

Destiny 1101

Chapter 1101 Special Mission (Part 3): Undercurrents

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Since Shin and Leonard would be getting assistance from John and his group, Shin decided to scrap his previous plan of visiting the pubs in the city and saved it for the next day.

He decided to call it a day and rest. This mission would be a battle of nerve, so they had to always be at their peak condition to avoid making mistakes during critical moments.

After making sure that everything was running properly, he left the secret room alongside Leonard. And before going to bed, he made another quick round in the house, checking if all of the talismans that he had set up were working properly before finally collapsing inside his room.

In the meantime, somewhere in the Mountain Sea City, there were silhouettes moving around a secluded alley in a secretive manner.

A moment later, the shadows in the alley suddenly moved and morphed into a group of people. The rest of the shadows also turned into a black cocoon that enveloped everyone.

One of the shadowy figures suddenly stepped forward and asked. "How is it? Did those people send more pests to bother our business?"

"We are closely monitoring everyone who is entering the city. There quite a few people who looked new, but we are already keeping an eye on them, so there shouldn't be much of a problem," said another.

That person paused for a moment before quickly adding laughingly. "We will be able to quickly recognize the locals, regular guests, and people who are here to investigate us. The superstitious beliefs of the people here are helping a lot in identifying those moles planted by those idiots in the military."

Hearing that, the first guy shook his head and refuted. "That is only for the branch stationed in the Eastern Sea Region."

"If the military forces under the Springfield Family or the instructors from the Top Military School, then we are going to be in serious trouble."

"Fortunately, the forces here in the Eastern Sea Region don't have a good relationship with the Springfield forces while the Top Military School are too far from us to send their people, so we are still fine for the time being."

"But once those two managed to deal with their situations and are able to send their people, then our situation will be more complicated."

He then paused and swept his gaze at everyone before warning them. "Don't let your guard down and keep an eye on everyone. The project is already at the most critical stages, so we can't afford to move our base of operation to avoid this problem."

"Are we going to stop our operations in the city, sir?" asked one of the guys.

The guy that seemed to be the leader shook his head and replied. "We are going to pause the abduction for the time being. You can also forget the guys in the brawl arena to avoid unnecessary problems."

"That place will be a hot potato in the eyes of the military since it was an obvious source of subjects."

"But since we already captured the elite students of the Magic Ace Academy, we will not be lacking in that area. We are not going to lose anything even if we stop picking out the potential subjects from the arena."

"Just focus your energy on monitoring the city and take note of any suspicious people. If they are making progress at tracking us, then eliminate them as soon as possible."

"But make sure that you are able to deal with them. If those people are actually the instructors of the Magic Ace Academy, then forget about returning alive. You better shut your mouths for good, instead of harming the organization."

"Am I clear?" he asked with a cold voice.

"Yes, Sir!" replied everyone as they nod their heads.

"Dismiss!" said the leader, making the others scatter and head in different directions. They would be heading to their respective positions and observing their potential targets.

In the meantime, the leader looked around for another time before stepping back into the shadows and merging with them. Following that, the black cocoon that enveloped the alley was suddenly sucked into the shadows before disappearing completely.

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A few moments, that person arrived at the depths of the mountain range behind the city. He walked around with great familiarity before disappearing into the woods.

After a minute of walking, he arrived in front of a cliff wall. He stood in front of it for a couple of minutes before walking straight to the solid wall. But instead of bumping into it, he seemed to walk through it as if the wall was nothing.

He continued to walk in darkness for quite some time before arriving in front of a metal door. He waited for another minute before the door opened on itself.

Contrary to the darkness behind him, the other side of the metal door was too bright. It took a couple of seconds before the eyes of the mysterious person adjusted to the brightness.

He then resumed his steps walking through the corridor of a research facility.

There were a lot of rooms lined up on each side of the corridors. And looking over at those rooms, one could see that different research was taking place. Some were being conducted by a lot of people while the rest were just being monitored by a couple of personnel.

The mysterious person walked to the farthest end of the corridor, where a glass door was blocking his path. He paused for a moment before taking out an ID from his pocket. On it, the name Shaun Livingstone was written alongside a portrait of a young man in glasses.

After walking for a few more minutes, this guy with the name Shaun Livingstone finally reached his destination. It was a research lab with scattered and unorganized apparatuses and materials mixed together.

There was an old man in a laboratory gown sitting at the center of the room in a lazy manner, staring at the floating images projected in the air.

Hearing the door open behind him, the old man turned around and saw Shaun Livingstone walking over. "Your back? How is it outside?"

Shaun did not immediately reply as he tried to find the right path to reach the center of the room. When he arrived, he suddenly asked. "Can Sir clean your room from time to time? I can't imagine that you are able to work with such a mess."

The old scientist smirked when he heard that and refuted it. "Kid, you will never be able to understand."

He then paused and went back to his original question. "So, how is it on the outside? Is the academy sending their main forces already?"

Shaun shook his head. "I don't think they will be able to send their people this soon. They have to organize their forces first before launching a thorough search in the mountains. We still have enough time to finish the project."

"What I am more worried about is the forces of the Springfield Family. They are not showing any movements on the surface, but I feel that they are plotting something," he added after some hesitation.

The old scientist shrugged his shoulders. "We can't do anything about that. Those people are already on our tail since that incident years ago. If they managed to sniff us here, then there is no point in avoiding them any longer."

"This is the reason why we ask Butcher and Coffin Maker to assist us. It is to hasten our progress while also having powerful experts that will be able to protect us if the situation goes against our favor."

"But I must say, Coffin Maker really did a good job of stealing the data from the Hextech Laboratory. It hastens our progress by a large margin."

The old scientist paused for a moment before asking. "Have you followed the instructions that I've asked you?"

"Of course, sir! I ask everyone to halt our operations and just focus on monitoring the city," said Shaun.

"Good! You can leave now and go back to your post," the old scientist snapped with his fingers before asking Shaun to leave.

Shaun furrowed his brows for a moment before bowing and complying with the old scientist. He gave the old man one final look before leaving the laboratory. There was a clear displeasure on his face as he knew that the old scientist was still not trusting him enough even after doing everything that he did up until now.

The old scientist did not care about the thoughts that Shaun currently had. He made sure that the guy left before tapping a couple of buttons on the keyboard near him, locking the laboratory, and activating the isolation features that it had.

Even the glass door was covered by a steel door, thoroughly sealing the entire room.

Then the projected images in the air suddenly disappeared before being replaced by an image of a person.

That person had pale skin which was as smooth as jade while his eyes resembled a reptile, particularly a snake. His long hair was entirely black as he let it hang on his back.

"Sir Snake Head," greeted the old scientist as he stood up and bowed.

The person on the other side of the call slightly nodded his head before asking. "How is it? Is everything going smoothly?"

The old scientist lowered his body even further as he replied. "Everything is going according to the plan, sir. We only need the final testing, and we will get all the data that we need."

Snake Head smiled creepily before saying. "That is good. Send me everything that you have and proceed according to the plan. When you are done with everything, destroy that lab and head back to the main base."

The old scientist hesitated for a moment before asking. "I will make the necessary preparations, sir. There are a lot of personnel here, so we will need some time to move everyone."

"What personnel? I seem to remember that you are the only one that we have sent over there," said Snake Head in a casual manner.

Those words seemed to be said casually, but they sent an intense shiver down the spine of the old scientist. He knew what Snake Head meant by those words.

He gulped a mouthful of saliva before bowing even further. "I understand, sir. I will clean up everything."

"Good! Then I will be expecting the data that you are going to present to me," said Snake Head before ending the call.

The old scientist was sweating spontaneously as he maintained his bowing posture for quite some time. He knew that his boss was cold-hearted, but he did not expect that it would be to this degree.

After adjusting his mood for a couple of moments, he strengthened his back and started making preparations.

He had to move fast.

If Snake Head suddenly changed his mind and found the old scientist as a disposable piece like the others, then his end would be no different to the people of this research facility.

Chapter 1102 Special Mission (Part 4)

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The next day, Shin and Leonard did their morning training inside their respective rooms but did not practice their mentalism techniques and martial skills respectively. Executing such moves would require a special place or an open area or else they would destroy everything around them.

Shin did a quick meditation training instead while Leonard trained his energy and blood circulation method that he learned from his master.

After a quick shower, the two went back to the secret room once again, observing all of the screens, before Shin went to the main computer and turned on the microphone beside it. "Brother John, are you there?"

It did not take long for the person on the other side of the line to answer. "You're up? That is good! Do me a favor and opened these files on the main computer and install them."

Shin pursed his mouth a little before following John's instructions. And after installing the things that he needed to install, he quickly launched them and let them run on the main computer.

While waiting, Shin suddenly asked. "Is there anything notable that happened last night?"

"I slept last night after setting up the computers and connecting the ones over there to ours. I left the job with the rest of our time. Let me ask them for now – I just woke up too," said John in a nonchalant manner before shouting.

Shin could hear that the other person cursed John multiple times while giving their 'report'. He could not help but chuckle as he continued to listen.

After a few moments, John and the other person finished cursing each other. He then summarized everything to Shin. "We can't clearly see everything through low-end products installed there. The cameras that the city has are also very outdated, so we have to fix a few more things and install some special applications before we can have a normal operation."

"We also can't recognize if there were some sneaky energies being captured in the cameras, especially in the dark, so we have to polish our system first before operating properly."

