

Destiny 1161

Chapter 1161 Undercurrents

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Nathan was standing in front of a huge glass capsule where the body of the Domain Realm Artificial Mutant was currently contained. And besides it was two more mutants that were brought here in the research laboratory of the military forces under the Springfield Family – one of them was the zombified body of Alexander Leon.

Behind him was a group of researchers working under the military force. They were working busily at gathering the data that they could get from the three mutants. And further behind them was another group of researchers assigned to study the failed mutated subjects that were taken to the site.

There was also the severed body of Ezikiel that David had brought with him. There was also a dedicated group of researchers to study it.

Among the bodies that were brought here, the Artificial Mutants made from the body of the Professor, the zombified body of Alexander Leon, and the body of Ezikiel that managed to retain his consciousness despite using the serum enhancer, were the most important ones.

One was an enhanced and reinforced body that was comparable to Domain Realm Experts, one was a body made from the corpse of the dead and one was able to retain his sanity despite using such an evil and mind-consuming serum.

Looking at the three Artificial Mutants, Nathan could not help but feel somewhat worried. The progress of the Black Serpent Mafia had already reached this point and there was also the Unforgiven Ones from the Hextech Laboratory – these two organizations would surely break the balance once their respective super soldiers had reached their perfected state.

A few moments later, one of Nathan's most trusted aides approached him and saluted.

Nathan slightly nodded his head and asked. "How is it? Have you investigated the identity of this guy?"

Lieutenant Rage nodded his head and replied while keeping his head low. "Yes, Commander. Based on the information that we have and the according to Young Master Shin has told us, this guy seems to be the person called the 'Professor' within the Black Serpent Mafia."

"From the intel that we have gathered, he is the person who leads most of the projects of the organization. The Artificial Mutants are mainly researched by him. It is his Mutant Project, which is inspired by the hidden intentions of the Project Genius."

Nathan nodded his head and said. "So, he is our guy. But how come he turn like this? He has become a victim of his own project."

"We have suspected that it is because he is put in a corner, where he doesn't have a choice but to take a gamble," commented Lieutenant Rage.

But Nathan quickly rejected the idea. "It can't be. Butcher and Coffin Maker are still present at that time. I can still feel their presence until this guy releases that world-shaking roar. Their only presence disappears after that."

He paused for a moment and thought about it before continuing. "It is highly likely that something happens during that time. It may even be an internal strife."

"The question is why do they have to turn their head researcher into something like this? A failed subject," he paused for another time as a sudden thought flashed through his mind. "Unless they already find someone better to take over his position."

When he thought about that, the expression on his face suddenly turned grim as he could tell what this signified. It seemed like their problem was slowly growing larger.

Aside from this, he also had to worry about the disappearance of Butcher and Coffin Maker. Butcher would not be a problem since that guy sucked on espionage given his personality. But when it came to Coffin Maker, it was a whole different matter.

'It looks like we have been infiltrated once again,' thought as he recalled the abilities that Coffin Maker had. He turned to his lieutenant and instructed. "List down all the students that take part in the last mission as well as our soldiers. Then monitor all of them and take note of any suspicious moments."

"If you find something out of place, report it to me directly and no one else," he added, emphasizing the importance of this task.

The lieutenant was taken aback and could not help but ask. "All of them, Sir?"

He was not asking about it because he doubt his hearing or questioning Nathan's orders. He felt that he needed to ask about it for another time since there would be a lot of people on the list that they had to keep their eyes on.

Nathan gave the lieutenant a sidelong glance, which gave the latter a shiver that ran through his spine. He did not like to repeat himself, but let it pass this time. "Yeah, all of them."

Lieutenant Rage nodded his head before saluting Nathan and retreated. But before he could step out of the room, his commander suddenly added. "Assign the task to Phantom Dragon Unit."

"Just tell them my words and they will know how to proceed," added Nathan before focusing on the Artificial Mutants in front of him.

On the other hand, Lieutenant Rage felt that his entire body trembled when heard that the task would be assigned to the Phantom Dragon Unit. That unit was one of the hidden cards that their forces had, so for Nathan using them right now signified the importance of this task.

"I understand, Sir," replied the lieutenant as he saluted once again.

Nathan squinted his eyes as he stared at the mutated body of the Professor. His eyes were looking at what was in front of him, but his mind was thinking about something else. 'It has been a while since I heard from that d*mn couple. I wonder what happens to their search.'

'Are they related to the sudden change of plans of the Black Serpent Mafia?' he added to his thoughts before shaking his head. 'Let's forget about that now and trust them with it. I am sure that the two of them will be fine given their unreasonable strengths.'

In the meantime, somewhere in the sea, there was a ship that was heading toward the Sun-Moon Continent. Based on the size and how heavily armed this particular ship was, it was clear that it was owned by a powerful force or organization.

Not long after, the huge mass of land could be seen from the distance.

Inside one of the luxurious rooms on the ship, Shiella was currently relaxing on her bed. It was one of the rare occasions when she could relax her mind and take a rest.

It had been a while since she had a time like this, so she had to take advantage of it as best as she could.

She was in the middle of her relaxation when Anna, her personal assistant, and bodyguard, suddenly knocked on the door before entering.

Shiella still had her eyes closed but she could sense who it was. She slightly knitted her brows as she asked. "What is it this time, Auntie?"

Anna smiled bitterly before answering. "We are about to arrive at the Sun-Moon Continent, young miss."

Shiella raised her brow before slowly opening her eyes. "Already? I guess that is all for me."

She quickly got up and head over to the bath for a quick shower. "Let the other delegates that we are going to head straight to the Sun-Moon House. We are not to waste our time since I still have other matters that I need to attend to."

Anna hesitated for a moment before finally voicing her concerns. "Young Miss, please don't be rash at everything. This project is of utmost importance to your family."

Shiella paused her steps and turned to Anna before smiling. "Don't worry, Auntie. Since when I am that kind of person? I never act rash in any deals that I have, much less when it comes to this kind of thing?"

"I just want to deal with this as soon as possible since I still have a score to settle with the Lufus Weapon Arms Group," she added a sudden chill flashed in her eyes.

Anna nodded with a bitter smile since she could understand her young miss. Shiella could be provoked when it concerned other things. But her family was off-limits, particularly her little brothers. And since the Lufus Family dared to touch her brothers, she would make sure that they had to pay the price.

"Just remember that this is not our territory, young miss. Accidents can happen here," warned Anna.

Shiella smirked when she heard that and said. "What can they do once I secure the deal with the Sun-Moon House? The moment the House of the President agrees to our deal, then those from the Lufus Family will not dare to act rashly if they don't want to be eradicated."

"Moreover, the Cilvana Family is also here. We are not alone, so there is not much to worry about," she added with full confidence.

Anna nodded once again before suddenly remembering something. "Oh! What about the other task that Sir Nathan has entrusted to us?"

Shiella raised her brows in confusion before remembering what Anna was trying to say. "Oh! That girl? You can leave that to the unit that Uncle has assigned. Since he sent that special unit, then this person must be someone important."

"Make sure that you will be able to sneak her out from here," she added before proceeding to the bath.

Anna hesitated for a moment as she was trying to say something more. But after a few moments, she shook her head and rejected the idea. 'Forget it. She will learn about it later anyway. Let's leave the matter for now and let the young miss focus on her tasks.'

After that, she bowed at Shiella's retreating figure before standing at the corner of the room while contacting the other delegates, informing them to start preparing.

Chapter 1162 Game Servers Re-Opens

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Wednesday was the day when the servers of the game were about to re-open.

Shin and the others spent their entire day in regular classes. Professor Kyrie was already free from the tasks that were given to her by the academy, so she quickly resumed her classes as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately for her, most of her students were currently in the middle of doing their missions, so she could not discuss the advanced lesson since she had to wait for the entire class. What she could only do right now was to have a recap of all the lessons that she had already discussed.

In the afternoon, the class could only spend their time doing the obstacle course that Old Man Lin had left. The entire course was still as difficult as ever, but it was not as unreasonable when compared to the first time they went through it.

The powerful and ever-growing mechanical puppets and clay golems were not present, but they were replaced by another set of obstacles that blocked the advances of the students.

It was still hard to go through it, but it was still much easier than it used to be. Though, none of them still managed to finish the number of laps that were assigned to them. Not even Shin and his group finished three laps due to being too exhausted.

That was when the class understood that this obstacle course was not as simple as it looked. Even without Old Man Lin overseeing the situation, the students still failed to go through it smoothly.

At night, Shin went back to his room, lying inside his gaming cabin. The servers were about to re-open, so he was waiting for it so that he could quickly log in as soon as possible.

There were a lot of things that he had to deal with before he tried tackling the test for the qualification of being able to head over the Awakened Continent along with the rest of the Empyrean Talons.

He closed his eyes and relaxed his mind, waiting patiently. Not long after, the long-awaited notification sound finally rang in his eyes. And when heard that, he quickly adjusted his position before muttering.

"Link Start!"

Swoosh!

Ding!

[Welcome back, Player Sickarius!]

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A flash of light descended from the sky and landed at the center of the Frozen City.

When Shin opened his eyes, he was immediately greeted by the familiar sight that they had left behind. It was still the same ruined city, which reminded him of the battle that took place in this city.

Shin chuckled slightly when he remembered what happened before opening his friend list to check on the others. He then immediately discovered that Arthur, Leonard, and the rest of the Empyrean Talons were already online.

Each of them seemed to be doing their respective business, so he did not contact them to avoid bothering the group.

For now, he had to focus on his own business.

Ding

He was about to make his move when a system notification disturbed his thoughts.

System: The Frozen City is about to undergo its reconstruction in ten minutes, Player Sickarius is instructed to vacant the area as soon as possible.

He nodded his head and activated his teleportation scroll when another system notification arrived.

Ding

Regional System Announcement: Attention to all players in the Saint Heaven Kingdom, Twin Towers Kingdom, Ascension Empire, and Abysmal Archipelago!

