

Destiny 1381

Chapter 1381: The Battle God against the Martial God (Part 4): Each of their Tricks

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Shin continued to press Ashura with a barrage of attacks, forcing the latter to be in a passive state. He even switched the form of the [Yamato] into twin katana to increase the efficiency of his attacks and have a faster attack speed.

He also separated the 'Primordial Lightning' to each of the swords to further increase the variety of attacks that he could use.

Switching between the basic and intermediate movements of the Jade Kirin Scripture, he was able to throw a barrage of attacks that gave him the upper hand in the battle.

He was also able to throw a few techniques from the Perfected Four Symbol Scripture in the mix, catching Ashura off guard. He primarily used the sword techniques from the Sacred White Tiger and Celestial Vermillion Bird Methods, which majored in offensive attacks.

But Ashura was unsurprisingly able to hold his ground despite being in a disadvantageous position. He was able to respond to Shin's moves and even used his swordsmanship calmly and steadily.

If Shin could execute extremely fast swordsmanship and possess an unpredictable and complex style, then Ashura had a steady swordsmanship that focused on raw power and unbreakable defense.

Even if his movements were quite slow compared to his opponent, Ashura was still able to always block the attacks of the opposing side with either a simple swing of his sword or using its surface as some sort of shield or simple guard.

His limited actions seemed to be calculated movements that would always meet the attacks of his opponent regardless of the situation. In a sense, his sword movements seemed to be a simplified version of complex sword techniques to match his style and personality.

Even if Ashura could not take advantage of his improved speed and mobility and could not use his usual explosive attacks, he was still able to steadily hold his ground as Shin continued with his assault.

From time to time, Ashura would try to distance himself from Shin to gain enough space for his huge swings. But Shin stuck to him like a gum, not willing to give up his advantage.

However, Shin suddenly noticed a small change that made him put his guard up without any hint of hesitation. Despite how minimal that change was, he would never overlook it and let his guard down, especially when he was facing an equally powerful opponent.

His danger senses sharply intensified as he sensed the sudden arrival of an unknown threat.

Bang!

Without bothering to look at what it was, Shin quickly spun in the air while swinging his swords at the same time.

That was when a barrage of energy beams flew at him from every direction.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Shin used his signature technique, the 'Infinity Edge,' to ward off the beams of light that were directed at him either blocking, cutting, or deflecting them.

He might have survived the barrage of attacks in the end, but Ashura was able to break from his restraints and create a huge distance between them.

Having enough space for an advanced attack, Ashura quickly raised his sword ruler and slashed it down with all his might.

'Mystic Cosmic Method: Heavenly Sword Boundary'

Swoosh!

The Sword Ruler came slashing down in a plain, efficient stroke. It wasn't as fancy as those flashy sword techniques, but Shin could feel the area around him suddenly dimming. It was as if he was suddenly isolated from the rest of the world.

Not only that but there was also a dangerous and underlying threat that had been accumulating throughout the environment. Layer by layer, turning into shapeless shackles that limited his movements.

He felt pressured and overwhelmed as the huge sword ruler came slashing his own.

Shin saw the sword ruler coming out of the darkness carrying the blurry and dark silhouette, as though it covered the entire sky and loomed over the land. Apart from this strike, there was nothing else in there.

Swoosh!

At this moment, Shin felt a mental pressure that he could not explain, making him intimidated. He felt that he was tied by heavenly ropes and couldn't move.

That was when he realized that each attack of his opponent affected the environment. Or to be more precise, each of his sword techniques was always accompanied by environmental pressure as if the world was supporting him.

This sense was completely different from what a Martial Artist, a Mentalist, and a Swordsman could achieve. It was as if the path that Ashura was taking was completely different from the modern disciplines, especially the three major paths.

This made him recall one of the books that he had read before when he was trying to look for clues on how to unify the paths of Martial Arts and Mentalism.

That book was one of the books that Professor Henry had written.

It said that Martial Artists used their powerful martial prowess to affect the world and conquer everything with it, also breaking through its restraints.

Mentalists, on the other hand, projected their strong wills to the physical real through their powerful mentality and willpower.

Then, there were the Swordsmen, who infused their wills into their sword. They continuously polished their swordsmanship and forged their strong mind and powerful body through repeated practice – honing their path of the sword.

Further down that book, Shin also remembered that it briefly mentioned something about the ancient teachings of the past generations, particularly in cultivation.

It was mentioned that cultivators used their strong minds to communicate with nature and tempered their bodies and spirits through its help. This was also the reason why most of their techniques affected their surrounding environment and even resonated with it.

"Don't tell me this guy is an ancient cultivator or something similar?" mumbled Shin as he watched the descending sword of his opponent that was filled with profoundness.

Adjusting his mind and trusting his instincts, Shin released the twin katana and reverted the [Yamato] to its original form.

Following the projected method inside his head, he swung his sword forward while releasing the accumulated powers at the same time.

Crackle! Crackle!

The 'Primordial Lightning' roared violently as it flew out of the sword along with the energy wave that was released from the previous strike.

Boom!

Using one of his in-game skills and fusing it with all the accumulated knowledge that he had and the sword principles that he had learned, he created yet another sword technique by following his instincts.

'Myriad Transformation Swordsmanship: Eclipse Slash'

With the Power of the Primordial Eclipse and Primordial Lightning, the might of this skill rose by several folds as it flew toward the descending sword from the sky.

It even turned into a serpentine dragon that opened its mouth wide, biting on the huge sword silhouette that was collapsing toward the world.

Boom!

A thunderous explosion immediately erupted as the two sides clashed. There was even a series of delayed explosions that disrupted the flow of mana in the surroundings.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Amid these chaotic explosions, two figures repeatedly clashed, adding to the chaos in the air.

Shin used his extreme speed to circle Ashura while throwing a series of ambushes at the same time. The latter, on the other hand, continuously swung his sword ruler in hopes of suppressing his opponent with his overwhelming power.

But Shin was quite tricky to deal with. Even if he was lacking in raw power, he was using the accumulated momentum of his fast movements to increase the impact of his attacks, barely putting him on an equal term with his opponent.

Their figures then transformed into a stream of light that flew across the sky before repeatedly clashing, causing strong shockwaves in each collision.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Crackle! Crackle!

In these exchanges, the two showcased their respective swordsmanship and revealed the power of their unique mana manipulation.

The sword ruler in Ashura's hands revealed a heavy with latent energy. It had a stream of golden glow that flickered along with the 'stars' swimming through the dark energy enfolding his weapon.

This was his 'Cosmic Energy'.

He jerked his arms for a moment before flicking his wrists. The sword ruler recoiled back before crushing down his opponent.

Boom!

The [Yamato] flickered along with the black-and-white lightning, carrying a profound and mysterious energy. It was fast, light, heavy, and steady. The lightning danced around the sword, forming a thin yet sturdy layer of energy on its surface.

The 'Primordial Lightning' crackled violently!

Shin flipped his wrist before swinging the sword upwards, following the momentum of his flight to meet the descending sword ruler.

Swoosh!

Boom!

The collision sent violent ripples in every direction, scattering the could of smoke, flame, and chaotic mana around the two contenders.

Shin flew back due to being in a slightly disadvantageous position. But Ashura could not give chase either as his arms recoiled back from the collision along with his sword ruler.

Gritting his teeth, Ashura held the sword ruler with both of his hands, forcing himself to swing it. He strongly slashed diagonally to the left, then to the right, then downwards, then upwards – throwing a series of slashes in the air.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Sword waves came out from his sword one after another, chasing after Shin, who was still flying toward the ground.

'Mystic Cosmic Method: Heavenly Star Descent'

Ashura relatedly slashed down and continuously sent a series of sword waves with each strike faster than the previous ones. A faint burning smell lurked in the hissing wind, indicating the burning mana in the surroundings.

To Shin, this barrage of attacks was like a sudden downpour from the sky. He inhaled deeply before flipping mind air and sheathing the [Yamato] in the process.

Bang!

He landed on his feet when he hit the ground, creating spiderweb-like cracks that spread in every direction and sending rock fragments in the air.

Assuming his signature sword-drawing stance, he channeled all his energies toward his sheathed sword while visualizing one of his combined skills, which was also a Class-Fighting Style skill, before converting it into a real sword technique.

Shing!

When the downpour of energies reached a certain distance from the ground, Shin suddenly unsheathed the [Yamato], swinging it upwards, sending a powerful sword wave, before putting it back into its sheath once again.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

He repeated the process with each action being much faster and stronger than the previous ones.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Purgatory Stance'

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The sword waves that came out from each of his strikes met the downpour of attacks from the sky, creating more chaos and explosions.

When the final strike arrived, all the momentum that Shin had accumulated was compressed into one while powerful energy was channeled into the sword before being released.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Purgatory Stance: Final Crescent'

Swoosh!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A giant crescent sword wave was released from the tip of his sword and flew toward the sky destroying the remaining sword waves of his opponent before continuing to soar higher and head to Ashura, who was standing on its path.

Seeing the overwhelming might of this attack, Ashura did not hesitate and used a similarly powerful technique from his arsenal.

He raised the sword ruler above his head before slashing it down with everything he had

Boom!

A heaven-deafening explosion could be heard as the slash came crashing down, releasing a mighty pillar of light that headed toward the incoming sword wave.

'Mystic Cosmic Method: Heavenly Cleave Annihilation'

Boom!

