

Destiny 1291

Chapter 1291 Retreat and Invasion

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BOOM!

With this explosion, the whole place was immediately affected. The ground shook as it sank, creating a deep and huge crater. The surrounding trees were swept away by the shockwave and were burned to ashes by the raging flames that were spreading in every direction.

A firestorm as tall as a ten-story building and as wide as it was formed and shot toward the sky. This firestorm spun rapidly and burned everything around it, not sparing anything. Even the earth's surface was scorched red due to the heat that it had.

In the middle of this, Shin and Mephisto remained in their respective positions as they held their ground and did not want to lose to each other.

The ground beneath Shin continued to crack, spreading in every direction. Gravels and rock fragments also flew in the air as the powerful impact repeatedly bombarded them. These fragments were also burned by the intense heat of the surroundings; some were scorched black while the smaller ones were completely melted.

Mephisto on the other hand was gritting his teeth as he pressed the blazing sword in his hands down. His wings spread wide as it was supporting him with his actions. The blazing wings repeatedly flapped as he pushed his weight down, trying to overwhelm Shin with it.

The air around him repeatedly exploded as the blazing wings continued to move. This created another circle of spinning tornadoes, smaller than the raging firestorm that was created by their initial collision.

Bang!

The two put more strength in there as they pushed the opposing side away.

Shin was sent skidding backward, leaving a deep trail on the scorched land, while Mephisto was sent flying into the air by their actions.

Shin bent his legs down as he tried to stop himself from being pushed further while Mephisto flipped a couple of times in the air to lessen the burn from the earlier exchange before spreading his wings wide to stop himself from flying further away.

Bang! Bang!

As if they had a silent agreement, both made their respective move.

Shin kicked the ground and sent himself in the air, flying straight to his opponent. Mephisto, on the other hand, flapped his blazing wings strongly and dived down, planning to meet the opposing side in midair.

Shin released the [Summit Shaper] and the 'Meteor Form' of the sheath on his left hand and returned it to its original form before putting the [Yamato] back in it during his flight.

Channeling the fire elemental mana into the sheathed sword and reinforcing it with the metal elemental mana, Shin left a blazing trail behind him before unsheathing the sword and swinging it horizontally.

Clink!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Fire and Mental Form) – Blazing Splitter'

Shing!

Mephisto held the blazing sword with both of his hands and channeled his demonic mana into it. He then raised it over his shoulders as blazing wings flapped with a strong force and sent him down with greater speed.

When he was about to reach Shin, he suddenly swung the blazing sword down like a hammer or a greatsword, bearing unimaginable strength and unstoppable momentum. He swung it down, leaving a thick blazing arc in the air.

'Class Fighting Style: Splitting Heaven'

Swoosh!

Bang!

The two sides stayed suspended in the air for a brief period as their swords and powers clashed against each other. Their swords released a repeated explosion as the two types of flames clashed and tried to overwhelm one another.

This lasted for a couple of moments before the two sides were separated from each other once again.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Bang! Bang!

The two landed on the ground a short distance away from each other. They withstood the strong impact before pouncing and lunging at each other for another time.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Shin had gotten the upper hand this time as he was already thrusting the [Yamato] forward before Mephisto could even have a suitable position to attack.

Seeing that, Mephisto calmly deflected the sword and redirected it to the side before twirling his blazing sword and about to counterattack with a strong diagonal slash.

Shin let his sword move forward as he used that momentum to turn around before swinging the greatsword form of the [Summit Shaper] that magically appeared in his left hand.

Swoosh!

Bang!

The two sides were momentarily jolted by the impact and forced to take a couple of steps back to relieve the burden of their muscles.

Then they charged at each other once again, brandishing their swords at one another.

Bang! Bang!

Their figures turned into blurry silhouettes as they ran around the place while fighting, destroying the already ruined part of the forest even more.

Sword flashes could be seen from time to time as they two disappeared and reappeared in different places. Huge and small explosions constantly erupted with each clash that they had, changing the landscape for a more devastated state.

During these exchanges, Shin had finally gotten a more favorable position as he tried to suppress Mephisto with his 'Myriad Transformation Swordsmanship'.

He shuffled between regular swordsmanship and quick-draw style while also swapping the forms of the left-hand sword between three different swords; a greatsword, a longsword, and a rapier.

The corresponding Elemental Spirit Possession was also being used during the changing of forms as Shin utilized all the advantages of his complex swordsmanship to the fullest.

But despite all of these, he must admit that this opponent called himself Mephistopheles was not an easy picking either.

Despite being in a less dominant position, he was defending himself with extreme calmness and responding with each move accordingly.

He was trying to find a window that he could use for his 'Secret Skills', but Shin repeatedly closed all of them before he could take advantage of anything. The latter was suppressing him with an unstoppable onslaught and complex combinations so that he could not properly find an opening to counterattack.

Realizing that he would most likely lose in this situation, Mephisto finally showed his real capabilities. He started using the other powers that he had gotten from the Elemental Spirits that he had devoured before.

He started switching between them similar to what Shin was doing.

His swordsmanship which included punches, kicks, and other close-combat attacks further increased in variations. He even included some magical attacks that gave him a slight advantage occasionally.

His left arm was covered with dark energy that was constantly changing its form according to the situation. At times it looked like a gauntlet and battle braces while other times it transformed into demonic claws or a huge dark fist.

His legs were in a similar position as they were being covered with a dark and eerie aura while moving or kicking with some leg techniques.

With these changes, the two sides started to exchange more complex assaults with each other, regularly shifting the flow of the battle. Both sides had their turn to get the upper hand or be pushed into a disadvantageous position.

But what surprised Shin greatly was the fact that Mephisto was able to contend against him in brute force even though he supposedly had the advantage in terms of overall stats.

It was as if they both had equal stats.

Or they both were in the third tier of their respective class, which was more unlikely.

After a few more exchanges, Shin later had to accept that it was almost like the case. Even though he refused to believe it since he did not hear nor see the latter's name in the list of the players who had passed their Promotion Quests.

He then realized that the reason was most likely because of the Elemental Spirits that the opposing side had devoured. Mephisto seemed to have absorbed their powers and gotten a portion of their stats during the process.

His Elemental Spirits supported this theory, especially Hanzo and Solus, who were the most experienced among them.

Shin then realized that there were still some odd players that could still contend against a Tier 3 Class with their unconventional means. He had to take note of this to make sure that he would not fall into any accidents in the future.

Although, he knew that this was most likely

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Mephisto was starting to laugh manically as the intensity of the battle grew. He was like a crazy demon that knew nothing but to fight.

Bang! Bang!

Boom!

Devastating explosions continued to erupt and changed the landscape of the surroundings as they continued with the battle.

Shin and Mephisto separated from each other and assumed another battle-ready stance right after regaining their respective footing.

Shin knew that he had to end this fast now since he was sure that the battle had already attracted quite a lot of players. With such a huge commotion, it was impossible to avoid any attention from the others, especially with the loud explosions during their exchanges.

If he stared here longer, it would be hard to get out of the mess, especially when the 'Big Three' of the Sacred Light Kingdom would most likely make their move against them.

Taking a deep breath, Shin glanced at his health bar and saw that it was only a fourth of its total value.

He had blocked most of the deadly attacks from his opponent and avoided getting more damage from them, but the flames and heat of the surroundings still caused him some minor damage despite him activating the [Divine Constellation Possession]. The demonic flames of the opposing side were quite problematic too as they burned him regularly during their previous exchanges.

The strong impacts from their clashes and the devastating forces behind the attacks of his opponent still made him receive some damage even though he blocked most of them, which resulted in the current state of his Health Bar.

But at the same time, Mephisto was most likely in a similar position, so he was not that worried either.

With this, Shin was planning to end this battle by using a powerful skill. He first wanted to use his Tier 3 Skills, which would most likely guarantee his success. But he hesitated since he could feel that Mephisto had also a similar card under his sleeve.

The cooldown of those two skills was quite long. He was worried that he would be wasting his skills if he failed to guarantee the death of the opposing side.

Moreover, the activation of the Tier 3 Skills was not as simple as the regular skills such as Tier 1 and Tier 2 skills due to how powerful they were. He had to meet certain conditions in battle first before he could activate them, so the risk of failure would only grow higher.

He just received his Tier 3 Skills recently, so he did not have the time to properly test them yet. He was planning to practice using them later when Arthur and Leonard were free, so he set aside studying them for later.

With this, Shin could only settle with the killer moves of his Tier 2 Skills and convert them into a Mentalism Technique from the real world. He also had the perfect technique for them already, especially now that he had mastered the 'Divine Yellow Dragon' method.

Shin was about to make his move when he saw Mephisto suddenly pause. He then saw that the expression of the latter turned dark along with an extreme unwillingness mixed within.

He then saw Mephisto click his tongue with a dark expression.

"When I am starting to enjoy this battle!" said Mephisto with a cursing tone. He was quite unsatisfied with the current state of this result.

Even though the state of the battle was in a deadlock from the observer's objective, he felt that he was on a losing end. He had already expended almost everything under his sleeve. Aside from the few hidden cards that he was holding, which would cause him serious drawbacks when used, he no longer had anything to show.

Moreover, he felt that his opponent's style was yet to reach its absolute perfection, so he could not accept this result since he had been doing his best all this time. He felt that he lost if he retreated now.

But when he remembered the agreement that he had with Lucifer, he could not disobey Paimon's order right now.

Mephisto turned to Shin and said. "It is a pity, but I guess we must stop this battle here. It is my loss this time, but I will make sure to take you down when we meet again."

After seeing his piece, he spread his wings wide before leaping in the air and flying toward a certain direction.

"Planning to run? I'm afraid that I can't let you go no matter what," shouted Shin as he was about to summon his wings and give chase.

But before he could do that, Lorraine suddenly appeared in the distance and shouted at him. "Shin! Forget about that guy! We must rush back to the Maze Forest as soon as possible! The base is being attacked by the Corrupted and Demonic Creatures again!"

Shin paused when he heard that and turned to her. He was about to say something when he turned his head toward his left and saw Diablo materializing out of thin air.

Diablo did not bother to waste his breath for any greeting and went straight to the point. "Paimon, the one leading this operation this operation, has set a trap. If I were you, then you better go back with your friends and ignore Mephistopheles for now."

Shin halted his actions and stared at the latter for a couple of moments before asking. "Are you coming with us?"

Diablo knew what Shin was trying to ask and just shrugged his shoulder. "There is no harm hanging out with your people for the time being and seeing what your team looks like before deciding."

Shin smirked as he knew something must have happened on the other side when he was gone, which made Diablo more interested in Empyrean Talons.

After hesitating for a moment, he took out a black book from his inventory and tossed it to Diablo. "Take this and learn its content. I heard from Senior Benedict that you are looking for a good Martial Manual. This one will be good enough for your needs."

Shin was planning to invest in Diablo now and slowly lure him to their side. "If you decide to join us, I will give you a better one which is perfect for your style."

He was originally planning to give the 'Shadowless Art', but he decided to save it later when he convinced this guy to join them.

Diablo caught the manual and read its cover. "Soundless Assassination Technique."

He was impressed that Shin managed to find such an advanced Martial Manual.

He was quite interested in how Shin had gotten his hands on this one. Even with his rich connection, Daiblo could not find anything that would fit his taste and the requirements that Professor Henry had given him, much less as advanced as this particular Martial Manual.

And based on what Shin had said, he seemed to have in possession of another manual, which was no inferior to the one that he was holding or even better.

He gave Shin a complicated look for a moment before keeping it. He then followed Shin to meet Lorraine, who was running toward them.

"Let's have a closer look at your friends and see if they have the same goals as mine," he mumbled while hiding his expectations.

Chapter 1292 Diablo's Influence

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Shin and Lorraine had regrouped with Owen and Ithilien who were accompanying Samael and Huahua. Diablo was also with them, but he rather hid in the shadows using his stealth skills while following the group's secret.

Shin could still sense that Diablo was around them, and he could accurately monitor his movements, so he did not bother him so long as he would follow them.

Owen and Ithilien had explained the situation to Shin as they ran toward the Maze Forest while riding their respective mounts at the fastest speed possible.