Hearing that, Shin could not help but smirk. "That is a roundabout way of saying that you guys did not find anything... or you have done nothing the entire night."

The corner of John's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard that before continuing. "Anyways, I have some tasks for you-..."

"Given me a second," he trailed his words for a couple of seconds as he sent a map to Shin's advanced watch through their secured line.

Shin opened it and saw that the map was the entirety of the Mountain Sea City. There were a bunch of blinking blue dots and a couple of red hollow circles on the map, making his brows rise a little.

It was at that moment when John continued. "The blue dots are the places where the cameras scattered in the city are installed. Their red circles are the blind spots of those cameras."

"Since you will surely make a round in the city during the day, make sure to put some cameras that will cover those blind spots. The spy cameras have already been delivered there. They are in the box placed in the living room."

"They are all portable and button-sized, so they are easy to carry and not complicated to install. Just put them in a nice spot where they can properly cover the blind spot. It will do its job on its own."

Shin swept his gaze on the map in front of him before saying with a twitching mouth. "Do you know how many are these blind spots? Do you think we have that much time to install those cameras?"

"Well, that is not my problem. The military can't send people over there to install them since the whole place is being monitored. Even the two of you are most likely been marked after you entered the city," said John while reminding. "Be careful when you are out there and be mindful of your surroundings when you are installing the cameras. The other side may spot you if you are careless."

This time, it was Shin's turn to suppress the twitching of his mouth before replying. "I can't promise that we can finish the job. Our time is very limited. The more we delay, the more danger the students of our academy will face."

"Our main purpose is still to find the location of the other party, then we will trust that Uncle Nathan and the others will make their move," he added solemnly.

John laughed and replied nonchalantly. "Don't worry. I understand the situation more than you do. I have been briefed by our superiors about this."

"I know how you operate which is why Commander Nathan put me on this task. Just keep a couple of spy cameras in you all the time. They have a built-in tracking device in them, so we will be able to know your location if you ever got abducted or something."

Shin thought for a moment before commenting. "That is convenient. Then I can just put them on someone that I find suspicious, and we can track them instead."

John paused for a moment before laughing. "Yeah! You are right! It can also make our job much easier and less complicated."

Shin stared at the map for a few more moments and closed it after making sure that he memorized everything.

He then looked at the time before standing up. "Alright. We will go out now – look around and investigate. We will also have breakfast too while we are at it."

Before Shin could even turn off the microphone, John quickly added. "Oh! Before I forget. There are also special communication devices among the package in the living room. Use it instead of using your earbuds."

"Earphones and earbuds are too outdated. It can also make you look suspicious if you wear them for too long. The camp provides the special device, so make sure to try them out," he added before initiating to turn off the microphone of the main computer.

Shin shrugged his shoulders before turning to Leonard, who was busy looking at the screens attached to the walls.

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When Shin went to the living room, he found what John was talking about. Two boxes to be precise; one was larger, which he suspected to contain the spy cameras, while the smaller boxes seemed to have the special communication device.

Shin just ignored the larger box and let Leonard take a look at its contents while he took the small box and opened it.

What he saw was a couple of devices. There were a pair of tiny, black molds that seemed to be a lump of clay or rubber or sort. He picked it up and pinched it a little. Then he heard a series of beeping sounds before subduing briefly after.

Nothing happened after that, which made Shin's brows form. He then slowly raised the tiny object and put it close to his place, closely observing it. And after failing to find anything, he shook it a little while putting it near his ears.

"Hello? Shin? Are you there? Do you hear me now?"

It was at that moment that he heard John's voice coming from the tiny object. He raised his brows and looked at it for another time, making his ear distanced from it a little. Then he found the sounds disappeared.

He then realized what it was. "Interesting! Even with my senses, I can't hear anything from it unless it is near my ears?"

He immediately figured out how to use the item. He put it on the lobule of his ear. And when he did, the tiny object quickly stuck on it, making it look like an earring or sort.

Then he heard John's voice once again. "Hey! If you can hear men, answer immediately. I look like an idiot right now, did you know?"

Shin chuckled a little and replied. "This thing is interesting."

After that, he took out the other one and pinched it before passing it to Leonard. He then made a series of hand gestures, telling the latter how to use them, while talking with John. "It is another convenient device that the military has."

"Hah! You bet!" said John before proudly saying. "Actually, it is one of the inventions of the students in the Top Military School. And after a series of testing and other annoying processes, we are able to produce this prototype."

"It is just a prototype?" asked Shin in surprise.

"Yeah! It is. The final product has other features such tracking device and such. It is very hard to install such things in a tiny object, after all," said John.

He then quickly went on the right track. "Alright, you should check the other special tools too. I will introduce them to you one by one and explain how to use them."

After that, Shin started talking out the spy-like gadgets from the box one after another while John explained their purposes. Each of them piqued Shin's interest, making him feel like he was in a famous spy or special agent movie from the previous eras.

He could even see Arthur looking at him in envy and resentment once he told the guy about these. One of that guy's dreams was to be able to use such gadgets during missions, yet Shin and Leonard were currently experiencing it right now.

After familiarizing themselves with everything, Shin and Leonard went back to the secret room to hide the excess spy cameras there.

Shin found it hard to believe that the military left such important things in the living unattended when they could just put them in the living room.

What if someone suddenly broke in inside the house and discovered them? Their cover would instantly blow when it happened.

Or maybe John had forgotten to remind him about them last night?

Shin shook his head and decided not to pick on John and just went on the mission. After making sure that everything was in order, he led Leonard to leave the house.

Aside from the task that John had given them, their goal for this day was to gather as much information as possible while going around the city. He just hoped that everything would go smoothly this time around.

Chapter 1103 Special Mission (Part 5)

After going out of the house where they were temporarily staying, Shin and Leonard went to the nearest restaurant that they had come across last night. They went there for their late breakfast.

The place was very simple, yet it had a lot of customers. From the looked of it, this place seemed to be pretty famous in the area. The duo could see that most of the customers were either middle-aged men or old people, which gave them a rough idea of what kind of servings this place had.

During the entire time, Leonard was actually the one who was talking the most contrary to his stern- and cold-looking appearance.

He was telling Shin about a few customs of the city and the famous tourist spots that it had. He looked like a local tour guide, who was boasting about his hometown.

Some of the customers overheard their conversation and could not help but give Leonard an approving look. The owner of the small restaurant even gave the two an extra plate of their signature dish for free because they were quite fond of Leonard.

Since most of the customers were old people, they loved to talk a lot. They asked Leonard why he was so familiar with their place, especially when it was their first time seeing him here.

Leonard just followed the script that was given to him and said that he had some relatives that used to live there.

The two were not in a hurry to leave yet, so they welcomed the conversation with these old people. They were just having some casual talks with them on the surface, but the two were actually collecting some information from these people.

After almost half an hour, the two bade their farewell and left the place. They quickly entered the car that they had parked nearby before heading to another location.

"It seems like the people are quite friendly to people who know a lot about their customs, especially the guys who respect their beliefs. Though, they are very cold to outsiders," commented Shin as he drove.

"That is to be expected. After all, there are quite a lot of people out there who find their customs weird or too old-fashioned," said Leonard.

Shin was silent for a moment before saying. "But it is not like we have not gained anything."

Leonard nodded his head and said solemnly. "From what those elders have said, it seems like the disappearance of people is a regular occurrence."

"They first take it as some sort of superstitious phenomenon where the spirits of the dead people invite those of the living to come and journey with them in the mountains, particularly their loved ones or at least close two them."

"It is said that those spirits can't rest in peace and need their relatives or those close to them for company. But if the living people followed them, they would never be able to come back as they will be lost in the Spirit Realm or something."

"At first, it is only one or two people missing like that for a year, but it recently became too frequent these last few years. And it even accelerated these last few months."

"The locals of the city believe that it is because the Guardian of the Mountain is enraged because of the disrespectful behavior of foreign people visiting their city, which resulted in the locals becoming hostile to them."

Shin nodded his head before commenting. "Isn't it a convenient excuse to use to cover a crime?"

"You mean, the abduction? It surely is," said Leonard as he also nodded.

Shin thought for a moment before continuing. "Let's have a little tour while killing some time. We also have to secretly install the spy cameras too, so let's have a few rounds around the city."

"Point me to the less famous tourist spots?" he instructed.

Leonard was confused when he heard that, doubting if he heard it wrong. But after making sure that it was not the case, he could not help but ask. "Don't you mean the most famous place? Isn't that how foreign people visit a certain tourist destination?"

Shin shook his head and said. "Normally, yes. But we are not. We have to keep a low profile."

"We already talk with the elderly earlier and learn more about a few things. I am sure those people who are monitoring us will find it a little suspicious."

"Sure, we will be no different from other tourists if we head straight to those famous tourist destinations. But will only make us more suspicious since that is how 'normal' tourists do."

"Because that is how the normal tourists act, agents and spies will also act that way. It is in the basic manual of Espionage of any organization. Or at least, that is what I remember from training from the Mafia Camp and also what I have read in the secret service manual in grandfather's study."

"So, we have to avoid such famous places or the most crowded ones. Let's just head over to the less famous tourist spots that are not commonly visited by the public. Locals will also choose to bring their friends to such places if they really grew up in this place."

Hearing the explanation, Leonard finally understood. It had been a long time since he knew Shin – so much that he had become his brother. But he almost forgot that Shin actually was trained in the Mafia Training Camp first then proceeded to live in a Military Household.