Frozen Kingdom is about to open its borders within a span of a month! Make preparations to explore this brand-new land!

Regional System Announcement: Players of Saint Heaven Kingdom, the high-level monsters at the borders of the kingdom are getting agitated due to the melting of the Divine Wall of Sealing!

They are creating a monster horde that will invade the borders of the kingdom!

Please pick up your weapons and defend the kingdom!

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Ding

System Notification Update: Congratulations on clearing the series of quests for the Sky Deceiving Valley!

As the main contributor to these quests, Player Sickarius is now in control of the villages within the region. All the surviving villagers have decided to become your subjects and the chiefs of the said villages are now considered as your retainers.

You have a whole month to organize everything and lead them as their lordship.

System: Congratulations! Due to you, resolving the issue regarding the Dragon Whispers, the Royal Family of the Saint Heaven Kingdom is awarding you the noble title of Duke!

System: All your contribution points are revoked in exchange for the title.

Ding

System: Regional influence is detected!

System: Sky Deceiving Valley is now registered as your dukedom!

Ding

System: Congratulations on being the first player to reach the noble rank of Duke! Your efforts will be handsomely rewarded!

System: You have received 20 Legacy Points!

System: Congratulations on being the first player to declare a regional land as your property! You have received the special title – Lord.

Title: Lord

Effects:

1. Passively increase all your stats by 30% when you are in your territory.
2. Passively increase all your stats by 50% when you are inside your castle.
3. Negative status effects decrease greatly whenever you are in your territory.
4. Charisma increased by 20 points; Fame increased by 100 points.

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System: Being a neutral land, your taxes are greatly lowered.

Ding

System: Regional relation is detected!

System: Frozen Kingdom declares you as their ally!

System: The influence of your Dukedom greatly increased!

Ding

System: A month of preparation time is given to you. If you have not chosen a name for your dukedom until then, your land will be registered with its default name.

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The series of notifications bombarded Shin's ears giving him a headache. And when he went through everything, that headache continued to increase as he was suddenly lost on what to do.

Fortunately, he was given an entire month of in-game time to deal with everything.

He also had prepared everything and even drew up a plan about it. The only problem was Shiella. She still hadn't gone online, so he had to delay most of his plans for the time being. But with all of this, he now had the upper hand when they would be negotiating with each other.

For now, he had to leave everything to the village chiefs.

"A month, huh? I should have enough time for it," he muttered as he thought about his plans. "Let's head over to the place that Arthur had indicated and collect the Meteorites so that I can finally promote my main weapon to its next stage."

"After that, I will try completing my class promotion quest before heading to the Awakened Continent with the others."

He nodded his head before crushing the teleportation scroll in his hands.

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Shin was sitting inside his office in the Mayor's Residence of Calderock Town. He had been away for quite some time already, so he had to check on the progress of the town before going for another adventure.

He had to polish the plans for this city before proceeding.

Ribbit was currently standing beside him reporting everything. All the work had been left this particular NPC, and Shin felt a little bad about it. And after seeing how competent this retainer was, he had to reward the guy handsomely.

Shin browsed through everything and found that the income of the town was really not as good as it was previously. And the main reason was the fact that most of the players were already at high levels.

The hunting grounds and training spots around the town could no longer keep up with their needs. They were now moving on the higher-level maps to hunt and train.

If not for the good mana density of the town, then the players would no longer stay in this place. Staying in the inns within the town was still better than most of the NPC cities and they were much cheaper, so there were still quite a lot of players who chose to stay here.

There was also the Battle Arena, which was one of the signature places of the town. Given the high mana density within the city, training in the Battle Arena gave the players a huge boost, which made them grow faster.

On top of that, it was also much cheaper compared to the Divine Arena of the huge cities. The only downside to this was the limited number of opponents. But since most of the players, who were visiting

the Battle Arena were mostly in groups that trained together, so there was not much of an issue when it came to it.

On top of this, the branch of the Hand of Midas Trading Firm right beside the Battle Arena was also attracting players, which made the businesses of the two places to be in great boon.

Shin let Ribbit give a run-through of everything before giving out some instructions that the latter quickly acknowledged.

After that, Shin went silent for a moment as he remembered the quest that he got from Ribbit. He turned to the latter and spoke. "Ribbit, we are going to relocate the town as you have suggested and promote it into a city during the process."

"But instead of promoting it straight to Intermediate City, we will keep it at Basic City," he added, which made Ribbit react.

But before Ribbit could even voice out his thoughts, Shin quickly added. "Don't worry, we are not doing it because I find your plans unfavorable. Instead, we are doing it to save more funds."

He then took out an emblem that he got from the system earlier and showed it to Ribbit.

Ribbit, as an experienced merchant previously, quickly recognized what that emblem stood for. He even stuttered as he tried to talk. "M-my L-Lord... That is a Duke Emblem. Does the Lord have become a Duke?"

Ribbit was in complete shock when he saw the emblem, which made Shin smile. He then nodded his head and continued. "Not only that but I am also rewarded with a land that will be my dukedom from now on."

"I am planning to build another city in that place, so I will need a lot of funds for it," he paused for a moment and took out a blueprint that he had prepared before giving it to Ribbit. "This is the design of the city, study it well and tell me your thoughts when I get back from my trip."

"This is of utmost importance since we will be negotiating with the Hand of Midas Trading Firm for cooperation. But I don't want to be at the losing end this time, so we have to plan it well."

"The place is also close to a shore, which we can also develop as a port. I am planning to connect it to the city so that we will not only monopolize all of the resources in the surrounding area but also have access to the sea."

"Do you understand what I mean?" he asked.

Ribbit fell into deep thought as he scanned through the blueprint and listened to the plans of his lord. He then nodded his head as he muttered. "A city on top of a mountain, which is not only good as a strategic location but also has a great potential to be a tourist destination due to its breathtaking view."

"And if we connect it with a harbor or a port, then we can also accommodate the other lands from the opposite side of the sea. It can also invite different kinds of adventurers."

The more he thought about it, the more excited Ribbit became. He then turned to Shin and said. "This is great, my lord! With this, our city can have infinite potential, especially when we are near the borders of another kingdom!"

Shin smiled and nodded his head. "Since you like it, please give me a more detailed plan when I get back. We will proceed with this as soon as I come back from my current task."

"Absolutely, my lord! I will make sure to draw a perfect plan for this!" replied Ribbit before taking everything from the table and heading toward his office. His actions clearly showed how impatient he was to draw up a plan for this project.

Shin shook his head and smiled bitterly before finally opening another panel that showed all the rewards that he got from the previous quest that he recently cleared.

"Let's see what we got here."

Chapter 1163 Heading To Another Adventure

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Shin pursed his lips when he skimmed through the list of rewards that he got from the series of quests that they had cleared while clearing the Empire Quest of Arthur.

It was not because the rewards were not amazing. It was just these rewards were no longer appealing to his eyes.

After the recent big update, the equipment rewards that he got from the quests were not that appealing to him because his current ones had more potential than these new ones. Even though the stats and level of the latter were better, Shin still believe that his Black Mithril Set would be greater once he upgraded them to the next rank.

From the information that he had, items and equipment with the rank of Obsidian and higher had to be crafted.

Monsters would no longer drop any items and equipment aside from materials that needed to be harvested from their bodies. This included the bosses of various ranks. Though, world bosses would surely be guarding a chest that contained various items and materials.

Thinking about these, Shin leaned more favorably toward the crafted items and equipment. After all, he could get a more tailored equipment set that perfectly matched his playing style.

With this, Shin liked the rare and high-quality materials that he got from the quests. As for the high-level equipment and weapons? He would be selling them to Hand of Midas instead. It might be true that crafted ones were better, but the mainstream players would surely not refuse these high-leveled, - quality equipment.

Aside from the materials, Shin also liked the rest of the rewards like the Legacy and Skill Points that he got. There were also the few Skill Books that he received along with them.

Though, he was not that excited about getting them either.

It was because of the current M.E.T.A (Most Effective Tactics Available) that the game currently had. With the appearance of the special battle states, these skills books would not have the same impact as before.

Just like Shin had thought before, the skills of the players would only be a base or a model for the players to execute high and advanced Martial Art Skills or Mentalism Techniques within the game.

The higher the skill rank, the more advanced the Martial Art Skills or Mentalism Techniques could one incorporate into the game.

Though, the skills needed to complement the ones that they had in the real world.

Or if they were as talented or skilled as Shin, then they could incorporate these skills into the real world. He could turn them into real Martial Art Skills or Mentalism Techniques.

Shin took a brief look at the skill books and thought to himself. "It is not bad to have more cards under my sleeve, but it will also make it harder for me to master all of them."

"I also have to organize my skill set since I am neglecting most of them after I discover the Reality Manifestation," he mumbled as he thought of the skills that he could not use much recently, particularly his Tier 2 skills and Legacy ones.

Previously, his Legacy Skills were the ones that he was signature skills that would make every player think of his name once he used them, especially Mondi's Style. But recently, he was not using them much.

What's more, Regan's Method, which was a magic-focused set of skills was not being used that much, much less now that Shin was one of the pioneers to discover the Reality Manifestation.

"I need to find a way to incorporate these skills into my Martial Arts or Mentalism. But the question is 'how?' How am I going to do that if there are not many similarities that I can take advantage of?"

His tier 2 skills were not a problem since he could at least find a way to turn them into real Martial Arts or use them as a blueprint to execute his more advanced Martial Art Skills.

But when it came to his Legacy Skills, there was a huge issue that he had to deal with.

Mondi's Style had a variety of swords, and he had to use different styles just to utilize its strength to the fullest. Moreover, this was also the skill where he used most of his Elemental Spirit Possession.

On the other hand, Regan's Method was a pretty useful skill that he used before, albeit not frequently. He also did not explore this skill that much even though it had a lot of potential. It was not because he found the skill useless. He just found that the skill did not fit his playing style that much.

But that was 'then'. It could not be the same now because Shin now had realized the importance of understanding different attributes, especially with the suspected multi-attribute Mentalism Method.

