

Destiny 1341

Chapter 1341: High Wire (Part 1)

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Shin had been trying to sense if something had changed within him since he logged out of the game. He was expecting that what happened within the game had affected his senses once again, just like before. But to his disappointment, nothing seemed to have changed at all.

He was sitting at the center of the room, just finished meditating. But after not finding anything, he could only sigh and stand up, planning to resume his current training.

Clank!

At that time, the door of the room suddenly opened followed by the entrance of an old man, walking with the support of his cane.

Seeing the old man, Shin quickly paused and greeted him. "Good morning, Sir."

Old Ryong, who saw Shin preparing for his training, nodded in satisfaction before gesturing for the young man to come over. He then looked for a chair to sit on while waiting.

When Shin arrived, Old Ryong squinted his eyes while looking at Shin before nodding once again. "Not bad. It seems like you are doing well."

He then paused for a moment as he thought about something before continuing. "I will not be able to oversee everything on your training due to our current circumstances. I will only drop by from time to time to see your progress while also giving you a few pointers here and there."

"But most of the time, I will be leaving an entire training plan that you need to follow or ask Henry to draw up a new plan."

He took another pause when he saw Shin's confused gaze before explaining. "You should know that we can't be in contact with each other that much. It is best if we avoid meeting like this much as we can."

Shin became even more confused when he heard that, making the old man knit his brow. Then the latter realized what was going on and explained further. "Ah! That is right. You don't come in contact with the possessor of Seed of Hatred that much."

"Seeds of Hatred is a special existence or power that is born from negative emotions, particularly wrath and hatred. I am sure that you are already aware of it, so I will not say anything about that much."

"Instead, I will explain some of the relationships between these seeds, and what will happen if people with seeds in their hearts meet each other often."

"Mostly, it is because the seeds can be attracted to one another. And usually, it is the weaker ones that are getting drawn to the superior seed subconsciously."

"If the weaker seed got exposed a little too much with the stronger seed, the person who possessed the latter commonly becomes corrupted and becomes a mindless monster."

Old Ryong materialized a scenario through his Materialization Technique, showing what he explained to Shin for a better understanding.

He showed Shin a couple of scenarios before continuing. "As you already know. I am also a possessor of a Seed of Hatred. But unlike you, I have already conquered my inner Demon and already keep it under control."

"But you are different. You are still in the stage of trying to conquer it. If the demon sealed within that seed is unleashed without you being fully ready to face it, you will be most likely to get consumed by it."

"It will be easier to solve if you are a Demonic Practitioner just like me. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Not only you are a Kaleidoscope Mentalist, but you are also a unique Martial Artists, who wields two different kinds of Internal Qi."

"Your case is completely different from mine, so you have to be careful with everything."

"I can help you suppress it from time to time, but that is only a temporary solution. Once the seed has become more accustomed to my energy, I can no longer inject my Demonic Qi to suppress it."

"Instead, I will only be helping it grow much stronger, which is very dangerous for you."

Shin fell silent when he heard that, understanding the gravity of his current situation. This was the first time he met someone with a seed just like his own, so it was news to him.

"You will not have any problem if the seed of the other people near you is on the same level as yours. But you will be in trouble if it is someone with stronger seed or higher achievement in Mentalism or Martial Arts," continued the old man.

"Your Mentalism Method happens to be suppressing your seed and able to nurture your mental strength, particularly the Jade Kirin Scripture."

"Not only that, but this particular mental training method is also applicable to your Martial Arts. I suggest you train this Jade Kirin Scripture more so that you can minimize all the risks that you will be facing in the future."

Old Ryong continued to tell Shin more about the Seed of Hatred and instructed the young man on what he needed to do in different situations.

"You just have to remember two things. Avoid getting involved with people who have a seed of hatred, particularly anyone with higher cultivation or achievements in martial arts. Then always keep an eye on your seed and take note of any changes that it has."

"If you have any strange discovery, no matter how small and insignificant it is, contact any elder around you. It is best if you can look for Henry, me, the Martial King when it happens," he emphasized in a grave tone, making Shin nod his head heavily.

After giving a few more lectures to Shin, Old Ryong finally stood up and prepared to leave. "Alright, that is all for now. I will come back again once I hear that you have already mastered at least ten different wills and can infuse them with your sword."

"I will teach you more interesting things once that time comes," he added before leaving the training room.

Shin, on the other hand, quickly went to train. His mind was a little occupied with the lecture that Old Ryong had given him, but he did not let it distract him too much and affect his training.

However, he was quite bothered about another thing. From his observation, it seemed like the old man was quite ill. He was not sure what it was, but he knew that Old Ryong must be suffering from a serious injury.

He could not bring himself to ask about it since it was his third time seeing the old man, and he felt not they were not that close and comfortable with each other to pry on each other's business.

He wondered how the old man had gotten injured when he was stronger than a bull when they last met yesterday.

He was quite curious about what happened and a little worried at the same time.

Regardless, he trusted Old Ryong that he could handle it since he looked more reliable compared to his other two masters.

Throwing that thought at the back of his head, he continued his training, which was progressing quite smoothly.

Boom!

In an abandoned temple somewhere in the Central Region of the Soaring Continent, a battle between three people was currently taking place.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

David rolled on the ground as he dodged a series of attacks that were trying to take his life. The floor of the already ruined temple collapsed due to the series of impacts that it was unable to endure.

When David saw that he was already about to reach the corner of the room that he was currently in, he suddenly pushed the ground and sent himself propelling in the air.

Swoosh!

Bang!

He then sent an energy wave that created a hole in the wooden wall of the temple before jumping toward it.

Swoosh!

Behind him, a silhouette of a person covered with black and crimson aura chased after him. This person's speed was so fast that a fist was already zooming in front of David's face right after he landed on the ground.

"F*ck!" he cursed as he summoned a Mental Energy wall in front of him while reinforcing it with more energy that came out from both of his hands.

Boom!

The Mental Energy Wall instantly collapsed with just a single hit while David was sent flying away by the powerful impact.

Swoosh!

David quickly adjusted himself in the air by twisting his body and spinning midair.

Ta-ta!

He slid back right after his foot touched the ground. Dust flew everywhere as his foot skidded on the ground, drawing long and deep trails on it.

The moment when he stopped himself from moving further, he quickly took a stance. He spread his legs and moved his feet away from each other while his hands circled in the air, leaving a trail of glowing mental energy through its trajectory.

When his hands were about to meet in front of his chest, the energy covering them suddenly intensified and brilliantly released a light that illuminated the surroundings.

His hands stopped with his palms facing one another, inches away from each other.

Hong!

A golden sphere of light suddenly appeared right in between his palms before circles of pulsing repulsive force came out from it. It pushed the air around David and prevented anything from approaching him.

Swoosh!

It was at that moment when the person that was chasing after him earlier suddenly jumped out of the cloud of dust and charged at him.

Bang!

But before that person could even approach David, they bumped into the repulsive force that the sphere of light had released. It sent the person slamming into the ground.

Bang!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Then black chains suddenly emerged from the ground and circled that person. They moved as if they were alive, resembling the movements of snakes, and wrapped themselves around the limbs of the person lying on the ground.

David, who just retracted his stance, quickly leaped in the air while raising a palm blade above his head. His arm was currently covered with Divinity Grade Mental Energy, forming a sword extending from his hand.

"Vincent, you better hold him tightly this time," he shouted as he descended and swung his hand down.

Vicent, who was currently standing at the other end of the chains, tightly held the black chains wrapped around his cousin. "Do you think I am slacking off? This guy just has a monstrous strength!"

He was in the middle of talking back when the chains were tugged from the other end and started dragging him.

"F*ck!" he cursed as he lowered his stance and pulled harder while shouting. "Just do your job and knock him out already!"

"What do you think am I doing?" snarled David back as he swung the Mental Energy Sword.

But before that energy sword fell, he noticed that something had come out from Jerimiah's body. It was a black aura with crimson edges, which formed a humanoid figure and blocked his strike.

Boom!

The shockwave spread in every direction, destroying the already ruined temple. Strangely enough, the ceiling remained intact and did not collapse despite the strong force that kept on bombarding it.

Due to strong force, Vincent could not keep his grip and let go of the chains, freeing the berserk Jerimiah once again.

Seeing that, David quickly retreated while cursing. "What heck!? I told you to hold him properly!"

"As if it is easy!" Vincent snarled back before giving chase.

"We must bring him to the surface! I am sure that something is affecting him here, which makes his Killing Star to be awakened!" suggested David as he ran away.

"We have been doing it since earlier, but as you can see, whatever is controlling him is aware of that stupidly obvious plan!" replied Vincent as he appeared right beside David.

"I thought he already had better control over it. How come he became like that? He will turn into a 'Slaughterer' if this continues," said David worriedly before turning to Vincent. "This can't do. Let's change roles."

"You keep him busy while I am preparing a suppression array," he added while dodging another attack.

There was an unwilling look on Vincent's face, but he did not refuse. He just slightly tilted his head to the side while saying. "That is more annoying."

"You are faster than me, anyway. Take him for a walk," said David before dashing toward another direction.

The berserk Jerimiah was about to chase after him when Vincent suddenly turned around and obstructed the path. "Alright, my cousin. Let's do this the old way."

Chapter 1342: High Wire (Part 2): The Killing Star

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The Lost Soul Continent was known for its assassins, particularly the ones that came from the Assassin Families with a long history. Most of the strongest, most skilled, and well-known assassins around the world came from this continent.

In this continent, there was a certain belief that lasted since ancient times. It was passed down from generation to generation until it reached the current era.

The Killing Star.

It was said that when a child was born under such a star, they were destined to become the most notorious and terrifying killer. They were born with a special talent that could make them the perfect killer.

They were not necessarily assassins, but they would without a doubt a murderer, slaughterer, or any description of a killer. They had a talent meant for killing, which was second nature for them.

Killing would become an instinct that they were born with.

The moment when they tasted their first murder or killing, the power granted to them by heaven, or rather hell, would be awakened and turn them into a true and natural killer.

Thus, these people were called the Killing Stars.

But due to how powerful they were, the power that they wielded was a terror itself. It also became the reason why a lot of people feared these people. They were either hunted down by powerful organizations or captured to become a perfect killing tool, a weapon.

That was when this talent had become almost extinct and disappeared.

But there were still a few families and old sects that managed to find a method to suppress the killing urges of the Killing Stars and put them under complete control.

That was when these Killing Stars had become a real weapon for killing.

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In other places, the children that were born under the Killing Star were treated as possessors of special physique. It was a physique that was baptized under the murderous aura of the Killing Star.

It was said that the person with this special physique continued to grow stronger the more they killed and bathed in the blood of their victims. This was why some old sects called these people the Blood Slaughterer.

Once these people had lost their sense of humanity and were completely devoured by their power, they would become true slaughterers who knew nothing but killing.

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After a long history, the Killing Star had become both a special physique and an innate talent unique to children born under it.

But to some of the oldest organizations just like the Demon Sects of the past. These Killing Stars had become something that they worshiped. People with the Killing Stars were treated as some sort of spiritual leader candidate of their sect.

Some of them even kidnapped people and brainwashed them to make them the perfect leader of their sect. They call these people the 'Blood Demon'.

Even though most of these sects were no longer active and not committing such acts, they still left their mark on history. One such evidence was written in the records when one of the most powerful sects of the past almost conquered the world during the ancient times.

The records were incomplete, but their existence was said to be real. It was proven by some of the historical records of different Martial Arts and Mentalism Families around the world mentioned them.

And some of the evidence that they had left behind were the temples that were now abandoned.

Most of the people had forgotten about these sects, making them nothing but a forgotten history.

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At this moment, David, Vincent, and Jerimiah had stepped into one of the abandoned temples of these sects, making the slumbering spirits within it to be awakened.

They had accidentally awakened these said spirits due to the appearance of a possessor of a Killing Star. Moreover, they had sensed that this particular Killing Star was different from their era for it had a purer murderous intent and stronger power.

The evil spirits became greedy and wanted to take over the body of this Killing Star, snatching it and turning the body into a vessel.

This was the cause of Jerimiah's current state. His Killing Star was aroused by these evil spirits, making it more active.