A thick cloud of blazing smoke blocked the view of Shin and Ashura as he tried catching their breaths and suppressing their exhaustion.

Releasing that he one Elemental Spirit was not enough, Ashura quickly mumbled, "Second Servant," and summoned another Elemental for a possession.

This time, Ashura's left arm transformed into a draconic arm with thick scales that resembled exquisite armor and extremely sharp claws that looked like small daggers attached to his fingers.

When the cloud was cleared, Shin immediately noticed the changes that his opponent underwent, especially after sensing the dangerous aura from the latter.

Not letting himself be outclassed by his opponent, Shin braced himself and flipped the sheath of his sword. He transformed it into a longsword that Solus instantly possessed, changing its appearance.

Wielding a dual possessed on his right hand, the Chaos Slasher, and holding an advanced possessed on the other, the Divine Constellation – it was no different from using three possessions at the same time.

It would be putting a heavy toll on Shin's mind, but he still persevered and stubbornly held his ground.

With the Chaos Slasher empowered with the Primordial Lighting and the Divine Constellation burning with the Eternal Flame, Shin kicked the ground and flew toward his opponent.

Boom!

There was an intense vibration on the ground when he flew, sending more rock fragments into the air.

With the help of the Sword Heart to improve his coordination and execution of sword techniques, Shin launched a series of attacks at Ashura.

Applying the sword principles that he had learned from Old Ryong's Training Methods; Shin used the sword movements of the Jade Kirin Scripture with the sword in his right hand while using the sword techniques of the Four Symbol Scripture with the other.

As Shin became accustomed to this style, he became bolder and added more sword transformations and a few more elemental possessions to the mix.

While the Chaos Slasher executed more of the sword movements of the Jade Kirin Scripture, the sword in his left hand transitioned between a longsword, a rapier, and a greatsword while the Solus and Astaroth took turns possessing them.

This increased the variety of attacks and combinations that he could throw at his opponent, especially when the sword techniques under the Perfected Four Symbol Scripture complimented one another.

Even if the Eternal Flame of Solus was a notch lower than the Cosmic Energy of his opponent, and the Earthen Metal and Metallic Earth of Astaroth was two levels below it, Shin was still able to cover their weaknesses with the every-changing fighting style that came in unpredictable forms.

Shin was now showcasing the real might of his Myriad Transformation Swordsmanhip!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

His attacks felt like a storm; chopping, slashing, thrusting, stabbing, cutting, cleaving, and more variations of attacks came one after another, overwhelming his opponent.

But the opposing side was not to be underestimated either. Despite the complicated and unpredictable style of his opponent, Ashura was able to steadily hold his ground while calmly responding to each strike of his opponent.

With the help of his wings, he was able to get more mobility in the air while draconic arms helped him add a few more variations to his attacks.

He switched between slashing, crushing, and cleaving with a sword ruler and punching, scratching, and stabbing with his draconic arm.

His attacks might not be as complex as his opponent's attacks, but each of them was packed with powerful strength that disrupted the flow of his opponent.

His raw power was more than enough to compensate for the difference between him and his opponent. Shin was always forced to either dodge or adjust his form whenever Ashura found an opening, no matter how small it was.

Their exchanges were so intense that the live audience and online viewers almost forgot to breathe. If it was them fighting there instead of these two gods, then they would most likely be killed in a matter of seconds.

Everyone, who was watching this scene, already had their butts at the edge of their seat and refused to blink, afraid that they would miss a single detail of this battle.

Each collision between Shin and Ashura sent ripples in their hearts and made their hearts boil, awakening the burning passion that they had.

Even the top elites and apex experts, who were paying close attention to this duel, could not help but feel a sudden urge to fight someone. They all wanted to find someone to release this burning fighting spirit that they had.

They clenched their fists as they felt that the upcoming United Cup would be an interesting one.

Chapter 1382: The Grim Reaper and the Sacred Keeper (Part 1)

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As the battle between Shin and Ashura escalated to a higher degree, the people watching this battle could not help but fall in silence as they were too stunned and too immersed in it to react.

But unlike them, David, who was quite experienced and expecting this kind of battle, was able to remain calm. When he saw that Shin and Ashura slightly slowed down and controlled their pace, locking themselves in another deadlock, David quickly took that opportunity and began commentating once again.

"This is interesting. Both fighters are now showcasing their real capabilities and giving out their everything."

Miss Bunny also joined and asked. "I seem to remember that you said that Ashura would get the upper hand in the early stages of the battle while Sickarius would take control over it if it became a prolonged battle."

David chuckled and admitted his mistake. "I must apologize for it since it is clear that these two were on an equal term."

"As you can see, both of them were taking initiative and also taking turns controlling the pace of the battle. Both sides were trying to use their respective advantages and covering their weakness by being more aggressive in their attacks."

"But I must also say that I am impressed with how each side deals with the advances of their counterpart and find a way to escape the possible predicament time and time again."

He then paused and pointed at Ashura before continuing. "But Ashura still has an advantage at this current stage of the battle given that he can constantly disrupt the flow of his opponent's battles."

"His 'weakness', mobility, is immediately compensated by his wings, which also give him free movements in the air."

"And his transformed arms also added to the series of attacks that he can throw to his opponents. This increases the variation of attacks that he could use for his offensive."

Hearing that, Miss Bunny immediately countered. "But Sickarius also has complex variations of attacks. That switching of swords in his left hand is not only cool but also confusing and deadly."

"I am pretty sure that most of our viewers want to possess such a fighting style as well," she added in a teasing manner.

"That goes without saying," nodded David, playing along with her to make the atmosphere more relaxed and easygoing.

After that, he continued. "Going back to what we discussed earlier, it is true that Sickarius will most likely take over once his Battle Genius Talent is triggered. He will be able to adjust to the fighting style of his opponent and even find a way to counter it."

"But Ashura is not that easy to deal with either. If I am not wrong, and from what I can see, he seems to possess a combat talent called Master Potential. It is a Mighty One Talent that can help an individual make complex things into something simple."

"In a sense, he can make complex skills and techniques into a basic one, lowering the difficulty of executing it. With this kind of talent, I will not be surprised if he still has a lot of techniques under his arsenal that he is not showing us."

"I am sure that he is waiting for the right opportunity to use them," he paused for a moment before continuing. "Not only that. Master Potential is a talent that is always accompanied by a special mind that can always find solutions to problems that are not obvious to the eyes of others."

"Because of this talent, a prolonged battle will not necessarily put Ashura in that much of a disadvantage."

He then paused for a moment before adding with a mystifying tone. "Moreover, the discipline that he is using is quite interesting as well."

'I ventured all around the world and have seen quite a lot, but this is my first time seeing someone use the principles of cultivation and fuse them with modern martial arts this well. It seems to be quite complete as well.'

'He is most likely a part of that Imperial Family since they are the only ones that have a complete heritage when it comes to that forgotten discipline,' he commented inside his head as he could not help but become impressed with what he was seeing.

In the meantime, Miss Bunny was barely able to process his point before suddenly asking. "Based on the movements and techniques of the two fighters that we have, it seems like they are also using the new mechanics of the game as well – that thing most people call the combat states."

David nodded his head as he answered. "To be more precise, these two are masters of Reality Manifestation. It is a special combat state that brings forth the real strength of an individual into the game."

"In simpler terms – it is manifesting reality into the virtual world," he added.

The two continued to discuss more topics and pointed out a few exchanges between Shin and Ashura, simplifying everything and making most of their viewers understand the details of the battle.

David was quite mindful and did not disclose the secrets that he had seen from both sides. Aside from a few superficial details and pieces of information that were already obvious in the eyes of the other experts watching this battle, he kept the rest to himself.

Miss Bunny, with her sharp senses, was able to notice that there were a few details that David was skillfully trying to avoid, so she played along and changed the topic naturally.

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Going back into the battle, Shin and Ashura noticed that they were over-exhausting themselves by the continuous and high-intensity battle, which was why they tried to slow down a little to catch their breath and control their pace to prepare themselves for the next exchanges.

Clank! Clank!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

A series of clattering reverberated in every direction along with burning sparks that looked like rain scattering in the air.

Ashura's arms felt numb due to the paralyzing effects of the Primordial Lightning. It was weighing him down and making it harder to wield the heavy and huge sword ruler.

Shin, on the other hand, felt suffocated due to the strong pressure of the Cosmic Energy of his opponent. It felt like a hidden poison was chipping him away.

Shin's attacks breathed endlessness. He continued to pour down with his complex and ever-changing sword style as if he would not stop until his opponent was unable to move anymore.

But Ashura continued to be strong and held his ground stubbornly. Each swing of his sword ruler was packed with power and overwhelming strength, forcing his opponent to dodge before throwing a few powerful punches and sharp scratches with his draconic arm.

Even if the current state of the battle was in a deadlock, Ashura knew that he could not let this go on. If he did, Shin would continuously grow and adjust with his style, throwing him into a passive position.

Realizing this, Ashura suddenly took the initiative to change the flow of the battle.

He flapped his wings to retreat, leading Shin to chase after him. He was trying to bait him to come after him before launching a counter.

Shin would naturally not want to give Ashura enough space for his huge swings, so he had no choice but to chase after the latter while preparing for a sudden counter from his opponent.

Swoosh!

This time, Ashura did not use any advanced technique to borrow some strength from the environment and instead threw a sudden thrust forward, catching Shin a little off guard.