He could use this particular Legacy Skill to discover and understand his innate attributes. The only problem was none of the elements that he remembered from Regan's Method seemed to be helpful to him.

At least not for now.

"Should I investigate the quest related to Legacy Skill?" he muttered as he tried to remember his battle against Regan and Mondi when he used the bloodstone before.

From what he could remember, Regan indeed had other elements other than the ones that his skill currently had.

He then shook his head. "I'll deal with it later once I am done with the things that I have on my plate. I'll focus on polishing my sword-drawing style for the time being while also using the Yin-Yang Swordsmanship from time to time."

He might be leaning more on Jade Kirin Scripture right now, especially now that he was working on upgrading his sword, the [Yamato]. But he did not want to lose his edge when using his original martial arts, so he had to use it regularly to make sure that he would not be too dull when using it.

After considering it for a few moments, Shin shook his head and decided not to learn the new set of skill books that he got for the time being and save them for later. He would be storing them in his personal back for the time being until he found the right opportunity in the future.

And once he was done with his current businesses, he would immediately investigate the hidden quests attached to his Legacy Skills.

It had been a long time since he asked for some information about the Wind Blade guy, who was the source of Mondi's Style and Mondi's Jump, so he did not have any idea about it.

After layering his plans, Shin sent a message to the 'Secret Recipe', the mysterious shop that he had discovered with Lawless' introduction. It was a place that provided a lot of information, an information merchant group. And since Lawless could vouch for it, Shin chose to trust them as well.

Aside from the clues about Mondi's Grave that hoped to get, he also added another request, which concerned Regan's Secret Lab that was mentioned in the introduction of the Legacy Skill.

He knew that this would take a long time, so he did not expect much. If he had gotten the opportunity, then he would investigate it personally.

He did not wait for their reply and quickly head out of the Mayor's Residence and went straight to the branch of the Hand of Midas Trading Firm beside it.

He left the items and equipment to the trusted person under Shiella. He hoped that they could sell it at a very good price. The firm could also buy it from him and arm their special groups with them. Anything was fine as long as he could get a desirable deal.

To his surprise, Black Hammer suddenly rushed out from his personal blacksmithing room and stopped him from selling the items and equipment immediately.

"These items will be no use to the young master, right?" asked Black Hammer before quickly adding. "How about you leave it to me for the time being? These are high-quality and -level sets of equipment! And it may be one of the first batches out there."

"Leave it to me and I will study them carefully. I promise you that I will not damage any of them!" the blacksmith said with full of reassurance before continuing. "This can help me greatly in my research! Who knows, this can be the key that will promote me to a Grand Craftsman Rank?!"

The corner of Shin's mouth twitched when he saw a well-built and huge guy looking at him with pleading eyes. He wanted to curse Black Hammer, but he couldn't since he understood what the latter was thinking.

After a few moments of internal struggle, he sighed and said. "Alright, sure! But you owe me one. Craft me an equipment set that is tailored for me. Or you can upgrade my current sets too!"

Hearing that, the chief blacksmith of the largest and most influential trading firm within the game nodded his head repeatedly like a child while agreeing to Shin with full enthusiasm. "Deal! Of course, I can do at least that!"

"Moreover, I am no different from being your personal blacksmith right now! Aside from the contract that we have with your Adventurer Team, I am also the one who knows your taste in equipment the most."

"I fully understand your needs and wants after studying your fighting style and crafting your equipment, so this makes no difference!"

"There is no taking back your words now, alright?" he said before snatching all the items and equipment that Shin had put at the counter.

After that, he swept his gaze at the counter to make sure that he did not miss anything, he nodded his head before quickly dashing back to his personal room while laughing like a crazy person.

Shin shook his head and smiled bitterly as he watched Black Hammer disappear. He then looked at the lady, who was at the counter, before giving her an apologetic smile.

After that, he asked her for some potions that he might need for his journey. And to his surprise, the receptionist passed him three boxes filled with potions in different varieties.

He was confused at first, but when he saw the notes attached to the boxes, he immediately understood what was going on.

"Hey! I know that you will immediately go on another adventure as soon as you got back. Here are your supplies. There are a few new products that I have crafted recently, use them well and give me your review later." – Adept Hands.

P.S. The receipt is already there. Just pay the receptionist when you receive them.

P.S.S The new products are free as usual, so do say that I am stingy.

Shin could not help but chuckle when he read the note before looking at the receptionist. He then paid for the potions before keeping the potions.

Now that he had already restocked his supplies, he could now finally head out and went for another adventure.

Chapter 1164 Starry Spears Mountain Forest

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Starry Spears Mountain Forest.

This place was one of the natural regions of the game. It was not a super high-level map like the unexplored regions of the Frozen Kingdom, but it was at least a step lower than it.

This place was filled with rocky mountains that were close to being a barren land. There were multiple rock formations with towering heights. The grey walls of these mountains were like a series of rocks with rectangular shapes stacked together.

They were piling up in an irregular pattern. They were either vertically aligned with each other, horizontally piled together, or stacked diagonally with one another.

Looking at this place from a few distances away, these rocky mountains looked like spears that fell from the sky that gathered in one place.

Hence, the place was named as such.

This place was not as famous as the other high-leveled maps because of multiple reasons. One of them was because of its location.

This mountain forest was located at the far end of the continent. It was far and uninhabited enough to consider it one of the most secluded places within the game.

The nearest city or settlement from it was thousands of miles away. And travel from there to this place would not only take a player a very long time, but they would also need to go through a series of high-level maps along the way.

Those maps were already filled with high-quality resources and powerful monsters that were more than enough for the players. So, they would rather stay on those maps to grind than continue to travel to the Starry Spears Mountain Forest.

Those maps were also large. They were large enough to accommodate all the players that were from the nearby cities and villages. And since there were not that many players that were high enough to continuously grind in such high-leveled maps, the competition for spots and resources was not that intense.

Aside from those, the other reason why the Starry Spears Mountain Forest was not popular among the players stationed in the nearby cities was because of the monsters on the map.

The monsters here were all related to earth elements.

This was the main reason.

Monsters with high earth-elemental affinity were very hard to deal with. They all possessed high physical defense, which made it hard for physical-focused players to fight. The melee players were mostly countered by these monsters.

At the same time, these monsters could also produce a high energy barrier that could nullify most of the magical spells. Or at least most of the elemental magic that magic-related classes had such as Lightning, Fire, Wind, and Light Elements.

The only elements that were effective against these monsters were the Dark Element due to their corrosive nature and the Water Element, which could counter the Earth Element.

These monsters also had very high damage that could one-shot almost every player aside from the classes with heavy armor such as Knights and Shield Warriors.

They also have multiple skills that covered a large area, which made their attacks very destructive. And given the terrain of the place, which was very narrow for their sizes, their attacks almost covered an area that was impossible to escape from.

The only saving grace that the players could have would be the speed of these monsters, which was so slow that made it easier for everyone to dodge most of their attacks. Though, achieving such a feat was only limited to players with very fast movement and reaction speed.

After listing all of these and weighing the pros and cons, the players concluded that hunting in this place was not worth the trouble. The distance alone was already concerning, much less the difficulty of hunting just a single monster.

These were the information that Shin had gathered about this place. And he could not help but look weirdly at it before asking Arthur how he ended up discovering such a secluded map.

And when he got the answer, he did not know whether to laugh or cry about it.

Arthur went to this place because he thought a dragon with earth elements could be found there. He said that since the earth-elemental mana in the place was so high, an earth-elemental dragon would most likely be living in this place.

But even after searching through the entire map and almost literally flipping it, he still failed to find an earth-elemental dragon. At most, he saw rock salamanders and metal comodo dragons, but they were clearly not up to the standards that he was looking for.

As for how Arthur was patient enough to reach this place. He was not patient enough. He just rode on his golden dragon pet and flew over the multiple maps to travel the distance.

Not only it was very convenient, but it was also the fastest way to reach such a secluded map.

Fortunately, he did not waste his time coming to that place. His travel there did not come without any positive results.

Arthur found that that place was filled with mines. Mines without different varieties of ores and metals. He even found some special ores that he had used when he asked Black Hammer to craft him his current equipment set. Even the materials of his spears and shield were from that place.

That was also when he found some traces of meteorites in the mines. But since his mining level was not enough to mine those high-quality ores, he could only forget about them.

Then he found a way to seal the places where the meteorites could be found before leaving. He was planning to take them away once his mining level was high enough.

He first wanted to sell the information to Hand of Midas Trading Firm, but Shiella tried to bully him at that time, so he refused to tell her about it. Then he forgot about the matter altogether. If not for Shin mentioning that he needed some meteorites, then Arthur would most likely forget about them.

...

"D*mn! When will I get a flying mount too?" cursed Shin under his breath as he traveled through the multiple hunting grounds.

He might not have a flying mount, but his mount would not lose when it came to speed.

Before, his two tiger pets, Whitie and Blackie, were mountable pets. He used them as his mounts during his long-distance travel.

But after they turned into special elemental spirits and became his reaper's retainers, he nearly had forgotten that they used to be his pets.

If not for the two reminding him about it, then he would most likely treat them like 'normal' elemental companions.

When it came to speed, Blackie was most likely the one who had the edge, so Shin chose her to be his mount this time.

He originally wanted to go straight to the Starry Spears Mountain Forest. But after some consideration, he decided to hunt a couple of monsters along the way.

There was still a couple of leveling maps along the way that were high enough for his current level, so it would not hurt to grind a little during his travel.

He might not get the experience points from killing the monsters because he was already capped at level 150. But it would not be a waste since it would accumulate enough points that he could use when he finished his Tier 3 Class Promotion Quest.

Moreover, he was not grinding solely for the experience points, but also to make himself more familiar with the new environment of the game.

Aside from polishing his fighting style and experimenting with the set of skills that he rarely used now, he also had to get used to harvesting the materials from the corpses of the monsters.

Of course, he would not fight any common monsters along the way since they would not be beneficial for his progress. Instead, he would only fight monsters that were at Lord Rank and above.

