

Destiny 1201

Chapter 1201 Pursuit (Part 7): A Familiar Enemy

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Shin stood silently in the middle of the mountain forest while keeping his eyes closed. He was engraving the feeling that he currently had so that he could remember it clearly later. This feeling would surely help him when he tried entering his Natural State meant for Mentalism.

At the same time, he was also assessing his performance earlier.

He was too occupied with the battle and too focused on the Natural State that he was in earlier to understand what was going on. He also somewhat had an idea of what was happening in that short moment.

He was able to break through his current limits in Martial Arts and step into the Ascension Realm. However, it quickly disappeared right after he calmed down and regained his usual composure.

He knew that it was temporary, but that feeling of completely being one with nature was still lingering within him. It gave him such a strong impression even though it was only for a short amount of time.

It was only the lowest of the Ascension Realm, the Ethereal Opening Stage, but he had gotten an impression that would last for a very long time.

Now that he had gotten the time to think about everything, he immediately understood what just happened. He quickly realized the answers to the questions that he had earlier.

Why he was in that state?

Why does that Natural State feel familiar yet also unfamiliar?

Why does it feel it was his yet also not at the same time?

These questions that were lingering at the back of his head were quickly answered when he thought about it now.

"So, it is you after all," he muttered, seemingly talking to himself. He might look crazy, but there was a reason for it.

The answer quickly came and sounded inside his head. "Don't talk to me. You are such a bother. Trying to claim it as yours can cause trouble for your real body even though you only feel it inside this world."

Uno was very annoyed at what Shin had tried as he continued to complain. "Do you realize how reckless it was? Your mind and body will have some dissonance when you log out later. It can cause your original 'illnesses' to reoccur if not for me stepping in."

"What are those illnesses?" asked Shin confusedly.

"Do bother to ask. You will know about it at the right time. It will only confuse you if you learn about them now," answered Uno with full annoyance.

Shin did not inquire any further as he knew that Uno would not answer any of his questions about this matter. Instead, he asked something that made him intrigued. "You can talk to me when I am inside this game?"

"Duh! Of course, we can!" answered Uno as if it was a matter of fact before explaining. "This world is nothing different from your sea of consciousness. The technology that is used to create this game stimulates your brain when entering this so-called game."

"It pulls your consciousness into this imaginary world while your body is in a state of suspended animation. It is like you are being put into a dream where you are completely aware of what is happening."

"And since you happen to have 'more than one consciousness,' we are able to communicate like this."

Shin came to a realization when he heard that before nodding his head. Then he suddenly asked as he remembered something. "Then we are you not communicating with before. This is a good opportunity to 'catch up' with each other, don't you think?"

"Tsk! Of course, it is because I hate you, you coward!" snarled Uno before continuing. "Anyway, I am going back now. Don't bother me again. I still have a lot of things to do. I can't entertain you."

Shin felt that it would be a pity, but he could not do anything about it since he did not have any control over Uno yet at this moment.

But he would not let this opportunity just go away like that without asking the questions that he was currently curious about. "Wait! Don't leave yet! Let me ask a couple of questions first."

He then added without waiting for Uno's rejection. "Have you successfully fused the 'Sacred Qi' and 'Demonic Qi'? Have you been able to fuse the two breathing techniques meant to control them, the 'White Dawn Boundary' and 'Black Origin Threshold'? And have you been able to break through the 'Core Formation State' and entered the 'Ethereal Opening Stage'?"

Shin felt that Uno contemplated for a brief moment before answering with a mystifying tone. "I will leave it to your imagination."

After that, Shin sensed that Uno had 'disappeared' and went back to who knows where. He could only shake his head and smile bitterly when it happened.

When Shin opened his eyes, he could already tell that the Demonic Formation locked on the place was collapsing. He could also tell that the metal rods that Blackie had informed him were crumbling right now.

He was holding back earlier since he wanted to claim those metal rods as well as the other materials used to set up the entire formation. But since Andre had overworked the formation and exhausted everything, the materials used for the formation had also been drained completely.

"Tsk! Too bad. I really wanted to do some research with them later," he muttered as he felt pity for it.

He felt that he would need those materials in the future.

After thinking about it for a while, Shin summoned his Elemental Spirits once again to sweep through the entire place. He wanted to make sure that he did not miss anything before proceeding.

When they were done with everything, Shin ordered everyone to continue the chase. Whitie transformed into a huge white tiger with blazing paws that Shin had mounted before dashing toward the direction that his master had indicated.

In the meantime, Vladimir, Blackie, and Grimrace chased after them and headed toward the same direction.

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In the meantime, on the other side where Shin's target was, the group of demonic players were currently advancing toward their destination in full haste suddenly came to an abrupt halt.

The person standing at the forefront of the group suddenly turned back, looking in the direction where they came from. He frowned quite deeply under his hood while staring in that direction.

"Andre has been captured," he muttered with a low voice, making the others turn toward him.

The others were shocked as they could not believe it while the rest seemed to be very calm as if they had already expected it to happen.

They knew that Andre was one of the most experienced veterans in their faction, but he was not the strongest among them. He was also not the most skilled either since there was someone within their ranks who was a famous mercenary in real life.

Regardless of their thoughts, this was still a serious matter. Recruiting a player to the Demonic Churches was not a problem but nurturing them into a veteran demonic player would not be easy.

Losing even a single one from their ranks was a serious blow to their forces. At least for the faction that their group was in.

Demonic Churches might be a strong force from the outsiders' point of view. It was the truth, but they were not as united as the Righteous Churches or the other NPC organizations within the game.

Everyone was always on their edge and on guard against each other. Any mishaps or mistakes could cause their faction to be devoured by the others, who were preying on them.

Given the losses that they had suffered after most of their people from this operation got captured by the 'people' chasing after them, it would not be a wonder if those opposing factions within the Demonic Churches used this opportunity to swallow them in one gulp.

It could even become more serious if they failed to escape from here and brought back the item that the traitor had stolen from them.

At the very least, they had to send their commander back along with the demonic item that they were carrying.

"You guys move and bring the package to the rendezvous point. The one that is chasing us seems to be much more formidable than what we have expected," said the commander of the group without removing his gaze from the direction that they came from.

"What are you talking about, commander? We are only a couple of miles away from our destination. We only have to endure a little bit more and we will reach the Forsaken Port City," said the sole team leader left in their group.

The commander shook his head repeatedly and reprimanded. "Idiot. You don't understand our current situation. It is already beyond our control, so we have to make some countermeasures."

"Then you must go ahead first, commander. We will stay here and buy you some time before they catch up. Without us dragging you behind, you will be able to reach the city much faster," said another member of the group, urging their commander to make haste.

Hearing that, the commander shook his head further before saying. "Morons. What a bunch of morons. You guys don't understand the situation at all."

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

While he was still in the middle of talking, he suddenly sensed a small group of people rapidly approaching them from the direction where he was looking at.

He raised his head a little to have a better look at the incoming enemies before muttering. "Now, it is already too late to run, you idiots."

"Prepare for battle!" he shouted, making the expression of everyone suddenly turn more serious.

Their eyes suddenly regained the cold looks that they were wearing earlier as they quickly headed to their respective positions.

Swoosh!

Right after his words descended, the group suddenly felt three unbearable pressures that suddenly assaulted them.

At the same time, they felt that something went past them, passing through their bodies. The mana within the surroundings immediately got agitated while the sky suddenly turned darker.

Raising their heads, the group realized that a purple dome was currently enclosing the entire area, seemingly trying to trap them inside.

They could feel that the space seemed to be solidifying, making it impossible to escape this place by using any kind of teleportation scroll. Not even blinking skills seemed to be possible to be used inside this barrier.

Along with it, they also sensed that the ground seemed to become more solid than before, giving them a sudden feeling of anxiety. It seemed like trying to dig the ground and create an escape route through it would be impossible with its current state.

The sky, space, and the ground were completely sealed by powers unclear to them, making the group become even more nervous.

Aside from their commander, who seemed to be very calm despite their current situation, the rest of the group felt too stiff to move.

Not long after, they saw a trio stepping out from the darkness created by the forest shade and walking toward them.

One was a person with purple skin wearing a ninja-like outfit. His head was full of white hair that was long enough to reach the back of his waist. He tied that hair into a ponytail, keeping it proper and giving him a clean look.

His white mustache was long enough to reach his collarbone alongside his long goatee. Such an appearance clearly indicated that this person was quite old.

The other person walking alongside him was a beautiful woman in a wizard outfit, which could not hide her alluring figure despite how loose they were.

Her eyes were glowing with brilliant light and her head was full of blazing hair. She was playing with a pair of fireballs in one of her hands while her other hand was releasing a violent flame that seemed to be able to burn anything.

The last and final person was a muscular person with bronze-like skin. He was currently topless while wearing a pair of white harem pants. There was also a thin fiber cloth hanging on his arms as he had his hands kept inside his pockets.

There were golden runes tattooed on his chest and arms, which were releasing a glowing hue from time to time. This pair of thick bull-like horns were also curving forward, making his appearance more intimidating.

These three were obviously the Elemental Spirits that Shin had sent to catch up with their targets first while he was left behind to deal with Andre and the rest of the teams left to block them.

Hanzo was stroking his goatee as he walked forward in a leisurely manner. But when his eyes landed on a particular figure standing in the middle of the opposing party, he could not help but squint further.

He focused his eyes on that figure as he scrutinized it with his gaze. This lasted for a couple of seconds before he suddenly started talking. "I did not expect this. It looks like we will have a proper fight this time compared to the last time we have met."

It was a good thing that he used his domain skill first alongside the one that Astaroth had before they came out. This prevented the other party from forcefully unsummoning them through the 'Spirit Awe' skill.

He could only say that the recent promotion of this Hybrid Guardian Spirit was perfectly timed. If he and Solus were the only ones present here, then he was not confident about this task that their host had given them.

At the same time, Solus was also glaring at that hooded figure while saying. "You will not be able to escape like the last time, Spawn of the Demon Gods."

Chapter 1202 Haowin, the God of Carnage (Part 1)

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Haowin just got promoted within the Demonic Churches due to the recent successes that he had. From an ordinary Messenger, he became a true Herald of the Demonic Church that he was serving.

He even received a sacrificial ritual that converted his race into a real Demon. Through this Demonic Rite, he could become a much stronger force than he used to be.

He still had his humanoid appearance, but his skin was pale grey, making him look more dead than alive. His eyes were pitch-black with crimson pupils. Those pupils were very demonic, making anyone who looked at him shudder in fear.

The only difference that he had from his previous appearance was the pair of long horns that were sticking out of his forehead and curving upwards.

When he took out the hood hanging over his head, the three Elemental Spirits immediately noticed the change that Haowin had undergone.

They could tell in a single glance that this guy had sold his soul to a Demon God and became a true evil. He was no longer a native of the Atlas World as he was now a true demon of the Underworld.

The three wore a solemn expression on their faces as they knew that this was not going to be as easy as they had thought. A strong Demonic Being was already troublesome enough, but a True Demon was going to be too much for their current selves to handle.

Fortunately, the other party seemed to have become a True Demon just recently, so his control over his demonic powers was still not beyond their levels.

At the very least, Shin could still fight against this guy as long as he went all-out and used everything he had.

But before all of that, they had to buy as much time as possible until their host got here. They then could leave everything to him when that happened.

For now, they had to decrease the number of the opposing side. Even though they could not kill them since these people needed to be captured alive, that did not mean that they could not incapacitate them.

With that in their minds, the three quickly made their respective move.

Haowin was able to sense their intentions and quickly waved his hand to warn his subordinates. "Move your feet and scatter!"

Unfortunately, they were already a step too late. The three Elemental Spirits were already on the move.

Hanzo had already extended his arm outward at that time and made a grabbing gesture in the air. A sword with dual blades, which was facing opposite directions, suddenly materialized in the air as he grabbed it.

His arm then suddenly turned into a series of blurs as he swung that weapon in the air.

Swoosh!

Before the opposing side could even make their moves, purple spatial rifts suddenly appeared in their surroundings and cut through everything that they touched.

Some of the demonic players got their legs and arms completely severed as those spatial rifts cut through them.

"Argh!"

"Urgh!"

"Ahh!"

Painful shouts resounded in the entire place as the demonic players started falling on the ground one after another. They were instantly incapacitated just by a single move from Hanzo. Fighting this state was already impossible, much less running away.

