

Reincarnated Avatar; I got 2 SSS-Rank Unique Skills

#Chapter 31: Ultimate Battle- a clash in the NetherRealm! [1]

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Chapter 31: Ultimate Battle- a clash in the NetherRealm! [1]

(Warstar World Championship:)

(Venue: Beaver Stadium)

(2nd Round:)

(Team England vs Team China)

(Individual Battle: nil)

(3 vs 3 Battle Rush: Winner- Team England; 0 points)

(5 vs 5 Team Battle: Winner- Team China; 0 points)

(Location: NetherRealm]

The NetherRealm is one of the unique locations in Warstar.

A battlefield unlike any other; an ominous, ever-shifting void where jagged obsidian platforms float above an abyss of swirling dark energy.

Chains of ghostly light link the islands, their glow faint and flickering. Fiery eruptions burst from the depths at random, while spectral shadows slither across the terrain, distorting vision and making movement unpredictable.

The air itself hums with dark magic, a chaotic, volatile force that punishes hesitation and rewards precision.

In Beaver Stadium, after both teams entered their respective gaming booths and logged into the game, this stadium became silent and tense.

It was clear that this game was different from the one that was played earlier.

Uncertainty and a certain thrill accompanied this game unlike that between Team U.S.A and Team Japan. Unlike the previous game that was played earlier, both of these

national teams were OG Warstar-playing countries, early adopters of the revolutionary video game.

While in England, there was Noah who reigned for a decade, in China, there was Meng Yu Wa, the ageless champion.

Meng Yu Wa's reign started later than Noah's as he was younger, but his fame was undoubtedly on the level of Noah's fame in the eSports circle in China.

Now, Noah's successor was the one to clash with China's Meng Yu Wa.

At the age of 24 now, Meng Yu Wa was at his peak.

The tension was palpable.

The ever-joking Gabriel still had a carefree smile on his face in the gaming booth, but his teammates who were closest to him actually knew the truth that he was tensed. Gabriel being tensed meant that he was serious.

This was how he was when they played against team Cyber Squad in the final of the Warstar RPG Champions league back in England.

The ever-carefree captain becomes like this when playing truly hard games.

A game against Meng Yu Wa was undoubtedly a truly hard one.

'I've beat Noah already, beating Meng Yu Wa won't be any different!' Gabriel chanted in his mind as his character went in first.

He made a decisive decision; he would fight in the first individual battle.

And just as his character started loading, China also decisively made their decision; they also sent their best avatar, Meng Yu Wa's Autumn Rain.

"Wow..., what a way to start this game!"

"It's Autumn Rain vs Dain Ironvalor right from the onset!"

"Damn! Dare not blink an eye, this is a game for the ages!"

As soon as the counter finished counting and the game started, the arena exploded into a storm of steel and energy.

BOOM!

The first individual battle was crazy and intense.

Against Meng Yu Wa, Gabriel dared not hold back as his APM went haywire!

Tap! Tap! Tap!

The rhythmic sound being made by his keyboard sounded like the drumbeats of war even as his in-game Avatar, Dain Ironvalor carried his will against the formidable Blademaster from China.

The individual battles have a time limit of 10 minutes and in an incredible display of skill and self-preservation, both avatars clashed for 9 minutes, 13 seconds before one of them finally collapsed.

---<VICTORY>---

The word victory flashed across the stadium screens.

Behind his computer, sweat dripped down Gabriel's forehead, his fingers spasming uncontrollably due to how much he just exerted himself.

He stared at his monitor where his beloved Avatar, Dain Ironvalor laid in a pool of blood, the imperious Blademaster towering above him.

"Bastard!" Gabriel cursed, chuckling. "In the end, he still won".

"What a monster!"

Laughing light-heartedly, he turned to face the next player that was scheduled to go on. "You better avenge me".

"I will, captain". His teammate said seriously.

The crowd was still reeling from the outcome of that exceedingly intense battle between 2 legendary Avatars when the next individual battle started.

Again, Team England lost to Team China.

On the 3rd individual battle though, Team England finally won through their Warlock, rescuing a point despite Team China's onslaught.

The outcome of the individual battle created even more animosity between both national teams, and this extended to the 3 vs 3 Battle Rush.

Having finally fought personally with Meng Yu Wa and gauging his skill level perfectly, Gabriel approached the 3 vs 3 battle rush with a strategy in mind.

His Paladin, Team England's reserve Summoner, and their reserve Cleric were the 3 that Gabriel decided to use in the 3 vs 3 battle rush.

No one understood his strategy, even the commentators.

Only the true Warstar experts knew.

...

In a room in Birmingham City, England...

"He's trying to wear Meng Yu Wa out, too scared to face him head-on," Aria muttered as she watched the game, idly munching on popcorns. "Weak". She added.

Due to the nature of this game, Aria traveled all the way from Coventry City to Birmingham City just so she could watch it alongside her friends so they would discuss and analyze it together.

"But that's the best strategy". Caleb said, looking at Aria.

"Facing people like Meng Yu Wa and Noah, the best strategy is to wear them out, to try shackling them to the best of your ability".

He looked back at the TV screen. "He succeeded with us the last time, shackling Noah, can he do the same with Meng Yu Wa?"

...

---<VICTORY>---

(Winner: Team China)

Team China won again but this time, not because they annihilated Team England but rather because after 20 minutes, they had the most avatars standing.

Gabriel shamelessly dragged the game through all 20 allocated minutes, but this did not mean it was boring, not in the slightest.

It was intense and end to end for all 20 minutes of this 3 vs 3 battle rush.

Meng Yu Wa was pushed to the limit, playing explosively but still he couldn't win decisively, waiting for the clock to run out instead.

The genius from China was irked, and most likely exhausted.

'Yes!' This was Gabriel's masterplan.

It was a big gamble on his part. Now, he left the rest to fate.

Team England was trailing behind Team China 1 point to 5 points, and now, the team battle came to decide this incredible battle at the world stage.

Chapter 32: Ultimate Battle- a clash in the NetherRealm! [2]

(Warstar World Championship:)

(Venue: Beaver Stadium)

(2nd Round:)

(Team England vs Team China)

(Individual Battle: 1 point – 2 points)

(3 vs 3 Battle Rush: Winner- Team China; 3 points)

(5 vs 5 Team Battle: Winner- nil)

(Location: NetherRealm)

...

(Team England Total Points: 1)

(Team China Total Points: 5)

It was the moment of truth.

The moment to decide the outcome of this world tournament, and the last qualifier to the final of the Warstar RPG World Championship.

As Team England and Team China's players took their positions, loading into the familiar arena again, the crowd in the stadium went silent in anticipation.

This was more than just a team match, it promised more than that. It was a war of Captains, a battle of wit, steel and willpower between Team England's Gabriel and Team China's Meng Yu Wa.

Tick! Tock!

The arena timer ticked down and when it finally hit zero, like a supernova, the NetherRealm erupted into pure chaos.

The battle began.

Team China wasted no time. Autumn Rain, a phantom of speed and steel was the first to move, vanishing in a flicker of red lightning before materializing behind Team England's Warlock, his twin blades carving through the air with terrifying precision.

Team England was ready though, and alert.

The Warlock barely raised a shadow barrier in time, but the force of the attack sent him sliding across the battlefield, dangerously close to the edge of an abyss. He was still in the battle.

The NetherRealm was dangerous in the sense that falling off into the endless abyss meant automatic death, adding an extra layer to this unique location.

At the same time as Autumn Rain clashed with England's Warlock, China's Summoner began his incantation, using a summoning skill.

A massive four-armed Nether Titan rose from the void, its flowing eyes locking onto England's Elementalists.

With a thunderous roar, the massive Titan stomped forward, shaking the platforms as it swung its massive arms, forcing Team England to scatter.

That was when Dain Ironvalor finally made his presence known.

{Light Infusion=}

A high-level Paladin skill!