If it was any other people, such actions would be insane. After all, the monsters around this place mostly surpassed the level 150 mark, which indicated that their strengths were in a whole other dimension.

Even the most common monsters here surpassed the Overlord Rank Monsters at the level 100-110 mark. Only Rankers could fight against them one-on-one.

Elite and Special Elites Monsters with a Level of 150 were comparable to King Class Monsters at 110-120 level and only Titled and Maverick Rankers were the only ones who would fight them alone.

Monsters with Level 150 and in Chieftain Rank would obviously be much stronger than those, much less those in Lord Rank and above.

Yet, here was a single player, treating those monsters as common mobs.

Well, that was to be expected since Shin was already a Godlike Player. And someone with a title at that!

He was one of those players who stood at the peak of the game, so such things were only natural for him. But for mainstream players, such a feat was something they could only dream of achieving.

...

There were only a very few numbers of players who would dare to venture to these high-level maps, but that did not mean that they were rare.

Right now, there was a group of unknown players watching an unbelievable scene a few distance away from them.

What they were seeing was a single player soloing a Lord Rank Monster that would require at least a whole expedition team from first-rate guilds to fight.

"D*mn! What a beast! We don't know who the real monster between them is," said one of the players while watching the battle from a safe distance.

Smack!

The other player hit the back of his head before saying. "Idiot! That is not important! We have to report this to the Guild Leader. This may affect our plans."

"Tsk! Tsk! Too bad. I really want to watch more," said the first player in a reluctant tone.

After that, the two turned around and left a few of people from their scouting team before retreating.

Normally, they could at least send a video to their guild leader to report such a matter. But since they had already isolated the space within tens of thousands of meters, sending messages through normal means was impossible.

They could only head back to their base and report this matter personally.

Unknown to them, there was a pair of eyes watching each of their moves from the darkness. And when they retreated and sprinted toward their main base, this person stealthily followed them without making a sound.

Chapter 1165 Starry Spears Mountain Forest (Part 2)

...

Inside an inn in a nearby village, a group of players were gathered inside a simple but large room. They were sitting around the table where a spying stone was projecting a scene where a single player was fighting a level 150 Lord Rank Monster. And from what they could see, this player seemed to be toying with the monster.

"This guy is definitely a Godlike Player. What are we going to do?" asked a Beastman Berserker with a pair of battle axes behind him.

A female elven archer sitting across him was silent for a moment before commenting. "This is going to be troublesome. We have already reached the final stages of our plan. I don't think our employer will like it if we delay our job any longer, much less fail due to this."

A Human Swordmaster nodded his head and said. "Yeah. This is a very important chance for our guild to be ahead of the others. We may even become a Super Guild or at least a Quasi one if everything went smoothly."

"We even sacrifice our opportunity to investigate the quests that can lead us to the next continent just to continue this operation. We can't afford to fail now," nodded an Undead Skeleton Knight across the swordsman.

The Female Elven Archer continued. "The 'Black Market' is already extending their hands to these regions because there are not many players hunting here, but the resources are pretty rich."

"And since there are no huge merchant guilds or training firms able to control the entire area, they want to be the first to do so."

"There are currently hiding their true strength and waiting for the good opportunity to finally reveal their fangs. They have been eyeing the business of the Hand of Midas for a long time already, and this region will be a perfect springboard that they can use for that."

"I heard that they have already partnered with a couple of Powerhouse Guilds, and even poached some of the partners and customers from the Hand of Midas," she added.

The Human Swordmaster shook his head and smile bitterly. "We only accept this commission because they can give us control over one of the cities after they succeed in conquering these regions for resources."

"It is a good deal, but we can't get swept by the collision between these hegemonic organizations. It will only impact us negatively in the long run."

"We may be one of the most powerful First-Rate Guilds in the area, but we are still nothing but an ant in the eyes of those two."

"We can accept the deal and continue with the job, but we can't get too close to the Black Market since they can burn us, or devour our entire guild without us knowing if we get too involved with them."

The Beastman Berserker shook his head. "Worrying about those too is already giving us a headache, now we have to deal with a monster Even players like them, a group of Titled and Maverick Rankers, worked together, there was a high chance that they would be that steps into our territory."

This Godlike Player might be alone, but that did not change the fact that he was powerful. In fact, in the eyes of first-rate guilds, players on this level were no different from a whole organization or guild.

Even players like them, a group of Titled and Maverick Rankers, worked together, there was a high chance that they would be beaten black and blue if they tried to fight someone of this caliber.

After a long silence, the group finally turned to the Human Wizard sitting silently on the corner. This player looked ordinary on the surface, but these guys knew that it was far from the truth.

Among them, this player might be the only one who could exchange a couple of blows against that mysterious Godlike Player.

This was their guild leader. And he was a Maverick God, who was close to getting an unofficial title from the system.

This guild leader remained silent up until now and let this group discuss among themselves while he was listening. And when he saw them looking at him, he sighed before saying. "We still don't know the purpose of this player. We have to make sure of that first before making our decision."

"We can't carelessly provoke him. We have already a lot of things we have to worry about, making an enemy out of a player with such caliber will only do us more harm than good."

"Tell the scouts to continue monitoring him from a safe distance and don't do anything unnecessary to provoke him. For all we know, he may even be aware of us already, so don't make this more complicated."

"He may only be here to grind and probably rushing to reach the Level 150 cap or something. He can also be passing by to complete a quest or something."

"Just leave him alone and don't bother him."

"We are going to analyze his destination and see if it will collide with our business. And if he does, then we will try to talk to him and negotiate. If that doesn't work, then we will pass this information to Black Market."

He paused for a moment before continuing. "If we can find who is this Godlike Player even before that, then it will be for the better since we can take a more specific precautionary approach."

"If he is really on the level that we can't provoke then, we have more than enough reason to pass this problem to them."

"We can't afford to provoke a Godlike Player of that level with our current strength. For all we know, he may be one of those monsters among monsters that is more than enough to eradicate our guild alone."

"We can leave it to the Black Market."

The guild leader analyzed the situation calmly and came up with a solution that would not give them too much trouble. They could not provoke either side, so it would be better to be their hands clean from this matter.

"But, Guild Leader, if we do that, then it can put our guild in an unfavorable position. We will be at a disadvantage when negotiating with the Black Market," said the Female Elven Archer before quickly adding. "Worse, they can even throw us away and look for our competitors to take our role."

The guild leader laughed bitterly before saying. "You don't understand, Cleansing Wind. This is the position of the 'weak'. We the 'strong' acts, we can only cower."

After that, he quickly added. "As for our competitors? Do you think they will dare to provoke someone that even we can't provoke? I highly doubt it. Those guys are not foolish enough to accept such a disadvantageous job despite the Black Market backing them up."

"No one is willing to be a surficial pawn. No one does and no one will."

"And if there is really someone foolish to take on that role for us? Then I am more than happy to watch them get eradicated in the process. And once they do, we can just jump into the prey and claim their controlled territories."

"At that time, we will not lose anything in exchange for gaining all the benefits. That is no different from what the Black Market has promised us."

He spread his hands and said. "We will still be the ones who wield the bigger fists in this region. And the Black Market will still choose to cooperate with us once it happens."

Hearing the line of thoughts of their guild leader, the group was quickly enlightened. They could not help but look at him with eyes full of worship.

Their guild leader was right, if we followed his plan, then they would still be the strongest guild in this region without doing anything.

It was a perfect plan where they would get the highest number of benefits with the lowest amount of risks.

After that, they quickly stood up and simultaneously said. "We will follow the guild leader's arrangements."

The guild leader nodded his head and said. "Alright. Go! See if he is really heading to the Starry Spears Mountain Forest and report back to me immediately."

"That place is really a hot potato right now. Even if we know that it is rich with minerals and ores, we can't claim it for ourselves."

"The Black Market sure is lucky to discover such a treasure trove," he added as he watched his subordinates walk out of the room.

After that, he rested his back on the chair before closing his eyes, returning everything to silence.

Unknown to them, there was someone watching everything from the dark corner of the room. A dangerous glint flashed through the eyes of the hidden silhouette before it merged with the shadow of the room.

...

In the region near the Starry Spears Mountain Forest, Shin was currently sitting on the huge corpse of a Monster Bear while resting.

In front of him was a virtual screen where he was watching the meeting that just concluded.

This ability was one of the skills that Blackie had learned after her recent upgrade. She could share what she was seeing with him as long as their distance was within a certain range.

After a few moments, Shin smiled before commenting. "Interesting! This guy is interesting! It is rare to find people like this, who can scheme without provoking either side."

He chuckled and muttered. "Hmm. If it is possible, then I want to befriend him. People like this are worth making connections with. Though, I also must be careful when dealing with such individuals."

He closed the virtual screen before his eyes were suddenly filled with coldness. "Black Market, huh? So, they are one of the main competitors of Big Sis. I guess I can help her a little deal with these guys."

"I'll make sure to deal a huge damage to these guys," he paused for a moment before sighing. "I guess I also have to inform Black Hammer about the mining sites here. It will be a waste if other organizations took control of it."

"Hmm. It will be better if people close to us benefit instead," he mumbled before nodding his head.
"Alright, I guess it is decided then!"

He then hopped down from the huge corpse that he was sitting on before looking at it. He then shook his head before summoning Whitie. "Alright, Alright! You can eat this one. Stop throwing tantrums. Just make sure that it really can help you evolve like the others."

Whitie, who was in his tiger form, did not even bother to reply to Shin and quickly jump into the feast that was laid in front of it.

Shin could only sigh and smile bitterly as he watched the white tiger enjoy its meal.

Chapter 1166 Starry Spears Mountain Forest (Part 3)

...

Shin continued his journey and arrived at his destination when the first day (in-game time) since the servers went back online was about to end.

He took a couple of stops whenever he found a good spot to rest and recover his peak form along the way. He had also harvested quite a number of rare herbs during his trip alongside the materials that he got from the Lord Rank Monsters that he had encountered during his travel.