Due to him being completely off-guard by the sudden assault by the evil spirits, and because of the special nature of the temple that they were currently in, the mental defenses that Jerimiah had in him suddenly collapsed.

That was when his Killing Star was unleashed, which brought them to their current situation.

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Bang! Bang! Bang!

Vincent ran around the entire place as Jerimiah was chasing after him closely. Even if his speed far surpassed the latter, his cousin, who was under the influence of murderous possession of the Killing Star, was able to keep up with him without any problem.

Vincent knew more than anyone that it would be foolish to contend against Jerimiah in a contest of strength. Facing this guy head-on would only be asking for a one-sided beating.

Taking advantage of his speed, Vincent harassed Jerimiah with a hit-and-run tactic while waiting for David to complete the suppression array.

Speaking of the guy, David had been missing since the time they had separated from each other in the previous room.

Vincent wondered where the guy went, but he did not have the time to think about it since Jerimiah was crazily chasing after him.

While he was trying to disengage from the battle, Vincent suddenly sensed something and halted his actions before springing toward the opposite direction.

Swoosh!

Bang!

That was when something flew past him and headed toward Jerimiah. When he turned his head and looked over his shoulder, he saw that it was a huge axe that came from the other side of the wall.

"What the...!?" Vincent was suddenly caught off guard by the appearance of that battle axe, especially when he could sense an immense and pure murderous aura coming from that weapon. "What's with that weapon? A cursed artifact or something?"

He was in the middle of his thoughts when he felt that his body seemed to have been paralyzed by the pressure coming from the battle axe.

"This is bad!" mumbled Vincent as he slightly frowned his brow.

After that, the bracers that he was wearing suddenly shone and turned into a pair of daggers on each of his hands.

The daggers seemed to be made from the bones of a monster. They did not look that sharp, blunt even. But for some unknown reason, they were emitting a dangerous aura that could not be seen by the naked eye or be sensed by other forms of senses.

Instead, the auras that were being produced by these daggers aroused the deepest fear that someone had in their heart—the thing that everyone feared consciously or unconsciously – the Aura of Death.

Swoosh!

The Death Aura that Vincent had was suddenly reinforced by the one that his daggers were emitting, freeing him from being paralyzed by the murderous aura that the battle axe was releasing.

Right after regaining his movements, Vincent quickly disappeared from his current location and reappeared dozens of meters away from it.

Boom!

The moment when his feet touched the floor, he saw Jeremiah slamming the battle axe on his previous location, producing a massive explosion.

But the more surprising part was the floor remained intact despite how powerful the strike was.

That was the moment when he realized that he was currently inside an unusual room that was completely different from the previous ones that he was in.

Sweeping his gaze at the surroundings, he noticed something strange within the room. Despite the extreme darkness that was enfolding the entire room, his eyes which were trained to be able to see clearly through the dark were able to see everything.

He found himself in the middle of a room that had stone pillars in each corner of the room. There were also statues standing against the walls of the room, lined up a couple of meters away from each other.

He could not see the appearance of the statues due to the blurry haze that was filling the room, but he could at least get the outline that they had.

From what he could see, each statue had a height of ten to twelve meters and all of them had humanoid outlines.

They were carrying a variety of weapons while there was a blazing halo on their back.

If he were describing their appearance, then he would say that they were quite similar to the 'Asura' or 'Demon' that used to be worshipped by ancient demonic religions or sects.

Each statue emitted a unique aura, but also contained an odd similarity with one another.

What attracted his attention the most was the tallest statue standing at the center of a wall. Among all these statues, this one had the densest and strongest sense of danger in it.

It was holding an axe that was similar to the one that Jerimiah was currently holding, giving Vincent an idea of what was going on.

The other one that attracted his attention was the cross star right above the head of this statue. This scene gave Vincent an impression of this 'star' releasing a light directed to this statue, seemingly baptizing it.

What he found even odder was Jerimiah stopping his actions.

Jerimiah stood still while holding the battle axe in his hands.

And before Vincent could take advantage of it, Jerimiah suddenly disappeared before reappearing right in front of that statue.

Jerimiah copied how the statue stood while facing Vincent. Then the power of the Killing Star suddenly blazed more violently before forming a blazing ring right behind him, similar to the one that the statue had.

Vincent was having a bad feeling about what was happening, but David suddenly appeared beside him, preventing him from taking action.

"What are you doing?" asked Vincent while squinting his eyes.

David ignored the tone that Vincent held and said. "Change of plans. We beat him after he is done with that."

"What are you talking about? Can't you see that he is currently being corrupted by that artifact?" shouted Vincent, snapping.

But despite seeing Vincent act that way, David remained calm and explained. "Relax. It is not something that we can't take care of."

"I will be honest with you, and I am not sure what exactly is happening, but I can tell that this can be an opportunity for Jerimiah."

"It has been long since the inheritances of the Killing Stars are erased by the World Government. It is rare to find one, so we can't waste this opportunity."

"If we handle it right, then that artifact will recognize him as his new owner. This is a great opportunity to gain an ancient artifact and accept a long-lost inheritance," he added in a serious tone.

"But it can also turn him into a mindless demon, a Blood Slaughterer," refuted Vincent.

"Don't worry. I will not let it happen," said David while drawing circles in the air. "I have already set up the array around within the entire temple. I can suppress him even if he went berserk once I activated it."

"How confident are you?" asked Vincent.

David was silent for a moment before replying. "About sixty percent?"

The corner of Vincent's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard that. "That is not a good odd, don't you think?"

David smirked before pointing at the daggers in Vincent's hand. "But we have our artifact here."

"I don't think that one of the treasures of the House of Valentine will be passed down to you. Are the rumors true? Are you chosen as the next head of the house?" he added, trying to lighten up the atmosphere.

"Bullsh*t! Jennifer is doing fine! Do you think they will choose someone from the vassal house rather than the direct line?" snarled Vincent back.

David shrugged his shoulders. "Whatever."

He then paused and looked at the statue behind Jerimiah before saying. "I will not say anything about the artifact and the inheritance, but I need something from that statue."

"It will be helpful to Jerimiah, but I have a better use for it," he added, fixing his head at the crown of the statue, particularly the crimson gem embedded in it.

"I don't care anything about that. Just make sure that Jerimiah will come back to his senses after this," said Vincent as he fixed his grip on his daggers.

"Then do a better job later," smirked David as took out a bunch of talismans and wrapped them into the cylindrical staff that he had created with his Divinity Grade Mental Energy.

Chapter 1343: High Wire (Part 3)

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David and Vincent watched Jerimiah accept the baptism light coming from the statue while preparing for the battle. They watched as Jerimiah got himself covered with a black aura with crimson edges.

After waiting for a few moments, the baptism seemed to have ended.

Jerimiah slowly turned to the two with a pair of glowing crimson eyes. His fierce eyes were filled with savageness as he glared at the pair, giving them a brief shiver down their spine.

"Tsk! This is going to be a little tricky," mumbled David as he repeatedly tapped the mental energy rod on the side of his neck.

"Who will be taking the lead?" asked Vincent while tossing and spinning the bone-like daggers around his hands.

David smirked when he heard that and asked. "What? Do you want to play with him head-on?"

"Nah~! Thanks for the offer, but I rather be the one dancing around and launching a random ambush," rejected Vincent.

"Just don't kill him in the process," said David as he knew that the next battle would be more serious than what they were doing earlier. He knew that this could make them get swept by the rhythm of the battle, leading to unfortunate accidents.

"Don't worry. Control and patience are some of the most important factors that an assassin must possess," replied Vincent as he suddenly hopped backward and disappeared into the darkness.

David shrugged his shoulders as he started walking forward. He might not be able to sense Vincent through his Spiritual Sense, but he knew that the latter was lurking around him, trying to become his shadow.

He knew Vincent before and understood the weapons of this particular assassin. It was said that as one of the Young Ghosts of the Lost Soul Continent, Vincent was notoriously known for his assassination techniques, particularly when it came to solo ambushes and quick assassinations.

But David knew something that most of the people were not aware of. It was the real fighting style that Vincent possessed.

It was to become the shadow.

Vincent's true skills shone brighter in this fighting style and became a dangerous threat to any opponent he would face along with a partner.

Bang!

Jerimiah suddenly stomped on the floor of the room, propelling himself toward David, who was calmly walking toward him.

Raising both of his hands, tightly holding the battle axe, Jerimiah swung down. His swing produced a sharp sound of the wind being split apart.

Seeing the savage attack, David calmly held the mental energy rod with his hand while mumbling. "If you are going to just attack blindly like this and not use any proper techniques, then I will put you to sleep much sooner."

Swoosh!

As these words left his mouth, his hands moved and made circular movements with the golden rod. The timing was impeccable as the surface of the rod perfectly deflected the descending axe and instantly changed its trajectory upon contact.

Bang!

As the battle axe landed on the floor, slamming right beside David, the golden rod pressed on it and prevented Jerimiah from pulling it up.

Then David threw a sharp hook with his left fist, sending it straight to the chin of his berserk friend. But the latter quickly reacted and briefly let go of the axe with his one hand, using his arm to block the incoming fist.

Boom!

That seemingly ordinary hook produced a powerful impact that forced Jerimiah to stumble to the side.

With a strong stomp to the floor, Jerimiah forced himself to regain his balance. He forcefully picked his weight up while swiftly leaping in the air and spinning in the process.

Swoosh!

With his current angle, he was able to free the battle axe from the golden rod pressing on it and dragged it to the air before counterattacking a spinning slash.

David responded by also following the momentum of his previous actions to spin while swinging the golden rod in the process.

Clang!

Due to his perfect timing and precise movements, his golden rod hit the surface of the battle axe once again, sending it toward a different trajectory and letting it hit the floor for another time.

Jerimiah was about to quickly follow it with another aggressive attack, but he suddenly sensed an immense threat coming from behind. He quickly halted his actions and retreated in the process.

The expected attack did not arrive, making it look like an illusion.

In the meantime, David took advantage of the situation and pressed forward by thrusting the golden rod into his hands.

Swoosh!

Jerimiah blocked the tip of the golden rod with the surface of this battle axe.

Bang!

It pushed him back, throwing his balance a little off and preventing him from getting an ideal position to attack.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Then David pressed forward while swinging the golden rod multiple times, transforming it into multiple strikes that came from different angles.

'Myriad Manifestation Method: Monkey King – Hundred Strikes'

Jerimiah seemed to have understood that he would not be able to block all the strikes, so he chose to face it head-on. His body seemed to have moved through its instincts and followed the habitual movements that his muscles had memorized.

Swoosh!

He held the battle axe with both of his hands and spun like a tornado or a whirlwind with unstoppable momentum.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Sparks flew in the air as the two sides clashed against each other.

Right after the final strikes of both sides ended, the two briefly paused as they were trying to regain their balance and relieve their muscles from the impact of their strikes.

Bang!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

While Jerimiah was trying to regain his footing, golden chains suddenly shot from the floor and wrapped themselves around him, locking his limbs and preventing him from moving.

David had used the residual mental energy lingering in the air, left from the previous attacks that he had thrown earlier.

He held the golden rod with one hand while the other formed a seal that controlled the golden chains.

Swoosh!

Right at that moment, Vincent seemed to have materialized behind Jerimiah, swinging his seemingly dull daggers.

Roar!

Right before those daggers touched Jerimiah, the battle axe released an intense flow of energy and created an explosion along with a demon-like roar.

Boom!

Vincent crossed his arms in front of his face to protect himself from the explosion before being sent flying by the shockwave.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

At the same time, Jerimiah pulled hard, making the muscles bulge, and revealing his thick veins. His actions made the golden chains snap and break.

Swoosh!

At the same time, Jerimiah suddenly swung hard, sending a strong wave of energy forward that flew straight to David.

David quickly responded by spinning the golden rod with both of his hands and forming a wall of mental energy in front of him.

Boom!

Swoosh!

Through the cloud of smoke and dust, Jerimiah charged through and appeared right in front of David, swinging the battle axe diagonally.

The air seemed to have been split apart by that swing while the black and crimson energy filling the battle axe burned wildly and violently.

At the same time, a demonic face seemed to have manifested right behind Jerimiah along with the blazing ring that surrounded it. This demonic face enlarged as it opened its mouth wide, seemingly planning to devour David whole.