Light Infusion imbues the caster or an ally's weapon with holy energy, causing their attacks to deal extra radiant damage.

Against creatures of darkness, it was an especially lethal skill.

Gabriel's Dain Ironvalor bellowed a war cry and charged, golden energy blazing around his sword, then...

BAM!

He collided head-on with the Nether Titan, slamming his shield into its chest and sending it stumbling backward.

In that short time, his Elementalists recovered, launching a combined storm of fire and ice at the Summoner, forcing him to retreat.

On the other side of the battlefield, Team China's Launcher, a heavily armed specialist wielding a high-tech magic cannon already took position atop a floating platform, calmly taking aim.

He locked onto Team England's Combat Mage, unleashing a barrage of explosive arcane missiles that rained down with terrifying accuracy.

BZZZ!

In response, England's Combat Mage teleported frantically between platforms, barely avoiding a direct hit.

During the early exchanges in this team battle, both national teams were even as they tested each other out for a time.

As the battle raged, Autumn Rain stepped forward once more.

Meng Yu Wa finally decided to amp the tempo.

This time, having activated a skill, his blades were stained with energy, his form surrounded by an eerie yet tyrannical aura.

He moved with unnatural speed, weaving through attacks, dodging spells, and cutting through Team England's defenses like a storm of death.

The King was unleashed.

Watching this scene, the spectators in this stadium experienced a feeling of déjà vu.

This was similar to what Meng Yu Wa did against the Germans. But in this occasion though, Gabriel was not having it.

Gabriel's Paladin saw the threat and bravely confronted it.

The two captains clashed in a breathtaking duel, sword against sword, faith against fury!

BOOM!

The arena itself trembled from the sheer force of their blows.

The Paladin blocked, parried, and countered against the relentless Blademaster, standing as an unbreakable bulwark against Meng Yu Wa's unceasing assault. But it lasted only for a time.

Meng Yu Wa was on a different level.

Every strike the Chinese Captain delivered carried an overwhelming force, a precision so ruthless that even the Paladin, famed for his resilience began to falter.

Dain Ironvalor's armor revealed cracks, his golden shield flickering even as his movements became just a little slower.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Team England's Warlock, Elementalists, and Combat Mage fought desperately to turn the tide.

Team England was stalwart and relentless.

They brought down the Nether Titan, they pushed back the Launcher, and they eventually broke through the Summoner's defenses. It seemed like they might hold on, that they might just do it, but then...

...Meng Yu Wa struck!

In a moment of terrifying clarity, the Blademaster dashed past the Paladin, so fast that he left behind an afterimage.

One strike..., two strikes..., five strikes..., ten strikes...

Bam! Bam! Bam!

His swords became phantom streaks of light, carving through Team England like a ghostly executioner.

The Warlock fell first, his body cut through with precision strikes.

One of the Elementalists tried to escape but Autumn Rain was already upon them, his blades ending its life with a single powerful downward slash.

At this moment, Gabriel's all-offensive attack formation was faltering!

All of their HPs were already at red!

Dain Ironvalor, wounded but still defiant roared and charged once more, swinging his great sword with all his might as he activated another skill.

The battlefield shook under the sheer force of his final stand.

But the Blademaster was merciless, Meng Yu Wa was merciless.

He sidestepped at the last possible moment, letting the Paladin's sword carve through nothing but air.

And then he moved, unleashing one final clean slash across the Paladin's chest.

The golden glow of the Paladin's armor shattered.

He stumbled, his sword slipping from his grasp even as he fell to one knee before eventually collapsing in defeat.

"..."

The NetherRealm fell silent.

Beaver Stadium fell silent.

---<VICTORY>---

The victory screen flashed, announcing the winner.

Chapter 33: Final of the Warstar RPG World Championship [1]

---<VICTORY>---

The victory screen flashed, announcing the winner.

The NetherRealm fell silent.

Beaver Stadium fell silent.

For a few seconds, the spectating fans paid their respects to the ultimate battle that they just witnessed in one of the most iconic locations in Warstar.

'What... a battle!' They all thought.

'If only this was the final, and not just the 2nd round battle!'

The screen flashed again, showcasing the final score of this epic battle.

(Warstar World Championship:)

(Venue: Beaver Stadium)

(2nd Round:)

(Team England vs Team China)

(Individual Battle: 1 point – 2 points)

(3 vs 3 Battle Rush: Winner- Team China; 3 points)

(5 vs 5 Team Battle: Winner- Team China; 5 points)

(Location: NetherRealm)

...

(Team England Total Points: 1)

(Team China Total Points: 9)

...

(Winner: Team China)

To think that a whole Team England, one of the oldest Warstar-playing countries would suffer a humiliation of this level.

The display of the scoreline above in the gigantic 3-way holographic screen became the cue for the Chinese fans as they roared at the top of their lungs.

They sang the name of their captain.

"Meng Yu Wa!" "Meng Yu Wa!" "Meng Yu Wa!"

In that moment, Gabriel felt what his senior felt weeks ago when they won against them in the Warstar RPG Champions League.

'Damn! This is awful'.

'And there's no backstage to escape either'.

The players finally came out of the gaming booths.

The England players had disappointed looks on their faces. It was not just the fact that they lost, but the manner in which they lost.

Losing by just 1 point to their opponent's 9 points was a bitter pill to swallow.

At the other side stood Team China, and Meng Yu Wa.

Meng Yu Wa was a tall, muscular man with a stern expression; he wore traditional Chinese clothing with subtle hints of his powerful in-game aura.

He had dark blue eyes that hid deep meaning and long black hair that he wore in a ponytail, with several large additional strands of hair dangling from his head like leaves from a tree.

'This guy...!' Gabriel felt irked. 'Why is he staring at me like that?'

'Bastard! Are you looking down on me?!'

Gabriel was gentle but mostly in front of the media. In reality, just like most other pro Warstar players at the very top, he was very competitive.

And at this moment, that look on his opponent's face irked him.

He walked over to Meng Wu Ya smiling, the tall and handsome Chinese man staring him down all the way.

When he got close enough, Gabriel leaned in with a harmless smile. "You cheap Lui Zhigang knock-off!" He cleverly pinched Meng Yu Wa by the waist.

"You beat me this time. But beware, next time, I'm coming for first place".

Meng Wu Ya looked down at him with an impassive look on his face. "You're free to try".

'He's looking down at me..., who does he have to be taller than me?' Gabriel felt even more irked. 'Is he really looking down on me?!'

'Bastard!'

Inside, Team England's captain raged but before the camera, he maintained a gentle smile of a graceful sportsman on his face who accepted loss with a cool demeanor as he trudged out of the stage with his teammates.

They left the stage for Meng Wu Ya and his team to bask in the glory.

Team England's journey was cut short.

'Dammit!' Gabriel clenched his fists tightly as he and his team walked off.

...

Birmingham City, England...

"Tsk, what a man!" Benjamin chuckled as he stared at the screen, at Meng Wu Ya who hogged most of the attention. "Not as manly as I am though!" He added with a grin.

"F*ck off!" Genevieve glared at him.

Benjamin sighed with grievance. "To the outside world, you're this gentle Angel of peace, if only they see how you treat me..."

"That's because you deserve it!" Genevieve was getting agitated.

"That's enough". Caleb came in between them, calming them down.

"This Meng Wu Ya...", Aria could not help but mutter, her competitive spirit rising. "To think that he would be the one to teach that Gabriel a lesson on our behalf, humph! This big sister didn't send you".

Standing up, she snuck towards the Warstar console and its connected monitor. "Hey," she spoke to the screen.

"This Meng Wu Ya is really something".

"In your peak, you and him, who would win?"

Lord Doom chuckled the next moment from inside the game. "How many times will I have to say this?"

He sighed. "I'd win".

"Hmph!" Aria snorted. "Cocky bastard".

None of them wasted time though as quickly setting the game up, they logged into Warstar the next moment.