Thinking about that for a moment, Leonard nodded his head and said. "Then let's go to the shrines."

"Shines?" Shin repeated questioningly.

"Yeah! The shrines. Even though this place is full of people believing superstitious beliefs, they still have some sort of religion. And if there is a religion, someone is bound to become the head of it or something – someone like a priest or sort," said Leonard.

"Since we are acting as a returning citizens of the city, then we better visit the shrines today. It is one of the traditions of this city. They call it 'Rite of Returning' – it means that we are returning to our rightful place."

"It is like visiting our old homes after being away from them for a very long time," he added as he tried to remember if he forgot anything.

"You are very familiar with the customs of this place, huh? It feels like you really used to live here for real," commented Shin.

"It is to be expected. After all, one of my senior brothers is a local here. He is my sparring partner when I am training. And he is very talkative, so it is natural that I learn a lot despite the short time I know him," replied Leonard.

Shin pursed his mouth before driving the car toward the place that Leonard had indicated. He also glanced at the rear-view mirror, looking at the certain car that was following them since they left the house.

Those guys tailing them were quite skilled as they maintained a considerable distance away from them. They also did not stay in the same lane as them and kept a couple of vehicles in the middle to avoid suspicion.

Shin could tell that those guys were not amateurs. They seemed to have a lot of experience with what they were doing. Unfortunately, Shin had very sharp senses thanks to his mentalism attainment. His memory was also quite good as he remembered every vehicle behind them.

Leonard noticed Shin's actions and asked in a casual manner. "We are being followed?"

"Yeah, they are quite skilled too. Fortunately, there are very few vehicles in the city, which made it easier to spot them," answered Shin in a calm manner.

Leonard did not purposely turn his head to look. Instead, he continued to look ahead while asking. "What is your plan?"

"Well, we are still not sure about their identity, so let's leave them for now," he said before slightly tapping the communication device attached to his ear. "Big Brother John, can you see the white car behind us? The one behind the delivery van."

He did not wait for a reply and said. "Take note of them and follow their movements every time. And also check their records if you have any or at least look at its history."

"Got it," replied John Evans simply before passing the job to his team.

In the meantime, Shin temporarily forgot about their tail and said. "We will stick to the plan. Head over to the shrine and have a few rounds in the city before heading to the pubs at night."

Leonard nodded his head before taking the tablet provided by the military and browsing on it.

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Inside the car that was tailing Shin and Leonard, the driver suddenly asked. "Did they notice us?"

The guy sitting on the passenger seat seem to not care and just lazy replied. "I don't know."

The driver frowned deeply. "If you are going to continue to act lazily, then I will report you to the boss. Let's see if your head is still on your shoulders when he learns that you are slacking off."

The other guy glared at him and refuted. "What do you know? I have been doing this job for years and can already identify which are the locals, tourists, and spies."

He then pointed at the car that they were following before saying. "I assure you that those brats are just some local returnees. You witness it too; they are not rejected by the old locals earlier. They are knowledgeable about the customs of the city and even know how to treat those elders."

"My guess is that they are going to the shrine temple for their Rite of Returning!"

"I bet my entire savings that they are not here to investigate us," he declared.

The driver knitted his brow for a moment as he asked doubtfully. "Doesn't that make them more suspicious?"

The other guy glared and said. "Are you an idiot? Who in the right mind will study the customs of this overly traditional place that deeply?"

"And if they are really some agents that are sent here to investigate us, then why are they wasting their time on such trivial matters? Aren't they supposedly looking for clues about the disappearance of those students?"

"And if they are professionals, then they are supposed to head to the famous tourist spots to make themselves less suspicious."

"And most of all, those two are just kids. Or at least in their early twenties! How much experience do they have?"

The driver could not refute after hearing the rapid words of his partner. Even though he still had some doubts, he kept it to himself and thought that it was only his imagination.

He just hoped that his partner was right.

Chapter 1104 Special Mission (Part 6)

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Shin was wearing a deep frown as he walked out of the Shrine Temple alongside Leonard. From what the latter had said, the so-called Rite of Returning was something that a returning local of the city had to do. It seemed to be one of their traditions that were passed down from generation to generation.

He was quite curious about it. But when they arrived at the temple, one of the maidens there told them that the head priestess was not around. They asked them to come back again on another day to do their Rite of Returning.

Shin found it somewhat strange. Based on what Leonard had said, this rite was one of the most important traditions that the city had. The head priestess had to be in the Temple all the time since the longer they delayed it, the more misfortune they would encounter during their stay in the city.

The guests of the city would still be fine and would not care about it since they only found it a superstitious belief. But for the locals of the city, it was something that had to be done.

Shin could not help but knit his brows after hearing that. It was also the same for Leonard, who was more familiar with these traditions, especially when he heard it from his senior martial brother.

Due to that, Shin could not help but ask where and when the head priestess would be coming back.

The shrine maiden did not find it strange when Shin asked her that question since they knew about their customs better than anyone else. They only smiled at Shin and said that he did not have to worry since the head priestess was only performing the spiritual ceremony in the mountains alongside some of the shrine maidens.

The maiden also reassured Shin and Leonard that it would not take that long since the head priestess understood the consequences of her prolonged absence in the temple better than anyone.

Shin wanted to inquire more about it as it would make it sound suspicious, so he let it be. Left without a choice, he and Leonard just left the shrine temple after bidding their farewell. They just said that they would come back again tomorrow.

While they were walking out of the temple, Shin suppressed his voice with his mental energy and whispered to Leonard. "Is it normal for the head priestess to leave the shrine? Is there really a ritual that needed her to head over the mountains just to perform it?"

Leonard shrugged his shoulders, indicating that he also did not know. He then whispered that he would ask his martial senior brother about it once they went back in the car.

The two could only pay respect to the temple before leaving. And once they left, they proceeded to go around the city like a regular tourist or returning locals, visiting a place one after another.

Of course, they also did not forget to install the spy cameras that John had asked them to do. They naturally did it sneakily, dodging the eyes of the guys that were tailing them since they left the place where they stayed temporarily.

Hours later, the sun had finally set, and it was night. After touring around the historical places of the city, Shin and Leonard could not head over to the place that they originally had targeted, the pubs.

After chatting with old people and other locals that they had encountered during their tour, the two were able to figure out which pub was the most visited by everyone in the city.

It was a pub that was situated in the center of the city. Its name was rather strange for the ears of the two. It was called 'Guidance'.

Shin thought that it might be because of the tradition and superstitious beliefs of the locals. He also heard from the people that it was named as such because the owner of the pub wanted the lost spirits within the city to come to his pub instead of roaming around aimlessly and disturbing the other people.

The moment Shin and Leonard entered the pub, they were immediately greeted by the loud and lively atmosphere. There was a mix of old men, middle-aged men, and young people in their twenties inside – chatting and drinking.

They were also a couple of women around, but the majority were still men.

The person who seemed to be guarding the entrance just took a quick glance at the two and let them in. He seemed to be unbothered by the newcomers and even found it a regular occurrence.

As long as these little kids respected their customs and did not cause any trouble, then it would be fine.

Shin and Leonard found a secluded corner to sit in and ordered some food and beverages. Despite their slightly older appearances, their actual age was still too young, so they could not drink any alcohol but would make them quite suspicious if they did that.

Fortunately, Shin was a skilled mentalist. He could just cast an illusion that they were drinking the alcoholic drinks that they had ordered when they were actually not touching them.

While they were eating, Shin stealthily spread his Spiritual Sense to listen to everyone one. On the other hand, Leonard relied on his heightened senses to listen.

"I heard that your old man's flower shop is having it rough these days."

"Ah~! You don't tell! It is because of the increasing number of competitors these days. And because of recent incidents a lot of us are offering flowers to the guardian spirit."

"This is because of those disrespectful foreigners. If they are not going to respect our beliefs, then they better get out of our city and scam somewhere else."

"Fortunately, the mayor is kicking out those guys and sending them back to where they come from."

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"Hey, Old Roger! Is it true that you are closing your business? It will be a pity."

"What are you talking about? I am not closing it for no reason. I am going to another career. I will not have the time to oversee the fields because I will be focusing on my new job."

"Transitioning to another job? How many times have you done it? You are just wasting your money. How about the business that I offered before? Just fund me and I will make sure that you will enjoy a good life."

"Che! As if a gambling addict like you will achieve anything? You never have won anything big! You have lost more than you have won. Only a fool will believe your words."

"Tsk! Tsk! So, heartless. Anyway, what kind of job are you going to do this time?"

"I will be a coach this time. After my fighter won twice during the last brawls, I discovered that I have talent in coaching. Hah! Just wait, I will be the next coach that will produce an undefeated champion!"

"Meh~! I pity the guy that will be your fighter."

...

"Have you heard? Some of the gangs from the slums are getting active recently. Say, do you think they will cause some trouble?"

"What are you thinking? There are marshals guarding the streets all day. They are just asking to be thrown in prison if cause trouble."

"Well, if you ask me, it is better to live inside the prison rather than continue living in the slums. At least in there, you can eat three times a day. The food may be terrible, but it is still better than dying in hunger."

"You have the point there."

...

"I heard the old chief's son has gone missing."

"Chief Oliver's son? I also heard about that. But according to the who last saw his son, the kid seems to be chasing a woman while calling her mom."