David stomped on the floor hard as he channeled his energy into the golden rod while holding it with both of his hands.

When the accumulation of mental energy reached its peak, it spun rapidly and formed a spiral flow of energy around the golden rod.

He then thrust the golden rod forward, sending all the energy forward.

Swoosh!

The golden energy turned silver, transforming into his Spiritual Force.

Roar!

Then it turned into a huge dragon with wide open jaws, seemingly wanting to eat the incoming opponent.

'Myriad Manifestation Method: Dragon King – Devouring Surge'

Boom!

The collision between the two sides caused an explosion that shook the entire temple. But regardless of how powerful and devastating it was, the seemingly rundown temple remained intact and failed to collapse.

At the center of the explosion, David remained standing with the golden rod in his hands. His body was currently covered with the 'Flowing Storm Force', his unique Spiritual Force.

Crackle! Crackle!

The gentle flow of energy surrounding his body and the silver electric currents on its surface contained a powerful force that fought against the suppression of the battle axe on Jerimiah's hands.

At the same time, David had already unlocked the fourth pace of his Limit Break, signifying that he was already taking this very seriously.

A few meters away from him stood Jerimiah, who currently had his right arm become dark due to the powerful energy flowing through the battle axe. The skin on his arm turned completely black while a crimson aura covered it.

David knew that the corruption was spreading faster due to Jerimiah's repeated usage of foreign power. If they did not take out Jerimiah soon enough, then he would most likely become a Blood Slaughterer.

"We have to make haste," mumbled David as he suddenly charged forward, taking the initiative to attack this time.

Swoosh!

The two were immediately engaged in an intense battle, exchanging powerful blows that repeatedly sent shockwaves in every collision.

The two ran through the entire room during their exchanges while Vincent kept on appearing and disappearing, joining the battle.

Vincent was light a ghost that came and went whenever he pleased. He was appearing in the most unexpected way possible, taking the trickiest angle to attack. His timing was always impeccable and it would be impossible for anyone to react. If not for Jerimiah's sharp instincts, then he would have been taken down a long time ago.

Vincent teamed up with David perfectly, skillfully playing the role of shadow. They worked in perfect tandem during the entire battle.

If not for them holding themselves back and pulling their punches to avoid badly injuring Jerimiah, then they would have most likely killed the latter already.

Roar!

Jerimiah released a deafening roar that shook the entire temple.

As if responding to his call, the statues released an intense light that illuminated the entire room. This crimson light that they were releasing seemed to have given Jerimiah more power while the tallest statue of an Asura behind him emitted a much more intense light than earlier.

Realizing what was happening, David quickly slammed the golden rod on the floor, sending an intense ripple on the ground.

Clap!

He then took a stance and put his palms together, placing them in front of him. He was also chanting a series of Buddhist Mantras, making the rod shine brightly.

Swoosh!

The Mental Energy inside his body seemed to have resonated with the air while golden runes appeared on the ground one after another and spreading in every direction.

Not long after, the entire temple was enfolded by a Mentalism Array that he had set up earlier.

This array tried to suppress the power that the statues were emitting and weakened their influence on Jerimiah, who was in the middle of losing his mind further.

The deep crimson light that was coming out from the battle axe had noticeably weakened due to the appearance of the array, signifying that it was affected.

Seemingly enraged, the evil spirits seemed to have glared at David, sending shivers down his entire body.

But he ignored all of them as he continued to chant the mantras composedly.

When he was done, he slowly opened his eyes and looked straight at Jerimiah's.

He currently had his Enlightened Eyes fully activated as the mandala patterns on his pupils shone brightly.

From his perspective, he seemed to be looking at a Demonic Spirit instead of Jeremiah. He seemed to be able to see the incarnation of the evil spirit that was trying to take over the body of his friend.

The two were in a staredown when David suddenly smirked and mumbled. "This is not my first time facing such possession, you know?"

"Come on, waste more energy so that I can finally get my hands on it," he added with a smirking tone.

Seemingly understanding those words, the Demonic Spirit roared enraged as it realized what the latter was trying to do.

"It is already too late, though," provoked David as he suddenly pulled up the golden rod and charged forward.

Chapter 1344: High Wire (Part 4)

.....

Eastern Sea Region, Ace City

Shin walked out of the training room. He just finished his training in both the tasks that Old Ryong had asked him and his regular study of energy.

For the training in his swordsmanship, he just fully learned how to infuse the will of 'heaviness' with his sword. He could not help but become more surprised the more he trained in this method that Old Ryong had introduced.

Not only did he fully understand the word 'heavy', but he also realized that everything could connect, especially when he had also mastered the will of 'quickness' and 'swiftness' earlier.

His heavy strikes had already reached another level, but when he learned this new will, the quick attacks had become more different compared to before. His quick draw had also become much faster.

Along with these two characteristics, he had also partially learned the wills of 'flexibility' and 'sharpness'. With this, his quick draw and other forms of sword strikes had not only become 'freer', but they also carried a scent that had never been there before.

It seemed to have carried the scent of 'death', albeit not as strong as the other experts who majored in controlling the Death Aura such as top-class assassins.

Aside from these, Shin had also started to learn more about his other innate attributes, the 'Wood' and the 'Water' attributes.

He might not fully learn everything about them, but he had already gained a certain level of understanding.

Compared to these two attributes, his understanding of the previous three such as the Fire, Metal, and Earth attributes had reached another level. He reviewed his understanding of them after learning the 'wills' from his current training.

Shin was contemplating himself and reassessing his training when he realized that the entire training ground was currently empty. All his seniors were currently not present when they supposedly training usually at this time given what he had heard from Benedict.

Even Benedict, who usually cleaned the place before heading out, could not be found.

Confused, he walked around the training ground while wearing a deep frown. He felt quite strange, but he could not put his finger on what exactly it was.

While he was lost in his thoughts, the door of the training ground suddenly opened as Rock entered.

The moment this muscular guy saw Shin, he suddenly smiled and said. "Oh! Junior Shin! I heard that you have become stronger compared to before. Want to spar a little before going home?"

Shin thought for a moment and was about to agree when Benedict suddenly entered and said. "You can't. The professor wants to talk with Shin, so you that sparring will have to wait."

"Tsk!" Rock clicked his tongue but did not say anything. He just shrugged his shoulder before walking toward the energy room personally designed for him.

Shin, on the other hand, turned to Benedict and asked. "Professor Henry wants to talk to me? What for?"

Benedict shrugged his shoulders as he answered. "I don't know either, but it seems like he wants to hand you something."

He then pointed behind him while saying. "The professor is at the conference room waiting for you."

Shin nodded his head and thanked Benedict.

...

Inside the conference room that looked like a rundown storage room, Shin walked inside and found the professor tidying up the place.

"Why are you cleaning yourself, sir? Can't you let the seniors do this? It is not like they are that busy anyway," said Shin as he ran toward the professor and lent a hand.

"Heh! You can't trust those guys with this," said Professor Henry as he shook his head. "This place may look a little shabby, but it hides a few treasures here and there. Those guys may steal a few things here if I let them do the cleaning."

Shin raised his brows when he heard that as he swept his gaze at the entire room. Given the appearance of the room, he didn't think that the professor was in a position to say that.

Seemingly reading what Shin was thinking, Professor Henry laughed. "I know that his place looks like this, but no one will be able to steal anything here unless I let them enter the place."

Not explaining any further, the professor took something from a pile of 'trash' beside him and tossed it to Shin.

Shin caught it and saw that it was a chain bracelet. He confusedly looked at it and could not find anything special. Through his eyes, even if he used his True Sight skill, he could not find anything strange on the bracelet.

He then confusedly looked at the professor and about to ask what it was.

Before Shin could even open his mouth, Professor Herny suddenly said. "Put it on at all times and don't take it off."

"It is a special item that I found in one of the ancient ruins that I have explored in the past," continued the professor, explaining. "It may look ordinary on the outside, but those chains are filled with ancient runes used by cultivators in the ancient era."

"I've studied the language and found the usage of this item," Professor Henry paused for a moment before adding. "Just wear it at all times for now and you will understand how it works naturally."

"Just remember. Do not take it off under all circumstances," warned the professor, emphasizing the importance of the item.

Shin was confused but still nodded his head before wearing the bracelet. He did not feel anything strange after wearing it. But since Professor Henry had told him that he would come to understand it naturally, he had to wait patiently for that time to come.

At the same time, Professor Henry took a stack of books from a dusty corner of the room before placing it in front of Shin. "These are your new friends. You don't have to rush and read all of them. Just read one or two of them when you have gotten free."

"Just focus on your current training. It is more important," he added before tidying the place.

He then paused for another time before continuing. "I will be away for another research study for the next two weeks. If you want to ask anything, then go to either Benedict or Dayna. Those two will help you to the best of their abilities."

"You can also consult Old Lin Huang if you have some questions. I will be asking him to look for you when I am away," he added before gesturing to Shin that he could now leave.

Shin bowed and picked up the books before leaving.

Looking at the covers of the books, they seemed to be quite old – or very old even. They closely resembled those books that could be seen in the previous eras.

He then tried reading the titles of each book, but he could not recognize the texts and the language used. He becomes more confused and a little intrigued by these books.

Using his telekinesis, he opened the book sitting at the top to see its contents. That was when he noticed an extra piece of paper in between the pages of the book, and when he read through them, he realized that they were the transcription of the original contents of the book along with a few explanations.

He became immersed in reading the contents before he knew it. He stopped in a corner, trying to finish the entire page of the transcription before turning toward the original text.

"Don't tell me it is a study of the ancient cultivation?" he mumbled before tilting his head a little. "Why does Professor Herny want me to learn this?"

He then raised his head and turned toward the door of the conference room in the distance, pursing his lips. "Just what the professor wants me to do? What he wants me to learn from these ancient practices."

He stood still for a few moments before closing the book and walking away with a slight frown on his face.

As he was about to reach his car, he noticed that someone was leaning on the door of the Black Panther, seemingly waiting for him.

Squinting his eyes a little, he realized that it was Shiella. "Big Sis? What are you doing here? Are you waiting for me? You should have messaged me instead of waiting here like this."

Shiella turned to Shin and stared at him in silence for a few seconds before finally opening his mouth. "It is fine. It is not like I waited that long."

She then cleared her throat a little before asking. "Do you know where is that Senior Brother of yours? I heard that he went on a special mission with the elite clubs."

"But it seems like everyone, who is on the mission, is already back aside from him and the two others. You are a member of the Research Department. Did they mention anything?"

Shin slightly frowned, confused, before shaking his head. "I am not sure about his situation. I don't ask my seniors either."

"Why? Do need him for something?" he asked, wondering why Shiella was looking for David.

Shiella shook her head. "It is nothing. I just want to ask him something, but it is not urgent."

After that, she pointed behind her. "Let's go. Give me a ride back."

Shin tilted his head to the side, thinking of something, but did not say anything. He placed the book at the back of the car before taking out the keys from his pocket and unlocking the doors.

Shiella quickly opened the door of the passenger seat naturally before entering the. Shin, on the other hand, opened the trunk to put the books before running to the driver seat.

Meanwhile, the person in question was currently in another region dealing with another matter.

David was currently standing in front of Jerimiah, who was glaring sharply and fiercely at him. He was currently topless as his shirt had already torn into shreds earlier. He tore it apart as it was already hindering his movements.

His body was covered in blood. Even his head was bleeding, the blood was flowing through his face and dripping down to his chin. His appearance was terrible, but he still stood straight, carrying the haughty and proud look that he usually had.

He was holding the golden rod and tapping his neck with it while combing his hair with his free hand.

The wounds on his body were healing fast. They were closing with a speed that could be seen through the naked eye. There was also black smoke coming out from those wounds as if something was being expelled from his body.

"This is harder than what I originally thought," he mumbled as he looked at Jerimiah, who currently had a black arm.

But that was not David's focus right now. Instead, it was the tallest statue of an Asura behind Jerimiah.

He had already exhausted enough energy from the battle earlier, which was why he was now focusing on destroying the statue to free Jerimiah from the control of the evil spirits. Knocking down the latter was no longer an option.

Vincent helped David quite a lot, but the latter was still the one, who suffered the most. David bravely faced all the attacks that meant to end them, and always somehow survived in the end.