They were eager to level up as fast as possible.

They were all already above level 10.

Before entering the game, Genevieve could not help but incline her head to look at Aria. "Hmmm..., you're not returning to meet your boyfriend?"

"And miss the final? Not a chance!"

Genevieve shrugged. "What's there to watch? China would win, and most likely, they won't even get to play a team battle as they'll snatch 6 points from both the individual battles and the 3 vs 3 Battle Rush".

"Tomorrow, we'll know".

...

Meng Yu Wa was extremely famous in the eSports community in China, but this was largely restricted to just there.

Afterall, every Warstar-playing country had their own established pro scene and their own God level players.

They would definitely respect their God level players more than experts from other countries but after the performance against Team England, Meng Yu Wa's reputation precede him.

The Chinese King's name spread across the borders of China.

This was why in the wait and build-up to the final of the Warstar RPG World Championship, the question was not if China could win, but rather if they would be able to win without playing the team battle.

This removed most of the element of surprise and excitement from the final, but a record-breaking crowd was ready to watch it nonetheless.

Afterall, they wanted to see Meng Wu Ya in action again.

Time moved fast and in a little while, another 24 hours already passed.

The final of the Warstar RPG World Championship between Team U.S.A and Team England started.

Chapter 34: Final of the Warstar RPG World Championship [2]

---<VICTORY>---

(Winner: Team China)

The whole world expected Team China to dominate once again in the final of the Warstar RPG World Championship, and the spectacle didn't deviate much from expectations, just that U.S.A performed better than expected.

It was not a clean sweep, avoiding the team battle all-together like most Warstar fans expected.

In the individual battles, Team U.S.A's captain managed to snatch a narrow victory, the 1 point being the catalyst that now pushed them to a decisive team battle against the strongest national team in the tournament.

This was how the battle now looked like.

(Warstar World Championship:)

(Venue: Metlife Stadium)

(Final:)

(Team China vs Team U.S.A)

(Individual Batte: 2 points – 1 point)

(3 vs 3 Battle Rush: Winner- Team China; 3 points)

(5 vs 5 Team Battle: Winner- nil)

(Location: Netherstorm Citadel)

...

(Team China Total Points: 5)

(Team U.S.A Total Points: 1)

For the big occasion, the 82k+ capacity Metlife Stadium in New Jersey, U.S.A was filled to the brim with passionate fans of the revolutionary video game.

The location this time was the Netherstorm Citadel, a relatively obscure arena among the numerous locations in the myriad world of Warstar.

The Netherstorm Citadel looms over the battlefield like a forgotten relic of an ancient war, a shattered fortress floating amidst an endless storm of violet lightning and arcane winds.

Its massive stone bridges, suspended in midair by unseen forces serve as treacherous battlegrounds while unstable magic zones randomly distort gravity, shifting the rules of engagement at unpredictable intervals.

The sky above churned with dark clouds, and every thunderclap shook the ruins beneath the warriors' feet.

The audience was electric, expecting an intense showdown between both national teams, a new sentiment that arose after Team U.S.A made it all the way to the team battle against Team U.S.A.

Having created a miracle against Team Japan already, making it all the way to the team battle against Team China, maybe U.S.A was about to create another miracle?

This was a battle between 2 different Warstar ideologies, a battle between the Blademaster-led titans and a team built around mental warfare and mechanical precision made lethal through teamwork.

Maybe, just maybe, U.S.A could create another upset.

So they thought..., but what followed was not a battle, it was a massacre.

As soon as the countdown hit zero, it started.

(Fight=)

For Team U.S.A, this was a game of trying to grasp for heaven.

Eager to create something memorable, the match began with Team U.S.A's Psychics attempting to seize control early, their eyes glowing with eerie power as they unleashed waves of mind-warping energy, distorting perception and slowing reaction time.

Their plan was simple and clear; shut down Meng Yu Wa before he could take over the fight.

But the Chinese were unfazed.

Meng Yu Wa didn't even need to see his enemies. He moved by instinct, his sword cutting through illusions and psychic barriers as if they were mere mist.

Within seconds, he already closed the gap, appearing in front of one of the Psychics and then...

{Judgement Strike=}

An Awakened level Blademaster skill!

Judgement Strike is an Awakened level skill that channels energy into a single devastating strike, cleaving through multiple enemies in a straight line.

If it triggers a critical hit, it's damage numbers skyrockets even more.

The input required to activate this Awakened level skill was crazy but in that short window, Meng Yu Wa already typed in the required input.

BAM!

One strike.

A flash of crimson energy and then, the Psychic's health bar vanished.

"...!"

Shock rippled through Metlife Stadium.

"OH MY GODDDD...!" The commentators screamed.

"Meng Yu Wa...!!!"

"Meng Yu Waaaa...!"

"One hit, one kill!"

In the final of the Warstar RPG World Championship, the Chinese King added to his growing legend, killing a U.S.A avatar in one hit!

A lot of factors including the fact that he triggered a critical hit and the fact that it was against a cloth-armor Avatar factored into creating this reality, but still, sheer skill was required to actually do it.

Meng Yu Wa's depth... was unfathomable.

"...!"

For a second or two, Team U.S.A were stunned by the sudden reality.

Meanwhile, Team China's Summoner called forth a Storm Behemoth, an enormous, lightning-clad beast that stomped through the battlefield, disrupting Team U.S.A's backline.

At the same time, China's Launcher locked onto Team U.S.A's captain, the Mechanic, unleashing a rain of arcane explosives that shred through defensive turrets before they could fully deploy.

The final team battle was just starting but Team U.S.A were already losing ground and on the cusp of losing.

Seeing his team in danger, Team U.S.A's Blademaster bravely charged forward to challenge Meng Yu Wa, the King of Blademasters.

The American was fast, strong, and relentless, but he was sorely outmatched.

The battle between Blademasters lasted only a few brutal seconds.

Meng Yu Wa was simply too dominant. He countered every move, predicted every feint, and dismantled his opponent like an artist carving stone.

A final phantom slash cut through the American Blademaster, sending him crashing to the ground, defeated.

His Cleric was helpless to do anything.

Without their strongest DPS avatar, Team U.S.A finally crumbled.

The second Team U.S.A Psychic tried to retreat but the Summoner's Storm Behemoth launches a massive bolt of void lightning, stunning him in place.

China's Launcher followed up with a devastating Railgun Shot.

Another elimination; utterly ruthless.

Team U.S.A's Mechanic and captain desperately tried to deploy a last-minute turret barrage but was engulfed by a pillar of fire from Team China's Elementalist.

The flames consumed his HP in an instant.

For the Americans, only 1 Avatar was left standing, their Cleric.

The situation on the arena looked comedic, it was like watching a Sheep that was trapped among a pack of Wolves.

With no allies left, Team U.S.A's Cleric raised his staff, preparing one last desperate spell, the only Awakened level Cleric skill, Mass Revive.

The Revive high level Cleric skill brings a fallen ally back into the fight, though with limited health and stamina.

But the Awakened level Mass Revive can cause a massive, map-wide resurrection of up to 10 allies being revived in the game.

But before the Cleric could finish the incantation, like a phantom ghost, Meng Yu Wa appeared before the hapless Sheep.

There was no hesitation in his movements. One final slash.

Game over.

---<VICTORY>---

The victory screen flashed before the match timer even reached the halfway mark.

" ... "

Silence.

Chapter 35: World Champions

---<VICTORY>---

The victory screen flashed before the match timer even reached the halfway mark.

"..."

Silence.

An eerie, total silence descended across the iconic Metlife Stadium.

Even the commentators were left speechless for a few moments.

They looked at the time, and they felt even more flabbergasted.

{13:48}

"My God...!!!"

"14 minutes! 14 actual minutes to finish the Warstar RPG World Championship final, what a freaking game!" The commentators finally recovered from their momentary shock as they raved about the Chinese display.

"Utter domination!"

"Utter humiliation, what a game!"