Realizing that it was already too late for these people to escape, the only thing that Haowin could think of was to kill them on the spot so that they could respawn again tomorrow.

Getting killed and forcefully logged out was much better than being captured by the opposing party. It was much better than being forced to delete their characters, lose all their progress inside the game, and start over again.

They were not like Haowin, who could still benefit somehow after being thrown in the Eternal Prison.

When that thought crossed Haowin's mind, he immediately waved his arm in the air and summoned a group of black spears in the air, pointing to each of the demonic players lying on the ground.

After that, he suddenly swung his hand down, controlling those spears and letting them fall to each of his subordinates to kill them.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

But right before those black spears could even reach the demonic players, the ground underneath them seemed to have moved before swallowing each of them while forming an earthen dome that protected them.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Astaroth made his move and 'saved' those demonic players at the very last moment. He cast a defensive skill at them before those black spears could even take their lives.

Haowin frowned deeply when he saw that and quickly raised his hand once again, preparing a much stronger skill that could utterly destroy the ground and completely obliterate the others along with it.

He was about to swing his arms down when he sensed an intense heat heading in his direction. And when he raised his head and looked at it, he saw a huge ball of fire rapidly approaching him.

Solus had sent it to him right before he could even complete his skill. The fireball was almost upon him even before he lowered his hand.

Swoosh!

He was already a step too late to dodge, so he could only raise his arm to block the incoming fireball.

The black corrupted mana gathered around his arms before forming a transparent shield in front of him.

Bang!

The explosion was so strong that it sent Haowin flying back. His cloak was also burned in the process, turning it into ash within an instant. If not for the powerful protection that his corrupted mana had, then his body would most likely been scorched black too.

Ta-ta!

When his feet landed on the ground a few meters away from his previous position, he quickly put his guard up and got ready to continue to fight. But to his surprise, the opposing party seemed to have no intention of continuing right away as they chose to secure the captured demonic players first.

Seeing that, he knew that he had been tricked. He frowned quite deeply while glaring at the three but did not make any hasty moves.

In the meantime, the three Elemental Spirits in the distance were currently observing his current appearance while securing their captives.

Aside from Haowin's face and horns, the trio could not clearly see his overall appearance due to the cloak that he was wearing. But right now, they could see the changes that his body had compared to their previous encounter.

His current build was not much different from what he had before. But his arms and legs were clearly much stronger than what they previously had. His fingers were also a little longer while his nails were much sharper.

There were also black scales covering his hands and arms. They also seemed to be covering the other parts of his body even though they were being covered by his armor. Some hints of them could be seen peeking out from the collar of the armor and spreading up toward his neck.

It was as if his demonic transformation had always been active all the time. The black miasma leaking out from his body was also a clear indication that the corrupted mana within him was so contaminated that it could not be properly contained. It was also starting to contaminate the surrounding mana.

Just looking at him was more than enough to put pressure on his opponents, what was more when he was purposely releasing a much stronger pressure from his body.

Hanzo squinted his eyes narrower while staring at Haowin. Fully understanding that this was not going to be an easy battle even for them, he quickly entered his Elemental Transformation to make sure that nothing could go wrong.

Three purple rings made of ancient glowing runes appeared behind him, rotating at different paces and opposite directions.

The body of the old spirit was also releasing a purple glow along with the appearance of small spatial disturbances around his body, which looked like pieces of shattered glass.

'Elemental Spirit Transformation: Dimension Traveler'

Following his lead, Solus and Astaroth also underwent their respective elemental transformation.

Solus was suddenly surrounded by a gorgeous flame that had golden runes swimming on its surface. Her wizard clothes were also filled with similar runes, which were blazing with fiery flames.

'Elemental Spirit Transformation: Firestorm Goddess'

Astaroth, on the other hand, was immediately covered by full-body armor after absorbing the energy from the ground. It was an armor made from a mixture of Earth and Metal Elements.

He rested his greatsword over his shoulder as he took a battle stance.

'Elemental Spirit Transformation: Earth Warden'

Right after their transformation, the three quickly moved and started attacking Haowin, not giving him any time to react.

Swoosh!

Solus made a series of gentle gestures in the air, summoning a huge group of fireballs behind her. Each fireball seemed to be made of blazing gas, making their appearance closely similar to a miniature sun.

She then waved her hand forward, controlling each of the blazing spheres made of fire forward. These fireballs scattered in different directions, taking different paths as they flew toward their target.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Haowin seemed to be able to read each of their trajectories as he suddenly took a fighting stance. He then enveloped his arms with a large amount of corrupted mana, which suddenly solidified and turned into a pair of black crystalline claw gauntlets.

He waited patiently for the barrage of fireballs to arrive before punching forward and sending a strong gust of wind that swept everything in its path.

His punch was strong, but it was not enough to completely obliterate the incoming barrage. He completely understood it and took a couple of steps forward before throwing a series of punches in the air that destroyed the remaining fireballs.

When he was in his ending pose, he suddenly sensed a brief change in the space surrounding him.

Without any hesitation, he quickly retreated while doing a series of dodging maneuvers such as flips, air rolls, and aerial spins.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Every time he did either of those movements, a series of long spatial rifts were suddenly formed on the space that he just went by, indicating slashing strikes that Hanzo had thrown.

Those attacks might come a little too sudden and hard to detect, but given his current stats provided by his True Demonic Body, he was able to sense all of them and respond accordingly.

When he finally felt that he had escaped the range of Hanzo's attacks, he quickly tried to pick up his form and get ready to counterattack.

But before he could even make his move, he suddenly felt an intense vibration underneath his feet, making him jump high up in the air without any hesitation.

Swoosh!

Bang!

Right after his feet left the ground, huge earthen spikes suddenly spouted out from the ground, piercing toward the sky. Their pointed ends were so sharp that they could even send shivers down Haowin's spine.

One of the spikes almost caught up to him, barely stopping front in front of his face when he reached the apex of his jump. He was suspended in the air, upside down, as he stared at the pointed tip right in front of his pupils.

A little push and his eye would most likely have gotten pierced by it.

While he was trying to regain his balance in the air, Haowin suddenly saw a group of fireballs heading his way. They were spinning and spiraling around each other while leaving a blazing trail in the air.

Swoosh!

A moment later, they started merging with each other and formed a blazing dragon head while charging at him. It opened its mouth wide, seemingly trying to devour him in a single gulp.

'Ultimate Elemental Skill (Eternal Flame): Judgement of the Sun'

Roar!

When he was about to think of a way to dodge, he saw Astaroth and Hanzo also sending their respective attacks toward him.

The former summoned a towering pillar made of earth, shooting up toward the sky. The Obsidian Guardian Spirit rode it and sent himself toward Haowin, who was still in the air.

And when he reached a desirable distance, he suddenly raised his greatsword and tightly gripped it with both of his hands.

The Earth and Metal Elemental Mana gathered around the sword and made its size grow larger.

Astaroth brandished the gigantic sword toward Haowin. The sword was so huge that it felt like a mountain was crushing toward him.

'Ultimate Elemental Skill (Metallic Earth): Supreme Banishment'

Swoosh!

At the same time, Hanzo appeared a few meters away from Haowin while holding his dual-bladed sword behind him. He was standing with a slightly bent leg while the other was resting on the side of his knee of the previous one.

His hand was forming a seal in front of his chest as he was muttering a series of silent chants in ancient language.

After that, he suddenly lunged forward while being covered by a purple light. He entered an astral state and transformed into a streak of light that charged forward. He then swung his weapon forward, cutting through everything, space included.

'Ultimate Elemental Skill (Void): Ancient Art – Astral Step'

Swoosh!

The three attacks were perfectly timed and arrived almost at the same time, not giving Haowin any window to escape.

Boom!

Chapter 1203 Haowin, the God of Carnage (Part 2)

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Boom!

A huge explosion erupted when the three attacks landed on their target almost at the same time. Blazing smoke, flying rock fragments, and a long tear in space could be seen in the air where the three attacks met.

But despite successfully landing their respective skills, the three Elemental Spirits still felt that there was something wrong. Even though they felt that they hit something, the feeling was a little too strange. It was as if they hit something extremely hard and could not be penetrated.

Not long after, the thick cloud of smoke started to settle. When everything receded, the trio saw a familiar sight in front of their eyes.

They saw a dark cocoon floating at the center of the receding smoke and falling rock fragments. It seemed to be a solid object that could not be crushed nor penetrated by any attack.

It had a rhombus shape with a three-dimensional figure. It looked like a floating prism with sharp edges and pointed corners.

Thump!

The floating cocoon seemed to shake a little, making it look like a beating heart. It then started moving and revealed its true form.

A huge pair of demonic wings slowly unfolded, revealing Haowin, who was currently curled within it.

From the look of it, he used this pair of wings to protect himself from the Ultimate Skills that the three Elemental Spirits had thrown at him. Using one of the special defensive skills under his arsenal, he managed to save himself at the very last moment.

However, he still had sacrificed quite a lot just to use that special skill. Not only he had consumed a large portion of his VIT stat just to use that defensive skill, but he had also sacrificed it permanently.

He might have escaped the lethal strike that he was supposed to suffer, but he exchanged it for a permanent loss of his stats, which affected his foundation.

He knew that he would not die from those attacks since he could tell that the three Elementals were somewhat holding back and seemingly trying to incapacitate him. They controlled their strengths very well, making it possible for him to use this defensive skill at that final moment.

He might be able to somehow survive their attacks, but he would surely be in a state where he could no longer fight if they successfully landed.

To avoid the worst-case scenario, he made a sacrifice that could give him a path to survive. It actually paid off.

It was very close, but he still managed to survive in the end.

In the meantime, the three Elemental Spirits were currently wearing solemn looks on their faces as they knew that they failed to secure the only chance to capture Haowin alive by themselves.

After failing to incapacitate him with those three ultimate moves, they knew that Haowin would no longer lower his guard. Now that he was aware of their current strengths, it would be impossible for them to catch him off guard once again.

He would be in extreme vigilance when facing their combined attacks while keeping a close eye on his surroundings.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Understanding their current position, the three quickly resumed the battle as they knew that this was the only way for them to win. They had to continue putting pressure on him before he could fully adjust to their strengths and find a way to deal with them.

At the same time, they were also pinning him on this place while waiting for Shin to arrive. They fully believe that if they could hold him here, the rest of the battle would be in their favor.

Naturally, Haowin was able to read their thoughts. He could tell that the Spatial Imprisonment and Earth Sealing Domains that Hanzo and Astaroth had released were meant to prevent him from using his 'Spirit Awe' skill that could forcefully unsummon them.

It was his first time to learn about these skills. He did not know that Elemental Spirits could also use this kind of skill, so it caught him completely off guard.

The 'Spirit Awe' skill was meant to counter players with Elemental Spirits and special creatures. It could forcefully unsummon any kind of summoned creatures on the battlefield, which were pretty much too broken most of the time.

The only counter for this skill was the 'Call of the Nature' or 'Spiritual Summoning' skill that Tamers, Summoners, and Beastmasters had.

But those skills were exclusive to the said classes, or the ones related to them.

It was pretty natural for Haowin to be surprised that these Elemental Spirits were capable of possessing such abilities as well.

Little did he know that it was only for exceptional Elementals. Only the ones with special abilities and reached the peak of their respective elements could achieve such a feat.

Having these thoughts, Haowin knew that there was only a single solution to his current predicament, and that was to escape the area of effectiveness of these domains.

As long as he got out of their area of influence, then he would most likely be able to use his 'Spirit Awe' skill once again.

With that, Haowin used his demonic wings to fly over the mountain forest with the fastest speed that he had. He had to escape the domains that were locking him as soon as possible.

At the same time, the direction that he was heading was the Forsaken Port City. It was one of the cities situated near the border of the Saint Heaven Kingdom.

That city was also one of the places where the monster horde event was currently taking place, so he could use the chaos within the area surrounding the city to escape.

The three Elemental Spirits knew what he was thinking, so they did everything they could to hinder him. They were using everything they had just to keep Haowin inside the domains.

Solus and Hanzo, who were capable of flying, were engaging in an intense aerial battle against Haowin. But despite being besieged by the pincer attacks of those two, he was still able to hold his ground without a problem.

Not only he was defending himself very well against their combined assaults, but he was also counterattacking from time to time, which made it hard for the two to keep the pressure up.

Astaroth, who was slightly behind, was riding a moving wave of dirt and rocks. He was leaping in the sky from time to time, assisting the two with their combined assaults.