Vincent noticed that the influence of the cursed artifact was already weakening, which was why they were now targeting the statue. It was the main source of their problem, so they had to take it down to solve everything.

They could not do it earlier due to the powerful energy that it had. If they carelessly touched it while its influence on Jerimiah was still strong, then an accident could happen, risking the life of his cousin.

But with the current situation, they knew that it was finally time to act, which was why Jerimiah was now trying to protect it from the two since earlier.

While Vincent was preparing to attack, he suddenly noticed that David turned toward the entrance of the room, seemingly looking at something.

It was a little behind, but Vincent also noticed that someone had entered the temple and was currently walking toward this room.

As he raised his brows and thought that some experts nearby had sensed their presence, David suddenly said. "You are quite fast. I sense that you were still in the other region earlier."

"Tsk! So, you are still alive, huh?" answered a voice coming from the dark corridor. "I thought something happened to you when I sensed that you broke that 'Seal', so I used that teleportation talisman."

"Ah!? About that? It was just an accident. I lost focus in a moment," replied David as he awkwardly scratched the back of his head.

He then suddenly paused as he sensed something from that tone. "But what's this? Are you worried about me? Now I am touch."

Vincent confusedly looked at David as he watched from the sidelines. From the voice, he knew that the other party was a woman, and seemed like she was quite close to this guy.

Turning his gaze toward the door, he saw an ordinary-looking woman stepping into the room. It was Alyssa in disguise.

Alyssa did not bother to look around when she entered and just fixed her gaze on David. She seemed to be wearing a poker face on the outside, but she was frowning deep inside.

"You look terrible," she said after a long silence.

David smiled. "This is nothing. As you can see, I am still alive and kicking."

Alyssa rolled her eyes as she knew that he was just putting up an act. Given that the Sealing Talisman was broken, she knew that David was already about to reach his limit. It was only a matter of time before the blocked meridian within him was broken.

"Why are you going this far?" asked Alyssa.

David just pointed at Jerimiah with an innocent smile. "That's my friend over there. I can't just kill him when he needs my help. And you can say that I am the reason why he is like that."

Alyssa sighed before turning to Jerimiah and then to Vincent, who was standing in the distance.

"Is it a mission from Sir Adam-...son?" she asked.

David maintained his smile and simply nodded. He was pointing at the crown of the Asura Statue, particularly the gem embedded in it.

"As you can see, I am not as free as you to roam around without any concern," he said.

Alyssa rolled her eyes before gesturing in the air. Then an ancient-looking umbrella appeared out of thin air. She grabbed it and tossed it to David.

"Here is your toy. Use it to suppress that raging energy within you," she said as she tossed the umbrella to David.

"You brought it?" David was surprised as he caught the umbrella before breaking into a bright smile. It felt like he had missed this partner of his.

"You can rest for now, and leave the rest to me," she said with a tone that would not be accepting 'no' for an answer.

Hearing that, David could finally drop his strong front and collapse on the ground. He tightly held onto the umbrella as he sat on the floor of the temple. He did not have any energy to even raise his head, but he forced himself to say additional words.

"Don't kill him."

"All my sacrifice will be in vain if you accidentally kill him," he added with full difficulty.

Alyssa rolled her eyes as she heard that. "I've heard you already. Once is enough."

She then turned to Vincent and nodded. "Please excuse me."

Right after those words left her mouth, a katana appeared on her hands out of nowhere. She assumed a stance that made Vincent think of Shin due to the great resemblance.

The stance, the aura, and everything else were entirely the same. The only difference was how smooth and refined Alyssa's movements were.

Click!

Before Vincent could even think of any, a subtle sound suddenly reverberated in the entire temple followed by the familiar grinding sound of the sword being pulled out from its sheath.

Shing!

Chapter 1345: Golden City and Gold Mountain

.....

Arthur was currently sitting on a bench along the beach near the hotel where they were staying with the others. He was staring blankly in the air, completely lost in thoughts.

He was thinking about the special training that Nathan was giving him every late night. The training today was canceled due to an important appointment that Nathan had, but he was given a special assignment that needed to be done before the end of this week.

He was tasked to learn more about the Lethal Move of Military Arts and the special techniques of the Imperial Tactics and the True Nine Dragon Arts.

Those sets of skills were not a problem given the current progress that he had. What he was concerned about was the true inheritance of the Springfield Family.

He was aware of it and knew that his achievements in practicing the Imperial Tactics were important in this. But he would only learn more about this inheritance of his family that was being passed down from generation to generation through the dragon statue standing at the center of the fountain in front of their household.

He was not sure why his uncle was suddenly rushing him like this when he said that he could just continue at his own pace and let everything naturally flow.

He found it strange that Nathan was suddenly changing his mind from time to time when he usually stuck with the original plan that he had already prepared.

There was also his big sister, who seemed to be acting a little strange since she came back from the trip. He was not sure if the trip was the reason, or if there was something else.

On the surface, he thought that it had something to do with the special mission concerning the ancient tomb. But after thinking more about it, he felt that the two were thinking about something else, particularly Nathan, who seemed to be preparing for a completely different matter.

He might not be the brightest, but he could at least sense that the two were hiding something from everyone else.

For some unknown reason because of this was getting anxious. He felt quite uneasy about the entire situation.

While he was lost in his thoughts, he suddenly saw a familiar car heading toward the hotel from the corner of his eye. Turning his head, he saw the Black Panther pulled over to the side of the road before the window of the driver seat suddenly rolled down.

"Hey! What are you doing there acting lonely? Are you filming a certain drama or something?" shouted Shin as he looked at Arthur from the distance.

Arthur pursed his lips a little while staring at Shin from his position. He then shook his head before walking over, mumbling to himself. "What a timing."

Central Region

At the abandoned temple, Vincent was staring at Alyssa with a weird gaze. He could not explain the current feeling that he was currently experiencing.

He then swept his gaze at the surroundings and looked at what happened in the temple. There was a long line that covered the entire temple from every angle, cutting through the wall and the statues surrounding the room.

Even the tall Asura Statue at the center of the wall upfront was sliced in half by that line.

Vincent could not help but gulp hard as he recalled what happened.

It was just a single move, yet everything ended before he even realized what was happening. It was somewhat of a terrifying feeling if he was the one standing on the opposing side against this woman. He would be most likely to die before he knew it.

Fortunately, what she attacked was the temple itself and the statues within the room that they were in.

She seemed to have honored her words of sparing Jerimiah's life. But he could not help but gulp harder when he realized how tough the entire place was.

David and Vincent had almost gone all-out earlier when they were Jerimiah, who was not holding with his attacks due to the influence of the evil spirits. But despite all of that, they still failed to leave a scratch on the ceiling and the walls of the room.

Yet this girl did not only leave a scratch, but she also drew a deep line on the walls and even sliced all the statues with a single move.

But what was scarier about it was how she had done it. She did it with full ease as if she had done nothing. If Vincent could not see the result, then he would think that she only swung her sword in the air.

David was currently checking on Jerimiah, who now had lost consciousness and sleeping on the floor of the temple.

"I can't understand why you struggle hard when it is just a simple job," said Alyssa as she sat next to David.

David rolled his eyes and refuted. "Can't you at least give us some credit? Do you think you will be able to destroy everything without us exhausting all the energy of those evil spirits?"

"That's what confused me more. Can't you just do that thing? That one that the monks are doing in the Buddhist Temple" asked Alyssa with a frown.

David sighed. "It is not like I can't. I just chose not to."

"We have to get this guy to experience being possessed by those evil spirits because it is a rare opportunity for him. I can't just exorcise him just like that," said David, trying to defend himself.

He was still in the middle of taking it when he suddenly felt a series of stabbing sensations on his back, hitting some of his meridians.

"Eh? What are you doing?" asked David as he looked over his shoulders.

"I am redirecting the energy flow within your body and sealing off some of your meridians. Can't you see?" said Alyssa before standing.

"You don't have to do that. I can handle it just fine. Moreover, the 'meridian blocks' will naturally close with the Limit Break taking effect," he said.

"Too late for your complaints. I have already done everything," said Alyssa as she stretched her waist.

She then turned back to David while asking. "Is there anything fun here? I will continue with my adventure and explore more places just like what you have done."

David rolled his eyes when he heard that. "Have you not learned your lessons yet? You have already caused enough trouble in the Sun-Moon Continent."

Alyssa stared at David for a moment before suggesting. "At least let me join with the tasks that Sir Adamson has left you."

"There is nothing urgent right now aside from gathering a few materials, and I have already gotten the final one that I need," he said as he tossed the crimson gem up and down.

"Then I will explore the continent on my own," she said while turning around and about to leave.

Seeing that, David panicked a little since he knew that this place was the most 'dangerous' for this girl. He could not let her meet the members of the Stuart Family, or at least let her interact with them that much.

"Wait! Wait! Wait!" he stopped her and suddenly suggested. "I don't have any urgent task at the moment aside from guarding Junior Brother, but I can introduce you to a place where you can do whatever you want."

"Are you interested?" he asked as he kept the gem.

Alyssa thought for a moment before nodding her head. "As long as it is an interesting place, then I will go for it."

David smiled, assuring her. "I am sure that you will like that place. I even got hooked on it after visiting a few times."

Vincent, who was listening from the side, already knew which place David was talking about. He also smiled as he also agreed that the said place was indeed interesting and fun.

Then he heard the two arguing with each other once again.

"So, where is that place."

"I will tell you later when I am back."

"Then I will go explore on my own for now. Contact me later."

"You don't have to go. I'm afraid that you will get in trouble again if I take my eyes off you."

"Tell me the place already!"

"Let me rest for now. I will bring you there later."

Vincent sighed as he listened to the two. He shook his head as he sat powerlessly on the floor and opened a virtual screen with his Advanced Watch, planning to browse the forums to relieve his boredom.

Fortunately, the signal was back.

In the said 'place' that David was talking about, Shin had just gotten back online and appeared at the center of an unfamiliar city. It was a city built at the top of a mountain along the Sky Deceiving Valley.

It was the city that Shiella had built with the Hand of Midas.

He had not gotten a good look at the place earlier when he logged out since he was in a hurry, but now that he looked around, it seemed like it was right to leave the construction to Shiella and the experts of the firm.

The city was still a little lonely due to the absence of the NPC residents and players, but he could already see how majestic this city was.

The city was designed to have different levels that resembled the stems of a platform. The houses, inns, restaurants, blacksmith shops, potion shops, and other establishments were scattered around the city, forming a staircase-like formation.

This design was to let the travelers, who loved to do sightseeing, see the view from the top of the mountain.

From here, players could see the Frozen Kingdom to the east and the vast sea to the north. The southern part of the city was facing the border of the Saint Heaven Kingdom and the neighboring kingdom while the western part was directed to the Saint Heaven Kingdom itself.

Facing these four directions, the view from the city was very stunning.

Shin could already see the flood of tourists visiting this place.

As for the other buildings that Shin had designed, all the important businesses were gathered at the plaza of the city located at the center, which was also the highest point of the city.

The Mayor's Residence was obviously at the center while it was surrounded by commercial streets along with the other establishments.

The tall and majestic building was built for the Hand of Midas, which was not lost to the luxurious Mayor's Residence. It had at least seven floors, which were divided for different activities and shops of the trading firm.

Right across the trading form was the Currecency Exchange Center and the Adventurer Guild. Then they were followed by an NPC Auction House that was partnered with the Hand of Midas.

Then not far from them was the Teleportation Hall.

This place would be, without a doubt, the busiest part of the city.

On the other street, there was the huge land for the majestic Battle Arena, which would be one of the main attractions of the city. Then across it was a string of restaurants with the Heavenly Resto-Bar standing at the center.

This place would be another famous place to visit.

Looking around, Shin could also see the different Churches scattered in different parts of the city, particularly the Church of the Sun and the Moon, the Church of Light, and the Temple of the War God.

It seemed like Cloe and Leonard had successfully convinced their churches to build a branch in this city, increasing their influence.

What surprised Shin a little was the tall tower in the southern part of the city. Even without knowing what it was, he at least knew which faction it belonged to – the Mage Tower.

He did not know how Shiella had convinced them, but it seemed like they had stationed some of their mages here, which would increase the security of the city.