"The corrupted monsters seem to have been waiting for us to leave the base before they launch the surprising attack. Fortunately, the members of the Secret Society are on standby for this kind of situation," said Ithilien while riding her mount at the front of the group along with Shin and Owen.

"There are also the skilled players of the kingdom there; some of them are even rankers, so defending the base is not that hard, especially since most of the players are already there."

"The problem is those Demonic Monsters that come out of nowhere. The Drows and Zombie Elves are already a problem, so the appearance of these monsters puts more burden on everyone," she added in a heavy tone.

"It will be a problem if the Pandemonium Descendants send their people too. I am not sure if the people from the base will be able to hold them back," commented Owen at the back of the group.

Shin fell into deep thought as he said. "So, we must be fast at collecting the relics. The one that we will be having the most trouble with will be the crown in the hands of the Pandemonium Descendants. And that is the only one that we are lacking right now."

Ithilien glanced behind them and looked over to Huahua. She nodded her head. "We are lucky to encounter someone carrying the Moonlight Chalice of Purity."

Shin agreed before saying. "For now, we must defend the base in the Maze Forest to the best of our ability and make sure that it will not collapse while we are thinking of a way to get the 'Crown of a Ruler' from the hands of the Evil Faction."

The others nodded their heads heavily as they rushed toward the Maze Forest.

It was at this moment when Diablo suddenly materialized beside Shin along with his mount, a strange creature that looked like a griffin without wings and had grey feathers. Its body was emitting a dark and eerie aura, which seemed to help it to enter stealth.

The others were just in surprise and almost attacked Diablo due to his sudden appearance. Fortunately, they were able to hold themselves back they had recognized him.

Shin, who was always aware of Diablo's presence, was not surprised at all and just gave the latter a casual glance while nodding.

He could tell that Diablo had something important to say since he dispelled his stealth, so he waited patiently.

As he expected, Diablo had given them a piece of crucial information. "I suggest you give some attention to the 'Big Three' of the Kingdom. They will most likely side with the Pandemonium sooner or later."

Shin gave Diablo an inquiring look as he said. "Why did you say that?"

Diablo thought for a moment before continuing. "I know Paimon very well. He is a very tricky and treacherous individual. He will do anything and everything that he can think of just to achieve his goal."

"Moreover, he is quite skilled at pulling people to his side and manipulating them to his wishes without being noticed. I am very confident that he is not trying to lure the three powerhouse guilds to his side at this very moment."

Shin raised his brows and asked. "Are you saying that these three powerhouse guilds are going to join them? Isn't it the same as hurting their foundation? This kingdom is one of their main bases of operation if I am not wrong."

Diablo nodded his head and continued. "You are right about that. But given the current situation where the reputation of the 'Big Three' is at its lowest, it is not strange for them to consider his offer."

"And if he promised them to hand over the control of the kingdom once it has been corrupted successfully by the 'Withering', I am sure that they will be tempted to join them."

Shin quickly realized what Diablo was trying to say and asked again. "Are you telling us that the Big Three will join the Evil Faction? This place is only one of their major branches. There are still the other branches from the other kingdoms, so I think it is most unlikely to happen."

"It is possible for the Clear Water Guild since they recently emerged within the game, and this is the only branch that they have. But I doubt that the Mythical Guild and the Golden Dawn will do the same."

Diablo shook his head and asked in return. "Then what if these branches separated from the main branch and become independent?"

Shin was surprised at first but shook his head. "I doubt the members of the guild will let it happen."

Diablo shook his head once again. "You don't understand. The Pandemonium have their way of converting the entire guild branch into an Evil Faction so long as their leading figure agrees to it."

"The whole guild, especially their members, will be converted into corrupted and demonic players forcefully when that happens," he clarified.

Hearing what he had said, Lorraine, Ithilien, and Owen, who were listening to them the entire time, could not help but gasp.

"How can they do such a thing?" Lorraine could not help but ask.

Diablo shook his head repeatedly as he answered. "I am not entirely sure about it either. It is not my area of jurisdiction when I am working with them. But I can reassure you that they have the means to do it since they have done it multiple times already."

"And don't underestimate their connections either since they have all their spies scattered far and wide. They have been scheming for the game for much longer than you can think," he added with a serious tone.

Hearing that, Shin fell into deep thought. Given his knowledge of the game being related to some matters in the real world, he started to suspect that the Pandemonium Descendants were being supported by a giant group behind them just like the other superpowers within the game such as the Center Order, Hydra Guild, and Dragon Pavilion.

He then recovered himself from being distracted and turned to Diablo and asked. "So, what do you suggest us to do then?"

Diablo was silent for a moment before turning to Shin. "Leave the base to your friends and come with me to prevent the worst-case scenario from happening."

"We can also steal the final relic that you are looking for if we are lucky," he added with a confident tone.

Shin knitted his brows and asked. "Do you have an idea where those guys are hiding?"

Diablo answered and confirmed it indirectly. "You have given me such a good gift to show your sincerity, so I must perform well to show my thanks and appreciation."

Shin knew that Diablo was talking about the Martial Manual that he had given the latter earlier. He then turned to the others and exchanged glances with Lorraine.

Lorraine seemed to have understood his intention and nodded her head in response.

That was then Shin decided and said to Diablo. "Then let's send these guys to the base in the Maze Forest first to make sure that no accidents will happen to them."

"We have to make sure that the relic will not get stolen away by the opposing side," he added in a serious tone.

Diablo nodded his head. He knew that Shin wanted to escort the rest himself to avoid getting ambushed by the Pandemonium along the way. It was better to be careful than to get caught in an unexpected ambush.

During the journey, the rest remained silent before Shin suddenly remembered something. He then turned to Diabo and asked. "There are quite a few troublesome people on the opposing side. Are you sure that the two of us will be enough?"

Diablo knew that Shin was talking about the members of the Pandemonium Troupes stationed on the other side, so he was not surprised by this question.

But in response, he just turned to Owen, Ithilien, and Lorraine, seemingly trying to tell Shin something.

It was at that moment that Shin had realized what happened in the earlier battle. The three must have taken down one of the Lust Devils, or even both.

He then turned to the three and gave them an inquiring look.

Owen scratched the back of his head before answering. "Well, we somehow eliminated those two from the troupe. That pair is quite troublesome to deal with, but Miss Nala was able to snipe the demonic player named Lilith, so we can handle the rest quite well," directing the credit to Lorraine.

Shin saw Lorraine look at him with a prideful look, seemingly telling him that it was time to let her join their team. He then shook his head before directing his gaze back in front. He could already guess what happened next with that information alone.

With that, the only ones that they had to worry about were Paimon, Amon, and Mephistopheles. But those three were still had to deal with, so he was still not fully convinced.

Adding the clues that he had gotten, he suspected that the Corrupted Cult must have sent a representative for this operation, so he was still not fully confident with the plan.

Understanding Shin's concern, Diablo immediately said. "You don't have to worry too much about the troupe members. From what I can see, Paimon must have already achieved what he wanted from this operation and just stayed to reap some extra benefit and stir the waters for more chaos just to have more fun."

"Amon and Mephistopheles still mark you as one of their main targets – the same for me. But they will no longer stay here since they will be reviewing your strength for the time being."

"I know how they work well. If they have failed to take you down in this operation, they will retreat for now and reassess your overall strength and abilities before sending the information to 'Pride'."

Shin knitted his brow deeply as he found it a little contradicting to what he knew and saw. "Why is that? From what I can see, this is a good opportunity to take me down and delay my progress."

Diablo gave him a mysterious smile before replying. "That is because I am here."

Hearing that, Shin could not help but give the latter a skeptical look, seemingly saying that was too narcissistic. He had a narcissist on his side, but this level of narcissism was in a whole other dimension.

Diablo could not help but chuckle when he saw that look and continued. "I am not telling you this because of that, but it is because they know that I know them well."

"Moreover, this is a form of their respect and acknowledgment of my strength as their former colleague. For as much as I know them, they also understand me as well."

He then turned to Shin and pointed at his eyes. "You have fought me before, so you should understand what they are afraid of."

Seeing that, Shin finally understood.

Diablo was right. They had fought before and saw what this guy was capable of. That kind of analysis and growth was similar to what a Battle Genius could do in battle but in a much scarier state.

He had witnessed how Diablo analyzed his style and responded to it during the battle, so Shin understood his capabilities very well.

If Diablo were given the chance to record and analyze the battle styles and capabilities of their members, then the Pandemonium Troupe would have a hard time facing him in the future.

Their cards would be revealed to him, and he would find a way to counter them soon after.

Shin now understood why Amon refused to make his move unless it was absolutely necessary. He was worried that Diablo would record him and analyze his weakness during the battle.

Thinking about that, Shin could not help but give Diablo a complicated look as he now realized how scary this person was.

Fortunately, Shin was starting to lure Diablo to their side. Even though fighting someone with such abilities was thrilling, it would not be fun to deal with him as an enemy.

He started to respect this person and wanted him to join their side the more he knew about him.

Chapter 1293 Plots and Schemes

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Sacred Light Kingdom.

One of the fallen capital cities of the kingdom that had become a Corrupted Nest.

Paimon was currently sitting across three individuals who were glaring at him sharply. These three seemingly wanted to kill Paimon with their gazes, but after seeing the two guards behind the latter, the three understood that it would not be possible.

Moreover, Paimon himself was not weak either. He even had the most dangerous scent among the people inside the room. It was very clear that he was the most dangerous man among everyone present.

The trio were the leaders of the three biggest and most powerful guilds stationed in the Sacred Light Kingdom. They were also the most influential guilds stationed here, but after the recent incidents, their reputation had hit rock bottom and could not be recovered easily.

And the very reason for their downfall was sitting right in front of them, yet they could not do anything about him.

What was even more frustrating about this situation was the reason why they had been invited here. Paimon wanted them to join him and the Evil Faction, particularly the Demonic Churches.

Paimon was very straightforward and did not bother to hide his intentions. He directly invited them without batting an eye despite knowing that he was the very reason why they were in their current predicament.

Fenix, the Guildmaster of the branch of the Golden Dawn here, was glaring fiercely at Paimon as he felt that they were being mocked by the guy.

But despite the sharp glares and unfriendly gazes that were directed at him, Paimon remained quiet and waited for their response with extreme patience. He was not in a hurry to negotiate with them as he knew that he was not in any kind of disadvantage. In truth, he was the one with the upper hand in this negotiation.

He was just 'extending an olive branch' to them in their time of need. He was their 'savior' in a sense.

After being silent for a long time, Fenix finally opened his mouth. "And why do we have to accept your offer? For all we know, you are the very reason why we are in our current position."

Paimon smiled calmly in response. "That's that, but it is already in the past. I am just doing my job and dealing with the obstacles that will hinder our plans. But this is now, and this is business."

"What I am offering to you is an opportunity – an opportunity to take back what is yours but under a different banner. You will be leading your guild the way it is, and you will become the overlords of this kingdom once again."

His tone was like a devil's whisper in their ears as he was offering them a very tempting offer. It was true that they wanted to regain their footing, but the extra condition made them hesitant to accept.

"But it is not under the name of your previous factions. You must follow ours. You can think of it as if you are working under a different master."

The three guild leaders did not like how this condition sounded, especially Heckles, the branch leader of the Mythical Guild and a Maverick God with the title of Nightmare Swordsman. This condition did not sit well with him, so he was the one who was strongly against the offer.

He smirked. "You make it sound glorious as if working under the Pandemonium Descendants is some sort of achievement. Are you just an emerging force that appeared just recently? I don't think you are any better than any other Powerhouse Guilds within that game that have a very solid foundation."

"I am already a branch leader of the Mythical Guild. I don't think that I have to change my master now and become someone else dog," he added as he shook his head.

Surprisingly, Paimon did not refute those words and even nodded his head. "You are right. Our organization is still quite new in the circle and doesn't have much influence compared to the already established guilds just like the Mythical Guild."

But what came out of his mouth next was like a poison or a venom that made Heckles realize his approaching 'death'. "But do they have the power to change your situation right now? I don't think so."

"And what do you think will happen to you, a branch leader, when they learn what happens in the area that you are managing? As you have said, you are nothing but a dog. I wonder what will happen to a useless dog that can't even protect his territory?"

"Will you retain your position and continue to be the leader of this branch, or will you be abandoned and cast away mercilessly?"

