

Destiny 1351

Chapter 1351: Eldritch Psychic Spirit (Part 4)

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Shin watched the battle from the walls at the coast along with the rest of his Elemental Spirits, waiting for Grimrace to finish his job.

He was quite confident with this abomination spirit, especially when the latter was showing rapid growth during the battle. Grimrace was becoming more proficient at using his psychic powers and even combining them with his innate shadow element.

But there were a couple of accidents during the battle. One of such was when the giant jellyfish suddenly started using its hallucination techniques. This Sea King cloned itself through these techniques, confusing Grimrace.

Even Shin and the others in the distance were affected by the technique to a certain degree.

With multiple bodies surrounding Grimrace, the abomination spirit was suddenly trapped and unable to retaliate when the jellyfish and its clones attacked from every direction.

The rest were about to lend a hand when they noticed that Grimrace was able to hold his ground despite being on the back foot. He was able to ward off most of the attacks while blocking the rest with his psychic powers.

The group then learned that Grimrace seemed to be learning the techniques of his opponent while constantly adjusting with every exchange.

At the end of the battle, Grimrace was able to learn everything before he finished off the jellyfish and ended its suffering.

"This clown sure is lucky. Fortunately, that Sea King is gravely injured, or he will find himself in an ugly situation," commented Hanzo as he watched from the distance.

Seeing that they no longer needed it, Hanzo took the initiative to return unsummoned and became a speck of light that circled Shin.

The rest also did the same aside from Astaroth, who remained by Shin's side to protect him and keep the stone wall active.

Shin was about to recall Grimrace when he saw that this nutjob was being a nutjob once again. He saw the abomination spirit dived down to the massive body of the jellyfish without even asking for his opinion.

Not long after, Shin saw that the corpse of the Sea King turned into specks of lights that were being pulled by a strong suction force.

Upon closer inspection, Shin saw that the one at the center of this suction force was the familiar figure of his Shadow Reaper. Grimrace was seated in a cross-legged position while absorbing everything.

At the same time, there was a crystal-like object floating right in front of the abomination spirit.

Shin did not need to know what it was as he already had the idea. It must be the Sea Soul that Hanzo had mentioned earlier.

He was thinking about what to do to that item when he saw Grimrace open his mouth wide and swallow the Sea Soul whole.

"What?"

Shin knew that Grimrace wanted something from the Sea King, but the thought that the core and its corpse were more than enough for him.

He also knew that the corrupted Sea Soul would be helpful to Grimrace. He knew that the latter wanted to eat it to reach the next rank. But he was not expecting that this abomination spirit would be too impatient to absorb the natural treasure even before Shin could read its details.

He could only shake his head and smile bitterly as he watched Grimrace from the distance.

Immediately after, he recovered a string of notifications from the system.

Ding

System: You have successfully defended your land from the invasion of the Sea Monster Horde!

Ding

System: Your Shadow Reaper, Grimrace has acquired a Sea Soul and absorbed its powers.

System: Your Shadow Reaper, Grimrace has successfully become a Supreme Elemental Being.

System: An Ancestor Bloodline is formed, the Eldritch Psychic Spirit Bloodline!

System: You are the first to acquire an Ancestor Bloodline Elemental Spirit!

Ding

System: You have received a special reward for this new achievement.

...

The first string of messages was something that he had somewhat expected. He had already gotten the idea of what he would be getting.

He slightly nodded his head and accepted what happened. Grimrace had already devoured the Sea Soul, so there was no point crying for it.

He just opened the special panel for his Elemental Spirit Companions and looked for the updated information.

As usual, he checked the special border of the name card first. Unlike the others, the border that Grimrace had was somewhat plain and did not possess much design.

Aside from the grey border, there was also a shadowy flow of mana shrouding the name card. It was also reflecting light as if it was made of glass crystal, smooth and appealing, which was completely different from the rough and troublesome personality that Grimrace possessed.

After appreciating the new name card of Grimrace, Shin proceeded to look at the updated information that it had.

Spirit Name: Grimrace

Status: Reaper's Retainer – Shadow (Psychic)

Race: Abomination Elemental Spirit (Shadow)

Bloodline: Eldritch Psychic Spirit

Purity: Supreme

Transformation: Yasha Transformation

Ability Status: Temporarily Sealed

Tier: Current 3 (Potential 5)

Level (Sealed): Adjusted to 170 (Max 500)

Shin slightly nodded his head as he read the extra data that was not there before. Right now, Grimrace's information was comparable to the rest, particularly their potential.

With all that, Vladimir was the only one left, waiting to reach his peak potential.

Shin was about to wrap everything here and head out to look for the clues of the other condition for his quest when another strong of notifications interrupted him.

Ding

System Warning: You have been targeted by the factions: Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance, for stealing the Sea Soul.

System Warning: A bounty has been issued for your head by the Court of Demonic Churches and Corrupted Cult.

System Warning: You will be hunted down by the four factions for two days straight (in-game time).

Note 1: Your locations will constantly update every 2 hours.

Note 2: The timer will be paused whenever you log out or enter a sealed-border or independent world.

Note 3: You will be automatically kicked out of the said independent spaces once you enter them for an extended period. (Maximum time of stay 2 hours)

Note 4: The sealing border will be taken down automatically once you stay them for a certain period. (Maximum 2 hours)

System Warning: You are discouraged from using your authority as the Envoy of the Church of the Sun and Moon when facing the factions of Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance as it can cause a faction war.

Ding

System: Survive this hunt and you will get a huge surprise.

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Shin halted his steps and stared blankly at the string of messages that he had just gotten before cursing.
"What the heck is this? Why am I a thief now?"

"It is not my fault that that stupid Sea Spirit steals your treasure. I just killed it and acquired my reward!" he cursed before quickly looking at the progress bar of his quest.

He might have cleared one part of his current quest a little earlier since they had killed the Sea Spirit and had gotten quite lucky after getting the Sea Soul, but it seemed like those two had gotten him another trouble.

He felt like having a headache as it had reminded him of the first big event that he had experienced when he just joined the game – that time when he was trapped in the Shunkai Forest along with Charlotte, Lawless, Faker, and the rest of their team as they were being hunted by a quite a lot of guilds and schemed by Undying Guild.

"This will sure bring back some unpleasant memories," he mumbled as he shook his head.

But this would surely be more troublesome since he was the sole target and even had a true bounty on his head. His coordinates would also be constantly updated on the track of his pursuers.

Sighing, Shin took a couple of screenshots of his system log before sending it to Shiella along with a helplessly sighing emoji.

Right after he sent the message, Shiella's reply immediately came right after.

Snow White: What have you done this time? I remember sending you to the coast to clear the monsters in the area. What happened?

Shin sighed as he explained everything starting from when he was investigating the area.

Shiella fell silent for a few moments before replying.

Snow White: You sure are a magnet of trouble. Wherever you go and whatever you do, everything will turn into a mess in an instant.

Sickarius: I cleared the coast, though. We can relocate to Calderock Town now.

Snow White: Yeah, good job. (Rolling eyes emoji)

After sending a sarcastic remark, Shiella quickly followed.

Snow White: What is your plan now?

Sickarius: What else? I have to play tag with these guys.

Snow White: Alone?

Sickarius: Don't worry Big Sis. It will not be that easy to catch me. I will ask for your help if things get a little troublesome.

Shiella was silent for a minute before nodding.

Snow White: Do as you see fit, but don't get too confident. Those two factions also have monsters in their ranks, particularly the Martial Alliance.

This piqued Shin's interest and about to ask, but Shiella suddenly added.

Snow White: Beware of the God's Paradise, particularly Ashura. That guy is not simple.

After that, Shiella did not continue to chat with Shin as she immediately asked to give her permission to manage Calderock Town as an administrator so that she could handle its relocation and promotion, especially when Shin could not afford to be around due to his sudden quest.

Sickarius: I will go to the administration office of the Holy City before heading out to play.

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Shiella, who was sitting inside her office in the newly built branch of Golden City, sighed as she closed the message panel.

She was silent for a couple of moments before re-opening the panel once again before clicking on a certain name in her friend list and sending a message.

Snow White: I have a job for you.

The reply came almost instantly as if the person on the other side was always waiting for it.

Jhin: Oh! What a surprise! To think the Club President is contacting me. What this humble servant can do for you?

Snow White: Stop with the nonsense. Let's talk about business.

Jhin: Tsk! Tsk! This is making me brokenhearted.

Snow White: Just tell me if you don't want the job.

Jhin: Of course, I will be taking it. If not, then who will?

Snow White: You are a part of Martial Alliance, right? Monitor their movements and give me a regular update.

The other side seemed to have instantly realized what was going on and asked.

Jhin: Eh? Is it related to the Faction Quest that is released by the Martial Alliance and Supreme Temple?
Are you related to it or know the 'culprit'?"

Shiella did not find any problem hiding the truth from this person as he was one of the most loyal members of her club in the real world.

Snow White: The target is my brother. You should understand what needs to be done, am I right?

Seeing the message, the person on the other side fell silent for a moment quickly replying.

Jhin: If that is the case, then I will be moving the entire unit. Don't worry, Club President. We will protect your brother without fail.

Shiella sighed before emphasizing.

Snow White: Have you read my message? I am asking you to give me regular updates on the movements of the Martial Alliance players and nothing else.

Jhin: But-...

The guy wanted to say something, but Shiella instantly shut him.

Snow White: Just do what you are instructed, and do not interfere with anything. The report is more than enough.

Jhin did not know what Shiella was planning, but he could tell that she wanted to use this opportunity to train her brother while also keeping a close eye on everything.

Jhin: I understand, Club President. I will arrange everything.

After closing the message window, Shiella leaned back on her seat while tapping the table with her index finger. "Since you want to challenge, then let me set up a good stage to prove yourself to the world."

Chapter 1352: Experiencing that Thrill (Part 1)

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Shin just walked out of the administration office of the Holy City, which now became the center of the Saint Heaven Kingdom. Right after his foot stepped outside the building, he immediately sensed a lot of hostile gazes directed at him.

He scanned his surroundings with his gaze, trying to look for these enemies. Some of them were quite confident as they stood either in the middle of the street or any place that could easily be spotted while the rest remained cautious and hid themselves in the dark.

Given that they had no idea who this person they were targeting was, the cautious ones chose to hide themselves and wait for the others to test the waters for them.

They had no idea who Shin was, especially when he completely hid his identity with his cloak and mask. One of the special effects of the [Death Shadow] cloak was to hide himself completely, weaken his presence, and further enhance his stealth skills. The [Nephilim's Gemini Mask] also had a similar feature, but since it was one of his signature items, people would easily recognize him.

Fortunately, the cloak was able to completely hide his figure as well as cover the mask under the shade of its hood.

With all these conditions, no other people would be able to know who he was unless he revealed himself.

Shin took a mental note of these people before turning around and walking away. He remained calm despite being surrounded by his enemies. He might look a little overconfident right now, but that was because he knew that none of these people could threaten him in the slightest.

Of course, there were still those people, who were hiding in the dark. But even if he included them, they would only put a little pressure on him and give more thrill in battle.