The transition between Ashura's movements was flawless. From the retreat to the sudden pause, and up to the forward thrust – everything came a little too smoothly that it barely gave Shin a window to respond.

But given Shin's Ultra Instincts within the game along with the help of his True Sight, he was able to notice the brief instance when his opponent changed his actions.

Flipping the greatsword on his left hand, he placed it in front of his shoulder before using its surface to redirect the trajectory of his opponent's attack.

Screeek!

The sharp and high-pitched sound of metal scratching metal could be heard as the edges of the sword ruler slide through the surface of the greatsword.

Blazing sparks could also be seen flying everywhere from the point of friction where the two swords were scratching each other.

Following his forward momentum, Shin suddenly twisted his body to the side, jerking the greatsword to follow his actions and making the sword of his opponent bounce upwards.

These actions made the guard of his opponent to be broken and left him completely open.

Taking advantage of this situation, Shin borrowed more momentum from his actions to spin while throwing a horizontal slash with the [Yamato] that was placed under the great sword and positioned beside his waist.

Shing!

Ashura responded quite swiftly as he let himself be dragged higher by the rebounded sword ruler and flipped in the air. He also used his right foot to kick upwards, accurately hitting his opponent's hand and changing the trajectory of the horizontal slash.

Swoosh!

Shin might have missed his attack, but he continued.

He spun around as the sword on his left suddenly disappeared and turned into a sheath. Then, while he was spinning, he sheathed the sword in one smooth motion while assuming his signature stance.

When he was facing his opponent once again, the [Yamato] was ready to be pulled out once again, waiting to be unleashed.

Swoosh!

As he unsheathed the sword, Shin suddenly flapped his wings strongly, transforming himself into a streak of light that flew straight to his opponent.

Swoosh!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – (Lighting) Flash Final'

Shing!

With the enhancement of the Primordial Lightning, the speed of this sword technique surpassed most of his sword-drawing techniques, slightly behind compared to when he was using the Void Element of Hanzo.

But given the short distance between him and his opponent, Shin reached his destination within an instant while pointing the [Yamato] forward.

Unfortunately, Ashura was still able to respond in time. Just as Shin pounced forward, Ashura flew back at the perfect time. As a result, he gained a small space where he could place his sword ruler diagonally in front of him while being supported by his draconic arm from behind.

Channeling his energy into his sword, the Cosmic Energy enfolding his weapon grew brighter and more violent.

'Imperial Family Secret Arts: Repulsion Mirror'

Bang!

The tip of the [Yamato] met the surface of the [Heavenly Meteor], Ashura's weapon.

The collision sent successive shockwaves that spread in every direction. It showed the forces that were repelling each other until Shin's momentum was finally exhausted.

Then as a second explosion, the sword ruler suddenly sent a strong repulsive force focused in front of it, where Shin was still maintaining his ending posture.

Bang!

Shin was quick enough to place the sheath in front of him and used the defensive guard that he had not used in a long time.

Swoosh!

But the explosion still sent him flying backward, widening the distance between him and his opponent.

Finally gaining enough space for his advanced skills, Ashura summoned and called out his third elemental spirit. "Third Servant!"

Responding to his call, the third speck of light that was revolving around his body was suddenly awakened before flying toward his back.

It briefly materialized into a humanoid figure first before turning into a light that transformed into a huge magic circle behind Ashura.

This magic circle looked like a cross star filled with incomprehensible runes. With its formation, the air around Ashura instantly changed, making him look more majestic and authoritative. It was as if he was a deity that came down from heaven to judge the mortals.

With this third elemental materialization, the connection between Ashura and his surroundings grew stronger. His mana sensitivity, magic power, and elemental control rose sharply, giving him an unparalleled magic power.

Seeing those changes, the corner of Shin's mouth could not help but twitch as he could already see what was going to happen next.

His Elemental Spirit Possession might give him different buffs along with the boosts that each form of 'Mondi's Style' provided, but it limits his choices as he could at least use two of them at a time.

The dual elemental possession of Whitie and Blackie already had to pull, even if it was a fusion possession. Adding the third possession when he was using the 'Mondi's Style' was already his limit.

If Ashura was adding one more elemental possession, Shin did not know if he could bridge the gap between their strengths and difference in stats.

He was not confident that he could add more possession to his current strength. Moreover, he did not have any extra sword that could be used as an extra medium for another possession.

Unless he could fuse more elemental spirits and activate another dual possession, he would not be able to match his opponent.

With that in mind, Shin could only bridge the gap with other means.

'Equipment Skill (Weapon: Yamato): Nephilim's Ascent'

'Equipment Skill (Headgear: Ruler's Dignity): Ruler's Authority'

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

Activating a Berserk Skill and two Domain Skills to boost his stats and weaken his opponent at the same time. It might not be enough, but it would at least help him limit the strength of his opponent.

The world around Shin turned black and white, dulling the colors of everything. But in exchange, Shin gained a power that increased the efficiency of his skills and put everything in this domain under his absolute control.

But before Shin could even do anything more, he saw his opponent also used a series of buffs that nullified all the effects of the debuffs that he just cast.

As if insulting him even more, Ashura also used one of his strongest skills.

'Racial Battle Physique (Seraphim): God's Servant'

'Racial Berserk Skill (Seraphim): Divine Awakening – Immortal Divinity'

Boom!

An extremely powerful pressure exploded, making it hard for Shin to breathe. He felt that he was drowning due to the highly concentrated mana that was filling the surroundings and gathering toward Ashura.

He then saw a giant cluster of mana turned into a miniature star in the sky with Ashura acting as its core.

To make it even worse, Shin also saw that the Battle Spirit behind Ashura became even more distinct, seemingly reaching its perfection.

It sat in the air with its towering size, making Shin feel like he was an ant that could be crushed at any time. He felt that he was in the presence of a real deity that could not be challenged.

Shin watched Ashura and the miniature sun float at the chest of the huge three-faced deity while clicking his tongue and mumbling. "Aren't you a little overpowered?"

Before Shin could complain even more, he suddenly heard the familiar sound of the system notifications.

Ding

System: All conditions have been met! Your Racial Battle Physique (Nephilim) is fully awakened!

System: Unlocking the 'Mutated Powers' of the 'Heavenly Fighting Physique (Mutated)'!

Chapter 1383: The Grim Reaper and the Sacred Keeper (Part 2)

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"Battle Physique!?" Shin stared blankly at the strings of notifications in front of him, unable to decide how he would react.

Aside from his Transcendent Race and Class, this top-class Battle Physique was one of the reasons why he had superior stats compared to most of the players. It was also ranked higher even among the top gods of the game.

But it had been a while since he had received any update about this Battle Physique. If he had not received this notification from the system, then he would most likely forget about the other special effects that it possessed.

The said abilities were locked until certain conditions were met, which he suspected at that time would only be unlocked once he reached the Tier 3 Class.

Since he had not received any notification about it the moment when he got promoted to the third tier of his class, he had almost forgotten about it.

While he was processing everything inside his head, another set of notifications rang in his ears.

Ding

System: Detected a natural enemy! Activating the Mark of Eclipse's Transcendent Berserk Skill – Metamorphosis!

System: Please select your mode of transformation – Decent of the Fallen God or Demonic Transformation.

Shin stared blankly at the notification before subconsciously choosing the former choice because it sounded a little cooler.

Ding

System: Activating the Mark of Eclipse: Metamorphosis – Decent of the Fallen God!

Swoosh!

Shin suddenly felt an unknown surge of power filling his body. It seemed to come from within him, enhancing all his battle capacities and boosting all his stats.

At the same time, he also felt that all active skills of the [Yamato], particularly the ones that were meant to enhance his stats and other abilities, were simultaneously activated.

Not only that! Even the skills of the [Nephilim's Gemini Mask] had also been activated – the Spirit Summon, Spirit Fusion, and Spirit Possession were all activated at the same time, adding to the berserk skills and had already been activated.

During all these transformations, Shin felt that the wings on his back became part of his body, and no longer had the foreign feeling that they had. Even the [Yamato] itself seemed to have become an integral part of himself.

As for the black-and-white, half-smiling and half-crying mask, transformed into a mask that did not have any expression. Aside from its blank face and plain black color and white eyes, there was also the golden emblem of the Church of the Sun and Moon at the center of its forehead.

At the same time, the same emblem was formed behind his head and became a crown made of sacred energy. It was very similar to what Lucy had, during his promotion quest, but in a smaller version.

Bang!

Shin unconsciously spread the wings behind him wide, sending powerful ripples in the air.

At the same time, another set of notifications flashed in front of his eyes and rang in his ears.

Ding

System: Metamorphosis is complete! The Godly Abilities of your Heavenly Fighting Physique have been activated accordingly!

System: Your Solar Reaper Solus has sensed the power of the fallen god from your body! Her Eternal Flame is temporarily promoted to the next level.

System: Due to the powers of the fallen god that you possess, your understanding of space and dimension greatly improved. You are now able to harness the Void Powers without restraint during the entire duration of the Metamorphosis.

System: Gods govern the physical and spiritual realm even if they were alive or dead. Your command over matter (Earth and Metal) has drastically increased.

Along with the sudden surge of powers that he had received, Shin also noticed that his control over the elements that Solus, Hanzo, and Astaroth had sharply improved and became more powerful.

Each of the elements that he controlled had become comparable to the Primordial Lightning!

With this, he would not be able to showcase a different version of his Myriad Transformation Swordsmanship, especially since he could now add Hanzo's possession to the mix.