"Eh? Another of those incidents? I heard that the same happens to one of the fighters of last month's brawls."

"You mean that fighter named Jerome? I heard he is an orphan who lost his parents during the fire incident last year. Did he also see the spirits of his parents?"

(Shoulder shrugging) "That is what I've heard. But I don't know the details."

...

"I've just finished the training session from the Heavenly Dao Dojo! I will be the next champion this month. Watch me become the next champion!"

"Heh! If that is the case, then pay for everything right now!"

"Bro, I haven't made any money yet. I am broke, yet you want me to pay for everything. Old Lui will not only ban us here. He will also beat us and become his dishwasher for the entire month. I will never be able to compete if that happens."

...

Shin and Leonard listened to everything as they ate at a normal pace. Most of the topics were random chatting of the residents, but there were also a few that might concern their mission, especially the ones about the missing people.

And while they were eating, they noticed that someone was walking toward them. They did not turn their heads toward the direction of that person, but their senses locked on instantly.

Shin relaxed his muscles a little when he realized that it was someone with decent training. The pace of that guy's movements was similar to a properly trained martial artist.

"Are they already making their move?" thought Shin as he prepared for action.

Chapter 1105 Special Mission (Part 7): Old Man Roger

...

Shin and Leonard suddenly turned their heads toward the person who suddenly walked over to them and stood beside their table.

What they saw was an old man with a clean-looking beard and mustache. The wrinkles on his face would easily tell his age. But despite that being the case, this particular old man seemed to possess an overwhelming vigor. He would not lose to people who were at their prime age.

The old man also had a muscular body, which indicated that he was able to maintain such a good form despite his old age. Shin was even expecting that this old man was one of the old hermits spending their retirement in a peaceful corner of the country.

The two observe the old man for a couple of moments while the latter also did the same. The old man was holding an unlit cigar in his mouth while staring down at the pair of young men, smiling widely.

"Is the elder need something from us?" asked Shin in a respectful tone.

The old man smiled even wider when he saw that the two did not even flinch despite feeling his presence. They were completely unaffected by the pressure that he was emitting, which could easily make any other young men cower.

He observed the two for a couple more seconds before finally saying. "You two look new. Are you guests staying in our city?"

Shin and Leonard did not immediately respond as they found this old man weird. Silence lingered between them for a moment before Leonard was finally able to respond. "In a sense, that is right, Sir."

"But we are actually here to visit my homeland. I am here for my Rite of Returning," he added with a smile.

The old man gave Leonard an interested look before saying. "Oh! You are from here? From which family? I may look old, but I have a very good memory. I practically know everyone here in the city."

The old man might have said it in a casual manner, but Shin and Leonard could tell that the old man seemed to be trying to sound them out. He was most likely trying to see through their façade and probing whether they were telling him the truth.

Shin smiled inwardly while Leonard took on the reign. "River Family of the Peace Bridge Bank."

The old man gave Leonard a deep look, focusing his gaze on the young man. After being silent for a moment, he then started laughing. "Oh! I see, the River Family. It has been a while since they left the city."

He then pulled out one of the chairs around the table and took a seat, continuing the chat. "How is the head of your family? It has been a while since I last saw that old fox Hena, is he doing well? Is the family able to take root at the Black Stone City?"

The old man asked questions in succession, not giving the pair the time to think properly. It was such a good strategy to pressure some amateurs or people with weaker willpower. Unfortunately, it was useless in front of these two little monsters.

Leonard answered the questions one after another in a very calm manner. "The Family Head is doing perfectly fine, sir. I don't know who is elder Hena that Sir is talking about. The old head has the name Domon River while the current head is his son, Daniel River."

"The family also takes root at the Longevity Fort City, which is located on the opposite end of the country, not in the Black Stone City."

"If there is a branch of our family living in that city, then I am afraid that is not in my knowledge, Sir. Maybe Sir has mistaken us for someone else."

This time, the old man could not help but pause a little. He must admit that he had underestimated these young men. He was indeed trying to probe these strangers, which was why he put them to the test.

But seeing that they were able to stay calm despite everything, he had to admit that he might have been mistaken this time. Especially when the stern-looking young man was able to answer everything perfectly and even point out the wrong information that he had purposely said.

As an old local living in the city, as well as one of the rare experts here, he was very aware of the strange things that were happening in the city.

These recent days, a couple of special agents were entering the city under their respective disguises. They seemed to be investigating something, particularly the case concerning the missing people.

Even though this was a city filled with people with superstitious beliefs and old culture, they would still not blindly believe in everything. They had police officers to maintain order and investigate every case properly even though they believe that it was caused by something superstitious.

Recently, the number of secret agents entering the city was rapidly increasing. Not only that, but students from prestigious schools seemed to have also joined the investigation, disturbing the peaceful lives of the local community.

This was the reason why the locals here were too unwelcoming when facing the foreigners of their city.

This old man was a retired officer and did not have to concern himself with such things. But as a local here, he could not just turn a blind eye when their city was suffering like this. Especially when there was a huge fight that occurred on the mountain range behind the city, which was being treated as a sacred place by the locals.

Seeing that Shin and Leonard were looking at him 'suspiciously', the old man smiled at them to hide his awkwardness before fishing out an ID from his pocket and showing it to the two.

"I am a retired officer. I can't tell you the details, but the people here in the city are currently not welcoming any strangers," said the old man before adding. "I am sure that you can feel it as well, especially when our friend here is from one of the major families that used to be a part of our city."

The pair took a quick glance at the ID of the old man and saw that his name was Lou Roger. From the picture that was attached to the ID, Shin and Leonard could tell that his old man used to be a competent officer in his younger years.

Cough!

The old man cleared his throat a little as he hid the ID before saying. "Most of the people here call me Old Man Roger. You can address me that way too if you want to."

Shin nodded his head before asking. "Is Elder Roger need something from us?"

Old Man Roger smiled bitterly as he could sense the cautiousness in Shin's tone. He could not blame the young man either since he was at fault for testing the two of them earlier.

He did not respond immediately and lit up his cigar to relieve the tension in the air a little before answering. "Actually, it is just a misunderstanding. You two are new faces here. And since I can feel that you seemed to have trained your bodies pretty well, I suspect that you are one of those foreigners that are disturbing the peace of our city."

Shin did not immediately ask another question even though he found that this was a good opportunity to gather more information. He stared at the old man for a couple of moments before finally asking. "I don't know how it concerns us, Elder. But I believe that Elder had already confirmed what he wants to confirm, right?"

This time, Old Man Roger could tell that Shin did not want to associate with him given the tone that the young man had. But that was understandable.

The old man smiled bitterly before saying. "How is this? As an apology, I will tour you in an interesting place. It is a famous place within the city and a lot of people will be gathering there, there is nothing for you to worry about."

Shin continued to look suspiciously at the old man. From the expression on his face, it seemed like he wanted to say – "Do you think we are an idiot? Following a stranger like that? It only makes you more suspicious." –

In the meantime, Leonard suddenly said. "If Sir is talking about the Brawls, then I am afraid that we can't accompany yours there. We still have to do our Rite of Returning."

"Based on our customs, it will bring us extreme bad luck if we immediately go gambling before performing our rites," he added.

Hearing that, the little suspicion that remained in the head of the old man immediately vanished.

If these two were undercover agents sent by some forces to investigate their city, then they would be welcoming such an opportunity with open arms. Being acquainted with someone like him, who was an old-timer in the city, would also be one of their goals. He was no different from a goldmine of information.

Seeing that these two would rather offend him than associate with him made the old man look at them in a new light.

Re-evaluating the two of them, Old Man Roger seemed to have come up with a decision and slightly changed the topic. "Say, are the two of you Martial Artists or something?"

The pair did not immediately reply after hearing that. They first stared at the old man with a blank expression before turning to each other. They could already tell what this old man was planning.

They looked so calm on the surface, which made the old man become more confident that they were not what he had thought they would be. But deep inside, the two were actually rejoicing that they found another piece that they could use for their operation.

Leonard stared at Shin with calm eyes, while also saying through his eyes that Shin could take the lead.

Shin did not respond and just turned to the old man.

Chapter 1106 Special Mission (Part 8)

.....

Shin and Leonard walked out of the pub and quickly rode their car to head back to their temporary place.

"Is it fine?" asked Leonard after they had distanced themselves from the pub.

Shin nodded his head. "It should be fine. It is better this way. When can go to the Brawl Arena whenever we want with that old man's help. But we can't be too hasty because we are going to be suspicious."

"That old man is not simple. He said that he is a retired officer, but his vigor is overwhelming. It may be nothing compared to the old monsters that we know, but he is at least a Void Manifestation Stage Expert."

"He has spotted us just because of our auras even though we have concealed ourselves properly. That means that the gap in our strengths is quite large. Only a handful of people in the Ethereal Opening Stage or someone with a similar strength can sense our real powers under our disguise, so that old man either has a very sharp sense or someone with that level of strength."

"Of course, it can also be the former since he is an officer previously. Or maybe both. Regardless, that old man is someone, who is strong enough to hold a high position within the city."

"You can see it too. The people in the pub treat that old man in high regard, so he shouldn't be that simple."

He paused for a moment and thought of something before continuing. "The old man was suspicious of us, so we can't just grab the opportunity that he has presented to us hastily since it will only confirm his suspicion."