However, the greatest factor boosting his confidence was the fact that none of them passed their tier 3 promotion quest yet. At least, these people around him and within the area that he could sense.

Even though all of them were experts, Shin felt that none of them were on his level. As someone who clearly understood the difference between the two ranks, he knew that no one could pose any threat to him among these people.

That was unless there was someone among them, who was the same as Mephistopheles of the Pandemonium Descendant. But that guy was an exemption, so Shin doubted that there was someone out there with similar class, race, and skills that could bridge the game between the tiers.

But Shin was also confident that he could take down Mephistopheles now without any problem given the recent progress that he had made. But that was only if the latter did not improve himself.

The other factor that made Shin confident was the hostility that these groups and individuals were showing each other.

He could tell that none of them were on good terms. At the very least, these people would not be working together when chasing after him.

In other words, they were all competitors. Even those people from the same faction would be competing with each other when trying to catch him.

With such a clear conflict and disharmony, Shin did not feel that much pressure from them. In his eyes, these people were only the appetizers that could entertain him for a few moments while waiting for the main dish.

The real thrill of the hunt would only come when the true monsters of the opposing side finally arrived.

"I wonder who those monsters that Big Sis is talking about," mumbled Shin as he led the group of enemies in different parts of the Holy City, 'taking' them for a walk.

From what Shiella had said, there should be a couple of people who he should be wary of from the Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance.

He did not need to think about the Demonic Churches and the Corrupted Cult at the moment since none of them would dare to set foot in the Holy City given the events that happened recently. Due to the disturbance and disaster that they had caused, every city within the Saint Heaven Kingdom was on full alert for them, especially the Capital Rank Cities.

Setting those guys aside, Shin could not help but look for more information from the online forums. He listed out all the noticeable and remarkable players from each faction and compared them to the data from the secret platform meant for top experts of the game, particularly the Titled Godlike Players.

He was already aware of Zero, the Sword God, being a part of the Supreme Temple. If he remembered correctly, the latter also possessed a status within the organization comparable to his Envoy Title in the Church of the Sun and Moon.

Disregarding that information, Shin looked at the rest. The other 'swords' of the Supreme Temple were based far from the Saint Heaven Kingdom. They were either on the outskirts on the other side of the Aurora Continent or staying in a special dimension connected to the said continent.

It would take quite a long time before they could reach this place even if they rushed with all they had. From his estimate, Shin felt that the two-day limit of this 'event' centered around him was far from

being enough to cover the entire distance. That was also in consideration of using multiple longest-distance teleportation in the process – that was how far they were.

Aside from Zero, none among them would try hunting him. At least, that was what he guessed. He felt that the trouble would not be worth it.

When looking at the information, and marking their locations on the map, Shin realized that each 'Sword' seemed to be covering a certain part of the continent. It was as if they were divided and assigned to oversee a part of the massive continent.

This piece of information piqued his interest, making him a little curious about how the Supreme Temple operated.

On the other hand, the Martial Alliance seemed to be a little too lax and carefree in comparison.

Unlike the other factions, particularly the churches and temples, the Martial Alliances seemed to be a little too free and more like a larger version of the Adventurer Guild.

They accepted everyone without concerning themselves with the background of every member. They were only thinking about the strength and the number of experts that would be working under them.

Naturally, there were also some differences between the members such as nominal disciples, outer disciples, inner disciples, core disciples, and inheritors. They seemed to be oddly similar to the old sects in every aspect, particularly in how they handled their people, albeit having a few differences.

They also were different from the Churches and Temples when having their 'heirs' such as the Envoys, Saintess, Champions, and others. The Martial Alliance only had their 'inheritors', which were said to be the disciples of powerful NPCs within the organization.

What surprised Shin was that there were only three players on the list despite the size of the organization, especially when it came to their overwhelming members.

"Ashura, Susanoo, Kallavan? Aren't these guys from God's Paradise? They are all from the Martial Alliance?"

It was quite a surprise when Shin saw the information. When he looked further in the list, he discovered that all members of the God's Paradise seemed to be members of Martial Alliance aside from a few, who joined them a little later.

As Shin was walking in circles around the Holy City, some of the most impatient ones among the people targeting him were already running out of patience. They started moving toward Shin, no longer concerned about the security of the city.

They believed that as long as chaos broke out, the others would not be able to fight the temptation and join the battle.

As for the others, who seemed to be quite used to this kind of job, remained patient and continued to wait in the dark. They would be the biggest fisherman among everyone once they finally made his move.

Shin glanced at a timer in the corner of his eyes and saw that the time that he could stay in a city in a day was already at half.

"It is time to go anyway," mumbled Shin as he sensed the movements of the people approaching him.

On a corner of a street, Shin suddenly took a turn before entering stealth. He hid under the shadows of the buildings while moving at a speed that shocked his pursuers.

The cautious ones among the 'hunters' were marksmen and had already put a mark on Shin as they were already expecting something like this to happen, especially when they did not have any information about the opposing side.

They quickly gave chase as they knew that Shin would be trying to shake them off. But as they ran after him, they saw that the marked target suddenly disappeared among the crowd while the mark itself was removed due to some unknown reason.

They had lost sight of their target!

This was the thought that entered everyone's mind. They tried to look for him, but they knew that it was close to impossible given that there were a lot of people in the street. It was close to being fully packed, but the traffic was not that heavy.

Shin had picked the perfect place to throw most of his pursuers off his tail.

They could do nothing but stare blankly at the busy street right in front of them.

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Shin walked out of the city while he was still in stealth to make sure that there were no people who would see him leave.

He purposely left at this time as he knew that it would take some time before the opposing side could track him. They would have to wait for at least one and a half hours before they could find his exact coordinates.

But he would also be expecting that there were a few people who would be able to find him, especially the most elite ones. Shin was able to spot a few of them while they were hiding, but he guessed that their skills were not that much different compared to the rest unless they were one of those types who liked to play as a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Shin ran straight to the forest, which would bring back memories – the Shunkai Forest.

Shin this would be a hunting game, he would want to do it in a place that he was familiar with, and somewhere quite historic.

As he was heading toward the direction of the Shunkai Forest, Shin suddenly sensed something strange in the surroundings. The air seemed to be carrying the scent of death.

Realizing that something was going on, he quickly slowed down his pace while sharply scanning his surroundings along with extreme patience.

A few moments later, the one who was hiding in the dark finally lost their patience. They could no longer wait for Shin to drop his guard as they could see that the latter had already figured out that they were stalking him.

"This is a surprise. There are very few people who can sense my presence," said a hooded figure as he appeared a few meters away from Shin.

Shin halted his steps and observed the opposing party, not even replying to what the latter had said.

The hooded figure seemed to have expected that response and shrugged his shoulders. "Well, this does not make any difference as you will be no different to those people who fall in my hands."

Shin slightly raised his brows behind his mask. He could see where the confidence of this person was coming from. But if the latter would only be relying on that, then it would be far from being enough.

Regardless, the first appetizer seemed to have arrived. It would be better to warm up a little before proceeding.

But before he could even make his move, another presence made themselves known. When he turned his head in that direction and instantly realized where the scent of death was coming from.

It must be this person.

Chapter 1353: Experiencing that Thrill (Part 2)

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Shin stared at the newcomer with caution as he could tell that the opposing party was most likely on the same tier as him, especially with that kind of aura.

Seeing that Shin was looking at him, the mysterious player suddenly gestured. "Don't mind me. I am just here because of my curiosity."

"If you can pique my interest more, then I may as well wait for my turn as I prefer fighting you without any hindrances."

Shin raised his brows in doubt when he heard those words. But for some unknown reason, he found this guy quite trustworthy. He became quite curious about this player due to this.

On the other hand, the first person to find Shin felt offended when he saw that he was being ignored by the two. He was also an expert himself, but it seemed like he was being ignored as if he were a random mob.

"Do not underestimate me," enraged, he quickly charged at Shin.

He disappeared and reappeared in front of Shin in an instant. His dagger was already extending forward and about to reach its target.

There was a dark aura shrouding the blade of the dagger, indicating that he knew an advanced technique of manipulating his energy and the surrounding mana.

But right before it reached its target, Shin's figure suddenly flickered before slowly fading away.

The next instant, this assassin suddenly felt a tingling sensation at the back of his head, giving him an idea of what was about to happen.

Without any hint of hesitation, he instantly used a lifesaving skill and disappeared. He then reappeared behind Shin and brandished his dagger once again.

But Shin did the same thing, disappearing and reappearing for another time and attacking the opposing party with the same pattern but a different angle.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

This process was repeated a few more times before Shin paused across the other party. He stood in silence while observing this particular assassin.

He must admit that he was not expecting that this mysterious player could match him in terms of speed and reaction speed. Moreover, he also needed to admit that this guy was in the third tier of his class.

It was not that noticeable earlier, but Shin realized that this person was not as simple as it seemed. However, he was not as threatening as the person watching them fight.

Knitting his brows, Shin used his 'True Sight' and realized that this person was someone who could be easily overlooked, but also possessed a deadly venom.

This player perfectly resembled a venomous snake camouflaging itself in a dense forest.

"King of the Darkness, the Maverick God Umbra," muttered Shin as he read the name of the latter. He was one of the top experts that Shin had taken note of when reading the information about the players that he had to keep his eye on.

He was a member of the Supreme Temple, and was one of the top candidates for being the next 'Sword'. However, he never passed the final exam when it mattered. He always failed when he was about to reach the final step.

It might be his terrible luck, or it was because he was purposely being targeted by someone within the faction. But all of it led to him being unable to take the final step.

Closely observing the opposing side, Shin slowly shook his head before saying. "I suggest you do not bother me unless you are confident enough to face Zero alone. Or else you will never be able to fight me even in your best form."

Umbra was surprised at first since he was not expecting Shin to know his identity.

They might have exchanged for a couple of times earlier, but that was not enough to expose his identity, especially when he was purposely hiding his personal combat techniques and unique fighting style.

This could only mean that Shin was able to see through his disguise even though he was wearing a top-class cloak within the organization.

This could only mean that Shin possessed ocular and observation skills that surpassed his items and abilities. This could also mean that the latter was able to see through his disguise and stealth skills.

With a gloomy expression on his face, Umbra glares at Shin while mumbling. "Who are you?"

Given the clues that he was seeing, it was quite clear that this person was not someone he could easily provoke. It was somewhat within his expectations, especially when Shin had killed a monster that the current players were not supposed to defeat.

But from what he could see, Shin seemed to have surpassed the majority of the player base by a great margin.

From what he could guess, there were only a very few people who could reach this level, and most of them stood at the very peak of the virtual world.

Shin smirked when heard that, especially when he knew what was running inside the head of the other party.

"You can try guessing that," he said while smiling.

Hearing that, Umbra suddenly got an urge to charge forward. But he suppressed it forcefully, especially when he could not tell that the other party was trying to provoke him.

He had to keep his calm when facing an expert of this level as a single and most negligible mistake would lead to a grave one.

While staring cautiously at Shin, he realized that this person was not someone that he could brush off like everyone else.