Boom!

At this point, his connection to the world seemed to have grown stronger as well, making his domain skills more powerful.

The range of the Monochrome Field had become much larger while the suppression and boost that it provided became stronger accordingly.

The field of the dull world had increased almost reaching the sky and affecting the surroundings to a greater extent.

Ashura, who was not in a hurry to attack, patiently waited for Shin. When he saw that the latter did not only disappoint but also exceeded his expectations, he could not help but feel satisfied.

He then spread his wings while emitting a powerful energy, activating his version of domain skill.

Swoosh!

The world around him grew dark while specks of light illuminated it. The work seemed to have become the clear sky of the night filled with countless stars, giving off a mystifying and sacred feeling.

'Sacred Keeper Skill (Tier 2): (Enhanced) God's Territory'

Boom!

There was a violent reaction when the boundaries of the two domains met. Sparks, explosions, and other types of reactions occurred at the center of the collisions between the two domains.

It was as if two worlds were colliding against each other. A Monochrome World filled with dullness and eeriness was clashing against a starry sky that was filled with radiant stars shining in the middle of the abyssal darkness.

When Shin finally adjusted himself with the overwhelming powers flowing inside his body, he raised his head and stared at his opponent.

Invisible sparks seemed to have appeared when the gazes of the two met in the air.

And as if they had already agreed upon it, the two simultaneously made their moves. They flapped their wings and disappeared from their respective positions before reappearing two meters away from each other at the spot where the two domains were clashing.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Then the two simultaneously swung their swords at each other with all their might.

Boom!

An explosion quickly erupted when the [Yamato] and [Heavenly Meteor] were swung at each other.

But the two swords never met as there seemed to be an invisible barrier preventing them from colliding against each other.

It was the point where the Primordial Lightning surrounding the [Yamato] and the Cosmic Energy covering the [Heavenly Meteor] clashed.

The two higher forms of mana were clashing against each other as the two swords tried to approach each other.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Repeated explosions could be heard as Shin and Ashura poured all their strengths into this clash.

Crack! Crack!

To make this clash even more domineering, tears and cracks appeared in the space around the two, particularly where the two energies were clashing.

The space repeatedly recovered, trying to heal itself from the cracks that were continuously appearing. There were even small fragments that fell from those cracks, resembling shattered pieces of glass.

Shin and Ashura ignored everything around them as they quickly swung their swords multiple times along with a series of techniques under their arsenal.

Shin switched his swords along with the multiple combinations of the Four Symbol Scripture. Now that the powers of Solus and Astaroth reached a whole other level, the might of each of his attacks when using the sword techniques under the Perfected Four Symbol Scripture reached a new height.

His left hand continuously switched between the different swords as Solus and Astaroth took turns possessing the swords under the forms of 'Mondi's Style' legacy skill.

On the other hand, his right arm was switching between the dual possession of Blackie and Whitie and the enhanced possession of Hanzo.

Switching between the 'Chaos Slasher' and the 'Dimensional Cutter', Shin used different variations of sword movements under the Jade Kirin Scripture while harnessing the enhancements of the Primordial Lightning and Void Power.

He was also using some of the sword-drawing techniques, taking turns with the two powers that would fit the situation. Sometimes, he was using the 'Primordial Lightning' to take advantage of its extreme speed and destructive powers.

But oftentimes, he was also using the 'Void Power' provided by Hanzo's possession since it could traverse longer distances in a shorter timeframe while also possessing stronger penetrative powers.

Each form of energy had its respective advantages, which increased Shin's choices when he was attacking.

Ashura, on the other hand, remained steady with his style. His destructive attacks and solid defense remained unchanged and even grew stronger due to the series of buffs that he had cast on himself.

At the same time, he was also harnessing a magical power that was comparable to the greatest mages of the game. He would not be losing in terms of might, casting speed, and destructive powers when he was using his magical prowess.

This was because of his third possession. Not only did it give him strong magical powers, but it also improved everything greatly.

Ashura took advantage of his unique discipline to communicate with the world, making the might of his attacks and spells reach greater heights.

Shin used the complexity and powers of his mentalism swordsmanship while Ashura showed the absolute might of techniques enhanced by the combination of modern martial arts and the forgotten path of cultivation.

Each side possessed its respective profoundness, showcasing prowess that could not be found in other people.

Adding the powerful might of each of their techniques, the scene of their battle was like a collision between the true gods of the game.

That scene where their collision produced spatial fractures around them was more than enough for the people watching this battle to doubt whether they were still on the same game.

If the might of these two contenders was more than enough for the live audience and online viewers to doubt whether this was still a game, then the speed that the two were showcasing was already out of the world.

The people watching the battle were barely able to catch their figures amid the chaotic energies caused by their skills, so it was close to impossible to find the two when they were also moving at extreme speed during their brief melee exchanges.

If not for the flashes of lights that were appearing from time to time and the repeated explosions that erupted during their collisions, then it would be even harder to get a glimpse of their figures.

And if this was not enough, the two did something even crazier.

Seeing that the range of his attacks was no longer enough to contain Shin, as well as his powerful strikes, Ashura suddenly distanced himself from the opposing side before extending a dragon-like finger of his left hand and drawing a series of runes in the air.

Bang!

A moment later, when the magical sequence that Ashura had written was completed, a spark of lightning suddenly flashed down from the sky.

Boom!

A moment later, a golden lightning pillar was suddenly summoned, descending from the high heaven.

It had a blinding light that illuminated the entire place.

And when this lightning pillar slowly receded, a gigantic humanoid figure suddenly walked out of it.

This giant stood like a towering skyscraper as its head was already touching the clouds in the sky. It was a dozen times taller and larger than the three-faced quasi-battle spirit that Ashura had.

The giant was also clad with a full set of exquisite armor, making it look like an immortal warrior of ancient times. This head was also fully covered by a golden helmet that complemented its immortal armor. On its hand was a huge glaive with a handle filled with dragon scales and a dragon head at the segment connecting the handle and the blade of the glaive.

'Sacred Keeper Special Skill: (Exclusive) Immortal Calling'

Seeing the towering golden giant, Shin slightly tilted his head to the side before licking his lips. "You are not the only one who can call for assistance."

After that, he suddenly sheathed the [Yamato] before raising his hand and pointing toward the sky.

Crackle! Crackle!

Boom!

There was a strike of lightning from the sky first, connecting to Shin's index figure before a huge spatial tear appeared there.

Crack! Crack!

Then a pair of horrifying hands with sharp claws and obsidian scales suddenly reached out from it and started tearing the space, widening the dimensional fracture in the sky.

A moment later, a huge head of a dragon suddenly peeked out of it as it pulled itself from the dimensional tear.

'Duplicator's Eyes (Copied Skill): (Modified) Summon The Eclipse Dragon'

Roar!

When the dragon finally pulled out its body from that hole in space, it released a deafening roar that shocked both heaven and earth.

Under the might of this apex predator in the universe, everything would tremble in fear while other creatures had to kneel in submission.

Purple flames were leaking out from the mouth of this dragon with obsidian scales and huge wings. It glared at the golden immortal giant in the distance while growling savagely.

Shin stood at the head of the Eclipse Dragon while looking at his opponent.

On the other hand, Ashura stood on the shoulders of the golden immortal giant, staring back at Shin.

There they seemed to agree not to attack for the time being to catch their breaths. Those intense exchanges that they just had required a lot of focus and burned their concentration heavily.

They needed a few moments to catch their breaths and adjust their minds before resuming.

After a few moments, the two sides were finally able to adjust themselves and ready for another round.

And as if they agreed on it once again, they urged their respective summons to move.

Bang! Bang!

The Eclipse Dragon suddenly pounced forward, flapping its wings violently and opening its mouth widely to spit a ball of purple flame toward the opposing side.

Roar!

On the other hand, the Golden Immortal Giant slid forward, dragging its huge glaive before swinging it forward to cut through the flame breath of its opposition.

Boom!

Chapter 1384: The Grim Reaper and the Sacred Keeper (Part 3)

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Bang! Bang!

Boom!

Due to the two colossal beings joining the battle, the already chaotic battlefield became even more chaotic. These two giants were wrestling and hitting each other with a force that was strong enough to destroy everything in their surroundings.

The Golden Immortal possessed a powerful defense that could ignore the attacks of its opposition. Even the flame breath of the Eclipse Dragon was barely able to damage it.

It also had a devastating power that could annihilate everything around it. But despite that being the case, its attacks were also not that effective against the said dragon.

The Eclipse Dragon, on top of having destructive physical strength and overwhelming magic powers, possessed powerful defense due to its obsidian scales.

And despite its massive body, this dragon was quite agile, dodging most of the attacks of the Golden Immortal.

Meanwhile, the tearing force of its large and sharp claws could also rip apart most of the defenses of its opponent, but the extra layer of energy over the armor of the Golden Immortal was sturdy enough to block them.

The collisions of the two sides were even more devastating than the exchanges that Shin and Ashura had earlier.

It was the true clash between titans.

...

The Golden Immortal was slightly in the advantageous position since it could use the environment to its favor.

The Ancient Battleground that Shin and Ashura were in was called the Immortal Burial Ground, filled with the fallen immortals' residual powers. These powers left behind by the ancient immortals were helping the Golden Immortal in a lot of ways such as increasing its powers and enhancing its abilities.