"Ladies and gentlemen..., this is Warstar!"

"The only video game in the world sophisticated enough to enable skill reflect in its full glory so evidently, what a spectacle it was!"

"Befitting of the penultimate game of the World Championship!"

"U.S.A decimated, Meng Yu Wa and his China sainted!"

"They are now Immortals!"

"Meng Wu Ya and his teammates, their name is forever entrenched in the history of the first edition of the Warstar RPG World Championship!"

While the commentators raved, the fans finally recovered.

Most of them were still in shock. Some cheered, others simply sat in stunned silence; this wasn't a battle, this was a f*cking execution!

At some point, even the usually fluent and eloquent commentators struggled to put in the right words to describe what they just witnessed.

Team China didn't just win, they annihilated the hosts, Team U.S.A, not giving a damn about their status.

They were ruthless and competitive, relentless till the end.

It was some time already since the victory screen flashed but the pro players were yet to come out of their gaming booths. Not giving a damn about their emotional state, the camera cut to the Team U.S.A players without mercy.

Some shook their heads in disbelief, others sat motionless, staring at their screens with hollow eyes, unable to process what just happened.

But the real focus was on Team China's Blademaster, the Captain, Meng Wu Ya. The handsome Chinese was as composed as ever, barely acknowledging the destruction that he just unleashed in the game.

He didn't celebrate even as his teammates celebrated around him, neither did he smile. But there was a subtle hint of a smirk on his face.

Clearly, even he was giddy at this achievement.

But the commentators misread his composed demeanor though. "God Meng Wu Ya, the King of Warstar!"

"I once heard that there's a Godfather of Warstar somewhere in England, f*ck that, this is the real Godfather!"

"Just see the look on his face. To him, this wasn't a challenge at all".

"This was just another step towards absolute victory!"

This was Meng Wu Ya's moment and he was not polite, he basked in it even as he and his teammates finally came out of the gaming booth.

A few minutes later...

The arena was electric with the energy of thousands of roaring fans.

Spotlights danced across the stage, illuminating the massive championship trophy, an imposing structure of gleaming obsidian and radiant gold, crowned with a swirling core of arcane energy.

The tournament's grand stage, now set for the award ceremony was a spectacle of flashing lights, cascading fireworks, and dramatic orchestral music.

The commentators' voices boomed across the Metlife Stadium, recapping the tournament's most unforgettable moments from day 1, Dain Ironvalor's unbreakable defense, Team U.S.A Psychics' mind-warping abilities that led to the upset against Team Japan, and then Meng Wu Ya's absolute domination.

All of it was memorable.

And now, it was time to honor the warriors who fought to the very end.

"3rd position, Team England".

As the announcer called their name, Team England who were dressed in casual clothes today stepped into the podium, earning their rightful place as the tournament's third-place finishers.

There was no third-place battle, the third-place finisher was decided through certain parameters that are set by the Warstar World Championship committee, and they were the ones who choose Team England ahead of Team Japan as the third-place finishers.

Gabriel, Team England's indomitable captain led the team forward, standing tall despite the bruises of battle that he sustained in this tournament.

Watching them climb the stage, the crowd erupted in respect.

Team England had fought like warriors across their 1st and 2nd round battles, refusing to back down even against impossible odds.

Replays of their epic duels flashed across the big screen, showing their fire, resilience, and their never-say-die spirit.

Captain Gabriel was given the opportunity to say a few words to the fans after their bronze medals were handed to them.

Facing the camera, he smiled apologetically. "To our fans back home, sorry we could not bring home the big trophy".

"But I promise you, next season, we'll definitely bring it home!" He grinned.

"We may not have won today, but we will return!"

After team England, Team U.S.A stepped onto the second-highest podium, their silver medals glinting under the stadium lights.

Though their final battle ended in brutal defeat, they had fought their way to the grand finals cleverly with skill, precision, and strategy.

They were deserving of respect.

The 2 Psychic controllers stood side by side, their expressions unreadable. The Blademaster controller despite suffering a humbling loss against Meng Wu Ya remained composed, his mind already replaying the match, analyzing every move.

Afterall, they were professional eSports players.

The Mechanic controller, Team U.S.A's captain exchanged quiet words with the Cleric controller, acknowledging the battles that they survived.

As the silver medals were placed around their necks, the crowd roared in appreciation. They may have fallen in the final, but they definitely pushed further than most could ever dream of in this tournament.

They accepted their fate with pride.

For U.S.A, a country that was a relatively new adopter of the revolutionary video game, Warstar, making it all the way to the final was a big achievement.

And then, the moment that the world has been waiting for...

The stadium lights dimmed for a brief moment, and when they flashed back on, the golden spotlights landed on Team China, the victors.

The undisputed champions. World champions.

The music swelled to a triumphant crescendo as they stepped onto the highest podium, their gold medals shimmering like crowns of glory.

The crowd was deafening, chanting their names, their cheers echoing across the entire arena.

At the center of it all stood the Blademaster controller, Meng Wu Ya.

His expression remained unreadable, his eyes cold and calculating, as if this was merely an inevitability, as if there was never any doubt in him standing in this podium from the beginning of the tournament.

...

Somewhere in Birmingham City, England...

"Pretentious!" Aria grumbled angrily. "So f*cking pretentious, and he's not even the best Blademaster! If he's so good, let him come PK with me!"

"Hehe," Benjamin chuckled in a good-natured manner. "He reminds me of my peak; his aura is not quite as peak as mine was though".

Genevieve sighed in exasperation, glaring at him.

In silence, from the monitor, Noah listened as everything transpired, for the first time in a while lamenting why he was stuck in the game and could not witness everything that was happening normally.

...

Metlife Stadium, New Jersey, U.S.A...

Under the spotlights of a whole generation of Warstar-playing fans, Meng Wu Ya stepped forward, his gloved hands gripping the trophy's base and with a single effortless motion, he lifted it high above his head.

BOOM!

The entire arena exploded into pure euphoria.

Fireworks burst across the sky, golden confetti rained down, and the tournament's anthem roared through the speakers.

Meng Wu Ya's teammates stood beside him, their faces reflecting relief, triumph, and pride.

The Summoner controller raised a fist, the Launcher grinned and pumped his arms in victory, while the Elementalist and Cleric controllers exchanged knowing glances, basking in the moment.

They enjoyed it in their own various ways.

At that moment, they were untouchable. They were legends.

The cameras flashed, the world watched, and the history books were written.

This was their coronation.

They are the Kings of the arena.

Chapter 36: Official announcements

A day after the final of the Warstar RPG World Championship, the remaining foreign national teams in New Jersey, U.S.A finally embarked on their return trip.

While Meng Yu Wa's party embarked on their triumphant return to China, Gabriel's party also embarked on their return journey to England.

They took Qatar airlines.

Bzzz!

The cabin hummed with the steady drone of the engines as the plane cruised through the sky. Sunlight streamed in through the oval window, casting a pale glow on the face of the young man sitting closest to it.

Gabriel leaned against the cool glass, his breath faintly fogging the surface. His dark brown hair was slightly tousled, and he absentmindedly twirled a loose thread on his jumper as his blue eyes remained fixed on the view outside.

"You've been staring out there for the past half-hour," Team England's Vice Captain, Oliver, also the Elementalist controller inclined his head to look at his captain. "You're still thinking of that Meng Wu Ya, right?"

Gabriel did not answer immediately, rather, he looked across where his other teammates sat in the plane and then he finally responded.

"Yeah," he chuckled. "I just can't get it out of my head".

He looked at his Vice Captain. "Oliver, I've been thinking, Meng Yu Wa's level, was that the type of level that God Noah played at in his peak?"

Oliver shrugged. "I don't know, during his absolute peak we were still broke toddlers dreaming of playing Warstar". He chuckled. "Maybe he got to that level too, but why are you suddenly curious?"