Someone who could mutter Zero's name as casually as that would be not a small fry, especially with the tone that Shin had used.

On the other hand, the other person, who remained silent the entire time and watched them with full of amusement from the sidelines, could not help but smile in satisfaction.

With those simple yet quick exchanges, this person was able to get a rough idea of how strong Shin could be. Even he, a top Godlike Player himself, was not confident that he would be able to take down Shin without showing his true strength.

Shin was giving him enough threat that he would need to use his full strength and all his power just to put up a good fight. It was a quite rare feeling, which made him more interested in Shin.

At the same time, he also felt that something more. He felt that Shin was somewhat familiar for some unknown reason. He felt that he had met Shin before, but he could not put his finger on it. It was as if he was already near the answer, yet it was trying to slip away.

But despite his curiosity and his urges to try fighting Shin, he kept his word and waited for the two to finish in full patience, not minding that his turn would have to take a little longer.

"Let's see if you are worth fighting for," he mumbled as he smiled while watching the two.

Somewhere in the Aurora Continent, Lawless and Faker logged into the game after quite a long time.

It might only be a couple of days, but they felt that they had been away for a very long time. It felt that they had gone into another two years of hiatus, given all the messages and updates that they had gotten.

They open their respective virtual screens and browse through all the news and updates, trying to catch up with everything.

They already had quite a few ideas of what was going on as they kept in touch with their friends, who kept playing the game while they were away, particularly the members of their Adventurer Team.

However, they were not expecting that it would be at this level. They were not expecting that a lot had happened since they last visited the game.

What made them more curious about these events was the news about the Hall of Fame, particularly the names on the list. But saw quite a lot of familiar names listed in there, especially the current Godlike Players listed in the official godly list.

What piqued their interest more was the few familiar names that they had not seen for quite a long time, particularly those Monster Class Players, who played with them in the previous games.

Some of these players were a legend on their own. They just played a little low after the big incident that shook the virtual world two years ago.

Most of them either retired or gave up their previous post within their respective guilds and organizations. Some of them were even forgotten by most of the people, which was why they were not stirring any kind of sensation during all these recent events.

But now that they had already made their presence known once again, the two knew that more of these old gods would slowly appear one after another soon.

It had been quite some time since some of these old experts came back, especially when Shin and the rest of the Empyrean Talons were clearing their most recent Empire Quest. But many of them remained quite unknown and forgotten by many people.

But with this list that everyone could see, Faker and Lawless could already see what was about to happen.

The sudden shift that was about to happen would cause bigger ripples in the virtual world, and it was about to be known to everyone sooner or later.

Seeing that most of these previously famous gods appeared in the Hall of Fame and reached the third tier of their respective class, Lawless and Faker felt that they had to make haste and clear their respective promotion quests as soon as possible.

They also skimmed through the information and clues that Shin had provided them about how to clear their respective promotion quests, making it quite easier for them to catch up to everyone.

"I have already promoted my bloodline to the next level, so I will try taking my promotion quest and see if I can handle it," said Lawless as he took a token from his inventory, which was the 'Proof of Qualification' that he had.

Faker nodded his head and agreed before saying. "I will head back to the Saint Heaven Kingdom first before doing mine. You do your thing while I will deal with my own."

"Let's meet again when it is time to head to the next continent," he added before hopping back to instantly meld with the surroundings, completely erasing his presence, and suddenly disappearing in sight.

Lawless stared at the spot where Faker disappeared before taking a deep breath. Now that they kept on spreading their influence and reviving their name and reputation, he knew that the time when he had to meet their old teammates would be coming near.

He was not sure how he would handle it when he faced those traitors once again. He was not confident that he would be able to hold himself back and not clash with them.

He clenched his fists tightly as he held his urges back before sighing. "Let's hope that it will not cause another ripple that will spread throughout the virtual world."

At the same time, inside a certain someone's virtual space, a pair of people were standing right across each other.

"I thought you were going to bring me to an interesting place, but why are you trying to get me into a virtual world? Am I a kid or something? Do you want me to play a game while we have missions to do?"

Alyssa was quite furious when she learned where the place that she had to visit. She wanted to beat David into a pulp after learning that what he was talking about was a certain place within the virtual world.

She felt that she had been tricked.

David did not mind how she was throwing her tantrums as he was somewhat used to it. He then waited for her to calm down before trying to coax her into playing the game.

"I can reassure you that you will not regret this. Even Master and Sir Adam played a virtual game during their younger years. Don't you want to know what they had experienced?"

"Don't you want to know those things they say that can only be learned from the virtual world? Trust me when I say this – you will get hooked into it when you experience it."

Chapter 1354: Experiencing that Thrill (Part3): Appointment

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As Shin was facing Umbra, the people, who were left in the Holy City, were still trying to look for his traces. But when they learned that he was most likely to leave the city already, they quickly made their moves to look for him in other places.

They were top experts and elites among elites themselves, so they at least had a rough idea of how to look for him. This was not their first time looking for someone with a bounty, so they were quite familiar with the process.

Moreover, there were a lot of players here as both the Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance had issued a special mission to capture Shin. With their number, it would not be hard to cover a large area while

searching for him, especially when the system would constantly inform them of his location every two hours.

Due to the movements of these people, some of the top powers residing within the Saint Heaven Kingdom immediately noticed them. They then quickly realized that something odd was going on within the kingdom once again.

They felt quite tired living in this kingdom after the continuous series of events that happened these past couple of months. They felt that they could not have a break.

Due to the flood of unfamiliar people arriving in different cities all around the kingdom, these guilds and organizations felt that they were being invaded or something.

However, after doing some investigation, they learned that they were hunting a certain player due to a special mission of big factions such as Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance.

Due to this, they felt that the player was hiding something important for the two factions to go after him. Then they later learned from their sources that even the Demonic Churches and Corrupted Cult were also involved, lurking in the dark and waiting for the right time to make their move.

This single piece of information was more than enough for these guilds to smell something. They felt that their initial suspicion was most likely to be true. – "This person is definitely in possession of a powerful weapon or item. It may even be a godly treasure!" –

Blinded by their greed, these guilds issued an order to their people. But to make sure that they would not arouse any unwanted attention from the four major factions that were already chasing after the target, they told their people to lay low.

Their scouts and spies were tasked to investigate the matter as quietly as possible while also trying to tail the people from the said organizations without being noticed.

Of course, it was impossible to hide all their movements, which still caused some ripples. The sparks and frictions when different sides met were unavoidable.

Fortunately, these people knew their goals, which was why these small scuffles and little skirmishes lasted only a short time before they went their separate ways, looking for the still unclear target.

This chaos continued for only a short time before everyone resumed to their respective tasks, looking for the target that they had no idea who.

In the meantime, the man in question was currently busy fighting a Maverick God.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Their figures flashed through the forest as they exchanged blows against each other. The two executed a series of skills and techniques, showcasing their abilities.

Umbra was doing his best to take down Shin, but the opposing side seemed to be very tough to deal with. He was not expecting this opponent to be able to match his movements despite using all the secret skills and personal techniques that he had created.

Shin was able to ward off most of his attacks and even dodged all the killing moves that he had. Moreover, the opposing seemed to be very relaxed during the entire exchange.

What Umbra did not know was Shin not showing his real capabilities. From the start of the battle, aside from a couple of basic and intermediate combat and movement techniques under his arsenal, he never used any techniques that could expose his identity.

He was using a pair of random swords from his inventory space that were lying in the corner and collecting dust.

It might be a pair of random items, but their quality was rather good. They were at least at mithril rank, which far exceeded the quality that most players had.

During their exchanges, Shin used the principles that he had learned from his recent lessons, particularly the swordsmanship that Old Ryong had taught him.

Infusing different wills on his sword and applying them to each of his strikes, Shin was able to showcase a different yet also similar swordsmanship. This also showed how much he had improved during the recent training that he had in the real world.

With his heavy, swift, and sharp attacks, Umbra started to feel some pressure the more he fought Shin. This pressure was gradually getting stronger as more time passed.

He also felt that he was gradually getting stronger as more time went by. He first thought that it was an illusion, but he became more confident about it as they exchanged a little bit longer.

The thought of Shin gradually releasing his true strength as the battle progressed. But that thought was immediately rejected when he saw a noticeable change and maturity in the style that Shin was using.

But what confused him even more was he could already tell that this was not the usual style of his opponent, who was trying to hide their real identity. This meant that Shin was indeed getting stronger as the battle continued.

Bang!

The two were separated away from each other due to a strong impact from their last exchange.

As Umbra stood a few meters away from Shin, he was suddenly overwhelmed by a strong urge to end the battle as soon as possible.

He was about to follow these instincts and charged forward with his strongest attack when he suddenly sensed something. He strongly stomped on the ground and forcefully stopped his tracks while looking forward.

As he raised his head, he saw the same opponent that he was fighting earlier but giving off a whole different aura.

Not only that, but this aura was also so overwhelming that it made his body freeze and completely paralyzed.

He tried to fight it with his aura while infusing his murderous intent, but it did not do anything. His aura crumbled in front of the pressure of his opponent, suppressing him completely.

His body was trembling in fear as he stood at a considerable distance away from Shin.

From his perspective, the other party looked like a demon shrouded by darkness, yet also surrounded by five divine beasts with a slightly weaker presence.

As a top expert himself and a decently strong Martial Artist in the real world, Umbra immediately realized what was happening and instantly recognized the phenomenon that he was seeing.

He could see that Shin was already at the level where his Aura Manifestation was already evolving into a Battle Spirit, especially with this kind of pressure that Umbra was experiencing.

But what surprised Umbra was the fact that there were at least five different Aura Manifestations behind Shin which was completely unheard of. Or he at least had no idea whether it was possible or not.

The Aura Manifestation was the representation of one's martial arts or mentalism after combining them with their Internal Qi or Mental Energy.

It was also the projection of their techniques after reaching maturity, which was why even if someone practiced multiple techniques or skills, they would still come together and merge into a single entity that represented their unique style.

The Battle Spirit was the higher form of it as Martial Artists and Mentalists grew stronger, learning more high-level techniques and unique energies such as Natural Force and Spiritual Force.

The stronger an individual was, the more powerful their Aura Manifestation or Battle Spirit could be. But it had never been mentioned that it was possible to possess multiple of them within a single body.

What was even more ridiculous about this was the fact that the demon that he was seeing was just an incomplete Battle Spirit that had yet to mature and nurture its true form. This indicated that the opposing side was still a distance away from realizing their peak potential, which made it even scarier.

"What kind of monster are you?!" shouted Umbra, unable to shake off the shock that he was suffering.

This was way beyond his understanding!

At the same time, his instincts were telling him to run away as far as possible and not provoke this demon as much as possible.

But Umbra knew that it was already too late for that. He knew that this demon was already done experimenting with something and felt that it was the end.

He understood it was time to dispose of his useless self just like when a cat was done playing with its food and got tired of it.

This was the thought that Umbra had inside his head, imagining the thoughts of his opponent.

He was starting to regret not looking for partners when he clearly understood that this mission was not as simple as it seemed on the surface.