"I wonder. Will you enlighten me about the answer?" he asked, pointing out the real position that Heckles was in.

Hearing that, Fenix and Heckles could not help but feel a shiver running down their spine. They now realized how scary this person was. Everything was under his control from the very beginning. No matter what decision they made, the outcome would still be the same – and either would still be favorable to the opposing party, nevertheless.

On the other hand, if they did not accept the offer, then they would most likely be cast out by their current masters and become abandoned dogs, which was the worst-case scenario for them.

All of these were already clear to them, yet Paimon had yet to reveal all his cards.

Paimon smiled mysteriously before turning to Kellin, who had yet to say anything up until now.

When the two turned their heads, they could not help but tremble as they saw this sly guild leader of the Clear Water Guild seemingly contemplating on something.

It was at that moment when Fenix and Heckles realized that Kellin was unlike them.

The Clear Water Guild was an emerging force within the Sacred Light Kingdom. They had built their guild from scratch and rose into their current position, which could now rival a branch build of an established powerhouse, with the help of the corporation backing them from the real world.

When the two other branch leaders thought about this, they realized that the Black Water Corporation backing the Clear Water Guild was a business corporation. They were nothing but a business, so they would most likely accept the side that could benefit them the most.

Moreover, the Clear Water Guild was only stationed in this kingdom, which was now on the brink of collapse. If the kingdom was destroyed, then the business opportunity that the Black Water Corporation had would have gone to waste. But if they accepted this offer, then they could still make a comeback and save their business.

Just look at this from a businessman's perspective, it was clear which decision was the most logical to make.

After weighing the pros and cons, it would not be hard to think of the answer.

When Kellin thought all of this, he started grinning slyly before raising his head. He briefly looked at Paimon and could not help but admire the latter. Everything was set up by this guy and all the choices seemed to lead to him and solely him alone.

All the choices had a trap hidden behind them, yet everything would still end up being beneficial to Paimon and Pandemonium Descendants.

After realizing that they did not have the choice to begin with, Kellin turned to his 'former' partners and said. "I suggest that you make the same decision. It is already clear what outcome is going to happen to you if refuse."

Seeing that Kellin had already made his decision, both Fenix and Heckles felt another shiver on their back. It seemed like they had been cornered since the time they stepped into this place.

Paimon did not say anything and remained silent, letting the three discuss themselves. It was clear that he already expected this to happen.

His goal was to invite these three, but he did not have to convince all of them. Anyone of the three would be more than enough for his plan, and he was clear that Kellin would most likely accept his offer since there were more benefits to it than refusing.

After seeing Kellin planning to accept, Fenix and Heckles fell into deep thought. They were already somewhat convinced when Paimon pointed out what would happen to them after the main branches of their learning about their failure.

Sighing, the two finally surrendered.

They closed their eyes as if bracing themselves for their decision. When they re-opened their eyes again, they looked at Paimon and asked simultaneously.

"What do we need to do?"

"Tell us the next plan."

Paimon grinned with satisfaction. "Before anything else, how about we sign a virtual contract first? It is not like I don't trust any of you, but it is to establish a 'real' trust from a business perspective."

After that, a pillar of light suddenly fell from the sky before forming a golden floating scroll in front of each of them.

The three guild leaders skimmed through everything briefly before signing their names on it.

Paimon did the same before letting the system keep them. After that, he stared at the three before saying while maintaining his grin. "So, let's discuss how are we going to move forward?"

...

A few moments later, Paimon walked out of the room alone. The three had already activated their respective return scrolls to proceed with the plan and complete the tasks that Paimon had given them.

Paimon paused for a moment and turned to the side. "I have already done my side. Now, everything is in your hands. Whatever the outcome is, it will no longer be my concern."

From the shadows behind the stone pillars, a figure walked out. This person was the representative of the Corrupted Cult for this mission.

He squinted his eyes with suspicion and stared at Paimon for a few moments. A moment later, he nodded his head. "Then I must thank you for everything. I will handle the rest."

He then paused and extended his hand. "But before you leave, pass the crown relic to me first. I still need it for the next part of the quest."

Paimon smirked as he could tell what this guy was planning. But he still took out the relic from his inventory and tossed it. He had already gotten what he wanted from that crown, so it no longer any point in holding onto it.

The representative of the Corrupted Cult caught the crown and looked into its details before nodding his head and keeping it. He then turned to Paimon and warned. "Everything will be under my command now, so you better get your hands off on this matter."

Paimon smiled mysteriously and said. "That is the plan, so I will not bother you with it."

He then turned around and started walking away. "Me and my people would be moving now. I will leave the control of the Demonic Monsters over to you as a gift."

"I wish you luck. I hope that you will achieve success this time," he added as he disappeared into the corridor of the former castle.

The representative of the cult fell into deep thought after hearing those words before shaking his head. "It is not important right now. What I have to do is spread as much corruption as possible."

...

Outside the castle, Paimon was greeted by Amon and Mephistopheles, who were waiting for him up until now.

"How is it?" asked Amon.

Paimon gave him a knowing look before asking. "Who do you think am I?"

He then shook his head and answered. "Of course, I have handled everything well. I also have gotten the item, so we can leave now. Let's go back to the headquarters and report to the leader so that we can proceed with the completion of our Promotion Quests."

Amon did not say anything and just nodded his head.

As they were walking toward the portal in the distance, Paimon suddenly asked the two. "How are the things on your side? Have gotten anything good?"

Amon thought for a moment and answered. "Diablo has grown stronger. It seems like he has completed the 'Demon's Eye' that he has been working on."

"I have not exchanged blows against him, but I can feel that I am in a constant watch of his Demon's Eye. The pressure that it has is much greater than what I can remember," he added with a solemn tone.

Paimon clicked his tongue and nodded. "It looks like he will be more troublesome now."

He then turned to Mephisto. The latter shook his head and said. "Tier 3 Class sure is quite hard to deal with, but that guy is much more interesting than what you have told me. I want to play with him for a while longer, but you summon me when I am about to reach the most exciting part."

Paimon smirked. "It is because I am afraid that you will go off the rails again. It is better to prevent you from going on a rampage again."

"But that guy possesses quite some tasty friends," mumbled Mephisto while licking his lips.

"Forget about it. You will get another chance when 'that' time comes. Have you recovered everything?" said Paimon straight to the point, no longer wanting to beat around the bush.

Mephisto glared at Paimon before nodding his head. "I have gotten it. I will give it to the boss when we get back. Don't worry."

Paimon was finally able to relax as he had gotten everything that he needed. He then led the group of people from the Pandemonium Descendants to enter the portal and leave this place.

Chapter 1294 Infiltration (Part 1)

...

Shin had entrusted the defense of the Maze Forest to the rest of their group and went to look for the members of the Pandemonium Descendants and their accomplice with Diablo. They had encountered quite a few Corrupted Monsters and Demonic Creatures that were able to see through their respective stealth skills and disposed of them immediately after.

Shin could not help but become impressed at these monsters for being able to see through their stealth, particularly Diablo. The stealth skills under his secondary combat class, the Phantom Swordsman, were not that powerful but they were enhanced by his sacred relic, the [Death's Shadow Cloak] that he was wearing. His stealth skills were pretty much 'passable'.

But it was different for Diablo as his 'Shadow Dancer' Transcendent Class majored in stealth and assassination. His equipment also enhanced most of his skills, which was made specially for his class. But these monsters were still able to see through it, making Shin believe that the Pandemonium Descendants were very prepared.

But when he put more thought into it, he found that it was to be expected. After all, Diablo was one of their main enemies, who not only knew about them and understood them well, but was also a powerful assassin who possessed powerful stealth skills and strange techniques.

It should be normal for them to possess such monsters to be able to see through such skills.

While traveling with Diablo, Shin was able to understand him a little more. He had also seen his skills and abilities that made him want to pull this guy to their side more.

The Empyrean Talon might have a powerful line-up, but they were still lacking in certain areas. Their members might be strong and skilled players, where most were standing at the very top of their class, particularly the Godlike Players on their side.

But despite these powerful members, Shin felt that they still needed to cover some of their weaknesses. After all, he had seen the equally strong lineup of certain groups that were comparable to them such as the 'God's Paradise' that was led by 'Martial God Ashura', the 'Ouroboros' under the leadership of 'God of Oblivion Lazarus', the 'Seamless Gate' and their commander 'Newgate, the King of Mavericks', and the 'Purple Crows' that followed the 'Shadow God Zoldryck'.

Shin had been researching the top adventurer teams of the game since the 'United Cup' was right around the corner, and these four teams were the ones that stood at the very top of the list. All of them had a lineup that was no weaker than the 'Empyrean Talons', especially the 'God's Paradise', which was also the current defending champion of this year's tournament.

He could also include the 'Slayers', which was being led by the 'God Slayer Lawless' and the 'Death God Faker'. But due to their fewer members, they were not as strong as those five Adventurer Teams even though they were being led by two of the strongest Godlike Players in the game.

But that was just a few of their strongest opponents. There were also the others such as the top mercenary groups and the strongest lineup of the powerhouse guilds and other organizations.

From the mercenaries, the strongest contenders would be the 'Earners Mercenary Group', the 'Utopia Mercenaries', and the 'Black Stone Camp'. These were the top three mercenary groups within the game, and they were no weaker than most of the organizations, especially the 'Earners', which sent a few of their members to the Frozen Kingdom after Immortal had commissioned them.

As for the elite members of the top guilds, there were the 'Angelwing' of the Wing's Alliance, the 'Ciphers' of the Central Order, the 'Talons' of the Dragon Pavilion, the 'Strong Fists' of the Titan Guild, and the 'Thirteen Heads' of the Hydra Guild.

These were just a few of the elites that the powerhouse guilds sent to the 'United Cup' whenever the tournament was being held, and each of them was the strongest lineup of each guild. All of them were composed of famous Godlike Players with great fame and reputation, or strong Maverick Gods that did not or have yet to join any individual tournaments to earn their official titles.

Then there were the other organizations that were no weaker than these guilds along with their respective elite groups.

The Assassin Union with their 'Shadow Ravens', the Hand of Midas and their 'Chiefs', the Black Market led by their 'Managers', and the Pandemonium Descendants which had the 'Pandemonium Troupe'.

These were just a few of the organizations that were strong enough to be feared by most. They were an established organization that had a long history of an emerging force that could not be ignored, especially the Pandemonium Descendants who were wreaking havoc wherever they went.

There were a lot of powerful groups that Shin had to take note of, especially when the 'United Cup' had a unique and special format.

It was a tournament that was divided into three rounds per battle: a one-on-one battle, a group arena, and a team completion.

The first was a straightforward one. It was like sending a 'champion' in a war that would raise or drop the morale of each side before going into an all-out war depending on the result.

This round would earn a single point for the team, but it was crucial since the morale boost that the winning side would get was not small.

The second round, which was a group area, was sending three players to the stage. It was a straightforward battle in a simple colosseum similar to a gladiator's area. Both sides would battle out, where the winner would be determined when the final member of the opposing side had fallen.

This round would earn the victorious side three points after winning.

As for the third and final round. It was a team battle, where each side would send the number of members that they had agreed upon before they were sent onto a special map that would be their battleground.

This round would provide five points that would turn everything around even if the opposing side won the first two rounds.

The first two rounds were not a problem for Shin and the others since he was confident with his teammates and their individual strengths. The problem was this final round since it showed and determined the real strengths and fatal weaknesses of each side.

In a special map, each role of every member of the team would be showcased.

The battle capabilities of the Empyrean Talons were without a doubt one of the strongest among the rest, but they were lacking in certain areas.

Ithilien, Alucard, and Akailu could be their scouts due to their respective classes, but they would always be better than the experts of the field such as the players with thief- and assassin-related classes.

They would most likely be taken down when they encountered top experts in the field just like 'Death God Faker' or 'Shadow God Zoldryck'. Such godly assassins stood among the very best of the field, which would be one of the biggest threats that the Empyrean Talons would face.

Studying an unfamiliar map was crucial for this round, so having a high-level assassin who would be able to scout for them was very important.

This was why they had to find someone who was at least an expert in the field, or someone who could escape as soon as possible when they faced someone powerful when scouting.