He already knew that Shiella had also invited the Mercenary Guild and Thieves Guild, but he was not sure where she put their bases. The latter were secretive, so he expected them to be on the outskirts of the city or any secluded street, but the former was the rival of the Adventurer Guild, which was why he was curious about where she put them.

He could also see a couple of empty lands, which he expected since they had decided to leave them to the other organizations that they would be allying with such as the Assassin Union and Secret Recipe, as well as the other Adventurer Teams and Mercenary Groups that they had invited to settle down to this place.

Some of these empty plots of land would be sold to other business partners that the Hand of Midas had to increase their profit. They could also collect more taxes from them later.

Shin did not have the time to check on the defense system of the city since he was too busy. However, since he was the one who designed most of the blueprints, he had a major idea of how they worked.

He knew that there was an underground base underneath the city where they could build and train their army, hiding their full power from their enemies. There were also the Elemental Pillars that stood along the walls, which would be the foundation of the defense barrier of the city.

These pillars would also filter the mana in the air, making the density of the elemental mana within the city to be very rich.

Then there were also cannons within the walls and a line of war ballistas along the top.

Given the terrain, it would be hard to invade the city, especially since they had the high-ground advantage.

Shin continued looking around until Shiella suddenly appeared.

She smiled and nodded to him while asking with a proud look on her face. "What do you think? Pretty good, right?"

"It's perfect," nodded Shin as he let Shiella stand beside him.

"We are already prepared, and the city can be opened anytime, but we still have a few things to settle first before proceeding," she said.

Shin nodded as he already heard the details in the real world. He then turned to the coastal area in the northern direction of the city. "Leave it to us. We will clear the entire coast and relocate the Calderock Town later before promoting it into a city."

"And lend me that NPC assistant of yours. He will be very helpful at managing everything," added Shiella.

She then paused for a moment before continuing. "Since it is technically your city and this is your territory, you should give it a name."

Shin raised his brows, surprised as he knew that Shiella was quite picky at picking names. He then thought long and hard before smiling. "You know that I don't like complicated things, so let's go with simple ones."

"Since this place will be flooding with gold, and your guild is named as such – how about naming the city Golden City while the land, or our territory itself, will be the Gold Mountain?"

Shiella slightly knitted her brows while mumbling. "A city of gold and a mountain of gold."

She then smiled and nodded. "It sounds a little tacky, but it fits perfectly. Let's go with that."

She paused for a moment before pointing at the northern coast while saying. "Now, go and get to work. Clean the place before the ice wall fully melts. You can leave the rest to me."

Shin shook his head as he watched Shiella walk away before opening his friend list and messaging a couple of names. "Let's go grind some levels."

Chapter 1346: Rise of the Dukedom

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Shin was disappointed that no one responded to his invite positively. Everyone seemed to be busy with either some racial and class-related quest or their promotion quest.

Even his newly added friends, Samael and Huahua, were not available. This pair of siblings seemed to have earned more fame points after the recent event.

Samael earned more reputation with the Church of the Sun and Moon, giving him a special promotion. He was also invited to try taking the Templar Promotion Quest.

It was the third tier of the Paladin Class, an orthodox class. But compared to the regular ones, this Templar Class was a sub-branch, which was exclusive to the Church of the Sun and Moon – the Eclipse Templar.

Shin was not surprised by the news since he somewhat expected it to happen. Given the current set of equipment that Samael possessed the unique sword that he had, and the level of quests that he usually took, it was just a matter before the guy reached a high-ranking official within the church.

The little shaman, Huahua, on the other hand, was suddenly promoted to an important position within the Sacred Light Kingdom due to the contribution that he had made when she brought the chalice.

The timid girl was overwhelmed with the swarm of work she needed. Fortunately, Lorraine pitied the poor girl and helped her finish all the tasks that needed to be done.

There was no need to talk about the others as they were equally busy.

Shin wanted to ask Shiella and borrow a few people from the Hand of Midas, but he was instantly rejected.

Shiella said that she was already short on manpower, which was why she asked him to help.

There were originally enough people to clear all the area around the city and the mountain. They even had enough people to clear the coastal area to prepare for the relocation of Calderock Town.

They had gathered enough after transferring the people from the other branches that the firm had to different kingdoms.

But after the events in the Sacred Light Kingdom, the barely enough people that they needed to be divided due to the branch that they were going to build there.

Shiella was quite reluctant about this. But since she knew how unique and rare the materials from that kingdom were, she had no choice but to accept Shin's proposal. Especially when the profession of Apothecary was so concentrated within the kingdom.

She knew how much benefit and profit they could get from setting up a branch in the kingdom, especially when they would be one of the new hegemons in the area.

With all of that, Shin was left alone once again.

As he was trying to look for a way to solve his problem, he was suddenly reminded of the residents that they had rescued during the early stages of the Empire Quest.

He wondered what happened to them, particularly to the new town that they had built after gathering everyone.

He also remembered that they were now his citizens.

"Now that I think about it, the town is supposedly along the coast," he mumbled as he recalled something. "I seem to remember that I asked Big Sis to take care of them. Don't tell me she has forgotten about them."

...

Even after walking along the coast, Shin failed to find the town. He was quite confused about this. After all, he could see the names of the Named NPCs on the special panel meant for his 'influence' just like Ribbit and the others.

Chief Lucas Choi - the previous village chief and a templar knight - was on the list. His name was grouped with the Knights that he had rescued during the previous quest along with a couple of Named NPCs.

His relationship with them also reached the 'Worship' level, so they should have an absolute loyalty to him. But the problem was, how he would find these people, or NPCs rather.

He found it strange, especially when he had already passed through the place where the village or town was supposed to be located.

"What is happening? Where are these people?" he mumbled confusedly. He was not sure what was going on.

He then walked to certain places where the training grounds that they had discovered were located. He could no longer find their traces even though their ruins were supposedly there.

He might have the blueprints of those training grounds and entrusted them to Shiella, and she said she would set it up in a place where no other people could discover aside from the ones closest to them.

Those training grounds should be their secret training cards that would be their edge over the other people.

But it remained that these places could not be found. From what he could remember, those places could still be used a couple of times before crumbling. They would only completely disappear after they had fully exhausted their energies.

The training grounds were also under his control, so he was supposed to receive a notification when there were other people, who wanted to use them.

But even after reviewing his notification log, he could not find anything.

"What is happening?" he mumbled confusedly.

As Shin went back to the coast, he suddenly found something strange in the distance. He squinted his eyes and focused on what it was.

Not long after, he found something moving on the surface of the sea. It slowly moved upwards before something surfaced and revealed itself.

Shin could only see a silhouette given the distance, and it looked like a moving hill.

He was about to activate his 'True Sight' when he suddenly sensed something. He turned his gaze toward another direction and saw a similar silhouette coming from a different direction.

Then there was another and another, and another more – multiple 'hills' surfaced from the depths of the sea one by one. They appeared one after another until they formed an army.

Ding

While he was watching everything, he suddenly received a notification from the system, making him curse silently. "What is it this time?"

He felt like he could not get a break when he was supposedly grinding peacefully while doing the task that he had.

System: The Lord of the Land is present! Territorial Quest has been triggered!

System: This quest can be done by either a solo or group mission, but the rewards depend on your choice and the result of the quest.

Note 1: Solo Quest grants better rewards.

Note 2: Additional rewards will be added depending on your performance.

Note 3: Solo Quest will improve your influence and fame, granting you a better standing at the Royal Court.

Shin was about to pick the group mission since he felt that it was more efficient. But when he saw the additional notification, he did not hesitate to choose the former.

Ding

System: You have chosen the Solo Quest Mode! Please look at the Quest Panel for more details.

[Quest Name]: Rise of the Dukedom (Part 1)

Mode: Solo

[Quest Type]: Hidden Territorial Quest, Investigative Quest, Chain Quest

[Quest Difficulty]: Default – varies from the rank, tier, and level of the Lord of the Land.

[Quest Details]:

Quest 1:

You have just returned to your Dukedom, but you find something strange. The first town that you have built suddenly disappeared due to some unknown reason.

Quest 2:

A sudden invasion of the sea monsters is approaching due to some unknown reason. They will be launching an attack on your land within the next 2 days.

[Quest Condition]:

Quest 1:

Investigate the truth behind the disappearance of your citizens and find their location within the entire week.

Quest 2:

Repel the invasion alone and force them to retreat.

[Quest Rewards]:

Quest 1:

Increase your fame and influence.

Gain more citizens and army forces.

Your reputation in the Adventurer Guild will drastically increase.

Quest 2:

Increase your reputation within the entire Saint Heaven Kingdom.

Special Title

Your voice in the Royal Court will become louder.

Additional Rewards:

The rank of your Territory will be directly promoted to advanced rank after completing both quests.

Additional features on territory management will be added once the quests are completed.

Diplomatic Relationships will increase upon the quest completion.

Special Title will be promoted to Unique Title – Duke of Valor

[Quest Penalty]:

Death of the missing citizens

Drastic decline of your fame and influence

Destruction of 30% of your territory.

Level Decrease (-10): Temporary Demotion to Tier 2 if you fall below level 150.

Shin was quite surprised at the rewards since it was somewhat new to him. Most of them were related to his current social status, particularly that unique title.

He was not sure if they were useful, but he felt that they should be given the harsh penalties that he would be receiving.

He could accept the rest, but the destruction of his territory would hurt, especially since the size of his land was quite huge.

Given this, Shin was prepared to go all out. He would be using everything he could, especially for the quest number 2.

This sudden invasion was something that must be dealt with as soon as possible. Moreover, he did not know how long it would last.

Fortunately, he had gotten a little clue from the system for this quest, unlike the first one, which did not give any hint or anything. He did not know where to start for the first quest, but the second one directly told him to chase these sea monsters away.

The best solution was to look for the leader of these monsters and kill them to scare the rest away.

Having that simple plan in mind, Shin suddenly waved his hand and summoned all his Elemental Spirit Companions, not holding anything back.

"The system only says that I can't share it with other people, but don't mention about these guys. They are a part of my strength, after all," he mumbled.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

All the Reapers appeared and formed a line in the air while releasing the powerful auras unique to each of them.

Hanzo and Solus stood highest in the air with the former crossing his arms in front of him while the other was holding her waist with her right hand posing.

Vladimir and Grimrace were slightly beneath the two as they stood beside Hanzo and Solus respectively. Vladimir still wore his haughty and arrogant look while the latter was licking his lips as if he found something delicious deep in the sea.

Whitie, Blackie, and Astaroth were originally standing on the same level as Hanzo and Solus, but they suddenly landed on the ground, right behind Shin.

Astaroth directly kneeled like a knight behind Shin with a lowered head. He even addressed Shin as his liege loudly, giving Shin the familiar cringe feeling.

To make it even worse, both Whitie and Blackie did the same and shouted his title as their lord. Their voices were even louder than Astaroth, resembling a thunder.

Even if there were no other people around, Shin felt so embarrassed to the point that he wanted to run away or dig a hole to hide.

Fortunately, his face was currently covered with the [Nephilim's Gemini Mask], hiding his embarrassed expression. Even his slightly red ears were hidden under the hood of his cloak.

Shin shook his head before signaling everyone to move. "Get moving already. We don't have that much time. Clear the sea first and find their boss and take him out."

Hanzo and Solus did not say anything as they immediately moved.

The former entered a spatial tear and disappeared for an instant before reappearing at the center of the sea monsters. He stood within the ranks of the monsters while holding his signature dual-bladed weapon.

This Ancient Void Spirit suddenly raised his head and swept his gaze at the monsters. His body flickered for a moment before a series of crisscrossing purple lines flashed everywhere.

The next instant every monster around him was diced and turned into cube meat that felt and floated on the water.

Solus, on the other hand, raised her hand and gathered the mana in the air. She was sucking all types of mana without filtering anything, which was against the laws of elemental magic.

Not long after, all these mana transformed and became pure Fire Elemental Mana. She had converted the other elemental mana to Fire Elemental Mana through an unknown technique.

A huge sphere of fire was swiftly formed above her, sucking more mana in the air. It only stopped when it became a miniature sun that evaporated all the surrounding water around here and the part of the coast underneath her.

Without further ado, she gently lowered her hand and pointed forward, sending the miniature sun forward.