With that thought, he subconsciously turned his head toward the other person, who remained quiet up until now and watched the entire battle without any intention of interfering.

He could tell that this person was also a monster himself, but he was not sure where he was on the same level as the demon that he was currently facing.

He wanted to ask for some help. But before he could even open his mouth, a flash of light suddenly flew in the air and went through his neck.

Shing!

There was nothing at first as Umbra could not feel anything. He just stared blankly in the air while trying to open his mouth and say something. Unfortunately, there were no words that came out of his mouth no matter how hard he tried.

He then realized that his entire body had become numb as he was unable to move any muscle. He only understood what was going on when he realized that his eyes grew tired and slowly closed.

With his darkening vision, Umbra slowly flew to the ground before turning into a lifeless body.

He was dead.

His corpse lasted for a minute or two before turning into specks of lights that dissipated in the air.

Shin twirled the swords in his hands for a couple of times, testing a few moves before sheathing them back. He then turned to the other person before asking straightforwardly. "So... what's the plan? Are we going to go straight to the point and fight, or are we waiting for the entire world to crumble before that?"

The other party ignored those words as he stared at Shin.

From his perspective, he only saw the incomplete Battle Spirit that had been released. As for the Aura Manifestation, only those targeted people could see them as it was a direct attack on the minds of their opposition.

He had no idea what exactly had happened to Umbra, and when he suddenly became paralyzed right before the end. He was even more confused when he saw Umbra suddenly become a little distracted in the end, which allowed Shin to end everything with a single strike.

He was not sure if it was an in-game skill or any metal attacks that could be used within the game, but he understood that Shin was not someone who could be underestimated.

He continued to look at Shin for a few more minutes before shaking his head. "You are becoming more and more interesting the more I learn about you."

He then turned around and started to walk away while saying. "Let me schedule an appointment. Let's face each other a couple of hours before the bounty mission to capture you comes to an end."

"I want to see how you will handle your current situation. I also want to see whether you are the same as those people and achieve similar feats or fall in grace and become forgotten like everyone else."

"I hope that you will not disappoint," he added as he walked further away without any fear of being attacked from behind.

It was as if he was confident that Shin would not try to stab him when his back was turned.

Or it was also possible that he did not fear being attacked like that. He seemed to be very confident that he would be able to handle it even if Shin tried to play such an underhanded trick.

In return, Shin also became a little interested in the other party and asked. "At least tell me who you are so that I know who I am making an appointment with."

The other party paused his steps and looked over his shoulders. He then continued walking away and waved his hand while answering nonchalantly. "People call me Martial God, but my friends and rivals know me as Ashura."

Chapter 1355: The Strange Events of Shunkai Forest

.....

Ding

Exactly two hours after Shin left the Holy City, all the members of the Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance that were chasing after him got a notification from the system, informing them of his exact location.

They halted their tracks momentarily, looking at the notification, before quickly heading toward the said coordinate. They all went straight to the location indicated on their virtual maps.

The members of the Demonic Churches and Corrupted Cult, who were dispatched for this mission, also received the same notification from the system. They had been waiting for it for quite a while already, so they were able to respond almost instantly right after receiving the notification.

They went straight to the Shunkai Forest, not bothering to hide their movements. The other two factions were already on their move, so the other organizations residing within the kingdom would not have the time to deal with them.

They became bolder in their actions and did not bother to hide their intentions.

At the same time, the powerful guilds and other organizations that were based on the Saint Heaven Kingdom quickly responded to the movements of the four factions. They followed the movements of those people while deducing their destination.

When they learned that their target was the Shunkai Forest, these superpowers of the kingdom, immediately made their arrangements while moving their forces toward the said location.

As the members of the four factions swarmed toward the Shunkai Forest, the powerful guilds and other organizations of the Saint Heaven Kingdom decided to surround the map, sealing off every entrance or exit that could be used as an escape route later.

They wanted to be the biggest fishermen in this battle. They wanted to be the ones who would be harvesting all the grains after the others struggled to fight against each other.

...

Right after these groups made their respective preparations, Shiella, who was busy with the relocation of Calderock Town before transforming it into a port city, suddenly received a report from her people.

Ding

Jhin: Club President! The Martial Alliance seems to be actively urging its members to participate in the faction mission. It seems like the young master has gotten his hands on an important item.

Jhin: As for the members that you tell me to keep my eyes on. Most of them are offline, aside from Martial God Ashura, who we can't find.

Jhin: But they are still in the middle of an Empire Quest, so I don't think that they will get involved in this event until the final hours of the said mission.

Shiella skimmed through the report before simply sending it.

Snow White: Continue monitoring everything. Report directly to me once an important development happens.

She then closed the virtual screen before looking around the office. After that, she glanced at the time and sighed. It was still quite early, but she felt quite tired mentally. She wanted to rest a little before continuing with her work.

The reconstruction of Calderock Town was already underway, and Ribbit was already overlooking everything while Delusive Smile, her executive assistant within the game, was dealing with everything concerning the Golden City and Golden Mountain.

Looking at the timer of the melting ice wall between the Sky Deceiving Valley and Frozen Kingdom, she felt that she still had enough time to rest.

But instead of logging out, she went on the sofa and lay there for a nap. "Things will get busier when we open the borders. Let's try recharging my energy before it happens."

...

Shunkai Forest.

Shin was sitting on a boulder in a cross-legged fashion, seemingly in the middle of meditation. He was on top of a mountain where he could see every corner of the entire forest.

He could see different parts of this region from this particular mountain and all he needed was to spin around and look at the horizon.

He was in meditation as he wanted to conserve as much energy as possible during this battle. The first wave of enemies would be the most impatient ones. Some of them might be strong, but he knew that they were nothing but a bunch of cannon fodders used by the crafty and sly ones to test the waters.

With this thought, Shin knew that this was a good opportunity to let his Elemental Spirit Companions on the loose.

Everyone would be his enemies anyway, so there was no need to restrain these Reapers of his. They could do whatever they wanted when dealing with these waves of players.

All these Elemental Spirits were in humanoid form anyway, so these players from the four factions would take them as some sort of humanoid monsters that happened to be in the area.

Even if those people were smart enough to use their observation skills on these Elemental Spirits, they would not know that the Elementals were nothing but summoned creatures.

Only those people who were on the same level as Transcendent Beings could see through this trick, and they were the only ones to be able to go through these Elemental Spirits and reach Shin after using their respective Spirit Awe Skills.

But those people would be the ones that Shin was exactly looking for. They were the worthy opponents that could satisfy his requirements for polishing his style and techniques.

After receiving his orders, his Reaper's Retainers quickly scattered in every direction, heading to the designated area that Shin had assigned them.

Grimrace, who had just recently been promoted, was very excited about this mission. He now had the opportunity to test his new strength without holding back. He could also go crazy without thinking about the consequences as well, so his excitement could not be hidden by his clown-like face.

Hanzo, on the other, calmly appeared at a random location in his designated area. He closed his eyes and stood silently with his hands crossed behind him.

He looked like a statue by staying still like this, especially when his aura resonated with the surroundings. It was as if he was a part of the nature itself.

Meanwhile, Blackie and Whitie turned into a pair of black and white tigers before occupying a mountain each. They stood at the peak of these mountains while overlooking everything beneath them like true kings.

Solus shrouded her body with a light before floating high up in the air. The light then resonated with the surroundings and made herself melded with it. No one would be able to see her from the ground.

Astaroth took another location and sat on top of a huge boulder. He also regulated his breathing to resonate with his surroundings, particularly the earth, while staying still. Just like Hanzo, he also turned into a statue.

Among all his Elementa Spirit Companions, Vladimir was the only one who was left behind. He was left behind and stood beside Shin to be on guard duty.

Naturally, this conceited and self-centered spirit would not agree to it. He wanted to join the others and slaughter enemies, not willing to be behind the others, particularly Grimrace. The two were somewhat of a rival since the time they first met. They were always at each other's throats and wanted to get rid of each other.

Unfortunately for Vladimir, Grimrace managed to be ahead of him this time and got promoted into a real Supreme Elemental.

Since Vladimir had yet to reach their ranks and evolve into a true Supreme Elemental himself, he could not be on the frontlines and had to wait until then.

Despite his unwillingness, he could not do anything but comply with the orders of his master, or he would have to be unsummoned and not could not join any form of battle.

All could he do was sulk on the side while complaining in his mind.

Shin ignored Vladimir as he continued to meditate. He wanted to conserve his strength as much as possible, especially when he was planning to filter out his opponents.

Whoever got through his reapers, regardless of their methods, would be worthy enough to challenge him. They could try to fight him or even catch him if they wanted, but they had to earn their qualification first.

He did not want to waste his time and energy on small fries, especially when he knew that this would be a long and exhausting battle. Even if he was confident that he could slaughter them with his absolute power, he still had to spend quite a lot of effort before facing the real trouble later.

Moreover, the strongest challenges that he had to face later would surely cost him a lot, so he had to conserve as much energy as possible.

...

While Shin was waiting patiently for his next opponents to arrive, the first batch of people finally set foot on the Shunkai Forest.

These players were a bunch of random players that happened to arrive at the same time. But their skills and strengths could not be overlooked as they were elites of their respective faction or a top expert in their respective professions.

They quickly glared at each other when they met at the entrance of the forest. Invisible sparks quickly flew in the air as their eyes met. The air also seemed to have become heavier when their respective pressure started pressing against each other.

But that only lasted for a few moments as they understood their current tasks. They knew that they could not afford to waste their time fighting each other when they had to hunt someone who seemed to be strong enough to slaughter them with ease.

After the initial spark, they turned around and went their separate ways, heading toward the coordinates sent to them by the system.

As they were running toward the said coordinates, one of the groups that bumped into each other at the entrance of the forest suddenly halted their tracks.

It was due to the immense pressure that was pressing on them.

As they were experts, who experienced a lot and went through multiple battles, they immediately recognized what kind of pressure this was.

It was the same familiar scent that they always encountered whenever they bumped into something unexpected or when their lives were at risk.

The scent of death.

This scent overwhelmed the whole place, paralyzing all of them.

When they raised their heads and looked ahead of them, they saw a humanoid figure standing silently in the distance.

It was someone wearing a set of butler's clothes in a dark green color. This person had a magician's hat with a color that complements the clothes that he was wearing.

This person walked slowly toward the group while fixing his white gloves. At the same time, he was also laughing manically, making the group feel a shiver run down their spine.

Then the group saw that the shadow in the surroundings started to move. They slowly crawled on the ground before converging on the shadow of that mysterious person.

Moments later, the group witnessed something that they would not forget for the rest of their lives. It might even hunt them in their sleep.

"Ah!"

"Wah!"

Cries full of terror shook the forest in the very next moment. It lasted for quite a while before the forest returned to its previous silence.

Grimrace, who was standing in the middle of corpses dissipating into specks of lights, frowned deeply. There was a clear sign of disappointment and disassociation on his face as he tapped his clothes.

"These guys are too weak. Their minds are too fragile. They are not worthy of my experiments. I hope the next batch will be worth my time."

Similar events were occurring in different parts of the Shunkai Forest.