Gabriel looked outside the window again. "Thinking back to how dominantly that bastard beat us, even completing a 1 vs 3," he sighed. "I suddenly feel bad for winning against God Noah's team".

He looked at Oliver. "We beat them at their weakest, and now I no longer feel like it's such a big achievement".

"They were already past their peak".

Oliver rolled his eyes. "You're joking, right?"

"Yeah, I am," Gabriel chuckled. "No matter what version of Noah it is, winning against a team led by him is not easy".

And then, his eyes turned dreamy. "I wonder who would win, in a PK fight between God Noah and Meng Wu Ya".

He grinned. "I'd pay to watch that".

"Instead of thinking of that, let's start preparing now on how we'll topple Meng Wu Ya to snatch the next World Championship trophy. To do that, we need to secure another King of England champions league trophy first".

Gabriel nodded. "Talking of the World Championship," he looked at his Vice Captain. "I think they'll release news concerning it soon".

"Huh?"

Gabriel rubbed his chin in thought before answering. "Think about it, if we play the World Championship every year just like the champions league, its identity would no longer be as unique".

"The World Championship was created to be the ultimate trophy of Warstar, a trophy that every professional eSports player should strive to get as his highest achievement, this is why I think they'll try to make winning it a rarity".

"Really?"

"Yeah," Gabriel nodded. "Football's World Cup tournament is played every 4 years, maybe Warstar will employ the same format?"

Gabriel and Oliver conversed for a large part of the journey, analyzing different topics, most hovering between the dynamic called Meng Wu Ya and Noah.

...

1 week later...

The world was still reeling from the aftermath of the Warstar RPG World Championship that concluded not too long ago and, in this time, a lot of things happened as the eSports arena calmed a bit after the end of the campaign.

With the Warstar RPG World Championship concluding, all the professional eSports clubs and their players could finally rest.

It was holiday time.

Of course, while the eSports alliance and the league campaigns went through their holiday period, inside the game itself was still lively.

Millions of players continued enjoying themselves, adventuring, and exploring the myriad world of Warstar, including its rich lore.

Among these players was a certain crew.

With the end of the World Championship, motivated even more by that, Noah and his teammates poured their time and energy into the game, leveling up at a rapid speed as they climbed the new server rankings.

Like this, 1 week passed and then, the official X platforms of the Warstar World Championship, the English Pro Alliance, and the Warstar Developers released announcements with only a few hours difference separating the posts.

Just like every other campaign, the English Pro Alliance would have a long 2 months' holiday after the campaign end in preparation for a new league season.

And long before time, the English Pro Alliance committee would release the fixtures for the new season, including the date for the first game of the season.

(Official Account: English Pro Alliance)

(Announcement!)

(The 11th season of the English Pro Alliance will commence on 14th August, 2036 and the first game of the season will be between Team Quantum Strikers and Team Crimson Vipers)

...

(NEW! Rule Change!)

(Certain rule changes have been made for the new campaign.)

(For regular league games, the 10-point system will still be employed but after the league phase, in the playoff phase between the top 6 teams to determine the Warstar RPG Champions League winner, the new 11-point system that was used in the World Championship will be employed to avoid the problem of drawing games, leading to rematches or unfavorable decider conditions.)

...

(By the end of the 10th season, 3 eSports clubs were relegated from the English Pro Alliance, namely Team AI Dominators, Team Cyber Titans, and Team Rogue Predators.)

(At the same time, 3 eSports clubs have fulfilled the requirements to gain promotion to the English Pro Alliance, namely Team Neon Sentinels, Team Stormborn Knights, and Team Prime Ascendants.)

...

(The full season fixture for the 2036/2037 English Warstar RPG campaign will be released in due time:)

The premise for a new campaign of the English Pro Alliance was already set, and Noah and his teammates were not part of it.

They were not disappointed by it though, rather, they expected it.

The biggest problem that plagued Noah's group of retirees was not coming out of retirement, instead the biggest problem was actually creating a roster of powerful max level 100 Avatars that are strong enough to compete in the pro scene.

A max level 100 Warstar Avatar could not be created in just 2 months. The more you level up, the harder it becomes to level up.

This was why every single Warstar Avatar is so precious.

It is the result of the sweat and tears of an avid gamer who poured his heart and soul into the game, grinding to create a max level Warstar Avatar.

Noah and his teammates returning to the pro scene was not going to be an immediate endeavor.

Having lost their original 1st server Avatars, they were going to be patient and take their time building Avatars that were strong enough to compete.

Hours later after the official account of the English Pro Alliance released their post, the official account of the Warstar World Championship also made a post that attracted a lot of attention.

(Official Account: Warstar World Championship)

(Announcement!)

(After the first edition of the Warstar World Championship and its resounding success, we organized a gathering, meeting with the top authorities of Warstar around the world, including the developers and we arrived at a decision.)

(The Warstar World Championship is not an annual competition.)

(The Warstar World Championship will be played every 2 years, and the final of the next World Championship will be hosted in the City of Paris, France.)

(France are the hosts of the Warstar RPG World Championship 2038!)

The Warstar community was taken by storm by the announcements.

Apparently, the decision to make the World Championship a 2-year tournament was partly because professional eSports players do not usually have the longevity of other physical sports like football.

At most, a professional eSports player could win the tournament a few times.

After the announcement by the World Championship committee, just an hour later, the official account of the game developers of Warstar made a post.

Their post created the greatest storm in the Warstar community.

Chapter 37: Update

(Official Account: Warstar RPG)

(Developers Update:)

(Introduction of SSS-Rank and SS-Rank Unique Skills!)

...

The title of the announcement alone already left the Warstar community reeling in excitement, the body of the message ignited even more frenzy among the fanbase of the most popular video game in the world.

...

(For a long time in the game, the rank of equipment and unique skills have ranged from D rank to S rank, the difficulty of getting one increasing exponentially the higher up the rank ladder you climb.)

(But after a summer of brainstorming, we've created an update for the game, the introduction of SSS-Rank and SS-Rank unique skills.)

(Not just unique skills, we've also developed SSS-Rank and SS-Rank equipment in the game but they are limited.)

(Only 5 SSS-Rank unique skills and equipment are available in the game.)

(There are only 10 SS-Rank unique skills and equipment available in the game.)

(To get them, you need to stumble into fortuitous encounters in the game, and a hard skill challenge is required to claim one.)

(Goodluck Warmongers!)

(See you in the game!)

It was an understatement to say that a storm was induced in the game.

For 12 years of Warstar now, there had only been D to S-rank unique skills and equipment that were available in the game. To suddenly learn that 2 new ranks of unique skills and equipment was introduced, it caused a storm in the game.

This was not just an event that was going to affect the game, it was also going to affect the landscape of the Warstar Pro Alliances simply because a unique skill tagged SSS-Rank had the potential of changing the scene.

Originally, at level 100 already with maxed out stats and skill points, everything, Avatars that play in the Pro Alliance don't have a need to level up any longer but with this new update, the scenario changed.

An SSS-Rank unique skill or an equipment had the potential to be a game changer, and every in-game Avatar clamored for it.

In the next few days that followed the update, God level accounts that normally don't appear inside the game started making an appearance.

For what? The grind for SSS-Rank unique skills and equipment simply started.

3 days later, the official developers account of Warstar RPG released a new post that sent the Warstar community reeling in excitement again.

(Official Account: Warstar RPG)

(Progress Update: Challenge of the Big Boys!)

(Ladies and gentlemen, we have our first pioneers of the SSS-Rank!)

(In this order, the in-game Avatars 'Lord Doom', 'Autumn Rain', and 'Susanoo Wrath' are the first pioneers of the SSS-Rank!)

('Lord Doom' and 'Autumn Rain' are the first pioneers to get an SSS-Rank Unique Skill, while 'Susanoo Wrath' is the first owner of an SSS-Rank equipment!)

Within just a few weeks, the premise of Warstar was changing.