The United Cup was just one of the reasons why Shin wanted Diablo to join them. Having an expert assassin in their group brought them a lot of advantages when exploring high-level and unfamiliar maps too.

Aside from this, Shin was also considering inviting a shaman or a shadow priest to their group since the curses and debuffs that they could put on their enemies would provide great help during any battle.

With all of these, Shin felt that their team would be able to face and survive any circumstances that they would face. That would make their Adventurer Team complete.

As he had this string of thoughts, Shin turned to Diablo before asking. "Have you thought about joining us?"

Diablo paused his steps before turning to Shin. He then started chuckling. "I have not noticed it before, but you seem to be an impatient one, which is quite unexpected. I have heard from Sir Benedict that you are patient and hardworking, but it seems like there are quite a few circumstances that it doesn't match."

Shin shrugged his shoulder. "Well, it is true at times. But can you blame me when I find the perfect candidate that would fill the gap in our team where our weakness lies?"

Diablo was taken aback by Shin's straightforwardness before shaking his head. "That's true. But As you can see, I don't want to join any group yet due to circumstances that you already know."

"I don't want to experience the same thing again after joining an organization," he added with a bitter tone.

Shin then suddenly said. "But we are not an organization. We are a small, but elite Adventurer Team."

Diablo shook his head repeatedly along with a bitter smile as he replied. "Do you know that the current Pandemonium Descendants start with the same background? The original Pandemonium Troupe is just like yours before, so I can't guarantee that yours will not end up with the same path."

Shin did not immediately respond as he understood where Diablo was coming from. This skilled expert was betrayed by his previous friends – or more likely, they had betrayed his expectations of them and walked down a deviated path away from their original goal.

Shin had become curious about what that goal was. The more he thought about it, the more curious he became. Unfortunately, he could not continue with the topic as he was not that close to Diablo sharing such secrets.

He then dropped that thought and continued with the one that he had started. "I am not sure what happened to you and your old friends, but I don't think that we will end up with the same outcome."

Diablo sneered as he felt skeptical after hearing those words. He then asked. "How can you guarantee that? No one will know what the other people are thinking and what they will do."

Shin pursed his lips for a moment before nodding. "I don't know about the others that we have recently met in this game, but I am confident with my friends, who are the core of our team."

"We have known each other for such a very long time already. We have grown up together and understand each other well, so I can at least tell you that we will not become like you and those guys in the Pandemonium Troupe. At least our core will remain the same and will continue to pursue our goals."

He then paused for a moment as a cold glint flashed in his eyes. "As for the others who are thinking of betraying us, I can guarantee that they will not have a good outcome."

"Being betrayed is the worst feeling, and betrayers or traitors are people that I hate the most," he added as his face turned stone-cold.

Due to this topic, Shin was suddenly reminded of the time when he was in the camp. He still 'remembered' how those kids had sold out the big sister who took care of and encouraged them when they were struggling and at their worst just to save themselves.

Unknowingly, his killing intent started to leak out, turning the whole place into a cold place.

Diablo shivered when he sensed the dense killing intent from Shin. He stared at the latter full of surprise. He could not help but become confused, and curious at the same time, how such a young man could release such a killing intent.

He wondered what Shin had experienced to have such an intense intent to kill.

Shin was able to snap out of it not long after. There was a surprised look on his face as he did not expect that he would lose himself that easily after being reminded of that incident.

He then turned to Diablo and apologized. "I am sorry about that. I've just remembered something unpleasant."

Diablo did not say anything and just nodded his head, calm and collected. But deep inside, he was still surprised. If it was in the real world, then he would most likely lose his life in an instant if he faced Shin in that state.

Not long after the two of them arrived at their destination. They arrived at one of the biggest Corrupted Nests within the Sacred Light Kingdom.

The pair stared at the fallen city for a few moments before Diablo opened his mouth. "This must be it. This is most likely their temporary base."

Shin stared at the distance and asked. "Are you sure that those guys are not here? Given the defenses that they had, particularly those patrolling beasts guarding the outer walls, they most likely expecting some 'visitors.'"

Diablo shook his head and smiled. "It is fine. I know Paimon very well. He may be hanging around for a while longer to have some fun, but he will leave as soon as possible once he has gotten everything that he needs."

Shin frowned and asked. "And how do you know that he has gotten it already?"

Diablo smirked and said briefly. "It is because he has already recalled Amon and Mephistopheles."

"If he hasn't gotten everything yet, then he will not summon those two back when they are causing havoc. He will use them as a form of distraction while he is working behind the scenes to arrange everything and finish what needs to be done."

"That's how that guy works. He has never been greedy, which is why he never fails in the operations that he is leading. He advances when he needs it and retreats after accomplishing the job," he added.

"Sounds a pretty troublesome opponent," commented Shin.

Diablo laughed and agreed. "That's for sure. But that is also why it is easy to figure him out."

He then paused before adding. "But it will be different when he works with Belial. Those two are very hard to deal with when working together."

He then dropped the subject and waved his hand while entering stealth. "Let's go. It is time."

Shin shrugged his shoulder as he followed.

Chapter 1295 Infiltration (Part 2)

.....

Shin followed Diablo as they sneaked inside the Corrupted Nest. His stealth abilities were inferior to the latter due to their class differences and advantages, but his technique was still quite good.

His training to move stealthily was still there, so sneaking like this would not be a problem, especially when his skills were enhanced by his secondary combative class and his sacred relic cloak, the [Death's Shadow].

By following Diablo, Shin was able to get a glimpse of the assassin's technique. They were quite crude and simple when compared to most of the people in the same field, but his self-studied and self-created techniques were one of the best. Adding the stealth skills and abilities that he had gotten from the game, his was still better than most of the players with the same or similar class as he had created them himself.

He was more familiar with all of these, making his control over everything reached a certain level.

Diablo had honed his own techniques, skills, and abilities to make it to his current level. But after seeing most of them, Shin realized that Diablo still had a lot of room for improvement.

Now that Diablo had the 'Soundless Assassination Technique', his abilities would reach greater heights, and become a true expert himself.

Shin could not wait to see how strong Diablo would become in the future.

The two of them sneaked inside the castle within the Corrupted Nest successfully. They did not encounter much of an obstacle along the way as Diablo had found a good path where they avoided all the monsters patrolling the area.

After entering, Shin immediately noticed the players guarding and patrolling within the castle. Most of them were highly skilled and at least rankers varying from low to high rankers.

It was quite a heavily guarded place given the skills and abilities of these players, but they were nothing in the eyes of apex experts like Shin and Diablo. The two were able to sneak past these players under their stealth.

But during their infiltration, Shin noticed something. These people were not from the Demonic Churches like he had expected. Instead, they corrupted players from the Corrupted Cult. He had not found a single demonic player, much less members of the Pandemonium Descendants that he was after.

Not even a single Sweeper of the Pandemonium could be found within the castle, which indicated that they had already left just like Diablo had said.

Of course, there was also a possibility that they were hiding inside a different base, but he had chosen to believe Diablo.

After exploring the castle for a few minutes and finding nothing, Shin could not help but frown. Aside from these patrolling players and a few of them guarding certain rooms within the castle that obviously did not have anything inside, the whole place was completely empty.

"Is this some sort of trap?" Shin could not help but voice out his thoughts after their unfruitful infiltration.

Diablo thought for a moment before shaking his head. "Probably, but I don't think it is for us. They may be expecting someone else."

"What's the plan? Should we look for another place?" asked Shin as he thought that there was no point in staying here.

Diablo shook his head. "There is no need for that. I am sure that our target is hiding somewhere within this castle. Paimon must have set up something within here – like an altar or something similar. I am confident that whoever took over his position, must be using it."

"How sure are you?" asked Shin with some doubt.

Diablo took out a black orb, which was glowing with a dark light, before answering. "A hundred percent. Even though I am not sure, this thing begs to differ."

"What's this?" asked Shin curiously.

"It is a tool that can find any kind of Demonic Altar or something similar. It is one of the treasures that I have stolen from the Pandemonium after infiltrating their bases a couple of times," explained Diablo, which made Shin shake his head.

"So, what's the plan? Should we explore the underground? There must be a cell dungeon there or at least a secret room," said Shin while scanning their surroundings.

Diablo thought for a moment before suggesting. "It will take some time for us to explore the whole castle to find the place that we are looking for given its size. It is more efficient if we explore separately."

Shin understood it and thought briefly. He then nodded his head, agreeing with the plan. "Alright. Let's contact each other if we find our target."

The two discussed a few moments, telling each other which parts of the castle they would explore. After polishing their plan, they agreed to meet at the throne room after exploring the other areas. If there were some accidents along the way, they agreed to escape separately.

After that, the two disappeared and went in different directions.

...

Shin was assigned to the left wing of the castle.

He moved sneakily while alternating with his stealth skills while exploring. It had been a while since he had moved like this. He might not be his major area of expertise, but he was quite familiar with it given his training.

He did not engage in any fight during his exploration to avoid any commotion. He did not even assassinate any of the corrupted players guarding certain rooms and instead had chosen to take a detour and looked for other ways to enter those rooms like going through the windows.

He had already explored most of the rooms within the left wing after spending a couple of hours, but he did not find anything. He even started to doubt if there was something within this place.

But after seeing how the guards were positioned and the patrolling players were walking through the corridor, Shin realized they had been deliberately arranged that way. It was as if to lead someone to certain directions where the traps were laid.

After he was done exploring the entire left wing, Shin had engraved the blueprint of the whole place within his head. He had memorized everything which included the positions of the stationary guards and the routes of the patrolling guards.

Shin thought for a moment before contacting Diablo and telling him his findings. He later learned that the latter had also found a similar thing. Diablo had also memorized everything like Shin, and when they compared their results, they realized that everything seemed to be leading to two places.

One of the places that the guards were luring them was the throne room, which obviously a trap. The other one was leading toward the outside of the castle, where a secret entrance was located. Given that the guards were deliberately 'guiding' them there, Shin felt that this secret entrance that was supposed to be hidden was yet another trap.

But after not finding anything, Shin and Diablo felt that they had no choice but to head over to those areas, which were inviting them.

What the two felt uncomfortable about was the fact that the two places were in the opposite direction and quite far from each other. It was pretty much obvious that these two places were meant to separate the forces that would infiltrate the castle.

The two fell silent for a couple of moments as they weighed the choices that they had. They had also considered all the possibilities inside their heads.

After a few moments, both came out with the same decision – they had to head to the two places separately.

One of the main reasons was to prevent the opposing side from escaping when the trap on the other had been triggered. The other reason was to save more time since they felt that whatever the other party was doing, they were about to be done with it.

Aside from that, the two of them were confident with their respective strength, especially Shin who was already in the third tier of his class. Even if he met a King Class Monster with a level over 150, he was confident that he would be able to hold his ground. He could even escape if he wanted to.

Diablo was in a similar position, especially with his class. Even if he could not face whatever the other side had prepared for them, he was confident that he would be able to escape even if he could not fight.

"Alright, let's go with this," said Diablo.

"I'll head over the throne room while you go to the secret passage," said Shin. He was nearer to the throne room, so he suggested this to save more time.

"But before anything else, we must time our movements. We will enter both places at the same time," said Diablo after serious consideration. It was to prevent the other side from responding and avoid them from making any preparations.

Shin nodded his head before ending the call and heading toward his destination. It only took him a couple of minutes to arrive outside the throne room. He had hidden himself under the shadows of the stone pillars of the corridor while also using his stealth skills.

He was waiting for the signal from Diablo before making his move.

Ding

When he had received the message and after taking a glance at it, he quickly sprung into action.

Swoosh!

He dashed straight to the door of the throne room while tightly gripping the sheathed [Yamato] with his left hand.

His figure was like a blur when he made his move which disappeared within an instant. Before the patrolling guards and the guys guarding the door could even respond, flashes of light cut through their bodies.

All of them stood stunned in their respective positions as Shin appeared in front of the door and sheathing his sword.

Click!

When the subtle sound of the sword and the sheath close reverberated in the quiet corridor, the bodies of the guards fell on the ground with soft thuds before dissipating into specks of light.

Shin did not even bother to look at them as he placed his right hand on the door in front of him before pushing it.

Creak~!