"I know that we are in a little hurry, but we have to take it so and let everything flow naturally. We are going to build a good relationship with the old man and slowly get close to him while purposely avoiding the things that we want."

Shin smirked. "That old man is quite sly. He is continuously asking some leading questions while purposely mixing out some incorrect information to make us slip out."

He then paused for another time before continuing. "Moreover, I don't have high hopes for the brawl arena, actually. Given that the organization caused a huge incident just recently, I am sure that they will be lying low for the time being to avoid the watchful eyes of the people."

"Instead, we can just work together with the old man earlier to catch those guys by feeding him some information that we already know. If he follows the clues, then there is a high chance that he will be able to find what we are looking for us."

The two continued to chat for a moment when Shin noticed that the car tailing them seemed to have changed a little. Knitting his brow, Shin lightly tapped the communication device attached to his ear before asking. "Brother John, how are those guys tailing us? Did they change their people?"

The reply immediately came. "Nah! It is the same guys. They just changed their cars just earlier."

"These guys are quite cunning. They are changing their car whenever you make a stop. It seems like they are already used to this kind of job and even prepared quite a number of vehicles," John chuckled as he watched on one of the screens in front of him.

"Should we catch them now?" asked Leonard glancing at the side mirror.

Shin thought for a moment before shaking his head. He then grinned evilly before continuing. "Nah. Let's let them be. I have a better plan."

"Let's leave these guys to the old man," he said with a laugh before continuing to drive.

In the meantime, back in the pub, Old Man Roger went back to his previous seat and joined his friends.

"How is it Old Roger?" asked a middle-aged guy, who was wearing a training shirt that was used by police.

This guy had a lean body but a pretty good build. There were also quite a number of scars on both of his arms, indicating that he had gone through a lot of battles. He also had a stern face that made him look intimidating, especially with the long knife scar that he had.

Old Man Roger did not immediately reply as he sat on his previous seat and snatch a mug of beer from the guy sitting beside him and gulped everything.

Tak!

He then slightly slammed the empty mug on the table before saying. "I don't know. Those kids are quite crafty."

He paused for a moment before continuing. "But one thing is certain – they are not ordinary individuals."

The guy in a police training shirt suddenly commented. "Not ordinary people, huh? Given their age, they are most likely to be graduating students or something. Are they another batch of those elite clubs?"

Old Man Roger poured his mug and filled it while replying. "I am not sure. Those two seem to be a little different. They are familiar with our customs and even know a lot of rules."

"They even refuse to be acquainted with," he added as he laughed.

"One of them even claims that he is from the River Family. I tried to probe him a little, but it seems like it is true. I can't even find a flaw that I can use to pressure him."

He then turned to the guy in a police training shirt and asked. "How about you, Young Billy? Have you noticed anything from here?"

The other suppressed the twitching of his mouth. "Old Roger, can you stop addressing me that way? I am the head of my department now."

"Then you can also stop calling me Old Roger," said the old man before adding. "You are still a junior of mine with I am on active duty, so stop complaining."

"I am only doing you a favor because it is you. If it is any other else, then you can forget about it. I just want to continue my leisure life and do whatever I want," said the old man as he drank another mug of beer.

Billy felt that it was a pity that this old man chose to retire despite his strength and martial attainment. Though, he could also not blame the old man since he had already done a lot for the police force during his active years.

Throwing those thoughts at the back of his head and answered the previous question. "I also can't find anything about those kids. They concealed their auras pretty well, so it is hard to gauge their actual strengths."

He then turned to Old Man Roger and continued. "But since you said that they are not that simple, then my guess is that they are highly train agents sent by either the Government or the Military."

"Not considering that they are really from the River Family?" asked the old man before adding. "I heard that they are here for their Rite of Returning."

Billy raised his brows a little before shaking his head. "I am also not sure. We can't exclude that too. Whether it is true or not, it will be revealed sooner or later."

"This will be easy if we have any contacts with the River Family," said another guy who was silently drinking on the side.

Old Man Roger shook his head and said. "You should know the rules of our city. We have to cut every communication with the families that chose to leave the city until they decided to return or if we also leave to venture outside."

Billy nodded his head in agreement before turning to the old man. "Anyway, I will leave those two kids in your car, Old Roger."

"Due to the recent incidents, we are currently lacking in terms of manpower. We don't have enough to keep an eye on additional foreigners," he added, asking the old man a favor.

Old Man Roger smirked and said. "I don't have a problem with that. Those two quite pique my interest too, so I will keep an eye on them even if you don't ask me to."

"I may even try to persuade them to be my fighters for the brawl. They are perfect candidates for my debut as a coach," he added as he started laughing.

Billy and the other guy shook their heads and smiled bitterly. Then the former suddenly remembered something and turned to the other. "I heard that the head priestess head to the peak of the mountains again. She is coming there more and more frequently these recent days. Is there something wrong?"

The other guy shook his head, indicating that he was also not sure. "Our job is to protect the priestess but not bother her with her work. We are only to follow her in the mountains and clear the surrounding areas, but we are forbidden to head to the peak."

"But according to the shrine maidens, it seems like the head priestess is trying to communicate with the guardian of the mountains."

"I don't know the specifics, but it seems like the situation is very serious," he added with a solemn tone.

Chapter 1107 Special Mission (Part 9): Unexpected Incident

...

The next day, Shin and Leonard met with Old Man Roger just like they had discussed last night. The pair did not want to, but the old man insisted on accompanying them to the Shrine Temple while they were doing their Rite of Returning.

It was at that moment that Shin understood that this old man wanted to monitor them.

They were still foreigners with unclear backgrounds despite Leonard claiming that they were from a family that used to be a part of the city. They also had considerable attainment in their respective disciplines. Even though they were only at the peak of the Core Formation Stage, the old man could tell that they were at least as strong as some of the Ethereal Opening Stage Experts.

That alone was more than enough for the old man to be wary of them, especially with the current events that were happening within the city perimeter.

Old Man Roger did not even bring his own car when he met with the two. And instead insisted to ride with them.

Shin could only shake his head as he could see through the scheme that this old man was planning. He let the old man ride with them, but he could only be in the backseat while Leonard remained in the passenger seat.

Fortunately, they had already considered this to happen and left the tablets on the house earlier. They also made sure that there was nothing within the car that would expose them, so they did not have to worry about it.

Not long after, they arrived at the Shrine Temple.

There was nothing wrong on the surface, but the three later discovered that something was amiss. They turned their heads and swept their gazes at the shrine and discovered that there were no shrine maidens around.

Forget about the ones who were usually greeting everyone that entered the shrine entrance – even the maidens that were supposed to clean the courtyards and marble paths of the shrine were nowhere to be seen.

Then they saw a large number of police cars parked a few distances away from the shrine, right behind the temple.

Something must have happened!

Old Man Roger did not delay any longer and quickly sprinted toward the temple, forgetting about Shin and Leonard.

Swoosh!

The pair stood still on their spots for a moment before exchanging glances and chasing after the old man.

Trouble had come earlier than they had expected!

...

Inside the temple, all of the maidens were gathered. A middle-aged lady was standing in front of them and facing everyone. From how the shrine maidens were looking at her, it was clear her status within the temple.

But at the same time, the maidens were wearing a worried looks on their faces.

Swoosh!

The middle-aged lady was in the middle of calming everyone down when Old Man Roger suddenly entered. He looked around and frowned deeply before heading over.

The middle-aged lady smiled at him and greeted him. "Sir Roger."

Old Man Roger did not bother to greet back and asked straightforwardly. "What happened, High Priestess Emily?"

The middle-aged lady, who was addressed as the high priestess, smiled bitterly before answering honestly. "Something happened at the peak of the mountains and the Head Priestess, along with the maidens accompanying her, disappeared."

The expression on Old Man Roger's face immediately turned dark when he heard that. He then asked in a solemn tone. "How did that happen? What about the Temple Guards?"

The High Priestess hesitated for a moment before sighing. "All-... all of them have been murdered."

Bang!

A loud sound could be heard as the floor where the old man stood suddenly sunk. He looked at the high priestess straight to the eyes and asked once again, "What do you say? How is it possible?" doubting what he just heard.

He calmed himself quickly before asking once again. "What about the Head of the Guards, Johan?"

The high priestess stuttered as she replied. "Templar Johan-... he-... he is found dead alongside the other guards."

Old Man Roger frowned deeply as he could not help but become confused. Johan, the head of the guards, was just drinking with him last night. The guy was relaxing a little to relieve the accumulated stress that he had these last few days.

From what the old man knew, Johan left during the shift last night and he was supposed to go back at dawn during the next shift. If that guy was murdered, then the incident most likely happened during that shift.

Old Man Roger might have been shocked, but he was able to quickly calm himself down due to his rich experience. He recollected his thoughts before asking the high priestess to fill him in the details.

It was only at that moment that Shin and Leonard were able to catch up. The high priestess quickly noticed them and was about to tell them to leave when another person suddenly rushed inside the temple and reached her side.

"Is it true? Johan is murdered alongside the Temple Guards?" Billy, the police officer who was drinking with Old Man Roger last night, also received the reports from his men just recently.

He just woke up and was about to start his day when he received a call from his subordinate. He immediately headed to this place right after he ended the call.

"What about the Head Priestess? Is she safe? Where is she?" he asked once again, unable to wait for the answer of the high priestess.

The existence of the two young men was suddenly forgotten as the high priestess started narrating what happened.