From the very first edition of the Warstar RPG World Championship and the crowning of its first champion country, and now to the introduction of SSS-Rank and SS-Rank unique skills, the game was changing.

A new age of Warstar RPG was being ushered in.

...

Birmingham City, England...

There were 3 chairs in the room, each one occupied as its occupants wearing complete gaming gear focused on their screen, their left hand tapping their keyboards even as their right hands controlled their mouse.

In the screen, in a different world...

Through a desolate battlefield of broken ruins and swirling mist, inside a dungeon, 5 Avatars trudged forward, their footsteps echoing in eerie silence.

They already dealt with all the dungeon monsters in the vicinity.

The Combat Mage strode forward at the front, his enchanted battle lance crackling with latent energy, robes singed from past battles yet unbowed.

Directly beside him was the female Blademaster who moved like a specter, twin swords resting at her sides, her piercing gaze scanning the horizon for unseen threats, ready to pull out her lethal swords at a moment's notice.

The Cleric followed closely behind them, a radiant glow emanating from her staff, each step a silent prayer against the encroaching darkness.

As for the Summoner, he walked in the shadows, his fingers tracing ancient sigils in the air, ghostly wraiths flickering around him like whispers of power.

As for Captain Batman, the ridiculously-named Elementalist trailed at the rear, his presence shifting the air itself, flames, frost, and storm flickering around him as if the elements were bowing to his will.

Compared to when they just started as weak level 0 Avatars, each of their in-game Avatars was now significantly stronger.

Bound by purpose, they pressed on, their journey far from over.

There was still the final wave of this dungeon to clear and its final boss. Besides, they got a notification of a hidden boss when they started this level 15 dungeon, so they were alert, waiting for it.

It took some time but with Sam reducing his leveling speed and waiting for them, his teammates finally got to his level, enabling them to raid dungeons together and it was safe to say that their raid speed was borderline ridiculous.

Together, Noah and his friends already did a clean sweep of the dungeon records of any dungeon that they raided together.

This level 15 dungeon was one of the hardest among the beginner village dungeons, but the 5 of them went through it like it was just a practice run.

As they continued, Noah leading the way, Genevieve started a conversation. "Noah, you keep ignoring the topic but these recent updates to the game, do you feel they are perhaps linked to your transportation inside the game?"

"I don't know".

Noah replied simply; typical him.

"Haha". Benjamin laughed.

Genevieve glared at him before focusing on Noah again. "Come on, don't you think we need to inquire? To find out exactly what happened and how to help you".

Noah chuckled. "What do you want to ask about again? They already gave me requirements on how to regain my freedom and I actually love it".

"So why look for another alternative when I already have a way to free myself? You guys just help me get back to the pro stage, is that too much for you?"

Genevieve pursed her lips behind her computer. "Fair enough, I agree".

"If you agree, then let's raid this dungeon fast".

"We need to get to level 20 as soon as possible".

"Ok". Genevieve nodded.

A few minutes of cutting through monsters later, including hunting the hidden boss along the way, they finally met the final boss of this dungeon, a towering Titan of ruin and destruction.

Despite facing this notorious final boss among the new server players, fearlessly, the raid party of 5 faced the hidden boss.

10 minutes later, it fell down dead.

---<Warstar>---

{Congratulations! Your raid party has killed the final boss of the Desolate City Dungeon; Desolate Titan!}

{You have been rewarded with XP each!}

{You have received drop rewards!}

...

{You have leveled up to level 16!}

---<Warstar>---

Immediately after they left the dungeon, they entered again, grinding for XP as they strived to grow their game Avatars.

Noah continued like this with his teammates for the next few weeks, breaking records in the new server as more experts in this server working for the big guilds sought them out, most importantly after Lord Doom was mentioned in the posts of the official Warstar developers' X account.

When they learned that he actually got an SSS-Rank unique skill, tears streamed from the eyes of Nightingale and his friends. 'To think we still underestimated him'.

The discovery made more guilds in the game to seek after Noah.

He did not respond to any of it though, he was too busy grinding for levels.

In recent weeks, Nightingale and his friends were more or less his personal assistants in the game as they did the diplomacy for him.

Like this, even as news about the Warstar community kept coming week in week out, they leveled up and eventually one of them did it.

Noah's Lord Doom was the first to level up to level 20.

Finally, it was time for a class change.

Chapter 38: Class change quest

---<Warstar>---

{Congratulations on leveling up to level 20!}

{Choose any of the 5 main class specializations to prompt a class change quest from the system:}

...

Noah leveled up while he was still raiding inside a dungeon and his friends noticed.

"Congrats," Genevieve was the one to congratulate him first.

"Which main class would you choose this time?"

"Is that even a question?" Noah chuckled. "Combat Mage of course"

He didn't reply to the system prompts immediately though. He patiently waited till the end of this dungeon raid, and then he replied to the prompt, choosing the Combat Mage main class as his preferred specialization.

The game system lit up with new notifications.

...

{You have received a Class Change Quest: Trial of Balance}

{Quest Giver:}

An enigmatic old warrior-mage named Master Kaelith, found meditating atop a floating rock in the Ruined Sky Temple where arcane energies and spear techniques intertwine.

{Quest Description:}

"Power is a fragile thing. Too much magic, and you become weak to steel; too much steel, and you will break against magic".

"You seek both? Then prove to me that you can wield blade and spell in harmony. Fail, and the forces of imbalance will consume you".

To become a Combat Mage, you must complete the "Trial of balance", a three-part test designed to test both martial skill and arcane mastery.

{Trial 1: Duel of the Arcane Blade!}

*Objective: Defeat a powerful Sentinel Warlock without relying solely on magic or melee combat.

*Challenge: The Warlock will adapt to your attacks. Spamming magic makes them counter with anti-magic barriers, while excessive melee aggression will trigger devastating counterstrikes.

*Solution: You must weave spells and swordplay together, using both in seamless succession. Strike with your blade to interrupt spellcasting, then unleash bursts of magic between sword swings.

{Trial 2 will be unlocked only after you complete Trial 1!}

{If you fail, you must wait 2 weeks before you can attempt the Combat Mage class change quest a second time.}

...

{Quest Completion:}

Upon passing all three trials, you will obtain Master Kaelith's approval and favor, and he will bestow upon you the title of Combat Mage.

With newfound power, you will leave the temple, a warrior of two worlds, ready to carve your legend into history.

{Reward:}

*Class Change: Combat Mage

*Skill Unlock: Arcane Blade Surge (Empowers your sword with magic, dealing powerful hybrid damage).

*Weapon Reward: Spellforged Battle lance (A sword infused with latent arcane energy, enhancing both spellcasting and melee strikes).

---<Warstar>---

Noah looked at his friends. "You guys go on without me, I want to go complete my class change quest now".

The others agreed without much fuss but Benjamin clicked his tongue, exaggeratedly placing his hands on his waist in an akimbo stance. "Oh wow, Noah, I see how it is".

Noah looked at him.

Benjamin snorted. "Soon as you reach the top, you just arc away from the buddy code like it never existed. Guess loyalty was never part of your ark-itecture!"

Noah chuckled. "Only if your silly jokes could actually deal damage in-game".

"Huh? You're looking down on me? Haha, just you wait, one day, my jokes will become capable of dealing real damage!"

"In your dreams," Genevieve rolled her eyes.

She looked at Noah. "Don't worry, go ahead, and don't you dare fail".

"I won't".

With that, Noah jogged off.

...

A few minutes later...

Atop the Ruined Sky Temple which was just a few minutes journey from the Beginner Village, Noah stood, arms crossed, a smirk tugging at his lips.

The wind howled through the broken pillars and ahead of him, a Sentinel Warlock emerged, a towering figure clad in dark robes, a battle lance in one hand and a swirling mass of arcane energy on the other.

"Your arrogance shall be your downfall!" The Warlock snorted, stepping forward with heavy footsteps.

Noah rubbed his shoulders. "Yeah, yeah. Let's skip the ominous speech".