There was a creepy and eerie sound when the door was being opened, but Shin remained unbothered. He remained to be on guard as he opened the door, preparing for any kind of ambush.

But nothing happened until the doors of the throne room were fully opened.

Shin looked inside and saw a dark room without any kind of light. Aside from the light from the corridor that entered through the door, the entire room seemed to be completely dark.

Shin knitted his brow slightly before stepping forward. When his foot stepped through the doorway and he entered the throne, the doors suddenly swung back and closed themselves.

Bang!

Shin did not even turn around to look like his eyes remained fixed in front of him while his other senses remained sharp, preparing for any kind of attack.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

It was at that moment when the torches attached to the pillars of the room lit up one after another, illuminating the entire throne room.

One by one, the torches brightened up as the light moved closer to the other end of the room, where the throne was located.

Click!

When the final torches were ignited, Shin finally had a clearer look in front of him. He squinted his eyes as he found a pair of people up front.

One was a hooded figure standing beside the throne while holding a huge bone scepter with a purple gem attached to its tip, which was releasing a dark and wicked aura.

Shin could feel that this person was quite strong but not strong enough to threaten him. But, on the other hand, the other person made his expression under his mask change a little.

It was an elf sitting on the throne haughtily. This elf was looking at him with expressionless eyes while resting his elbow on the armrest of the throne while his chin was being supported by his fist.

Shin ignored the handsome appearance and other features of the elf as his eyes became attracted to the golden crown over their head. A single look was more than enough for Shin to figure out that it was the crown relic that he was after.

Shifting his gaze, he noticed a pair of exquisite swords lending on the other side of the throne, which were emitting a dark light that could give Shin an eerie feeling.

Looking at these two, Shin twisted his neck left and right to produce a series of popping sounds before walking forward fearlessly.

Chapter 1296 Infiltration (Part 3): Challenging a King Class Monster

.....

Shin observed the two as he walked forward. He did not know who the hooded figure was, but he was sure that the one sitting on the throne should be the king who was recently killed during the assassination.

It seemed like the fallen king had become a corrupted undead after his death given the dense dark miasma coming from his body.

As Shin observed them, the two were also watching him closely, especially the cloaked individual. That person slightly raised their head to have a clearer look at Shin under the shade of his hood.

When Shin was about to reach a couple of meters away from the door of the room, the cloaked individual took a step forward, seemingly planning to face Shin on his own.

But he just took a single step when the fallen king raised his left hand and stopped him. The hooded figure turned to the side and looked at the king. They then nodded their head and took a step back while bowing.

After that, the king pressed on the armrest of the throne and slowly stood up while picking up the pair of exquisite swords leaning on the other side of the throne.

When he stood up and started walking down from the stairs, Shin had gotten a better look at this elven king.

The fallen elven king was wearing a set of armor that seemed to be made of jade crystals and special wood that could only be found at the core of the elven land. The two materials were expertly combined to produce the current armor that had a magnificent design but still retained the strong qualities that the two materials used to have.

This fallen elven king was also wearing a luxurious robe that could only be worn by the kings. It had a deep green color that would remind anyone who saw it about the forest while the golden embroideries that it had looked like shining runes, which made it look more sumptuous.

The pair of exquisite swords in his hand seemed to be made for light movements. The forms looked lavish, especially with those hilts and guards that were masterfully crafted into a work of art. They had a complicated and artful design while completely covering the front of the hand when they were being held.

The swords had a similar appearance, but the left-hand sword was slightly shorter than the other. But this shorter sword seemed to have been made for stronger attacks, particularly for slashing and cutting, while the right-hand one was more leaning to quick stabbing and total control of space given its length.

Shin observed the fallen elven king a little more as he became wary, especially with the dense corrupted mana that the latter was emitting. That black miasma that was coming out from the body of the fallen king was an indication of the concentrated corrupted mana flowing through its body.

Shin activated the observation skill of his 'True Sight' ocular skill that had always been active to see the basic information of this humanoid monster.

[Monster Name]: King Yulis

[Title]: King of the Fallen Kingdom

[Rank Classification]: King Class Humanoid Monster

[Monster Type]: Humanoid Undead, Corrupted Monster, Fallen Elf

[Life Rating]: Noble Elf Bloodline (Corrupted)

[Level]: 150 (Suppressed from the original state)

[Class]: Twin Swordsman, Elven Mage

[Tier]: 3 (Suppressed from the original state)

Health Points: 10,000,000,000

Skills:

- Sword Combat Skills

1. Sword Heart (Passive)

2. Twin Blades (Passive)

3. Swirling Blades

4. Storm of Blades

5. The King's Slash (Ultimate)

- Nature Magic Spells

1. Nature's Blessing (Passive)

2. Blooming Magic

3. Holy Fluorescence

4. Nature Speed (Passive)

5. Overgrowth (Ultimate)

Shin was slightly surprised at how detailed the information that he had gotten. It had been a while since he had seen an information panel as detailed as this. If he had remembered correctly, it was during his early days at gaming. But it did not last that long as everything became simpler when the monsters started growing stronger.

He was not sure if it was because his 'True Sight' had become stronger since he reached Tier 3 Class. But when he thought when he used the observation skill to the players, he could only see their basic information. This made him suspect that the upgrade of this ocular skill was only effective for monsters.

Skimming through the detailed information that he had, he became warier than his opponent, especially when he saw that it was not only a named humanoid monster with a title, but also because of the life rating that it had.

Moreover, there were also the ten skills that this monster had. But this also had given him a rough idea of what this fallen elven king was capable of, which was a good thing. He could at least be ready for them and knew what he had to be wary of, unlike before when he had to fight any monster blindly.

This had given him a better edge during the battle.

After observing the fallen elven king, Shin could not help but shift his gaze at the hooded figure. But when he was about to use his 'True Sight' ocular skill, he was obstructed by an unknown power that prevented him from looking at the details of the target.

Seeing that, Shin smirked as if he had gotten the idea of what was going on. This person seemed to have underestimated him. He did not know that Shin had already figured him out because he hid his details.

"Well, it will not do anything better since he will be exposed to my ocular skill. I will know that he is a player either way," mumbled Shin to himself while smiling bitterly under his mask.

He then raised his gaze and stared at the fallen king, who was now at the bottom of the steps while continuing to move toward him.

"I guess I have to play along with his script for a while and see how strong a Tier 3 Humanoid Monster with a specific class," he mumbled before adding. "I will deal with him later."

After that, he flapped his cloak with his left arm, exposing the armor under it as well as the sheathed [Yamato] that he was holding.

He then uttered. "Solar Reaper."

Solus quickly manifested behind him and fused with the katana on his hand changing its appearance and increasing his strength and other qualities, particularly his overall stats and control over the fire elemental mana.

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

In response to what he had done, Yulis, the fallen elven king, released a much stronger corrupted mana from his body that increased his strength and aura.

Then, in the very next instant, they kicked the ground and charged at each other almost at the same time.

Bang!

There was an explosion behind Shin as a circle of fire was created from his previous location. It slowly faded away along with the blazing trail that he had left in the air behind him.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two suddenly reappeared at the center of the throne room simultaneously, facing each other and taking a stance a couple of meters away from one another.

Shing!

Swoosh!

Shin unsheathed the [Yamato] and swung it forward with a speed that could not be seen by the naked eye. His arm turned into a blur while the sheathed sword flicked for a moment followed by a blazing flash that appeared in front of Yulis almost instantly.

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

Yulis remained calm as he watched the tip of the blazing sword rapidly approach his chest while leaving a blazing trail on its path. He then swung the shorted sword that he had in his left hand right before the katana pierced his chest.

Bang!

A loud collision of metal rang in the whole room, sending a strong ripple in the air, which almost extinguished the flame on the torches that were illuminating the whole throne room. Fortunately, they were made of magic and not an ordinary flame, or else the whole room would turn dark within an instant.

Right after deflecting the [Yamato], Yulis suddenly stabbed with his right-hand sword for a counterattack.

The speed of this stab was so fast that it was already right in front of Shin's face just after the fallen king's arm flickered.

Puff!

Shin suddenly turned into smoke that dissipated in the air right after the sword pierced through 'his' head.

At the same time, the shadow behind King Yulis seemed to move for a second before 'spitting' Shin out into the air.

Shin was already holding a greatsword in his left hand at that moment. The 'Judgement Form' was also under the [Summit Shaper Possession], which gave him the command over the elements of earth and metal.

King Yulis felt that his body turned heavy with the sudden appearance of that greatsword, seemingly locking on in place.

On the other hand, Shin was already circulating the enemies within him according to his special breathing technique as he swung the greatsword down.

'Perfected Four Symbol Scripture: Divine Yellow Dragon – Mountain Crusher'

Swoosh!

With pressure as heavy as the mountain, King Yulis seemed to have no ability to move as it tried to crush him. The greatsword was also falling over his head with an unstoppable momentum as it was about to split his head into halves.

Swoosh!

But when the greatsword finally fell, what he had split was just a hollow figure that did not contain anything. It was as if what he had cleaved was nothing but air, which was most likely the case.

Shin saw King Yulis' figure slowly fade away right after the greatsword cleaved down.

Bang!

The greatsword hit the ground and formed a fissure on the concrete floor of the throne room while sending small fragments of rocks in the air.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Then Shin saw the fading figure of his opponent turn into a bunch of flower petals that scattered in the air before suddenly surrounding him.

They moved along the aftershock that his previous action had created before revolving around him with a speed and momentum that was no weaker than a tornado.

Shin suspected that this must be the 'Holy Fluorescence' skill under the skill arsenal of the fallen king that he had seen earlier. He was not sure what they could do but given the threat that he was getting from them, he suspected that it was not a good thing.

Without any hint of hesitation, Shin used the 'Eclipse Pulse' skill under the Slayer skillset as the main model while combining it with his other techniques.

Then a dome of blazing fire appeared around him, shielding him from the flower petals that were rapidly closing it.

Swoosh!

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

Right after the appearance of the blazing dome, the approaching petals were immediately ignited and turned into ashes under its raging flames.

They were immediately cleared away without being able to do anything. It was at that moment that Shin saw that he had already been surrounded by thick vines with sharp and sturdy thorns.

Shin felt like sweating profusely when he saw those vines. If he had blindly charged out of the swarm of petals earlier, then he would have been entangled with those thorny vines and got some serious injuries in the process.

Snap!

With that thought in mind, Shin suddenly made a snap with his fingers after briefly letting go of his left-hand sword. Right after the sound reverberated in the whole place, the blazing barrier that was supposedly protecting him suddenly detonated and caused a huge explosion.

Bang!

The flames spread in every direction and swallowed the thorny vines around him, burning them until they turned into ashes.

Swoosh!

It was at that moment when the sound of air being split apart could be heard, cutting through everything.

When Shin turned his head toward the source of the sound, he suddenly saw King Yulis charging through the raging flame and lunging at him with great speed.

He tore through the air and created a spiral gust of wind that pushed the flames away from him and created a path as he continued moving forward.

Shin did not mind and even welcomed the challenge.

He released the [Summit Shaper Possession] and the 'Judgement Form' of his left-hand sword, turning it back to its sheath form. Then he put the [Yamato] back into as he kicked the round and transformed into a blazing trail of light that headed toward his opponent.

Shin!

Unsheathing the sword, he suddenly thrust it forward during his flight as the raging eternal flames enveloped its blade.

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

Seeing that, King Yulis also threw a powerful stab forward during his flight. The tip of his sword released a thick corrupted mana that spread through the entire blade before turning into a black miasma.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two swords briefly collided with each other, creating sparks in the air, before brushing past one another and continuing to move forward. They headed toward their respective target without showing any intention of stopping.

The tip of King Yulis' sword fixed its path toward the head of his opponent while the blazing [Yamato] was heading straight to the chest of the fallen king.

Shin was completely unfazed by the incoming sword as he was very confident that his sword would reach its destination first.

Puchi!

There was a sound of the flesh being pierced through by a sharp object.

Shin shirked behind his mask as he slightly tilted his head to the side, dodging the incoming tip of the opposing sword.

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But Shin did not rejoice that well as he saw King Yulis slightly twist his body, pulling his left chest back to avoid it from being completely pierced by the blazing sword.