He encountered quite a lot of monsters during the entire journey, but he did not find a single Overlord Rank Monster and above, which made him quite suspicious. But since hunting here was not his main priority, he ignored it and continued his travel.

And when he was about to reach the entrance of the Starry Spears Mountain Forests, he found a group of players blocking his path.

"Looks like they can't take it any longer. They are forced to make a move," he mumbled when he saw the group.

He was considering what he was going to do, but he quickly set it aside since he knew that they were no match against him despite their advantage in numbers.

"It is quite surprising that they have endured it up until now given that it is already obvious that my destination is this place. Let's see what they have decided this time," he said to himself before continuing to move forward.

He was wearing the [Nightwalker's Cloak] along with the [Nephilim's Mask], so it was impossible for these people to see through his information. What they could see was a black window, telling them nothing.

If not for them being sure that he was a player, then they would suspect that he was an NPC without the slightest bit of doubt.

And given that the good of the cloak hanging over his head cast a shadow underneath it, they could not clearly see the signature mask that he was wearing, much less his real appearance.

This was one of the main reasons why the other party was tiptoeing around him up until now. Their guild leader did not want to accidentally provoke a monster even among the Godlike Players of the game without them knowing.

And sure enough, the cautiousness of their guild leader saved them this time. If not, then their entire guild would suffer a devastating loss that they could never imagine, especially now that the penalty of dying was much harsher than before.

Shin stopped a few meters away from the entrance of the Starry Spears Mountain Forest and stood across the group standing in front of him.

He slightly raised his head to have a clear look at them before asking. "What do you want?"

The Human Wizard standing at the center of the group stepped forward and introduced himself. "My friend, I am Mychell, the guild leader of the Azure Wind Guild. Can I ask what your business is in visiting this place?"

Shin found it amusing that this person was really trying not to provoke him with those polite words. But since he already knew about their agenda, he tried to stir some trouble to see their decision. "What? Do I have to report to you when and where I need to go?"

"Are you also like those guilds, who will restrict the players from entering a certain map because they are controlling that area?"

"Don't joke around me. You don't own anything here," he added as he slightly moved his cloak and revealed his sheathed katana.

His thumb pushed the katana a bit, revealing its blade slightly while releasing an overwhelming pressure.

When he did that, the expression of the opposing party quickly turned grim as he could instantly feel the gap between them and this expert.

What a joke!

Even if they try to stop him here and fight, they knew that they would be slaughtered within a blink of an eye.

That gap was just that big!

They might be experts in front of the average and mainstream players, but in front of this player, they were nothing but a bunch of nobodies that he could slaughter at any time.

Aside from their guild leader, who could at least exchange a couple of blows against this guy, the rest of them did not stand a chance.

Mychell smiled and ignored the threatening pressure that was pressing on them before answering. "Don't misunderstand, my friend. We are not here to stop you. But we just want to warn you that an organization larger than our own is currently doing a huge operation here."

"Interesting!" muttered Shin with a voice that he could only hear when he heard those words. He could see that this Mychell guy had a way with his words.

But the thing that made him most interested was the way the latter dealt with things.

He could see through the intention of the opposing party. It might look like they want to prevent him from moving forward and warn him about the huge organization backing them, urging Shin to reconsider.

But the real reason why they were stopping him here was to buy some time for the Black Market to arrive at him while also preventing him from 'discovering' the rich mines that the region had to offer.

He was sure that they were already aware that his destination was this place, so he could easily guess that they had already reported this matter to the Black Market. But since the latter needed some time to send their own experts here, they were instructed to at least buy them some time until their forces arrived.

Shin could not help but chuckle at that thought. He was not worried about the forces that the Black Market was going to send the slightest. In fact, he was quite eager to meet them here, so that he could test a couple of things against them.

He was in the middle of polishing his style and experimenting with some of his in-game skills. He was more than happy to welcome such a challenge from a large organization such as this one.

Moreover, he had already contacted the Hand of Midas Trading Firm, and he was sure that they were already making preparations to build a channel that would connect this place and their nearest branch.

He was even expecting to see those armored vehicles that he had seen during their operation in the Blind Abyss Empire, where they 'stole' the magic stones and crystals under the noses of the Undying Guild and the Central Order.

Thinking about that, Shin turned to the people in front of him and sharpened his eyes before asking with a chilling tone. "Is that a threat?"

Swoosh!

Right after those words left his mouth, the pressure that was crushing on the opposing party became heavier and started suffocating them.

"Urgh!"

Painful groans started to come out from their mouths as the group could not help but bend their knees while enduring their pressure. Aside from Mychell, who was still doing fairly fine, the rest of the group were either almost on their knees due to the pressure or holding their chest as they struggled to breathe.

Mychell found his clenched arm was trembling, not because he was like the others enduring the pressure, but because he was feeling excited about the battle. He wanted to test himself against someone who was clearly stronger than him by at least a grade higher or two.

Shin, who was releasing that suffocating pressure also noticed that and could not help but smile under his mask. The more he looked at this Mychell guy, the more he found this guy interesting.

'Too bad he already belongs to a guild, and even the guild leader at that. If not, I will extend a hand and invite him to join us,' the thought before shaking his head.

'I have already given them enough time. I have to move now and get what I need before dealing with the people that the Black Market is going to send,' he thought to himself before taking a step forward.

The people on the opposite side could not help but feel their numbing senses when they saw Shin lift his foot in the air and was about to step forward.

They were expecting the worse and readied themselves to battle despite them knowing how large the gap between their strengths and this monster was.

But what witnessed next sent a shiver down their spines.

Shin disappeared for a brief moment before founding him walking between their ranks in a casual manner.

Their bodies tensed. They were unable to move as he walked past them without even glancing at them. It was as if he was treating them as if they were nothing but air.

And when he stepped on the entrance of Starry Spears Mountain Forest, where a pair of mountains across each other were forming a deep valley was located, he paused and said. "If you think that the Black Market will be able to stop me, then think again."

"They may be one of the largest organizations looming in the dark right now, but they are still inferior when compared to the real Powerhouses of the game," he added before continuing to move forward.

At the same time, the members of the Azure Wind Guild could not help but felt their bodies trembling. It was at that moment that they realized that they were facing a person who was already aware of everything, yet still dared to continue.

They could only thank the insights of their guild leader for being able to see through something that they failed to see. If not for him, then they would most likely have committed a mistake that they would regret forever.

In the meantime, Mychell stared at the spot where Shin first stood for a few moments before sighing with a bitter smile.

"The gap – it is still too big," he muttered before turning around and looking at the entrance of the Sparry Spears Mountain Forest before saying to himself. "It looks like I still have to work hard if I want to get invited to the Hegemon Cup."

Chapter 1167 The Challenge of Earth Element

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Shin walked through the valley entrance of the Starry Spears Mountain Forest while observing the surroundings. Surprisingly, or rather unsurprisingly, he had yet to encounter a single monster along the way.

Looking at the walls on each side, he could see how tall these stone mountains were. There were a couple of vegetation along the road and a few grasses and herbs stacked at the high level of the cliff.

But aside from that, the place was not much different from barren land. And just like what he had expected, the whole place was rich with Earth Elemental Mana.

Seeing this, Shin curled his lips before muttering. "This is going to be a good opportunity for Astaroth."

After that, he waved his hand and summoned the Mutated Guardian Spirit. "Guardian Reaper, Astaroth."

Swoosh!

Right after those words left his mouth, one of the specks of lights circling around his body broke free from its cycle. It then hovered in the air for a brief moment before manifesting a humanoid figure.

After releasing the light, the elemental spirit's appearance was out to see. He still had that muscular and robust body with dark skin that had a mixture of bronze and metallic color. With his bare upper body, the shining golden tattoos spread from his arm to his chest and the entirety of his back.

There was also a pair of golden rings wrapped around his biceps, seemingly restraining his muscles.

The thick bull-like horns on the side of his head, slightly above his ears, were curving forward.

His long ashen white hair was combed back to reveal his cold-looking face and left hanging behind him. There were also golden tattoos on his forehead and right below his eyes, making his appearance more ferocious yet also majestic at the same time.

He was wearing nothing but baggy pants which complement his dark skin. There was also a thin fabric wrapped around his shoulders and arms. It might look soft and flexible, which could give the feeling that it could easily be ripped apart, but it was actually made from pure mana of earth and metal.

Right after his appearance, he quickly kneeled like a knight before Shin. His head was lowered, and a hand on one of his knees, with the other, was clenched into a fist and pressed on the ground.

He was clearly showing his respect to his master. "Greetings, my Lord!"

Shin was slightly taken aback by the booming voice that the elemental spirit had released. It was as if a huge explosion just occurred. It even created a shockwave that spread out in every direction.

Fortunately, he was able to quickly recover himself before observing the latter. And the more he looked at the mutated guardian spirit, the narrower his eyes became. 'Is it just me, or has this guy really changed compared to the last time I have seen him?'

'Not only that. He also seems to be much stronger than before,' he added as he could also feel the overwhelming pressure that was spreading in every direction.

He might be thinking to himself, but his thoughts were transferred to his elemental spirits.

"It is not your imagination. The little guy really becomes different," said Hanzo before quickly adding. "Before, he just recovers his form and adjusts with the two elemental powers that he controls. But after such a long time, he is able to familiarize himself with everything and now able to control his powers to the fullest."

"His real strength has also been sealed like us, though. It is because our master is still weak. He is holding us back," Grimrace chimed in.

This nutjob had become more arrogant after being promoted into an Eldritch Psychic Spirit. He was too full of himself that he saw everyone as ants.

And as if he was not enough, Vladimir, who had been promoted into a Noblesse Crimson Spirit, had become more conceited. "That is right. I am ashamed that this awesome and amazing such as myself is following such a weakling."

And to add more to his headache, Blackie, who was not an Abysmal Penumbra Spirit, was always picking a fight with the two whenever they threw some insults at Shin.

Just like now.

"How dare you sully the name of our liege! I will punish you for your crimes!" she shouted as she charged at the two.