There was a place where huge fireballs suddenly fell from the sky and started bombarding the people, who were passing through that place. These fireballs were like meteors that caused devastation in the forest.

The explosion burned everything and did not leave any survivors alive. Not even a drop item or equipment was left behind as they were either scorched beyond repair or melted by the immense heat.

On another part of the map, players died without them knowing. They did not realize that they were dead until their vision turned completely dark, signifying their death.

People, who managed to see what happened to the others before a similar thing happened to them, could not believe what they just witnessed. They saw flashes of light that passed through everyone before their bodies got sliced into multiple pieces.

The last thing that they saw was a world shrouded with a purple light before they died.

On the other hand, some players decided to climb the mountains in front of them, trying to get a clearer look at what was happening. They wanted to get a vantage point where they could see the entire forest before making their next moves.

But they did not expect that these two mountains were a place that they shouldn't visit. There was a pair of tigers lying in wait in those mountains, planning to slaughter them.

It did not take long for these players to realize this mistake, but it was already too late as they got hunted down by those tigers without fighting back. They got eliminated one after another before silence enveloped the mountains once again.

Meanwhile, on the final place that Shin had instructed to be covered, the players, who stumbled upon this place were forced to band together and fight as a group.

It was because there was a group of Earth Golems blocking their path with a strength that far surpassed their current levels. They could not help but become confused at what was happening since this place was supposed to be a low-level map based on the information that they had.

They could not believe that there were groups of elemental beings such as Earth Golems residing on this map, making them unable to proceed toward their destination.

What was even more troubling about this was the fact that these golems were so powerful that they should be residing in a neutral region.

It did not take long for these golems to slaughter the first batch of 'visitors' before they turned into huge boulders once again.

The top guilds and organizations residing in the Saint Heaven Kingdom immediately received the reports and they could not believe it when they first got it. But after confirming that they were true, they could not help but accept that it was the reality.

The leaders of the guilds scratched their heads in confusion, not understanding what was happening. – "What the heck is going on?" –

Chapter 1356: The Strange Events at the Shunkai Forest (Part 2)

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As the guilds within the Saint Heaven Kingdom were very confused about what was happening at the Shunkai Forest. It was supposed to be a low-level map, which was already out of the current stage of the game.

Their higher-ups suspected that there might be another event happening, but after waiting for quite a while and not receiving any announcements or notifications from the system, they realized that it was not the case.

But it only made them more confused about the current situation. These strange phenomena that were happening in the Shunkai Forest were way out of their knowledge.

High-level elemental monsters popping out of nowhere, meteors suddenly falling from the sky, a phenomenon where players died without them knowing, tigers reigning over mountains, and a strange and terrifying humanoid monster that kept on torturing every victim – these events were making the players from the four factions to have second thoughts at entering the map.

At the same time, the top guilds of the Saint Heaven Kingdom were having a headache due to this.

As for the Powerhouse Guilds that were based on the kingdom, they did not want to get involved after learning a few things about these events. Their sources had told them that the four factions were after a certain player, and they learned from the Assassin Union that the said player was not someone that they wanted to provoke, especially when they were residing in the Saint Heaven Kingdom.

After getting such a clue, they immediately realized that the said player was someone with a decent background.

Out of the players that they could think of, the ones that immediately entered their minds were the members of a particular group, especially the leaders of this adventurer team.

Empyrean Talons – if it was someone from that group, then it would not be strange for the Assassin Union to warn them when they were trying to get some information about the current events.

With what they already knew, the Empyrean Talons had a close relationship with the Hand of Midas Trading Firm, which also had some connection with the Assassin Union. With that kind of relationship, these guilds knew that they could not afford to provoke the said group recklessly.

Moreover, the Titan Guild and HeadHunter Guild now had a decent connection with the Hand of Midas due to the recent events in the Sacred Light Kingdom. They also built a council that would control the player's interest in the said kingdom and its resources.

Due to this, the top guilds started having second thoughts of getting involved in the current events of the Shunkai Forest.

Some of them backed out while a few dared to stay behind and decided to observe the current development before coming up with their final decision.

But at the same time, there were still a few guilds and organizations that wanted to get involved in this event no matter what. A few of them were from the dark guilds and the criminal organizations of the kingdom, particularly the Blood Carnival, which was one of the groups with a grudge against the Empyrean Talons and Hand of Midas.

...

Somewhere outside the Shunkai Forest, there was a temporary base that had been set up by the Blood Carnival.

Within the tent, a group of players were gathered, seemingly in the middle of discussing a serious matter.

One of these players was an assassin dark elf with a black mask that covered his entire face. He looked at the other people sitting around the table before saying. "What do you think we should do?"

"Given the information that we have gotten and the data that we have collected, it seems like whoever the target of the four factions, they are without a doubt one of the leading players of the Empyrean Talons," said another player with the same profession as the previous person, but with a different race.

This guy was a Wolfkin with a hunter class (thief class of the Beastmen Race). Given the air full of authority that was surrounding him, it was clear that his position within the guild was quite high.

Sitting across from this person was a familiar face. He was the same person who fought against David during the Empire Quest that Shin and the rest of Empyrean Talons cleared previously – the Killer Clown Pogo.

Pogo was playing with his sickles and daggers. He was alternately tossing and catching them with one hand, seemingly unconcerned with the discussion. But when he sensed that the other two were staring intently at him, he could not help but sigh and give his opinion. "If you are asking me about it, then I suggest you move as soon as the chaos occurs."

"Given the current situation, some of the quick-witted ones will realize that they can't reach their target with themselves. They will propose to work together, at least until they go through the obstacles that are blocking their path."

"If they form such teams, conflicts are bound to happen whenever they encounter the other teams. Frictions will get stronger as the competition will be more intense this way."

The dark elf did not wait for Pogo to continue as he immediately got what the latter was trying to say. "So, you want us to take advantage of that chaos to go through the said spots while everyone else is busy."

"Our target is their target anyway, so it is better to ignore the rest and not waste our energies on them. Then we can get whatever they are trying to get from that said target," said Pogo.

The Wolfkin thought for a moment before asking. "Who do you think is this 'target' that they are after? Since we already have the upper hand in terms of information over these people, I think we can further strengthen this advantage."

Hearing this, the three turned toward another person, who had been with them since the very start but did not say anything up until now.

This player was wearing a cloak that completely hid his entire figure, preventing others from seeing his appearance.

This person was the one who was currently assigned to collecting information for the Blood Carnival and was the head of their scouting units.

"Mr. Information Network, how about you enlighten us with your knowledge?" asked Pogo with a little sarcasm in his tone.

The hooded person remained silent and unaffected by his tone and continued to stare blankly at them, seemingly having no intention of replying.

The Dark Elf sighed when he saw that before saying. "Don't wait until Pierro arrives. We don't want to get the 'Jester' to take this matter into his hands, am I right?"

"The Jester, the Fool, the Fraud, and the Deceiver – unless one of them is here, none of you can order me around," said the hooded person, making the other three sighs helplessly.

Seeing that they would not be able to order the guy, or might even request something from him, the other three could only look at each other before deciding to make a move themselves.

Pogo stood and said. "I'll do the scouting myself and try to uncover the true identity of the said target. Provide me with some people."

The Dark Elf nodded his head as he continued to sigh. "Wait at the designated location before making your move. I'll try contacting our people from the Demonic Churches and the side of Corrupted Cult."

After that, they ended the meeting and left.

...

On the other part of the Shunkai Forest, another group was organizing themselves and about to make their move.

Phantom stood up from the boulder that he sat on before turning to the others. "Is everyone ready? We have already collected enough information; I think it is time for us to make our move."

Valdez, who was already getting impatient, excitedly stood up as it was finally time for them to show themselves. He was already getting bored, so this timing was just perfect.

Wolf dusted himself before turning to their current team captain and nodded his head while his brother, Claude, checked his magic pistols before putting them in their holster.

The only female player of their group, Sylvie, fixed her slightly wrinkled mage clothes before picking up her scepter and readied herself.

Seeing everyone was ready, Phantom slightly nodded his head before turning around and entering the Shunkai Forest. Their target was one of the mountains, where a black tiger was residing.

Among all the routes that they could choose from, this was the one that they felt was the easiest. Compared to the others, this mountain seemed to suit their team composition the most.

The Earth Golems was the slightly logical choice, but given the composition of their team, they felt that it would take them a lot of time before they could take down one of those golems, much less clear the area and pave a path for themselves.

As for the other three paths, those routes were very terrifying, especially the one with a crazy humanoid monster that loved to torture its victims.

The other two, where huge fireballs fell from the sky and where players were diced into pieces by unknown attack, were less scary compared to that one, but equally troublesome.

As for the other mountain, which was being guarded by a white tiger, the group felt that it would be picked by other players who were starting to form a group.

It was a slightly easier route that everyone could use since the white tiger could not camouflage itself, unlike the black tiger. However, it could use long-range magic attacks.

Regardless, it was much easier to deal with compared to a powerful monster that could ambush them at any given moment.

Due to this, a lot of people would choose the mountain guarded by the white tiger, which would increase the competition.

It was quite good in a sense since they could use the chaos to sneak away while the others were keeping the white tiger busy. But such thought would be quite common for everyone, which would result in another chaos where everyone was trying to sneak away from the fight and go through the mountain.

Such an event would only cause another chaos, where everyone was fighting one another, causing the situation to be more conflicted.

With all that considered, Phantom and his group decided to choose the other mountain.

...

As everyone was making their respective plans and preparations, the first person, who managed to sneak away from the said routes reached Shin ahead of the others.

Shin did not even bother to open his eyes as Vladimir took the initiative to greet this 'visitor'.

The other party could not help but raise his brows when he saw a humanoid monster standing right beside the target. Moreover, given the intense and dangerous aura that he was sensing from the opposing side, he could tell that this particular monster was not something he could afford to underestimate.

At the same time, he also immediately realized what was going on. Those strange phenomena occurring in different parts of the Shunkai Forest had something to do with their target.

Realizing this fact, this player instantly understood that the target that they were chasing was no ordinary player.

This piece of information could be helpful to the other players of his faction, but he chose not to share it with anyone. Greed sure was terrifying as it could blind the judgment of anyone.

He wanted to monopolize this information and get ahead of others. Even if he failed to capture this person, he was still confident that he could escape from this place and gather more forces that could help him.

Given that his person was the first one to arrive, Shin did not dare to underestimate him. But given that Vladimir wanted to vent his anger, he chose to remain in his meditating state while keeping his guard up.

He had to leave this matter for Vladimir first and would only step in if his assistance was needed.

At the same time, he felt that it was also a great opportunity to help the Crimson Noblesse Spirit accelerate the digestion of the inheritance left behind by Dracula.

This might be a good opportunity to help Vladimir evolve much faster.

Chapter 1357: A Proposal from an Enemy

.....

Shin was sitting cross-legged on a boulder, watching the battle between Vladimir and the first person to arrive at this place.

From what he had seen so far, this player indeed possessed a decent skill. He might not be as strong as a Maverick God or a Godlike Player, but he was at least a skilled Titled Ranker of Maverick Ranker.

