

## **Destiny 1081**

### Chapter 1081 Group Assessment

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The class stood at the entrance of the field for the next stage of the course and stared at what was in front of them. The expression on their faces turned weird with every passing second as they stared at the sight ahead.

There were no noticeable traps in the field ahead. But there was something seemingly more troublesome standing on their path. What they saw was a group of humanoid things standing on the field and seemingly waiting for them to step forward.

"Clay Golems and Mechanical Puppets?" commented one of the students while having a grave look on his face.

If those golems and puppets were just ordinary ones that were usually used in training, then they would not have that kind of reaction. But from the threatening feeling that they were getting from those golems and puppets, the class could tell that they will get seriously hurt if they try to mess with those.

Moreover, the class also noticed another thing – these clay golems and mechanical puppets seemed to be targeting a specific individual or group based on what they could see.

There were not many of them, but based on their numbers, the class seemed to suspect that each of them was targeting the groups of students within the class as well as the others who chose to go solo.

"Looks like this is meant to test our choice whether it is good or not," muttered Jillian as she looked ahead.

"Which one is ours then?" asked Arthur as he was trying to look for the golem or puppet that was targeting them. But even after a few moments, he could not find them.

"You can try by stepping on the field. I am sure that the ones designated to test us will quickly charge at you once you did," commented Leonard as he calmly looked ahead.

"Whether it is a clay golem or a mechanical puppet, we can just smash them and advance!" declared Lorraine as she was itching to fight.

Shin, on the other hand, was calmly standing on the side. He had the same assessment as Jillian and was also looking for the ones that could possibly target them alongside Arthur. And after a few moments without finding anything, he gave up on it and just turned his head toward the rest of the class.

He could see them making their respective preparations for the upcoming battle. He could only sigh as he looked at them before shaking his head.

He then turned in the direction where their crazy training instructor was sitting leisurely underneath the shade of the tree. He was thinking about how ruthless this old man could be.

This was just the 'first' lap, yet they were thoroughly getting exhausted already. Moreover, they were expected to run four more laps at the very least before going to the meditation training that the old man prepared for them.

Shin could not help but sympathize with the first group of the class, who were meant to run through this field for as long as they could. He was suspecting that this crazy old man was trying to kill his students through exhaustion rather than training them.

"Will the difficulty of the course will remain the same or will it adjust in every lap according to our forms?" said Alice, telling the others her thoughts.

Her words were quite soft and quiet, but the whole class heard them. It was at that moment when everyone was reminded that they had to run through the entire course a few more times until the end of the class.

The second group, that were meant to run four more laps after this, was wearing serious looks on their faces while the first group, who had to run through the entire course repeatedly, were already sweating bullets and currently having second thoughts about whether their choice of coming here was the right one.

After observing everyone for a couple of minutes, Shin led the others to distance themselves away. Regardless of the purpose of his part of the course, they were still in the race. And the other groups and individuals were competitors that could sabotage them at any given moment.

Even if Shin was thinking that this might be too early for that, there was no harm in being careful. After all, 'unexpected' and 'accidents' could always happen anytime.

Not long after, the class started moving forward. This time around, they were not going to wait for the others to take the first move and observe from the distance. They had already gathered enough information, so they could only worry about themselves for the time being.

Moreover, they could also check on the progress of the other groups and certain individuals from time to time while fighting.

Right after everyone crossed a certain line within the field, the clay golems and mechanical puppets quickly made their moves. They responded with the movement of the class and started moving toward their respective targets.

Seeing the direction of where those golems and puppets were heading, the class confirmed that this stage was going to be way different from the rest of the course.

Bang! Bang!

Explosive sounds could be heard in different parts of the field as both sides made their moves. It came from the side of the students as well as the golems and puppets.

Boom!

Then a much larger explosion could be heard as the two sides collided against each other. Different collisions and clashes occurred within the field, creating chaos that resembled a war.

Some of the students that got carried away by their emotions could not help but shout while charging at the golems or puppets standing in front of them.

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In a certain part of the field, Shin and the group were currently advancing forward while maintaining their formation.

Leonard and Arthur were spearheading their formation with Shin closely following behind. Then there was Cloe behind him with Alice and Jillian standing on her side. Molton and Lorraine were standing side by side at the rear as they observed their surroundings with sharp eyes.

Ahead of them, A huge clay golem was blocking their path and seemingly waiting for them to reach it. There were also a pair of mechanical puppets standing on each of its sides, which had the same height as an average human.

Shin observed the golem and the puppets with his 'True Sight' but could not accurately gauge their strengths no matter how hard and thoroughly he looked at them.

Even Arthur, who was using his 'Dragon Eyes' ocular technique, was furrowing his brows quite deeply. He could not tell how strong or how advanced these 'things' standing on their path.

This was the problem that almost everyone would encounter when facing a clay golem and mechanic puppets. But given that the golem and the puppets were meant to counter their group, Shin could at least guess the major strength and abilities that they were supposed to have.

While everyone was getting ready for the battle, Molton's voice suddenly rang from behind. "There is another one hiding somewhere."

The group suddenly halted in their tracks when they heard his words before waiting for him to continue. "I am not entirely sure, but by Spiritual Sense is picking up another threat lingering in the air."

Shin did not turn his head as he was keeping an eye on the three 'opponents' waiting for them upfront. But he tilted his head to the side, trying to confirm Molton's assumption.

He was also keeping his Spiritual Sense active, but he could not pick up the 'threat' that Molton was saying. He could not help but doubt it a little but did not disregard the possibility.

Since it was either a clay golem or a mechanical puppet, Shin could not feel their 'presence' but he could at least feel the movements in the surroundings. But regardless of how sensitive he was, he could not find that 'thing' that Molton had found.

Seemingly able to tell what Shin was currently thinking, Jillian explained. "My brother's spiritual sense is a little special compared to most of the mentalists. Instead of feeling the 'presence' and 'movements' in the surroundings, he can tell the threat that can possibly harm him."

Since she was planning to join this group, she had to tell them what she and her brother could do to let them understand each other more.

Even though they had worked together before, the group was still not overly familiar with the two of them, so she took this opportunity to let the others understand them more. She could tell them anything aside from the secrets that could not be known to others.

Shin did not ask any questions nor doubt Molton anymore and just nodded his head in understanding. He thought for a moment before saying to the group. "It seems like the big guy is meant to deal with you, guys."

"If there are two or three mechanical puppets around and they had similar levels of strength, then it is most likely targeting me and these two," he added as he pointed at Leonard and Arthur.

He could instantly tell what the crazy old man was thinking after seeing the setup. Old Man Lin want to see how everyone would perform if the three of them, who were the strongest among the group, were put out of the equation.

The old man seemingly wanted to know whether the group was only being carried by the three of them or the others were just being overshadowed by their radiance.

Shin pursed his lips a little before giving his instructions. "Leo, Arthur, go deal with the two mechanical puppets. The rest will be dealing with the clay golem and work together to take it down."

He then surveyed the surroundings with his gaze before saying. "Leave the hidden threat to me and focus on your task."

"I will make sure that you guys will perform well in this group assessment," he added as he turned his gaze back in front of them.

#### Chapter 1082 Group Assessment (Part 2): True Purpose

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The group organized themselves as they carefully advanced forward. They cautiously watched the movements of the clay golem and mechanical puppets in front of them, fully ready to take action as soon as they made their moves.

But after reaching a few meters away from the latter, the group noticed that they would not move unless Shin and the others took the initiative. And when Shin realized it, he quickly gave the signal.

"Leo, Arthur!" he just called their names but the two quickly sprung into action and sprinted ahead.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

'Blood Sutra: Devil's Footprint'

'True Nine Dragon Arts: Dragon Dance'

The two executed their respective movement techniques, charging forward while covering their bodies with their Internal Qi. They were preparing to use their respective Martial Art Skills at any given moment.

Their energy circulations were still disturbed by the restriction cuffs, but they already got used to them after when they experienced the previous stages of the 'obstacle course'. They could now use most of their skills and techniques to a certain degree although they were not at their full potential.

But at the very least, it was more than enough to fight and protect themselves, especially in this kind of situation.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Right after Leonard and Arthur rushed forward, the two mechanical puppets made their moves and charged at them at a similar speed.

The mechanical puppets almost took an instant to reach the two, appearing in front of the duo all of a sudden.

But as if they were expecting that, Leonard and Arthur suddenly stomped on the ground to halt their charge while simultaneously throwing their fists forward. Those punches were empowered by their Internal Qi, signifying the skills that they were using.

'Blood Sutra: Puño de la Mauerte'

'True Nine Dragon Arts: The Dragon Shatters the Heaven'

Both executed advanced skills despite having restrictions on them. This signified how good their control over their Internal Qi was and how familiar they were with their respective Martial Arts.

But what happened next shocked everyone, making them halt their steps and stare blankly at the two puppets.

Those mechanical puppets threw their fists with almost perfect timing. Their metal fists struck out with the most basic movements, making it look like a simple punch. But when their punches met the fists of the two, Leonard and Arthur were quickly overpowered.

The two were even pushed a couple of meters back, clearly showing the difference in strength!

The group could not help but pause and look at the pair of mechanical puppets standing in front of them, re-evaluating their initial thoughts about them.

These mechanical puppets seemed to be much more powerful than what they originally expected. Moreover, the rest of the group could also see the trembling arms of the two, signifying how powerful the punches that were thrown at them were.