He knew that he had already lost the exchange when the blazing tip reached his chest first, so he chose to avoid the worst-case scenario with those actions. This also made Shin have an easier time dodging his stab.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

They then burst past each other before stopping a few meters away and standing with their backs facing each other.

That was just the first round.

Chapter 1297 Infiltration (Part 4): Meeting an Unexpected Visitor

.....

Lodhir was one of the best and youngest talents in the training camp of a certain organization in the real world. During his training, he had spent a lot of effort just to graduate with pull marks from it.

The organization had later tasked him with a certain Virtual Reality Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (VRMMORPG) for unknown reasons. But since it was an assignment, he had no choice but to comply and do everything he could to finish the task.

But he later realized that this game was not simple as a lot of organizations seemed to be oddly interested in the game. Not only the underworld organizations had set their eyes on the game, but even the organizations under the World Government had joined it too.

They had built their respective guilds or other organizations complete with the powerhouse guilds and super guilds that had already established themselves in the virtual world.

There seemed to be a lot of silent wars that occurred within the game aside from the all-out wars that happened from time to time.

The organization that he belonged to had chosen to side with the evil faction. He realized that the organization had invested quite a lot in the game as they had already taken a few core positions within the Corrupted Cult despite being a player.

The core force of the organization seemed to have invested quite a lot of time in the game and put their utmost efforts into raising their status within the evil faction and snatched a couple of positions from the higher echelons.

He had also met quite a few familiar faces who were trained by the camp and played with them a couple of times. He had also found a couple of seniors who had already graduated from the camp a few years ago. They were all putting their efforts into building their influence within the game.

As competitive as he was, he wanted to put in this same amount of effort and investment a lot of time playing the game.

After playing the game for a couple of months, he managed to establish his position with the Corrupted Cult and become one of its core members. He also had a position that was higher than most of the corrupted players within the game, particularly the Messengers of the Corrupted Cult.

In terms of influence, strength, and status, there was only a single player within the cult that could rival him. That was Immortal, the Lich God, and one of the best and most powerful players within the evil faction.

Immortal's influence within the cult was no weaker than him, which he found a great threat to his position.

Immortal was a senior within their camp in the real world, who had already graduated after just a couple of years of training. His talent surpassed almost all the younger generations of their organization and suppressed them with his absolute strength and mysterious ability.

But oddly enough, Immortal seemed to have refused to climb any higher position within the cult aside from being a Messenger. He showed no intention of going further after reaching that position and instead developed his strength alone.

Lodhir wanted to surpass Immortal, and he had done it not only after being a core member of the Corrupted Cult, but he had also become more influential to Immortal due to a couple of events that happened recently.

Immortal's influence within the cult dropped sharply after a couple of setbacks that he had suffered, particularly his defeat against 'Battle God Sickarius' a couple of times.

First was the operation of nurturing the Corrupted Nest within the Saint Heaven Kingdom. Immortal had first encountered the current Battle God and the rest of his friends in the place, which led to the entire operation failing.

Immortal's influence within the cult had suffered a blow during that time, which had given Lodhir a chance to swallow everything that was left behind.

He had manipulated quite a lot of events within the cult behind the side, crippling the faction within it that was supporting Immortal. This had given him enough power that was slightly stronger than Immortal.

Then the second incident happened. The huge failure in the Blind Abyss Empire and his crushing defeat against Battle God Sickarius took place, which also signaled the start of the fall of the great Lich God Immortal.

This event also cemented the fame and influence that Sickarius had.

Lodhir continued to play in the dark and devoured all the resources that were supposed to be sent to Immortal due to the recent failures.

He then plotted everything and set Immortal up.

Due to his influence growing within the cult, the other Messengers had started to fear him. They started following his orders despite him only having similar strength with them – or might be slightly inferior.

They feared his current position within the cult, which was almost as high as the elders.

Then Lodhir prepared the plan for the destruction of the Saint Heaven Kingdom. He had led that operation, which had borne great results.

Even though they still fail in the end due to certain powerhouses that appear one after another to protect the kingdom, the blame is still not directed at him.

He had cooked up a great plan and almost destroyed the whole kingdom. He even occupied land that became their main base within the Saint Heaven Kingdom before he was plotted by the mysterious Guild Leader of the Hand of Midas Lifestyle Guild.

Even though that base had fallen even after the great efforts that the Corrupted Cult had invested, he was still not affected by it since he had already taken his hands off the entire operations after the successful capture.

It was no longer his responsibility when it had fallen.

Instead, Immortal suffered the blow for him once again. Due to another defeat against the Empyrean Talons, Immortal's influence within the cult had hit rock bottom.

Even though he could still provide them quite a lot of resources due to his powerful guild, the Undying Guild, which was also one of the powerhouse guilds within the game, the Corrupted Cult had decided to strip his title and position as one of the Messengers of the cult.

Lodhir felt a great achievement when it happened. He did not only 'defeat' this brightest and strongest senior within their organization, but he had also done it 'magnificently'. He experienced a great sense of fulfillment when the news was announced.

He could now feel superior to Immortal, especially when the elders of the organization had praised him repeatedly due to his rising momentum and gaining a core position within the Corrupted Cult.

But what he did not expect was for Immortal to suddenly leave the Corrupted Cult after the huge failure at the Frozen Kingdom.

Lodhir first thought that Immortal had suffered a great blow that he could not endure, which triggered him to leave the cult. He felt that the ego of Immortal was hurt due to it and suffered great humiliation.

Lodhir sneered when he first heard the news, but later discovered that there was something wrong with the situation when he also heard that even the dark guild under Immortal, the entirety of the Undying Guild, had also left the cult.

What was even stranger in it was the whole guild seemed to have vanished after they quit the cult. They even left their main base in the Blind Abyss Empire and the other bases in the neighboring kingdoms under their control.

The situation became odder when he realized that even the Corrupted Cult had been affected. The higher echelons of the cult, which were composed of the great elders and cardinals, had even launched a special meeting to discuss how to handle the situation.

It was a little later when Lodhir discovered that Immortal had stolen a couple of relics from the cult, which led the higher echelons to become angry and chase after him.

But they could not find Immortal after he had stolen their relics. It was as if he had disappeared completely along with the Undying Guild.

Lodhir did not know where it came from, but he had suddenly felt a sense of great crisis. He felt that something was about to happen to him, and it would not be anything good.

This was why he started preparing. He felt that Immortal would come back at him, which was why he led a few more operations and targeted a few kingdoms while being more aggressive. He had also set his eyes on a couple of relics, desiring to get his hands on them if possible.

This led him to the current operation in the Sacred Light Kingdom. He had teamed up with the Demonic Churches once again since they were very efficient at doing their jobs.

When he learned the proposition from the Paimon of the Pandemonium Descendants, he quickly agreed despite any hesitation after setting a special condition; the relics that they were going to get would be his possession.

Paimon seemed to have expected that and agreed.

Lodhir did not think of anything else as long as he had gotten his hands on the relic. When he got the 'Crown of a King' relic, he quickly used it along with the corpse of the fallen king of the kingdom that they had assassinated to create a powerful undead under his command.

The moment he had created this King Class Undead Monster, Lodhir felt relieved and accomplished. He felt that no one could stop him now in this kingdom since he was controlling the strongest being within it.

A Humanoid King Class Undead Monster was not something to be trifled with, and he was the one controlling it. If not for his current level and strength that restricted the real powers of this creation, then he felt that he would become the most powerful player in the game right now.

But he later felt something strange. It was as if something was about to happen. Then it became clearer when he heard the two pieces of advice that he had gotten recently; one was from a senior from the organization while the other was from Paimon when they were preparing the 'Withering' of the Sacred Light Kingdom.

– "Do you honestly believe that you have forced Immortal out of the cult? You are too naïve. Let me tell you. He lets you do your thing while he prepares for this outcome. He let you play in the dark so that he can leave the cult without any problems."

"If he remains to be a Messenger of the Cult, then he will never be able to leave that place due to the leash attached to his neck. But since you strip it off from him, then he can now do whatever he wants."

"He is only using the cult as a source of certain resources that he can't get his hands on anywhere. That is the real reason why he stays in the cult." –

– "Heh! You said you want to handle the things here. Then let me remind you since we are currently partners. Don't underestimate that guy who defeated your senior. He is not an ordinary opponent." –

Lordir fell into deep thought and started contemplating those two 'advice.' But since he could not put his fingers on what was wrong at that time, he set it aside and continued with the operation.

He had received a warning from Paimon before he left, saying that he should have expected to receive some visitors once Paimon and the rest of the Pandemonium Descendants left.

Lodhir took it seriously since he felt that Paimon was too wary of someone. He later realized that the person that he was wary of was a former member of the Pandemonium Troupe, so he started preparing seriously.

If it was someone that even Paimon had to be cautious of, then they were definitely not an ordinary individual. This was the reason for the current security of the castle as well as the traps that he had set up.

He then waited at the throne, planning to welcome this 'visitor' with his newly acquired King Class Humanoid Undead.

But he was surprised when he saw that the person who 'visited' him was not the expected guest. Instead, it was someone that was not supposed to be here.

And since he knew that this particular guest was the one who became the first player to reach Tier 3 Class, Lodhir had become even warier.

But what he did not expect was Shin to be able to fight against Fallen Elven King Yulis, who was a Humanoid Undead with a King Class Rank. The scarier thing was that Shin had the upper hand during the initial round.

There was a dark look under the shade of his hood as he watched Shin battle against Fallen Elven King Yulis on an equal footing. But at the same time, there was also a desire hidden within.

He wanted to use the secret technique that he had stolen from the members of the Undying Guild and turn Shin's avatar into a powerful undead summon.

So long he could kill Shin along with the fallen elven king and use the secret technique, he would acquire yet another powerful undead monster that was comparable, if not stronger, to his current one.

"I have to find an opportunity to trap him so that King Yulis can kill him with ease."

Chapter 1298 Sword Heart

.....

Shin was already exchanging many blows with King Yulis, and he felt that the latter was gradually getting stronger the more they fought.

He was not sure if it was because of the changing phases of this boss monster or if it was due to the necromancer controlling it was getting familiar with it, but the difficulty of the battle was indeed getting higher and higher.

He had memorized all the skills that this fallen elven king had, both the sword skills and nature magic spells, which was why he was able to hold his ground against this opponent despite the huge difference in stats.

Moreover, this monster was completely different from the ones that he had fought before.

First was it being a complete humanoid monster with a complete set of skills, which were being utilized with a variety of high-level techniques. It felt like Shin was fighting an NPC with very advanced AI, which also made it look like a fighting a real person.

This had given Shin a whole new experience inside the game.

It was not his first time fighting a humanoid monster. He had even fought others that were much stronger and had a higher base and overall stats. But there was something different about fighting this guy.

Of course, Bellion and Draco who he had met in the Frozen Kingdom were way superior to this guy. Lycan, who had become Leonard's Elemental Beast Partner, was also way stronger, especially when he turned into his Werewolf form.

But those three were exemptions since they were at the peak of this plane. They were either a Sovereign Being in their peak or close enough to reaching that state.

If Shin would compare this fallen elven king to other humanoid monsters, then he would pick the two generals, who turned into Fallen Humans: the Vanguard King Nel and the Archer King Caelum.

But those two were stronger than most of the King Class Monsters, bordering Emperor Class ones. They were also in level 175s, so they were obviously in Tier 3 as well.

Their classes were also Ascended Class, which was a notch higher than regular classes and indicated that they would be stronger than most.

But Shin was also fighting with the others during those times. He had the help of other highly skilled elites from their group, which greatly reduced the difficulty of the battle.

But this time, he was facing an enemy with slightly inferior skills and techniques alone.

He was also currently in Tier 3 Class, so they were mostly equal. The only difference was he was a player while the other side was a monster with higher stats parameters and multipliers.

What surprised Shin the most was the utilization of the skills as well as their combinations and rotations.

Now that Shin was fighting against a humanoid monster of this level alone, he was able to discover and learn quite a few things, particularly in swordsmanship.

He might not have followed the orthodox way of practicing the sword and could not be a real Swordsman and could only be a Mentalist Swordsman, who applied Mentalism to their swordsmanship.

Due to this, he could not form a 'Sword Heart,' which could greatly help a swordsman in their path of sword. This could also enhance their swordsmanship, making it more powerful compared to most swordsmen from the other disciplines.