He was putting up a good performance despite being the only one who could not fly. In fact, he was the only one who was giving Haowin a lot of trouble since he was always popping out at the right moment.

He was perfectly blocking the escape route that Haowin was taking, whenever he was breaking free from the encirclement of the two.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Bang! Bang!

Boom!

The chase and the clashes between the two sides created loud explosions in the sky, which reverberated in the entire region. The collisions resulted in huge disturbances that started to attract the attention of the players within the area.

There were many players, who were hunting in these maps right now since most of them were currently defending the borders near the Forsaken Port City due to the monster horde event.

But it did not mean that there were no longer any players around. And since the disturbance that was created by the clashes between Haowin and the three Elemental Spirits was starting to get near the city, curious players started to gather head over their direction.

Naturally, these players would not dare to get too close to the center of that commotion. They would only stay in a place far away from it but also have a clear view of what was happening.

After all, most of the strongest players in the city were currently engaged in an intense battle with the continuous horde of monsters. They were too busy defending the city to satisfy their curiosity.

At the very least, they could only send some scouts to investigate what was happening. The guilds would also do the same while waiting for what was about to come.

In the distance, they could see two bright lights chasing after a humanoid silhouette with a pair of huge demonic wings on their back.

Closely behind those three was a moving hill that seemed to be also chasing after that mysterious silhouette.

At first, the curious players and the investigating scouts thought that it was another monster horde, but upon closer inspection, they realized that it was not the case.

Based on the huge explosions from each collision, it was pretty clear that it was a clash between powerful beings within the game. Or at least the strongest players who stood at the peak of everyone else.

In the distance, Haowin could already see the silhouette of the city. His confidence was starting to rise since it would only take a short moment before he finally reached it.

At the same time, he could also now see the borders of the domains cast by Hanzo and Astaroth. Other players might not be able to see them, but given his current power within the game, seeing such a boundary was very easy.

Understanding that he would now be able to escape, he started unleashing his real power while forcing his way out of the boundary of the two domains.

The expressions of the three Elemental Spirits were already getting grim as they tried their best to stop Haowin.

As more time passed, the three Elementals started to become hopeless as they watched Haowin exit the Spatial Imprisonment and Earth Sealing Domains.

They felt rather helpless due to the restrictions that the Will of the World (System) had cast upon them. If only they could showcase their real strengths, then teaching this guy a lesson would be as easy as flipping their hands.

Haowin was already grinning from ear to ear as he flew past the boundary of the two domains. He was no longer paying attention to the three Elemental Spirits at that time as he was flying straight to the Forsaken Port City.

He had already wasted a lot of time traversing multiple regions and hunting maps of the Saint Heaven Kingdom just to escape the pursuit of the Church of the Sun and Moon. He could no longer waste more time since it would be more dangerous once those powerful NPCs caught up to him.

He no longer had the support of the Demonic Formation, so he would not dare to face such powerful NPCs in his current state. It was the same as committing suicide, and he was not that foolish.

But right after he flew past the boundary dividing the inside domain and outside its area of influence, a much heavier pressure suddenly descended on him.

He was not sure what it was or where it was coming from, but he completely understood that it was targeting him. It locked on him from a very long distance, sending shivers down to his spine.

It only took him an instant what was happening and quickly turned sideways. He then curled his body into a ball before enveloping himself with his pitch-black wings.

Swoosh!

A sonic boom could be heard coming from a distance, attracting the attention of the players watching the earlier chase from afar.

At the same time, Solus, Hanzo, and Astaroth finally halted their tracks while wearing a deep smile.

Solus seemed to have stepped aside and straightened her back before putting her hands slightly below her belly with one over the other. She then gave a respectful bow while waiting for the arrival of her master.

Hanzo stood opposite her with a smug look on his face. He had his arms crossed in front of his chest while wearing a smirking smile.

Astaroth also halted before solidifying the wave made of dirt and rock fragments into a tall pillar. His right hand was holding the greatsword upside down beside him as he knelt on the stone pillar like an honorable knight while keeping his head lowered.

Then their bodies suddenly glowed before transforming into specks of light that followed the dashing figure who flew past them.

Swoosh!

Shin, who currently had two pairs of black angelic wings, flew straight to Haowin, who was currently hiding behind his demonic wings, and sheathed his sword.

Shing!

The sound of metal grinding against its sheath reverberated in the entire place as Shin pulled out the [Yamato] from its sheath.

This sound was still echoing throughout the entire place as Shin swung the sword forward, unleashing a powerful slash toward the opposing godlike figure.

Bang!

This collision was going to be another sensational clash between two peak gods within the virtual world.

The battle between Battle God Sickarius and the God of Carnage, Haowin.

Chapter 1204 Battle God vs God of Carnage (Part 1): Clash of the Gods

...

Bang!

Swoosh!

Haowin was sent flying in the opposite direction as Shin struck him with a powerful slash. That slash left a blinding trail in the air after being completed. It was still lingering in the air when the God of Carnage flew straight to the nearby mountain.

Boom!

The collision created a loud explosion that threw a cloud of dust and dirt in the air. Fragments of rocks and broken tree trunks could also be seen scattered in the air due to how strong the impact Haowin had created.

When everything settled down, Haowin could be seen standing in the middle of a huge crater that was created by the previous fall.

He was dusting himself in a casual manner as if the previous attack was nothing but an ant's bite. The leisurely expression on his face was still present as he slowly raised his head and looked at Shin, who was currently hovering in the air.

He stared at Shin for a couple of moments before chuckling. "I know that this is bound to happen sooner or later, but I don't expect that this is going to be under these circumstances."

Shin, on the other hand, was currently frowning deeply as he listened to the reports that Hanzo and Solus were giving him.

He was not sure how strong Haowin was but given that he was able to survive the combined assaults of the three Elemental Spirits up until now, and almost escaping from them, he could tell that he was at least as strong as his current self.

Moreover, he could also sense a deep threat coming from this guy, who seemed to be acting in a leisurely manner.

He also heard from Hanzo and Solus that Haowin had become a true embodiment of evil, a True Demon, which meant that he looked in a constant state of Demonic Transformation. This transformation did not have any limitations or a limited time duration.

On top of that, it was much stronger than what he had seen from Justin and the rest of the Silent Night, as well as Andre, whom he just previously captured.

Shin thought about the battle that was going to happen and muttered to himself. "This is going to be much harder than my previous battle against that veteran demonic player. Should I use my Martial Arts again and try entering that Natural State for another time?"

"It will boost my battle prowess and fighting capabilities."

It only took him a brief moment before he quickly rejected the idea. "Nah! It will be dangerous. Based on what Uno has said, I will suffer greatly if I try doing it again."

"I don't know what 'illness' he is talking about, but I am sure that it will be something to do with the imbalances that it can cause to my mind and body once I get back in the real world."

Thinking about that, Shin shook his head and decided to not risk it.

Instead, he thought of the best solution that he had right now. "Let's go with the strongest card that I have right now. I can also use my experience in the previous battle to try summoning my own version of Natural State when I am at it."

Having that in mind, he quickly called out Solus and used her Elemental Spirit Possession.

'Elemental Spirit Possession (Solar Flame): Divine Constellation'

The sudden appearance of the flame that enveloped Shin out of nowhere made Haowin frown a little. He could tell that this particular change was something to do with the technique application that concerned the Elemental Spirits, which was called 'Possession'.

He had already faced quite a few people, who possessed such technique, and all of them were strong in their own right.

What made him frown here was the pressure that he felt coming from Shin. He could already feel a strong threat coming from the latter since the earlier appearance, but this pressure became much heavier the moment he saw that gorgeous flame.

But that was not the end as Shin also used the breathing technique that he learned just recently. The breathing technique that he had acquired when Berlin was reforging his weapon, the 'Solar Breathing Technique'.

A mixture of white steam and blazing smoke came out of Shin's mouth as he exhaled deeply.

He could feel that the surrounding fire elemental mana was gathering toward him and waiting for his command. He felt that he had absolute control over them as he was currently in this state.

At the same time, he could also feel that he was touching the ideal state that he was looking for. A light push was needed for him to fully grasp it.

The Reality Manifestation, the Elemental Spirit Possession, and the Solar Breathing Technique were helping him reach that ideal state, that Natural State.

Shin looked like a fallen angel that had been ejected from heaven with his current appearance. But with the blazing sword and four black angelic wings behind him, he still looked dignified and majestic, especially when he was hovering in the air and looking down at his opponent from above.

Adding the brilliant halo created by the radiance that his body was currently emitting, his current appearance could put everyone who saw him in awe.

Haowin, on the other hand, felt something different when he saw the sight of his opponent. He felt rather excited fighting this powerful opponent despite how dangerous the other party was.

After that, he suddenly leaped toward the sky before flapping his wings to throw himself higher. He stopped and hovered in the air a few distances away from Shin while staring at the latter.

'Demonic Trait: Corroding World'

At the same time, he also released his own pressure to counter the one that Shin was currently emitting, which quickly resulted in invisible collisions in the air.

Black sparks clashed against each other where the respective auras met, which also created a series of subtle explosions.

Haowin clenched his fists tightly while keeping them in front of his chest. A moment later, he suddenly stretched his arms wide and opened his palms before releasing a much stronger pressure from his body.

Black miasma started leaking out from his body and spreading in every direction, dyeing the sky with its color.

The sky immediately turned dark due to this spreading black miasma as it also started to affect its surroundings. The mana filling the air also started to get contaminated due to it. They rushed toward Haowin and gathered around him, forming a black sphere.

Seeing what was happening, Shin squinted his eyes before increasing the pressure that he was releasing. He also controlled the fire elemental mana in the air, countering the incoming black miasma.

A blazing sphere quickly formed around Shin while repelling the black miasma that was trying to approach him.

Subtle explosions could be heard as the two opposing powers collided against each other.

Crimson and black sparks could also be seen at the point of collision, where the two forces met. Every time those stray sparks touched the trees underneath, they would either be burned into ash or blasted into smithereens.

This clearly indicated how strong the residual powers that were coming from the two.

...

As these two gods of the game were currently building up enough momentum, the players who were sent to scout what was happening could not believe what they were seeing.

They were starting to doubt whether they were playing the same game as these two, or even doubting whether they were from the same dimension.

They were too far from the two to clearly assess what was going on, but the current scene that they were seeing was more than enough to shake their eyes.

That blazing miniature sun and a huge mass of corroding miasma were more than enough to tell them that these pair were currently standing at the peak that they could only dream of.

These scouts might not be able to clearly see the appearance of the two players fighting right now and might not be able to identify them due to how bright the flames and how dark the miasma surrounding them, but they could tell that these two were among the top Godlike Players within the game.

Given that, these scouts quickly opened a live broadcast of what was happening while reporting to the higher-ups of their respective guilds and organizations.

When the news spread out, the more idle players from the nearby cities started to gather in this place and started their respective live broadcasts. Some of them even posted theirs on the official forums of the game, attracting more attention.

It did not take that long before the news reached the ears of the people, who could recognize those two.

"Damn! Did this guy say that he is in the middle of doing his class promotion quest now? Then how come he is fighting Haowin instead?"

"Hah! Shin Bro is quite enjoying himself fighting strong people, yet here we are struggling to clear our Class Promotion Quest."

"Haha! I guess Junior Brother is too idle right now to have much free time to play with these guys."

"Look at this guy! Here I am doing my best to look for the clues on how to upgrade my in-game Bloodline, yet he is out here enjoying himself fighting strong opponents."

...

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Back in the place where Shin and Haowin were currently facing, the accumulation of powers already reached the peak of both sides.

Boom!

Then, almost at the same moment, the blazing flame of the miniature sun and a huge mass of corroding dark miasma suddenly shrunk inside, seemingly receding toward the body of the two players situated right at their respective cores.

When everything recently, the figures of Shin and Haowin were revealed to every spectating player in the distance. This gave everyone a clear view of what was going on and told them the identity of the pair, who were currently fighting.

Bang! Bang!

Then, right at the same time, both Shin and Haowin flapped their respective wings, propelling themselves toward each other.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Shin left a blazing trail behind him as he flew toward his opponent. His sword was also raging with the gorgeous flame that was enveloping it. He looked like a meteor or a comet flying in a straight line as he threw a forward strike that cut through the air.

Swoosh!