"You've got a lance, I've got a lance," he grinned. "Let's dance".

Their fight started.

The Warlock attacked first, hurling a barrage of shadow lances at Noah while warping behind him for a brutal spear strike.

Any normal player would have been caught off guard, but Noah?

He tilted his head, effortlessly dodging the magic projectiles with pin-point accuracy, and then he parried the sneak attack without even looking.

"You're gonna have to do better than that," he said, grinning.

Noah had no idea if the A.I controlling this Warlock was intelligent enough but it clearly wasn't amused by his words.

The Warlock shifted tactics, setting up an anti-magic barrier that nullified spellcasting while dashing forward in a relentless flurry of blade strikes.

If Noah relied on his arcane spell skills, he was doomed but he didn't panic, he adapted instantly.

Instead of fighting back directly, he stepped just outside of each attack's range, letting the Warlock's aggression build.

One dodge. Two. Three.

He was studying every moment of his enemy, calculating every flaw and then, the moment that the Warlock overextended by half an inch, Noah struck like a Viper!

He punished him with a brutal counterstrike, a lightning-fast slash that landed right between the gaps in the Warlock's armor.

The Sentinel Warlock staggered.

"Whoops, you dropped your defense. Must be rough," Noah taunted, flipping his battle lance effortlessly.

The Warlock growled and changed tactics again, expanding the anti-magic field while teleporting erratically, trying to disorient him.

Again, in this situation, a less experienced player would hesitate but Noah?

He yawned. "Oh please, I've seen toddlers do this better".

Noah was a good trash-talker but he rarely used it outside the competitive stage, too lazy to use it against newbies at times.

But since listening to Meng Wu Ya in action at the World Championship, something ignited in him, a competitive spirit and that brought old habits back with it, including his trash-talking.

These days, he was in a good mode most of the times and it reflected here.

In response to the Warlock's new tactic, he didn't rely on predictable attacks. Instead, he feinted a spellcast, forcing the Warlock to react.

The enemy shifted his defense, expecting a magic attack but it was a trap.

Noah instantly canceled the spell, surging forward in a blink-speed sword dash, his blade igniting with pure arcane force.

The Warlock realized too late.

He drove his sword through the Warlock's chest, arcane energy detonating on impact. The enemy stumbled, their body crackling with unstable magic before collapsing into shimmering dust.

---<Warstar>---

{Trial 1 Complete: Duel of the Arcane Blade Passed!}

{Unlocking Trial 2..., please wait...}

...

Noah kept his battle lance, cracking his neck. "That was cute," he muttered, smiling.

The game system lit up again the next moment.

...

{Trial 2: The Shattered Glyph Path!}

*Objective: Navigate the "Shifting Spellscape", a labyrinth where stepping on the wrong glyph teleports you into deadly traps.

*Challenge: The glyphs shift unpredictably, requiring both magical insight and combat agility to cross.

*Solution: Cast small controlled bursts of magic to reveal invisible glyphs, then time your movements with precise dashes and leaps, using your blade to cut through obstacles along the way.

{Trial 3 will be unlocked only after you complete Trial 2!}

{If you fail, you must wait 2 weeks before you can attempt the Combat Mage class change quest a second time.}

---<Warstar>---

Chapter 39: The Shattered Glyph Path

Noah hummed to a song as he progressed to the next trial in his class change quest. It was a song that was popular decades ago.

"...a smooth criminal!" He mumbled with a grin.

Yes, he was humming to Michael Jackson's classic, Smooth Criminal.

Yes, call him ancient, call him old fashioned but Noah loved it old fashioned.

Who was Nightingale?

He had no idea, all he knew was the rule OG, Michael Jackson.

Even as he was a big fan of the popular American hip hop musician, few knew because he rarely ever hummed to songs. Only his closest friends knew this facet of him, and it's because of how much time they spent together.

Noah humming to a song meant only one thing, he truly was in a good mood.

Noah went through a teleportation portal inside the temple that took him to an ancient floating stone bridge suspended in an endless void of shifting storm clouds and glowing runes.

Bzzz!

A soft hum vibrated through the air as the glyphs beneath his feet pulsed and flickered, their patterns constantly changing.

At the far end of the bridge stood a massive glowing archway, the exit.

That was Noah's goal in this trial.

The next moment, a deep mechanical voice echoed through the stone bridge. "Only those who walk the path with mind and blade in harmony may pass".

"A misstep leads to oblivion".

Noah snorted, his lips curling upward in a cheeky grin. "Oblivion? That's dramatic. Let's see if this place can actually kill me".

He took a step forward.

The moment that his foot touched the first glyph, it shifted unpredictably, glowing brighter for a split second before vanishing entirely.

He pulled back just in time before the tile crumbled into the abyss below.

At the same time, a notification appeared, hovering before him.

{Incorrect step detected- Path resetting!}

The entire bridge flickered and every glyph reshuffled randomly.

Noah rubbed his chin in brief thought and realization. "Ah, I see," he smiled. "One of those puzzles. Great".

At this moment, 12 years of Warstar-playing experience showed.

Most players would have to slowly trial and error their way across, casting detection spells, memorizing safe glyphs, and hoping the resets don't screw them over, but Noah?

He didn't need such complicated shenanigans; he figured it out in 3 seconds.

Noah kneeled, touching the bridge with his fingertips, eyes scanning the shifting patterns. The magic wasn't random, it followed a sequence.

The glyphs glow in a distinct rhythm, almost like the timing of a perfect combo chain in a fighting game.

The game expected players to cautiously analyze each and every step, but Noah intended to do it all at once.

Instead of hesitating, he bolted forward, leaping from one glyph to another at inhuman speed, his body moving like a blur as he showcased his frightening precision and experience.

The moment his foot touched a tile; he already predicted the next safe spot.

The system tried to outpace him, shifting the glyphs faster but Noah was unperturbed.

"Cute," he smirked. "Try harder".

He incorporated his skills into his movement, attacking with his battle lance and slicing apart incoming magical barriers and also deflecting sudden lightning traps, never breaking stride.

The system was relentless.

It threw out illusionary pitfalls, sudden gusts of wind, collapsing tiles but Noah was above it all as he danced through them like they didn't exist.

Noah made it look easy but it was far from easy.

Precision, foresight, both were needed in abundance to even attempt what he was doing and even at that, his kind of success was still not guaranteed.

Eventually, Noah reached the last stretch of the bridge but suddenly, the final few glyphs vanished entirely, leaving a massive gap before the exit.

The air distorted, suggesting an invisible path.

"...!"

Noah stared, stumped for just a fraction of a second but then he laughed. "I already solved this".

Without pausing, he kicked off the last visible tile and dashed straight into the empty space. The moment that his feet touched the air, the invisible platforms flickered back into existence.

Noah knew.

The game had been subtly hinting at an unseen pattern in the gaps between glyphs, and he had already mapped it out mid-run.

He landed at the end without missing a beat.

And just like that, Noah completed a trial that would have taken most Warstar players weeks of preparation with still no guarantee of completing it.

In that moment, the archway pulsed as a notification appeared.

---<Warstar>---

{Trial 2 Complete: The Shattered Glyph Path Passed!}

{Unlocking Trial 3..., please wait...}

...

As soon as Noah landed at the end, the stone bridge stabilized behind him, no longer shifting. He turned back to look at it, unimpressed.

He was in showboating mood today.

"That was supposed to be hard?" He scoffed, dusting off his coat. "I actually feel slighted".

Without a second glance, he stepped through the archway, already looking forward to something that might actually challenge him.

And in that moment, the last trial of his class change quest finally updated.

...

{Trial 3: The Duel against yourself!}

*Objective: Face a perfect illusion of yourself, mimicking your exact fighting style.

*Challenge: Your reflection reacts exactly as you do. If you cast fire, it casts fire. If you swing your blade, it counters. It is the perfect nemesis sent to push you to your wit's end.

