenix Rising's captain led the club to a 4th consecutive RPG champions league win, right on Cyber Squad's heels.

On matchday 1, Gabriel Ironwall led his team to another dominant win, cementing the purple reign of his club as the benchmark in the English Pro Alliance after Cyber Squad's fall.

That was just one game in the matchday though.

Matchday 1 had more games, and the first few games fanned the flames of passion burning in the hearts of the fans.

[English Pro Alliance- Season 12:]

[Matchday 1:]

>Phoenix Rising vs Stormborn Esports<

[Phoenix Rising: 10 points]

[Stormborn Esports: 0 point]

>Winner: Phoenix Rising<

...

>Avalon Sovereign vs Cerberus core<

[Avalon Sovereign: 4 points]

[Cerberus Core: 5 points]

>Winner: Cerberus Core<

...

>Cyber Squad vs Lionheart Legacy<

>Time: 3:00pm<

...

>Pendragon Esports vs Exo Genesis<

>Time: 3:00pm<

In previous seasons of the English Pro Alliance, matchday 1 is usually stretched across days, mostly 3 days, pro clubs clashing in the first game of the season for supremacy.

But this season, the 12th season of the English Pro Alliance, the English FA tried a new format, employing the format of the last matchday on the first matchday.

This was why 4 games were scheduled to be played at the same time... 3:00pm.

2 were already played, but at the same time, 2 games were yet to be concluded, having extended to cover more time than the first 2 games.

Phoenix Rising's game was a thriller, but the game between Cerberus Core and Avalon Sovereign was not any less high-staked and filled with tension.

Like Phoenix Rising, Avalon Sovereign was the club at home but that did not make them escape the fury of the visitors.

Avalon started on the front foot, riding the energy of their home fans who filled the stadium and sailing their passion to secure quick double wins in the individual battle round.

Even Cerberus' captain lost against the Avalon captain in the first individual battle. And yet, they could not claim a clean wipe in the individual battle round as Cerberus' vice-captain secured a narrow win against her opponent.

That victory broke the Avalon momentum, but only slightly.

In the 3 vs 3 battle round, Avalon came out with even more hype and energy. They won convincingly, taking their total points tally to 4 points against their opponent's 1 point.

And yet, it was in the team battle that all hell broke loose, their momentum broken by sheer willpower of their opponents and their seamless teamwork.

Cerberus Core, a team with a core of bestial Avatars exploded when it mattered in the team battle, staying huddled and compact in enemy ground, against not just the pro players standing against them but also against the tens of thousands of fans jeering them in the stadium.

In the end, only one man was left standing... Cerberus' vice-captain, a Combat Mage.

Cerberus Core won against all odds.

It was a battle with a crazy twist, and now, all the focus went to the last 2 battles, mostly on one club that was tipped to return to their best this season, the Caster-led Cyber Squad.

The team battle already started.

[Cyber Squad: 3 points]

[Lionheart Legacy: 2 points]

Cyber Squad claimed a clean sweep of their opponents in the individual battle round, Stinger of War leading the way with a win over the opposition to an eventual flawless 3-0 win.

That performance left the stadium in London boiling in excitement, Cyber Squad fans bellowing war chants.

"The Battle God is back!" They sang.

And yet, despite the hype and excitement in the stadium, in the 3 vs 3 battle rush, Caster, Cyber Squad's captain made an inexplicable decision, omitting himself from the 3 vs 3 battle rush squad.

It led to protests from the home fans, booing their own players but Caster didn't budge or make a last minute change, leading to a brutal knockout by their opponents. Lionheart Legacy won the 3 vs 3 battle rush.

It led to outrage in the stadium.

While the fans questioned their captain though, none of the Cyber Squad players protested. They understood his decision, and they believed in him.

It was a tactical decision because while the opposition captain fought with his all to secure the grueling victory, Caster kept himself fresh for the team battle. Caster aimed to create an all-time dominant performance against a famous team.