Vladimir was somewhat toying with this opponent since he did not know when another would arrive. But the other party was still able to hold its ground very well. Shin could practically see how this person managed to sneak through the places that his other Elemental Spirit Companions were guarding.

He was somewhat impressed with the other party, especially after watching what they could do during the previous exchanges.

But during the battle between Vladimir and the other party, Shin suddenly sensed something. He suddenly stood up and observed the opponent with his 'True Sight' Skill before suddenly unsummoning Vladimir forcefully.

The Crimson Noblesse Spirit was somewhat taken aback at the sudden move that his master had made. But as Shin was so forceful about it, the blood spirit was unable to fight back and could only comply.

At the same time, right after Vladimir turned into a speck of crimson light that returned to Shin, his opponent suddenly made a seal with both of his hands.

Swoosh!

Not long after, his body suddenly turned into a black smoke, which also became a demonic hand that tried to grab Vladimir.

Fortunately, the elemental spirit had already been recalled by Shin, barely avoiding the unexpected capture.

At the same time, the black demonic hand that barely missed Vladimir suddenly turned into a portal, where a 'new' player walked out.

This person had a similar appearance as the previous one but with a slightly different class. This time, the player seemed to have a magic-related class, especially when Shin saw the bone scepter that this player was holding.

"Tsk! Tsk! That was close. I should have gotten my hands on a pretty decent Elemental if only I'm a bit faster," said the player chuckling.

Shin instantly realized the background of his player after seeing the aura that they had. Moreover, there was also a familiar emblem on the chest area of the cloak that the player was wearing.

Someone from the Undying Guild.

But what confused Shin was this was his first time seeing this person.

Since he kept on clashing with Immortal and his people, Shin and the rest of his friends had taken note of all the top experts of the Undying Guild, particularly their higher-ups who were claiming to be Immortal's Apostles.

This person did not belong to the list that they had. But what was surprising about this was the fact that this person seemed to be much stronger than the rest of 'The Apostles' on the list.

He then suddenly remembered that this person must be the main body of the 'player' that Vladimir was fighting earlier. If that one was a clone and it was as strong and skilled as a Titled or Maverick Ranker, then this main body should be somewhat stronger, at least a Godlike Player or Maverick God.

That was also when he recalled what his Senior Brother had told him before. – "The forgotten experts that used to be on the top of the virtual world are starting to come back one after another." –

Putting two and two together, Shin knew that the person standing in front of him was one of such experts. The only confusing thing about this was the fact that this highly skilled player seemed to be following Immortal.

As he thought about this, Shin was reminded of the events during their Empire Quest. That time when one of the core members of the Silent Night turned their backs on Justin and the others, resulting in the failure of their group and falling into the schemes of Immortal.

"Is that guy already organizing his forces?" mumbled Shin with a frown before remembering that the United Cup was about to start in a couple of weeks.

Seeing that Shin was mumbling to himself, the member of the Undying Guild that walked out of the portal stared at the opposing side with an interested look on his face.

He smiled as he said. "You are as interesting as what our Leader has said. I somewhat expected this, but you are much more interesting than what I have heard."

Hearing that, Shin suddenly became more cautious and squinted his eyes. From what the other party had said, they seemed to be aware of his true identity, which was supposedly impossible given that the system did not leak it and his disguise was quite perfect.

The other party seemed to have noticed his confusion and explained. "Others may be unaware of it, but our leader is quite familiar with you."

"Your side has already been clashing with ours for quite some time already, so it will not be strange for us to be familiar with you, especially when our leader puts a lot of interest and attention to you."

"We have been watching you and your movements for quite a while already, so it is very normal for us to know what you are up to."

"It is also not hard to guess that you are behind this recent event given the clues that we already have," he added, giving Shin a decent understanding of what was going on.

But it also made him put his guard up, especially after learning that the opposing side was keeping an eye on their movements.

After letting Shin digest everything, the apostle suddenly revealed his real purpose of coming here. "Our leader sends me here to offer a business proposal."

Hearing that, Shin finally understood a couple of things. He also realized how this person was able to sneak away from his Elemental Spirits without being noticed.

Given that Immortal had first plotted something here, particularly the Holy City, Shin understood that this Lich God had spent quite a lot of time studying the area and the nearby regions.

Aside from Shin, who had also studied this map during that incident, Immortal must be the one, who understood and knew more about this place.

Shin had no intention of working with such a sly fox, especially when he knew that happened to Silent Night before. That incident was more than enough for a lesson, so he would not let himself fall into such an obvious trap.

But hearing the other side would not hurt, so he gestured the latter to continue.

Seeing his actions, the apostle nodded in satisfaction before continuing. "Before everything else, let me introduce myself first. I am Daven, fourth of the true apostles of our leader. I am entrusted to deal with these kinds of negations."

Shin had already gotten a few clues after hearing those words. The words 'true apostles' were more than enough for him to understand that Immortal must be hiding more of his forces aside from the Undying Guild while the so-called 'apostles', who had the higher position within the guild, were nothing but frontmen to hide real ones.

But that was barely enough for what Shin was supposed to know. He did know that the name 'Daven' was one of the famous experts back in the years. This name was more than enough to strike fear in most of the players in those times as he was one of the most notorious dark players in the past.

'One-armed Demon Daven' – was his nickname.

It was not because he only had one arm, nor did he possess a demonic arm like Demon God Justin.

He was named as such because he was known for chopping the arms of his victims after defeating them. It was nothing because it was done in the virtual world, but what was troublesome about it was the pain level at that time was so high that it was fifty percent similar to what a person would experience in the real world.

This had already been adjusted to a much lower level after a few virtual games due to the psychological problems and traumas that players would face.

However, after a few improvements in safety regulations and other safety measures, such levels of pain receptors inside the virtual world were slowly going back to the past.

Even if it could not kill the players in the real world, it could still result in psychological traumas for the players.

However, the World Gaming Organization already had a solution for this after their long research. But to make sure that they would not face any unexpected accidents, they were only slowly increasing these improvements and matching them in the game's updates.

Regardless, this player standing in front of Shin used to be one of those maniacs, who loved to torture their victims before finishing them off.

One of those psychotic players, who loved to watch others suffer and fall in despair.

Even if Shin was aware of this history, he would not bother himself to think about it. All he had to know was whether the one standing on the opposite side was worthy enough to fight him or not.

It was not being arrogant or anything, but it was because his current strength far surpassed most of the players of the game.

Right now, this person standing in front of him might be strong, but they were not enough to threaten him.

"Let's forget about this pleasantry and hear out your real purpose. It is not like we are going to be friends or anything anyway," he said, not wanting to hear any more rubbish from the latter.

Daven did not mind that kind of attitude from Shin even if he used to be one of the most notorious players in the past. He was surrounded by a lot of lunatics back in their base, and he was one himself, so such a thing did not bother him.

After seeing a bit of what Shin was capable of, Daven went back to business. "Our leader wants to help you with this predicament and..."

He was still in the middle of talking when Shin suddenly interrupted. "B*llsh*t! Do you think I need his help on such a trivial matter? Enough with that and tell me what he wants. Although, I doubt that we will come to terms."

"Nor convince me with it," he added with a smirk.

Shin was waiting for what kind of nonsense would Daven pull out, but he did not expect the next words that he would hear. "The descent of the Glutton of the Flies, Demon King Beelzebub..."

"....We will help you find the exact location of the portal if you promise us one thing," added Daven, catching Shin's interest this time around.

Shin stared at Daven with a poker face, observing the latter closely, before squinting his eyes. "What kind of ploy are you playing this time?"

Even if the Corrupted Cult and Demonic Churches were said to not have a good relationship with each other, that did not mean that they would be sabotaging each other when it came to these things.

It was also possible that Immortal was laying a trap for him, but Shin could not shake off the feeling that Immortal was indeed trying to sell off the Demonic Churches, or at least the Pandemonium Descendants, which was the largest and strongest force within the said faction.

Shin did not know what Immortal was trying to pull, but he could at least tell that they were trying to do something crazy.

While Shin was lost in thought, Daven suddenly added. "We will also tell you why the Corrupted Cult is trying to get the Sea Soul that you have 'snatched' from that Sea Spirit and why they have corrupted it."

This Shin could not help but put his guard even higher.

If earlier, Shin thought that Immortal was trying to screw off the Demonic Churches, then this other information would be no different from betraying the Corrupted Cult.

What was more surprising was the next words that he heard.

"We can also provide you with the information about the real purpose of the Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance in capturing you."

This time, Shin had to admit that Immortal had made him interested in this so-called proposal.

Chapter 1358: Troubles

...

Soaring Continent, Eastern Sea Region, Ace City

Nathan was reading the reports of his subordinates inside his room when someone rang the bell. Given his strength and attainment in Martial Arts, he did not need to look at the projector connected to the door camera to see who his visitor was. He could just use his powerful sense to see who was on the other side of the door.

It was Elias Stuart, the Warrior Sage of the Stuart Family of Mentalism.

Sighing, Nathan stood up and walked to the door to open it and let Elias enter. "What's the matter? It is quite rare for you to visit me."

"But if you did, it could only mean that there is some sort of emergency," he added as he led his friend inside.

Elias found himself in a comfortable position on a sofa before answering. "We have some trouble. The elders have contacted me, and it seems like Elder Ryong has encountered Jan Mateo and got in a fight."

Hearing that, Nathan could not help but raise his brows as he clearly understood what would happen when two powerful Demonic Partitioners fought one another, especially when either one got consumed by the other.

"It is not like what I think it is, right?" asked Nathan solemnly.

Elias shook his head and reassured the latter. "None of them got consumed by the other, but the elders have said that both sides suffered serious injuries."

Nathan heaved a sigh of relief when he heard that before continuing. "So, what's the problem?"

Everyone was too wary of Jan Mateo due to his unique demonic powers, particularly his ability to combine his Martial Arts and Mentalism and partially fuse his Demonic Force and Spiritual Force.

The Government was currently setting up a trap for this guy, trying to capture him.

Now that Jan Mateo was seriously injured by a powerful elder like the Thousand Arms Demon Asura, Nathan could at least relax a little since he did not have to worry about Jan Mateo targeting Shin once this Great Demon had discovered his nephew.

"The Great Demon is at it again," said Elias with a solemn tone.

Nathan's eyes suddenly turned wide when he heard that as he clearly understood what those words meant.

There was a time before Jan Mateo was known to the world when a certain capital of a region overseas was massacred without anyone's knowledge. It was only when an expert passed through the place that it was discovered and reported to everyone.

This event occurred for a couple more times before the Government discovered the perpetrator of that event. That was also when Jan Mateo first earned his title as a Demon.

But during that time, the government could no longer do anything to him since he was way too strong, especially when a group of powerful individuals was following him.

What Elias was trying to say was that Jan Mateo was repeating those incidents once again.

"Which city is affected this time?" asked Nathan solemnly.

"It is not a big city. It is just a village in the mountains. But this village was quite famous and has a lot of visitors due to their special medical and medicinal knowledge, particularly the unique treatments that they offer," said Elias, pausing and continuing.