It landed at the center of the incoming sea monsters before exploding.

Boom!

The scale of the explosion was so huge and powerful that it evaporated that portion of the sea before the water started flooding back, filling that part once again.

As for the sea monsters? Nothing was left behind, not even their toasted corpse.

It then signaled the action of the other Reapers. They quickly moved and charged toward the sea monsters, attacking with their respective means.

Chapter 1347: Rise of the Dukedom (Part 2)

.....

At the coast at the edge of the Sky Deceiving Valley, Shin and his little group of Elemental Spirits were already fighting the invading sea monsters for almost three hours. The monsters continued to attack the coastline relentlessly, seemingly not planning to stop until they completely swarmed at the land.

This seemingly endless wave of monsters was neither slowing down nor showing signs of weakening. It even looked like they were getting stronger as more time went by. More powerful and much larger monsters were even appearing more frequently as the battle continued.

But despite all of this, Shin and his group were still not showing any weakness while fighting. They continued to slaughter the sea monsters even if the waves seemed to be endless.

Shin had already no idea how many monsters were killed, but he knew that the number would continue to increase, and this battle would last a little longer since they could not find the leader of the monsters.

But despite this seemingly boring and one-sided massacre, Shin seemed to be enjoying the battle. He was observing them, especially the two that recently got promoted into Monarchs, Whitie and Blackie.

The two seemed to be eager to try their newly improved abilities and recently acquired powers. They immediately transformed into their respective Elemental Transformations and flew over the sea while slaughtering the monsters along the way.

Whitie was shooting a series of light beams with every strike of his fist while Blackie turned into a shadow that swept through the entire battlefield, killing every sea monster she came across.

From time to time, the two were also executing a few skills that covered quite a large area. At times, the skills that they were using some single-target skills, killing their targets in an instant.

This part of the sea had already transformed into a slaughterhouse. Monster corpses and pieces of meat scattered everywhere while the sea water either turned red or green due to the blood of these dead monsters.

The other elemental spirits were also performing well, particularly Vladimir, who seemed to be a Sovereign Being on this battlefield. His performance was more efficient and much faster compared to even Hanzo or Solus.

This Noblesse Crimson Spirit had access to a seemingly endless blood. The continuous appearance and attack of the monsters seemed to have worked in his favor. As the rest killed the sea monsters and left their corpses behind, the blood that dyed the sea became his weapon while the place itself turned into his domain.

Shin saw this conceited elemental spirit start showing his absolute dominance in a field where he could fully showcase his power.

At the same time, he had also seen how powerful Vladimir had become. This elemental spirit also showed him the power of the inheritance that he had gotten from Dracula. Different techniques and skills were being displayed one after another as Vladimir slaughtered the sea monsters.

Blood weapons, blood strings, blood energy, and many more were being used as Vladimir fought, which gave Shin some inspiration on how he would unitize the Blood Elemental Mana that he controlled within the game.

From what Shin could see, Vladimir was almost done digesting all the knowledge that Dracula had given him along with the blessings that he had received with it.

It would be a matter of time until Vladimir also became a Monarch.

As for Astaroth, he remained on the coast and stayed with Shin. He stood in front of his master while killing all the monsters that would try to reach the land after getting past the rest due to luck.

With his protection, Shin was able to observe the entire battlefield without any issues.

That was also when Shin noticed something strange. Grimrace, the nutjob who was always eager to create trouble and enjoy this kind of slaughter, was acting a little odd.

This Eldrich Psychic Spirit was fighting quite well just like the rest, but Shin noticed that this guy was somewhat distracted by something.

Grimrace was still killing the sea monsters, but unlike when he was dancing and making gestures with his hands while doing so, he was doing it with an uninterested and bored look on his face.

Shin squinted his eyes and observed Grimrace a little closer. That was when he found out that this nutjob of an elemental spirit kept on looking at a certain part of the sea.

Shin frowned a little and turned at that part where Grimrace kept on glancing. But even after paying close attention and using his 'True Sight' skill, he was unable to see anything.

He tried communicating with Hanzo, Solus, and Vladimir to ask if they noticed something, but they also failed to find whatever it was in that part of the sea despite their powerful senses.

With that, Shin had no choice but to ask Grimrace himself through mind communication. "What's the matter? Have you found the leader or something?"

Grimrace remained a little distracted, making him respond a little late. But instead of answering, he seemed to ask permission. "Master, can you let me go to that part of the sea? I think I find something that will be beneficial to me there."

Shin became even more confused when he heard how Grimrace addressed him. "Since when this nutjob has become this polite? I don't think he has called me 'Master' before."

Regardless, Shin nodded his head as he was also quite curious about what Grimrace had discovered. He wanted to ask what it was, but the abomination spirit had ignored him and charged toward a certain part of the sea.

Grimrace turned into a black silhouette while flying above the water's surface before diving straight down after reaching a certain spot.

Blackie also moved and filled the gap that Grimrace had left, making sure that there was no sea monster would go past her.

Shin became more and more confused at the actions that Grimrace was showing, especially when he noticed the impatience from the abomination spirit.

But chose to trust Grimrace and decided to wait. This abomination spirit might be a complete nutjob at times, but Grimrace always produced results when needed.

...

Swoosh!

Somewhere deep in the sea, Grimrace dove down at a speed faster than any sea monster swimming in the water.

Some of the monsters tried to obstruct his path, but this Eldrich Psychic Spirit only used his telekinetic powers to ward them off and push them away.

Grimrace created a sphere with his Psychic powers as he dove deeper and moved faster.

Not long after, he arrived at the bottom of the sea where the pressure was so strong that it could crush even the largest boulders within a couple of seconds.

Grimrace ignored it and continued to go deeper until he came across a humongous silhouette of a sea monster. Its size was so huge that it resembled a tall mountain that could touch the clouds.

Grimrace squinted his eyes as he stared at this sea monster until the latter slowly opened its huge eyes.

These eyes seemed to glow brightly even in this deepest part of the sea, shining down to Grimrace, who was standing in front of it.

When Grimrace saw that pair of eyes, he instantly recognized the aura of the latter. He smirked and said. "I see that you are like me. We come from the same root, yet also somewhat different."

His face then turned back to his usual excited and cruel expression before saying. "It seems like it is my turn now."

After that, he extended his hand forward before releasing a powerful wave of psychic energy, pushing forward.

In response, the giant sea monster suddenly moved. Black silhouettes that looked like huge ropes or whips suddenly appeared around it, dancing along the current of the water underneath the sea. These were the tentacles of the monster.

Each tentacle released an invisible energy that was similar to the one that Grimrace had released, but somewhat stronger.

Bang!

There was a collision that sent a strong ripple in every direction. The ground underneath the sea shook as if an earthquake suddenly occurred. Sand and dirt suddenly rose and clouded the water, hiding the figures of the two.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A series of explosions immediately followed as the two continued to exchange attacks with their respective Psychic Powers.

...

Rumble!

Back on the surface, Shin could sense the intense shaking of the ground. When he tried feeling it a little clearer, he discovered that the epicenter of this earthquake was coming from the depths of the sea.

At that time, he instantly knew that it was due to Grimrace. Whatever that abomination spirit had found down there, he was sure that the nutjob was fighting it.

This lasted for quite a while and started to affect the surface. Then a few more moments later, the waves that were slamming on the coast suddenly weakened before the water receded as if something was pulling it back to the sea.

Shin already knew what was coming next.

Swoosh!

A seemingly huge wall of water appeared in the distance and moved toward the land at a speed that could not be imagined. The rumbling sound of the waves could be heard even from a great distance.

A huge tsunami was coming.

As for the monsters that their group was fighting earlier, more of them could be seen riding this incoming tsunami.

Shin could not help but frown deeply due to this. But he did not feel that troubled due to his confidence in his Elemental Spirit Companions.

"Astaroth," he called while looking at the incoming tsunami.

The Obsidian Guardian Spirit did not need to hear Shin's instructions as he already understood what he needed to do. He stepped forward before raising his greatsword and holding it with both of his hands invertedly.

Swoosh!

Bang!

He then slammed it into the ground while channeling his mana into it. A shockwave spread in every direction before an aftershock that quickly moved in a horizontal direction, covering the entire coast.

Rumble!

Not long after, the land suddenly moved upwards and formed a tall wall throughout the coast, reaching hundreds of meters and at least dozens of meters thick.

Shin and Astaroth stood on the top of this wall while the rest of Elemental Spirits gathered there.

They watched the tsunami arrive before finally moving when it was about to reach them.

The tsunami was slightly taller than the wall that Astaroth had built, casting a shadow on them. But before it could even hit them, Hanzo suddenly and swung his dual-bladed weapon horizontally.

Shing!

The space itself seemed to have been cut by his actions.

Then the tall tsunami was cut in half along with some of the monsters that were riding it. The lower part slammed into the wall of earth, shaking its foundations intensely but unable to destroy the entire wall.

In the meantime, the upper part of the tsunami was separated in the air and was about to fall.

But Solus and Whitie swiftly moved at that time. Both extended their hands before respectively releasing beams of energy made of fire and light, evaporating the falling water, and obliterating the monsters riding it.

On the other hand, Vladimir and Blackie dealt with the monsters that were left below along with Astaroth, who was protecting Shin.

Boom!

When everything slightly calmed down, Shin heard a loud sound coming from the distance.

He raised his head and looked in that direction, seeming a part of the water rising. He could see that something was surfacing from the depths of the side.

Swoosh!

Then he saw a small figure compared to this rising 'hill' flying in the sky.

It was Grimrace.

A few moments later, Shin saw a giant jellyfish with a body that covered a huge portion of the sea appear along with its hundreds, or thousands, of tentacles.

A powerful pressure suddenly spread across everything right after the appearance of this monster, making Shin realize how strong it was.

However, it was not powerful enough to make Shin helpless as he had seen many terrifying figures before.

Then suddenly noticed Grimrace acting like his normal self once again, or more specifically, in a much crazier state. It was as if this abomination spirit became a beast that suddenly found a delicious meal after starving for a very long time.

Chapter 1348: Eldritch Psychic Spirit (Part 1)

.....

The jellyfish Grimrace was fighting was so huge that Shin felt it was still too near despite the great distance between them. It felt like a huge moving mountain could be seen from the coast of the Sky Deceiving Valley.

Shin watched the battle from the distance while the rest of his group were busy dealing with the sea monsters that were trying to climb the wall that Astaroth had built.

From what he could see, this jellyfish seemed to be a magic-type monster, especially when he saw the invisible collisions between Grimrace and the monster.

Based on his observations, Shin felt that this monster seemed to have the same type of power as the abomination spirit.

What intrigued Shin the most was the familiar aura that he was feeling from this jellyfish. It was an aura of an elemental being yet also different. Somewhat the same as what he was feeling from Grimrace, an abomination spirit.

Trying to confirm his suspicions, he asked the two most knowledgeable members of his group. Hanzo naturally was more experienced on this plane compared to Solus, so he was more suitable to answer his question.

The old spirit observed the giant jellyfish before answering. "If I am not mistaken, then it must be a type of Sea Spirit."

"Sea Spirits are born in the depths of the ocean and remain living there unless an unforeseen circumstance happens. They usually live on their own don't interact with other creatures and are somewhat harmless. They don't harm anyone unless they are provoked."

"But once they become enraged, they become a very aggressive monster that will slaughter anyone in its wake."

"They are known as a type of a Sea King when they go on rampage as they have powerful psychic abilities such as hallucination and telekinesis."

Hanzo then paused and frowned as he remembered something. "But from what I know, these Sea Spirits only appear in the depths of the Glacial Sea near the Awakened Continent, which is where the home of all fishermen and sea creatures is located, the Atlantis Kingdom."

"How come such a creature appears here?" he mumbled confusedly as he stared at the giant jellyfish.

It was at that moment when Solus suddenly injected. "It is corrupted."

Hearing those words, Hanzo realized something and nodded. "It is not originally from here. Someone or something seemed to have brought it here."

Shin frowned while watching the battle.

"Do you want us to lend that troublemaker a hand, my lord?" asked Blackie as she appeared beside Shin.

Shin thought for a moment before shaking his head. "There is no need. It seems like he wants to deal with it alone."