...

Earlier in the dawn, the shrine maidens alongside the temple guards were heading to the mountains alongside the Templar John.

The maidens were bringing the food for the other maidens staying at the peak of the mountain and the head priestess. Meanwhile, the temple guards were going to replace the other guards guarding them for their regular shifts.

But when they arrived, everyone discovered that all of the guards were murdered. Every guard was found dead with their bodies scattered everywhere as if a monstrous beast had slaughtered them.

The head of the temple guards, Templar Johan, quickly lead the guards accompanying him to head to the peak of the mountain while ordering the maidens to head back to the temple.

The maidens were hesitant at first, but after seeing the gruesome sight in front of them, they were unable to move forward and had no choice but to go back.

But they were only halfway down to the mountain when they heard the cries and shouts coming from the peak of the mountain.

The maidens paused their tracks and wanted to climb up once again to see what just happened. But they just turned around when they saw a 'Demon' standing a few distances behind them and staring at everyone with its bloodshot eyes.

The maidens stiffened when they saw the Demon holding the head of Templar Johan. They panicked and started running down the mountain as fast as they could.

Cries of helplessness and agonizes could be heard behind the maidens that were running at the forefront of the group. They knew that the others were being slaughtered one after another.

There were a few fortunate ones that managed to escape and return to the temple, but their faces were either devoid of life or filled with horror.

The high priestess was barely able to understand what happened after listening to them. She then later used some special techniques to calm the surviving maidens down and put them to sleep.

After that, she reported everything to the police forces of the city, which immediately responded. The police quickly sent their people and head to the mountain to investigate.

...

"So, the forces are still there?" asked Old Man Roger, furrowing his brows.

The high priestess nodded her head and said. "Yeah. Nothing seemed to have happened since the police is already starting their investigation. The seal of the mountain, preventing from going it."

"I'll go," said Officer Billy as he was walking out of the temple. The said mountain was in a restricted area right behind the temple.

"I'll join you," said Old Man Roger as he quickly followed.

Officer Billy hesitated for a moment before nodding his head. This old man might be old, but he was still one of the most powerful experts in the city.

Given the current circumstances, everyone needed the help of this retired expert, especially when there was an unknown entity lurking in the mountain.

"Please, Sir Roger! Save the Head Priestess!" said the high priestess in a pleading tone.

The old man paused in his tracks for a moment before nodding his head. He then continued to exit the temple, planning to head to the mountain.

Shin and Leonard, who just overheard everything, did not know what to do. They also wanted to investigate what happened but could not blindly ask the other party if they could join.

Moreover, they also have their own mission that they needed to deal with.

Even though they were suspecting that this case might be somewhat related to their mission, they could not just ask them if they could come along since it would blow up their cover.

They were caught in a dilemma, not knowing what to do.

Chapter 1108 Special Mission (Part 10): Danger!

...

Old Man Roger glanced at Shin and Leonard before saying. "This does not concern you, young lads. You better go back."

Hearing that, Officer Billy paused in his tracks and turned to them. "Old Man Roger, I think it is better to bring them along. We still have to keep an eye on them."

"Who knows, they are somehow related to this," he added while shooting an unfriendly gaze at the two.

The expression on the faces of the two suddenly turned dark when they heard it. Suddenly being accused like that did not feel well, especially when the case was this serious.

Old Man Roger also knitted his brows. He knew that Billy was currently agitated. After all, Templar Johan was his best friend.

Billy was quite sensitive right now, especially when it came to the foreigners in their city.

Old Man Roger smiled bitterly before saying. "Calm down for a moment, Billy. We don't know what exactly happened in the mountain yet."

"Moreover, isn't inappropriate to involve outsiders in this case yet?" he added while glancing at the two.

"Isn't that exactly why we must keep an eye on these two? They are the only outsiders here, so they were one of our main suspects," said Billy in a snarling tone before quickly adding. "Sorry, Old Man Roger, but it is impossible to calm me down currently."

"Not only the Temple Guards are annihilated, but their captain, who is a Templar is also killed in action. Moreover, the Head Priestess and the maidens accompanying them also disappeared!"

He paused for a moment before glaring at the two. "The citizens of the city are aware of how important the Shrine Temple is to us, much less the priestesses, the maidens, and their guards. It is impossible for them to do anything to them. Outsiders are the only ones that we can suspect in this."

Old Man Roger smiled bitterly and shook his head. It was not that he did not suspect the same thing, but he just knew that it would be impossible for these two young lads to be the main suspects.

First of all, these two were at most only at the peak of the Core Formation Stage or in the lower stages of the Grandmaster Realm. Even if they were talented enough to be as strong as a few Ethereal Opening

Stage Experts or peak Grandmaster Realm Mentalists, their strength was still weaker compared to Johan, who was a Templar of their Shrine Temple.

Outsiders might not know about it, but an individual could only be given the title of a Shrine Templar if they were on the Void Manifestation Stage or Rulers Realm, which was far superior to the strength of these two.

Billy could not see this fact since he was currently blinded by grief and rage.

Of course, there was also a possibility that these two had an accomplice with a strength comparable to Templar Johan. But given the description of the surviving maidens, the old man guessed that there was a higher chance that there was another party involved.

Old Man Roger tried to reason with Billy, but the latter was too blinded to listen to him. The old man could only smile bitterly and agree. He looked at the pair of young lads before apologizing. "I am sorry, young lads, to be involved in this manner. But you have to come with us right now."

He then paused for a moment before quickly whispering to them using a sound transmission. "I know that you have your own agenda. What he is saying is not totally unjustifiable either. You two just arrived recently and this happens."

"Of course, this can be a coincidence. But we can't say that you are not involved either since everything is too coincidental."

"If you are not guilty, then everything will be fine. It is not like you are not going to gain in this either since I know that you are looking for something," he added as he followed Billy.

He was thinking that these two might possibly be looking for that so-called 'Demon' the maidens saw.

At the same time, he was also thinking that this incident might be related to the case of the mysterious disappearance of certain individuals. Additionally, there was also a huge battle that occurred just recently, that case might also be related to this.

The more the old man thought about it, the more convinced he became. He had to find out what exactly happened and punish those sinners for the crime that they had committed.

Shin and Leonard exchanged glances with each other before smiling bitterly.

"That old man sure is sharp. He really knows our agenda," whispered Leonard as they walk.

Shin smiled and said. "This is what you call experience."

At the same time, he tapped the communication device attached to his ears while whispering. "Inform the others of what happened. I think they have to make their move sooner than we expected."

...

Not long after, Shin and the others reached the place where the incident happened. Or should he say, the crime scene?

The pair could not help but wear a solemn expression when they saw the scene. It was too gruesome and hideous. It might not be a crime scene but a slaughter place instead.

Shin swept his gaze at the surroundings and saw the scattered limbs and innards everywhere. The ground, the trees, and the bushes were painted with blood.

If not for his and Leonard's strong willpower, they might have been vomiting their breakfast already. Aside from them wearing dark expressions, they seemed to be fine overall.

Old Man Roger, who was keeping an eye on them saw this. He immediately confirmed that these two were not ordinary young lads. To have that kind of tenacity, they must be trained agents or something similar.

The old man took note of that and proceeded to investigate the scene. The more he looked the darker his expression was.

Based on these traces alone, he could guess that what took place here was a one-sided slaughter. There were no traces of any resistance at all – everyone died on a single hit.

When he thought about it, he suspected that the so-called 'Demon' had let the surviving maidens escape purposely.

Old Man Roger clenched his fists tightly as he tried to suppress the rage within him. 'I am going to slaughter them personally!'

Bang!

A little further ahead, an explosion erupted.

Raising his head, the old man saw Billy punching the nearby trees and destroying them in the process. Not far from him, a head was currently placed on the ground. From the looked of it, it must be Templar Johan.

Old Man Roger frowned deeply before disappearing from his current spot. It only took an instant for him to appear behind Billy. He put his hand on the shoulder of the latter, suppressing the guy and preventing him from messing the scene further.

...

Shin and Leonard were observing the scene and came up with the same conclusion as the old man. Not long after, they heard John's voice from the communication device.

"This looks familiar."

John, who was watching everything through the special lenses that Shin was wearing, was muttering to himself while the two paused what they were doing.

"What do you mean?" whispered Shin with a furrowed brow.

"Wait. Give me a second," said John before turning to another computer beside him and quickly tapping its keyboard rapidly.

Not long after, he could not help but cursed out loud. "F*ck! F*ck!"

Shin raised his brows as he listened to the curses that were coming out of John's mouth. When he could no longer hold himself back, he quickly asked. "Hey! Stop cursing for a moment and tell us what it is."

It was at that moment that John calm himself down. "Shin, listen carefully. You have to get out of that place as soon as possible. The Butcher might be there!"

"Butcher what? What are you talking about? Explain to us what is happening," said Shin as his frown grew deeper.

John took a few deep breaths to calm himself further before sending a file through the computer. Immediately after that, Shin and Leonard saw a series of images and information flashing through their vision.

The special contact lenses that the two were wearing were another product that the military had produced. It is operating similarly to what Shin and the others were experiencing inside the game, where certain files would appear in front of their eyes without the others knowing.

Shin and Leonard scanned through everything wearing a deep frown.

At the same time, John was explaining. "The scene over there is very similar to the previous case that the military is currently investigating."

