

## Reincarnated Avatar; I got 2 SSS-Rank Unique Skills

### #Chapter 91: Club Echelon - Read Reincarnated Avatar; I got 2 SSS-Rank Unique Skills Chapter 91: Club Echelon

#### *Chapter 91: Club Echelon*

"NO!!!"

Genevieve, Benjamin, Caleb, and Aria all yelled at once.

Nightingale chuckled at the sight, his crew members all struggling to muffle their laughter too.

To the rest of the world, the legends of Cyber Squad, Noah and his crew were untouchable beings, gods of the game. But getting to know them now, Nightingale realized that they were normal just like everyone else.

'Maybe that's how my fans think about me too'. He thought.

Still on the matter though.

Benjamin clutched his head. "Bro, that sounds like an edgy 12-year-old's first guild name".

Aria scoffed. "We're not a death metal band".

Caleb rubbed his temples. "Why do you name things like a final boss in a low-budget RPG".

In the game, Noah frowned. "Come on guys, was it that bad?"

"YES!" They chorused again.

"Fine. How about... Shadow Tyrants?"

"NO!"

"Warborn Phantoms?"

"STOP!"

Noah scowled. "You guys are too picky".

Genevieve sighed, taking a sip of her drink. "Alright, let me handle this before we end up with something that makes sponsors run for the hills".

Everyone turned to her expectantly. If anyone had good naming sense, it was Genevieve.

She placed a hand on her chin in thought, then looking at the ceiling, she muttered. "Echelon".

The table became quiet.

"Echelon?" Aria echoed.

Genevieve nodded. "It means the highest level, the elite. That's what we are, and that's what we're going to prove in the pro scene. That even in our advanced age, we're still the benchmark of the elite".

She smiled. "No gimmicks, no nonsense; just pure, undeniable dominance".

She looked around at the others, waiting for their reaction.

Silence stretched for a moment as they all took in the weight of it.

Benjamin was the first to break it. He grinned, nodding in approval. "Not bad. Sounds clean, sounds powerful. No puns needed".

Caleb leaned back, thoughtful. "It carries the right connotation. Prestige, superiority, success. "Yeah..., it fits".

Aria whistled over the call. "Gotta say, its got a ring to it. Better than 'Warborn Phantom's at least".

Inside the game, Noah exhaled, rubbing his chin. "Tch. Fine. I'll admit, it's good". He paused before continuing, addressing Genevieve. "You always had the best naming sense, anyway".

Genevieve smirked, looking quite pleased. "Of course".

And just like that, it was decided.

Club Echelon was born, only that it was not registered officially yet.

As the conversation settled, Nightingale leaned forward, clasping his hands together as he studied them.

"I've made my decision," he said, his smooth voice carrying an air of finality.

Despite the fact that he was sitting before his Warstar idols at this moment, as a famous celebrity himself, Nightingale was already able to force himself to accept his new position in this clique.

He was essentially their boss already.

All eyes turned towards him.

Nightingale took a deep breath and continued. "Until the club is officially established and bringing in revenue, I'll be putting all of you on a salary".

There was a moment of stunned silence before Aria, still on the video call, broke it. "Wait, seriously?"

"Yes," Nightingale confirmed. "You don't have any other jobs right now, and I need you all focused on Warstar. Leveling up, refining your playstyles with your new Avatars, and also optimizing your competitive Avatars".

"I don't want distractions. If we're going to take this seriously, then we do it properly from day one".

Aria was the first to react. "Thank God!" She exclaimed.

"I was beginning to feel guilty, gosh. My boyfriend works and make all the money while all I do is play games. Phew, I can finally support".

Hearing that, the others all looked at Aria weirdly.

'Is this really the Aria we know?'

Aria looked at them. "What?"

"Uh, nothing". Genevieve looked away from the phone.

Benjamin reacted next, leaning back on his chair with a big grin on his face. "Man, I should've known you'd sponsor our addiction. This is like getting paid to breathe". He chuckled.

Caleb adjusted his glasses, his expression contemplative. "That does take care of a major concern. Without financial pressure, we can maximize our training efficiency".

Genevieve smiled. "That's incredibly generous of you, Nightingale".

Nightingale shrugged. "It's an investment. I expect nothing less than complete dedication in return".

His gaze flickered to the computer monitor where Noah's Lord Doom was. "Now, let's talk about the guild. When do you want to create it?"

Noah didn't even hesitate. "Now".

Nightingale raised an eyebrow. "Now?"

"Yeah," Noah said with complete confidence. "We've got nothing better to do. The sooner we set it up, the sooner we start making waves".

"Besides, I'm not small". He grinned smugly. "These days in the 11th server, I'm kind of a celebrity so if I create a guild in the game, a lot of new players and even old players are sure to join".

"Another thing. Since the beginning of the 11th server, we've been grinding dungeons and have amassed a lot of items and equipment that we don't need".

"A guild needs to have a lot of equipment and item in its inventory".

"If we put all of our spare equipment and items in our inventory, I believe it'll be bigger than most small guilds in the game".

"This should be a good starting point for us and if our boss, Nightingale is willing to spend some money, we can start with an even bigger foundation".

"And lastly, you know we've been racking our heads on who to sell the Greataxe of Asmodeus to right?"

He grinned. "How many guilds in the game can boast of having an S-ranked equipment that their guild members can rent for use?"

"That'll be something exclusive to our guild".

The others exchanged glances, then nodded in agreement.

"Fair point," Aria said.

"Let's do it," Genevieve agreed.

But then, Caleb sighed. "There's just one problem. Creating a guild isn't free. It costs money, actual in-game gold. And a lot of it too".

A pause.

Benjamin blinked, then slowly turned to Nightingale. "Soooo... boss man. Any chance our new salary comes with an in-game expense account?"

## *Chapter 92: The birth of a new guild*

Inside the game...

In the heart of the bustling capital city of Valor, standing before the grand Guild Creation Monument, Noah and his crew gathered, their Avatars illuminated by the soft golden glow of the monument's ethereal runes.

The air around them was thick with anticipation.

Even though to some it was just a game, the weight of the moment pressed down on them.

This wasn't just another guild being formed, this was Echelon, a club that would soon shake the very foundations of Warstar.

Noah stood at the center, his presence commanding as always. His fingers hovered over the holographic interface, the Guild Creation Panel flickering before him.

---<Warstar>---

[Guild Name: Echelon]

[Guild Leader: Lord Doom]

[Confirm Creation?]

---<Warstar>---

Noah smirked. This was it.

"Alright," he said, his voice steady. "Let's make history".

With a single press of the confirm button, a surge of golden energy erupted from the monument, spiraling into the sky.

A deafening chime rang across the entire server, a system-wide announcement flashing in front of every player's screen.

[World Announcement!]

->A new guild has been created!<-

->[Echelon] has been established by the player [Lord Doom!]<-

The ground trembled as the announcement echoed, and suddenly, a massive, golden sigil of Echelon's emblem; a sleek, interlocking crest symbolizing ascension flashed across the sky of the 11th server.

The world itself acknowledged their existence.

For a few heartbeats, everything was silent. Then...

"IT'S OFFICIAL!" Benjamin cheered, punching the air. "I'm part of history! This is the greatest pun, ahem..., I mean, moment of my life!"

Caleb smirked. "Not bad".

Genevieve folded her arms, nodding in satisfaction. "Echelon. It has a nice ring to it". She felt proud of her naming sense.

Aria scoffed, flipping her hair. "About damn time". But even she couldn't hide the small smirk on her lips.

Nightingale and his crew, who had been watching silently, exchanged glances.

This wasn't just a guild. This was the birth of something legendary.

Nightingale exhaled, shaking his head with a small smile. "I was right to bet on you".

"What am I even saying?" He chuckled, shaking his head again. "This is God Noah!"

...

And then, the ripple effect...

The moment Echelon's creation was announced, the entire server erupted.

The reaction of the casual players was a sight to behold.

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\*HOLY SHIT! LORD DOOM MADE A GUILD?!

\*I'M JOINING IMMEDIATELY!

\*Does this mean he's officially making a play for the pro scene? Wait..., does that mean he doesn't intend to join any of the already established pro clubs, but wants to create his own pro club instead?