And adding to that, Whitie, who was also arrogant to the bones but respect Shin on the same level as her, always joined the fight despite him clearly being weaker than any of them. "Judgement!"

Fortunately, they were currently in the form of specks of lights. If not, then he would not be able to handle the destruction that they could cause during their battle.

Ironically, Solus, who was supposed to be more loyal to Shin and treated him with full respect like Blackie, Whitie, and Astaroth, did not join them. She always watches the clashing specks of lights from the side while saying. "Youth! How I much such feeling. It is really good to be young."

"They have always been full of energy," commented Hanzo as he was too lazy to get involved with this scene. He had long used to it already, so he left them be and chose to enjoy the show.

Shin massaged his temples before ignoring them. Though, he also had to admit that he somewhat missed this energetic group since they rarely talk when he was doing the Empire Quest with the rest of the Empyrean Talons.

He just found out that Elemental Companions would not communicate with their masters when doing quests with that level of difficulty, especially when it was a quest that involved several players.

He suspected that this was one of the features of the game that prevented the players from getting too much information from them.

He sighed helplessly before turning his attention back to Astaroth, who was still kneeling before him. "What do you think of this place? Can it help you grow?"

"Replies to the Lord! This place is indeed beneficial to me. I can feel that the monsters in the area have a rich Earth Elemental Mana. Some are even fused with other minerals, which can help me evolve on the same level as the others," replied Astaroth with a tone that carried his respect yet also his confidence.

Shin could help but feel cringe whenever he heard these elemental spirit companions treating him like this. But he could not do anything about it as they were too stubborn to drop it.

He sighed before nodding his head. From the look of it, it seemed like he would be getting a bonus on coming here aside from getting the materials that he was looking for.

"I see. How are you going to do... this evolution then?" he asked with a slightly knitted brow.

"I will be needing the Cores of the monster in the area and absorb them. And it will be a large number of them, my Lord," replied Astaroth before adding. "But if we manage to get the cores of high-ranked monsters, then the effects will also be larger."

'Cores? This is my first time hearing that. Is it another hidden feature that is added in the game after the recent patch?' he thought to himself before asking. "Cores? What do you mean by that?"

Instead of Astaroth, it was Hanzo who answered the question. "It is a source of powers that is unique to monsters that can be found in places with rich Elemental Mana like this place."

"Not all monsters can have it as it will only be formed if a monster inhabited a place with a high density of mana that they have an affinity with."

"Though, there are always exceptions. The best example is the Golems. They don't have organs and flesh, unlike the other monsters. Instead, they have mana circuits that circulated the mana in their entire body. And the center of everything is their Energy Cores, most commonly known as Mana Cores for elemental based."

"As for the beast-type monsters, it is called Beast Core. That is if they managed to form one," he added in a nonchalant tone.

Shin nodded his head before looking for additional information from the official forums. And sure enough, it was another hidden feature that not many were aware of.

Though, it was not something that was just added recently, it was still something that only a limited number of players knew.

What was surprising was that it actually had a lot of uses. And most of them were related to forging special equipment and weapons or crafting some gadgets that only Master Engineers and above could make.

After reading through the available information in the online forums, Shin could not help but let his mind run wild. "Don't tell me when it is combined with both forging and engineering, players could wear futuristic battle suits in the future?"

Thinking about that, he found himself imagining a couple of things.

Who among the guys didn't dream of wearing such cool battle suits? It was an instinct that men had.

Shin chuckled for a moment before mumbling. "I wonder what Arthur will think about this. I am sure that he will pester both Black Hammer and Tinker relentlessly when I tell him about this."

After recollecting his thoughts, he turned to Astaroth and said. "Since it is beneficial to you, then let's hunt some of them along the way. We will not leave this place until you satisfy the requirements for your evolution."

He felt that this evolution of elemental spirits was related to something.

Aside from giving him more powerful elemental skills, it could also improve his Elemental Spirit Possession.

But at the same time, he could also tell that there was more to it that he had to discover. Though, it could wait for the time being as he had to focus on the task at hand for now.

"This humble servant thanks the Lord for his grace!" shouted Astaroth with a booming voice that caught Shin off-guard.

But what was even more surprising was the window panel that appeared in front of his eyes all of a sudden.

Chapter 1168 The Challenge Of Earth Element (Part 2): Supremes And Monarchs

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Shin looked at the notification panel in front of him after recovering from the initial surprise that he had.

[Quest Name]: The Challenge of Earth Element

[Quest Difficulty]: S (New Recap) – Nightmare

[Quest Type]: Hunting and Collecting

[Historical Note]:

Your Guardian Reaper, Astaroth, was born from the residual spirits of the two strongest Earth Elemental Spirits.

One was known as the Earth Spirit that with the strongest defense and sturdiest body while the other was famous for having the most powerful attack and mightiest firepower.

After their last battle during the Repelling Era, the two suffered grievous wounds that required them to absorb a lot of Earth Elemental Mana to recuperate.

They traveled far and wide to look for a new rebirthing place and arrived at the land somewhere in the Saint Heaven Kingdom.

But since the place could only accommodate a single spirit, the two battle it out to know who was the strongest.

The victor would be the owner of the place while the loser would be devoured by the former.

Unfortunately, the two had equal power and could not decide the winner. And since their battle was so intense, their wounds worsen which led to their mutual destruction.

With no news about them, the Elemental Spirits and Transcendent Beings suspected that both of them had died during their fight battle.

Even though it was not the entire truth, it was not that far either.

The residual of their spirits fused together and gave birth to a new Elemental Spirit with a mutated Earth Element.

[Quest Details]:

Even though the two Earth Elemental Spirits had been dead for a long time already, their strong will was hosted in the body of your Guardian Reaper and inherited their goals.

Help your Guardian Reaper reach its pinnacle form and became the Sovereign of the Earth Element.

[Quest Condition]:

Gather enough Earth Elemental Cores that could help Astaroth in his path of evolution.

Note: The better the grade of the core the more benefits your Guardian Reaper could get.

[Quest Reward]:

Evolution of Astaroth and his promotion into a Supreme Elemental Being.

[Quest Penalty]:

Failure could lead to the weakening of Astaroth and demoting his rank to an ordinary Elemental Spirit.

Shin furrowed his brows slightly after reading through the entire quest panel. He read it twice to make sure that did not miss anything before muttering to himself.

"Hmm... This is not as troublesome as what Vladimir has given me before."

The entire quest was interesting and seemed to be not that hard. It was also quite simple and straightforward too, so he thought that it would not take too much time.

The rest of the historical note was what he had already suspected as it was what Hanzo had told him before. And adding to the information that Charlotte had given him before, the entire historical background was entirely the same.

But there were a few things that piqued his interest.

First was the words 'Sovereign', which was somewhat familiar to him. From what he could remember, the only ones that could call themselves 'Sovereign' were those beings that reached the pinnacle of this plane.

It was the information that he had gotten from King Dracula from the previous quest that they had cleared just recently.

This could mean that Astaroth could reach that level when his evolution had been completed. Though, he also suspected that his true powers would also be sealed due to him being 'weak'.

There was another thing, and that was the words 'Supreme Elemental Being'.

If he added it with the current information that he had gotten from the quest description, being a 'Sovereign' of an element was equivalent to being a 'Supreme'.

What was interesting though was the fact that one of his Elemental Spirits had the purity level of 'Supreme'. Grimrace, who was an Eldritch Psychic Spirit, was on that level.

But when he compared the nutjob to Blackie and Vladimir, who were an Abysmal Penumbra Spirit and Noblesse Crimson Spirit respectively, their strengths and powers were comparable to each other.

But the Bloodline Purity of those two were labeled as 'Monarch', and not 'Supreme'.

He was not sure about it, so he could only ask the two, who were more experienced than him in this area.

"What is the connection of a Sovereign of an Element to a Sovereign Being? And what is the difference between an Elemental with 'Supreme' bloodline purity and someone with a 'Monarch' one?" directing the question to both Solus and Hanzo.

The first to answer was Solus. "A Sovereign of an Element, or a Supreme Elemental Being, is equivalent to the 'Sovereigns' that that other races had. They are the Elementals that managed to reach the pinnacle of this plane."

"But these Supreme Elemental Beings are not the same as the other Elemental Spirits. They are Elementals who walked on their respective path which slightly deviates from the rest of Elementals."

"They have gained their elements through unusual things or undergo a mutated evolution from their original elements."

She paused for a moment before pointing to Grimrace. "Take this clown for example. He is supposedly a Shadow Elemental Spirit who turns into an Abomination. But after he devours multiple Elementals during his time of craze, he awakens one of his hidden potentials."

"He then became a Shadow Psychic Elemental Abomination."

"And after a series of mutations and evolutions along the way, he becomes what he is now today – an Eldrich Psychic Spirit."

"And since he is walking his own path of elemental evolution, he become a 'Supreme', " she added which quickly clarified Shin's confusion.

And as if taking it as a cue, Hanzo quickly added. "As for the Elemental Spirits with 'Monarch' bloodline purity, they are the ones that are born to be the Kings of their respective element."

"Unlike the Supreme Elemental Beings, the path of a Monarch Elemental Being has already been paved in front of them and all they have to do is to follow it to reach the pinnacle."

"Though, they are still slightly different compared to the 'Elemental Kings' of the lower plane. Those guys are the absolutes of their respective elements. But that did not mean that they are unmatched since the 'Supremes' and 'Monarchs' are at least as powerful as them, albeit not having the same level of authority."

Shin slightly nodded his head in understanding.

He also suspected that the new 'terms' that he was getting like 'Elemental Kings', 'Supremes', and 'Monarchs' might be related to the new update, especially when he was one of the players who triggered it and had more knowledge about the 'secrets' that most of the players did not know.

After thinking about it, he opened the information panel of Astaroth and saw a few interesting things.