On the other hand, the mechanical puppets seemed to be completely unaffected despite receiving such powerful punches from the two. Not even a scratch could be seen on the surface of the fists of those puppets.

The group could not help but wear a solemn look on their faces as they stared at the two mechanical puppets that suddenly stopped moving after repelling the two.

Not only their group experiencing this sudden awakening. The other groups within the class and the solo individuals were also experiencing the same thing. They all realized that these clay golems and mechanical puppets were much stronger and more powerful than they were expecting.

Seeing the stunned looks on everyone's faces, Old Man Lin, who was currently having leisure time in the distance, suddenly said to them. "Little cubs, do you really think that I am going to prepare an average 'product'?"

"These clay golems and mechanical puppets are personally crafted by those old foxes from the research center. They are the most advanced model that they have, so you better not underestimate these 'products' if you don't want to seriously get hurt."

"If I were you, I will be using everything I have. Holding back will only fail you on this challenge. And if that happens, your grades for the first lesson will be pretty disastrous," he added with a mocking tone, seemingly provoking everyone.

Hearing his words, the class immediately realized what they had to do. They could not afford to hide all their cards in this situation.

They now realized what Old Man Lin meant when he said that he would not let them slack off when running through this 'obstacle course.' It did not mean that they could hide from his eyes, but they would instead force to do everything they could if they want to survive in this course.

"Tsk! Really a crazy old man," muttered Arthur as he took out a cylindrical object from his back pocket.

Then he shook his wrist as if he was shaking out something from the bottom of that cylindrical object. And right after he did that, that object extended down and turned into a steel rod.

He then tightly held it in a reverse manner before swinging his arm down, which led to the meter-long steel rod extending once again. Then one of its tips opened before a foot-long spearhead come out.

He twirled the steel spear a couple of times before resting it over his shoulders with his arms wrapped around it and hanging in a lazy manner. "I guess we have to get serious on this one, do you guys think?"

Leonard, who was standing a couple of meters away from him, extended his hand behind him and took out a pair of knuckle gloves. These gloves looked rather ordinary due to their black color.

But contrary to its ordinary appearance, the materials used to be rather rare and special. His master had given it to him since his old pair were not good enough for his current strength.

This pair of gloves had special enhancements and enchantments that were personally cast by powerful Mentalists. It even had special formations drawn on it, fortifying and strengthening its already special materials.

After putting them on, he bumped his fists together while saying. "Then I'll be trying these new gloves that I receive from Master."

Bang! Bang!

After that, Arthur and Leonard simultaneously disappeared from their respective spots before reappearing right in front of the mechanical puppets.

Arthur stabbed forward as he carefully controlled his Internal Qi and infused it on his spear. He could not use any 'Qi Reinforcement' now to strengthen his body because of the restrictions of the cuffs that were disturbing his energy circulation, but he could at least use 'Aura Blade' to his weapon to further strengthen his attacks.

'Imperial Tactics: Dragon Finger'

Swoosh!

The mechanical puppet did not dare to meet the incoming attack head-on unlike earlier. Despite not being at its full strength, that seemingly ordinary stab from Arthur was much more destructive than it looked, so it had no other choice but to dodge.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Arthur chased after the mechanical puppet with his 'Dragon Dance' foot technique while continuously throwing a series of stabs during the process.

He chased the mechanical puppet away from the rest of the group while keeping his guard up. He could feel that this puppet was plotting something.

Swoosh!

And it came sooner than he had expected!

The mechanical puppet extended its arms wide as it continued to retreat. The pair of steel pipes come out from its palms before gripping them tightly.

Quickly after that, the mechanical puppet started to retaliate with attacks that were much faster than an eye could see.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Arthur's attacks were fast and hard to read, but the mechanical puppet was able to respond to each of them with each. It even welcomed the contest of speed as it swung its metal pipes faster than each passing second.

The mechanical puppet's attacks were simple and rather plain, but each of them was accurately blocking the attacks from Arthur despite his utilizing different spear techniques and martial skills.

It seemed like it was planning to crush him with brute strength, which made him wear an even more serious look than before.

"Tsk! Are you provoking me?" he clicked his tongue and was about to use an even more powerful skill due to his impatience.

It was at that moment when Shin suddenly used a voice transmission to break him out of his thoughts.  
"Hey! Remember the purpose of this training!"

"Don't focus on defeating that metal scrap and think about your Qi Circulation instead. Focus on your Qi – control it, understand it, and explore its properties. That is the goal of this training!" Shin added quickly.

"Tsk! Alright, Smartass," muttered Arthur as he quickly recollected himself and calmed his mind. This time, he would not focus on defeating this mechanical puppet and instead focus on himself.

After taking a deep breath, his eyes became clear while his mind became focused. He would focus on his progress and the process instead of the result.

In the meantime, Leonard, who attacked at the same moment as Arthur, was now engaging in an intense melee with the other mechanical puppet.

Shin had already instructed him to focus on his Internal Qi and Qi Circulation just like what he had said to Arthur. The purpose of this training was still the same, so they had to focus on that and find their innate attributes and the nature of their energies.

They got a little distracted by the entire obstacle course, so they had briefly forgotten about it. But now that Shin saw how the mechanical puppets attacked and how they fought, he was suddenly reminded of their main purpose for this afternoon's class.

Old Man Lin wanted to check on their foundation and see how close they were to advancing to the next stage. On the other hand, they were meant to explore their capabilities and reevaluate their abilities.

Shin was suddenly reminded of the entire course that they went through and noticed that each of them was targeting different areas – some were meant for their observation skills, the others were targeting their reflexes, some were testing their insights, and the rest were meant to evaluate their physiques.

Looking back at them, he noticed that each stage of the course has its purpose. And this current hurdle in front of them was meant to test their fighting capabilities and teamwork on the surface. But in truth, it was also a way for them to realize the true nature of their energies and discover their innate attributes through battle.

Shin could see how much thought Old Man Lin had put into this particular course. He could now see that this old man, who seemed to be fooling around and making fun of them, was a meticulous training instructor.

He could see why the academy chose and assigned him to train them.

Seeing that, he could not help but thought of a famous quote that he read from a certain book – "The pain that can't kill me will only me stronger" –

### Chapter 1083 Group Assessment (Part 3)

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As Arthur and Leonard were engaging in an intense melee with the two mechanical puppets, the rest of the group, aside from Shin, quickly made their move.

They charged ahead and went straight to the clay golem that seemed to be waiting for them since earlier. It did even move an inch while the two mechanical puppets were keeping two of the monster trio busy.

Alice and Jillian lead the charge as they flanked the clay golem from both sides. Their speed was quite fast despite having an unstable energy circulation. Instead of covering their entire body with their Mental Energy, they only focus on reinforcing the parts they needed for certain movements.

The clay golem finally showed some signs of movement as the two girls charged at it. And when it stood, the two could not help but pause their steps for a moment as they finally saw how huge it really was.

The clay golem's true height was actually three meters tall with limbs much thicker than the girls' entire bodies. Not only that, but it also had four arms and two heads that were facing different directions, seemingly to cover all its blind spots.

With such a scary and creepy appearance, the group could not help but look at it with stunned expressions on their faces.

But it only took a moment for them to recover themselves and continued charging at it.

The clay golem was about to slam its arms on the ground, seemingly planning to create a strong shockwave that would push the two girls.

But before it could even do what it panned, Lorraine, who remained in her position, quickly acted. She was lying flat on the ground while relaxing her body as she held a sniper rifle in front of her.

She took a sniping position as she targeted the head of the clay golem. She was already familiar with this kind of golem since her family where using similar 'practice dummies' when they were training their shooting abilities.

From what she could remember, clay golems could absorb strong impacts that were directed at its body. It could also let the bullets hit itself before absorbing them into its body.

Having that in mind, Lorraine could only rely on her special method of infusing her bullets with Internal Qi or Mental Energy to make them stronger. It was to create an impact powerful enough to either blast the parts where it would land or at least force the golem to halt its movements.

She was a Dual-Practitioner like Shin. But unlike the latter, who had the perfect vessel for being a kaleidoscope mentalist and specialized in combat, she was only a Psychic Mentalist. She also majored in enhancements and enchantments, so her fighting style was completely different.

In their group, she was actually the one who had her battle capabilities unaffected. She only needed to have enough energy to maintain her real combat power, which was also being a marksman.

She could reinforce the bullets with Mentalism Enhancement while wrapping them with her Internal Qi through the specialized method that her family had created.

Bang!

Right after she pulled the trigger and released the reinforced bullet from the barrel, a streak of light suddenly flashed through the air. It quickly arrived at the face of the clay golem, creating a powerful blast that pushed its head back.

And due to it, the earlier action of the golem was suddenly disturbed, making it unable to continue.

Alice and Jillian took advantage of that opportunity and launched a powerful attack that targeted the legs of the clay golem.

Bang! Bang!

Their attacks produced a powerful impact that made the entire body of the clay golem tremble. But aside from that, nothing else happened – it was completely unaffected.

The smoke only its face had also been cleared, revealing its undamaged face despite receiving such a strong blast from Lorraine's shot.

A sudden chill suddenly run through the spine of everyone as the eyes of the clay golem suddenly produced a dangerous glint.

Alice and Jillian quickly tried to retreat as they saw all of that. But the arms of the golem came a little too fast as it swung them at the two like huge hammers.