\*Damn! I'm shaking..., too much aura! Lord Doom is just giving the G.O.A.T, Sung Jin Woo's vibes!

\*Damn! This is gonna change everything.

\*I don't know about you guys, but I'm all Guild Echelon already! I feel like I was always fated to join them, I think Lord Doom is my soulmate!

\*Hey, you above me, tone it down a bit. You're now being weird.

~~~~~

The casual players were not the only ones that reacted to the sudden creation of a guild by Lord Doom though, the top guilds also reacted.

After all, unlike the casual players, they're the ones who've actually had a head-on confrontation against Lord Doom and his crew.

Since the battle of the Canyon of Ruins, the activities of the top guilds in the 11th server became much tamer and humble.

No were no longer as overbearing.

Afterall, they were still traumatized by Lord Doom.

There was a group chat among the guild leaders of the top guilds in the 11th server. And immediately after the world announcement, the group became busy.

~~~~~

\*That bastard is stirring up trouble again!

\*Tch. So it begins.

\*Hah. This is going to make things interesting.

\*Interesting my ass! This is going to make things so much harder. Where the f\*ck is Shattered Star? He was the one who antagonized him first. Don't hide, I know you're online you bastard!

\*I'm sorry..., the real Shattered Star is now currently on leave due to an illness. I am just an employee whose task is to level up his Avatar on his behalf.

\*As if I'd believe you, shameless bastard!

\*Umm..., guys, should we... try to recruit him instead?

\*You think its as simple as recruiting him huh? What do you have to offer God Noah that'd move him into joining our guild? Not even our pro club has enough enticing benefits to recruit him!

Silence, for a few seconds...

\*I still can't believe Lord Doom is God Noah (crying emoji).

\*To think we really went to war against the Godfather of Noah, we were really courting death without knowing it! (crying emoji)

\*Sigh..., with a character like him in the playing field with us, it's no longer us but him. He's the main character, and we're just side characters dancing to his tune.

\*It's... so frustrating!

\*Well, we have to compete with him nonetheless. No matter what his identity is, since he decided to create a guild, he's now a direct competitor to all of us. Not just because of what happened before, but because he and his guild members will now be competing for boss kills and clear records with us.

\*Life as a guild leader is about to become soooo... stressful. Sigh.

~~~~~

The news spread like wildfire.

Applications to join Echelon flooded in by the thousands.

Noah knew that among these applications were obviously spies from rival clubs, but he didn't care. He was too lazy to pay attention to extras, and so he accepted them all as Guild Echelon started breaking growth records.

The entire balance of power in the 11th server had just been shattered, a new apex predator had entered the playing field.

Perhaps, only after Guild Echelon expanded to the Heavenly Domain where the top guilds mostly base before it could be suppressed.

For now, Guild Echelon was poised to be the undisputed King of the 11th server in England's LAN location.

And at the center of it all, Noah stood, arms crossed, gazing at the sky where Echelon's sigil still shone brightly.

A slow, confident smirk tugged at his lips.



"This is just the beginning".

*Chapter 93: Weapon level-up test*

2 days later after Guild Echelon's creation...

---<Warstar>---

[Equipment Name: Aetherforge]

[Equipment Type: Weapon]

[Weapon Type: Battle Lance]

[Weapon Rank: SSS]

Level: 20 {Upgradeable}

Durability: 100/100

Physical Attack: +180

Magical Attack: +180

[Passive Skill: Aetherforge]

\*Forged with an iron will in the depths of a dying star, the wielder is able to manipulate this weapon into different shapes and forms corresponding to any weapon available in Warstar.

\*5 base forms are currently available in the Ether. More forms can be unlocked when the Aetherforge is upgraded.

[Available Forms: Battle Lance; Twin Swords; Daggers; Rifle; Shield]

[NOTE: There is an awakening test for any additional form after the Aetherforge is upgraded.]

[NOTE: Every 10 levels, there's a level up test where the wielder fights against manifestations of all forms of the Aetherforge. The price of defeat is losing the weapon. This is the weight of holding an SSS-Rank Weapon.]

>Description: A weapon forged for Daemons and Gods<

---<Warstar>---

It was already 2 days since Noah created Guild Echelon, and since then, the growth of the guild already became a bit stabilized.

Since he and his teammates were going to be so busy leveling up and building their in-game Avatars, he delegated the role of Vice Guild Leader to someone he trusted, Nightingale.

At first, he was hesitant since Nightingale was essentially their boss but he was surprised at the musician's enthusiasm after hearing about it.

Well, after that, Nightingale became Guild Echelon's Vice Guild Leader.

He was in charge of all the administrative details, allowing Noah to focus on leveling up with his teammates and building their in-game Avatars.

This time though, Noah did not focus on leveling up his Avatar itself, but rather his focus was on leveling up his Avatar's main weapon, Aetherforge.

There was a price to wielding an SSS-Rank weapon.

The weapons needed to be leveled up regularly, after every 10 levels to prevent them from becoming obsolete.

Aria's S-Ranked Blades of Aamon and Caleb's S-Ranked item also required level up tests, but none of them were as daunting as Noah's SSS-Ranked level up test for Aetherforge.

Due to being busy with a lot of different activities and due to his skill, he didn't feel it before but now, he felt it.

Aetherforge was becoming obsolete, just like the Spellforged Battle Lance.

This was why yesterday, Noah put the Spellforged Battle Lance in the guild inventory and focused on his Aetherforge again, precisely on leveling it up.

It was time for him to take on the Aetherforge Level Up Test, one of the deadliest trials in Warstar. Unlike ordinary weapons, Aetherforge demands a brutal price for evolution.

After informing his friends and Nightingale, he went about it.

A portal appeared before Noah as soon as he triggered the level up test. Without hesitation, he walked into the portal.

BZZZ!

Noah found himself standing in an ethereal battlefield, a plane of pure, swirling Aether where time and space twist unpredictably.

The only rule?

Defeat every manifestation of Aetherforge's forms, or lose the weapon forever. The penalty for failure stuck out like a sore thumb.

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\*Battle Lance Form: A mirror image of your usual fighting style.

>Title: The Spear God's Reflection<

...

\*Twin Swords Form: Agile, relentless dual-blade combatant.

>Title: The Demon of Blades<

...

\*Dagger Form: A swift assassin, striking from blind spots.

>Title: The Phantom Killer<

...

\*Rifle Form: A long-range sniper, adept at keeping enemies at bay.

>Title: The Sniper King<

...

\*Shield Form: A defensive juggernaut, near impenetrable.

>The Unbreakable Titan<

~~~~~

" ... "

Noah took a deep breath.

This was not just a battle; it was a gauntlet.

He must adapt, outthink, and outfight his own weapon in all its deadliest forms if he was to complete this test.

And worst of all? They don't fight one by one.

They all attack at once.

This was the true burden of wielding an SSS-Rank weapon.

And then the trial begins...

BZZZ!

One after the other, the five forms materialized around Noah, glowing with pure Aetheric energy, their presence crackling with overwhelming pressure.

Noah grips Aetherforge tightly in its Battle Lance form, eyes narrowing as he accessed the battlefield.

In the Ethereal Battlefield, five luminous figures stood against him, each radiating power as pure as the cosmos itself. They were manifestations of Aetherforge's potential, given form by the weapon itself.

Each one moves independently, fights intelligently, and adapts on the fly, because they are fragments of Noah's own weapon mastery, making them his worst possible match-up.

And now, they were coming for his life.

The Battle Lance Form, titled the Spear God's Reflection was a towering knight clad in war-scorched silver armor, wielding a lance identical to Noah's, but wreathed in swirling Aetheric flames.

Its helmet had no face, only a void of shifting constellations, as if the universe itself peered through.

As for the Twin Swords Form, titled the Demon of Blades, it was a lithe warrior clad in obsidian-black garb, two shimmering silver blades floating beside it like wings.

Its body was sleek and feline, its movements so fluid they seemed to ignore the laws of physics. The only constant was the deadly gleam of its swords.

And then the Dagger Form, titled the Phantom Killer. This guy was a flickering shadow, humanoid in outline but lacking all substance.