"We don't know much about what happened, but based on our investigation, the people in the village seemed to have their life force sucked out of their bodies, which resulted in their death."

"It is pretty much the same as those cases when Jan Mateo first made his name in the world," he added with a solemn tone.

"He must be trying to recover from his injuries as soon as possible, especially since he is in our territory," commented Nathan as his eyes turned cold.

"If that is the case, then we can easily track him down as he will leave certain traces behind," said Elias.

He paused for a moment to take a deep breath before continuing. "There is an ethnic group residing in the nearby mountain where the incident occurred. They have a quite strong chieftain and shaman, who is comparable to a peak Domain Realm Experts and Venerable Mentalist."

"Given their strengths, they are supposed to put up a fight decently, especially with their unique discipline. But after using 'Time-Vision Rewind' to see what happened, they did not even manage to showcase their powers before dying."

"Are you sure that it is Jan Mateo?" asked Nathan.

Elias nodded. "I can recognize him even if he turned into his Demonic Form."

He then took another pause as he hesitated. But after considering it for a couple of seconds, he continued. "But there is something strange with his current power this time around."

"We both know that he has this unique ability to copy other Demonic Powers that he has consumed. But it seems like he can do it now without consuming the others," he added with a solemn tone.

Hearing that, Nathan seemed to have realized something and asked. "Are you telling me-...?"

Before he could even complete his words, Elias nodded his head and confirmed his friend's suspicion. "That is right. It seems like he can use the unique powers of Elder Ryong."

"Even if it is still incomplete – it seems like he has already made decent progress," he added as his tone became more solemn with each word.

"Then he must be trying or testing these powers to nearby experts while also consuming their lifeforces after defeating them and recovering from his injuries," said Nathan.

Given the current information that they had, it seemed like they had to make haste and chase Jan Mateo away even if he could not capture him.

Reading the thoughts of his friend, Elias dropped yet another problem. "But that is not the only issue that we are facing."

Hearing his tone, Nathan felt like there was something equally troublesome was happening.

Elias sighed and continued. "The Potter Clan has contacted my family, and they want us to conduct a joint investigation in the Magic Ace Academy."

"Apparently, someone manages to sneak inside the World Research Center and steal the data of some special projects. Most of them are even from highly classified projects that involve Professor Henry."

"They want to investigate this matter in full secrecy as those projects of Professor Herny involve the Unification of Martial Arts and Mentalism as well as the Virtual Progression Research."

"Since there is a high chance that there is a spy within the Academy, they want a reliable third party to do an investigation with them. The Stuart Family happens to fit all the requirements for this since you, the Springfield Family, have been too active recently, which makes some of the higher elders of the academy to be wary."

"Regardless, this will work well with him since I can do the internal investigation while you are dealing with the outside interference. It will also help us find the other spies that we are looking for. It is the perfect chance, so I will have to accept it."

"Things are getting chaotic recently, so we have to become more active to make those outsiders remember the might of our Continent."

Hearing that, Nathan could not help but think of something and asked. "Don't tell me this involves Jan Mateo as well?"

Elias shrugged his shoulders and did not claim that it was the case. "It is hard to tell right now, but it is too much of a coincidence to ignore that possibility."

He then paused one more time as he was hesitant to say the next words, but he continued anyway. "I am here not only to tell you this but to also pass a message from Elder Ryong."

"He told us to keep an eye on that nephew of yours as the Great Demon seems to have set his eyes on him," he added solemnly.

Nathan fell in silence when he heard that. This could only mean that Jan Mateo had already sensed the seed within Shin.

"It is still fine since it seems like Jan Mateo is still unaware that it is that kind, but only knows that an alluring 'meal' is somewhere in the continent. Elder Ryong and Sir Henry have helped the kid to conceal the scent of the seed with their respective methods, but it will never hurt to be extra careful," said Elias as he could see the worried look on Nathan's face.

Nathan nodded his head slightly before asking. "Is there anything else?"

Elias turned silent as he stared at Nathan with strange eyes. A moment later, after a few moments of hesitation, he suddenly said. "Nathan, this is a warning from my mother. I don't know if it is directed to you or someone else, but it is better if you heard it."

"A Dragon will fall from the skies and its kin with a cry in agony. A Demon will be born, and a lot will die. The sacrifice will be noble, but the outcome will remain the same."

"Those are the exact words that my mother has said, and they are from the revelation that she has gotten after undergoing the most recent ritual of our family. We still don't know who is mentioned in this prophecy that it will never hurt to be careful."

Nathan became silent once again as he contemplated those words before nodding his head. "We don't know who the dragon and demon are mentioned in it – don't worry, I will be careful. I will warn the others as well."

Elias stood up as he had already passed the message, so there was no point in staying here, especially when he had to prepare for the special joint investigation.

He was about to leave when Nathan suddenly opened his mouth again. "Elias, I know what you are thinking. But you must be careful when doing it. That place can't be touched regardless of the reason."

Elias paused for a moment before sighing. "Nathan, I may be the current head of the Stuart Family, but I am a father as well."

"I just want to find the truth about my daughter and avoid the same mistake that I have committed in the past," he added before resuming his steps and leaving the room.

Nathan did not bother to see his friend out as his thoughts were already on something else. With the current events that were continuously happening and the sudden prophecy that came out of nowhere, he could not help but think of something.

He was suddenly reminded of that time when he first tried to seek answers. – "Young Dragon, you will sour in the sky and shine bright. But keeping your position will be much harder than what it is supposed to be." –

– "The time will come when you have to come back on the ground once again and reflect on your past. That is the only way for you to survive." –

Remising the words of fortune that he had received from his mother, he suddenly felt that it might be the right time.

He stood up and went toward the balcony before staring at the starry sky. He dwelled into his memories before mumbling to himself. "The positions are said to be relative, but you have forcefully changed it and seized your fate."

"Will I be able to do the same?" he added with a sigh as he stared at a particular star in the sky, which was shining brighter than the rest.

This star had reminded him of someone who repeatedly defied his destiny and created a miracle. As if it was responding to his words, it shone even brighter.

In the meantime, somewhere on another continent, a couple was sitting at the edge of a cliff and watching the stars in the sky.

A moment later, the beautiful woman suddenly trembled as if she sensed something. She then turned to her husband and said. "We have to go back."

"Why?" responded her husband, who was lying on the ground and feeling lazy to move.

"One of the candles is about to be extinguished. I think-..." She was in the middle of talking when the guy suddenly sat up and said without any hint of hesitation. "It must be our dragon friend. After all, he is a close friend with the death himself."

Chapter 1359: The Legend of the Shunkai Forest (Part 1)

.....

Somewhere in the mountain ranges near the Eastern Sea Region, there was a village where a tribe of mountain people were living. It was located deep in the mountain range, where only a few people could get through.

This was a healthy village where the people lived peacefully, but their peaceful lives suddenly came to an end as a Demon 'visited' their village and caused a massacre.

The residents of this village followed an ancient teaching that was being passed down from generation to generation. Their tribe was filled with powerful warriors due to these teachings. Even their Chieftain and Shaman were powerful enough to be considered as top experts in the current time.

They just did not like getting involved with the matters of the outside world, which was why they were not well known.

But despite all of these, they were still unable to fight back when this certain Demon arrived in front of their gates.

Despite putting up everything and working together, they could still not protect themselves when the Demon showed his might.

Everyone was massacred mercilessly, and their lives became a nutrient for the Demon as he recovered himself.

Jan Mateo was standing on top of a mountain of corpses while looking at his hands as he opened and closed them repeatedly, checking the changes of his life force.

Not long after, he frowned deeply, showing his disappointment. It seemed like he did not reach his desired outcome. "This is still not enough. It is the fifth tribe already, yet my strength still hasn't reached its peak."

He then touched his left shoulder before stroking the huge wound that was left by Old Ryong's strike. He had already done a lot, but the wound was only growing graver the more time passed.

"Such a strange power. I think I have already learned everything about it, yet it is only getting more and more mysterious the more I study it," he mumbled before the expression on his face turned grave due to the sudden pain.

He tried to lessen the pain by spreading his Demonic Powers within his body before compressing them on the long wound across his torso and trying to suppress the foreign energy on it.

This lasted for a couple of moments before the pain finally disappeared.

Jan Mateo frowned deeply before mumbling. "It seems like I need at least a month before my body fully recover."

He then looked at the mountain of corpses that he was sitting on before continuing. "I guess consuming trash will not help at all. It looks like I need to consume that old man after all."

After that, he turned in a certain direction before standing up. "But before that, I have to create an opportunity where I can trap and capture him."

He then hopped down the mountain of corpses before tearing the space with his strange powers before entering it. He disappeared along with that dimensional tear, leaving the completely ruined village.

A few moments later, a group of people suddenly appeared at the entrance of the village and became shocked at what they saw.

"D*mn! We are late once again! What are we going to do now?" asked one of the people as they walked within the village and looked around.

The other agent, who was traveling along with him, wore a grave expression on his face as he looked around. "This is getting worse the more we try to chase after him."

"Do you think we are going to end up as those people if we continue?" asked another as they continued to explore the place.

Then they suddenly arrived at the center of the village, which made them halt in their tracks.

They stood blankly at the sight in front of them while their brains were trying to process what they were seeing. Not long after, their expression became graver as they finally digested the scene.

"What the f*ck!"

"The heck is this?"

"Urgh!"

The group showed different reactions when they saw the mountain of corpses at the center of the village. Some of them with a weaker stomach even throw up on the side, unable to withstand what they were seeing.

This scene was much more horrifying than the previous villages that they had visited earlier. It seemed like they had to report this to higher-ups and tell them that they had to take this matter more seriously than before.

Not long after, the captain of the team quickly took out a communication device and said to the person on the other side of the line right after the call was answered. "Tell the higher-ups to put this mission in the highest priority. Things are getting ugly."

As the real world was getting chaotic due to a certain Demon, someone was doing a similar thing by fighting top experts of the game one after another.

He had been fighting for quite a long time now, defeating all the players who managed to go through his elemental spirits one after another.

Some of them were quite powerful, but most of them were highly skilled. He fought quite a lot of experts now and enjoyed a few thrilling battles, but he had never found any worthy opponent yet.

He was not sure if this was the quality of the players that were chasing after him, or if the stronger ones were still bidding their time and waiting for him to be exhausted and become weaker.

There was also this time when he kept feeling he was being watched by other parties from the dark. Moreover, they were not just a single individual as multiple groups of people were watching from where he could not find them.

He was not sure of it, but he felt that aside from trying to study him and his style, they were also quite wary of one another.

This would still work in his favor.

Aside from this would buy him more time before the timer ended, and it would also give him a decent time to consider the offer that he had gotten from Immortal.

Earlier, during his discussion with Daven, he realized a couple of things. However, since he was still lacking the most crucial information, he could not figure out everything. If he wanted to know the real reason behind the actions of the Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance, he had to agree with the proposition that Immortal was offering.

He could also screw up with the plans of the Demonic Churches and Corrupted Cult if he played his cards right.