'Sword Hearts' also varied from one person to another, depending on their respective talents. The more talent a person was, the greater their 'Sword Heart' could be.

It also depended on how early someone could form their 'Sword Heart' since they could nurture them much earlier, making them build a firmer foundation.

Aside from that, 'Sword Heart' could also give the sword a clear state of mind in the path of the Sword. When they fought, all false appearances and illusions would not work on swordsmen when they formed it.

It was somewhat similar to the 'Mind's Eye' of the Martial Artists that could read or sense the intention of their opponents during battle. It was also the same as the 'Spiritual Sense' of the Mentalists when it came to most of their abilities.

But with a 'Sword Heart', the sword practitioner would have a higher degree of integration with the sword. Thus, they could accomplish twice as much even with half of their when they were training their sword skills and techniques or during a battle.

Their understanding of the path of the sword would be much deeper and more refined when they possessed a 'Sword Heart'.

This was one of the most surprising things that he had seen from King Yulis.

Having a 'Sword Heart' as a monster? Of course, that was surprising. Even if King Yulis was previously an elf, Shin still found it amazing and unbelievable to find someone like such a thing inside the game.

He had heard about certain mutated monsters that could be found in the depths of the Forbidden Valley of the Dark Continent in the Real World before from the Springfield Family. He had also read its details from one of the books in the library of the household.

But he still treated it as a legend as no one was able to prove its existence yet after it was 'discovered' by a certain 'explorer'.

But rumors said that this mutated monster could grant an individual a 'Sword Heart' after it was defeated in a duel and got its core and soul extracted from its corpse.

To be more precise, these core and soul had to be crafted into a special elixir by a powerful Mentalist, who majored in medicine and alchemy. Once an individual consumed that elixir and fused it with their cores or settled it in their dantian, they would be able to form a 'Sword Heart' of their own regardless of the discipline that they were practicing.

Shin found it unbelievable as there was not enough evidence for it. He had to ask someone from a swordsman family in the real world about this information since they were the ones, who were concerned the most about it. They held most information about swordsmen and sword practitioners as it was their main field of profession.

Looking at King Yulis, Shin could not help but think of a certain possibility. – "Was it possible to do the same thing here inside the game?" –

He knew that the game developers would be not bored enough to design a monster like this just to troll the players. A monster with a 'Sword Heart' was not weak. Even if some circumstances resulted in the current situation, this kind of monster was not a joke.

The system might have generated it too since King Yulis was supposed to be an NPC inside the game that turned into its current state. But designing someone with a 'Sword Heart' was still their job initially, they were still the ones to be 'blamed'.

However, he was not aware that most of the NPCs within the game were designed based on real people from the real world and were only generated by the system.

When Shin watched King Yulis execute a series of movements by only using the limited sword skills from his arsenal but was able to produce different results through a variety of utilization, he could not help but desire this 'Sword Heart'.

Even though he knew that he couldn't produce a 'Sword Heart' in the real world since he was just a Mentalist Swordsman, he would still be able to experience what was like to have such a sword base within him. He would be able to understand what was like to have a swordsmanship that was supported by a 'Sword Heart'.

He would not be able to take it out in the real world, but the experience of having it would greatly help him in his path of sword.

He wondered if the information that he had read from the real world would also apply here or if that 'legend' was the model of this monster.

"But before that, I first have to deal with that person," Shin mumbled to himself while glancing at the hooded figure standing beside the throne.

If his suspicion was correct, then that guy was a necromancer controlling this fallen elven king. If he wanted to extract the core and soul of this monster without any distraction, he had to take down this person first so that the summoned creature would be freed from his control.

If he was about to finish off King Yulis later, and this necromancer suddenly jumped in and joined the battle, then he would be in trouble. There was also the chance of unsummoning the fallen elven king, which would lead to all his efforts going to waste.

Shin did not want that to happen, so he had to find an opportunity where he could eliminate the necromancer and make sure that no one would disturb him later.

With that in mind, Shin started formulating a series of plans inside his head while fighting King Yulis. But he did not expect that the necromancer would take the initiative to join the battle.

Slightly licking his lips under the mask, Shin focused all his senses while preparing for the much hectic battle.

Chapter 1299 Making His Move

...

While Shin was engaged in an intense battle against King Yulis, Lodhir finally made a decision. He would be making his move and interfering.

He could see that despite the fallen elven king gradually getting stronger due to the changing phase, Shin was still able to adjust accordingly and respond to everything without a problem. It was as if he was also getting stronger as time went on.

If Lodhir knew that Shin was a player, then he would think that he was a boss monster that could also become stronger as the battle progresses due to the changing phase whenever his HP Bar decreased.

Speaking of which, Lodhir also noticed that his undead summon, a humanoid King Class Monster, had yet to get a clear hit to Shin since the start of the battle. Aside from the small chunks that his HP Bar had suffered from the strong impacts during the powerful frontal attacks that Shin could not avoid, he never got hit by any attack. He would always somehow avoid them despite how unexpected they were or block whenever he was forced into a corner before counterattacking.

Realizing that he could no longer wait, Lodhir finally made his move. He could not afford to continue with his act earlier.

Not that Shin was not aware of it.

Raising his bone staff, Lodhir gathered his mana before slamming it down. Right when the bottom of his staff hit the ground, an intense tremor suddenly spread in every direction and shook the whole floor of the throne room.

"You finally can't wait any longer, huh?" Shin, who was already expecting that to happen, smirked. He then disengaged from exchanging more blows against King Yulis and leaped back.

Swoosh!

Right when he leaped away, the ground where previous stood sprouted out with shadow spikes that seemed to be planning to skewer him alive.

At the same time, King Yulis suddenly charged forward, breaking through the shadow spikes, and jumped straight at him.

Shin flipped in the air multiple times while moving away from the fallen elven king, creating distance between the two of them. He somersaulted from time to time to dodge some of the attacks of the latter as he retreated.

While retreating, he was keeping an eye on Lodhir, who was constantly casting a series of spells and sending them his way.

Shadow spikes, dark spheres, cursed arrows, and shadow tentacles made their way toward Shin as he engaged in battle against King Yulis. Each of them was accurately sent at him whenever the fallen elven king left a gap in his attacks.

But as if Shin had extra eyes on him, he was able to dodge everything without problem. None of the spells touched him despite engaging with King Yulis. It was as if he did not have any blind spot that Lodhir could take advantage of in the battle.

Some of the spells that he had sent were even deflected by Shin and sent toward King Yulis by slightly changing their trajectory. Even though the fallen elven king remained affected by those spells since their dark properties were of no use against him, his movements were still being hindered by the explosions of those spells.

Seeing that his spells were ineffective, Lodhir felt frustrated, especially when he supposedly had the upper hand in this battle with the help of King Yulis. It seemed like he still underestimated Shin despite witnessing what he could do earlier.

Realizing that he could not afford to continue hiding his real capabilities, he started using more advanced spells from his arsenal.

Clasping his hands together, Lodhir held his bone staff with both of his hands while chanting a series of necromantic words. The aura around immediately changed as the surrounding mana gathered.

Swoosh!

Huge magic circles filled with dark energies appeared behind him, spinning with a constant rhythm. Then a group of dark spears wrapped with shadow chains came out from those magic circles.

Shin felt that the hair on his back suddenly stood up, sensing an intense chill right after the appearance of those spears. He felt that they were locked on him. It seemed like they would be chasing after him wherever he went and not stop until they caught up.

Bang!

Stomping the bottom of his bone staff on the floor once again, Lodhir fired the dark spears.

'Corrupted Necromancer Skill (Tier 2): Spears of the Sealed Fate'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing the incoming spears with insane speed, Shin did not hesitate to retreat further away, trying to shake off King Yulis while preparing to counterattack.

But the fallen elven king seemed to stick to him like gum and refused to let go. He assaulted Shin with a series of sword movements and techniques, which forced Shin to defend himself.

Shin forced King Yulis to retreat for a moment with a powerful strike before sheathing the [Yamato] in a swift yet accurate motion. He then ducked forward as he controlled his breathing and circulated the mana within him according to the 'Solar Breathing Technique' and the 'Golden Immortality Technique'.

When the chained dark spears were almost upon him, they circled and blocked off all his retreat path under Lodhir's skillful control.

King Yulis also jumped forward, forcing Shin to choose whether he defend himself against those dark spears or him.

Click!

The subtle sound suddenly rang in the whole throne room as Shin's thumb flicked the sheathed sword open.

Shing!

He then fully unsheathed the [Yamato] and swung it around. His arms seemed to disappear as he did that while blazing trails were left behind with each of his swings. Those blazing trails intertwine with one another, forming a crisscrossing net and a dome of fire that protected Shin from outside harm.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Fire and Metal Form) – Blazing Firmament'

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

The chained dark spears hit the blazing dome surrounding Shin and deflected away upon the impact. Even though they circled him and tried to throw themselves at him for another time, they were still unable to break through his defense until they exhausted their powers.

Bang!

When they disappeared, the final strike from Shin accurately clashed against the incoming strike of King Yulis, who was about to strike him.

King Yulis crossed his swords, squeezing the [Yamato] and preventing it from moving forward. He was also trying to lock the sword in place as another spell from his master was about to arrive.

Shin smirked when he saw that as King Yulis seemed to have forgotten that he still had other swords.

The sheath on his left hand took the 'Judgement Form' as Astaroth possessed it with [Summit Shaper Possession] in greatsword form.

Shin then twisted his body as he swung the greatsword with all his might, cutting through the air and producing an ear-piercing sound. The sword was also imbued with the Earth and Metal Elemental Mana, containing their heaviness and sharpness during the swing.

'Perfected Four Symbol Scripture: Divine Yellow Dragon – Mountain Cleaver'

Swoosh!

The poker face of King Yulis remained unchanged since it was already an undead puppet. But when he saw the incoming attack from Shin, he seemed to flinch and felt like death was already approaching.

Fortunately, Lodhir already made his move at that moment and saved him in the nick of time.

Black chains wrapped themselves around the body of the fallen elven king and pulled him back right before his body was cleaved by Shin's strike.

Before Shin could even chase after him, the ground around him exploded as bone spikes shot up from beneath and surrounded him. They formed a cage that entrapped Shin within it, preventing him from going anywhere.

At the same time, Shin saw dark swords hovering in the air, surrounding the bone cage from every direction. They pointed their tips at him, fully ready to stab him to death.

Before he could even respond to the situation, Lodhir waved his hand and pointed at Shin, commanding the dark swords. They flew at their target at a speed that was no slower than the previous attack. They flew through the gaps in the bone cage as they headed to Shin.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Shin was forced to use his defensive technique against it, forming a blazing barrier that protected him from the dark swords.

The blazing barrier, the 'Pheonix Embrace', spun intensely as the dark swords collided at it, trying to take it down.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Explosions continued to erupt from every collision as the two sides met.

The dark swords seemed to form continuously and endlessly, bombarding the barrier. It looked like they were not going to stop until they exhausted the energy of the barrier and forced it to collapse.

Understanding what his opponent was thinking, Shin snapped his fingers and detonated the barrier, making it explode and spearing its raging flame in every direction. The explosion was unable to destroy the bone cage but they passed through the gaps that it had and swallowed the remaining dark swords hovering in the air.

Shin had already sheathed the [Yamato] at that time. He then used the residual flame energies linger in the air and absorbed them, channeling them into his sword.

Shing!

He then unsheathed it immediately after, swinging in a full circle while releasing a blazing wave of fire in every direction. It formed a flaming ring that moved outwards and destroyed the bone cage that exhausted some of its powers from the previous explosion.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Fire Form) – Sunlight Cleaver'

Swoosh!

At that moment, King Yulis charged through the raging flames while covering his body with a thick black haze to protect himself.

He then spun in the air as he swung his swords at Shin, who was still in the middle of maintaining his final pose after the earlier move.

The swords in King Yulis' hand suddenly ignited with a shadowy flame that absorbed the surrounding flame, forming a spinning twister around them.

Shin slightly raised his brows when he saw that. But instead of backing down, he welcomed the incoming attack with open arms.