Its entire form is a shifting mist, visible only when it chooses to materialize; right before a kill. Its eyes glow like twin burning slits, promising death.

The Rifle Form, titled the Sniper King is a ghostly gunslinger draped in flowing cerulean Aether, its long-range Rifle glowing with ominous runes.

It stood at the farthest possible range, cold and patient, aiming without emotion. The sight of it was unnerving.

And then the Shield Form, the Unbreakable Titan. This guy is a monstrous juggernaut, over three meters tall, its entire body fused into a titanic shield glowing with molten inscriptions.

It doesn't wield a weapon; it is the weapon.

Noah took a deep breath. 'This is going to be troublesome'.

They didn't give him time to think though.

They moved, like a natural disaster.

KABOOM!

*Chapter 94: Noah vs five forms of doom [1]*

A battlefield of shimmering void stretched infinitely around Noah, the air thick with etheric pressure, dense enough to make even breathing feel like a challenge.

The only light came from the five luminous figures standing before him, each a different manifestation of Aetherforge's power.

They were not mindless constructs.

They were the embodiment of his own weapon mastery, wielded at a level beyond even his current limits.

And they were here to kill him.

The Twin Swords Form was the first to move.

KABOOM!

The sword-wielding disaster literally caused a sonic boom with its movement, Noah barely catching the flicker of its form before...

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The silver swords blazed in the darkness, raining down a torrent of slashes so fast they blurred into a wall of light.

Noah twisted, parrying two strikes, dodging three, but the last...

"Tch..."

A razor-thin gash opened on his cheek, at the same time a damage pop-up notification floating above Lord Doom's head.

He had dodged too slow.

But he had no time to breathe.

The Dagger Form vanished from sight, its presence disappearing like mist...

"...!"

Alarmed, Noah's instincts screamed.

He spun just in time to catch the flicker of a dagger materializing out of thin air, aimed straight for his spine.

CLANG!

He barely twisted Aetherforge's Battle Lance in time to deflect the deathblow, but then...

BANG!

A bullet screamed through the air.

His body reacted before his mind; instinct honed from countless battles forcing him into a sidestep.

The Sniper Form's shot grazed past his ribs, carving a burning line of pain across his side.

A single second had passed.

And in that second, he had already been pushed to the edge of survival.

But it was not fruitless, Noah learned something.

His eyes flickered, calculating rapidly. He already clashed with 3 of the 5 forms and in that little clash, drawing from his 10+ years of experience playing Warstar, he was able to analyze a lot of information on the spot.

He learned their combat style.

'The Twin Swords form..., its strengths are absolute speed, unparalleled offence, and its wind walk strikes'.

A casual player, even a normal pro player would not have noticed it but he did, the moment the sword vanished into thin air and reappeared mid-swing.

It was what caused the thin gash on his cheek.

His brain geared into overdrive, calculating. 'It accelerates mid-combo, doubling attack speed every few seconds'. His eyes narrowed. 'If I don't break it, this can force me into an unwinnable tempo'.

His eyes flickered again. 'But..., it never defends. Every move is a strike, every parry turns into an attack. An unparalleled offensive style if it wasn't fighting against someone like me'.

'And then the wind walk slashes. It vanishes into thin air and reappears mid-swing, cutting through blind spots with horrifying efficiency'.

'Threat level, 9/10'.

Noah grimaced slightly.

'As for the dagger form, it's strengths are its stealth perfection and deathblow strikes. With these 2 abilities, if I'm not wrong, if it has a 3rd ability then it has to be the ability to create illusory clones'.

'Stealth perfection allows it to phase in and out of existence, attacking from impossible angles'.

'The deathblow strikes..., it doesn't bother with normal combat; every attack is aimed to kill instantly'. His eyes gleamed. 'Maybe I can take advantage of this'.

'But still..., its threat level is 10/10'.

'As for the Rifle Form..., it's strengths are pinpoint accuracy, disruptor shots, and if I'm not wrong its last ability has to be instant reload'.

'That shot..., it didn't aim for lethal damage'. His eyes narrowed into slits. 'If I'm not wrong, it will keep on aiming at my feet, arms, and my weapon to throw me off balance at the worst moments'.

'It's dangerous but its threat level is 8/10..., still a tough opponent'.

All these thoughts and analysis went through Noah's mind in almost in instant.

And then, grimacing again, he focused on the last 2 forms.

"Let's see what you've got!"

As they attacked, he swung Aetherforge, parrying and staying on the defense just so he could force the last 2 forms to utilize their moves.

This strategy was a risky one, but Noah was confident enough to try it.

Facing off against the onslaught of the 5 forms of his weapon, Noah's multitasking ability and game experience was pushed to the maximum within just a few seconds but he managed to stay alive.

And finally, he got all the information that he needed.

His eyes flickered. 'The Battle Lance form..., its strengths are its explosive reach, its perfect counters, and my spatial breakthrough. Dammit!'

'Threat level, 10/10!'

The towering knight's thrusts extend far beyond their natural range, laced with etheric shockwaves that tear apart the battlefield.

It took all of Noah's instincts and reaction speed to dodge the explosive barrage. And yet, that was not all.

The knight mirrors Noah's own movements with split-second precision, predicting his feints and punishing every misstep.

As for the Spatial Breakthrough, it was Aetherforge's ability. Just like him, the Battle Lance form can pierce space itself, reappearing in unexpected angles to launch deadly counterattacks.

Noah's eyes narrowed again. 'As for that Shield Form..., its strengths are its absolute defense, reflective retaliation, and area control'.

The shield form could block everything, including his most destructive high-level attack skills.

As for its reflective retaliation, annoyingly and worryingly, every strike against this guy bounces back with doubled force.

'How am I supposed to even beat that?!'



As for its area control, it was simple. With its size, it doesn't need to chase Noah. It simply forces him into a corner with the intent to crush him.

'Threat level, 9/10'.

'They're all at a threat level of 9 or 10 huh?'

Noah chuckled in slight panic. "This..., don't you think this is going a bit overboard? Who the hell can actually beat this?"

In the end, he didn't keep on whining though.

Rather, he relished the challenge.

Knowledge is power. Noah may not know how to beat this crazy test now, but with his analysis complete, he was confident in himself.

'I'll find a way'.

With that, he grinned. "Fine. Let's dance".

He no longer stayed on the defense.

For the first time since the test started, he attacked.

BOOM!

*Chapter 95: Noah vs five forms of doom [2]*

Noah moved.

His Aetherforge blurred as he lunged forward, targeting Twin Swords form, the fastest one of the five.

If he didn't eliminate it first, he wouldn't get a second chance.

BOOM!

His lance thrust forward with the force of a cannon, Aether trailing like a comet's tail behind it...

CLANG!

But his spear never reached its intended target.

The Shield Form moved.

With an impact that shook the void itself, Noah's attack rebounded and the backlash sent him skidding back.

Another pop-up damage notification floated above him.

The Shield Form didn't move an inch.

Noah looked at the shield bastard, grinning. 'So that's how it's gonna be huh?'

He didn't hesitate; he jumped right back into battle.

The battle continued.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Every single one of them was a terrifying opponent in its own right but Noah multitasked, taking on all 5 of them at the same time.

His multitasking ability was pushed to the limit, his brain working on overdrive to keep up with the attacks and movements of his 5 opponents.

Twin Swords form danced around him, cutting at his guard from impossible angles.

Dagger Form flickered in and out of existence, always one step away from slitting his throat. Noah was riding on the edge of a cliff.

Sniper Form controlled the battlefield, its Rifle never missing.

Battle Lance Form matched him perfectly in a pound for pound battle, countering every move he made.

As for Shield Form? It made sure he never had a clear attack route.

The 5 weapons and their wielders were lethal masters of their various weapon disciplines, and together, they were impenetrable.

It was a flawless coordination.

It was Noah's own skills used against him.

It was a battle he had no right to win.

And yet... Noah laughed.

Because even after analyzing their strengths, he still didn't know their weaknesses, a way to overcome the crazy odds and actually win this fight.

He had been holding back since, but no more.

FWOOOOOSH!