"Just continue with what you are doing while keeping an eye on everything. Report to me if you find anything suspicious," he instructed as he turned back to the battle in the distance.

He was not sure if this was a similar Elemental Spirit Quest that he had gotten from the rest but given that he did not get any notification from the system, he felt that it might not be the case.

However, he also felt that it could also be because Grimrace was not a regular elemental spirit, but an abomination – a monster that devoured other elemental spirits and rebirth places to grow stronger.

He felt that the condition for Grimrace's evolution was somewhat different compared to the others.

He suspected that one of the conditions might be for Grimrace to fight this creature alone given the strange actions that the abomination spirit had shown earlier.

He decided to wait.

In a certain part of the Aurora Continent, there was an archipelago that was quite far from the mainland. It was a high-level neutral map that a very limited number of players could access. Even among the elites, one of the best ones would dare to step on this land.

The islands of the archipelago were divided into five levels, where the type and ranks of the monsters varied.

The first two levels were meant for players who were below level 150 but no lower than level 145. Moreover, the players that needed to visit this place needed to be at least as skilled as Titled Rankers or Maverick Rankers to survive there.

The next two levels were for players that already cleared their Tier 3 Promotion Quest. If the player, who would try to set foot on these third- and fourth-level islands, did not meet this requirement, then they would die without knowing what killed them.

There were no players, who dared to come this these third- and fourth-level islands, due to how hard to explore them. Aside from the few very skilled experts such as Godlike Players, no one could survive here.

It wasn't until some of the top experts started clearing their promotion quests and reaching the third tier of their respective classes that more and more experts started visiting this area.

Of course, reaching the archipelago was not easy as the players needed to board a ship and fight powerful sea monsters before they could get there, which was very difficult and too time-consuming.

There were still very few players trying to explore this map, especially when it had quite harsh requirements just to get here.

But there was a certain group of players, who had been exploring this region for quite a while already, even before this new flood of experts came in.

They had been doing quests and venturing around the archipelago, hopping from one island to another, even before the game had reached its current stage.

This proved how strong they were and how skilled their group was.

After exploring the islands and clearing almost all the quests available there, this group was already reaching the final island of the fourth level of the archipelago.

They might have sacrificed quite a lot during their exploration, particularly at the Empire Quests that they had recently acquired, but they were able to hold out until the end.

Their progress was quite slow just recently, but when most of their members started clearing their Tier 3 Class Promotion Quest one after another, their speed became much faster. They almost cleared the last three islands within a single day due to the recent improvements of their group.

Right now, they were at the final island of the fourth level, which was supposedly the current limit that they had.

From their estimate, the fifth-level islands, which were the final three islands of the archipelago, would need to at least master their newly improved powers and reach a decent ranking within their respective NPC factions.

"Shall we call it a day? We have been clearing everything in a rash these last few days. I think it is time to relax a little," said a swordsman, who was wearing a set of armor similar to a samurai of the past. "It will be better to condition ourselves since this is the final island of this level."

The group's leader was a person who seemed to have a warrior-related class given the set of armor that he was wearing a huge ruler-like sword hanging on his back.

To the top gods within the game, this guy was known as the Martial God and the leader of the current number one Adventurer Team, the God's Paradice.

Ashura stood in front of a forest, seemingly trying to extend his sense forward and scouting ahead.

A few moments later, he turned around and looked at the group. "Susanoo is right. We should condition ourselves before clearing this island."

"We are way ahead of the others already, so there is no need to be rash," he added as he reassured them.

Hearing his words, the rest of the group started organizing their inventories and preparing to log out. They took a seat on the nearby borders or on the sand itself.

This time, a muscular guy with a pair of gauntlets walked over to Ashura before asking. "Leader, what about that sea monster that we are tasked to hunt? Are we not going to look for it?"

Ashura turned to that person before shaking his head. "We can't do anything about it. Based on the information, the monster seemed to have fled away from the Sea of Death. I don't think we will be able to find it after such a long time has passed."

"We don't have to worry about it, Kallavan," he added, patting the shoulder of the person.

Kallavan touched his chin and pursed his lips. "But the Martial Alliance left that searching device to us. Don't you think we can try looking for it after we are done with our quest here?"

"We don't have that much work to do anyway. I think it is better to try hunting it while waiting for the others to clear their promotion quest. It is not that hard anyway," he added, trying to convince his leader.

At this moment, Susanoo suddenly walked over and chimed in. "He is right, Leader. I think we should look for something that can help us kill some time."

Ashura turned to Susanoo and shook his head. "The Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance are trying to look for it due to something that it has on its body. It is something important to both factions. Do you think it will be easy to get it back?"

"They will not be issuing the mission to all their members if it is not important. But both factions hold back a few important points in the mission description, which made it quite suspicious."

"That monster may be injured, but it is not mentioned how strong or weak it is. They also asked us to find it, but not hunt the monster, which means that it is more likely to be a powerful monster than our current strength can handle."

"The Martial Alliance gave us two devices just to locate it. One for tracking it down while the other is to send the signal to the headquarters."

"Do you know what it means? It means they are not expecting us to kill the monster, much less retrieve whatever it has in its body. They want us to use the second device to summon their experts as soon as we find the monster."

"And if we somehow become a little luckier, and that monster becomes weaker instead of recovering from its injuries, tracking it down will still take a lot of time."

Hearing those words, Susanoo and Kallavan became even more convinced that they wanted to track the monster. – "Isn't it more reason why we have to accept this quest?" –

Ashura shook his head as he knew that these two only wanted to have that 'thrill' of hunting something powerful and disregard the rest.

"It is not that I am against it. But the problem is it conflicts with our current mission. We have an Empire Quest to clear, then report it to the higher-ups. That is when we will get the recommendation letter to enter the Royal City, we will be one step ahead of the others at that time."

"Do you guys think we have enough time to hunt whatever creature it is? Traveling to the branch of Martial Alliance is not easy," he explained.

The two sighed in disappointment as they knew they would not be able to convince their leader unless they cleared all the tasks they currently had.

"It is a pity. I am quite curious what kind of monster it is," mumbled Susanoo.

"I am sure that it is some sort of fish," said Kallavan.

Ashura shook his head as he saw their expression and added. "Moreover, we have spent quite a lot of time here. That quest has been issued for quite a long time already, so I doubt that the others still haven't accepted it given the rewards that have been offered."

"There are also those people from the Supreme Temple. I don't think we still have the chance to catch up to them given the time that we have already wasted."

His two friends became even more disappointed when they realized this fact.

Chapter 1349: Eldritch Psychic Spirit (Part 2)

...

Bang!

A collision of psychic powers created an explosion that shook the entire sea. The shockwave sent violent ripples on the surface of the water that slowly turned into raging waves that went in every direction.

Grimrace was flying in the air using levitation magic with his Psychic Powers. He was looking down from his position and glaring at the giant jellyfish below him.

Invisible ripples could be felt around him as he controlled his powers. Realizing that the Psychic Powers were not enough to take down this monster, he decided to use his elemental transformation.

'Elemental Transformation: Yasha Transformation'

With this transformation, his aura rose sharply. He released a suffocating pressure that immediately suppressed the one that the jellyfish monster possessed.

At the same time, he summoned his shadow powers, manifesting a huge group of shadow daggers in the air.

He spread his arms with his palms facing the sky. He seemed to be acting like some sort of god before waving his hands forward and hugging the air with his arms.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Quickly after that, a hail of shadow daggers and knives fell from the sky and rained down on the giant jellyfish. They left a series of intertwining lines in the air as they fell and produced sharp sounds that cut through the wind.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The jellyfish tried to block the falling shadow knives with its psychic powers, but Grimrace controlled each one of them very skillfully, changing their trajectory mid-flight before proceeding to attack at a tricky angle.

Some of the shadow knives collided with the psychic barrier, but there was still a lot that managed to bypass it and landed on the body of the monster as well as its tentacles.

But despite how strong the impact was, the giant jellyfish seemed to be completely unaffected. Upon closer inspection, there seemed to be an invisible layer of aura right above the skin of the monster, protecting it.

Swoosh!

Raising its tentacles, the jellyfish pointed them at Grimrace, who was in the air, before shooting beams of light from their tip.

Grimrace quickly responded and did a series of aerial maneuvers to dodge while also waving his hands to send his shadow knives down.

After dodging for quite a while and realizing that he was being pushed back once again, Grimrace suddenly paused while extending his hand above. He opened his hand wide while summoning his Psychic Powers and slamming it down immediately after.

Swoosh!

A huge invisible hand was formed above Grimrace before slamming down along with his actions.

Bang!

The invisible hand collided against an invisible barrier, preventing it from going further. Then the aftershock from the impact sent the water flying in the air, creating a curtain as high as the stone wall in the distance.

Grimrace made a grabbing motion as he maintained his extended arm. Following his actions, the huge invisible hand made of Psychic Powers suddenly tightened, grabbing onto the barrier of the jellyfish.

After that, Grimrace gritted his teeth as he put a lot of strength on his arms, lifting the jellyfish along with its barrier.

Realizing what the abomination was trying to do, the jellyfish suddenly started moving crazily, slamming its tentacles around and creating more curtains of water.

With the water that was sent in the air, the jellyfish used its powers to form a giant spear that was pointing at Grimrace.

Swoosh!

Without further ado, the monster sent the spear forward, disrupting Grimrace, who was focusing on controlling the invisible hand.

Unable to divide his focus between the two, Grimrace chose to let go of the jellyfish and dodge the incoming spear.

After that, Grimrace stabilized his balance in the air, spreading his arms wide and summoning more of his shadow powers.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Dark tentacles came out from its body and spread in every direction, seemingly forming a net surrounding the area.

Not long after, a cage was formed and trapped the two of them inside.

The giant jellyfish felt an intense danger when the cage was formed, which was why it immediately released more of its psychic powers and forcefully pushed the cage, trying to break it.

...

In the distance, Shin was watching the battle with a slight frown. It was not because of the current pace of the battle, nor due to the current state that it had. Instead, he felt a strange energy coming from jellyfish aside from that corrupted energy similar to an abomination spirit.

It was very vague at first, but he felt that it was getting stronger as more time went by. It was as if this foreign energy was getting clear the more the monster used its psychic powers.

When he focused more on it, Shin felt that it was coming from the body of the giant jellyfish.

While he was lost in his thoughts, Hanzo suddenly appeared beside him and commented. "Now this is interesting. It looks like that abomination friend of ours is quite lucky this time."

Shin turned to the old spirit and flashed an inquiring look.

Hanzo did not reply for a few seconds as he was trying to make sure that he was right. He then nodded his head and added. "That Sea King must have a Sea Soul within its body. I am not sure how it ends up on its hands, but I can assure you that it is something good."

"What is a Sea Soul?" asked Shin as he turned his gaze at the battlefield. He did not know when the battle ended, but it looked like the monster wave had finally calmed down a little.

The number of sea monsters was reduced to the point that they did not need to worry about them anymore. The rest of the elemental spirits were already more than enough to deal with them, which was why Hanzo had plenty of time to idle around.

Hanzo thought for a moment before continuing. "It is a natural treasure that is usually used for nurturing the soul of an individual, or especially used to heal a soul that suffered from serious spiritual attack."

"If I am not wrong, this Sea King must have stumbled upon this treasure and wanted to use it to reach the next level. Unfortunately, something must have happened, which is why it is currently in its wounded state."

He then paused for a moment before continuing. "I am quite confident that whatever happened to it, this Sea King must be currently running away."

"It then tries to use the Sea Soul to recover from its wound somewhere in the depths of the sea, but it then encountered another incident when it suffered another serious injury, worsening its already terrible state."

"Then the Sea Soul must have contaminated in the middle, ending it up with what we are seeing right now. It loses its mind and goes berserk when it is unable to control the Sea Soul, which is why we are here right now."

Shin then nodded his head before asking. "Then does it mean-... whatever that Sea Soul or something is, it will be helpful to Grimrace?"

"Not only it will be helpful, but he will also experience something that only a very few Elementals have experienced in the past-..." Hanzo trailed his words for a couple of seconds as he watched the battle. "...- and that is evolving into an Elemental Being that is acknowledged by the world."

Shin confused looked at Hanzo when he heard had and asked the old spirit to explain further. "What do you mean by that."