In the meantime, Haowin turned into a steam of black light that was leaving a black smoke behind the path that it was taking. His demonic arms had become large and enfolded with a dark miasma. He then swung it forward, tearing through the space and leaving deep marks on the trajectory that it had taken.

Swoosh!

Boom!

Not long after, the collision immediately resulted in a huge explosion. The shockwave that it produced spread in every direction, pushing everything away from its center. It was so strong that even the trees on the nearby mountain were uprooted and sent flying along with it.

Such a sight sent shivers down the spine of every player that was watching the battle. Whether they were the once in recording the battle or the viewers watching from the live broadcast.

Yet, it was just the stat.

Bang!

Shin and Haowin were separated from each other after the brief pause during the initial collision. Then they sent themselves toward each other once again before having another explosive collision.

They repeated the process, making them look like a pair of lights that were flying in the sky while constantly clashing against each other.

Each collision would result in a resounding 'boom' reverberating throughout the place. There were also circular shockwaves that could be vividly seen by the naked eye even from a distance.

Each explosion seemed to be striking the chest of the scouts, spectating the battle from the distance due to how strong and deafening they were.

The viewers watching from the live feed posted in the official online forums were also starting to get at the edges of their seats as they could tell that the intensity of the battle was gradually rising.

They did not wait that long as Shin and Haowin finally finished measuring the strengths of each other and started using their skills.

They started showing off their real battle capacities.

Shin used some of his Mentalism Techniques with each of his moves, using the skills that he had in the game as the main model. And with the help of the Solar Breathing Technique, he was able to showcase a battle capability that shook all the spectating players to the core.

On the other hand, Haowin was starting to reveal the real strength of a True Demon. He was using the real powers of his race, as well as its unique racial skills. Aside from that, he was also amplifying the powers of these existing skills with the demonic powers that he had, turning them into a new set of skills.

Both sides were showing a strength that the ordinary players could only think of. They might have different approaches, but both methods had their own charm.

Shin was revealing to everyone that the game was not as simple as it was. It was as if he was telling them that anything was possible, and the real limit was themselves.

He was showing everyone that the in-game skills could also be used as a Martial Skill or a Mentalism Technique that could only be seen in the real world.

They did not know that it was called the Reality Manifestation, but all of them knew that this was something that they had to grasp if they wanted to reach the peak of this world.

Some people had taken this as a hint for the next progression of the game while others were suddenly reminded of the so-called hidden mechanic mentioned by the game developers in the recent announcement.

They then realized that this was something they needed to reach a height that they never had dreamt of reaching.

In the meantime, Haowin was showing a different point of view. He seemed to be telling everyone that there was nothing that could be done as long as they had the right amount of 'STATS'.

As long as their respective Stats met a certain range, their avatars within the game could also achieve something that they could only imagine in the real world.

At the same time, they also had to possess a certain 'Power' or 'Energy Control' if they wanted to achieve something like this. It might not be the same as what Haowin had, but it had to be at least on the same level.

This was neither Reality Manifestation nor Hyperactive Immersion, but the sharp and quick-witted players could immediately tell that it was another hidden mechanic that they had to discover.

This clash between Battle God Sickarius and the God of Carnage, Haowin, would leave yet another mark in the history of the Virtual World.

This would fully start the spark of the next stage of progression.

Chapter 1205 Battle God Vs God Of Carnage (Part 2): Perfect Demonification

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Bang!

The pair of lights clashing in the air were separated from each other as Shin and Haowin retreated to gain some breathing space.

While Shin was trying to catch his breath, he suddenly saw Haowin stopping a few distances away from him with wide-opened arms and fully spread wings. He knitted his brows a little as he focused his gaze on the latter, and then he saw a huge group of black spheres appearing behind his opponent.

Then, before Shin could even react, Haowin waved his hands forward and sent the black sphere toward the opposing party.

'Demonic Skill: Shadow Stars'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The black sphere moved according to Haowin's will and transformed into streaks of light that were heading toward his opponent. Their speed could not be underestimated since they were almost upon Shin in just an instant.

Seeing the black spheres bombarding him from multiple angles, Shin quickly flapped his wings and retreated to create more space between him and the barrage of attacks.

Swoosh!

He then started flying in the air while doing a series of aerial maneuvers. He spun, rolled, moved side to side, and even flew in the air with irregular patterns.

He was practically showing his amazing flying skills while dodging the black spheres that were chasing after him.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

He left a series of explosions behind as he continued to fly in the air like an eagle playing in the middle of a raging storm.

The explosions behind him looked like fireworks in the sky, which captivated the players watching the battle both from the distance and the live broadcast.

Adding the blazing trail that Shin had left through his path and the beautiful arcs that it drew, the scene became more pleasing to the eyes despite how destructive those explosions were.

Seeing that this was not going to work, Haowin decided to engage with close quarters once again.

He read through the trajectory of his opponent before flapping his wings to send himself toward the direction that he had predicted. He was planning to block Shin's path while the black spheres were chasing after him.

Swoosh!

Shin quickly sensed the approach of Haowin and swiftly made some adjustments to his movements. He spun around and swung his sword along with it.

A blazing trail was spread around him before turning into a flaming mantle that wrapped around himself and blocked the barrage of black spheres coming his way.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Those spheres were immediately melted by the flaming mantle when they came in contact with each other.

At that moment, when the flaming mantle finally receded after being bombarded by the black spheres, Haowin suddenly appeared with his demonic arm stretched behind.

There was a huge spherical object floating above his palm while blazing with shadowy flames. He then struck down with it, slamming the blazing sphere at Shin.

'Demonic Skill: Fallen Star'

Swoosh!

Shin just finished his spin at that moment, but he was already assuming a sword-drawing stance when he stopped. He stopped facing Haowin with a ducking position before unsheathing his sword.

The flame quickly stuck out from the gap between the sword and the sheath when he pulled out the [Yamato]. He then swung it forward while skillfully controlling the raging flame with the Solar Breathing Technique.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quickly Draw (Fire Form) – Solar Flare'

Swoosh!

A blazing crescent wave was quickly sent out as Shin swung the sword horizontally. It drew a perfect arc in the air as it continued moving toward the incoming blazing sphere.

Swoosh!

The blazing sphere was instantly cleaved in halves as the crescent wave flew past it. The two halves immediately exploded right after being separated from each other, making a clear path for Shin.

Bang! Bang!

At the same time, the blazing crescent wave sent by Shin immediately dissipated right before it reached Haowin since it had already exhausted its powers.

The two stared at each other's eyes for a brief moment as their movements paused momentarily.

Then they simultaneously made their moves, throwing their next attacks.

Haowin flew a little higher than his current position while pulling his right arm backward. He then raised it behind him and formed a claw with his hands while gathering his demonic energy in it.

The demonic arm grew in size along with the purple demonic energy enveloping it. It was releasing a suffocating feeling as the surrounding mana was continuously being sucked by it.

When the accumulation of powers reached its peak, he swung his claws down, cleaving through the air and tearing down space.

Swoosh!

'Demonic Skill: Demonic Collapse'

Shin quickly pulled back a little as he swiftly put the [Yamato] back to its sheath. He was assuming a sword-drawing stance when the surrounding fire elemental mana gathered toward him.

He then channeled the accumulated mana toward his sheathed sword as he was using the Solar Breathing Technique to control the flow of mana within his body and surroundings.

He waited for a couple of moments before finally pulling out the [Yamato] from its sheath and stabbing it at the incoming claw of his opponent.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Fire Form) – Blazing Strike'

Swoosh!

That stab was accompanied by a large amount of blazing mana spiraling around it. It then collided with the sharp claws of Haowin that was trying to crush on him.

Bang!

The two sides were thrown in a deadlock for a brief moment before the blazing strike from Shin pierced through the attack of his opponent.

But immediately after putting a huge hole in the huge hand made by the demonic energy, it quickly exhausted its powers and lost its momentum before dissipating in the air.

Shin then quickly followed it up with another move, jumping through the hole that his previous attack had created and stabbing his sword forward.

Swoosh!

Haowin swiftly retreated to create more space. After properly gaining a moving space, he stepped forward with a powerful stomp before throwing a powerful punch.

Bang!

The demonic fist and the tip of the sword quickly caused an eruption after meeting each other. The brief pause that they provided gave the two enough breathing space before throwing more attacks at each other.

Shin continued to slash while applying the insights that he had gained during his previous battles, using a series of straightforward attacks along with the sword techniques under his arsenal.

Haowin was forced to dodge from time to time since Shin's attacks were much faster than his. But he still found a couple of windows where he could throw a few punches for a counterattack.

In these exchanges, it was clear that Shin had the upper hand. Not only his advantage of having more experience in aerial battles was starting to show, but his swordplay itself was also improving during the battle in a steady manner.

The Reality Manifestation was not only helping him summon his Mentalism Techniques and Sword-Drawing Skills, but it was also helping him fuse the two styles in a much smoother way.

And since the Solar Breathing Technique was perfect for fire elemental control, the Celestial Vermillion Bird Method and the Jade Kirin Scripture showed some great maturity during the entire battle.

The Elemental Spirit Possession of Solus, the Divine Constellation, was also giving enough help since it could have absolute control over the fire elemental mana through it.

Combining everything together, Shin was able to gain a lot more in this battle than he had expected.

Moreover, he was starting to touch that ideal state that he was looking for. At least for this particular style that he currently had.

Shin was focusing on his own growth during this battle, but that did not mean that he was not aware of the changes that his opponent had.

During the process of their battle, Shin could also see some extreme changes from his opponent. He could see that Haowin was starting to adapt to the demonic physique that he currently had and the extreme powers that it possessed.

He could still tell that Haowin was currently being influenced by the system and the limits of the game. But for some unknown reason, he could feel that there was something different between Haowin and the other players of the game.

It was as if the 'limits' that Haowin had were different from the ones that the regular players had – or even the other Godlike Players.

During their exchanges, Shin could sense some familiarity from the movements of his opponent. It was the feeling that the system was completely 'helping' Haowin reach what he was trying to achieve.

It was similar to what he sensed from Diablo during their battle, but also somewhat different.

The difference was big from his perspective, but it was almost unnoticeable from the point of view of other people.

From what he had seen, the system was granting Diablo enough skills and techniques to achieve what he was envisioning inside his head. It was as if he was given the 'ability' to do things that he could only imagine.

From his knowledge, that state was known as Hyperactive Immersion. A legendary state that was known to all experts of the virtual games.

In comparison, Shin felt that the 'thing' that the system had given to Haowin was a 'vessel'. A perfect vessel that could withstand an overwhelming power that he was not supposed to have.

It seemed to be an enhanced version of the Battle Physiques that the players had after the trials in the Divine Colosseum. A physique that was perfectly tailored for them alongside their chosen techniques.

Shin suspected that whatever Haowin had achieved, it must be one of the hidden mechanics that the game had along with the 'Hyperactive Immersion' and 'Reality Manifestation'.

It might also be similar to the 'Magic Circuit Formation' or 'Conductor of Magic' that he had heard from Zero. It was the special magical state that was showcased by Flouree, who was a captain of the Earners Mercenary Group and a girl with some history with Arthur.

The difference between her and this method from Haowin was their completeness. This state that Haowin currently had was much more perfect and flawless.

...

Shin's suspicions were not that far. In fact, he was very close to it.

Haowin indeed had a Demonic Physique that was specially tailored for him by the system. He unlocked this physique after he became a true believer in the Demonic Churches and the first person to convert his race into a True Demon.

This transformed his virtual avatar from an 'imaginary' state into a 'true' being.

In this world, he had a true body, which was much better compared to the rest of the players. He could also control it perfectly since this virtual body had become a 'true' body.

This state was called by the system the 'Perfect Demonification'.

The concept of this was from the idea of creating a body comparable to the physique of the Demonic and Monstrous Beast from the real world.

In the real world, it was common knowledge for everyone that beasts and monsters had a much tougher body than humans. Some were even more flexible and agile than any other beings.

Their muscles, tendons, bones, and other parts were much tougher and stronger than human physiques.

Some of them even had special abilities that they innately had since birth, making them special creatures compared to humans, which made some of the people greedily research them.

Even if there were some people who could rival the bodies of these demonic and monstrous beasts through intense training, those people were very few and rare.

There were a couple of research that concerned this topic, but none of them were that successful, or at least did not have any serious side effects. They might have some progress, but they were still far from their desired outcome.

Some of the researchers in the World Gaming Organization, who knew about these research projects were invited to join the creation of the game. They had become one of the game developers and applied this idea of their research within the game.