Aether erupted from Lord Doom's body, a maelstrom of raw killing intent accompanying it like a flood pouring from a pool of blood.

His enemies didn't flinch; they had no such emotions.

But that was their flaw, the one weakness that he found.

Because Noah wasn't just strong, he was unpredictable; not even the advanced A.I.s running in Warstar's servers could fully predict him.

WHOOSH!

He threw his lance.

Straight at Sniper Form, the weapon cutting through the air with imperious speed and force.

And yet, it was a feint.

Because at that moment, Dagger Form materialized behind him, aiming for the opening that the reckless action of throwing his weapon created.

And that was exactly what Noah wanted.

'Got you!'

His hand shot out, grabbing Dagger Form's wrist mid-strike, then...

CRACK!

{Crushing Twist=}

A high-level Brawler skill that took inspiration from the one-inch punch, dealing devastating damage in just a single twist of the arm.

A single twist was all it took.

Dagger Form shattered.

Just like Noah analyzed and predicted, the price of Dagger Form's deathblow strikes was its paper defense that was extremely weak to counterattacks.

'One down, four to go'.

Noah's eyes moved left and right, no longer that of a prey but now gleaming with the lethality of a predator.

With his speed and unpredictability unleashed, he became chaos incarnate.

In an instant, his enemies no longer seemed as impenetrable with one of the five making them whole gone.

BZZZ!

Noah disappeared.

He didn't just recklessly throw his lance, disarming himself.

After launching his lance through the air, he teleported after it and caught it mid-flight, right where Shield Form appeared to protect Rifle Form as he erupted, attacking from impossible angles.

He used the Shield Form's rebounds against it, at the same time redirecting force to counter Battle Lance Form's attacks.

And then, as soon as an opening appeared, he took it.

In one rapid dash, activating a skill to amplify it, he closed the distance on Sniper Form, catching the sniper off-guard and breaking its aim before it could adjust.

Bam!

Noah's Aetherforge attacked.

It took a few more hits, but Sniper Form was also down.

'2 down, 3 more to go'.

With only 3 forms remaining, the difficulty reduced even more and Noah became even more unbridled in attack.

He was ruthless, unhesitating, and extremely direct with his attacks.

He fought knowing their strengths and weaknesses, maneuvering over the strengths and taking advantage of the weaknesses.

Like this, he dominated the last 3 and one by one..., they fell.

Until finally, only Shield Form remained.

It stood unshaken, its titanic body towering over him.

Unbreakable. Unmoving.

Noah grinned. "Unbreakable, huh?"

Among the five, though this guy had the weakest offensive power, he was the greatest nuisance to Noah, the glue that keep the five invincible.

With a smirk, he raised his lance.

Aether crackled, the power of his entire will condensing into a single point as Noah activated a Combat Mage high level skill.

BOOOOOOOM!

His battle lance struck like a falling star...

And finally, the Shield Form's defense was breached.

The shield fractured, the titan staggered..., and yet Noah didn't stop.

That guy's defense was not that fragile, but Noah had more in his arsenal of high-level skills.

BAM!

A second strike.

BAM!

A third, a fourth.

And then...

CRACK!

The Unbreakable Titan finally shattered.

The battlefield went silent.

Noah exhaled.

He was covered in wounds, panting, exhausted, barely standing. But he was the last one left standing.

And as the battlefield rippled away into nothingness, Aetherforge began to glow in myriad colors like the rainbow, and then...

~~~~~

[Congratulations! You have completed weapon level up test!]

[You survived, and won.]

[Aetherforge has evolved.]

[New Forms Unlocked=]

>Click to access new forms<

[Level Cap increased to 30.]

[Level 40 weapon level up test now available!]

[Aetherforge's stats have upgraded!]

>Click to check out new weapon stats<

~~~~~

Noah grinned.

"Not bad"

The first thing that Noah did was not to check his new weapon stats and the forms though he was excited to see them.

The priority right now was...

'Damn! I need to sleep'.

His brain was exhausted.

*Chapter 96: Aria's weapon trial- the blood oath of Aamon*

While Noah went straight to an inn in the nearest city to rest and recover his exhausted mental reserves, somewhere else, Aria also decided that it was time to upgrade her S-ranked weapon.

In Noah's crew, only 3 of them had S-Ranked and above equipment, Noah himself, Aria, and Caleb.

Just like Noah's Aetherforge, they also needed to complete level up tests to upgrade the level of their weapons.

Today, Aria also decided to level up her S-ranked weapon after weeks of preparation for it, both mentally and materially.

The moment Aria activated the level-up test for the Blades of Aamon, the world around her collapsed into darkness.

A voice deep as the abyss resonated in her mind.

"Only those who revel in slaughter may wield these fangs of Hell".

And then, a thousand crimson eyes snapped open in the void.

The trial had begun.

...

The battlefield was a ruined temple, drenched in blood-red moonlight.

Statues of forgotten deities lay shattered, their faces defied by claw marks and ancient symbols of Aamon, the Demon Lord of Demon's Tower.

And in the center..., a ring of crimson fire erupted and from it, a lone figure emerged.

It was her.

A perfect copy of Aria, wielding the same Blades of Aamon.

Staring at this replica of her, Aria took a deep breath. 'Unexpected,' she thought. 'But I'm prepared'.

Unlike Noah with his Aetherforge, she didn't know what the level up test was going to be. Of course, the penalty for failure was more lenient than Noah's. This was why she practiced, preparing for multiple different scenarios.

The reality was a bit unexpected, but she was prepared.

"Your hesitation is your weakness," the copy sneered. "Prove to me you deserve these weapons".

Then it attacked.

WHOOSH!

The first strike was blindingly fast, the blades cutting arcs of pure malice through the air.

Aria barely deflected, her twin blades clashing against her clone's in a metallic scream. But the force behind it...

Thrown off balance, her feet skidded backward.

"Tch...", Aria stared coldly at the copy.

The copy moved like a beast; faster, stronger, and ruthless in its aggression.

Aria's mind went into overdrive, observing her.

This wasn't a normal duel.

This was a slaughter, and she was the prey.

This was not unexpected, but still, it stung to be prey.

[Passive Skill: Hell's Dance]

\*Consecutive strikes increase attack speed and lifesteal, stacking up to +50% speed and +25% lifesteal over time.

The Hell's Dance passive skill of the Blades of Aamon was in effect, for both of them.

With every clash, every dodge, every exchange, their attack speed escalated, pushing Aria's reflexes and the system's A.I past the limit.

Their blades blurred into phantoms of crimson steel.

The battlefield became a storm of slashes, a brutal waltz where one mistake meant instant death.

Aria gritted her teeth.

Her copy was faster, but speed alone wasn't enough to kill her.

She was a Blademaster. She fought not with just strength, but with instinct.

And so, having tried every trick in the book to no avail, Aria improvised, fully relying on her instincts that were honed through 10+ years of Warstar.

She started predicting the clone's movements.



BZZZ!

Aria entered a state of ultra-instinct.

A feint to the right? She twisted into the opening, cutting it off before the follow-up attack could build momentum.

A downward strike? She redirected the momentum to create space.

A sudden dash? She stepped in, denying the gap before it was made.

In that instant when Aria decided to embrace her instinct, for the first time, she managed to meet the superior speed of her opponent in a level slate.

One second, she kept at it.

Two.

Three.

Aria became one with the wind, settling into a rhythm and then..., her counterattack began.

Aria's blades suddenly became a storm, not fighting the trial's speed but surpassing it!

CLANG!

A perfect parry, a step in, a blade to the throat...!

SPLAT!

Blood sprayed across the ruined temple.

Her clone collapsed, its body dissolving into crimson mist. But before Aria could even breathe...

"Good".

The voice returned.

"But can you survive what comes next?"

Aria's eyes narrowed. 'Not over yet?'

The crimson flames surged.

And this time, it wasn't just one enemy.

It was an army.

Fifty warriors rose from the flames, each one a master of the twin blades, each one a fallen champion who once wielded the Blades of Aamon.

The undead knights of the Demon Lord.

And they all came for her.

Aria's grin was pure madness.

"Fine".

She tightened her grip on her weapons. "Let's see who the real slaughterer is".

Then she charged.