Spirit Name: Astaroth

Status: Reaper's Retainer – Guardian

Race: Hybrid Elemental Spirit (Earth/Metal)

Bloodline: Pending

Purity: Supreme (Potential)/ Ordinary (Potential) – Pending

Transformation: Earth Warden

Ability Status: Temporarily Sealed

Tier: Peak 2 (Potential – 5) – Pending

Level: Pending

There were a lot of details that had been omitted or had been in the process of evolving or devolving. Those changes would definitely be dependent on the outcome of his current quest.

He became more motivated on clearing this one since it would directly affect his strength. Though, he was still not sure how he was going to totally fuse it with his ideal battle style.

Right at this moment, he had already two confirmed battle styles which centered on Yin-Yang Arts and Swordsmanship, and Sword-drawing Arts and Jade Kirin Sword Movements respectively.

Both already had their respective Elemental Spirit Possessions that he could use, which also complimented the two sword styles.

As for the rest of the Elemental Spirit Possessions, he was still not sure how he was going to fit them with his swordsmanship or martial arts.

Regardless, he still had to focus on what was in front of him. He could take it one step at a time, so the rest could only wait until he found a way to connect them with each other.

Though, he also had the feeling that he would get his answer once he tried taking his Tier 3 Class Promotion Quest.

He was about to close the information panel of his Elemental Spirits when his eyes suddenly caught something.

He paused for a moment and noticed that the borders of each of the information panels of the Elemental Spirits had similar colors aside from Hanzo and Solus. And on top of that, it seemed like their 'ranking' was slightly higher than the rest but on an equal level to one another.

Solus had a blazing golden border that was very similar to the surface of the sun while Hanzo had a purple border shining with a dim light while its edges were alternating between shattering and reconstructing of a glass.

As for the rest, all their borders were slightly simple compared to the two. And all of them had either white or black borders. Whitie and Astaroth, who were at the bottom of the list, did not even have a border.

"Interesting!" He muttered as a sudden thought flashed through his mind. But he quickly set it aside for the time being before closing the information panel.

He then turned to his front and saw a couple of huge silhouettes in the distance. "Alright, it is time for the hunt!"

"Let's forget about the rest and focus on the high-quality ones!" since he decided to do this, then he would make sure that he would get the best benefit available in front of him.

"Let's just hope that a World Boss is lying around somewhere."

Chapter 1169 The Challenge Of Earth Element (Part 3)

...

As Shin continued, he finally encountered the first Earth Elemental Monster on this map.

It was a huge lizard with scales as solid as rock. There were also some clusters of rocks on the different parts of its body in different sizes. Those rock clusters looked like makeshift armor that it made over its scale.

The rock clusters on its back had the largest number. The larger rock was also there, making the lizard look like it was carrying a huge boulder on its back. On its legs, the rock clusters seemed to be sharp armbands in different shapes and sizes.

Shin observed the monster for a moment before activating his 'True Sight' Ocular Skill on it to see its basic information.

[Monster Name]: Comodo Earth Lizard

[Monster Type]: Beast Monster, Reptilian

[Monster Index]: Earth Element Mutation

[Monster Rank]: Lord

Level: 170

Health Points: 10,000,000,000/ 10,000,000,000

Shin slightly knitted his brows as he felt that something was wrong. "From what I have heard, monsters in this place are supposed to have low HP Bars but high defense."

Then the corner of his mouth suddenly twitched as he continued. "If this is what they considered low, then this hunt is really going to take some time."

It might be crazy, but in a sense, Shin found it reasonable. After all, monsters that surpassed the level 150 mark were those with not only powerful bodies but also possessed strong natural defenses. And

after comparing this monster to the ones that they had encountered in the Frozen Kingdom, then he had to admit that the HP Bar of this one was around an acceptable level.

At the same time, he also remembered one of the new updates. The one that discussed the 'execution' methods in battle. As long as someone fulfilled certain requirements such as severing a head, bursting one's heart, and others, they could kill a monster in one hit, particularly those with a humanoid form.

He nodded his head before turning to Astaroth. "Do you want to try fighting this one? It has been a long time since you fight on your own."

"If I may, my lord," replied Astaroth with full respect, placing one of his palms on his right chest while bowing.

Shin sighed before tilting his head toward the monster. "Go. Try and see how strong you have become."

"This servant heeds your words, my lord," said Astaroth before suddenly disappearing.

Swoosh!

It only took an instant for him to appear in front of the huge lizard before thrusting his fist in the air.

Boom!

A huge explosion occurred as the air explode in front of his fist. It then produced a strong air current that pushed a huge lizard despite its enormous size.

Roar!

The Comodo Earth Lizard seemed to have gotten enraged due to the sudden attack. It did not suffer any damage, but it felt humiliated for being provoked by a punny ant.

It then charged forward with full aggressiveness, carrying an unstoppable momentum that could not be ignored. The ground beneath its feet sank as it left a trail of deep marks in its wake. Each step that it took resulted in a booming sound that shook the area as the wind seemed to have been split open during its charge.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The huge lizard moved agilely despite its enormous size and heavy weight. It took it a short time to traverse the distance between it and Astaroth.

It then opened its mouth wide as it approached its target. The lower part of its jaws was even sweeping the ground, eating the hardened soil and rock fragments during the process.

From the looked of it, it was planning to devour Astaroth alongside those.

Despite the momentum that the Comodo Earth Lizard and the heavy pressure that it was emitting, Astaroth stared at it with a calm yet fiery gaze.

He clapped his hands to produce a loud booming sound before spreading his arms wide. He also spread his legs outward while planning his feet on the ground firmly.

He then glared at the incoming lizard, waiting for it to arrive with full patience.

Boom!

Not long after, the two finally met, which resulted in another explosion. It was as if they were like a mountain wall and a huge truck that crushed against it after running at full speed.

But neither of them moved despite how strong the collision was.

Bang!

The ground beneath Astaroth's feet sank as his hands held on the upper and lower jaws of the huge lizard, preventing them from closing.

There was a brief pause between the two before the muscles of Astaroth suddenly tightened. His body then exploded in strength as he picked up the huge lizard, launching it in the air through the two jaws that he was holding.

"Haaa!"

He then followed the momentum of his action and slammed the huge lizard on the ground behind him, flipping it upside down.

Bang!

Dirt and rock fragments flew in the air as the lizard slammed into the ground. The cluster of rocks on its back was even shattered from the impact, especially when the weight of its enormous body was added to it.

The Comodo Earth Lizard seemed to have cried in pain after it was thrown on the ground like a body bag.

Huge numbers in red color also appeared above it, which signified the damage that it had taken.

But Astaroth was not done yet.

He stepped on one of the jaws of the lizard while holding the other over his head. Then he extends his hand behind him as he gathered the surrounding mana on top of his palms.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The surrounding air was pulled in alongside the mana in it. They swirled above the palm of the elemental spirit, forming a spinning orb made of earth elements. It glowed with a mixture of gold and yellow color alongside a black hue swimming on its surface.

And when the accumulation of power reached its peak, Astaroth swung his hand forward and sent a glowing orb at the mouth of the huge lizard. It flew straight in and arrived at the stomach of the latter within an instant.

Swoosh!

And before the Comodo Earth Lizard could even do anything, a subtle but powerful explosion erupted inside its stomach.

Boom!

It messed up its innards, making the huge lizard cry in pain for another time. And as if it was not the end, there was a series of rumbling sounds inside the body of the lizard before a bunch of earth spikes sprouted out of its body, piercing the hardened body of the lizard with their pointed end, and cutting huge wounds with sharp edges.

The Comodo Earth Lizard wiggled crazily due to pain. It struggled to move while roaring repeatedly due to the huge damage that it had suffered.

Almost half of its Heath Bar was chunked out just by that attack.

Its mount breathed out a huge amount of hot mud, dirt, and rock fragments that forced Astaroth to retreat.

Ta-ta!

When the elemental spirit landed in the distance, he wanted to quickly charge back and finish off the lizard as soon as possible.

But before he could even move, he felt an intense vibration on the ground, which forced him to retreat once again.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

And not long after, earth spikes appeared on the previous location that he was standing on, covering a large area.

In the distance, the Comodo Earth Lizard had already flipped its body over and went back on its feet. It was breathing haggardly due to the numerous wounds that it had both internally and externally.

But not long after, the lizard absorbed a huge amount of earth elements from the ground. In the next instant, the wounds that it had slowly closed by the formation of rock clusters, totally sealing them.

Even though it did not heal those wounds and its Health Bar remained in the same state, the lizard was no longer suffering from the continuous bleeding.

Boom!

Then its body emitted a visible flow of earth elemental mana as its eyes turned bloodshot while glaring at Astaroth.

It was clearly in its enraged state, boosting all of its stats and power.

Bang! Bang!

The two did not wait that long as they quickly charge at each other once again before clashing multiple times. They were also showcasing their control over earth elements as they exchanged quite a number of spells during the process.

Their battle might be explosive and devastating, but the one with a clear advantage was definitely Astaroth as he did not suffer any injuries during the exchanges.

It was only a matter of time before the Comodo Earth Lizard would fall and get defeated.

...

In the distance, Shin watched the battle without any intention of joining. He remained standing on his spot and observed the two while gathering the information that he would likely need in the near future.

"So, these beast monsters are still following the normal logic. They would suffer double the damage after being hit by a powerful attack from the inside."

This was one of the most important pieces of information that he could get since this would give him an idea of how to defeat most of the monsters in the area.

Aside from learning the attack patterns and the rest of the skills that the Comodo Earth Lizard had, this piece of information was the most valuable that he had gotten.

At the same time, this battle also had given him the idea of how strong Astaroth was. He also learned the fighting style of the latter, which was completely different from the rest of his Elemental Spirit Companions.

And what really baffled him was the fact that this particular Reaper's Retainer was a mixture of earth mage and warrior.

That was just too overpowered!

Moreover, Astaroth also had not used his main weapon yet, so his real strength was yet to be revealed. He was also mainly using his earth element, so his other elemental power, the metal element, was still hidden.

There was also his Elemental Transformation, the Earth Warden.