Hanzo smiled mysteriously. "What I mean is, he will become an ancestor of his elemental race if he has gotten a little luckier."

Shin could not completely understand it, but he could at least tell that it was a good thing for Grimrace, which also meant good for him.

He just shrugged his shoulders before casting his gaze back to the battle in the distance.

In the meantime, in the headquarters of the World Gaming Organization, Carlos was currently inside his office, sitting on his chair and looking at the report that had just been given to him.

He leaned back on the chair, looked at the ceiling, then closed his eyes before massaging his temples.

He was completely exhausted and suffering from a serious headache.

He was wondering whether a certain player was his nemesis in his past life or something. He felt that whenever everything was getting a little better, the worst possible event always happened, and the center of everything was this particular player.

Taking a deep breath, he looked at the screen projected in front of him before turning back the report that was given to him by Lohengrin.

"Why is this stupid monster in his territory and become part of the Territorial Quest?" mumbled Carlos as he repeatedly read the report.

He could not blame the man in question either as it was not the fault of the player. Shin was supposedly doing his own thing when the sea monster entered his territory intending to invade it.

However, this event would cause a serious problem for them as this sea monster possessed something that was supposedly a crucial item for a main scenario quest.

Carlos could already see what was going to happen after this.

Shin would kill the sea monster, get the Sea Soul, use it to promote one of his Elemental Spirit Companions, and then get another overpowered Elemental Being after.

That was something very good for Shin, too beneficial even, especially when he would get almost all his Elemental Spirit Companions into a Supreme Spirit or Monarch Elemental.

With that number, Shin would most likely trigger another major event by accident if this continued.

That was just one of the problems, and it was quite acceptable since they were already somewhat used to it.

He had been doing these crazy things from time to time now, so the people of the World Gaming Organization were somewhat numbed to it.

But the real trouble came after he killed the Sea King and got the Sea Soul as that monster and natural treasure was supposedly meant for another quest.

It was something that certain factions needed to save someone – an important NPC related to a main quest scenario of the game.

If Shin acquired the Sea Soul and used it to promote his abomination spirit afterward, then the Sea Soul, a rare natural treasure, would be lost. This would lead to a delay on the side of the main quest scenario, or worse, lead to the death of that NPC.

This would then result in the deletion of a series of quests related to that main quest scenario. All the hard work and effort of the different departments when designing that Main Scenario Quest would be wasted.

The worst part of this was the game developers could not get involved in this matter and could only watch while hoping that a miracle would happen and save them.

The very person, who saved them from their earlier predicament, was now back to being 'himself' and become their mortal enemy.

"Is it guaranteed that the main quest scenario will be deleted once he acquired that item? Or will it create another path for the other side?" he mumbled as he thought of the Super AI Chronos.

He heard that the chairman had recently updated the system of the game, making it more advanced and improving its ability to calculate different outcomes within the game.

Due to the recent events that happened within the game, particularly some of the accidents that gave the World Gaming Organization a lot of problems, the chairman had come up with this solution.

Carlos just hoped that it would be enough.

But if it was not-...

Just the thought of it made Carlos miserable.

He then turned to other virtual screens, which were showing two Miracle Players. He stared at them for a moment before praying. "Let's just hope that these two will create their respective miracle and save us from this."

Chapter 1350: Eldritch Psychic Spirit (Part 3): Targeted

...

Somewhere in the Saint Heaven Kingdom, a group of players were currently gathered, seemingly having a serious meeting about something.

This group of players was currently residing in a small village at the edge of the kingdom, right beside the Sky Deceiving Valley. They had been staying here for quite a while already as they were waiting for the boundary to open.

"Why are we still staying here? Until when are we waiting for that stupid boundary to disappear?" asked one of the players full of impatience.

One of the players, who was sitting comfortably on a chair, responded in a lazy tone. "We can't do anything about it. This is the nearest route that we can take to reach the location of the sea monster that we are chasing."

Another player nodded his head in agreement. "That is right. We can't go around two kingdoms, sail through the Sea of Death, travel around the Mysterious Archipelago, and to the Sea of Death once again."

"That is too troublesome. We can't afford to invest too much in it, especially when we are not that skilled at fighting on the sea. We can lose our lives multiple times fighting the sea monsters before we even reach and find our target," he added with a sigh.

The first player, who talked earlier, took off his hood and leaned his back on the chair as he complained. "But we have been waiting here for quite a long time already. Isn't the time needed to travel through that route somewhat the same?"

"But it will waste our efforts on staying here," refuted the other player before adding. "We are just unlucky that the border is suddenly closed before we even get through it."

"Why do you think it suddenly closed?" asked the one relaxing in a corner.

He then paused and turned to the fourth person, who was lying on the bed, seemingly unconcerned about the topic that they had. "What do you think Captain? Don't you also find it suspicious?"

"The timing is a little too coincidental, don't you think? The border is closed for a few days when the opening of a high-level neutral kingdom has opened. I smell something fishy," he added while squinting his eyes.

Surprisingly, the 'sleeping' captain suddenly responded. "How many times do I have to tell you not to address me as such? I am not the captain of this team. Heck! It is not even a team."

"We just gather here because of the mission issued by the Supreme Temple. I don't understand why we have to group just to do such a simple tracking quest. It is not like we are tasked to fight the said monster," he added in an exhausted tone.

"I agree with, Phantom. Why are we gathered here when he is only supposed to track down a monster?" said one of the members, who kept silent the entire time.

The entire group simultaneously turned to this player, putting the person in an awkward situation.

"I don't think that our muse can talk," said the first person.

"I thought she was mute or too introverted to have a conversation with us," said the second player.

The third player also nodded as he commented. "This is a surprise – really a surprise."

Phantom, the guy that was addressed as the captain, shook his head. "Stop teasing her. You are scaring the lady."

That female player had her face turned red after hearing Phantom defended him. Fortunately, the hood over her head was covering her expression when she lowered her head.

Phantom did not see her expression and turned to the guy, who complained waiting for her the most. "Valdez, if you are too bored, then how about you do some scouting outside instead?"

Valdez rolled his eyes before turning to the other two. "That is your job, Wolf. Go outside and scout. Claude, you come with your brother."

The pair of brothers rolled their eyes at him before completely ignoring what Valdez had said.

Claude then turned to Phantom and said. "Do you have any information about the progress of the Martial Alliance? We are supposed to compete with them in this quest, aren't we?"

Phantom became a little uninterested and turned around. "If you are concerned about the Gods' Paradise, then you can rest assured. Those guys will not be joining the hunt since I heard that they are too busy with the archipelago quest."

"However, I am also not sure about their progress, so we can't be sure too," he added as he recalled the information that he brought from the Assassin Union.

"What about Zero? Do we have any news of his movement?" asked Wolf almost instantly.

Phantom sighed when he heard that. "You guys better not concern yourselves on those guys. It is not like this quest is too important. If it is, they will only issue it to selected elites of our faction and not let everyone participate."

"Zero is one of the 'Swords' of the Supreme Temple, a true member. He is unlike us, who are just a nominal member. He will not accept such a quest, where many people will be involved," he added.

He then paused before continuing. "I also heard that he is already rushing to clear his promotion quest, so I don't expect that he will have the time to idle around and do these kinds of errands."

"Does that make us some sort of beggar or something? It sounds like we are trying to find some scraps from the trash bin," commented Valdez as he heard those words.

"We are also quite famous ourselves even though we are only Maverick Gods," he added before turning to Phantom and the female player before correcting himself. "Oh! I almost forgot that you two have recently gained your first official titles in the last Hegemon Cup."

"My bad," he was apologizing to the two, but it was clear that he did not mean it given the tone full of sarcasm.

These people might not be as famous as the other Godlike Players and Maverick Gods, but they still had decent fame themselves.

However, that was not the root of their confidence. The real reason why they were confident of themselves was the fact that they were of the same generation as the Monster Class Players from the «True Era» Online.

They were once the rivals of the top experts from that game. They just chose to keep a low profile like most of those top players hiding in the dark.

They remained playing solo aside from the pair of brothers in their group. Most of them were operating individually and independently, but they happened to join the same NPC organization, which led them to their current situation.

They were tasked to track a certain sea monster while using the tracking device that the Supreme Temple had given them.

Their faction was quite wealthy despite having very few members. It was also very generous when handling a quest, especially when the players needed a few special devices meant for those quests.

The temple was generous enough to provide them with the tools when doing the quest despite most of the members being nothing but nominal disciples.

Aside from the Church of Light, Merchant Organizations, and the Imperial Court, it was said that the Supreme Temple was one of the wealthiest organizations within the game. However, it was not well-known because most of their operations were highly secretive.

These five were the players with the highest contribution points among the nominal disciples, which was why the Supreme Temple had given them extra attention.

They were also the frontrunners for being promoted into official members, which was why they happened to bump into each other when they were receiving special instructions when they were accepting this quest.

They then decided to group up when they heard that God's Paradise happened to receive the quest as a special quest.

Given the fame of that adventurer team and the current strength that they possessed, it would most likely be challenging to compete against them with this quest alone. That was why they were currently together.

The problem was their progress was suddenly halted when the group was about to reach their destination, which gave God's Paradise a decent amount of time to catch up to this group if they wanted to.

While the group was currently chatting with each other, trying to kill some time, they suddenly received a notification from the system.

Ding

They jolted due to the sudden notification when they were doing nothing.

But what surprised them the most was the fact that they all received a notification at the same time. Given that they had simultaneously received the message, they somewhat had gotten an idea of what was going on.

They simultaneously opened their respective system log while having similar thoughts.

"Have someone cleared the quest before us?"

"That can't be! We are way ahead of the others from the Supreme Temple!"

"Then could it be the Martial Alliance?"

"But I heard that the members of God's Paradise are still in the middle of their archipelago quest!"

Unfortunately, their guesses were way off the mark.

System: You have failed to clear your quest 'Track the Sea Monster'!

System: Penalty will be delayed due to certain circumstances.

Ding

System: Quest Conditions have been changed.

Quest Update: Someone has stolen the Sea Soul! Capture the Player, who has stolen the sacred treasure, and bring him to the Temple.

...

The group stared blankly at the notification in front of them, unable to completely understand what was going on.

They were not sure what happened, especially when the monster that they were supposed to track was supposedly unbeatable with the current abilities of the players – Tier 3 Class Players included.

"How the heck does this guy have done it?"

"Which monster player has done it?"

They were still confused when another string of notifications followed.

Ding

System: The Sea Soul has been lost and no longer be tracked, but its aura still lingers in the body of the new possessor until it is completely absorbed.

System: Coordinate of the 'thief' will be displayed every two hours as a guide.

Note: This will last until the aura of the Sea Soul is completely erased.

Estimated time: 6 days (Timer will be paused when the said player logs out of the game).

System: The Player can't hide in a sealed-border or an independent world.

System: The sealing border will automatically collapse if they fail to leave the said area within the designated time, and they will be sent out of the independent world if they stay there for an extended period.

Ding

Faction System Announcement: All members of the Supreme Temple are tasked to track down a thief for 2 days (In-game Time).

Note 1: Killing the said Player will not generate any reward.

Note 2: Capture the Player with the Prison Prism and bring them to the Supreme Temple.

System: Players can go to any branch of the Supreme Temple to receive the required tools for the task.

System: Rewards will be calculated based on the contribution of the members.

...

The group, once again, stared blankly at their respective system log floating in front of them. They were not sure what was going on, but it seemed like it was a piece of good news for them.

They exchanged glances with each other and went silent before Phantom opened his mouth. "Since we have already agreed to this together, we should see it until the end as one."

He then turned to Valdez and asked. "You are not going to back out and say that it is no longer the chase, aren't you?"

Valdez clicked his tongue when he heard that as Phantom read him like a book. He then shook his head. "Don't worry. I may look like it, but I am not the type to betray the people I am working with."

Phantom nodded his head before saying. "Then let's prepare before heading out."

He then glanced at the virtual screen that was projecting a virtual map before saying. "It seemed like we are quite close to our target."

They were not the only ones to receive the Faction System Announcement as the players of the Martial Alliance also received the same task.

Ashura skimmed through the string of notifications that he suddenly received before logging out. "This is interesting. It looks like I must look on it while killing time, and not miss the fun."