The battlefield erupted into pure carnage.

Blades flashed, blood splattered..., Aria weaved through the chaos, cutting down knight after knight, her attack speed ramping up until she was an untouchable blur on the battlefield as she already entered the state of flow.

The Hell's Dance passive effect stacked higher and higher...

20%..., 30%..., 40%..., then 50%, maximum stacks!

Aria became unstoppable.

She became a hurricane of steel. She carved through them like a storm of death, a demon wreathed in blood.

Until the last knight fell, impaled by her twin blades.

And the battlefield fell silent.

Aria, drenched in blood, stood victorious. And as the last body crumbled to dust, a crimson sigil burned into her right hand.

Aamon's voice echoed one last time.

"You have proven yourself. From this day onward, these blades are truly yours. Go forth and drown them in the blood of your enemies".

A notification appeared.

~~~~~

[Congratulations! You have completed weapon level up test!]

[You survived, and won.]

[Blades of Aamon has evolved.]

[Level Cap increased to 30.]

[Level 40 weapon level up test now available!]

[Blades of Aamon's stats have upgraded!]

>Click to check out new weapon stats<

~~~~~

Aria exhaled, then she laughed.

"Oh yeah". She grinned. "Now we're talking".

Aria entered this void with a level 20 weapon, and she left with an upgraded level 30 S-ranked weapon.

Somewhere else, Caleb also took on his test.

*Chapter 97: Caleb's trial; the covenant of Hell's Key*

After conquering Demon's Tower at Hell Mode, Caleb got the least personal rewards since he was the only one in the group to not get at least an S-ranked unique skill, only getting an A-ranked one.

As if to compensate for this, among the drop rewards that they got after defeating Asmodeus, the King of Hell, there was an S-Ranked item that fit Caleb's class, Hell's Key.

Till date since getting the overpowered item, Caleb only used it in dungeons where others were not watching.

He didn't even use it during the battle of the Canyon of Ruins.

This was because unlike the others who recklessly revealed their unique skills and trump cards, Caleb calculated ahead for their debut in the pro scene. A trump card becomes half of a trump card once the whole world knows about it.

This was why he kept Hell's Key a secret, and now, it was time to level it up.

The moment Caleb activated the level-up test for Hell's Key, the world shattered around him.

A crimson void stretched infinitely in all directions, an endless abyss of chains and fire. And then, a throne emerged.

Atop the throne sat a shadowed figure, its form obscured by flowing chains and infernal flames. Only its piercing golden eyes shone through the darkness.

"A mortal dares claim dominion over Hell?" The figure's voice was deep, unamused, and laced with power. "Very well. Let us see if you are worthy".

The chains rattled. The flames roared.

The trial had begun.

The shadowed figure in the throne barely finished speaking when a circle of hellfire erupted, surrounding Caleb and forming a burning arena.

From the flames, six monstrous figures emerged; each one a legendary Demon General who once served under the Demon Lords under Asmodeus.

As soon as they emerged, floating red notifications hovered above them, giving Caleb a brief name introduction of what exactly he was facing.

[Gor'Thar, the Unyielding Tyrant]

[Level 30 Demon General:]

Gor'Thar is an intimidating Demon General, a towering four-armed, armored behemoth wielding twin Great swords.

It had a fearsome grin tearing its face.

[Velshor, the Ashen Death]

[Level 30 Demon General:]

Velshor was less intimidating, a sorcerer demon wrapped in cursed, burning scriptures that contained an unholy power.

[Xel'Tun, the Blood Reaper]

[Level 30 Demon General:]

Xel'Tun, the Blood Reaper is a scythe-wielding assassin, its body a shifting mass of shadows and teeth. This Demon General was terrifying to look at.

[Mazrok, the Infernal Juggernaut]

[Level 30 Demon General:]

As for Mazrok, the Demon General was a towering brute, its body composed of molten rock and infernal steel brimming with raw power.

[Sylphira, the Scarlet Tempest]

[Level 30 Demoness General:]

Sylphira, the only female of the 6 Generals is a winged demoness, clearly a master of aerial combat and hellfire magic.

[Dreg'zul, the Hollow King]

[Level 30 Demon General:]

As for the last of them, Dreg'zul, the Hollow King is a skeletal warlock, whispering incantations that could unravel existence itself.

The voice spoke again.

"Command them... or be destroyed by them".

The six demons charged at once.

Most would panic; most would hesitate. But Caleb?

He smirked, and analyzed.

In a fraction of a second, he processed a ton of information from the movement of the 6 Demon Generals alone despite not clashing with them yet.

'Gor'Thar clearly has overwhelming strength but limited agility...'

'There's a 68% chance that I can interrupt Velshor if his incantations are disrupted before they can form a spellweave...'

'Xel'Tun clearly relies on openings to fight,' his eyes gleamed. 'Bait him and he'd fall into his own trap, that's the way!'

'Mazrok's molten body makes him extremely resistant to physical damage, but it also makes him slow'.

'Sylphira has speed but looks fragile up close'.

'Dreg'zul's magic is unknown,' his eyes narrowed. 'I have to take him out first to prevent uncertainties'.

Noah needed to clash with his opponents before analyzing them to derive a plan to defeat them, but Caleb went a step further, doing that without the need to take the risk of fighting with them first.

Caleb adjusted his glasses. "Let's begin, shall we?"

The battle started.

Caleb didn't fight with brute strength though, rather, he commanded.

[Equipment Name: Hell's Key!]

[Equipment Type: Item]

[Item Rank: S]

Level: 20 {Upgradeable}

[Special Skill: Hell Legion]

\*Grants the ability to summon and command the legions of Hell, including those under Asmodeus and his Demon Lords within Demon's Tower.

\*The strength of the summoned demons is dependent on the wielder's power and control.

>Description: An artifact of absolute authority. Not even demons disobey this key<

The S-ranked item granted Caleb the ability to command any and every demon from Demon's Tower, including the Generals and when he was strong enough, even the Demon Lords and maybe even Asmodeus himself someday.

With a flick of his wrist, Hell's Key pulsed with power.

A single word escaped his lips. "Kneel".

The demons hesitated for the briefest moment, and that was enough.

BOOM!

With a snap of his fingers, Caleb twisted the battlefield in his favor.

Gor'Thar's massive swings were redirected; he was now an unstoppable force slamming into Mazrok instead.

Velshor's incantations? Caleb severed the flow of hellfire fueling them with the power of Hell's Key, turning the Demon General's own magic against him.

Xel'Tun's assassination attempt? A feint..., Caleb sidestepped, sending him into Sylphira's firestorm.

Dreg'zul's whispers of death?

Caleb's own voice echoed louder. "Silence".

The warlock's spell collapsed into nothing.

One by one, the Demon Generals fell to his control.

It seemed easy, but far from it. Rather, Caleb made it seem easy with his seamless calculations and the insane accuracy of their results.

He was not just a Summoner.

He was a strategist, a tactician, a ruler.

Until finally, the last demon knelt before him.

The throne in the abyss rumbled.

The voice spoke again, this time with something almost like... respect.

"You did not conquer with strength. You conquered with will. The Key is yours, Master of Hell's Legion".

A system notification appeared.

~~~~~

[Hell's Key has Evolved.]

[Level Cap increased to 30.]

[Level 40 weapon level up test now available!]

[Hell's Key stats have upgraded!]

>Click to check out new weapon stats<

~~~~~

Caleb exhaled, then smirked.

"That wasn't so hard".

*Chapter 98: Matchday 1..., Warstar is back!*

1 day later..., it was weekend!

It was that time of the season again.

Warstar was build around the game itself, the revolutionary video game that captured hearts around the world with its impeccable design, implementation, revolutionary graphics and game mechanics.

It was by far the most popular RPG game in the world.

But that was not the true base of Warstar's popularity, the true core of Warstar's popularity was the Pro Alliance in big countries around the world.

Even before Warstar, there was an Esports scene in most countries, but it wasn't quite as avid as what people saw these days.

Afterall, apart from football and concerts by artists, never had an eSport event been hosted in an actual stadium not to talk of a stadium as big and iconic as Wembley Stadium in London, England.