Realizing that it was impossible to escape, the two quickly halted their steps and instead braced themselves for the incoming attack. They crossed their arms above their heads while gathering their Mental Energy from them as fast as they could.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

But during this predicament, a pair of silhouettes suddenly traveled in the air with an insane speed and headed toward the descending arms of the clay golem. And before those arms could even gather enough momentum to crush Alice and Jillian, they were immediately blasted away by the two people.

Bang! Bang!

Cloe and Molton took action! They moved fast enough to redirect the descending arms of the clay golem and redirected them to the side even though they could not completely stop their descent.

Alice and Jillian quickly responded to that current situation. The Mental Energy that was gathered in their arms to protect themselves was now being used to launch a strong attack.

This time, instead of trying to destroy the tough legs of the clay golem, they chose to force it to lose its balance and prevent it from moving freely. But their efforts were still in vain as their attacks did not have any effect against the golem.

Realizing that they quickly retreated away from being supported by Cloe and Molton. There was also the cover fire from Lorraine from the distance, making it easier for them to escape.

Then they tried to circle around the clay golem as they observe its movements. They were looking for its weakness that they could use to defeat it. They were also attacking from time to time, trying to look for the most effective attacks against it.

Seeing what they were doing, Shin slightly shook his head and shouted. "Don't solely think about defeating it. You also must focus on yourselves. Train your energy control while observing them. Remember our main topic in an earlier class, look for our innate attributes and understand their nature."

Hearing those words, the group was suddenly awakened, making them nod their heads. They would not blindly attack the clay golem this time, but instead, observe it as well as themselves.

The group quickly went into action while treating the clay golem as a training dummy. They were trying to familiarize themselves with the current circulation of their energies, which was currently disturbed, while also polishing their teamwork.

Jillian was giving out a couple of instructions during the battle. She instinctively did it since she was a leader in the previous groups that she was in. She did not do it when Shin was leading them, but this time, it seemed like her old habits suddenly came back.

But since there was nothing wrong with her instructions, the rest of the group did not have any objections. They followed it while also keeping in mind what they had to do if the situation did not go according to the plan.

Jillian and Molton coordinated well as expected. They were twins, after all, so such a thing was only natural. They were working as if they had a single body, reading the intention of each other without saying anything.

Alice, who used to be alone and did not regularly take orders from the others, was slightly having a hard time adjusting herself. But with her experiences with the Empyrean Talons inside the game, working with a group was not entirely foreign to her.

She was relying on her strong Spiritual Sense to read the movements around her and respond to them accordingly. She was also using the advanced techniques of her family to support others and save them when necessary.

It might take her quite some time to adjust herself, but she was steadily advancing and heading toward that positive direction.

Lorraine, on the other hand, was in a completely opposite situation. She was part of a gunsmith family, which was also a family of marksmen. With such a background, she was used to working with others, especially with the training that she had at home.

Moreover, she was also a part of an adventurer group within the virtual world, which was where she majorly gained the experience of working with others. And since her class was mostly related to marksmen, she was able to fire her guns without worrying about accidentally hitting the people on her side.

Her accuracy was top-notched and she could even hit the target between a narrow margin. This surprised and impressed Old Man Lin, who was watching everyone in the distance despite his leisurely appearance.

Regardless, the one who impressed him the most was still Cloe, who was now his personal disciple. The more he looked at her, the more satisfied he became.

Not only Cloe's foundation was perfect, but her reflexes and reaction speed were also solid enough. Her situational and environmental awareness was also on a similar level.

Despite not being too familiar with the other three people fighting alongside her, she was able to work with them without a problem.

That remark might even be an understatement since she looked like someone who already worked with the others for a very long time.

Not only she was filling the gap that the others left, but she also became the bridge that connected Alice with Jillian and Molton.

She might not have a flashy or advanced technique in her arsenal, but she could make others feel at ease with her supporting capabilities. She had the air that could make anyone feel safe as long as she had their backs.

Old Man Lin observed the entire class from a distance and nodded his head when he noticed that they were starting to understand the real purpose of this stage.

He never expected that any of them would be able to finish the task that he gave them since he knew better than anyone how crazy and difficult it was. But he believed that they were able to understand his intention after running through the entire course a couple of times.

This was what surprised him a little. He was expecting them to only realize his true intention after they did the course the second or third time but achieving it on the first try impressed him a little.

He must admit that he underestimated them a little. But if these brats thought that his ruthlessness could only reach this far, then they were completely mistaken. He had to beat them up a little more to make them all nice and tender.

"The main dish is yet to be served," he muttered as took a couple of grapes from the table beside him, that came out of nowhere.

He savored their juice before continuing to talk to himself. "I wonder who will be able to have the first taste of it."

## Chapter 1084 Class War (Part 1): Chaos

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Shin observed what was happening in the entire field while keeping an eye on his teammates. There was still the hidden threat that he needed to deal with, so he could not afford to let his guard down.

On the other hand, he was observing how the other groups were doing. From his position, he could see that everyone was already dealing with their respective opponents. And from what he could see, the entire class seemed to be able to calm themselves down and focused on improving themselves rather than competing with one another for the 'race'.

He could see that the clay golems were meant to deal with the groups within the class. Everyone who had a group was matched against a clay golem with different features, specially prepared to deal with particular groups.

The mechanical puppets, on the other hand, were meant for the most outstanding individuals that could fight solo. But not everyone was matched with one.

There was the trio of Jean Camus, Thomas Brooks, and Simone Bartolomeo. The three of them were dealing with a clay golem that was specifically designed to deal with their group. They had to work together just to hold their ground and protect themselves.

There was also Diel Hendrickson and Falcon Hawkins. These two were also fighting a clay golem. But unlike the rest of the class, the golem that they were facing was relatively small. It was still huge for

having a two-meter height and thick limbs, but it was much smaller compared to the clay golems that the others were dealing with.

The twin - Mavin and Marie - were somewhat in different positions as they were fighting a mechanical puppet together. But this particular puppet was somewhat different from the rest as it had a slightly bulkier body and was donned with mechanical armor.

That mechanical puppet also had a lot of firearms aside from the metal saber that it had in its hand. It was also holding a customized gun in its other hand.

The solo individuals of the group were also fighting a mechanical puppet that was meant to counter the respective styles of each student.

Shin could see Dylan White dealing with a mechanical puppet that was wielding a spear, fighting him at the same distance that could not be reached by his swords. It also had a decent speed that made it hard for Dylan to catch up.

Ezio Williams was matched with a mechanical puppet with heavy armor. It was armed with a solid defense that almost made his attacks ineffective. The puppet had low mobility and slow movement speed, so he could just circle around it while constantly harassing it with his fast attacks.

But the moment Ezio paused his tracks, the mechanical puppet would suddenly explode with an insane burst speed that was only meant for straight movements. It may only be meant for linear motion, but such speed almost made Ezio get eliminated from the course when he failed to respond to it.

As he watched everyone from the side, he suddenly realized that aside from him, everyone else was busy fighting their respective match. He was the only person idling around without doing anything.

Shin frowned his brows as he turned his gaze back to his group. He was rather confused at why he was the only one, who did not have an opponent.

He did hear from Molton that he was able to sense something hiding somewhere and it had a considerable threat. But the latter did not tell them that it was targeting their group specifically.

When he put more thought into it, he thought of another possibility. That 'something' hiding somewhere might not be specially targeting their group, but the other groups as well.

This could only mean...

"A special task?" muttered Shin as he quickly spread his Spiritual Sense in every direction. He was focusing on finding that specific target.

He was thinking that whatever that thing might be, it would most likely be key to passing this stage without exhausting themselves in fighting these clay golems and mechanical puppets.

The fact that he was not facing any opponent might also be the 'clue' that was prepared by that crazy old man watching them from the distance.

Shin surveyed every place with his Spiritual Sense – whether it was in the air, under the ground, or anywhere else – he did not leave any stone unturned.

Then, he suddenly sensed an intense bloodlust coming from a certain direction. He snapped toward the source of that bloodlust and spotted a mechanical puppet with a different appearance from the others.

It was a mechanical puppet with a size of an average person just like most of the rest. But it did not have armor or any specific weapon on it. It only had a plain and simple design, making it look like an unremarkable training dummy.

But what made Shin look at it solemnly was the lines that it had on different parts of its body. When looked closely into it, he discovered that those lines were actually made up of mentalism runes.

The runes were arranged and lined up together, forming a specific sequence that was somewhat familiar to Shin.

"Mentalism Enhancements and Lesser Strengthening Array," muttered Shin as he recognized the arrangements of the runes in a single glance.

He discovered that this particular mechanical puppet was filled with engravements that could only be seen from enchanted weapons and artifacts crafted by Mentalists, who specialized in the art of craftsmanship and forging.

From his perspective, this mechanical puppet was no different from a weapon. It was a dangerous weapon that could kill anyone if not handled properly.

But what his spine shiver was the fact that this mechanical puppet seemed to be quite 'conscious'. He could see some intelligence in its eyes when he looked at them. He knew that this mechanical puppet possessed a consciousness of its own or something similar.

And from the looked in its eyes, it seemed like the mechanical puppet knew that he was looking for it, so it purposely let Shin find it by emitting such bloodlust.

It was inviting Shin to come.

Shin wore a dark expression on his face as he looked at that mechanical puppet. The threat that he was sensing from it was similar to a powerful beast or an expert in the field of Martial Arts and Mentalism.