Due to these boosts, the Golden Immortal was not only able to showcase abilities that far surpassed itself but also able to exceed its limits.

But despite that being the chase, it was not able to suppress its opponent. The Eclipse Dragon was so strong that most of the abilities of the Golden Immortal became useless.

The environment of this battlefield was not only helpful to the Golden Immortal but to the Eclipse Dragon as well.

As a being born between the powers of light and darkness, the Eclipse Dragon could not only enhance itself in the environment filled with light energies but also in a place filled with resentment and bloodthirst just like this ancient battlefield where countless immortals had fallen.

With deep resentment and dense bloodthirst filling the entire place, the abilities of the Eclipse Dragon would never be on the losing end compared to the Golden Immortal.

...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

While the two colossal beings were fighting, their respective masters were also fighting intensely in the air. They were flying around the two giants, adding more chaos to the already chaotic battlefield.

Bang!

Ashura was forced to pause his actions after being forced by Shin to retreat. When he was about to make his move, he suddenly realized that he was currently surrounded by multiple copies of his opponent.

Shin and his copies assumed a sword-drawing stance as they surrounded Ashura from all directions.

The space around each of the copies seemed to be surrounded by the crumbling space aimed at their target.

A moment later, Ashura saw that all of them suddenly charged at him at the same time while unsheathing their swords and swinging them forward.

Click!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – (Void) World Splitter'

Shing!

Ashura then saw a series of intertwining lines filling the air and crisscrossing at each other while making their way toward him. He could also see the spatial tears created by those sword flashes as they continued moving forward.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing that there was no place to dodge or escape this encirclement, Ashura suddenly assumed a stance and placed his sword ruler in front of it.

A moment later, a transparent sphere suddenly surrounded him before turning miniature world filled with stars. It rotated with an unbelievable speed before turning into a spinning ball of light that deflected all the incoming attacks from every direction.

'Mystic Cosmic Method: Heavenly Star Summoning'

Bang! Bang! Bang!

After a few moments of bombardment by those attacks, the real body of Shin finally appeared in front of Ashura, maintaining the final posture of his previous attack.

He was about to retreat when Ashura suddenly disappeared.

He then saw that the spinning ball of light exploded and scattered in every direction. The explosion did not harm Shin in any way, but they suddenly formed a series of magic circles that surrounded him.

Seemingly returning the favor, Ashura hovered in the air a few distance away from Shin before pointing his sword ruler forward.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Immediately after that, the magic circles suddenly bombarded Shin with a series of laser beams. Each magic circle shot out a barrage of energy beams while revolving around Shin to cover every direction.

Swiftly sheathing the [Yamato] and switching the Elemental Possession from 'Dimensional Cutter' to 'Divine Constellation', Shin placed his free hand in front of him while forming a seal.

Swoosh!

Flames suddenly covered around him from every direction, forming a spinning sphere of fire that protected him from the bombardment of the laser beams.

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

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Shin waited for the blazing barrier to accumulate enough power from the barrage of attacks before snapping his fingers and detonating the barrier, resulting in a massive explosion that swept through the magic circles and destroyed them in the process.

Boom!

Shin quickly spread his senses as he stood in the middle of the raging flames produced by the explosion.

Swoosh!

Then a huge hole suddenly formed above the blazing smoke and chaotic mana. A meteor as huge as a house suddenly broke through it and headed toward Shin.

Shin responded in an instant. He switched the Elemental Spirit Possession for another time, but it was from 'Divine Constellation' to 'Chaos Slasher' this time.

Click!

Harnessing the 'Primordial Lightning', he swiftly unsheathed the sword and swung it repeatedly at the descending meteor.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – (Lightning) Flash Requiem'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Flashes of sword lights appeared in the air, intertwining with each other, and cut through the huge meteor. The huge blazing rock was diced into fragments as they fell toward the ground like rain.

Whoosh!

As Shin ended his technique, Ashura suddenly appeared behind him while dragging his huge sword ruler in the air.

A starry light covered his weapon, signifying the large amount of energy containing it. It blazed like a starry flame, leaving a beautiful trail in the air.

'Imperial Family Secret Technique: Starlight Suppression'

Swoosh!

The sword ruler slashed down at Shin, creating a pressure that was heavy enough to create an illusion of a huge mountain descending from the sky.

Shin did not even bother to look at that attack to know how mighty it was. Instead, he directly responded with another sword technique.

Flipping the sheath in his left hand and transforming it to the 'Judgement Form' of 'Mondi's Style', Shin let Astaroth possess it once again as he spun and slashed it toward the incoming 'mountain'.

'Perfected Four Symbol Scripture: Divine Yellow Dragon – Earthly Ascension'

Roar!

An illusionary dragon seemed to be formed around his sword, releasing a powerful earth elemental mana. It opened its mouth wide and devoured the descending 'mountain'.

Bang!

The sword ruler in Ashura's hands rebounded back due to the strong recoil. Ashura was dragged by it for a moment before stabilizing himself in the air.

Shin, on the other hand, was sent flying toward the ground due to the strong collision. But before he could even touch the land, he suddenly spread his wings wide to halt his descent.

And with a powerful flap, he sent himself back in the air once again.

Swoosh!

Ashura watched Shin return. He then dragged his sword ruler to greet his incoming opponent. A long trail of starry light followed behind him.

Bang!

When the two met once again, a series of explosions immediately erupted due to multiple exchanges that they had.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

When they separated again, Ashura stood high up in the air while pointing his sword ruler toward the sky. There was a light beam that connected his sword and heaven before beautiful dancing ribbons of light appeared in the sky.

'Mystic Cosmic Method: Secret Movement – Aurora Borealis'

Swoosh!

When Ashura gently lowered the sword ruler and pointed at Shin, the ribbons of lights dancing in the sky converged into one and turned into a beam that headed toward his opponent.

Shin, who was standing in the distance, took his signature stance while regulating his breath. He channeled all his Void Powers toward his sword while patiently waiting for the heavenly lights to arrive.

Click!

When the familiar subtle sound resounded in the entire place, a blinding glow suddenly illuminated the entire place for a brief moment before flashes of sword lights left a series of crisscrossing lines in the air.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – (Void) Dimension Quelling'

Time seemed to have stopped briefly before the space around Shin crumbled light pieces of broken glass along with the heavenly light that Ashura had sent.

Swoosh!

Ashura was about to spread with a follow-up move when he saw Shin calmly sheathed his sword before unsheathing it again in a slow yet mystifying way.

While Shin was in the middle of unsheathing the [Yamato], his figure suddenly disappeared from his current location, making Ashura when in full alert.

Swoosh!

There was a sharp sound swept through him along with a gust of wind that brushed past his body.

Then Shin suddenly appeared a few distance away from behind Ashura, ending a horizontal slash.

After that, he shook his wrists and the sword before putting it back into its sheath in an unhurried manner.

Click!

Crack! Crack!

When the subtle sound of the sword returning to itself resounded once again, a series of shattering sounds, similar to broken glass, suddenly reverberated in the air along with the formation of a huge spatial rift behind him and trailed the path that he took earlier.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Spatial Rending'

The huge spatial fracture devoured everything around it as the space restored itself. The void within the rift sucked all the energies before the space was restored once again.

As for Ashura, his figure slowly crumbled along with the receding void and healing space.

But Shin did not lower his guard even in the slightest as he could still see the Giant Immortal still fighting against the Eclipse Dragon. This meant that Ashura still had survived his previous attack.

Bang!

An explosion suddenly erupted beside Shin along with the unexpected collapse of the space. A huge hole was formed as Ashura used brute force to escape the endless void and even launched an accurate attack at Shin.

Shin, who was still caught off-guard despite his heightened senses, could only raise his sheathed sword and channel his energies into it while blocking the ambush.

Boom!

Despite Ashura's miserable appearance after coming out of the void, his attack was still packed with a lot of strength. It would not be surprising if Shin suffered serious damage from it.

This was the very first time that the two landed clean hits on each other since the beginning of the game.

Ashura struck while the iron was hot and chased after Shin.

Dragging the sword ruler in the air, he suddenly swung at Shin right after he reached the ideal range to attack.

Zheng!

The world seemed to have turned dark around him as he swung the sword ruler. The specks of light appeared along with it, resembling the stars in the night.

Swoosh!

When Ashura finally swung the sword ruler, it was fully packed with raw strength. It was as if he had become the Golden Immortal while the Cosmic Energy surrounding his weapon turned into a humongous blade that descended toward his opponent.

'Mystic Cosmic Method: Secret Movement – Collapsing Heaven'

Shin, who was shooting toward the ground, adjusted himself in the air when he saw the descending blade from heaven.

He quickly unsheathed his sword while focusing his mind. Taking advantage of the enhanced willpower provided by his current metamorphosis, the Descent of the Falling God, he visualized the Advanced Movements of his mentalism swordsmanship.

He adjusted his breathing as Blackie and Whitie possessed the [Yamato] for another time, triggering the Primordial Lightning once again.

Crackle! Crackle!

Swoosh!

Then, with an attack that embodied the principles of Swift Sword, Severing Sword, and Sharp Sword, he slashed the [Yamato] while releasing all the accumulated energies that he gathered.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Seventh Movement – Thunder Eclipse'

Boom!

A thunderous explosion quickly followed as he slashed the sword. A huge crescent of lightning flew toward the giant descending blade, colliding against it.

There was a thick cloud of smoke at the point of collision, blocking the view of Shin.