The sheath on his left hand transformed once again and turned into a longsword, taking the 'Meteor Form' of 'Mondi's Style'. Then Astaroth fused with it once again for another [Summit Shaper Possession] but in a different form.

Then Shin swung both of his swords one of them covered with a blazing flame while the other was enfolded with metallic luster.

Bang! Bang!

Right after the two sides collided, the strong aftershock shook the entire throne room, which also affected the floor underneath them.

Gravels and rock fragments flew in the air due to the strong aftermath of their clash before turning into dust as they were crushed by the residual force from the collision.

The two paused for a moment, maintaining their positions, before engaging in an intense exchange.

King Yulis executed a series of sword techniques produced by his limited sword skills. He seemed to be able to create a new set of techniques by just adjusting the angle of his strikes, the speed of each of his swings, and the power behind them.

In response, Shin used a variety of his sword techniques, combining his sword-drawing and sword-changing styles. He was able to respond to everything but was forced to retreat from time to time since he had to also deal with the spells that were sent to him by Lodhir.

Shin seemed to be struggling in the battle when King Yulis increased his pace and Lodhir used his more advanced spells.

From time to time, Shin was glancing at the direction of the necromancer, who remained in the same position up until now and seemed to gauging the distance between them.

When he was forced into a corner, the two opponents coordinated with another combination of attack, trying to end him there.

But at that moment, Shin mumbled with a whisper. "It seemed to be enough."

He then exploded with a series of movements, heading toward Lodhir.

'Elemental Skill (Void): Void Steps'

'Slayer Skill: Moonlight Steps' x3

'Phantom Swordsman Skill: Phantom Steps'

In just a couple of seconds, Shin appeared right behind Lodhir while brandishing his sword with great force. It was clear that he had no intention of letting of this opportunity that he had created.

He had purposely lured King Yulis away, so that he could create more distance between the two and prevented the latter from rescuing Lodhir in this situation.

But Lodhir seemed to have expected something like this to happen, so he quickly raised his bone staff and appeared tens of meters away from his previous location. Not only this escape was instantaneous, but its distance was also quite far, so Shin would still take some time to catch up.

"That time is more than enough for King Yulis to rescue me," he mumbled as he turned around and about cast a spell to buy him some time.

But it was also at that moment when he was greeted by a cold voice. "Is that so? Why do I feel that it is not the case?"

Shin suddenly appeared right in front of him the moment when he turned around as if he was a ghost.

'Equipment Skill (Leg Armor): (Megumi's Shadow) – Death Travel'

He then swung the sword on his hand, severing the head of Lodhir, who was still staring at him in great shock and disbelief.

'Perfect Four Symbol Scripture: Sacred White Tiger – Guillotine Execution'

Chapter 1300 Making Haste

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Lodhir had his eyes wide open as he watched Shin swing the [Yamato] at his neck. Then his vision suddenly spun rapidly as if his world was being rolled like a ball.

Thud!

Not long after, he heard a soft sound, indicating that 'he' fell on the cold floor of the throne room, bouncing and rolling on it.

When 'he' finally stabilized, he found his headless body standing in the distance, telling him what had just happened. He then realized that his head was beheaded by Shin, resulting in his current situation.

Shin exhaled softly after severing the head of his opponent. Now that he had taken care of the Necromancer, Fallen Elven King Yulis would be able to break free from the latter's control and become an independent undead monster.

At least that was what was supposed to happen. After all, King Yulis was a King Class Humanoid Monster. But he realized that there was something wrong with the situation later.

He found that he did not receive the notification that informed him about the death of Lodhir. The system did not tell him that his opponent died.

Swoosh!

It was at that moment when Shin heard the wind being split apart. It was an indication that someone was approaching him at extreme speed.

Without any hesitation, Shin squatted his hips and lowered his stance while crossing his swords beside him as his shoulder supported them.

Bang!

(-205,620)

The impact exploded as he was sent skidding away.

Frowning his brows deeply, he raised his head and looked ahead. In his previous location, he saw King Yulis standing there haughtily.

At the same time, he glanced at the health bar that was chunked by that previous attack despite him blocking it properly.

"Hehe... He... Hehe-..."

It was at that moment when he heard someone laughing in the distance. Knitting his brow, he saw the head of Lodhir slowly floating in the air while laughing manically.

"I heard that you are strong, but I did not expect that I would 'die' that fast before I could even react when you decided to eliminate me. I guess I still have underestimated you despite putting my guard up."

"That ambush is not only perfectly timed but it is also executed perfectly," he commented as his body floated in the air and approached the fallen elven king.

Shin frowned deeper as he watched what was happening. He wanted to move when he sensed that King Yulis was watching him sharply and fiercely.

He then watched the head of Lodhir reach the fallen elven king's side before a black smoke came out from its mouth which entered the latter's body through eyes, nose, and mouth.

The entire process lasted for just a couple of seconds before the head fell back on the ground for another time.

Shin had his brows clashing hard until he saw King Yulis open his eyes and look at him. He immediately realized that the latter was no longer the same mindless undead puppet that was being controlled by Lodhir. He could see that this 'King Yulis' now had some conscience after seeing the intelligent eyes that the latter had.

"Oh~! This feels good. So, this is how it feels to have a powerful body," 'King Yulis' opened his mouth as he commented about his body. But the voice that he had was the same as the voice that the head that Shin had severed earlier.

It was Lodhir's consciousness that entered the body of the fallen elven king.

Lodhir looked down on his hand, opening and closing them, before mumbling. "I feel like I can do anything with this vessel."

"Oh! It has a lot of skills! It even has a Sword Heart. This is interesting!" he continued to talk to himself, seemingly forgetting about Shin.

Shin squinted his eyes a little when he watched from the distance before preparing to attack. But before he could even make his move, the opposing side suddenly raised his head and looked at him with a smirk.

"You are too impatient. Let me appreciate this vessel a little more since I will have to dispose of it later. It is a pity that I will be losing a perfect undead puppet because of you," said Lodhir.

Shin scoffed when he heard that before preparing himself. He might be wary of this King Yulis if this undead puppet maintained itself. But since the vessel was not taken over by a player, he did not have to be that worried.

It was because earlier, when King Yulis was still 'controlling' himself, Shin had to treat the battle as a fight between two swordsmen. But this time, it was not the same case since he could feel that Lodhir was not a natural swordsman or at least a sword partitioner in the real world.

That would be his grave mistake.

The only concern Shin currently had right now was whether he still had the chance to get the Sword Heart Skill later when he extracted the core from King Yulis' body since the 'soul' of the latter had most likely been extinguished when Lodhir transferred his consciousness.

Seemingly understanding what Shin was thinking, Lodhir chuckled briefly before saying. "I know that you may underestimate me because the 'compatibility' with this vessel is not that great. I can more or less perform 70% to 80% of this body can do before the 'soul transfer'."

"But I think that is more than enough since my current goal is no longer to defeat you," he added which confused Shin a little.

BOOM!

It was at that moment when a very loud explosion could be heard from the outside of the throne room.

Rumble!

Shin could also feel the intense tremors of the whole castle due to that explosion.

Since there were no windows in the throne room aside from the ones that were high up on the walls and adjacent to the ceiling, Shin could not see what was happening on the outside.

That was when Lodhir suddenly commented. "It seems like the other rat sneaking in the castle finally awakened my little pet."

He then 'generously' opened a virtual screen and showed it to Shin. "Let's see what is happening over there."

Casting his gaze on the virtual screen, Shin saw a thick cloud of dust enveloping the huge part of the castle as it spread in every direction. He squinted his eyes a little to focus his gaze as he could see a massive silhouette hiding behind that dust cloud.

From what he could see, it was coiling around the structures of the castle and destroying everything around it.

A few seconds passed and the cloud of dust settled a little, giving Shin a clear look at the creature behind that silhouette. His expression suddenly turned grave as he saw what it was.

"A centipede?"

It was a massive centipede that seemed to have extended for hundreds of meters long. It had a smooth and sturdy exoskeleton that covered its entire body. A single look at it was more than enough for Shin to realize how hard that armor-like skin protecting its body.

The hundreds of limbs that the centipede had were also so sharp and threatening just by looking at them. They looked like sharp spears that could pierce through anything.

Shin saw the centipede camped a few of its legs on the structures of the castle and crushed them into dust a little later. He could tell from the video that the strength of those limbs was not a laughing matter.

"An Emperor Class," mumbled Shin gravely as he watched the centipede create havoc within the castle.

"This is an infant Dragon Centipede. I have acquired it due to an interesting encounter," introduced Lodhir to Shin before muttering softly. "I wonder how long the defenses of the Maze Forest will last when this little pet of mine assaults them."

Then, as if following his command, the giant centipede suddenly turned and started heading toward a certain direction. From what Shin had seen, he could tell that it was heading straight to the base that Owen, Ithilien, and the rest of the survivors of the main region of the Sacred Light Kingdom had built.

The situation was getting serious, and Shin was currently occupied which was why he would not be able to lend them a hand.

All he could do was send a serious warning to others about the threat that was about to befall them. But his expression turned much graver when he saw Ithilien reply solemnly.

Ithilien: The Big Three have abandoned the Sacred Light Kingdom. Their whole guild has converted into an evil faction and declared war on the kingdom.

Ithilien: They are now attacking the footholds and smaller towns along with the rest of the Corrupted Monsters and Demonic Creatures.

Ithilien: They are spreading the 'Withering' at a faster rate and slowly approaching the cities.

Lodhir could not see the expression that Shin currently had due to the [Nephilim's Gemini Mask], but he could still feel his mood. "I wonder what you will do now?"

He just finished his words when he sensed the sudden change in the atmosphere. The temperature of the throne suddenly dropped for a moment before the raging flames around Shin made it rise once again.

Then Lodhir saw Shin raising his head.

"Sigh~! This will be a huge waste, but I guess I can't help it," said Shin as he took a step forward.

Then an intense pressure comes out from his body, suppressing even the air around him. It felt that his body had grown hundreds of meters tall from the eyes of his opponent.

He emitted a majestic air that filled the entire throne room while anyone who opposed him in his presence weakened greatly.

'Equipment Special Skill (Apocalypse Set): King's Authority'

As if it was not enough, Shin activated yet another Domain Skill.

With a step forward, the entire world seemed to have turned black and white. Anyone or anything within it seemed to be under Shin's control and could not escape his authority as his strength greatly increased once again.

'Grim Reaper Skill (Tier 2): Monochrome Field'

Since he had been promoted to the third tier of his class, the effects of this Domain Skills were greatly enhanced. They had affected the environment greatly while reinforcing his strength by a larger margin than before.

"This is going to be a very unpleasant experience for you. It has been a while since I activated this skill, so I can't control my strength very well in this state," said Shin.

The face of Lodhir grew solemn before saying smirkingly. "It will be fine since my Dragon Centipede will still destroy the maze forest even if I die here and I will still achieve my goal."

At the same time, he activated his version of Domain Skill from the skillset that King Yulis had.

'Ultimate Skill: Overgrowth'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Right upon activation, huge and thick roots of trees started growing from the floor of the throne room. They grew rapidly and spread in the entire room within a couple of breaths. The throne room was now filled with these overgrown roots, which granted Lodhir an immense boost in his strength.

"But that is if you can me!" he added as he stood on the highest root within the room, looking down at Shin.

Shin smirked before four wings grew on his back.

'Equipment Skill (Yamato): Nephilim's Wings'

After that, he stepped forward before leaping into the air. The wings on his back then flapped strongly and propelled him upwards, flying straight to his opponent.

Swoosh!

Lodhir laughed maniacally when he saw Shin charging straight at him while swinging his swords left and right.

As if following his orders, the thick roots within the room moved and shot toward Shin like a swarm of snakes. They extended themselves, wrapped together, and set up a blockade while forming a wave that seemingly planning to crush him.

Shing!

Shin held the sheathed [Yamato] before pulling it out and swinging it around. Multiple sword flashes could be seen in the 'Monochrome World' that they were in as his sword left blazing arcs in the air.

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

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

In the very next instant, the space around him seemed to have been split into multiple pieces before crumbling like shattered glass along with the burning roots that charged at him.

It was at that moment when Lodhir was revealed behind the blockade of thick roots before jumping at Shin while swinging his sword.

Shin responded and swung the [Yamato] at the same time.

Boom!