Then he saw the mechanical puppet take out a cloak from somewhere and wore it to hide its body. It stood up slowly before gesturing to Shin to come at it.

Shin raised his brows as he could clearly see that the intelligent mechanical puppet was challenging him.

"Hoh~!" he did not know whether he was going to be impressed or scared after seeing everything.

Regardless, he turned to the group and said to them. "Guys, there is a change of plans."

Hearing his words, the group quickly distance themselves from their respective opponents before turning to him. They were waiting for what he was going to say.

Shin pointed at the mechanical puppet in the distance before saying to them. "There will be another contest. Beat your opponents as soon as possible and join me in taking down that guy."

He paused for a moment as he thought of something before continuing. "Or prevent the others from interfering in my fight."

After that, he suddenly disappeared. He was utilizing the Holy Azure Dragon Method to sprint toward the mechanical puppet. He had to reach that place before the others noticed him and realized the other purpose of this stage.

At the same time, he was rather excited.

He wanted to test the current abilities that he had after the sudden upgrade of his Mental Energy alongside the insights that he gained from it. There were also the flame properties that his Celestial Vermillion Bird Method that he gained along with it.

Aside from those, there were also the sword-drawing techniques that he gained just recently. He did not have the chance to properly train or use them, so this would be a good opportunity for it.

This would be the chance to see how good that sword technique was in real battle. He already became familiar with it when he was fighting within the game, but it was still different when he was using it in the real world.

Swoosh!

Shin left a gust of wind on his path as he made his way toward the strange mechanical puppet. And due to that, he attracted the attention of the other students in the class, who were busy dealing with their respective opponents.

Confused, they looked briefly at Shin before moving their gazes toward the place where he was heading.

That was when they saw a strange mechanical puppet waiting for Shin in the distance. It seemed to be calmly waiting for its opponent to come.

It was at that moment that the class realized what Shin was trying to do. They also realized that this particular puppet might be the key to advancing from this stage of the 'obstacle course'.

The quick-witted ones swiftly moved and made their decision. They dropped what they were doing and left their opponents to their teammates.

The ones who were working solo wanted to give chase too, but they were immediately obstructed by the mechanical puppets in front of them. The only ones who managed to break free from those puppets were the likes of Dylan White and Ezio Williams that were strong enough to ditch their opponents behind.

There were even a couple of crafty ones who were able to pull the mechanical puppets that they were dealing with toward the rest of the class before leaving them behind.

Because of this, the field was immediately thrown into chaos. Most of the class did not know how to deal with the current situation and started making mistakes that they were avoiding earlier.

Some even started engaging in a fight against each other as they tried to shove their opponents into the other groups while the rest tried to repel them.

And just like that, a war broke out within the field.

Chapter 1085 Class War (Part 2)

...

"Look at the mess that that guy has created," commented Arthur as he looked at the chaos of the class.

Everyone was fighting one another while also dealing with the clay golems and mechanical puppets. The chaos spread through the entire field as right after Shin headed toward the strange mechanical puppet.

Arthur could not help but blame Shin for such a scene. "Tsk! Tsk! Things are always like this whenever he decides to do something."

Hearing that comment, Cloe, Leonard, and Lorraine could not help but give him a skeptical look. They knew that he was no better than Shin. In a sense, he was much worse than Shin when it came to certain situations as he always jumped in the middle of everything just to attract everyone's attention and stood in the limelight.

Understanding the gazes that they were giving him, Arthur quickly waved his head and shook his head, denying everything. "I haven't done anything yet though."

Unfortunately, his words already betrayed him. He admitted that he was much more of a troublemaker than Shin.

"We haven't said anything though," said Cloe with a smirk.

"Tsk!" Arthur could only click his tongue as he did not know how he was going to respond. He just avoided their gazes and act as if he was focusing on the mechanical puppet in front of him.

"So, what is the plan?" asked Alice as she paused her attacks to look at the field that now became a chaotic battlefield.

"Let's join the fun," blurted out Arthur, revealing his inner thoughts. And when he realized his mistake, he awkwardly smiled while clarifying himself. "I mean, we can just dump these puppets to the others and help Shin. Didn't he say that we prevent others from interfering with his fight?"

The group rolled their eyes at him after hearing his words. They then turned to one another, seemingly looking for each other's opinions.

"Let's do it. It seems like everyone is already accustomed to the restrictions that we have," said Jillian, being the first to give her opinion.

Molton and Alice nodded briefly while Lorraine seconded the opinion. "I think there shouldn't be a problem. And we will be at the advantage since our group has the greatest number of members compared to everyone."

Cloe thought for a moment before nodding her head. "Okay, let's do it."

"Then it is decided!" exclaimed Arthur as he suddenly became excited.

Fighting this mechanical puppet might improve his battle capabilities and his other aspects in battle. But it was too boring for him. He could not provoke this puppet that did not have any emotion. Instead, he would be the one who will get riled up for looking at such an expressionless face.

Leonard shook his head when he saw the excited Arthur from the corner of his eyes. He paused his movements and throw a powerful punch on the mechanical puppet to push it away before turning to the others. "Then let's draw out a plan."

...

In the meantime, Shin was rushing toward the strange mechanical puppet. He did not bother to halt his steps and even accelerated his speed when he noticed the others were also planning to do the same thing as him.

He also maneuvered his body to dodge the attacks that the others were throwing at him to slow down his advance. Unfortunately for them, his movement techniques were too fast and flexible. He could maintain his speed despite dodging their attempts to slow him down.

If they did not intercept him directly, then none of them would be able to stop him. And when that thought entered their minds, a few decided to make their move.

Dylan White and Ezio Williams were not used to working with other people since they were always alone. But given their current circumstances, it seemed like they had to do it. They could not let Shin took the first place in this competition once again, or else the gap between him and them would only grow larger.

It was the same for Diel Hendrickson and Jean Camus who were third and second on the rankings respectively.

They had a significant gap between Dylan, who was ranked fourth, and those three, so he had to prevent them from accumulating more merit points.

There was no need to ask for Ezio since he was currently ranked tenth. He had to put in more effort if he wanted to catch up with those guys at the top of the rankings.

The two exchanged glances with each other as they met on their way toward a strange mechanical puppet. Then they nodded their heads before separating and sprinting toward different locations.

Dylan's target was Shin. He had to prevent the latter from advancing and let the others deal with the rest. He was planning to sacrifice himself just to delay Shin and prevent him from accumulating more merit points.

Swoosh!

But before he could even reach his target, the sound of the air being cut apart could be heard from his side. Something was heading his way with an extreme speed and seemingly targeting him.

Without any hesitation, he quickly halted his steps before decisively turning to the side and swiftly swinging his sword.

Clang!

Sparks quickly flew in the air as his sword collided with a steel spear that was thrusting toward his way.

Then he saw Arthur, who was wearing a cheeky grin on his face. The guy was wearing an excited look while staring at him.

"Hey! You have already gotten your fill when you spar with him. It is now my turn to play with you," said Arthur as he pushed Dylan back before blocking the path leading to Shin.

He twirled his spear around as he stared at Dylan before saying. "It is our first time fighting each other in the real world, Zero. I wonder if the ranking will be the same."

Being addressed by his in-game name, Dylan could not help but raise his brows a little while staring at Arthur. He then shook his head and smiled bitterly as he was quite familiar with the in-game persona of this person despite not knowing each other here in the real world.

He then gave Arthur a smirking look before saying. "But I am still ranked higher than you, though."

The cheeky expression on Arthur's face immediately disappeared when he heard those words. It was true that Dylan had a higher rank than him in the class ranking. He was only fifth while the other was ranked fourth.

He then slightly lost his cool and refuted. "You are only ahead of me by two hundred points! Stop talking as if the gap between us is that huge!"

"Reasons," muttered Dylan with a soft and quiet voice. It was as if he did not want Arthur to hear it but he purposely focused his voice and directed it to the latter, so that it would not be affected by the noise in the surroundings.

The expression that Arthur had immediately turned dark. He then raised the spear in his hand and pointed it at Dylan. "Let's just get this started. I will teach you that it is going to be different here in the real world."

...

On the other place, Ezio was targeting Jean Camus, who was currently ranked second in the class rankings. But just like Dylan, he was also intercepted – Thomas Brook was currently standing in front of him and blocking his path.

He knew that it was not going to be easy to fight a fellow assassin in their current situation and setting. Since they were currently in an open field, there was no place for them to hide, nor a shadow that they could use.

It was going to be hard for him since he would not be able to showcase his real capabilities, but it was the same for his opponent, so it would still be fine.

At the same time, Simone Bartolomeo was currently engaged in an intense battle with Falcon Hawkins. Their battle quickly started right after they encountered each other. They did not even hesitate as they immediately unleashed their powers right from the start.

...

Jean Camus and Diel Hendrickson were currently standing across each other, not showing any intention of moving further.

"It looks like our time arrived faster than we expected," said Jean Camus while crossing his arms.

Diel Hendrickson shook his head and said. "I am guessing that you are also been sent here. I wonder what task your master has given you."

"If you tell me what your organization is planning, then I will not have a problem sharing it with you," replied Jean while wearing a crafty smile.

Diel shook his head and sighed before taking out a couple of talismans from his dimensional bag. "Let's just fight and finish this up. I have no plan on maintaining the rank right below yours."