After inputting the data into the game, the Super AI Chronos ran some virtual simulations and created a hidden mechanic in the game along with the others.

This achieved the desired outcome that the researchers had, thus they named this special state as the 'Perfect Demonification'.

Chapter 1206 Reality Manifestation Vs Perfect Demonification (Part 1)

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Bang! Bang!

Boom!

As Shin was observing Haowin and trying to figure out what kind of hidden combat system mechanic the latter was using, his opponent was also doing the same.

Haowin discovered this hidden combat mechanic after he became a True Demon.

The clues that he had during that time were the rewards meant for the first player to come in contact with the Devildom and Underworld, so it was impossible for other players to also unlock it without him knowing.

At first, he thought that Shin also possessed a 'Perfect Demonification', since their battle capabilities were really on the same level. However, after observing his opponent for quite some time, he discovered that there was something different from the hidden combat mechanics that they had.

He had a vessel that could perfectly host the overwhelming power that he currently had, but Shin obviously did not possess such a thing. Instead, the latter seemed to be able to use the Martial Art Skills and Mentalism Techniques from the real world.

Realizing this fact, Haowin knew that Shin might have discovered another path that could break through the limits of the game. It was something similar to his 'Perfect Demonification' that was meant to break free from the restrictions cast by the system.

Bang!

After separating from each other, Haowin did not immediately resume his assault but said instead. "It looks like you have discovered something interesting. Mind sharing it with me?"

Shin scoffed when he saw Haowin trying to sound him out. He shook his head before giving the latter a smirk. "The same can be said of you. How about telling me which Hidden Combat System you have discovered first?"

"I may satisfy your curiosity if you give me a satisfying answer," he added before quickly flapping his wings and lunging forward.

Clang! Clang!

The blazing sword and demonic claws clashed a couple of times before the two were separated once again.

And once again, Haowin tried to initiate a conversation. "How about you go first? I actually have a trust issue."

After that, he clenched his fist and gathered a huge amount of corrupted mana into it. He then threw a forward punch, which produced a huge demonic fist that flew straight to Shin.

'Demonic Skill: Dark Annihilation'

Swoosh!

Shin flapped his wings to distance himself away from the incoming fist while sheathing his sword. He then paused for a moment to assume a sword-drawing stance while accumulating enough fire elemental mana on the sheathed sword.

A moment later, he transformed into a stream of light that flew forward while leaving a blazing trail behind.

Shing!

Unsheathing his sword, he suddenly stabbed forward while flying in a straight line. His figure pierced through the huge demonic fist and headed straight to his opponent.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Fire Form): Blazing Final'

Swoosh!

Bang!

"I must say that I also suffering from a similar condition," said Shin as the tip of his sword collided against the scales protecting the clenched fist of his opponent.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

After that, the two showcased their martial skills and mentalism techniques once again. The exchanges that they had were clearly showing the insights that they had on their respective disciplines.

Even though Haowin could not fully showcase his martial path, he could at least compensate for the gaps between their might with his current physique and powerful skills inside the game.

Even though his even his Tier 1 and Tier 2 Skills reached another height due to 'Perfect Demonification' – very similar to how Shin was transforming his in-game skills into real Martial Art Skills and Mentalism Techniques.

The only issue that Haowin had was the continuous growth of his opponent. He could clearly see that Shin was constantly growing in their battle, and it was at a rapid pace.

Haowin could estimate that he would most likely lose if he let this continue. He did know what state was trying to reach, but he could at least tell that it was something that he did not want to experience.

If he let Shin complete his goal during the battle, then Haowin's fate was most likely been sealed at that point.

"If that is the case, then I have to beat him before it happens!" he muttered to himself before coming up with a decision. "I must use everything I have at this point!"

Finally resolving himself, Haowin forced Shin to retreat with a powerful strike before quickly retreating. He was planning to create enough space between the two of them before using his final cards.

Shin could already read the thoughts of his opponent, so he quickly flapped his wings and gave chase. He was not going to give Haowin enough space to reveal his true strength.

At the same time, Haowin naturally knew that Shin would not let him do what he was planning, so he had to buy himself enough time to use his final cards.

Swoosh!

He waved his hand while retreating, leaving a huge group of black spheres in his path. Half of these spheres created a blockade that prevented anyone from approaching him while the other half became a swarm of attacks that flew straight to Shin.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Shin knitted his brows when he saw the incoming barrage of attacks. But instead of slowing down, he flapped his wings strongly and further increased his speed, diving straight to the incoming attacks fearlessly.

Swoosh!

Boom!

A sonic boom was created as Shin flew straight ahead. His speed did not hinder his mobility in the air despite how hard to control his movements with it.

But as he advanced further, the swarm of black spheres was increasing in numbers, making it hard for him to completely avoid them. They had created an almost solid wall of defense that could not be easily penetrated.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Given this situation, Shin finally slowed down his flying speed so that he could deal with them. He started swinging his sword left and right, slashing and deflecting.

He was applying the principle of the 'Sword Transmigration' to redirect the trajectory of the incoming spheres and send them to the rest that were coming his way.

As he repeated these actions, his movements started to become more flawless and powerful. Each of his swings was becoming more and more natural as time went by.

Those swings were also starting to build up a strong momentum since they contained the principle of the 'Sword Transmigration'. The swings were getting stronger with each passing second as he continued to absorb the kinetic force of the incoming spheres and add it to the one that his wings already had.

While Shin was busy dealing with the swarm of black spheres, Haowin did not waste any time and quickly sat cross-legged in the air.

He put his palms together while continuously absorbing the mana from the surroundings, converting them into corrupted mana before fusing them with his demonic energy.

Roar!

Not long after, a huge illusionary figure of a demonic being manifested behind Haowin. It seemed to have similar features to himself but had a more hideous and horrifying appearance.

Its entire body was made of corrupted mana that was purple in color and carried a black hue on its surface.

The pressure that it was emitting was so suffocating that it even started to affect those players watching from the distance.

"Urgh!"

"Argh!"

Painful groans could be heard from the distance, making the scouts rapidly retreat from their current location. They continued to run until they finally regained their breathing in a faraway distance.

From this distance, they could no longer see what was happening in the battle. What they saw was the gigantic purple silhouette behind Haowin and the 'fireworks' on Shin's side.

Regardless, they continued watching the battle despite the limited information that they had. They were committed to watching this battle until the very end.

Haowin did not care what those people were thinking. The only thought that he had was to defeat Shin as soon as possible so that he could finally escape this place. The longer he stayed here, the higher the risk of him being captured by Inquisitors of the Church of the Sun and Moon.

He continued to channel his mana toward the demonic avatar behind him, making its appearance more realistic.

Bang!

At that moment, Shin finally broke through the blockade of the black spheres. Unfortunately, he was a step too late as the demonic avatar already had a lifelike appearance.

"What was that?" muttered Shin with a frown while looking at the huge silhouette behind Haowin.

Answering his question, Hanzo suddenly responded. "It is the Blood Servant Avatar."

"Blood Servant Avatar?" repeated Shin while continuing to frown deeply. He could feel a strong pressure coming from the demonic avatar despite all the boosts and buffs that he had.

Hanzo nodded his head and continued. "Yes. It is one of the secret techniques that the Demon Race has. They pull out an ancient demon beast from the other dimension and turn it into their loyal servant."

"In a sense, it was a secret technique that the Demon Race came up with to counter the Elemental Spirits and the Possession Techniques of the Heroes from the previous Repelling Era."

He then paused for a moment before adding. "However, this secret technique can only be used by True Demons with noble statuses. Since that is the case, this Otherworld Individual must have a very high ranking in the Demonic Churches. We must capture him at all costs."

Hanzo observed the appearance of the demonic avatar behind Haowin before continuing. "From the looks of it, this Ancient Demon Beast is a Destruction Devil. It is an epitome of destruction."

"You must put your utmost caution! This one is going to be so much harder than you think," he warned with full seriousness.

Shin inclined his head to the side before mumbling. "Then I must prevent it from fusing with that guy, right?"

As that thought flashed through Shin's mind, right before he made his move, the Destruction Devil suddenly raised its arm and threw a punch at Shin.

Swoosh!

Shin's pupils suddenly contracted when he saw that. Despite the huge body that this Destruction Devil had, its speed was something that Shin did not expect.

He quickly turned into a streak of light that dashed toward the other location.

Swoosh!

He had exhausted the charges of his 'Moonlight Steps' skill to make sure that would not be caught by that destructive punch.

Bang!

Shin could hear a deafening explosion when that punch reached its farthest range. The air in front of its demonic fist exploded, sending a strong shockwave in every direction.

That single punch alone was more than enough to rival one of the advanced skills of his Elemental Spirits.

As he was comparing the strength of his ancient demon beast with his elemental spirit, Hanzo's voice suddenly sounded inside his head. "Destruction Devils have no skills or techniques. All they knew was to use their powerful bodies to destroy everything they see."

Shin could not help but chuckle despite the current situation. He felt that his old spirit was somewhat offended when he tried to compare the Elemental Spirits to the Destruction Devil.

Haowin, who just finished summoning his Destruction Devil, quickly stood up and flew higher in the air.

He then entered the slightly translucent body of the demonic avatar behind him before activating an empowered berserk skill that was unique to True Demons.

Thump! Thump!

There was no visible change in Haowin's outer appearance, but his muscles seemed to have become more compact and much denser.

Following that, the demonic avatar of the Destruction Devil suddenly shrunk with an unimaginable speed before merging with the body of Haowin.

And when the proceed ended, Haowin slowly opened his eyes, which were now releasing a deep crimson glow.

Additionally, a spiritual figure also overlapped with his existence, indicating that the Destruction Devil had merged with him.

'Secret Demonic Technique: Destruction Devil'

The pressure that was coming from his body was also much stronger than before as it was comparable to the one that the Destruction Devil was releasing earlier.

The expression on Shin's face became slightly solemn as he failed to stop the entire process. It was a little too fast for him to respond.

However, he was not that concerned as he was still confident with his current strength.

While Shin was still waiting for Haowin to make his move, the latter suddenly opened his mouth. Then a beam of light suddenly shot out from it and flew straight to Shin with a speed that surpassed everyone's imagination.

Swoosh!

Regardless, Shin evolved innate talent inside the game, which was the Ultra Instincts, and his True Sight ocular skill gave him the ability to respond to it.

He swiftly raised his sheathed sword and placed it in front of him while summoning a spherical barrier made of fire mental mana.

This protective skill was the 'Eclipse Pulse' from the skillset he had from the Slayer Class.

Its properties changed due to the influence of his Elemental Spirit Possession and the Reality Manifestation.

Adding the great control that was granted to him by the 'Divine Constellation' and 'Solar Breathing Technique', the effects that this ordinary skill had another change.

Shin also added his Mentalism Technique in the mix, so its current form was much different from what it used to be.

It became one of the advanced techniques that his Mentalism Method had.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Celestial Vermillion Bird Method – Pheonix Embrace'

Swoosh!

A tongue of flame suddenly appeared and wrapped itself around Shin and the transparent barrier that he had summoned.

It created a spiraling movement of flame surrounding the spherical barrier, creating an illusion where a blazing flow wrapping the barrier was constantly moving upwards.

The process seemed to be quite long in words, but it only took an instant to be completed.

Boom!

It was at that moment when the beam of light collided against the flaming barrier.

This beam of light seemed to have been split into multiple beams while clashing against the blazing barrier surrounding Shin. It looked like a stream of water colliding against a sturdy rock in the middle of a raging river.

The process lasted for a few moments until the beam of light finally exhausted its strength.

It then revealed Shin's figure, which was completely unscratched despite how powerful the previous attack was.

As the embers of the flame dissipated in the air, Shin suddenly raised his head before saying. "I am starting to get the hang of it."

"How about you try a little harder so that I can finally reach that state!"

Chapter 1207 Reality Manifestation vs Perfect Demonification (Part 2)

...

Shin levitated in the air while staring at Haowin. He was showing that he was completely confident in his strength and would win this battle, but that was only on the outside. It was because, despite his constantly growing self and steadily maturing fighting style, the current state of his mind was starting to get worse.

Due to him doing multiple things at once, the burden that his mind was suffering was getting extremely taxing.

He was consuming his concentration at an insane pace, which was why it was getting harder for him to continue fighting this way.