But that was the exact location where the 10th Warstar RPG Champions League final was played in England.

An eSports final..., in Wembley stadium!

A decade ago, that would have sounded inconceivable to anyone.

But not anymore, and it was all due to Warstar, and its popularity.

In Warstar, 3 countries were recognized as the big 3 when it the revolutionary video game, namely England, China, and Japan.



They were called that way not just because their Warstar Esports communities and Pro Alliances were the most developed in the world, but mostly because they were the first to recognize the potential of the revolutionary video game in Warstar.

They saw something that would revolutionize sports as the world knew it before, and so they jumped into it, adopting it first.

They didn't just adopt it though, on just the 2nd year of Warstar's launch, England, China, and Japan became the first countries to launch an official Warstar Pro Alliance due to the explosive growth in popularity of the game.

Since then, the 3 different Warstar Pro Alliances grew in prestige and importance, till today when the World Championship was introduced.

China, England, and Japan were the biggest Warstar-playing countries.

Their Warstar communities were highly developed after 12 years of having adopted the revolutionary game first, and this created fanbases of the video game that was now even rivalling football in terms of fan passion.

In England and around the world where football was the most popular sport, to football fans, every single season ends in a rollercoaster.

This was because at the end of the season, the winner of each domestic league would be decided, ending the title race that lasted all season.

Not just that, the big tournaments of football would also be decided.

Especially the UEFA Champions League final of football which was the biggest club tournament would conclude in a blockbuster final where a certain fanbase would celebrate their team's win in the final, while the other wallow in regret.

All those emotions, the rollercoaster, they all hit a crescendo at the end of each season. And then comes the long break.

During the break, if there was no international tournament in between, football fans around the world become starved of football.

And like drug addicts, they begin to crave it.

This was why every time that a new football campaign was about to begin, fans around the world approach it with crazy enthusiasm and anticipation.

They could not wait for the season to begin!

And on the start of that matchday 1, the first day, the emotions of the fans go haywire as they're overwhelmed by emotions.

A similar situation overtook England at this moment.

This was because after 2 months of being Warstar-deprived- not just any Warstar, but Warstar at the highest level, between pro players, fans of the video game were finally about to return back to their normal schedule.

The pro clubs around England were about to start taking to the arena every week again in heart-wrenching clashes to the death.

The old clubs, the newly promoted clubs, the favorites to lift the trophy again, the famous pro players, the promising newbies, fans of the revolutionary video game could not wait for all of them to take on to the pitch and clash for glory.

And this was why the fans were so excited.

A certain fanbase was also excited.

The screen bathed Benjamin's apartment in Birmingham with a soft glow as the Pro Alliance's new season unfolded.

On-screen, Cyber Squad, Noah's former team clashed against Lionheart Legacy, the Manchester-based Warstar club with a deep history in the league.

For the first time in 11 years, Cyber Squad fielded a massively different lineup of pro players even as the roster of legendary Avatars remained intact.

Of the original team of 7, only 1 familiar face remained, Isabella, the controller of the OG Cyber Squad Paladin, Stormborn Valor.

Originally, in the OG Cyber Squad team, Stormborn Valor was one of the more anonymous Avatars in the team, never making waves and mostly being the side character but for the first time in years, Stormborn Valor was now a major character in Cyber Squad.

Afterall, she was now the most experienced player in the squad.

For 11 years, Noah was the captain of team Cyber Squad while Marcus was the vice-captain but this year, the hierarchy finally changed.

With the sudden retirement of Noah Harrington and his crew of close friends, Isabella got a promotion, rising all the way to become a starting V player of team Cyber Squad. Not just that, she became the vice-captain.

The captain position was given to the heir of Cyber Squad's legend, the new controller of the God-level Stinger of War Avatar, Caster.