"Still can't accept the fact that I am better than you, huh? Give me your best shot then," replied Jean while gesturing to Diel to come at him.

...

The class started taking on different opponents while the rest were left to deal with the clay golems and mechanical puppets.

But Shin was not concerned about them. He was currently standing in front of the strange mechanical puppet, staring at it with a curious yet cautious gaze.

After staring at it for a couple of moments, he started walking forward while placing his left hand on the pair of sheathed katanas on his waist.

He also circulated his Mental Energy around his body, making his body release a golden glow that resembled a dancing flame. His eyes released a golden glow as he used his 'True Sight' ocular skill alongside the release of his Spiritual Sense.

The intelligent mechanical puppet stared at Shin calmly before jumping down from the boulder that it was standing on. It extended its arm out of its cloak, revealing that it now transformed into a steel blade.

It then raised its head and looked Shin straight in the eyes, sending an intense shiver down Shin's spine.

Shin tightened his grip over his katana as the expression on his face turned even more serious.

Chapter 1086 Class War (Part 3): The Main Act

.....

Shin advanced forward with calm and steady steps while keeping his eyes on the mechanical puppet. The latter was the same and seemed to be mimicking his movements.

Bang!

Then, the two of them suddenly disappeared from their respective positions alongside the explosive sound produced by their steps.

Swoosh!

They only reappeared when they were a couple of meters away from each other.

Shin was ducking forward as he placed his right hand on the hilt of the white katana.

Click!

With a flick of his left-hand thumb, the sword was slightly pushed out of the sheath. And when his right hand caught it, he suddenly swung it in a horizontal manner.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Flash Horizon'

Shing!

Shin moved in a swift and decisive manner, making his actions flow smoothly and accurately.

But the mechanical puppet saw through everything and responded accordingly. It raised its arm, which transformed into a blade, and hacked it down.

There were no fancy movements or advanced techniques. It was just a simple yet powerful action that carried a lot of force behind it.

Bang!

The collision produced a loud sound that kept on ringing in Shin's ears, making him quite dizzy. It was also accompanied by a strong shockwave that sent a violent air ripple in every direction.

The expression on Shin's face grimaced for a moment as he felt the weight behind the attack of the mechanical puppet.

His arm was trembling as he tried to nullify the kinetic energy produced by the collision. His feet also sank to the ground as he transferred some of the absorbed force toward them.

Gritting his teeth, Shin put more force on his arm and pushed the arm blade of the mechanical puppet.

He also executed a sword movement from his newly acquired sword technique. He swung the katana in a horizontal manner, leaving a glowing straight in the air.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Fourth Movement – Tempest Stroke'

The stroke that Shin had drawn in the air came a little too fast. The mechanical puppet was forced to take a couple of steps back, barely dodging the tip of Shin's katana.

Shin was able to quickly seize the tempo of the battle with that stroke in the air. Unfortunately, he was still a little unfamiliar with his current swordsmanship, so he was unable to quickly follow it up.

He could only rely on his experience inside the game, which was still a little too awkward for him to perform in the real world.

Instead of advancing forward, he took a step back and increased the distance between him and the mechanical puppet.

At the same time, he sheathed the white katana in a swift, single motion. He then switched it with the black katana as he stomped on the ground.

He propelled forward as he unsheathed the black katana. But this time, instead of swinging, he thrust the katana forward.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Flash Strike'

Shing!

Swoosh!

The mechanical puppet gained enough space to avoid the incoming attack due to the delay of Shin's movement.

Though, it didn't back down either. It decisively took a step forward and fearlessly advanced.

It raised its steel arm and thrust it forward in a very aggressive manner. The air surrounding its steel-blade arm swirled around and produced a spiraling motion while moving ahead.

Bang!

Yet another explosion erupted. But this time, the tip of their weapon did not even touch each other. The metal energy surrounding the black katana and the spiraling force accompanying the attack of the mechanical puppet collided with each other first, preventing the two sides from advancing further.

After the brief collision, Shin and the mechanical puppet were pushed back by the impact.

The former took multiple steps back to nullify everything and left deep footprints on his path while the latter skidded back and drew a long trail on the ground, directly absorbing all the impact.

Shin suppressed the urge to vomit and braced himself. He took a series of large steps as he strode forward while holding the black katana with both of his hands and raising it over his head.

The air around his body spiraled around his body and rose, climbing toward his katana. It formed a revolving gale around his body and the black katana alongside the dancing mental energy that he was releasing.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: First Movement – Collapsing Wind'

Swoosh!

The great momentum that Shin had was affecting his surroundings. The revolving wind and mental energy around his body were producing a suction force that was pulling everything toward him.

Due to that, the mechanical puppet could not freely move its body. It was being pulled by the suction force and preventing it from escaping anywhere.

Realizing that it was impossible to dodge, it chose to let its body be dragged by the suction force. It was planning to borrow the pulling power to produce a strong momentum as it charged at Shin.

It also assumed an offensive position where it slightly twisted its waist while dragging its blade arm behind. And when it reached the desirable distance away from Shin, it stomped its foot on the ground to gain a firm footing before swinging its steel blade arm up.

Bang!

Swoosh!

Boom!

This time, the shockwave that was produced by the collision shook the entire field.

It even attracted the attention of everyone. The class could not help but pause what they were doing and cast their gazes in the direction where the commotion was coming from.

Then they saw Shin engaging in an intense battle against a mechanical puppet. Based on the trembling ground and the violent ripple in the air produced by the earlier collision, everyone could tell that the attacks from both sides were very powerful.

"Tsk! Showoff!" commented Arthur, who was currently engaging in an intense melee with Dylan.

"That is rich coming from someone who likes to jump in the limelight," said Dylan mockingly, refuting the words that Arthur had said.

The corner of Arthur's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard those words. He could not find the words to refute.

This guy rarely talked and did not want to engage in prolonged conversation, especially if it was a verbal battle. But at times, this mute guy's words were much sharper than his swords.

"Just focus on yourself!" shouted Arthur before resuming the battle.

Dylan smirked and continued to attack with his words. "Whose the one who suddenly stops and talks about their battle."

"B\*st\*d! I just gave a minor comment!" Arthur slightly lost his cool and started intensifying his attacks.

...

Shin and the mechanical puppet did not care about their surroundings as they continued to throw their battle. It was even more true for the latter since it was only focused on the task given to it.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Each collision produced a strong impact that produced loud sounds and violent shockwaves that were sent in every direction.

And when they became familiar with the strength of the opposing side, they started moving their feet and executed their movement techniques.

The two of them transformed into blurs that kept on appearing and disappearing in the field.

And when their speed increased further while maintaining their powerful strengths, they became a streak of light that flew across the field and collided from time to time.

Each collision was much stronger and more powerful than the previous ones as it started to reverberate throughout the entire place, affecting the state of the battle of the students.

Shin alternated between the quick draw style and the sword movements that he remembered after the stimulus that he got from his continued practice of the Jade Kirin Scripture.

His mind was already familiar with the sword techniques after he repeatedly used them in the game.

And right now, his body was steadily adjusting and adapting with them the more they used those sword techniques in this battle.

His mind and body were slowly catching up with each other, making his battle prowess to become more refined and sophisticated.

It was at this moment when his peak combat talent, the Battle Genius talent, was starting to show its worth once again.

He was constantly improving in battle, which hastened the unification process of his mind and body.

But he was not the only one who was improving. The mechanical puppet was also constantly gathering information and updating the data that it had inside its database.

And Shin could clearly see that.

As someone who possessed the Battle Genius talent, he was very sensitive to these kinds of small yet impactful changes.

He could clearly see that the mechanical puppet was gradually getting stronger as the battle progressed.

He knew about it but could not do anything to prevent it from happening.

All he could do was focus on his own progress and hope that he would be the one to complete the 'evolution'.

He had to reach his perfect form first before this mechanical puppet collected all the data about him and formulated a perfect counter style to deal with him.

This battle became a race on who would be the first to reach perfection before the other.

Chapter 1087 Class War (Part 4)

.....

The entire class could not completely focus on their respective battles as their attention was attracted to the commotion that Shin and the mechanical puppet were making.

The intensity of that side was currently blowing the mind of everyone. They knew that this current ranked one student was strong, but to think that it already reached this height was still dumbfounding.

Moreover, this was not the end, but just the beginning instead. They could see that Shin was still gradually getting stronger as the battle progressed.

For the students in the lower ranking, this was a sight to see. It was to see how strong this current ranked one truly was.

But for the students in the higher rankings, it was an opportunity. An opportunity to see the real strength of this toughest rival that they had.

They purposely slowed down the pace of their battles to closely observe Shin. They were gathering all information they could get from this particular battle.

And at the same time, they were also looking for the perfect opportunity to strike. They were planning to snatch this opportunity from Shin and seized it for themselves.

They were not planning to let Shin get the 'MVP' for this particular assessment that easily. They even had a tacit agreement to focus on kicking Shin out of the competition instead of interfering with each other.

They were planning to set aside their grudges just to eliminate their toughest competitor.

Naturally, the others on Shin's side were able to read the air. They were able to see through the plan of the rest of the class just by seeing the slow tempo that the others were taking.

Opposing the rest of the class, the group was planning to do their best to protect Shin and their 'lead'.

Even though Arthur was grumbling about Shin taking all the spotlight once again, he knew what he had to do as well as their main objective.