When it was cleared, Shin's eyes suddenly contracted as he saw that the Golden Immortal that was supposedly fighting the Eclipse Dragon was currently standing behind Ashura.

Ashura seemed to have merged with the golden giant as he stood at the center of its chest.

As Ashura held his sword ruler and raised it over his shoulders, Shin saw that the Golden Immortal mimicked his actions while gathering all the residual energies of the fallen immortals from the environment.

A moment later, Shin saw Ashura and the Golden Immortal swing their respective weapons at him with a diagonal slash.

The world seemed to have merged with the Golden Immortal as it swung its massive glaive. It was as if the world itself was lending its powers to this colossal being, giving it powers that could destroy the world itself.

'Sacred Keeper Skill (Tier 3): (Modified) World Domination – First Destruction'

Shin immediately realized that he was in trouble when he saw that kind of attack. It was more powerful than the one that Pogo had used in his most recent battle. It far surpassed the level that regular experts could reach.

Glancing in the direction where the Eclipse Dragon was and saw that it was preparing for its most powerful attack, the dragon breath.

'Eclipse Dragon's Breath: Unity Ray'

Boom!

But in front of the mighty diagonal slash that was produced by the combined forces of Ashura and the Golden Giant, the dragon's breath was immediately annihilated.

However, the might of the slash was greatly reduced in the process.

At this point, Shin had already prepared himself for his strongest move. He stood in the distance holding his sword with both of his hands.

He raised his sword over his head while gathering all the energies from the surroundings. He channeled everything toward the sword as his Elemental Spirits gathered behind him.

This time, with the Chaos Slasher as his possession and the twin tigers as the center, the other Elemental Spirits that were in the form of specks of lights formed a circle on his back and spun rapidly while gathering the surrounding energies.

Seeing changes around Shin, Ashura quickly retracted his strike and adjusted his stance. He then used the momentum of his previous strike to throw a much stronger diagonal slash.

'Sacred Keeper Skill (Tier 3): (Modified) World Domination – Second Annihilation'

Swoosh!

When the sword ruler and the giant glaive of Ashura and the Golden Immortal fell respectively, Shin was already done with his preparations and finally swung his sword down.

Shing!

The moment his sword fell, the world seemed to have been split into halves.

This strike seemed to have cut the dimension itself.

A thin light appeared in front of the sword, following the path that it took earlier and extending toward the horizon.

The space was like a glass that was cleanly split by a sharp weapon, making it slide in the opposite direction. Dark energy seemed to leak from that thin line left in the space and spread in every direction.

Then the world turned dull and became a monochrome world for a brief moment before everything was sucked by that thin line once again followed by a silent explosion.

'Ultimate Elemental Skill (Combined): Ragnarök'

Boom!

Chapter 1385: The Wolf is Coming!

.....

Clink!

When the sword slash of Shin passed through the Golden Immortal, its glaive and body were split in half. Its body slid against each other in opposite directions before crumbling into multiple pieces like broken glasses.

But amid all of this, as well as the powerful explosion that accompanied the slash from Shin, Ashura was revealed standing while horizontally holding his sword ruler to block the residual force that the Golden Immortal had failed to withstand.

He looked miserable due to how powerful the previous attack was. Even the Cosmic Energy that was surrounding his body was flickering nonstop, seemingly nearing being extinguished. But it was still amazing that he was able to hold his ground in the end despite all of that.

The live audience in the special stand and online viewers watching the live broadcast saw how terrifying the skill last skill that Shin had used was as it seemed to have transcended dimensions and could split the world itself.

They all thought that Ashura would have died at that time. At the same time, they thought that this battle was already decided. Given the current state that Ashura was in and the flickering powers that lacked any strength, they were sure that Shin had already won this battle.

Even those people who were keeping an eye on this battle very closely due to their bets on the gambling sites could not help but sigh in emotion.

"It looks like the Battle God will continue his winning streak."

They all believed this and thought that the outcome of this battle had already been decided. At least until they saw the next course of events.

Ashura, who was currently in an extremely miserable state suddenly raised his head. His eyes shone brightly as he looked at his head, staring at Shin in the distance.

He then held the [Heavenly Meteor] with both of his hands and raised it over his head, seemingly mimicking Shin's actions in the previous exchange.

Seeing that Ashura was taking such a stance, Shin could not help but feel threatened. His danger senses when too extreme ass he felt that something was wrong.

But before he could even respond, Ashura suddenly swung the sword ruler, completely copying the previous movements that Shin had done.

Shing!

Then, just like what happened earlier, the world seemed to have been split by that stroke from Ashura. It repeated the earlier scene but in a reverse situation. This time, Shin was the one, who was on the receiving end of this overwhelming attack.

'Imperial Family Secret Art: Killing Move – Revenge Slash'

Swoosh!

When the dimension was split into halves, Shin, who was standing in the distance and the Eclipse Dragon, who regrouped with its master, were swept with this attack.

Boom!

The Eclipse Dragon was split in half along with the space itself and died in the process. Such an overwhelming attack could not be blocked by normal means.

Shin was quick enough to use one of his equipment skills at the last moment.

'Equipment Skill (Body Armor: Maximillian): Life Forcefield'

This skill enhanced his defense drastically. It also summoned a brilliant light barrier that protected him from harm. But all of this was not enough to save him from this powerful attack.

The people watching this scene could not help but gulp hard as they saw the sudden turn of events. They also saw that Shin's health bar went straight to being emptied after that attack.

A counterattack! A massive counterattack! An absolute comeback!

The live audience and online viewers went wild when they saw this scene. They were still in the process of accepting that Shin had already won this battle but it seemed like the Martial God had turned the tables right at the final moments.

But before the people from the gambling sites, who betted on Ashura's victory, could rejoice at the sudden reversal, something unexpected happened.

Everyone suddenly noticed that Shin refused to fall and remained standing. That was when they all noticed that Shin's Health Bar suddenly stopped dropping when it reached the 1% mark.

Another lifesaving skill was activated.

'Equipment Skill (Body Armor: Maximillian): Death Exemption'

It was a skill that made him escape death after receiving a fatal strike that could end his life.

Before his life bar dropped even further, Shin immediately activated the second effect of the skill and converted most of his remaining mana to health points.

At the same time, another passive effect of his equipment was also triggered by the event and restored his Health Bar to 50%.

'Equipment Skill (Leg Armor: Megumi's Shadow): Life Recall'

Seeing this scene, those people who had been following Shin for a long time could not help but remember another event.

This exact scene was similar to what Shin had done during one of his previous battles – more specifically the one that he had with Immortal during his first Godly Challenge Right.

Recalling that scene, these people could already guess what was going to happen next.

Shin's next move immediately came.

'Equipment Skill (Body Armor: Maximillian): Life Revenge'

It was a skill that could only be used when the 'Death Exemption' skill was activated.

Its effects were to return 10% of the total damage that he had received during the 'Death Exemption', which was the fatal strike. Additionally, more damage would be added to it based on the amount of HP that was restored during the converse of his mana.

Shin swung his sword and sent a powerful sword wave on top of the effects of the 'Life Revenge' skill that he just used.

'Myriad Transformation Swordsmanship: Eclipse Slash'

Swoosh!

The sword wave cut through the air and almost arrived in front of Ashura within an instant.

Another reversal! Another comeback!

Seeing this scene, the players watching both live and online were sure that this was the end. Given the current state that Ashura was in, they were sure that this should be the end of this duel.

But they raised their flag way too early as Ashura did something impossible once again.

Right before the sword wave reached him, a dark shadow, resembling a death god, appeared behind Ashura.

It stood with the huge scythe in its hands before the same apparition appeared behind Shin.

'Elemental Spirit Skill: Sacred Sacrifice'

Shin was not sure what was happening, but he instantly sensed the aura of death binding his body.

Due to his current state, he was too exhausted to do anything. Instead, he followed his instincts and used one of the ocular skills that he had, which was the only thing that he could do at the moment.

'Legacy Skill: Duplicator's Eyes – Copy'

Right after the skill was activated, the skill that Ashura had used was instantly copied.

Ding

System: Skill has been copied. Initiating the skill conversion to match your attributes.

System: Congratulations! You have successfully learned the 'Death's Execution' Skill.

Right after the notification rang in his ears, Shin quickly activated it without bothering to look at what it was or read about its effects.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Two more apparitions of the Death God appeared behind the two right before the sword wave hit Ashura.

Boom!

And when the Eclipse Slash hit Ashura, the apparitions behind the two raised their scythes and swung at them.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

This skill was similar to the 'Life Revenge' skill that Shin had under his arsenal, but it would return 100% of the damage to the opposition when the user of the skill received a fatal attack.

But at the same time, it would not save the user from the previous attack, which indicated that they would still receive the same damage.

With the scythes of death about to hit them, Shin and Ashura simultaneously raised their hands and cast another skill to themselves.

'Elemental Skill (Light): Sacred Light'

'Battle Cleric Skill: Healing Stream'

Lights fell on the body of the two, restoring a decent amount of their health. This amount might not be strong, but they were more than enough to make them survive the scythes of deaths that were directed at them.

The two did not care about the damage that they suffered and the current state that they were in. They quickly urged their body to move and proceed with the battle.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

'Slayer Skill: Moonlight Steps'

'Battle Cleric Skill: Heaven's Movement'

The two disappeared from their respective position – one turning into a streak of light that flew forward while the other teleported himself – appearing right in front of each other once again.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A series of intense collisions immediately followed as their swords transformed into blurs that repeatedly clashed against one another.