*Solution: Instead of fighting with brute force, you must out think the reflection, tricking it into falling for feints, misdirects, and deceptive spellcasting. Utilize spells in unpredictable ways, e.g., cast an ice wall, then shatter it with your sword for a surprise AOE attack.

{If you complete this trial, your class change quest will be complete!}

{If you fail, you must wait 2 weeks before you can attempt the Combat Mage class change quest a second time.}

---<Warstar>---

Noah stood, staring at the string of notifications that hovered before him. "A perfect reflection? Really?"

"That's a first in all my years of playing Warstar".

"Damn! A Benjamin joke at this moment would have really hit". He chuckled but then, he fearlessly stepped forward.

Chapter 40: Duel against yourself

Noah swaggered into the final chamber of the temple, a vast, circular arena floating in a void of swirling arcane energy.

The walls, if they can even be called that, flickered between realities, showing glimpses of battlefields, ruins, and endless storms.

At the center of the arena, a mirror-like portal rippled and distorted before forming into a perfect reflection of him.

A game system notification appeared as soon as this happened.

{Trial 3: Duel against yourself!}

{Objective: Defeat the Arcane Reflection!}

Noah tilted his head, smirking, wanting to say 'oh, this is cute' but then thinking of how many times he's said cute today already, he coughed and looked at the reflection. "You think you can beat me by copying me?"

His reflection perfectly mirrored his smirk, slightly unnerving Noah.

Every detail was perfect; his stance, his confidence, even the way that his fingers twitched in anticipation, this reflection mirrored it all.

"Damn! The A.I controlling you must be really expensive". He chuckled.

This reflection looked no different from him but Noah knew better than anyone, perfection isn't about copying.

Rather, it's about knowing what the other guy doesn't.

The battle began.

Whoosh!

Quickly lunging forward, Noah struck with his battle lance, it's blade crackling with arcane energy but so does his reflection.

Their swords clashed at the exact same moment, sending shockwaves rippling through the arena.

{Fireball=}

Fireball is a low level Elementalist skill, a skill that launches a fiery projectile that explodes on impact, dealing AOE damage.

As low-level skills could be learned by any class so long you had enough skill points, Noah had this skill in his repertoire.

He unleashed a rapid spellcast, releasing a fireball while mixing it with a feint step but his reflection did the exact same move, canceling them out.

And then the reflection counterattacked.

Unperturbed, Noah dodged, pivoted on the spot and struck from an unpredictable angle. The whole sequence of attack was executed perfectly and insidiously but yet, blocked.

The reflection moved frame-perfect, predicting every step, every swing, and every spell that Noah casted.

The more Noah fought with this guy, the more impressed he felt at it. 'This A.I is really advanced'. He thought.

At this point, most players would panic but Noah just grinned wider.

And then, suddenly, he dropped his stance entirely, lowing his battle lance in the middle of combat.

"..."

The reflection hesitated for a split second.

That split second was all that Noah needed.

Bam!

In an explosive outburst, Noah lunged in with a completely illogical move; a reckless, unpredictable slice that no version of himself would ever consider using since it left him so open for a counterattack.

The reflection tried to react but it was a fraction of a second too late.

The lance's blade carved through the reflection's torso, ruthlessly piercing through as cracks spread across its body like shattered glass.

The reflection stumbled back, eyes widening, its perfect copy routine suddenly broken.

Noah clicked his tongue. "You lost the moment you tried to be me".

"I'm not predictable; I make the rules".

With a final burst of arcane energy, Noah disintegrated his reflection with a single decisive slash.

Crack!

The sound of something shattering reverberated as the arena pulsed, followed by another game system message.

{Trial 3 Completed: The Arcane Reflection Defeated!}

The floating arena where Noah just fought with his own reflection finally stabilized and, in the center, a glowing rune appeared, marking the completion of his class change.

He exhaled sharply, twirling his sword before keeping it in his inventory. "Took you long enough to lose," he mumbled. "I was getting bored".

And then the voice of Master Kaelith echoed through the chamber the next moment as the mysterious quest giver finally appeared.

According to the backstory of the Ruined Sky Temple, Master Kaelith is an ancient warrior-mage, a relic of a forgotten era where magic and steel were one, and true mastery meant wielding both in perfect harmony.

Unlike most Combat Masters though, Master Kaelith wields a sword.

He is neither fully a swordsman nor purely a mage, rather he is both, effortlessly.

He is the progenitor of all Combat Mages in Warstar.

Master Kaelith stood tall, his presence exuding a quiet but undeniable dominance. His silver hair, long and unkempt, flowed like an old warrior too seasoned to care for vanity.

His face bore deep scars, not from recklessness, but from surviving battles no ordinary man should.

His eyes? Glowing with arcane energy, constantly shifting between deep violet and searing blue as if the very elements themselves battle for control, he was the embodiment of dual power progression.

He wore a weathered combat robe, reinforced with spell-inscribed armor plates that shift subtly as he moved.

His blade, the Runebringer, one of the only S-ranked blades in the game that can be won through a quest at level 100 rested on his back. It was not just a weapon, but rather an extension of his will.

At a glance, it appeared simple but in the hands of a master, it can shatter spells, cut through space, and weave enchantments with a single stroke.

The old master looked down at the player. "You have proven yourself, Noah".

"You are now a Combat Mage, one who wields both blade and magic in perfect harmony".

Standing before this imposing NPC, Noah just shrugged. "Yeah, I know".

And then, it happened.

---<Warstar>---

{You have completed Class Change Quest: Trial of Balance!}

{You attained a completion rating of S!}

{You have unlocked the Main Class: Combat Mage}

{Your life force has evolved!}

{Your Skill Points has been reset!}

...

{You have been rewarded with an Ancient High Level Combat Mage Skill: Arcane Blade Surge!}

>Arcane Blade Surge: When activated, it empowers your sword with magic, dealing powerful hybrid damage<

...

{You have been rewarded with an Ancient A-Rank level 20 Combat Mage Weapon: Spellforged Battle Lance!}

[Equipment Name: Spellforged Battle Lance]

[Equipment Type: Weapon]

[Weapon Type: Battle Lance- Hybrid of Spear and Staff]

[Damage Type: Hybrid- Physical & Magical]

[Weapon Class: A]

[Special Trait: Adaptive Arcane Fusion]

Level: 20

Durability: 100/100

Physical Attack: +58

Magical Attack: +58

[Special Effect: Arcane Bladeform- Adaptive Weaponry]

*The lance's blade-tip changes form depending on the magic infused into it, allowing the wielder to seamlessly switch between melee and spellcasting styles.

*Fire Magic: The blade becomes a flaming spear, exploding on impact.

*Lightning Magic: The blade extends into an energy whip, lashing enemies from a distance.

*Ice Magic: The blade freezes solid, shattering armor and slowing opponents.

*Pure Arcane: The lance becomes a beam of energy, piercing through defenses.

...

[Special Effect: Runeburst- Arcane Overload Counter]

*If an enemy blocks or deflects the lance, the runes automatically store kinetic energy from the clash.

*After enough energy builds up, the wielder can unleash Runeburst, an unavoidable shockwave blast that forces enemies backward, breaking defensive formations.

...

[Special Effect: Rift Lunge- Spatial Breakthrough]

*The lance can momentarily bend space, allowing the wielder to execute a "step-through" attack.

*The user lunges forward, phasing briefly through reality, bypassing obstacles and enemy defenses before delivering a devastating thrust.

*Can be used to break past shields, avoid counters, or create unpredictable attack angles.

...

>Description: A sword infused with latent arcane energy, enhancing both spellcasting and melee strikes<

...

[Lore: A weapon meant for a Legend]

Forged in an age when Combat Mages were gods of the battlefield, the Spellforged Battle Lance was a weapon for those who refused to choose between magic and steel.

It has no master, it only accepts those with absolute control over both arts.

---<Warstar>---