The problem was he could not or did not want to, trust the words of such a sly fox. Such a cunning opponent would always be scheming something behind his sweet and alluring words. What happened to the Silent Night was already a lesson.

Shin knew better than to trust the words of Immortal even with the contract overseen by the system.

He wanted to discuss this matter with the rest, but he did not have enough time since the flood of players was starting to arrive one after another.

Despite how powerful his Elemental Spirit Companions were, they would still not be able to stop all the horde of players that were coming after him. There would still be a few routes they could not cover, especially when dealing with other players.

The 'horde' was starting to increase to the point that Shin had to keep on fighting against them without rest. He could try escaping if he wanted to, given his familiarity with the map.

But he used it to his advantage instead and started fighting these multiple groups of people in guerrilla warfare – ambushing them and assassinating their healers and other support players.

He was utilizing most of his skills under the Phantom Swordsman Skillset as well as a few of his Elemental Skills, particularly the two provided by Blackie from her arsenal.

With all of these, people thought that Shin was an assassin, who was highly skilled at ambushing and assassination. He could even annihilate an entire group of elite players and top experts in a matter of minutes.

The moment he appeared, he always took down the supports and other auxiliary class players first before fighting the rest without worrying about them being healed or buffed.

He was able to successfully hide his identity from everyone with this kind of fighting style, and when he was utilizing the teachings of Old Ryong, he was able to hold himself without any problem.

Things were getting chaotic due to his repeated disappearance within the Shunkai Forest before reappearing in a different part where he slaughtered another group of people trying to hunt him.

The moment the elites and experts started flooding the map, Shin took the initiative to attack them – being on an active offensive instead of possibly waiting for the enemies to come and find him.

Things got more and more chaotic as the people realized that Shin was no longer hiding his fangs and decided to reveal them.

Even the people, who were secretly monitoring Shin's movements were starting to get warier, especially when they could see that he was purposely leading them by purposely leaving his tracks so that they could follow while chasing after him.

They knew Shin was already aware they were watching him from the dark and observing his actions.

But what was even scarier was Shin fighting unbothered when he was being watched like some sort of prey, especially when they were trying to set a trap for him.

What these people were feeling was something strange. They felt that they were the ones that were being hunted despite their hiding in the dark.

This was one of the main reasons, why they could not pull the trigger even if they found a lot of opportunities to ambush Shin.

It was as if they were actively being invited to come and fight him, and he would welcome them with open arms.

They could not help but feel that it was some sort of trap.

...

The events in the Shunkai Forest started to spread everywhere.

Given how large the moments of the four factions, along with the strange response of the big and powerful guilds within the Saint Heaven Kingdom, it was impossible for the gaming community to not notice it, especially when there were a lot of people who loved to gossip everywhere.

Some people came from the two major factions and leaked the mission in the official forums.

Naturally, this news quickly spread everywhere, making it another sensational event that idle and bored players would discuss and gossip about.

The videos and photos of people being slaughtered despite outnumbering their opponents quickly followed.

Not only that, the skills and techniques of the protagonist in the video amazed everyone, especially when he was assassinating the support players of the victim group despite being heavily guarded by the others.

Aside from this, the people also realized that the groups that were being slaughtered one-sidedly were composed of famous experts of different classes.

Some of them were Official Rankers with their respective titles while the rest were famous Maverick Rankers, who were quite well-known for their skills and unique techniques.

But despite being grouped, all fell in the blades of their opponent, who fought them alone.

The trend then attracted more attention, and some expert analysts tried to figure out the identity of the mysterious player for fun.

They had listed out quite a lot of players, who were well-known for their assassination methods or famous players that always played the assassin and thief class.

But after a close comparison, they had never figured out the real identity of this mysterious player – none of the listed players seemed to have the fighting style that he possessed.

It was until a famous analyst suddenly pointed out that this person was not a true assassin, but a very skilled swordsman instead.

Then this topic blew up, attracting more people, which also made a lot of curious players head to the Saint Heaven Kingdom and the Shunkai Forest.

This kind of event was quite rare, especially when this era of virtual games was rapidly improving.

It had been a while since a similar event occurred, and it was also the time when the players at the center of that event became very famous and turned into very powerful Godlike Players.

These players were curious to see whether another god was about to be born, and another legend was about to be written – or if this mysterious person was already a Godlike Player, who would solidify his name in the gaming world.

That was also when the true experts and the most powerful opponents started to make their moves.

Chapter 1360: The Legend of the Shunkai Forest (Part 2)

...

People started to notice the strange events that were happening in the Saint Heaven Kingdom once again.

Players, who were residing in the kingdom, were already used to this kind of event as the kingdom became the center of the game in their opinion.

Meanwhile, those guys that were from the other kingdoms and empires could not help but become more curious about the Saint Heaven Kingdom and even considered migrating to join the fun.

As everyone was paying close attention to the movements in the Saint Heaven Kingdom, particularly the events in the Shunkai Forest, the man who was the cause of everyone was getting more active with his movements.

...

"Pay close attention to your surroundings. Don't let your guard down," said a Knight as he led his group deeper into the Shunkai Forest.

For some unknown reason, the strange phenomenon that was happening in different parts of the map somehow stopped. Due to this, more and more people were entering the region and started spreading everywhere while looking for the traces of their target.

However, due to the sudden increase in competition, conflicts were bound to happen. Now that there were more competitors because of easier access to the map, the players from different factions started fighting each other.

Due to this, the groups that were hunting Shin had to keep their guard up, not only because of the scary target but also because of the possible ambushes from the opposing faction.

But aside from this reason, the real problem that everyone was most wary of was Shin himself.

As everyone in this group was busy scanning their surroundings, a sudden cry from their healer, who was situated at the dead center of their formation, made their movements pause.

Simultaneously turning their heads toward the source of the cry and putting their guards even higher, the group said their healer with a sword stuck on his back and pierced through his chest.

When the lifeless body of the healer fell to the ground, they saw a hooded figure standing right at the center of their formation, looking at them with cold eyes.

Intense shivers ran down their spines before the knight of the group, who was also their leader, recovered his composure and shouted. "What are you standing them for?! Attack already!"

Hearing his voice, the group quickly recovered themselves and started attacking.

But before they could even make their moves, a flash of light suddenly shone through their bodies before a thin line suddenly passed through their necks.

Swoosh!

Then they found their bodies not listening to them. Their bodies seemed to have been paralyzed by something before collapsing one after another.

Seeing that scene, the leader of the group was stunned. He could not process what was happening when a shadow was suddenly cast over him, indicating that someone was standing in front of him.

Before he could even respond, his head was already sent flying into the air before falling to the ground with a soft thud.

Shin scanned his surroundings for a moment, making sure that he did not miss anything before looking at the sword in his hands.

"It looks like I have already mastered all the wills I recently learned. I can even combine a few of them now," he mumbled as he recalled the earlier strike just now.

That strike was the combination of 'quickness' and 'sharpness' from the sword technique that Old Ryong had taught him. Aside from this combination, he could also put 'heaviness' and other forms that he had learned.

With the recent battles that he had gone through here in the Shunkai Forest, he was able to apply all the knowledge that he had recently acquired in battle and polished his style by incorporating this new knowledge and techniques into his system.

Even if he was quite eager to log out of the game and try learning a few more 'wills' that he could apply to his swordsmanship in the real world, he knew that he could not do that yet. For now, he had to at least finish this emergency quest before going anywhere.

After testing and polishing his style even further with the recent battles that he went through, Shin felt that it was now enough.

"I think it is now time to deal with these guys at keep on spying on me."

After mumbling that, he suddenly disappeared from his current position before reappearing in another place where someone was hiding right behind a tree.

This person had been watching Shin for quite some time already. He was tasked by his team to monitor Shin's movements and observe everything from a safe distance.

He was doing his job, watching Shin slaughter yet another team within a few moments. But this time, Shin only took a couple of strikes to finish everything. It was not even a fight, unlike the other battles he went through earlier.

It was clear that he had improved greatly after these few battles that he had. Although, they were also aware that this style that Shin had was not his real style, but just a disguise to hide his real identity.

Seeing that Shin suddenly disappeared without even bothering to loot the drops of the group that he just slaughtered, this player watching Shin could not help but feel a sudden chill that he had never felt before.

Swoosh!

Without even bothering to see where Shin was heading and quickly retreated without any hesitation, but he just took a couple of steps away when someone suddenly grabbed his shoulders, sending yet another chill down his spine.

He did not even need to see who it was as he quickly took out his daggers and turned around, swinging widely at the other party.

But right after he spun around with a swing, he realized that he hit nothing but air. Without thinking too much about it, he quickly hopped backward and entered stealth.

He was planning to run away from this place as soon as possible, not daring to stay here any longer.

But before he could even execute his escape plan inside his head, he suddenly felt like his world was spinning.

His vision spun while his body fell on the ground in a thud.

He quickly did a roll right after his body touched the ground. He even pushed himself hard to make sure that he would land far from that spot.

Unfortunately, right after he regained his foot and was about to sprint away, he felt a cold sensation right beside his neck.

It was a sharp edge of a sword resting on his shoulder and about to sever his head.

His body froze on its own as he de no longer dared to move even the slightest. He did not even dare to turn his head to look over his shoulders and know who was behind him as he already had an idea.

"I don't think it is a good manner to just like that after stalking me for quite a long time," said Shin as he held the sword behind this person before adding. "How about having a chat?"

"You can also call your friends to join us, and I will not mind," he added with a nonchalant voice.

Wolf, who was sent here by his group, could not help but sweat profusely. Felt regretting coming here alone after they learned that Shin did not want to bother with them.

But from the look of it, this target of theirs seemed to be waiting for something, or at least waiting for his style to be polished before trying to challenge them.

Wolf was in the middle of thinking about how to save himself when Shin's sharp ears picked out the sound of bullets flying in the air.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

He did not even need to know where they were coming from as his senses were more than enough for it.

Without any hesitation, Shin quickly slashed with his sword, planning to cut the head of the other party.

But Wolf seemed to have also sensed something and quickly leaned to the side, following the movements of the sword. He was doing his best so that he could save his head.

His movements were slightly slower than Shin's, but since the latter needed to deal with the incoming bullets as well, he was able to get away with a deep wound on his neck.

But that was enough as he could just drink a potion and heal it and recover his health.

Clank! Clank!

Shin quickly swung the sword to the side right after missing Wolf's neck. He was able to deflect the incoming bullets that were accurately targeting his head.

He was about to give chase to Wolf when he sensed more bullets coming his way.

He quickly kicked the ground and sprinted toward the nearby tree, planning to use it as a cover.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Dirt flew in the air as the bullets hit the ground, barely missing him.

Shin was raising his brows already when he saw the high accuracy of the shooter, especially when he could tell that they were quite far from his current location given the speed and direction of the bullets.

He knew that he was up against a highly skilled marksman this time.

Not only that, but he could also sense a few presences rushing toward his direction with a speed that was slightly slower than his.

Knowing that this was going to be slightly harder than his previous battles, Shin could not help but lick his lips, getting a little excited.

"Alright. The real test to measure my current abilities is here."