This was how team Cyber Squad now looked.

~~~~~

[Cyber Squad:]

[Avatar- Stinger of War]

[Class: Combat Mage]

[Controller: Caster]

[Special Position: Captain]

...

[Avatar- Stormborn Valor]

[Class: Paladin]

[Controller: Isabella]

[Special Position: Vice Captain]

...

[Avatar- Sprinkling Brooks]

[Class: Blademaster]

[Controller: Chrollo]

[Special Position: None]

...

[Avatar- Black Phantom]

[Class: Mechanic]

[Controller: Smith]

[Special Position: None]

...

[Avatar- Changing Spring]

[Class: Cleric]

[Controller: Cleon]

[Special Position: None]

...

[Reserve players:]

[Avatar- Fatal Einstein]

[Class: Summoner]

[Controller: Elliot]

[Special Position: None]

...

[Avatar- Pestilent Jest]

[Class: Elementalist]

[Controller: Peter]

[Special Position: None]

The OG Cyber Squad team was the Battle God, a Battle Mage, a Blademaster, a Mechanic, a Summoner, and a Cleric but for the first time, Cyber Squad changed its strategy, integrating Isabella's Paladin into the main team.

Isabella's Paladin replaced the Summoner in the starting V.

For this game, the first game of the new Warstar season, Cyber Squad were still the overwhelming favorites over their opponents.

Afterall, this was Cyber Squad.

To a lot of fans, that name alone was an advantage on its own but it was not the true reason. It was not all nostalgia.

Yes, Noah and his clique may have retired after losing in another Warstar RPG champions league final, but on paper, the team didn't decline.

Afterall, Cyber Squad went all out on the transfer market, not just securing Caster's signature but the signature of other promising young rising stars in the league who were eager to snap up such legendary Avatars.

Instead of the old and ageing team that Cyber Squad was last season, this new season, Cyber Squad was a young and energetic promising squad.

This was why they were the favorites for this first game.

On Lionheart Legacy's side, it was a pro club that had been in the English pro scene for a long time. A club with royal sponsorships and a history dating back all the way to the origins of Warstar eSports, known for its discipline and noble knight-themed aesthetics.

From the description alone, their class lineup was evident.

Instead of Cyber Squad's aggressive attacking line up of a Combat Mage, a Blademaster, an Elementalist, a Paladin, and a Cleric, Lionheart Legacy stuck with their old lineup of 2 Paladins, a Cleric, a Gunner, and a Ghostblade.

Controlling 1 of the 2 Paladins was the captain of Lionheart Legacy, a veteran of the English Pro Alliance and an old rival of Noah Harrington, Harvey.

Harvey was the only reason why Cyber Squad was not given a 100% chance of winning the first game of the new season.

This captain was devious and experienced, and that meant a lot in Warstar.

Afterall, it was a game of strategy and teamwork.

It was going to be a tough and exciting matchup, but it was not the only game that was scheduled for matchday 1 of the 11th season of the Pro Alliance.

Afterall, there were 20 clubs in the English Pro Alliance every season.

On the broadcast, the fixture of eSports games was dropped.

(English Pro Alliance:)

(Cyber Squad – Lionheart Legacy)

(Time: 6:00pm)

...

(Oblivion Knights – Shadow Dominion)

(Time: 7:00pm)

...

(Imperium Tyrannus – Scarlet Rose)

(Time: 8:00pm)

...

(Juggernaut – Phoenix Rising)

(Time: Tomorrow, 6:00pm)

...

(Nightfall – Pendragon Esports)

(Time: Tomorrow, 7:00pm)

...

(Midnight Revenants – Blazing Gryphons)

(Time: Tomorrow, 8:00pm)

...

(Avalon Sovereign – Stormborn Esports)

(Time: Tomorrow, 9:00pm)

...

(Cerberus Core – Exo Genesis)

(Time: Monday, 7:00pm)

...

(Steel Bastion – Phantom Vortex)

(Time: Monday, 8:00pm)

...

(Helix Nova – Titan's Ascent)

(Time: Monday, 9:00pm)

Seated in Benjamin's apartment, a group of friends focused on the screen as the action was about to begin on stage.

They were excited.

*Chapter 99: Cyber Squad vs Lionheart Legacy [1]*

[First Individual Battle: Stinger of War vs Charging Vale!]

The 11th season of the Pro Alliance was about to start.

And now, for its first battle, Stinger of War and Charging Vale were to clash in a blockbuster battle, making the hype of the first game rise to the roof.

The Warstar Pro Alliance stage was set, the atmosphere charged with anticipation. The individual battles were crucial, each one worth a point, and the opening match was clearly going to be a clash of titans.

Caster, the promising young player now controlling the Battle God Avatar, Stinger of War. Vs Harvey, the seasoned captain of Lionheart Legacy, wielding his trusted battle companion, Charging Vale, a Paladin.

The arena map loaded.

[Arena Location: The Radiant Bastion!]

The Radiant Bastion, a battlefield designed for tactical skirmishes; open plazas flanked by narrow corridors, ideal for both spellcasters and tanky warriors.

And then, the countdown started.

3..., 2..., 1. Now!

Caster moved first.

While this game meant a lot to a lot of fans, fans of the English eSports scene, it also meant a lot to the young controller, Caster.

Caster had a lot to prove this game. Afterall, the task of filling the void left by Noah Harrington, the living legend was big boots to fill.

He wanted to prove to the whole world with his first game in Cyber Squad and the Battle God Avatar that he was ready to take on the world, that he was ready to become the new figurehead and main man of the Pro Alliance.

He wanted to prove that he was worthy of the Battle God.

Whoosh!

Stinger of War blurred into action, his combat robes flaring as arcane sigils formed at his fingertips.

A barrage of Aether lances materialized in the air as Caster activated a Combat Mage skill before hurtling toward Harvey like spectral javelins.

The experienced captain stood his ground.

His Paladin's shield shone with divine radiance as he raised it, activating Blessing of the Sentinel, a defensive aura that fortified his resistance against magic.

The lances struck, flashes of blue light scattering across his armor, but the Paladin barely flinched.

"Classic Caster," the commentators noted. "He plays aggressive from the get-go, trying to establish tempo".

"Just like Lionheart's style, the Knight charge style!"

Harvey was unshaken.

Amid the lance strikes, he charged forward, his longsword wreathed in golden flames.

{Radiant Slash=}

A crescent of divine energy erupted towards Stinger of War.

Caster smirked, weaving Warp Step, the Combat Mage teleportation spell as he vanished just before the attack connected.

He reappeared on a higher platform, already conjuring a new spell...

{Aether Chain=}

Golden chains of crackling arcane energy quickly shot toward Harvey, aiming to bind him in place.

Harvey did not evade. Instead, he slammed his sword into the ground, then...



KABOOM!

{Judgement Field=}

A holy shockwave pulsed outward, shattering the Aether Chains before they could wrap around him.

For a brief moment, behind his monitor, Caster's smile faltered.

Harvey closed the distance in an instant. His blade came down in a devastating Smite, forcing Caster to blink away at the last second.

The pressure was mounting.

The audience could tell, Harvey's Paladin wasn't just tanking, he was dictating the flow of the battle.

'Dammit!' Caster raged in his mind.

'Even with Stinger of War, I'm not dominating?!'

'Unacceptable!'

Caster raged, but his mind was able to stay clear of distractions.

Afterall, his talent was not just for show. He earned Cyber Squad manager's attention for a reason; he was a true professional player.

Despite how much he hated it and it wounded his pride, Caster switched tactics on the spot.

His hands moved in a blur, Arcane Resonance activated, another Combat Mage skill.

Stinger of War's next spell came instantly.

{Mana Surge=}

A burst of raw energy detonated around him, launching him back while sending shockwaves at Harvey.

Harvey held his ground.

That was his mistake.

A second spell was already woven, this time an Awakened level Combat Mage skill...

{Aether Nova=}

BOOM!

An explosion of violet fire erupted from the ground, engulfing the Paladin in cascading flames.

For the first time, Harvey took true damage.

His health bar flickered dangerously; he had lost 20% HP in a single exchange!

The crowd roared, hailing the Battle God.

Caster grinned. "I've got you".

Or so he thought.

...

Birmingham City, England...

In the room where Benjamin, Caleb, and Genevieve sat, focused on the television as they watched a familiar Avatar clash against a familiar rival, feeling melancholy and slight indignity, Benjamin realized it first.

"That bastard's still got it!"

Genevieve sighed. "I hate sneaky players like him the most".

"It's called experience". Caleb said with all seriousness. "It's the only thing that can't be quantitatively calculated in Warstar, and it's the reason why Caster will lose in this battle".

...

"Battle God!" "Battle God!" "Battle God!"

It was a Cyber Squad home game, played in their home stadium.

That was why as Caster started dominating, they roared, cheering on the Battle God at the top of their lungs.

None of them expected the situation to change suddenly though, not even Caster himself.

Caster used Aether Nova, an extremely powerful Awakened level Combat Mage skill that ate through Harvey's HP, but Harvey expected it.

This was why as soon as Caster used it, he improvised, using the explosion of violet fire as a veil even as he took damage.

"...!" Caster realized it too late.

Through the flames, a golden glow pulsed.

Harvey activated Divine Aegis, an Awakened level Paladin skill, a powerful skill that granted temporary invulnerability buff.

Caster's eyes widened. "No way".

Harvey's figure rushed forward, shield leading, sword trailing with righteous fury as he slammed into the Combat Mage.

{Divine Thrust=}

An Awakened level offensive Paladin skill!

Caster was not the only one with offensive Awakened level skills.

Awakened level skills were all extremely hard and expensive to learn, this was because of the crazy effects and incredible damage that they could cause.

But in the pro scene, they're not so prominent.

This is because the input required to use an Awakened level skill is always high, meaning it is impractical to use it fluidly mid-fight. The ability to use an Awakened level skill mid-fight fluidly and smoothly is something that separates the God-level players from regular pro players.

Using an Awakened skill required crazy APM.

Caster did it with Aether Nova, proving his skill and APM. Harvey couldn't do it, he was not young anymore, and so he improvised.

Using the flames of Caster's skill as a veil, and hiding in it, he had the time to rapidly type the input for 2 Awakened level Paladin skills.

BAM!

The paladin's sword pierced through the flames and struck Stinger of War directly; a stunning blow!

Stinger of War's HP experienced a drastic drop.

The entire arena gasped.

Caster was locked in place, temporarily immobilized.

Harvey did not hesitate. His sword gleamed once more, another Awakened level Paladin skill, then...

{Judgement Strike=}

KABOOM!

A pillar of holy light engulfed Stinger of War.