"It is first in the hands of the police forces of the Eastern Sea Region. And it is the special unit of the Metropolitan Police Force no less."

"They are chasing after a high-profile criminal who infiltrated the country and seemed to be hiding in the region. But later, the special unit is slaughtered in the same way as what you are seeing over there."

"Understanding the seriousness of the situation, the police forces collaborated with the military forces stationed in the Eastern Sea Region. But that is still not enough, and they ask for more help from Commander Nathan."

"They later confirmed that the one who is responsible for it is Butcher, a high-profile criminal, and a powerful expert."

While he is saying that another series of information appeared in the eyes of the two alongside a photo of a scary-looking man.

John continued. "From the database, Butcher is in the Domain Realm. He is still a little weaker compared to top experts like Commander Nathan, but he is still a powerful Domain Realm Expert nevertheless."

"Commander Nathan is looking for the trances of the Butcher everywhere these last few days."

"F*ck! You will be in deep trouble if the Butcher is really in there. Our end will be the same as those people that he has slaughtered!" John's voice was full of urgency as he urged the two to run away as soon as possible and as fast as they could.

Shin signaled Leonard to prepare to run as he himself was also taking a few steps back. He then whispered. "So, you are telling me that this Butcher guy is the 'Demon' that the maidens have seen earlier."

"Hundred percent positive!" confirmed John while adding. "I've already contacted Commander Nathan. He will arrive there in five minutes tops!"

He then paused for a moment before quickly adding. "Actually, Butcher is only one of your problems. There is another high-profile criminal working with that guy."

Then another set of information was sent to Shin and Leonard alongside an anonymous photo.

"Coffin Maker?" muttered Shin as he saw the name on the very top of the information.

John continued. "Coffin Maker is also one of the criminals that Commander Nathan is currently chasing. Based on the updated data that the military has, the guy is also in the Domain Realm. But he is much weaker compared to the Butcher, but he is by no means a weakling either."

"What makes this guy troublesome is his disguising techniques! He can take on every form or disguise which makes it impossible to identify his real appearance."

"He can even copy the appearance of his victims as well as their attitude, manner of speech, and everything else through special means. That guy is one of the most troublesome criminals that anyone can face."

"If there is anyone who finds acting suspicious, then he is most likely the Coffin Maker! If he is also in there, then you are in an even more dangerous situation!" added John as he became desperate.

Shin quickly swept his eyes in the surroundings when he heard that. He observed the police officers investigating the scene with sharp eyes, cautiously looking at them.

He was about to run with Leonard when a sudden thought flashed through his mind. He snapped toward the direction where Old Man Roger and Officer Billy were.

His pupils suddenly contracted as he shouted. "Old Man Roger, watch out!"

Chapter 1109 Coffin Maker

...

Earlier, inside the Shrine Temple, Shin saw that Officer Billy rushed inside and quickly asked about the situation.

But what was strange about it was the question that he had asked first when he arrived. The first thing that he mentioned was whether it was true that the leader of the temple guards, Templar Johan, died or not.

In normal circumstances, it shouldn't be suspicious, especially when Officer Billy was best of friends with Templar Johan. Old Man Roger even said this.

But in this city, where everyone had the same religion and belief, their first priority would most likely be the Head Priestess.

In this incident, the temple guards were slaughtered while the Head Priestess was mission alongside some of the shrine maidens. Between the two, the latter should worry the citizens of the city more than the former case.

Old Man Roger had already proven this with his actions. There was no need to ask for the other priestess since she first ask the old man to prioritize saving the Head Priestess.

Aside from this, there were also a couple of instances where Officer Billy had overreacted. One of them was when they were at the foot of the mountain. He was insisting that Shin and Leonard had to come with them even though Old Man Roger was against the idea.

It was as if Billy wanted Shin and Leonard to be at the mountain no matter what.

When Shin thought about it, he could not help but look in the direction where Old Man Roger and Officer Billy was located. He saw the old man trying to calm the latter down as the guy went on a rampage.

"Old Man Roger, watch out!"

With his loud call, the old man could not help but slightly frowned his brows. He was about to turn to Shin when his rich experienced told him that there was something amiss. Especially when he heard the urgency of those words.

He instantly became vigilant and spread out his senses, feeling his surroundings and taking a combat-ready position.

It was at that moment that he sensed an intense bloodlust coming from an unexpected direction.

He quickly moved and swiftly hopped back but he was still a little late.

Swoosh!

A burning sensation quickly assaulted his waist. Then he felt his blood flowing out from the horizontal cut on it.

He tensed the muscles on his waist, making them contract strongly. It closed the wound temporarily and prevented the blood from continuously flowing out from it. He also held his waist with his left arm while looking at the person who just assaulted him with mixed emotions.

Confusion, grief, anger, and disbelief filled his eyes while looking at Officer Billy who was currently holding a surgical knife in his hand.

The officer was looking dangerously at Old Man Roger as a crimson glint appeared in his eyes. His appearance was still the familiar look that the old man remembered, but his current attitude and aura were completely different.

"Who-... who are you?" asked Old Man Roger with a hoarse tone.

It was at this moment that when the old man realized that this 'Officer Billy' was not the one he was familiar with.

Officer Billy did not immediately respond and just clicked his tongue. He then turned to Shin and Leonard before saying. "I knew that you two are strange from the start."

"Our people are so useless that they have let their guards down the moment they realized that one of you is from this city."

"But unfortunately for you, your disguises will not work on me. You can fool the others, but you can't fool my eyes."

"Tsk! But it is a pity that my cover is immediately blown just because of you," he added with a hint of frustration.

He had spent quite a lot of time just to take on his current disguise. He just perfected it when these two young men suddenly appeared out of nowhere, making him feel a little uncomfortable.

He was not what it was, but he had a feeling that he would immediately get exposed if these two roamed around the city freely.

His original plan was to let Old Man Roger keep an eye on them while he was making preparations for the next step of the plan of organization.

He did not know why Butcher suddenly lost his mind and started slaughtering everyone on the mountain, making him feel terrible. They had spent a lot of time and resources on this plan, but the knucklehead suddenly went crazy when they were at the most crucial and waste all their effort.

He could only curse silently and decided to clean up the mess. He was originally planning to do this silently and cut all of the loopholes.

He was planning to kill everyone here, including the shrine maidens, to get rid of the witnesses. He was just waiting for Old Man Roger to let his guard down so he could finish the old man off as soon as possible.

His martial arts attainment might be a realm higher than Old Man Roger. But that did not mean that he could get rid of the latter quickly.

His specialty was infiltration and deception. His way of eliminating the targets was also in the form of assassination. This made him a little weak when it came to frontal confrontation. If it came to a close combat quarter, then might be a match of this old man, who was always been at the peak of the Void Manifestation Stage.

In this current situation, the one that he blamed was Shin, who was able to see through him in the final moments. If not for that kid, then he most likely able to get rid of the old man without spending much effort.

Clink! Clink!

Clack!

While he was lost in his thoughts, a series of guns being raised and loaded could be heard. And when he took away his eyes from Shin and Leonard, he saw that all of the officers on the scene were currently pointing their guns at him while keeping a considerable distance.

He clicked his tongue once again as he did not find his situation a little troublesome. Regardless, he looked at everyone with an indifferent gaze aside from Old Man Roger.

He squinted his eyes and warned sharply. "Don't make any foolish move, old man. All of this trash will lose their pitiful lives."

The expression on Old Man Roger's face suddenly turned dark when he heard that. He was actually preparing a big move just now to create a window for everyone to escape. He was confident that he would be able to stand against this guy for at least a few moments even though his real was a realm lower and he was currently injured.

But it would be a different case if he had to protect the others when the fight broke out. Everyone would without a doubt die if ever they caught in the crossfire.

While Old Man Roger was in a dilemma, Billy turned to Shin and Leonard and said. "It is the same for the two of you. I know that you are looking for the opportunity to run. If you take another step back, then I will kill these guys for every step that you will take."

The expression on their faces immediately turned ugly when he heard that. Shin was now slightly regretting that they did not run earlier. Though, he was not sure if they would be able to get that far that way since Old Man Roger would seriously get injured if he did not save him just now.

He did not know who exactly these two were, but he was sure that they did not come here just for the Rite of Returning bullsh*t. He was sure that they were either sent by the military or the Magic Ace Academy.

Those two forces might have thought this through. They sent a pair of Core Formation Stage geniuses to act as returning citizens as cover, fooling them to let their guards down.

To people like him, who was in the Domain Realm, these two were not worth it in his eyes. They could be easily overlooked due to their strengths. If they were a little stronger than this then they would arouse the suspicions of the organization people, especially with the recent incident.

The organization did not easily capture those elite students. They had paid a huge price just to trap them in a single place. The organization had sacrificed a lot of Ethereal Opening Stage Experts and Grandmaster Realm Mentalists.

Not only that, but the other group of elite students also even managed to break through their encirclement and escaped. Moreover, they killed quite a number of Void Manifestation Stage Martial Artists and Rulers Realm Mentalists during the process.

This was the reason why Officer Billy, or rather Coffin Maker, was looking at Shin and Leonard warily. He was still not sure whether these two brought a strong powerhouse with them. This was the reason why he was not making any hasty moves against them earlier.

But since they had presented themselves on their doorsteps, he would not help them escape easily.

He could ask for some explanation with Butcher later, right now. He was going to capture these two and bring them to the base for interrogation.