Slashes, cuts, cleaves, thrusts, stabs, and more series of attacks were executed by the two, showcasing their respected swordsmanship, particularly their foundation.

Their collisions did not slow down or become less intense despite their current exhausted states. They stubbornly held their ground.

Then, when they finally reached their limits, the two forced their opposition to retreat before taking up their signature stance.

Shin took his sword-drawing stance while channeling his energy on the sheathed sword and black-and-white lightning danced around his body.

Ashura, on the other hand, stood still and took a high sword stance while the flames of the starry energy covered his body and sword. He was getting ready to slam that sword down and cut everything in front of him.

The two tacitly understood that this would be the final exchange, so they had to put everything on this move.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two simultaneously moved in the next instant.

Shin transformed into a streak of light that charged forward, swiftly unsheathing his sword, and strongly swinging it forward during the entire process.

Click!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – Moonlight Splitter'

Shing!

This particular move that he usually regularly used before had turned into something different after he applied the principles of the Swift Sword, Sharp Sword, and Strong Sword in the process.

In the meantime, Ashura embodied the fundamental techniques of his stance while infusing his insights into it. He swung the sword ruler down as it carried everything – his burden, his enlightenment, his resolve, and everything else.

'Imperial Family Secret Art: Personalized Move – Heavenly Stroke'

Swoosh!

A flash of light briefly blinded everyone when the two exchanged their moves.

Ashura remained standing on his spot while maintaining the final posture of his previous strike while Shin brushed past him and stood a couple of meters away behind.

The two maintained their respective positions for a couple of seconds before relaxing their bodies.

Shin stood straight as he sheathed his sword while Ashura raised the sword ruler and rested it on his shoulders.

They simultaneously turned around and looked at each other, observing the other party.

"That is fun! Let's do this again in the upcoming tournaments, especially the Hegemon Cup, and decide the real winner," said Ashura.

Shin slightly nodded his head as he replied. "I am looking forward to it."

Then, all of a sudden, deep wounds suddenly appeared on their bodies.

There was a horizontal cut on Ashura's waist, almost separating his lower and upper body, while a long wound starting from Shin's left shoulder to his left waist appeared.

Then their bodies slowly turned into specks of lights that were gradually dissipating in the air.

The result of this battle was finally decided.

Result – Draw!

...

When the people saw the result, they could not help but stay still and stared blankly at the air in front of them.

To make sure that they were not seeing things, they rubbed their eyes and looked at the notification once again, trying to see if it would change.

When they finally recovered, they could not help but burst into an intense uproar!

The result was secondary as the battle itself was already satisfying. Each side took turns controlling the battle and showcasing their respective styles and battle prowess, which shocked everyone.

Those final exchanges were even more entertaining as the rollercoaster of emotions overwhelmed them. The comeback after comeback and reversal after reversal almost took the souls of everyone, particularly those from the gambling sites.

Everyone was more than willing to spend for another round of such a banger battle. Unfortunately, the rules that Ashura had set for this challenge right was an all-or-nothing duel instead of a series of round battles.

Even David and Miss Bunny, who were commentating on the battle, could not help but have a string of emotions as they did not know how to respond to it.

Regardless, they continued to discuss the battle and went into detail, giving the viewers an in-depth understanding of the battle. This also helped everyone to calm their nerves down, especially the ones who put large bets on the gambling sites.

Who would have guessed that this was going to end in a draw?

Even the gambling companies could not believe that they earned more than they had expected, resulting in Shin and Ashura gaining extra pocket money through special commissions.

To conclude the broadcast video, David looked straight at the camera and said. "My friends out there, can you feel it? A newly promoted god is rapidly rising."

"A few months prior, he is a nameless swordsman, who knew nothing about the game. He then became both a Titled Ranker and a Maverick Ranker with unofficial title at the same time, then became what he is today."

"The wolf is coming, so you better watch out!"

"And see you again at the United Cup!"

Chapter 1386: Unexpected 'Harvest'?

.....

Shin and Ashura were sent back to the place where the last left before their duel. They were back in the Shunkai Forest where the Empyrean Talons met the God's Paradise.

They felt quite awkward after remembering the cliché moments that they had during the previous battle. It sounded like they would be seeing each other again after quite a while, but here they were standing in front of each other again right after the duel.

"Sigh," Shin smiled helplessly before trying to break the atmosphere by making fun of themselves. "Well, this awkward."

Ashura chuckled as he heard about that before nodding. "That's right. It indeed feels like that."

After laughing heartedly, Ashura suddenly asked. "Are you coming and see what those guys are doing?"

Shin knew that the latter was talking about their members, who were currently having a battle of their own. He was also quite interested in it, but after remembering that his current task hadn't ended yet, he shook his head and politely refused. "I still have to deal with this troublesome quest that I have."

Remembering something, Shin suddenly said. "Ah! That is right! You are from the Martial Alliance, don't you? Are you not going to catch me for the faction quest?"

Ashura paused as he remembered it as well. He then smiled bitterly and shook his head repeatedly before saying. "Well, that includes the condition of our earlier duel. You will come with us once you lose while I will stop the faction from going after you if I lose."

"I have temporarily hindered the faction quest with my position along with the help of my friends. But that is only until the duel ends," he paused for a moment before adding. "But since the result falls in neither category, I think that the bounty will be put up by the Mission Hall once again."

He then recalled the battle before continuing. "However, I doubt that there will still be people, who come after you given the strength that you have shown everyone."

Shin thought for a moment before shaking his head. "I doubt that. After all, this is a good opportunity to catch me given that I am exhausted."

"Moreover, there are also quite a few stubborn people, who will be targeting me just like those from the Corrupted Cult and Demonic Churches. I haven't seen the real experts that they have dispatched, so I guess that they are plotting something."

"There is still quite a lot of time before this special event ends," he added while looking at the timer of the quest.

Hearing that, Ashura found it reasonable and nodded. He then paused for a moment before answering Shin's previous question. "But since neither of us wins, I will wait until the next time before we fight again. As for the quest, I will withdraw from it along with my friends."

"They have already gotten their fill of entertainment after all," he added chuckling.

The two walked and roamed the forest a little while casually chatting like long-time friends. Seeing them walking together, those people, who were trying to scheme against Shin and took advantage of his current exhaustion, started having second thoughts.

A single monster was already hard to deal with, much less having two of them at the same time. Ashura's presence was more than enough to discourage most of those people and drop their plans.

While walking, Ashura suddenly remembered something. "Ah! That is right. I heard that a huge neutral region is going to open for the next few days. I am thinking about settling on this kingdom for a moment and developing our team in that place."

"Do you know if there is a good place where we can garrison our adventurer team? Given your status, I am sure that you can give us a good recommendation," he added.

Shin was slightly taken aback when he heard that. He then fell into deep thought as he found that this was a good opportunity.

They were lacking a few powerful people, who could garrison on their territory. He and Shiella had already found quite a few forces that could hunt regularly on their territory while maintaining order and keeping an eye on possible invasion.

The security within the city itself was already stable enough. Given that they had a private NPC army and Adventurer Guild garrison in there, adding the forces of the Church of the Sun and Moon, the Church of Light, and the God of War Temple, stationed in there due to the branches that they had set up, they will not have any problem keeping order inside the city.

The problem was the outside, where the players could be lawless and do whatever without the watchful eyes of the landowner.

They had already invited the Secret Society and Ethereal Hope, who were relatively famous among the players and had a decent number of people.

There was also the Slayers Adventurer Team led by Lawless and Faker as well as the Brotherhood Mercenary Group under Legolas and Aragorn, who were previously key figures in the Central Order.

Then there were the people from the Hand of Midas, Assassin Union, and Secret Recipe. The latter two were powerhouse organizations within the game, which were also close allies of Empyrean Talons, while the latter one was a renowned information merchant organization.

With all these forces, Shin was confident that they would at least be able to keep the order within their territory as well as the Golden City and the Calderock Port.

If they added God's Paradise and let them garrison in the city while maintaining a friendly relationship with them, Shin could see how prosperous his dukedom would become. He was also sure that Shiella would not refuse such a good ally.

The fame everyone had was more than enough to discourage any plot from the dark forces and greedy organizations that could target them.

Moreover, Shin also knew that having a great rival close to them would arouse the competitiveness of the Empyrean Talons. This would make the group grow stronger at a much faster rate.

After having such a long string of thoughts, Shin turned to Ashura and answered. "I do have a recommendation. But I think it is better to discuss the terms with another person since she is the one dealing with this matter."

Shin was planning to dump the annoying job, particularly the negotiations, on his big sister.

"I will let her know about it, so you can talk to her later," he added before quickly informing Shiella about the matter.

Ashura seemed to have realized something and said. "Are you talking about the Guild Leader of the Hand of Midas Trading Firm?"

"We have quite a decent partnership with her since we always sell all the materials that we have gathered in our adventures to the firm while we get a decent discount from their products," he added positively.

Hearing that, Shin nodded his head and extended his hand. "Then it is decided."

Ashura reached out and shook Shin's hand in response before leaving.

Shin looked at the spot where Ashura disappeared after crushing a return scroll before turning around. "I still have a couple of hours before this quest ends. There is also that solo quest that is linked to my territory. I still have quite a few matters to attend, sigh."