Having the Reality Manifestation constantly active while also adding his Elemental Spirit Possession in the mix was already weighty enough. But if he added the Solar Breathing Technique along with while adding his constant usage of advanced Mentalism Techniques during the battle, then the burden would only start to pile up until he extremely exhausted his mind.

Moreover, the wings on his back were also consuming his concentration during the entire aerial battle. He could summon these wings for as long as he wanted, but he had to pay a certain price for it – his concentration would be constantly burned during the entire duration, making it extremely taxing as time went by.

If this battle was prolonged for an extended period of time, Shin knew that he would be at an extreme disadvantage.

The balance between all the states that he currently had would instantly collapse once a single slip occurred inside his head. If he even missed a brief moment and broke his concentration, then it would break the balance of everything and cause a domino effect.

Once this extreme equilibrium was broken, the consequences that he needed to pay would be very serious.

If Shin wanted to continue fighting for a longer period of time, then he must give up on one of the current states that he was in, so that he could lessen the burden in his mind. And the most ideal one to sacrifice would be the 'Nephilim's Wings'.

He could also take the risk of fighting the way it was. He could forget about everything else and continue pushing forward until the end.

He was already at the point where he was almost touching the surface of summoning his own version of Natural State inside the game, so he could not just give up and stop right here.

As long as he met a certain condition and encountered the perfect opportunity, then would surely grasp it and break through everything.

As long as he had found that chance, he would not hesitate and jump into it.

"The greater the risk, the greater the rewards," he muttered as he rolled his shoulders a little while preparing to attack.

After regulating his breathing, Shin flapped his wings once again and lunged toward his opponent.

He unsheathed the [Yamato] and twirled it in front of him a couple of times, spreading the flame that it was releasing. The gorgeous flame wrapped around himself, forming a spiraling motion during his flight.

He then spread his wings and got ready to flap them for greater momentum, the revolving flames quickly followed suit and wrapped themselves around the four angelic wings.

Those wings were suddenly set ablaze, leaving multiple embers of lights behind as he gently flapped them.

Not long after, the cloak that he had also became wrapped with those flames and became a huge blazing mantle. They looked like the long tail of a blazing bird flying in the sky.

From a distance, Shin really looked like a giant bird made of fire, flying through the dark sky. His blazing flames illuminated the whole place.

Within that giant blazing bird, Shin held the [Yamato] over his head in the middle of his flight. He was completely in a blazing world, where the raging flames were burning wildly.

Swoosh!

'Four Symbol Scripture: Celestial Vermillion Bird Method – Pheonix Inferno'

Shriek!

The cry of the bird reverberated in the whole region, shaking even the mountains in the surroundings.

On the other hand, Haowin released a deafening roar toward the sky. It was comparable to the cry of the blazing bird a few distances away from him.

Roar!

Immediately after that, the apparition that was overlapping with his existence suddenly grew, rivaling the size of the blazing bird. It stood in the air with its purple flames while having a stance where it was about to throw a punch.

Haowin waited for a couple of moments before finally throwing his fist forward, sending a world-shaking punch along with the giant apparition.

'Ultimate Demonic Skill: Epitome of Destruction'

Swoosh!

If the Destruction Devils were already strong enough without any skills and techniques, relying only on their physical bodies, then what would happen if their overwhelming strength was added to the skills that the Demon Race had?

The answer was immediately revealed at the very next moment.

This was also the very reason why the pure-blooded noble and high-ranking demons were comparable to the Transcendent Races of the past, particularly the Evil Lords of the Devildom and the Demon Kings of the Underworld.

Boom!

A world-shaking explosion quickly erupted when the two sides collided.

Swoosh!

The shockwave that it had created swept through everything in its path, dragging everything that it went through.

The trees within the range of explosions were all uprooted and burned into ashes. The ground sank greatly and created a deep crater with fully scorched ground. Even the nearby mountains that were caught in the collision caved in due to the explosion.

This exchange alone greatly changed the terrain of the place!

Yet, that was not the end.

But just the beginning of the real battle.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A series of explosions could be heard from the distance as Shin repeatedly clashed against Haowin in this form.

The two sides clashed multiple times while flying in the air.

Their small figures could not be seen in the middle of the explosions, but the humongous apparitions that they had created earlier seemed to be also engaging in an intense battle.

The giant apparition of the Destruction Devil was repeatedly throwing a series of punches with one of its gigantic fists while using the other arm to defend against the flames of its opponent.

The blazing bird, on the other hand, was using its burning wings to defend while opening its beak to spit out a fire breath and using its sharp talons to scratch the opposing side.

Roar!

Shriek!

The roars and cries continued to resound in the entire region as the two sides fought against each other. And each collision was much stronger than the other.

Each move that the Blazing Bird and Destructive Devil reflected the skills and techniques that Shin and Haowin were using.

Every time the two used a specific move to execute an advanced technique or skill, the two gigantic apparitions moved accordingly. They seemed to be showing how to unleash those moves with their humongous bodies.

The trail of flame that Shin left in the air drew an irregular yet majestic pattern. He continued to fly while chasing after Haowin. He was also using a series of Mentalism Techniques during the entire process, making his opponent feel huge pressure during the battle.

But despite all the pressure pressing on him, Haowin was still able to keep up with everything and hold his ground firmly. Even though he needed to catch up from time to time, he was still able to pick himself up with the help of his powerful physique and overwhelming strength.

His powerful and sturdy body was filling the gap between the two of them when it came to techniques. Combining his overwhelming physique and powerful skills, he was able to barely fight the techniques that Shin had.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Haowin was using his scale-covered arms and legs to block the blazing sword of his opponent, which created a series of metallic sounds along with the burning sparks that flew in the air from each collision.

He was trying his best not to get caught by an unexpected attack and receive a serious injury. At the same time, he was also looking for the perfect opportunity to counterattack.

That chance seemed to quickly present itself after a few more exchanges.

There was a sudden pause in Shin's movements as he pulled his sword back after launching a series of slashing strikes.

Haowin's eyes suddenly turned sharp when he saw that and quickly grabbed that opportunity. He stretched his left hand forward, seemingly trying to catch Shin.

Sensing the threat coming from those demonic hands enveloped with purple flames, Shin quickly retreated as fast as he could.

But that was only a feint as Haowin suddenly retracted that extended hand and quickly threw a powerful punch with his other hand, which was now clenched into a firm fist.

Swoosh!

The fist was currently covered with a dense purple mana, shrouded in black miasma. It moved with a spiraling movement before turning into a spinning black hole that was rapidly approaching Shin.

'Demonic Skill: Devouring World'

Despite how sudden it was, Shin was still wearing a calm look on his face. He took a deep breath and controlled the circulation of mana within him according to the Solar Breathing Technique before channeling everything to his sword.

Swoosh!

He then extended his left arm forward while twirling the sword with the other. He then took a stance where the sword was right in of his chest while being held horizontally.

Then, a tongue of fire suddenly spouted out from the blade of that sword before enfolding the entirety of it.

After that, he used the 'Heart Seeker' Skill that he had in his skillset as a model for another Mentalism Technique.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Celestial Vermillion Bird Method – Pheonix Talon'

Swoosh!

The sword seemed to fly forward as a blazing trail was left behind its track. Its tip, which was completely covered by a sharp spiraling flame, accurately hit the center of the incoming attack from his opponent.

Bang!

The latter attack quickly exploded as the blazing [Yamato] continued to fly forward. Shin had found the weakness in that skill and accurately targeted it with his stab.

A hole was created in the middle of the explosion as the trajectory of the sword was skillfully controlled by Shin during the last moment. He then continued stabbing forward, targeting the chest of his opponent.

Swoosh!

Haowin quickly retracted his arm and retreated when he saw the incoming attack. He then crossed his arms in front of him while hiding his head and chest behind it.

A transparent wall of mana made with demonic energy was formed in front of him, blocking the incoming strike from his opponent. He even focused most of the strength of the barrier on a single point, where he predicted the trajectory of the incoming sword.

He was planning to accurately block the tip of the sword with that concentrated energy.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

But at that very moment, he suddenly saw that the singular stab in front of him suddenly multiplied and started assaulting the parts of his barrier where the energy concentration was the weakest.

Shin adjusted his technique and used another in-game skill, the 'Multiple Stabs', to execute another Mentalism Technique.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Celestial Vermillion Bird Method – Infernal Talons'

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The barrier that was supposed to protect Haowin immediately collapsed and scattered in the air like pieces of shattered glass.

Haowin could not do anything but curl his body into a ball to prevent his vitals from being attacked. He relied on his tough and sturdy scales to block most of the blazing stabs of his opponent.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

A barrage of blazing strikes bombarded Haowin repeatedly, trying to completely collapse his defenses. That was when he realized that the previous pause from Shin was just bait prepared for him to commit a grave mistake.

Now that it happened, this so-called True Demon was about to be thrown into the pits of hell.

Chapter 1208 Result

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As Haowin started to get pushed back by Shin, the gigantic apparitions behind the two reflected the current state of the battle, which gave the spectators a clear understanding of what was going on despite the pair being hidden by the series of explosions.

The Blazing Bird was repeatedly scratching the arms of the apparition of the Destruction Devil while also spitting out a flaming breath at it.

The clash between these two colossi was as intense as their host, clearly reflecting the current state of the battle.

Realizing that this was not going to end up good for him, Haowin had no other choice but to make a gamble. Shin was already controlling the state of the battle, so he had to take the risk to regain his footing.

Steeling his resolve, Haowin decisively charged ahead, diving straight into the incoming attack from his opponent.

This action caught since a little off guard. But it did not mean that he was going to hesitate. Instead, he purposely increased the force behind his strike, making his blazing sword cut through the air and burning everything in its path.

Swoosh!

Slash!

Haowin raised his left arm to block the incoming strike, but the blazing blade of the sword still cut through the scales covering the entire arm. It even almost chopped off his forearm since the sword dug too deep into it.

Even his shoulder was even penetrated by the edge of the sword, almost digging through his chest. A huge amount of purple and black blood gushed out from the wound, signifying the degree of injury that he just suffered.

A huge chunk of health points disappeared on his HP Bar, which clearly reflected how much damage he received.

That health bar had almost been emptied by that singular strike.

Despite all of that, Haowin remained calm and collected. He slightly gritted his teeth to endure the pain that he was suffering before raising his other hand behind him and pouring a large amount of demonic energy into it.

Swoosh!

The surrounding mana rushed toward his fist, forming a purple sphere with a spiraling flow of energy surrounding it.

He did not wait nor hesitate for a second as he quickly threw a punch straight at Shin, who was still trying to retrieve his sword.

Swoosh!

'Demonic Skill: Shadow Destruction'

Shin was doing his best to pull his sword back, but it seemed like its blade was currently stuck with the demonic flesh that Haowin had. That rapidly regenerating flesh seemed to be gripping tightly at his blade, despite it releasing a flame that was intensely burning them.

Realizing that it was already too late to dodge, Shin quickly enfolded the sheath of the sword that he was holding with his other hand with fire elemental mana before placing it in front of him.

He was too late to use the 'Mondi's Style' legacy technique and turn the sheath into one of its forms since the rapidly approaching demonic fist was already upon him.

He could only rely on his instincts and used one of the oldest techniques that he had gained in the early stages of playing the game, the defensive technique of his Sheath Wielding.

Bang!

He was quickly sent flying in the opposite direction right after the demonic fist and the blazing sheath collided with each other.

Swoosh!

The regenerating flesh of Haowin also let go of Shin's sword, preventing himself from being further injured.

Bang!

Shin landed on the ground and got buried in it as his body continued to dig deeper. A pile of rubble was stacked on the spot where Shin was buried while the surrounding land collapsed toward it.

A landslide from the mountain seemed to be happening.

Bang!

Not long after, Haowin suddenly dived down from the sky and landed on the ground near where Shin was currently buried. He also retracted his wings as he felt a little tired from flying and fighting in the sky.

He felt rather good after finally landing a clean hit on Shin. But despite that being the case, he refused to let his guard down since he could see that the apparition of the giant blazing bird was still present in the sky. This clearly indicated that his opponent was still able to continue this battle.

Bang!

A few minutes later, the pile of rubble in the distance suddenly exploded, sending countless rock fragments and shattered stones.

It then revealed a deep crater that was spanning dozens of meters in radius and tens of meters deep.

Shin was standing in the middle of the crater with his unfolded wings while having his body wrapped with a mantle of fire.