[HP: 0%]

---<VICTORY>---

The familiar victory screen appeared, then the referee's voice boomed.

"Winner of the first individual battle, Harvey!"

The away Lionheart Legacy fans exploded with cheers.

The camera panned to Cyber Squad's bench. Isabella's expression was grim, Chrollo crossed his arms. As for Caster, he shook his head, extremely disappointed, barely hiding the simmering rage in his eyes.

On the commentators' desk, the analysts broke it down.

"Caster had the tempo early on, but Harvey's discipline and clutch decision-making won him the fight".

"This is why he's the captain of Lionheart Legacy. He never panics".

With Lionheart Legacy leading 1-0, the stage was set for the next individual battle. Before that...

In Lionheart Legacy's gaming booth, as soon as the camera panned away from them, Harvey focused on his teammates, a smirk on his face.

"Facing that bastard account is always a pain, but this time, I finally found a weakness in it. The weakness is its controller!" He grinned.

"Caster, his situation is just like a smalltime businessman who suddenly got a multi-million dollars deal".

"First, he'll become arrogant and conceited, feeling on top of the world".

"Then, he'll become desperate to perform and prove himself".

"Caster is now in that second phase. I've fought with him before, the boy is good but right now, he's not in the best state of mind".

"He's too eager to dominate, and too arrogant to play normally, only set on dominating just because he's now controlling the Avatar called the Battle God".

Harvey smiled coldly. "He's underestimating the game".

"This is his weakness, and we'll take advantage of it".

"I believe Caster is a mentally resilient boy. With time, he'll realize this weakness and adjusts as he suffers more defeat but today, let's take advantage of it and win against Cyber Squad".

"Yes captain!"

On the bench, as the 2nd Cyber Squad player stepped up, Caster simmered in rage, never taking his eyes off the opposition player booth.

'How? Just how?!'

'How did I lose with Stinger of War?!'

'He definitely cheated, right!'

'Yes, he cheated!'

*Chapter 100: Cyber Squad vs Lionheart Legacy [2]*

In Cyber Squad's gaming booth...

Isabella looked at her captain. 'This...', she hesitated.

Seeing the ugly look on Caster's face, she knew exactly what he was thinking. After spending a few weeks with him, though she acknowledged his skill, she also knew his weaknesses, he was too arrogant and conceited.

'Sigh..., he's so different from captain'. She thought.

But in the end, she knew she had to take responsibility. To the outside world, Caster was the captain but in truth, it was all for publicity.

Only a few important figures at the club knew the truth that Isabella was the true captain after Noah's departure. And her biggest job was managing the ego of their new star player, and keeping him in line.

She hesitated. "Umm, captain, I'll be going next".

"Go if you want!" Caster snapped, still seething in rage.

Isabella smiled, not minding the disrespect. "I believe that you were better in the individual battle, Harvey won because he played dirty".

"I know!"

Maintaining her smile, Isabella's Avatar finally entered the arena.

For the 2nd individual battle, she was representing Cyber Squad and she now had a big task to fulfill. 'I can't afford to lose'.

'With him losing, the team is already shaky'. She briefly glanced at her teammates. 'Morale is low now, I need to restore it'.

She thought of Harvey. 'That shameless old man, I won't let him have his way!'

With that, she entered the Arena.

The pressure was hard on her but Isabella was able to deliver. With her Paladin, against Lionheart Legacy's Ghostblade, she was able to deliver, winning and getting a point for Cyber Squad.

Cyber Squad also won the 3rd individual battle, completing a comeback and stealing the lead even as the stadium became a cauldron of noise again.

But even as Cyber Squad fans celebrated, including the players, one specific player remained inconsolable.

'Unacceptable!'

'I can't accept this!'

'How can they all win and I be the only one who lose?!'

'Does that mean I'm useless?'

'I can't accept this!'

Isabella could sense the dark thoughts going through her captain's mind, and she was worried.

She was not the only one who sensed it though, a certain shameless old man in Harvey also sensed it.

The 3 vs 3 battle rush started as Caster was eager restore his pride. But what he didn't expect was how unbridled Harvey was going to be.

Harvey didn't hold back, trash-talking Caster till even Isabella started feeling bad on his behalf, trolling him for losing as the captain and with an Avatar as overpowered as the Battle God of Warstar while his underlings won their own battles.

In the end, Isabella finally realized.

'This guy..., he deliberately let us win the last battle right'.

'Just so he could attack Caster psychologically!'

She gritted her teeth angrily. '...bastard!'

In the end, there was nothing she could do.

Caster was already overly eager to perform before Cyber Squad's home fans in their home stadium, and Harvey's taunting pushed him over the edge.

Caster was no longer in the right state of mind.

He was angry, frustrated, and erratic.

Isabella tried to warn him but knowing his personality, she knew that it would only backfire.

Looking at Harvey's Paladin through her monitor, she despaired. 'This guy..., he's planned this from the very beginning right?'

'To treat a promising youngster like this..., Harvey where is your shame?!'

Clearly, shame was a foreign word to Harvey though.

Because in the 3 vs 3 battle rush, Harvey held nothing back.

He let Lionheart Legacy's other Paladin fight Caster first, whose APM exploded to ridiculous levels in the fight, overly eager to win.

At some point, the combos were so much that the home fans started cheering for the Battle God again.

But Isabella knew. 'Damn..., they're falling into his schemes again'.

Lionheart's other Paladin was not as offensive as Harvey's own Avatar. His was a more defensive minded Paladin, one that could substitute as a Cleric.

His role in meeting Caster first was not to defeat the Battle God, but to rile him up and frustrate him due to how long it was taking to complete the battle.

It lasted 8 minutes and 23 seconds, pushing Caster's patience to the limit.

'No...!' Isabella's eyes widened because she knew what would come next.

[Avatar Charging Vale has entered the Arena!]

Lionheart's Paladin despite being defeated managed to wear Caster's Stinger of War Avatar to below 40% HP because of his reckless fighting, and now...

Harvey grinned.

{I told you you're nothing important right? Just an arrogant, overpampered brat who doesn't know his place.}

{What's with that face? You don't believe me? Just watch me crush you!}

'Shameless bastard..., he's already at 40% HP!' Isabella thought angrily but the others didn't see her POV, even her other teammates.

Alongside the fans, they cheered the Battle God on, piling pressure on his shoulders that he must win against that annoying Paladin.

Caster heard all the roars, the chants.

Caster was intelligent, he knew how unlikely it was with just 40% HP to win against Harvey but still, his ego could not help it.

'I am controlling Stinger of War!'

Noticing the look on him, Harvey secretly smirked. 'Done'.

The battle started and it was a one-sided beatdown.

Harvey with his Charging Vale Avatar absolutely crushed Stinger of War 1v1, breaking the Avatar. Not just the Avatar, but also the controller behind it.



Crack!

Caster vividly heard his pride being shattered.

"...!"

With bloodshot eyes, he watched, seething in rage.

Harvey was ruthless though even after winning as he continued taunting Caster on the Arena, saying that he was not worthy of the Stinger of War Avatar, that he should return it to the rightful owner.

'This...!' Isabella was worried.

Despite knowing that it was just part of Harvey's psychological warfare all to win the battle, she couldn't help but feel bad since she knew how it was affecting Caster and what he was likely thinking.

Harvey was not all talk and boast though.

Perhaps trampling on Stinger of War for the first time in years emboldened him, pushing him to the flow state because he actually completed an incredible 1v3 against Cyber Squad and won!

Harvey singlehandedly won the 3 vs 3 battle rush.

And yet, he didn't stop, taunting Caster still.

By the time the team battle rolled over, Caster already lost it completely, no longer in the right state of mind to compete but Isabella dared not tell him to leave the fight. Because of his ego, and because he was the captain.

Arrogantly and petulantly, Caster pushed on to fight.

And that led to a humiliation in the team battle.

Isabella tried to curb the situation but she could not as after employing some devious strategies to isolate Caster and Stinger of War from his teammates, the Battle God was ganged up on and brutally murdered.

Caster... was the first to die in the team battle.

...Emotional damage.

Isabella couldn't hold it in anymore, she directly messaged Harvey despite the fact that it was being broadcasted to the world.

{Hey! You're taking it too far!}

{Too far?} Harvey sent laughing emojis. {Someone has to teach your petulant captain a lesson, that rising to the top is not just banked on getting a God-level account. Someone has to teach him not to underestimate the Pro scene.}

{Come on Isabella, instead of criticizing me, you should be thanking me for being the senior educating the junior.} He sent more laughing emojis.

Crack!

Behind his monitor, in the ghost state of his Avatar, Caster watched, reading the line of text that Harvey sent on the task as he heard more of his ego shattering.

'Ah...!' Caster grabbed his head, feeling like he was losing his mind.

With the best Avatar and trump card of Cyber Squad won, there was only one outcome destined to be of the team battle.

One by one, Harvey led his teammates to pick out and kill the Cyber Squad Avatars, dominating so hard that the Cyber Squad stadium fell completely silent.

It was no longer like the stadium of one of the biggest Warstar clubs in England, rather, it felt like a cemetery instead.

Some fans literally broke down in tears as they watched how their team was being bullied on the first game of the season.

...

Birmingham City, England...

There was a solemn atmosphere now in the living room as Benjamin, Genevieve, and Caleb stared at the proceedings on the screen.

"Tsk". Benjamin stood up, grabbing a cup of water. "Disgraceful". He muttered.

"I should hate them," Genevieve gritted her teeth. "But this is so heartbreaking..., I was a Cyber Squad fan for 10 years".

Caleb sighed. "That boy is not fit to be a captain".

"Unless a miracle happens and his personality and outlook of the game changes, Cyber Squad will be on course to have their worst season ever".

But then, Benjamin managed to shake it off quickly as the game finally came to an end. He chuckled. "They betrayed us, now, they've been be-destroyed, heh!"

The game finally came to an end, Lionhearts Legacy won.

(English Pro Alliance:)

(Cyber Squad 2 – 8 Lionhearts Legacy)