At the very least, he was fighting to his heart's content while facing Dylan, one of his toughest rivals inside the game.

The group continued what they were doing while keeping an eye on everyone. If they noticed that someone was acting suspiciously and plotting something, they would immediately act without hesitation.

...

In the distance, Old Man Lin was currently observing everything leisurely. He was acting like a complete spectator. It was as if he was not the reason why these kids were suffering.

He squinted his eyes a little as he focused his gaze on Shin and the special mechanical puppet. He could not help but click his tongue as he watched the intense battle.

"Tsk! It will be boring if it continued to be like this. The script will be too predictable and too obvious."

There was a clear dissatisfaction in his eye as he moved, he gaze at everyone. It was as if all of them were moving according to a certain direction, heading toward the already-decided outcome.

Most of the students were right. He designed this obstacle course as a form of test to further measure their strength, potential, and teamwork.

It was also to let them discover more about themselves, especially in the field of manifesting their innate attributes and passive natures.

There was also the fabricated crisis that he had prepared.

He was planning to use the pressure that was coming from the clay golems and mechanical puppets – as well as the natural competition that was created by this course – to hasten the progress of everyone.

Unfortunately, despite everything going according to plan, there were still some circumstances that were bound to happen.

The ones that were used to working together remained united while the ones who were acting like lone wolves continued to work alone.

Even though some of the solo students were temporarily working together to fight against the toughest group, which had both the best quality of teammates and the greatest number of members within the class.

But at the same time, these guys were still plotting against each other as they would remain rivals in the end.

This was what was currently happening within the class, which was quite interesting in the old man's eyes.

He liked the idea of 'standing united to face the common enemy' before quickly backstabbing each other when they achieved their initial goal.

He liked the chaos that was currently happening within the class.

But he did not like the current development, where the same protagonist was currently taking the stage.

This was the problem with the group that was already familiar with each other – a group where everyone could trust their backs to the others. They already knew their respective roles within the group, so there was no point in changing anything since everything was going well.

This was the reason why he purposely let their group face the earlier composition of clay and mechanical puppet. He wanted to keep Arthur and Leonard occupied while assessing the teamwork of the group without Shin.

He wanted to see how the group would perform without the pillars that they usually had.

He wanted to see if those three were too bright for the rest to shine or if the others were not actually good as the evaluation that was given to them.

Everyone worked pretty well at the beginning, but everything quickly changed when Shin decided to head straight to the evolution puppet.

Old Man Lin originally wanted to leave Shin on his own and make him an observer. He wanted Shin to gain the eyes that would be perfect for his Mentalism Path.

Unfortunately, Shin's hunger for battle was very strong that he had overlooked the real purpose of why the old man had left him alone.

Well, Old Man Lin was also to be blamed for this one since he chose to test Shin this way, where he could just directly tell the young man his real intention.

He also did not expect that Shin wanted to test out the sword techniques that he recently gained and apply them in real battle.

He had underestimated how crazy a Battle Genius was for battle.

...

It was the same for the rest of the class. He had prepared a couple of assessment tests for everyone, targeting a series of specific areas. Whether it was teamwork or individuality, he wanted the entire class to understand them better.

Especially for the line wolves of the class such as Dylan White and Ezio Williams.

The same for the ones who always had the same group since they arrived at this place such as the tip of Jean Camus and his friends, the master-servant duo of Diel Hendrickson and Falcon Hawkins, the twin Mavin and Marie, and the rest of the class.

He wanted them to break free from their respective comfort zones to grow further.

If they did not realize his true intentions for this particular test, then Old Man Lin was expecting to have a hard time polishing these rough gems.

"Tsk! These kids were very stubborn. Don't they realize that they would not be able to reach the peak if they continued on this path?"

"They would not be able to break through if they don't understand the true meaning of individuality, duality, and unity."

He paused for a moment before muttering in a low voice. "Is it because they haven't taken that class yet? But most of them should already be aware of it given their respective backgrounds."

It was at that moment that the old man realized that it was indeed the case. "Tsk! Perhaps, I am too hasty?"

He then nodded his head silently as he accepted that it might really be the case.

"Should I modify my initial plans and teach them step by step?" he muttered, seriously considering the idea.

But not long after, he quickly shook his head and rejected the idea. "No, this can't do. I will stick on pressuring them to solidify their foundation with it and let them take the final step themselves."

"I have to force them to break free from the current setup to make everything work," he added as he started adjusting a couple of his plans inside his head.

After that, he turned his attention back to the class and muttered. "But before everything else, I have to let these kids suffer more pain."

This time, instead of letting the clay golems and the mechanical puppets do what they were tasked to do, Old Man Lin was planning to get involved a little more.

He wanted to increase the difficulty a little bit so he would be lifting up the restrictions cast on the clay golems and the mechanical puppets.

At the same time, he would be personally giving out instructions instead of letting those creations move on their own.

The only problem that he would have would be Shin, who was currently immersed in his battle against the evolution puppet.

"The more I look on this kid, the more of a monster he became," he commented with a twitching mouth before adding. "I don't know which segment of the Mentalism Path he is taking. But I am sure that it was not as simple as the common one that most were taking."

"I wonder which one of the three was it," the old man continued to mumble to himself as watched Shin fought.

Chapter 1088 Class War (Part 5): Crisis

.....

The supposedly 'quick' race was taking longer than expected due to the final stages of the race. The clay golems and mechanical puppets were much harder to deal with than they originally had thought.

Yet Old Man Lin was expecting them to repeat the entire course at least four more times. If he was not a crazy old man, then he could only be a devil in disguise.

And right now, this devil training instructor was currently planning to get involved in the test and teach them personally a lesson.

He started giving out orders to the clay golems and mechanical puppets, forming a battle formation while taking care of every student in front of them.

The quick-witted students of the class instantly noticed the strange movements of the clay golems and mechanical puppets as they fought. They immediately reorganized their respective groups while the lone students started distancing themselves away from the rest while sweeping their gazes at the surroundings and observing everyone.

"Let me see how fast you guys are going to organize your forces. And whether are you going to continue being stubborn," muttered Old Man Lin while watching everyone from the distance.

"First, let's focus on forcing you to work together," he added before giving another series of orders. He paused for a moment to look at a certain part of the field before shaking his head. "Let's leave the little monster alone for now... and wait until he finishes evolving."

After that, he let the clay golems and mechanical puppets organize themselves and left Shin and the evolution puppet unbothered.

The pace of the battle within the field started to change. The students that were too slow to react started to get eliminated one after another when the mechanical puppets ganged up on them. The groups that were working together since the start of the race were being besieged by the clay golems, forcing them to continuously retreat.

The students, who were busy fighting their classmates, were forced to stop their battles and temporarily worked together to survive.

"Tsk! That old man is such a bummer. When everything is starting to get interesting, he decided to get involved," complained Arthur as he warded off an attack by the clay golem that suddenly appeared beside him before moving away to create some distance.

Dylan was in a similar position and quickly retreated as he saw two mechanical puppets trying to flank him from opposite sides. He warded off their attacks skillfully before saying to Arthur without looking. "Hey! It looks like we have to postpone our battle once again. Let's team up and deal with these guys first."

There was an unwilling look on Arthur's face, but he could only agree with the suggestion of the latter to survive their current predicament. He could instantly tell that their devil instructor was the one behind the sudden change within the field, so if he wanted to survive, he had no choice but to work with Dylan.

"Don't drag me down," shouted Arthur as he suddenly charged toward the two mechanical puppets that were besieging Dylan from both sides.

"You steal the words that I am supposed to say," replied Dylan as he suddenly adjusted his footwork. His figure paused for a moment before suddenly turning into a blur as he charged forward all of a sudden.

He skillfully avoided the first mechanical puppet that was planning to obstruct his path before positioning himself on the side of the second puppet. He swung his swords a couple of times to deflect the attacks of the puppets before throwing a powerful horizontal strike with both swords, sending the puppet flying.

The direction where the puppet was flying was where Arthur was coming from. The guy twirled his steel spear a couple of times before slamming it on the ground in front of him, launching himself in the air.

He somersaulted midair while holding the spear tightly and slamming it down toward the incoming mechanical puppet, flying in his direction.

Bang!

The mechanical puppet crossed its arms to block the incoming strike. But since it was currently in an awkward position in the air, it could not properly block the attack, leading it to be sent back to the ground and slamming on it.

Bang!

Dylan had already calculated where Arthur was planning to send the mechanical puppet, so he was already waiting for it to arrive. He leaped toward the direction where the mechanical puppet landed while swinging both of his swords down, creating a strong ripple in the air that headed toward his target.

Bang!

That air ripples spun around and turned into a strong vortex while traveling in the air. This attack might not be strong enough to shred the mechanical puppet, but it could still deal serious damage to it if landed.

Bang!

Unfortunately, the clay golem that Arthur had ditched earlier suddenly appeared in front of the lying mechanical puppet and blocked the air vortex sent by Dylan.

It also extended one of its arms forward, planning to slam it into Dylan, who was currently flying toward it.

Swoosh!

And at the very same moment, the other mechanical puppet suddenly caught up from behind, thrusting its arm forward, where a triangular blade appeared.

Boom!

Then Arthur suddenly landed on the back of the clay golem and slammed his spear at the back of its head, forcing it to kneel and making its arm deviate from its original course.