The shattered fragments of the rocks and stones were continuously falling from the sky, creating a series of clanking sounds.

He took a deep breath before exhaling with a white steam coming out from his mouth. He knew that he was already reaching his limit before everything collapsed. He needed to end this as soon as possible before he was forcefully logged out by the system due to over-exhaustion.

The good news about this situation was that his opponent was most likely to be in a similar state, if not worse.

Tightly gripping on the hilt of his sword, he stared at his opponent, seemingly trying to convey a message.

Being able to read what Shin was trying to say, Haowin smiled before rolling his shoulders, then his wrists. He wanted to end this now since he could sense that a crisis was about to befall him if he lingered around a little longer.

At the same time, his mind also wandered around for a moment, trying to remember something in his memory. He clearly remembered how he first saw Shin and how much 'hunger' he felt at that time.

He wanted Shin to get eliminated as soon as possible while also wanting the latter to grow with the greatest speed. He wanted to get rid of this problem that would be a huge hurdle for their plans but also wanted to fight Shin in his strongest form.

Such conflicting feelings tormented him for quite some time until Shin finally showed everyone his real brilliance.

Not only he had shone much brighter than everyone else, but he had also proven that he could be placed on the same level as the previous and current generation of brightest stars.

He caught up to everyone with an unstoppable speed and reached the place where only a selected few could set their foot.

"It is a pity that you are still not in your apex. However, I am not in my best form either," muttered Haowin. "It is truly a pity that I can't taste that long-forgotten thrill and excitement."

"I should have chosen the already existing ones, rather than hesitating up until now," he added before assuming a battle position.

He raised his demonic fist and pulled it behind him while focusing everything he had on it. A storm of surging mana quickly enveloped his surroundings.

The violent flow of mana gathered around his fist, forming a blazing sphere with a mixture of purple and black hues on it.

That sphere made from pure energy continued to expand and shrink repeatedly as he compressed everything on his face.

The ground sank deep and formed spiderweb cracks that spread in every direction. The small pieces of rocks also started floating in the air as they were being pulled by the gravity and the suction force coming from that sphere.

Swoosh!

The huge apparition of the Destruction Devil also shrunk, matching the size of his body. Looking from a distance, Haowin looked like a person being possessed by an evil spirit.

Haowin used multiple buffs and enhancements on himself, increasing his overall power.

Bang!

Not long after, the accumulation of powers reached its peak.

He then kicked the ground and leaped into the air while dragging his glowing fist behind him. He jumped onto the deep crater, launching himself toward his opponent.

Swoosh!

'Ultimate Demonic Skill: Titanic Extermination'

Raising his fist in the air, a huge demonic arm was suddenly manifested above him. It was covered with purple flame and black runes that seemed to be pulsing with life.

It then descended as Haowin slammed his fist toward the center of the crater.

Swoosh!

In the meantime, Shin was currently regulating his breathing while controlling the flow of mana within his body.

A surging heat was released from his body while a gentle flow of flame formed a layer over his hair, skin, armor, and sword.

Bang!

The ground cracked and his feet sank by an inch. Not long after, the ground started showing some signs of melting due to the intense heat that he was emitting.

Then a spiraling flow of flame suddenly appeared around him before moving toward the sky as he slowly unsheathed his sword and pointed it toward the sky.

'Elemental Skill (Solar Reaper): Blessing of the Sun'

Swoosh!

The spiral flow of flame suddenly became much wilder the moment he activated the elemental skill.

Bang!

It did not end in there as he quickly followed it up with another skill.

'Elemental Skill (Solar Reaper): Descent of the Primordial Sun'

The raging flame around him suddenly spun around at a much faster pace before spreading in every direction. It then scorched the ground that they went through while also melting a portion of it.

Around Shin, a miniature sun was suddenly manifested as the gigantic apparition of the Blazing Bird in the sky suddenly shrunk and fused with the dancing flames around him.

Bang!

He then squatted his hips and kicked the ground, launching himself in the air. He transformed into a stream of light that flew straight to Haowin and the descending demonic fist.

Swoosh!

Shin tightly held the blazing [Yamato] before swinging it in a horizontal fashion.

Shriek!

As he stroked through the air with that horizontal slash, the deafening cry of the bird could be heard. It echoed throughout the entire region while following Shin's movements.

Then the fiery bird seemed to have manifested around Shin once again as he was about to reach Haowin.

The flaming bird opened its beak wide as Shin drew a beautiful arc of flame with his sword.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Celestial Vermillion Bird Method – Pheonix Purgatory'

Swoosh!

Boom!

A huge explosion quickly erupted as the two sides met. The collision between the huge demonic fist and the fiery bird created a spherical field of energy that illuminated the entire region.

Swoosh!

Everything below it was completely crushed as the already huge crater expanded from a dozen meters to a kilometer wide.

The shockwave also pushed everything away before a wave of raging fire burned through the land and sky.

This phenomenon lasted for a couple of moments before a vacuum was momentarily formed and pulled everything toward it.

Once it disappeared, nothing was left behind within that kilometer range aside from the empty crater created by the explosion.

When the blowing wind completely subdued and everything finally settled down, a glowing figure could now be seen floating in the sky. It was a silhouette of a person with a dim yet fiery light.

This silhouette lingered in the air at the center of the explosion for a couple of moments before disappearing.

...

Some of the scouts and players, who stayed up until now to see the final result of this legendary battle, could not help but feel a little pity since they could not clearly see who the winner was.

They could only sigh bitterly before looking at the aftermath of the battle full of amazement and adoration.

After that, they started leaving the scene and headed back to what they were supposed to be doing.

Little did everyone know, there was actually a person who captured everything. Even the final moments of the battle as well as the pose of the winner were captured by the lens of her camera.

She smiled mysteriously and opened the image of Shin, who was the clear victor of the battle, before admiring her work. "Of course, no one can beat me when it comes to this. I don't even need to edit it."

She stared at the picture of Shin, who was in a completely beaten state, yet still maintained his glorious and majestic air.

It was even more amplified due to the four black angelic wings on his back. Their edges and the feathers attached to them showed the residual effects of his previous technique.

Adding the flame embers and fiery lights that were in the middle of dissipating, his figure was completely stunning and captivating.

His tattered cloak and broken armor could already tell the tale of the entire battle while the blazing sword on his right hand and glowing sheath on the other showed everyone the result of it, especially with the floating prism in front of him.

Average players might not know what it was, but the veterans and experts of the game all knew that it was a prison prism.

Miss Bunny, who was this mysterious person, nodded her head in satisfaction before quickly opening her accounts from different online platforms.

She then started posting the picture that she just captured before putting on the caption.

– "After the intense battle, the Battle God still emerged victorious!" –

Chapter 1209 Spreading fame once again

...

With the influence that Miss Bunny had within the online platforms, she was able to quickly attract a lot of attention with just a single post that she had made. And given that it was a very stunning image, a lot of people were immediately captivated by it.

Half of an hour was more than enough for that single post to spread everywhere. It was like a wildfire within the forest full of dry trees and vegetation.

All the fans of Shin in both of his previous personas and current name, spread the post even more, sweeping through every online platform.

The name Sickarius, which gained a lot of popularity with the recent event, became more influential on the internet.

Nameless Swordsman, the Angel of Death; Sickarius, the Emperor of the Night – these two names that swept through everything in the early stages of the game were already sensational enough.

When he had become the Battle God Sickarius, his fame was already comparable to the top celebrities of the game.

Now that he had undergone yet another sensational battle, the people from different online platforms immediately went crazy. Moreover, this battle was against one of the villains of the virtual world along with Lich God Immortal, the God of Carnage Haowin.

On top of that, it was a battle that surpassed everyone's attention. A battle that made them doubt whether they were playing the same game or not.

The scale of the battle made them think that it took place in the real world and the two combatants were at least in the Domain Realm of the Martial Path or the Rulers Realm of the Mentalism Path.

This battle greatly changed the view of every player about the game.

Some even thought that Shin and Haowin might have already finished their respective Tier 3 Class Promotion Quest. However, the idea was already rejected by a lot of people.

...

As usual, Shin did not know anything about another sensation that he had created. He did not even care about it.

Unfortunately, he was no longer an unknown person within the virtual world. He was already a celebrity and a top expert in the game.

Understanding Shin's personality, Miss Bunny took the initiative to contact him instead.

Miss Bunny: Oh, great expert! Please send me your record of the entire battle as soon as possible so that I can edit it right away.

Shin ignored the messages that he was receiving since most of them were only meant to tease him while the rest were some unreasonable complaints just like what Arthur was sending him.

But since he saw that Miss Bunny was talking about business, he paused for a moment before giving her a reply.

Sickarius: I'll send it to you later. Let me finish my quest first.

He paused for a moment before suddenly asking.

Sickarius: How about the other ones that I have sent you? Have you finished them already?

Miss Bunny smiled before proudly replying.

Miss Bunny: Of course, I've finished them already. Should I upload them now along with the rest of the videos from the other members?

Miss Bunny: But young miss said that we should wait first. We have to wait until the Frozen Kingdom becomes fully available to everyone to take full advantage of it.

Shin thought for a moment before nodding his head. He could read what was running inside Shiella's mind when she said that. She was planning to use those battle videos as some sort of promotion that would attract the attention of the public.

Once everyone saw those videos, a lot of them would surely become interested in the Frozen Kingdom and head over there once it became open to all players.

This could also become some sort of marketing strategy for the city that they were planning to build at the Sky Deceiving Valley.

If everything went well, then it was no different from hitting multiple birds with one stone.

Sickarius: There is no need to hurry. We can follow big sister's arrangement.

Sickarius: For now, work on the video of the battle earlier. I'll send you my record of it as soon as possible.

Miss Bunny was jumping for joy when she saw the reply. She really loved working with the Empyrean Talons since everything that they sent her was top-class battle videos, particularly the ones from the Godlike Players of the group.

The best decision that she had made in her life was definitely quitting her previous job and becoming a Portal Manager of the group.

Forget about the exclusive broadcasting rights whenever the members of the group were having any kind of official battle or tournament, editing such high-quality battle videos was more than enough for her to be on cloud nine.

Not only she was earning a lot of money from them, especially when she was partnered with the Soaring Dragon Corporation, but she was also enjoying this job since this was something that she wanted to do.

Given that, she thanked Shin repeatedly before finally returning to the city. She immediately logged out of the game and entered her personal virtual space to start working on the battle video.

...

Shin was currently resting when he received the message from Miss Bunny.

After the battle, he felt greatly exhausted. He felt like dying when the adrenaline finally disappeared and the figure started to kick in.

The first thought that entered his mind after defeating and capturing his opponent was to take a leave and take a rest. He immediately took out a return scroll and crushed it at that time, sending him back straight to the Holy City.

But instead of quickly heading back to the Church of the Sun and Moon to report, he first went to the branch of the Hand of Midas Trading Firm to repair his equipment.

The battle was much more intense than he had expected, and the demonic power that Haowin possessed was much more powerful than he had thought. Those attacks packed with demonic energy corroded his armor even though most of them barely grazed him.

"Looks like Mithril Rank equipment can't withstand the corroding effects of the corrupted mana from a True Demon," he muttered as he was resting in one of the VIP Rooms of the firm.

While waiting for his equipment to be repaired, he decided to open the online forums to see what was going on.

He finally had the time to learn that his name was creating a storm in the gaming community once again.

Looking through the top topics going through online, he found that almost everything was about him and his battle against Haowin. Even though he knew how fast the news travels through the internet, he still did not expect that it would be like this.

The top ten most searched and discussed topics right now were all about him and his previous battles.

Shaking his head, he scrolled down a little, looking for any other topics that were not about himself. But after browsing for a few minutes, he got tired of everything and decided to stop.

But when he was about to close the window, a certain phrase suddenly caught his eye.

– "The United Cup is approaching once again! Sleeping legends awake from long slumber!" –

Intrigued, Shin paused and opened the article. Then he saw that it was a long list of famous groups within the game as well as the records of their previous and most recent records.

It was even categorized from different Adventurer Teams to Mercenary Groups, to Mysterious Organizations, up to the elite units of large guilds. Everything was listed and properly organized.

Some of the names of these teams were something that he had never heard before. The others were the names that he was regularly hearing from the players walking on the streets and drinking in the pubs.

There were also some that were very famous at the current time. Some were also somewhat familiar with Shin just like the Earners Mercenary Group that they had encountered briefly during their Empire Quest.