But before all of that, he first had to take care of Old Man Roger, who was still unwilling to back down and plot against him.

"It looks like you are too stubborn, old man," said Coffin Maker as he played his surgical knife. Then the expression on his face suddenly turned cold as he added. "I guess, I should take care of the trash first."

Old Man Roger suddenly got a bad premonition. "No!"

Unfortunately, his shout could not do anything to stop Coffin Maker.

Right after his shout reverberated in the whole mountain, the police officers that were pointing their guns at Coffin Maker felt that their bodies suddenly turned stiff.

Then blood started gashing out from their throats before falling one after another.

Chapter 1110 Escape

...

"B*st*rd!"

Old Man Roger immediately became enraged when he saw the police inspectors and their team started falling after another.

As a Void Manifestation Expert himself, he could feel the life forces of those people slipping out of their bodies. It was obvious that they were going to die in just a few seconds.

Bang!

The old man quickly kicked the ground and launched himself forward, not caring about his safety anymore. He knew that the person in front of him was a realm higher than him, but it did not mean that he would be standing still and waiting for his death.

He was still an expert who was a step away from that realm!

Swoosh!

He clenched his fists as he accumulated large amounts of energy on them. The Natural Force that he had nurtured since he stepped into Ethereal Opening Stage but remained dormant up until now was awakened once again.

At the same time, more energy comes out from his core and spread to different parts of his body. Not long after, a golden armor covered his body from head to toe and donned his entire being.

This was a signature technique of Void Manifestation Experts, the upgraded version of Qi Reinforcement Skill – the Qi Armor.

But it did not in there. More and more Natural Force gathered on the arms of the old man before materializing into a pair of battle gauntlets that was filled with glowing runes.

Yet another version of Qi Reinforcement Skill – the Qi Armament.

Ha!

Old Man Roger stomped on the ground and threw a powerful punch forward, accompanied by a strong gust of wind.

Boom!

An explosion quickly erupted as the punch created a shockwave that spread forward. Everything that was on its path was quickly obliterated, turning the dense woods of the mountain into a cleared area.

Swoosh!

"That was not bad for an old man," said Coffin Maker as he soundlessly appeared behind Old Man Roger. He then smiled sinisterly before saying. "Unfortunately, that is still not enough."

After that, the surgical knife that he was holding suddenly released a dangerous glow before he swung it forward.

Swoosh!

The old man quickly spun around and met the surgical knife with his battle gauntlet. He threw yet another punch that was no weaker than the previous one.

Bang!

The impact quickly sent Old Man Roger skidding back while Coffin Maker took a couple of steps back. This clearly showed the difference in their strength. But despite being an advantage, the latter could not help but wear a gloomy look as could feel a little discomfort from that collision.

In the end, he was still weak when it came to frontal confrontation. He had to end this as soon as possible to prevent accidents from happening.

Old Man Roger seemed to be able to realize this too, so he quickly charged forward and initiated a close combat quarter. As a retired officer, he was familiar with hand-to-hand combat which was his advantage in this current situation.

Bang! Bang!

The two quickly engaged in an intense melee. Naturally, the old man had the more active role while Coffin Maker was constantly avoiding the frontal confrontation.

...

At the same time, right when Old Man Roger decided to attack, Shin quickly shouted to Leonard. "Now, run!"

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two of them quickly hopped back and turned around. They ran away at full speed without any hesitation.

They were clear about their current situation. This was not a drama, where they had to insist on staying here due to a sense of comradeship or something.

They would not act foolishly and stay, hoping to help the old man.

They were clear of the big difference between their strength and their opponent. With their current ability, they would only be a hindrance to the old man if they continued to stay there.

Even though it was rare to watch such a battle between experts with high martial art attainments, they knew that this was not the right time for it.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two ran down the mountain while executing their fastest movement technique. The gust of wind that was accompanying them was even blowing the nearby tree branches and bushes along their path.

As they were running away, Shin's Spiritual Sense suddenly sensed a huge group of people chasing after them.

"Tsk! There are people on our tail. And they are quite fast," said Shin, informing Leonard.

And when he realized that they could not outrun their pursuers, Shin decided to fight. "We are going to fight as we run."

"Brother John, how long do we have left?" he asked while taking out the pair of katana and getting ready for the fight.

At the same time, John quickly answered. "I think, three more minutes-... if the commander did not get delayed."

Shin frowned deeply when he heard that and could not help but ask. "What do you mean by that?"

John was continuously tapping the keyboard in front of him without taking his eyes away from the screen in front of him. He then took a glance at the other screen beside him, where there seemed to be a radar map being shown.

"There is a strong energy fluctuation on the path that Commander Nathan is taking. I think Someone is planning to obstruct his arrival," said John with a troubled expression.

Hearing that, Shin could only curse silently before a decisive look appeared on his face. "Then let's do both plan A and B together."

"Eh!?"

Both Leonard and John were confused by his words, and couldn't understand what Shin had said.

Then he quickly explained. "We are going to engage in a battle with those guys while retreating as best as we can. If we manage to escape before that guy, Coffin Maker, manages to catch up to us, then it will be better."

"But if we get captured before Uncle can arrive, then we will proceed with the original plan. We will let ourselves be dragged away by those guys and see if we can find their base."

"If we manage to find their main location and confirm the safety of the elite students, then the military can proceed with the plan."

"Contact Senior Brother and the others to start moving as soon as possible. I think these guys are plotting something and are already at the most critical stages. They also seem to be running away as soon as everything is over, which is why they decided to reveal themselves right now."

He paused for a moment and slightly turned his head, looking over his shoulder. Behind them, he could see the silhouettes of their fast-approaching pursuers.

After that, nodded to Leonard, who quickly went in another direction, before saying. "Brother John, pin our coordinates all the time, especially if the signal disappeared - note down our final location. Maybe that would be the entrance of their base or something."

"I'll make sure to let the others know our location as soon as I find the opportunity. I hope the special gadgets that you give us will be helpful when that time comes," he added before abruptly stopping and quickly turning around.

While turning, he unsheathed the white katana as it released a blazing mental energy while being swung.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Solar Cleaver'

Swoosh!

A circular blazing energy was formed and spread outward, cutting through everything on its path.

Urgh!

Augh!

Clang! Clang!

Bang!

A series of painful groans immediately followed alongside the clashing sounds of metals.

The unfortunate ones were either cleaved in halves as they did not expect Shin's unexpected move while the guys with the fastest reaction speed managed to save their lives in the final moments.

This was yet another sword technique that was inspired by his skills within the game. After the previous incident at the academy where he fought against the evolution puppet, Shin was able to control this innate fire attribute of his Mental Energy, which also gave him more freedom at incorporating his in-game skills into the real world.

Shin raised the katana over his shoulder after executing that move. He quickly swept his gaze at the surroundings and memorized the positions of his opponents inside his head kicking the ground.

Bang!

His figure suddenly disappeared before flashing across the mountain forest as he took down his opponents one after another.

He had already figured out the strength of these guys. They were at the early phase of the Ethereal Opening Stage, which was not that far from his current Mentalism Attainment. His strength was slightly stronger than then, other than the ones who seemed to be their leaders.

"Don't engage! He is too strong for us to handle. Just delay their escape until the reinforcements arrive," shouted one from the distance as he watched his subordinates fall one by one.

Shin quickly spotted him and locked his gaze. "That guy should be in command."

Then his figure disappeared once again. The guy who just shouted quickly felt that he was being locked down, so he quickly retreated. He could sense the fast-approaching presence of Shin.

Swoosh!

He just took a couple of steps back when Shin finally arrived in front of him while swinging the katana at the same time.

The blade of the katana was almost upon him when the guy suddenly smiled sinisterly. "Caught you!"

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

A series of rushing sounds quickly followed when he said those words. Another group of people suddenly appeared and jumped out from the surrounding bushes, launching an attack at Shin in a coordinated fashion.

The smile on the leader's face suddenly turned stiff when he realized that the figure standing in front of him was gradually fading.

"An afterimage?"

The leader was still thinking about what just happened when he noticed that Shin was already ducking forward. And unknowingly, his katana had already been sheathed back once again.

Shin assumed a sword-drawing stance while his mental energy was gathering on the sheathed katana.

He was preparing to use another sword-drawing technique. But instead of the inspired sword movement from the game, this one was among the techniques that his body had remembered after he found out the real essence of the Jade Kirin Scripture.

It was the combination of the two sword movements, the 'Flash Crecent' and 'Flash Horizon'.

Clink!

When his thumb pushed the guard of the katana and the clinking sound reverberated, a sudden flash blinded everyone for a moment, making them slow down their movements momentarily.

Then they felt a series of crescent sword gales surrounding Shin and flew in every direction, cutting everything in their path.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Flash Firmament'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The leader of the group stared blankly in the air as the gusts of wind passed through his body as well as his subordinates.

Then their bodies were diced into small pieces before being blown away by the remaining gust of wind that accompanied Shin's previous move.

Hu~!

Shin took a deep breath as he suppressed the discomfort within his body after preparing that technique. He frowned slightly as he sheathed the katana once again.

His face was a little pale when he resumed his run.

"Performing an advanced movement of the Jade Kirin Scripture can still burden my body. I guess I have to undergo conditioning training for the quick-draw style after everything is over," he muttered to himself while running.

He then glanced in the direction where Leonard headed earlier. "I hope Leo is still fine."