Dylan took advantage of that opportunity to twist his body in the air while holding his swords – one beside his waist while the other was over his shoulder. Then he re-twisted toward the opposite direction and spun in the air, creating a powerful gale that swept the incoming mechanical puppet and sent it to the unknown part of the field.

Ta-ta!

After that, he gently landed at the back of the clay golem, where Arthur was currently standing.

"You are already dragging me down," commented Arthur as he pulled out the steel spear from the back of the clay golem.

"That is what you call calculated risk. I let it happen so that you can land a critical strike," refuted Dylan before looking at the clay golem under their feet before commenting. "Tsk! But from the looks of it, you can't deal with this guy despite the opening that I've created."

Arthur almost exploded in anger but quickly disregarded the idea of having another round against Dylan as the clay golem already recovered.

...

Similar events were currently happening in different parts of the field. The previous opponents and competitors were now teaming up and working together to deal with the common enemy.

Some of the groups were also establishing a temporary alliance with the others just to stand their ground against the battle formation of the clay golems and mechanical puppets. They did not want to be the same as those stubborn ones, who chose to continue fighting alone and got eliminated by the combined forces of the opposing side in the end.

The backs of Cloe and Alice accidentally bumped into each other as they were trying to find their footing in the middle of this chaos. They instinctively jumped forward, spun around, and throw their fist at each other when it happened.

Fortunately, they managed to stop themselves from continuing when they realized what happened and recognized each other.

While they were reorganizing their thoughts, they saw a mechanical puppet creeping out behind each other, making them jump into action.

They simultaneously strode forward and brushed past each other while throwing a powerful strike at the mechanical puppets, pushing those clumps of metals away.

Then they quickly took a step back to relieve the force that they had gotten from the impact, making their backs touch each other once again. But this time, instead of moving away, they leaned back and supported each other.

Lorraine, who was currently standing on an elevated ground, saw everything unfold with a mischievous look on her face. She separated herself away from the others to look for a good sniping point where she could cover the others.

She did not expect to see such a rare sight from those two, which made her lips curve into a smile. As a spectator in their daily lives, she could see more things clearly than the people involved, so she was somewhat aware of the 'rivalry' that these two had even though they were not that conscious about it.

"Hey! What are you doing? Stop watching from the side and start providing support already," shouted Leonard from the base where Lorraine was standing while dealing with a mechanical puppet that was planning to attack her.

"Why do I have to stay behind and look after your back when the others are better suited for it? It is better if I am with those two in the middle of everything," he grumbled as he wanted to clash with the other top rankers where Shin and Arthur were located.

Lorraine's smile curved higher when she heard him, making herself unable to stop teasing him. "If you are not going to protect me, then who will? You are supposedly protecting your princess, you know?"

The corner of Leonard's mouth twitched when he heard her words. He wanted to deny her words but stop himself midway. He then continued to grumble. "If that is the case, then Arthur and Shin are supposedly protecting Jillian and Cloe Sis from this chaos."

Leonard did not refute anymore as he saw two more mechanical puppets heading their way. "I think we should change our location. We are already spotted here."

...

As everyone was starting to organize themselves and forming temporary alliances with the others, the clay golems and mechanical puppets were also gathering to solidify their battle formations.

They had already eliminated enough students, so they could not now gather up and strengthen their forces. And once they hand bonded together, the class would have a much harder time taking them down.

Some of the students immediately recognized this problem but could not do anything about it. But might have allied with the others but that did not mean that every group within the class had unified.

There were still a couple of groups who were quite stubborn as well as lone wolves scattered in different places.

If they did not bond together and combined their strengths, then the outcome of this battle had already been determined.

Their defeat would be inevitable.

Chapter 1089 Class War (Part 6): Accident

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As the entire class was having a hard time dealing with the organized attacks of the clay golems and mechanical puppets under Old Man Lin's control, Shin was currently busy dealing with the evolution puppet in front of him.

The battle took longer than he had expected, and he suffered quite a bit during their exchanges. Fortunately, his Celestial Vermillion Bird Method saved him the trouble as he was able to constantly heal himself during the battle. And due to the special fire attribute, that he just awakened recently, his healing capabilities reached an unimaginable degree.

The harvest that he had during this battle was too bountiful, making him very satisfied with it. Not only he had become fully accustomed to the new sword techniques under his arsenal, but he also gained a lot of insights on how to properly utilize them during the battle.

What was left right now was how he was going to apply the offensive capabilities of the fire attribute of his Celestial Vermillion Bird Method.

He already got inspiration from copying his skills inside the game, but he knew that it was still not the full potential of his attribute as he could feel that there was still something lacking on it when he was using it during the battle.

He did not know if it was because the other attributes were not awakened yet, or if he was still not familiar with the attribute itself. Regardless, he could still use the inspirations that he got inside the game and polish them during the battle.

After a couple of moments, Shin managed to find a small window to catch his breath with space that he had barely created. This also gave him enough time to turn his head away from the mechanical puppet for a moment and swept his gaze at the ongoing battles in the distance.

It was at that moment that he realized that the situation on the other side was getting dire. The class was being pushed back repeatedly by the combined forces of the clay golems and the mechanical puppets. He also noticed that the latter group was moving in a very organized and systematic manner as they pushed the students back.

But at the same time, he also saw that most of the students were working with one another, especially the ones that he usually saw working alone.

He even spotted Arthur and Dylan joining forces to take on a huge clay golem. There was also Jean and Diel, who was currently fighting a pair of mechanical puppets that were flanking them from different angles.

Shin found it rather interesting as he could remember that those guys were supposedly fighting one another earlier.

At the same time, he also noticed that the battle formation that the mechanical puppets and clay golems had was very solid and hard to penetrate, their defense was perfect. Their attacking pattern and offensive movements were also very strong that which put the class in a difficult situation.

Shin looked for his group and noticed that they were also in a predicament. Fortunately, it seemed like the group were able to establish an alliance with the other groups and started working together.

After a quick look, he swiftly jumped away from his current position, dodging the attack of the evolution puppet that finally caught up to him.

He then assumed a sword-drawing stance as he thought of what he was going to do next.

He had already gotten his fill of battle, so he could now stop being stubborn and stay occupied with this strange mechanical puppet.

He was guessing that Old Man Lin was plotting something, given the organized movements that the clay golems and mechanical puppets had.

Shin was now caught in a dilemma where had to decide whether to ditch this evolution puppet or continue fighting it.

If he chose the former and regrouped with his team, then had had to risk this evolution puppet throwing everyone in havoc. And when it joined the other mechanical puppets and the clay golems, he could already imagine the inevitable defeat of the class.

But if he remained here and continued to engage in a battle with it, he did not know whether the group would be able to hold their ground until the end. At the same time, he did not know if he could fight this evolution puppet until everything was over. After all, his stamina was still limited, so he did not know if he could last that long.

After contemplating it for a couple of moments, Shin decided to continue fighting the mechanical puppet. It was better to keep this monstrous puppet occupied rather than let it loose in the battle and create chaos. The damage that it could deal to the class was devastating.

Moreover, his style was already taking its perfect state while the evolution puppet seemed to be far from its ideal form. He was currently in a clear advantage at this point in time. He had to utilize it properly if he wanted to defeat this mechanical puppet before it reached perfection.

Bang! Bang!

Clang!

Cling! Cling!

Shin continued to exchange blows with the evolution puppet, fully trusting the others on their side. He executed a series of sword techniques and foot techniques to deal with the puppet during the battle.

And after linking the sword movements and foot techniques to perfection, he was finally able to find an opening that he could take advantage of.

He tossed the white katana in the air, making the eyes of the mechanical puppet get attracted by it. And at the brief moment when the puppet got distracted, he swiftly unsheathed the other katana hanging on his waist and swung it.

It was not his usual quick-draw attack as he was utilizing his mental energy in a different way. He was using the inspiration that he got from the game as he infused the black katana with the fire attribute mental energy that he recently gained.

He had already used this technique before when he assisted the agents and guards of the Cilvana and Springfield Families when facing that powerful mercenary, Mad Dog. Due to that, he became more familiar with this technique and was able to instantly execute it with a flawless motion.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Solar Flare'

Shoosh!

The katana burst out with a blazing flame as it traced a beautiful arc in the air, releasing a burning crescent wave in the process.

Everything happened a little too fast for the mechanical puppet to respond. Even though it managed to read the attack ahead of time, the little delay that Shin's previous action of tossing the other katana in the air brought enough time for Shin to execute everything.

Moreover, this particular technique was not in its database since it was the first time Shin had used it in their battle.

The evolution puppet was caught completely off-guard, making it unable to properly respond to Shin's move.

It only managed to take a couple of steps back, avoiding the worst-case scenario.

But it was still not enough.

The blazing crescent wave still grazed the chest of the evolution puppet, leaving a clear mark on it. The cloak that the mechanical puppet had was cut by the blazing wave while a deep horizontal cut could be seen on its chest.

The edges of the cut were still burning hot, leaving the mixture of orange and red color that indicated how hot that 'wound' was.

The mechanical puppet paused for a moment, making it look like it had short-circuited for not being able to properly process what just happened.

Shin did not care about that as he quickly sheathed the black katana before catching the white one that was falling from above.

He strode forward to reach the evolution puppet within an instant. He held the white katana with both of his hands as he swung it down with great momentum. There was also the mental energy and violent gale revolving around his body and the sword as he did those actions.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: First Movement – Collapsing Wind'

Swoosh!