And he did.

BAM!

As soon as the game started, Stinger of War exploded, embodying the spirit of the Battle God Avatar.

That afternoon, on the big screen, Cyber Squad were driven through the memory lane. They saw the Battle God again after so long of being leashed.

The Battle God, in his full glory wreaked havoc across enemy lines, leading a changed Cyber Squad team to a dominant team victory.

Individually, Caster claimed the man of the match award as with Stinger of War, he secured a legendary 3v1, snuffing the life out of 3 different enemy Avatars on the chaotic battlefield, including the enemy captain's Avatar.

At the end, no one remembered the 3 vs 3 battle rush.

At the end, tens of thousands of fans bellowed across the stadium.

"BATTLE GOD!"

"BATTLE GOD!"

"BATTLE GOD!"

It was a crazy one-man army performance from Caster; he put on a show for the fans. He gave them what they loved and wanted.

[Cyber Squad: 8 points]

[Lionheart Legacy: 2 points]

...

Cyber Squad's victory was confirmed before the final 3:00pm game came to an end. Pendragon Esports vs Exo Genesis was the most conservative game of the 3:00pm games.

Both teams were even, and instead of going for a reckless all-out battle, they choose a conservative and measured battle.

In the individual battle round, after 3 grueling battles that were all pushed to the time limit, Exo Genesis secured a 2-1 advantage over the home side.

And yet, in the 3 vs 3 battle rush, Pendragon Esports made their comeback. Like in the individual battle round, Exo Genesis was initially leading again but home advantage played a more significant role this time.

"BOOOOOOOO!!!"

The sound was deafening.

The boos drowning the Exo Genesis players was earsplitting. No matter how professional the players were, when faced against such a raucous atmosphere, they could not stay calm.

It was in the final clash of the 3 vs 3 battle rush that one of the players made a big blunder due to the pressure, allowing the Pendragon player to take advantage and make a stunning comeback.

The arena for the battle was a treacherous one, set on an active volcano. Due to his blunder, the Pendragon Avatar managed to push his enemy into the smoldering depths of the volcano, his Avatar suffering the fate of being burned alive.

He died in less than 5 seconds.

Just like that, Pendragon Esports started their comeback, now leading their opponents 3-2 in points.

Now, everything pointed to the team battle being the decider and both teams prepared for it with passion and determination.

In the end, none of all that mattered though, because the game was tight and even. Both teams pushed each other all the way.

An Exo Genesis player died first, but an opposition player from Pendragon died within 10 seconds to follow the first death. Their substitutes arrived at the same time, making it an even battle again.

The 2nd and 3rd deaths happened at the same time. Both Clerics were targeted, and both teams let it happen so they could deal more damage to their enemies in return using their Clerics as bait.

Both Clerics died at the same time. Once again, still no advantage.

Their 2nd substitutes entered the game at the same time. This was when Pendragon Esports finally took the lead, their captain securing a vital advantage by killing the enemy Paladin.

That opened Exo Genesis up, an advantage that spiraled into the eventual win. It was an advantage, but it didn't make the struggle to clinch the victory any easier for the home side.

Pendragon Esports fought tooth and nail for their win, and at the end, only 2 of their Avatars were left standing, battered and both at red health.

It was a close victory, but Pendragon Esports didn't care about the details.

What mattered is that they won.

[Pendragon Esports: 8 points]

[Exo Genesis: 2 points]

They secured all 3 points.

The score line at the end didn't reflect the grueling nature of the game. Exo Genesis played a good game in enemy ground.

After that game, Warstar fans across the country had a chance to rest. A basic English Pro Alliance game lasts an hour and 20 minutes; 80 minutes. 10 minutes for each

individual battle, 3 in total; 20 minutes for the 3 vs 3 battle rush, and 30 minutes for the team battle.

Most teams finish their games before time, but this is the normal timeframe, giving enough time for fans to rest before the next round of games.

The next round of games would start at 4:00pm.