It was clear that this Elemental Spirit was not in the slightest bit weaker when compared to the rest of his Elemental Spirit Companions. And that was not his peak yet since he was supposedly in the middle of an evolution.

Shin felt completely satisfied and nodded his head. "This is way better than I expected!"

Chapter 1170 Overlord Stoneback Gorilla (Part 1)

...

Bang!

Shin had taken down yet another beast monster. But after dissecting its body and gathering useful materials from it, he felt a little disappointed since he did not find any Beast Core from it.

He had already spent an entire day already hunting quite a number of Lord Rank monsters as well as the ones in Common, Elite, and Special Elites in the area. Surprisingly, none of the monsters that he had encountered were at Chieftain Rank, which was quite strange.

And despite the number of monsters that he had hunted alongside Astaroth, only a few of them possessed a core. Even the Elemental Type Monsters that they had encountered did not guarantee that they had a Core either.

He now understood that not all the monsters in the area could possess such a thing in their bodies. And only those with the strength that far surpassed the ones on the same level and rank possessed them.

He also now realized that hunting for these Mana Cores was much harder than he had expected.

He felt that hunting here was really not worth it. Aside from the decent experience points, which he never needed at this point in time, the only thing that he could treat as a great harvest was materials from the beast-type monsters and elemental shards and mana stones and crystals from elemental-type monsters.

Boom!

Shin turned his attention toward the distance and saw Astaroth taking down yet another beast-type monster. The latter was stepping on the huge body of the monster while looking coldly at it.

The Elemental Spirit was now holding a huge sword resting on its shoulder. That sword was made of metallic elemental energy that had been martialized and solidified into a sturdy weapon.

Compared to the weapon of the others that either looked exquisite and majestic, this huge sword looked brute and ordinary, but the power that it provided Astaroth was at least on a comparable level.

Shin also witnessed how good Astaroth was when using that sword despite its enormous size. He also had gotten some inspiration when wielding a greatsword just by watching the latter.

Aside from that, he also noticed that Astaroth had gained great control over metal elements when wielding that huge sword. He saw the elemental spirit summon a huge group of metallic spheres that quickly turned into pointed needles that could pierce through the body of beast monsters despite their powerful defenses.

After witnessing the battle prowess of Astaroth, he could not help but think that this elemental spirit was really powerful. In terms of raw power, he was the strongest among all the elemental spirit companions that he had. And top of that, the elemental spells under Astaroth's arsenal were quite powerful too, and even complemented his battle style.

When Shin thought about it, he could not help but feel something. Though, that feeling only lasted for a brief moment.

He could not completely grasp it since it was too fleeting for him. But he was sure that it would be beneficial to him once he firmly held into it.

Unfortunately, he could not study it for long since he currently had another task at hand.

He had already arrived at his destination. He was now standing in front of a cave entrance that would lead him to the mines where he could find the meteorites that he was looking for.

"Let's go and enter. We can resume hunting for more Mana Cores once we are done mining the ores that I am looking for," said Shin as he led Astaroth inside.

"I heed your words, my lord," answered the elemental spirit as he followed right behind Shin.

Shin had already spent quite a lot of time inside the game, and he only had a day's worth before he had to log out. After all, he was no longer that free since he had to go to class at the academy in the morning.

He had to at least get the real reason why he had to go to this isolated map. He must work fast and secure the meteorite that he needed before the forces of the Black Market arrive.

Even though he would be getting reinforcements from the Hand of Midas, he would still not have enough time to deal with his real business when things turned out to be a mess.

With that, he had to finish everything that had to be done before having the time to get some fun later.

Having that in mind, he continued to venture inside the mine and look for the meteorite that he was looking for. Based on what Arthur had said, the Meteorite Ores were located in the deeper parts of the mine.

Moreover, there were also some monsters that were tricky to deal with, so Shin had to still be careful when advancing.

There were some simple golems disguised as rock formations and walls of the cave, but Astaroth was able to spot them instantly before dispatching them.

The journey was going smoothly when they finally encounter the monster that Arthur was talking about.

Shin raised his head and looked at the stalactites high up in the ceiling of the cave. On one of the largest stalactites, a huge silhouette was hiding in the darkness. It had a humanoid silhouette, but it also showed some noticeable differences.

Shin instructed Solus to make the light brighter than the one that she was currently releasing. And when it illuminated the cave, they were finally able to have a clear view of the monster clinging to the huge stalactite.

It was a huge gorilla with size that was much larger than the Comodo Earth Lizard that they had encountered the first time they arrived in the region.

Its arms were so muscular arms alongside the thick furs on them. Even its legs were in the same state. The round yet broad shoulders that this gorilla had also signified the strength that it had.

With such a build, it was easy to figure out that this was a strength-type monster. But after the experiences that Shin had earlier, he could not be sure, especially when he saw the rock armor that the gorilla had on its back.

[Monster Name]: Stoneback Gorilla

[Monster Type]: Beast, Mammal

[Monster Index]: Earth Elemental Mutation

[Monster Rank]: Overlord

Level: 165

Health Points: 5,000,000,000/ 5,000,000,000

Seeing the basic information about the monster, Shin could not help but frown deeply. "An Overlord Monster? No wonder there are no other monsters in the surrounding area. But it only has five billion health points despite its rank. It is pretty low compared to the monsters in the region, especially since it is an Overlord."

Shin was having a bad feeling about the monster when he saw that information panel. "To have such a 'low' HP Bar in that rank can only mean that it has either a broken defensive prowess or an overpower attack power."

"And given that this gorilla is hanging on that stalactite, it will not be surprising if it is very agile when fighting," he added while sighing. He was expecting that this was going to be much harder than what he was expecting.

"You better have a Beast Core to drop to make this trouble worth it," he said to the Stoneback Gorilla, not caring whether it could understand him or not.

After saying that, he suddenly instructed. "Pull it down to the ground!"

"Yes, my lord!" Astaroth, who was standing behind him silently and waiting for his orders somewhat impatiently, immediately kicked the ground and forcefully launched himself into the air. He flew straight to the gorilla while summoning his greatsword.

Tightly gripping the sword, the muscles on his arm bulged up as he put a lot of strength on them while brandishing the greatsword.

Swoosh!

Roar!

The Stoneback Gorilla hit its chest repeatedly with its free fist while releasing a deafening roar that shook the entire cave violently.

It even created an air shockwave that tried to push Astaroth back and prevent him from advancing. But it did not do much as the latter swing his greatsword in the air in front of him, cutting the invisible shockwave and creating a path for himself.

During his flight forward, he followed the momentum of his previous swing and twirled the greatsword a couple of times to generate more of it. And when he finally reached the ideal distance to attack, he swung the greatsword with a force much stronger than the previous strike.

Seeing the incoming attack, the Stoneback Gorilla swung itself a little before pouncing at Astaroth while widening up its arms in the air above its head before swinging them like a pair of hammers.

Roar!

Boom!

The collision quickly generated a strong shockwave that spread in every direction, shaking the whole cave once again when it hit the walls.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Then two figures flew in opposite directions right in the next instant. Astaroth was sent back flying on the ground and slammed onto it while the Stoneback Gorilla was thrown to the opposite side and hit the walls.

Bang! Bang!

Swoosh!

Shin quickly made his move at that time and charged forward, chasing after the gorilla. He also entered Reality Manifestation since he knew that he could not hold back this time. Then he jumped in the air and used the 'Mondi's Jump' trice to further increase his speed and catch up to the latter.

His speed was so fast that he quickly caught up to the latter within a span of seconds. He appeared in front of the gorilla the instant it collided with the cave walls.

He then unsheathed the [Yamato] and stabbed it forward.

Swoosh!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Flash Strike'

Shing!

He might have timed his attack perfectly, but it was still blocked by a massive hand that appeared in front of the tip of the katana.

Cling!

It produced a metallic sound that reverberated in the entire cave alongside the shining sparks created by the collision.

After blocking, the Stoneback Gorilla extended its palm forward, trying to grab Shin with it. But that latter quickly reacted and kicked the surface of the huge palm to propel himself back in the opposite direction.

The gorilla was about to give chase when it saw Shin twist his body midair before spinning.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Passing by his body with a narrow margin, 'thin' metal needles flew toward the monster with insane speed.

Roar!

The gorilla shouted once again before sinking the fingers of its hands clinging to the cave walls behind it. It then did a pulling motion as a huge chuck of rock was pulled out from that wall.

The gorilla threw that huge rock a size of a boulder toward the incoming hail of needles. It even infused a huge amount of earth elemental mana on that rock, making it glow with a brown light.

Cling! Cling! Cling! Cling!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The huge piece of rock was bombarded by metal needles and reduced into small fragments that were thrown in every direction.

Ta-ta!

When Shin landed back on the ground, he quickly raised his head and looked in the direction where the gorilla was. His eyes were glowing with a golden light, making his sight to pass through the thick could of dust and dirt in the air.

The gorilla did not make any sudden move after that, which made him relax a little.

Then his brows could not help but locked into a frown as he remembered what just happened earlier when he attacked. "Those hands look like made of metal. I can't even scratch it, much less leave a wound."

"This is getting more and more troublesome," he muttered as a slightly annoyed look surfaced on his face.

He then turned to his ability panel and saw that he could only summon two more Elemental Spirit Companions. "Tsk! It even has a Spiritual Suppression Skill. Fortunately, it is not a superior one that can prevent me from summoning more of my retainers."

"Alright, let's increase our numbers then," he mumbled while summoning two more Elemental Spirits.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

After a brief consideration, he decided to summon Solus and Whitie.

Given the elemental of this Stoneback Gorilla, the abilities of the others would only be suppressed, so he rejected the idea of choosing them.

At the very least, Solus had the destructiveness of her flames while the light element of Whitie was much more useful than the others.

As for Hanzo – well, he needed the guy for Elemental Spirit Possession. Since the old spirit was the only one who was currently perfect for his sword-drawing style aside from Solus, he did not have much of a choice.

Shin did not have to give his orders to the others as everyone quickly made their moves.