Looking into it, Shin was able to gather a decent information about them and even gain a rough understanding of their strengths and specialties.

Some of the groups could even threaten his team despite how strong the lineup that they had.

"This is interesting," muttered Shin as he saved the contents of the article before closing it. He then went over the other topics until he stumbled upon another interesting article.

– "The Kings have returned! The comeback of the mysterious Gods' Paradise Adventurer Team" –

Shin felt something strange when he read the title of the article and opened it out of curiosity. What he saw was an article discussing a certain adventurer team that seemed to have disappeared when ?Destiny's Fate? had started.

No one knew what happened to them and why such an active group did not join the current hottest game of all time when it was released.

The fame and achievements of this particular adventurer team were comparable to the Dark Hero Adventurer Team that Lawless and Faker had previously been part of.

The lineup was pretty stacked. They only had a very few members but all of them were famous in the gaming community and even known for their overwhelming skills and unbelievable mechanics.

They only had twelve members, but seven of them were Godlike Players while the rest were all top Titled Rankers.

With their current fame and status within the gaming world at that time, it was very puzzling why they suddenly disappeared just like that.

It was until recently that the whole team of the said Adventurer Team was seen gathered together. They were spotted by one of the journalists focusing on the gaming world.

And from what the journalist had seen, the group seemed to be planning to do a high-level quest with sky-reaching difficulty.

The journalist came up with that idea when he saw the Adventurer Team embarking on a ship that was supposed to head to the Sea of Death. It was a high-level region that not many wanted to venture into.

A lot of groups, guilds, and in-game organizations tried to explore the deeper parts of that region, and all of them came back defeated. All their expedition teams were either annihilated or become trapped in a certain deserted island.

After the repeated losses, no one dared to challenge that region once again.

Shin skimmed through the rest of the article since he was not too interested in the topic. He only slowed down when the article started discussing the members of the said Adventurer Team.

He read through everything as he thought that it might become helpful in the future. After all, the United Cup was a team competition, so this particular group might be their rivals in that tournament.

But what really piqued his interest in this group was because of a few familiar faces among them. He could not help but knit his brow as he found it quite intriguing.

"It looks like this upcoming United Cup will be much more interesting than I have thought," he muttered as he tapped the air in front of him and pointed at those familiar faces.

"I heard that they have never revealed their faces before and always move with utmost secrecy, but why they are taking off their mask now and even revealing their movements to the public?" he muttered as he found that something was going on.

But since it was not his problem, he threw it at the back of his head before closing the article.

He browsed through the forums and looked for a good discussion. But after looking for a few more minutes, he had gotten bored and closed the virtual window.

He paused for a moment as he suddenly remembered something. Since he still hadn't gotten back his equipment, he decided to send the video materials that Miss Bunny had requested and finished up everything.

He then closed his eyes and started clearing his head. A few moments later, he entered a state of deep mediation.

Chapter 1210 Rewards

.....

Shin walked out of the branch of the Hand of Midas Trading Firm with a much more exhausted face than he entered. It was quite ironic since he went there to rest while waiting for his equipment to get repaired.

He indeed managed to recover his peak state inside after some meditation, but it was only until Black Hammer came back after repairing his equipment set.

He was thankful to the chief blacksmith of the firm since he dropped everything that he was doing just to help Shin with the repairs, but after learning that his main weapon, the [Yamato], was successfully reforged by a Saint Rank Blacksmith, he suddenly went crazy and started pestering Shin to show it to him.

Shin complied at first since it was not a big deal. But after a few minutes of observing the sword, Black Hammer did not want to part with it. He kept on saying that it was a masterpiece and wanted to have deep research on it.

He then started making offers to Shin, saying that he would do anything if the sword was lent to him. He wanted to study the [Yamato] for as long as he could. It gave him a lot of inspiration just looking at it for

a few moments, so Black Hammer could not imagine how much work he could do after deep research on the sword.

Shin could immediately give his reply as he was too stunned at the current behavior of Black Hammer. But he suddenly became scared when he saw the frenzied look of the chief blacksmith.

He quickly snatched his sword back and swiftly put it inside his inventory bag, not wanting to show it to Black Hammer again.

And that was something even crazier suddenly happened.

Black Hammer suddenly pounced at Shin like a frenzied beast. His eyes were completely unfocused and filled with madness.

Shin was about to fight back when he sensed someone entering the room.

Harmony, who just finished repairing the [Nightwalker's Cloak], entered the room at that exact moment. She just came back earlier from the Starry Spears Mountain Forest since Tinker and Welsh took over the job on that side.

She was a little tired when Shin asked her to repair his cloak. Since she was quite interested in it, she accepted the request without asking much.

And when she saw what was happening, she immediately shook her head and muttered. "It is happening again."

She was too tired to deal with this blacksmithing maniac, but she had no other choice.

With a sigh, she waved her hand in the air. The steel threads suddenly shot out from her hand and flew straight to Black Hammer. They wrapped themselves tightly around him, preventing the chief blacksmith from moving.

Black Hammer was immediately immobilized by those steel threads. He was suspended in the air as the threads tightly wrapped themselves around his limbs.

Walking over, Harmony threw the cloak to Shin while saying. "I am sorry for the unsightliness of his loser. He always turns like this whenever he sees a good weapon or equipment that is worth researching for."

Shin gulped a mouthful of saliva when he heard that before pointing at Black Hammer. "Will he be fine?"

"Don't worry, he will be fine after a few minutes," replied Harmony before extending her hand, and asking for something. "Your promise! You are going to give it to me, right?"

Shin shook his head and smiled. "I am not giving to you. I will only lend it to you for the time being."

After that, he took out the [Dawn's Mantle] and passed it to Harmony. "As promised, I will lend it to you for an entire week (in-game time). I will come back again to take it back."

"Tsk!" Harmony clicked her tongue when she heard that. She then put the mantle inside her inventory before saying. "Alright. I will return it when I am done."

She was about to leave when Shin suddenly remembered something and said. "Ah! Before I forget. Can you change its color to a pure white one while you are at it?"

Harmony paused for a moment before an evil thought suddenly entered her mind. She smiled and was about to add something to her demands when Shin suddenly interrupted her.

"I will give you these silks in exchange."

She was about to refuse since she was more interested in the [Dawn's Mantle] than any materials at the moment. But when she saw the silks that Shin had taken out, she could not help but suppress her words and swallowed them back.

There were three types of silks laid in front of her and all three of them were top-quality materials. Moreover, their ranks were all Mithril Rank.

"W-where did you get all of these?" she asked as she could not help her curiosity.

Shin chuckled and said. "I've gotten them from the guys that defeated earlier. Those people from Demonic Churches sure have decent materials."

Harmony silently gulped before nodding her head. "Alright. I will comply with your request. I will change the color of this mantle into a white one."

"Any other thing that you want to add?" she asked.

Shin thought for a moment before replying. "Maybe make it a little feminine? Other than that, there is nothing else."

Harmony remained motionless for a moment before giving Shin a teasing smile. "I see. I guess even someone like you has that side of men. Making it a gift, huh? Don't worry, I will make sure that whoever that lucky girl is, she will feel that this was the best gift that she will receive."

Shin ignored the last comment before walking past Harmony and bidding his farewell. "See you again next time."

...

Walking down the street, Shin thought about his quest. He was heading back to the Church of the Sun and Moon, planning to report his success and hand over the captive members of the Demonic Churches.

He was a little tired, so he was planning to hand over his quest before logging out. He would try taking on his Tier 3 Promotion Quest tomorrow when he was in his peak form.

When he arrived at the church, he did not waste any time and headed straight to the office of Archbishop Ronald.

No one blocked him since his status within the church was very high.

When he arrived at the office, the high priest waiting outside quickly opened the door at the sight of him. It seemed like he was expecting the arrival of Shin.

Shin casually nodded his head, greeting the high priest, as he walked past the latter.

Right after entering, Shin could not help but frown deeply as he could feel a strange atmosphere filling the entire room.

Turning his head around and sweeping his gaze within the room, he immediately spotted the hooded individuals standing straight against the walls of the room. They were all releasing a suffocating aura that seemed to be crushing at him right after he entered.

Calming his mind and regulating his breathing, Shin endured all the pressure directed at him and walked toward the table where Archbishop Ronald was along with one more hooded individual.

Every succeeding step that he was taking was much heavier than the last, but he was still walking at a steady pace.

A few moments later, Shin was standing in front of the table where the archbishop was sitting behind.

He then gave Archbishop Ronald a respectful bow before saying. "I have returned after completing that task that you have given me, your eminence."

Archbishop Ronald nodded his head before turning to the hooded figure sitting across him. "What do you think, Head Inquisitor Marielle? Isn't our Envoy quite capable?"

The hooded figure scoffed a little before standing up. "Hmph! It is only right for him to be this competent if he doesn't want his title to be revoked by the Council."

After that, she tossed two envelopes to Shin while saying. "Congratulations, Young Envoy. Let's meet again at the Divine Empire."

She then walked out of the room with the rest of the hooded individuals following behind her.

Watching them leave, Archbishop Ronald chuckled a little before saying. "Don't mind her. She is just a little upset that you are able to catch the assassins of the Demonic Churches before her."

Shin tilted his head to the side when he heard that before looking at the two envelopes that he caught. Inspecting them, he realized that it was the promised Recommendation Letters for the Inquisitor and the Templar Promotion Quests.

While Shin was checking those letters, Archbishop Ronald suddenly asked. "I've heard that you have caused quite a commotion at the borders of the kingdom."

Shin turned to the archbishop and awkwardly scratched the back of his head. "Well, as you can see, my opponent is not that weaker than me, so the battle escalates to that degree."

The archbishop chuckled a little before saying. "Alright, that is enough for now. Hand me the prison prisms and I will handle the rest. I know that you are pretty much exhausted after that battle."

Shin nodded his head before taking out a bunch of black cubes from his inventory and putting them on the table.

Ding

Right at the same moment, the system sent him a notification that informed him about the completion of the quest.

System: Congratulations, You have completed the Quest: Assassination's Culprit!

System: Rewards are now being granted!

Archbishop Ronald nodded his head as he inspected the prison prisms laid on the table before taking out a stack of envelopes and putting them on the table. "These are recommendation letters that can help you enter the Awakened Continent. You can share it with your friends."

He then took out two more items and placed them on the table. One of them was a special token radiating with black and white light while the other was a white mantle releasing a holy aura.

Shin did not have to think about what they were. One of them was the token that he needed to enter the special ground where he could take his Tier 3 Class Promotion Quest while the mantle was the racial- and class-specific reward item.

Giving the archbishop a bow, Shin took the items and gave his thanks.

"Go on. I know that you are very tired right now," said Archbishop Ronald while waving his hand.

Shin was about to leave when the archbishop suddenly added. "Don't forget to drop by from time to time to take on some of our quests. Don't neglect your duties just because you have a special status within the organization."

Shin almost tripped when he heard those words before smiling awkwardly. He then bowed and said. "Don't worry, your eminence. I will make sure to come again when I am free."

After that, he quickly turned around and dashed out of the room, not waiting for the archbishop to say anything.

Seeing that, Archbishop Ronald laughed loudly.

...

After exiting the church, Shin quickly headed toward the nearest inn since he was planning to log out of the game.

But after renting a room, he did not immediately log out as he wanted to see the two items that he just received from the archbishop.

Item Name: Key to the Chamber of Secrets

Item Rank: Special

Item Type: Miscellaneous

Description: This is an item that is forged by the God of Smithing using the Stars as the furnace and Meteors as an anvil.

Usage: This item is used to find the true self of every being.

Note 1: This item will turn into dust after usage.

Note 2: Fuse with the user after being used and disappear after successfully promoting to Tier 3 of a specific class.

Equipment Name: Daydreamer's Mantle

Equipment Rank: Special

Equipment Type: Cloak/Mantle

Stats:

+15%? of INT

+20% Elemental Affinity

+25% Mana Sensitivity

+30% Flying Speed

Status: Sealed

Bonus Skills: Locked

Note 1: One of the four broken parts of the [Cloak of Divinity].

Note 2: Look for the other pieces and fuse them together to gain the acknowledgment of the broken cloak.

Shin could not help but frown deeply as he saw the description of the two items. The former was something that he had already expected, but the latter was somewhat puzzling.

What was even more troublesome about it was that it only had a vague clue on completing it.

Ding

While he was contemplating, a sudden notification snapped him out of his thoughts.