The speed and smoothness of his actions were too perfect for the current situation. It could also be said that it was too perfect that it was impossible to be dodged or blocked given the current circumstances.

If this attack landed on the mechanical puppet, the damage that it could deal would be pretty much disastrous. Given that momentum, Shin could possibly cleave the puppet in halves the moment when he swung the katana down.

The evolution puppet analyzed its current situation, processing all of the data inside its head at an extreme speed.

Upon closer inspection, one could see its eyes having a series of text and symbols flowing at a rapid pace.

Within an instant, the evolution puppet evaluated that it was currently in a very dangerous situation and could not save itself with its current mode. Because of this, the emergency and protective features of the puppet were accidentally triggered to protect itself.

It adjusted its mode from 'practice' to 'combat'.

The glowing runes engraved on different parts of the mechanical puppet's body suddenly turned red while its eyes released a dangerous glow.

All of this happened within an instant and Shin immediately noticed the sudden change and sensed the danger coming from the puppet.

Unfortunately, it was already too late to stop in his tracks, especially when his body was being pushed by the generated moment. He could only give his all and pour everything he had into this attack and hope that it would be enough to stop the incoming disaster.

The white katana was already about to descend to the mechanical puppet when it suddenly raised its head and stared at Shin.

Bang!

Chapter 1090 Class War (Part 7): Interest

...

As the katana descended, Shin instantly recognized the danger coming from the evolution puppet. He knew that it was already too late to dodge, so he could only put more strength into his arms, increasing the force accompanying his attack.

The mechanical puppet knew that it was in danger, so it quickly swung its left arm forward, throwing a punch straight into Shin's abdomen.

Swoosh!

Bang!

Screech!

The speed of the punch was a little too fast as it already arrived at its target within an instant. The metal fist implanted itself on the abdomen of its opponent, creating a loud sound alongside a strong ripple that pushed the air outwards.

Shin had the urge to vomit as he felt that his innards were currently being flipped by the shockwave that was produced upon contact. But he held it back and continued swinging the white katana down as it descended almost at the same time as the punch of the mechanical puppet.

The katana dug deep into the body of the evolution puppet. It created a high-pitched screeching sound of metal and burning sparks that were being thrown in the air as the katana cut through the shoulder of the mechanical puppet and made its way to its chest diagonally.

When the screeching stopped, a sonic boom quickly followed as Shin was suddenly sent flying by the delayed force of the punch.

Boom!

But despite that being the chase, he did not let go of his sword and even held it tightly, making its blade dig deeper into the body of the mechanical puppet and destroying its body even further.

Swoosh!

Shin flew straight to the end of the field, clashing against multiple trees in the process and only stopping when he collided against the wall enclosing the entire field. He left a devastated group behind with fallen tree trunks on the path that he took.

The entire class was attracted by the commission and were forced to pause what they were doing to look. Then they saw the strange puppet standing alone in the distance while maintaining its previous posture, slightly squatting, and extending its arm forward.

Most of the students were furrowing their brows, thinking about what had happened. But the ones who remembered that this mechanical puppet was supposedly fighting Shin could not help but wear a solemn looks on their faces.

Shin's group quickly dropped what they were doing and started sprinting toward the place where Shin was sent flying.

But someone was much faster than them. Old Man Lin, who was giving orders to the other mechanical puppets and clay golems to fight with the students, already made his move at that moment.

He was a little late because everything happened way too fast. The final exchange between Shin and the evolution puppet only happened for a brief moment, making it impossible for the old man to respond.

He had miscalculated. He had to admit that he underestimated Shin and did not expect that he would be able to push the mechanical puppet into a corner where it found itself in extreme danger and forced it to trigger the emergency protection mode.

That special puppet was designed by the old researchers within the World Research Center, and it was set to be on the same level as peak Ethereal Stage Experts in terms of combat strength. That meant that the ones who could force it to activate its emergency protection mode were Martial Artists or Mentalists that were in similar stages, or even stronger.

This could only mean that whatever Shin did earlier before the emergency feature of the evolution puppet was activated, was on the same level that exceeded its restricted limit.

This was very surprising since Shin's strength was supposedly restricted by the restriction cuffs that Old Man Lin had given them.

Those restriction cuffs were not only meant to disrupt their energy circulation and help them train but also to make sure that they would not be able to trigger the emergency features of the mechanical puppets.

The academy knew that this batch of students had the ability to improve their strengths and surpass their current limits temporarily through special means, especially with their backgrounds. The old man was already expecting it, which was why he chose those restriction cuffs to avoid any accidents from happening.

But who would have thought that there was a monster within the class who could still emit enough threat to the mechanical puppets, making him be identified as a serious threat and forcing it to activate its emergency protection system?

As Old Man Lin was flying past the evolution puppet, he gave it a sidelong glance, after noticing that it suddenly stopped moving. That was when he noticed the two cuts that it had suffered.

One was quite shallow as it only managed to cut its outer shell, but the other cut was quite serious. That cut was so deep that it made its way from the shoulder of the puppet up to the center of its chest, where its core was located.

The second cut was almost severing the arm of the mechanical puppet.

Old Man Lin could also see the electric sparks from the gap created by that cut, which also revealed the destroyed components within it. There was also a huge crack in its core, which explained why the mechanical puppet suddenly stopped moving.

"That kind destroyed an advanced evolution puppet? He is indeed a monster among monsters," muttered the Old Man as he continued to head over to where Shin was sent flying.

He was quite worried about what happened to that kid after suffering a direct blow from the evolution puppet that had the physical strength of a peak Ethereal Opening Stage Martial Artist.

But when he arrived at that place, he could not help but halt in his tracks and stood a few meters away from Shin.

What he saw was Shin slightly standing while supporting himself with the white katana. Behind him was the wall that enclosed the entire field, which currently had a huge cobweb crack with a deep crater at the center. Shin must have fallen from that crater earlier.

The young man was currently covered by a violent flame that seemed to be burning him. But at the same time, that flame did not harm him in any way, and heal his wounds instead.

At a single glance, Old Man Lin could tell that it was the innate properties of Shin's mental energy. The old man was surprised that Shin had fully awakened his attribute and even utilized it with great familiarity.

But upon closer inspection, the old man noticed that it was not the full capability of the Mental Energy that Shin possessed. He could sense it was only a part of the real attribute that Shin was supposed to have – it was just a fraction of his real powers.

But that was still not the real reason why Old Man Lin halted. It was because of the other form of energy that managed to leak out due to the cuffs around Shin's wrists being broken.

The old man squinted his eyes as he looked at the black Qi leaking out from Shin's body. From what he could see, he could tell that it was Demonic Qi, which had a high density.

Given the current era, everyone was not looking too unfavorably at Demonic Partitioners, unlike the previous eras. That was as long as they followed the rules and maintained their morality.

It was the same for practitioners, who let their inner demons consume them but managed to retain their consciousness. If they did not harm the public and innocent people, then the World Government and the other factions would not bother them.

In the eyes of the people, it was just another unorthodox path in the field of Martial Arts, Mentalism, and Swordsmanship.

Though, it was a completely different case when it came to Evil Practitioners and Unforgiven Ones, who performed hideous deeds. Those two types of practitioners not only cast away everything and stopped being humane.

And given the eerie vibe and dangerous feeling that Old Man Lin was getting from the Demonic Qi that was coming from Shin, the old man was suspecting that it might be a type of power that could make its host lose their minds and turn into a real Demon.

The old man was about to take action when another form of energy came out from Shin's body. This time, it was a white Qi that could put anyone in a state of serenity – it was his Sacred Qi.

The two Qi intervene with each other, forming a state of absolute balance.

It was at that moment when the blazing flame made from Mental Energy subdued and was retracted within Shin's body.

Old Man Lin could not help but squint his eyes even further as he sensed a sudden change. He felt that the air and aura surrounding Shin took a massive change. It was as if the young man turned into a whole other person.

The body of the old man suddenly tensed and was about to make his move. He was planning to subdue 'Shin' if he suddenly went out of control and entered a berserk state – like a demon.

Sensing the intention of Old Man Lin, 'Shin' slowly raised his head and looked at the old man with sharp and cold eyes.

Those eyes were completely different from what the old man had remembered. He recalled that Shin was supposed to have grey pupils, but right now, he saw that 'Shin' had a pair of purple pupils with slightly slit irises.

Swoosh!

It was at that moment when Old Man Lin finally stopped holding himself back. He disappeared from his current position and instantly reappeared right in front of 'Shin'. He also extended his hand as he was planning to subdue the latter with it.

But when his hand was about to touch the young man, he suddenly stopped himself once again as he stared into the eyes of the latter.

Given his age, achievements, and experience, Old Man Lin had already met countless practitioners who were either possessed by their inner demons, demonized person, or even people who lost their sanity.

The old man could tell that the current Shin was different from those people.

What he saw from those cold, yet unfazed eyes was intelligence that could only be seen from a sane person.

Moreover, the old man could also see strong determination, unbreakable will, and extreme courage despite facing the immense pressure that he had.

Old Man Lin stared at 'Shin' confusedly and observe the young man a little more. Then the latter slowly closed his eyes and slightly leaned over but remained standing with the support of the katana.

The old man stayed still for a moment before retracting his extended hand and stroking his goatee. "It seems like this kid is hiding more secrets than what I can imagine."