In the meantime, Ashura arrived at the Divine Arena of the Holy City, where the rest of the Empyrean Talons and the members of God's Paradise were having a friendly match.

When Ashura arrived inside the room, he saw that there was still a battle going on. But instead of the team battle that he was expecting, what he saw was Arthur and Susanoo having an intense bout against each other.

There was also Simba and Kallavan in the distance, having an enjoyable battle of their own.

"Huh? Where are the others? Don't tell me it already ended?" asked Ashura as he walked towards Lia, who was observing the battle with full focus.

She had already sensed Ashura's arrival earlier, but she did not look at him as she was too busy watching the battles.

She only replied when Ashura arrived beside her. "It is not that we have finished already, commander. Your battle is just way longer than ours."

"As for the others, they look for rooms themselves to continue sparring in one-on-one duels. It is quite rare to find a qualified opponent after all."

"Is it?" asked Ashura with a raised brows as he did not feel that his battle with Shin took that long. Regardless, he still nodded his head and asked. "And the result?"

Lia paused for a moment and gave him a sidelong glance before sighing. "They are close battles, but we only win one and lose the other."

"Oh! That is interesting. How is it?" he asked.

Lia thought for a moment before replying. "Sigfried is slightly stronger than Susanoo and I am still a little inferior to Arielle when controlling the battlefield, so we have lost the first battle."

"As for the second one-..." there was a weird look on her face when she recalled the other battle before saying in a strange tone. "It is hard to explain since it is quite a strange one. You can see it for yourself later when you watch the recorded video."

She paused once again as she recalled the details of the battle for the second time before sighing. "We almost lost that battle as well, but weird things kept on happening at that time and the second group somehow forced a win."

This time, Ashura could not help but frown even further as he could see that something more to it that could not be explained in words. He became more curious about the said battle.

After that, he asked another matter. "What about noteworthy rivals? Have you seen anyone from them?"

Lia did not even think as she answered. "Aside from the well-known godlike players that they have in their group, there are three other players that we have to keep our eyes on."

She opened a virtual screen and shared it with Ashura before continuing. "The first one is this assassin. From what I can see, he is strong enough to be a top-ranked Godlike Player himself. As long as he wants to join any kind of individual tournament, he can get himself a decent title."

"His skills and techniques are way above the current ceiling of the players, which makes him very hard to deal with."

"I can also see that he can enter Hyperactive Immersion without any problem. He can even suppress Dio during the entire battle, though his coordination with the other members of the group is rather weak."

"I am guessing that he is relatively new in the group, and it hasn't been that long since he joined them. But he can be a real threat in group battles once he integrated properly with the others, especially with a troublesome class that he has."

She then paused and switched the profile with another player. This time, Alucard's profile was being projected on the screen. "This is the second one. He is quite troublesome. I am guessing that he is an old-timer from the previous virtual games, who changed his name as a disguise."

"Sherly is having a hard time keeping up with this guy, but that is only due to the advantage of his race. He seems to be from a Noble Vampire Race and possesses a decent inheritance. The purity of his bloodline is quite dense as well which is why he has a lot of advantages."

"But that is not the only problem. The guy is not only good at shooting from the distance as he is quite good at close combat, specifically his swordsmanship."

Ashura nodded his head as he commented. "Good in both marksmanship and swordsmanship? This guy seems to be an all-rounder in terms of combat."

Lia shook her head as she said. "That is not the interesting part about this guy."

She paused as she continued with a serious tone. "Sherly said that this guy is similar to the Gun King and Sword King from the previous game that she majored in, «Guns and Swords» Online."

Ashura became even more interested and asked. "How so?"

Those two were the top gods of that game, and their respective styles did not share any kind of resemblance with each other, so this topic quite piqued his interest.

Lia thought for a moment before continuing. "Let me correct myself. What Sherly says exactly is this guy possessing the skills from both The Gun King and Sword King, specifically the 'Gun-Fu' from the former and the 'Silent Steps' and 'Sleep Walk' from the latter."

Ashura was surprised at those words before smiling. "Now that is intriguing. I suddenly become curious about this guy's background."

After that, he suddenly asked. "What about the third one?"

Hearing that, Lia suddenly wore a weird look on her face before sighing. She then opened another profile before explaining. "This guy is the famous Herald of Chaos. The one with the said Legion of the Chaotic Sun."

"I don't know how to judge him. I don't know if he is a secret expert comparable to Maverick Gods or a complete noob. It is hard to decide."

"At times, he is doing complicated formations with his summoned monsters that almost break our formation, but at times he is messing up with his teammates."

"The others tried to focus on him, but he always somehow survives by sheer luck or absolute skill – I don't know. This guy can't be understood by logic, so I don't know how to describe it."

"He is also the reason why we almost lost that second round, but also the reason why he won somehow, so I don't know how to judge him," she was sighing while covering her face with both of her hands in embarrassment as she recalled the details of that battle.

She then turned to Ashura, who was looking at her in full confusion, before continuing. "Anyway, you can watch that battle and see it for yourself, commander. I am sure that you will understand until then."

Ashura then turned to the profile projected on the virtual screen and saw the name 'Chaotic Luck'.

"Just who is this person?"

Chapter 1387: It's Them, Again

...

A group of mysterious individuals gathered on an inhabited island not far from the coast of the Sky Deceiving Valley. They were wearing cloaks that were slightly different from the ones the cults used but also shared quite a few resemblances.

The group leader suddenly said when he saw that everyone finally arrived. "How is the progress?"

One of the hooded individuals stepped forward and reported. "The sacrifices are already prepared. We are only waiting for the right opportunity to use them."

Hearing that, another person suddenly smirked and said. "What is the use of the sacrifices when our target is already been killed."

"We went through a lot of trouble just to weaken and corrupt the Sea Spirit. But in the end, the one who benefited is not us, but that Battle God Sickarius. Moreover, it seems like he has already used the Sea Soul for something, which is why the faction quest is triggered," he added with a deep sigh.

Hearing that, the person who reported to their leader earlier glared at him. "If you don't have anything better to say, then just shut up your mouth, Jord."

Jord scoffed when he heard that and said with a provoking tone. "You can try me anytime, Karl. I am not afraid of you."

Seeing that the two were already starting to argue despite the presence of their leader, another member of the group suddenly stepped in between the two and mediated. "Come on, guys.

We know that we are temporarily grouped because the Messengers of the Cult are currently in a questionable position due to the sudden betrayal of Immortal, but we can't always be in disagreement since we will fail the quest altogether."

The two that were about to fight hesitated for a moment before deciding to keep quiet. They were also aware of their current situation, so they could not push their luck that much.

In the meantime, the acting leader of the group, who kept quiet up until now, finally opened his mouth. "Let's proceed with the meeting if you guys are already done playing around."

His voice was calm, but it carried an eerie coldness that sent shivers to the other members of the group. That was when they remembered that this person was not like them who were from the middle ranking of the cult.

This guy was quite a low profile, but he was skilled enough to be ranked on the same ranking as the Messengers of the Cult.

"Since the Sea Spirit has already been killed, we don't have much use for those villagers," the leader paused for a moment before continuing. "Let's change the plan and use them as sacrifices for the cult ceremony. Tell our people to build the altar while the rest of you make sure to guard the island and prevent anyone from approaching us."

Hearing his instructions, the person, who mediates between Jord and Karl, could not help but voice his doubt. "But leader, we will catch the eyes of the NPC Factions if we try to conduct the Cult Ceremony here. And please don't forget that there are quite a few people from the Supreme Temple and Martial Alliance currently nearby."

Hearing that, the leader looked at him before saying. "Do you think that I don't consider that?"

"The Sky Deceiving Valley is currently in lockdown due to some unknown reason, so people are unable to enter it. Since that is the case, they can't learn about the events here, especially when we are quite a distance from the coast."

"As for the NPC Factions, they will not be able to sense us as long as we set up the isolation barrier around the island."

Despite his explanation, the rest were still not fully convinced.

Seeing that, the leader suddenly asked. "Don't tell me that we are just going to leave the sacrifices that we have earned go to waste? I don't think that will be the answer to our current situation."

"Since everything has already been prepared, why not take the initiative, and proceed further ahead? We may as well get a certain benefit after going through a lot of trouble," he added before dismissing everyone.

The leader was left behind and remained seated on the boulder that he was on, seemingly waiting for something. When he made sure that everyone had left and no one was around, he suddenly opened a virtual screen and sent a message.

"I have already set everything. You only have to come over and collect the 'item'."

There was a brief moment of silence before the person from the other side replied.

"Good job. I will be there once the ceremony starts."

After seeing the message, he closed the virtual window and jumped down from the boulder, acting as if nothing had happened.

A couple of hours after Shin had survived the pursuit of the four factions, a piece of unexpected news was released to the public.

The borders of the Sky Deceiving Valley were opened to everyone once again, making the people rush towards it with the hopes of crossing over it and reaching the borders of the Frozen Kingdom before everyone else.

But before they could enter, they were greeted by another notification from the system,

Ding

System Regional Announcement: Congratulations to Player Sickarius for being the first person to reach the Duke Rank Player!

System Regional Announcement: Congratulations to Player Sickarius for successfully setting up a Dukedom! The Sky Deceiving Valley will now be also called the Gold Mountain.

System Regional Announcement: Player Cities: Golden City and Calderock Port are now open to the public! Please visit it, everyone!

...

Each message was repeated at least three times, ringing in the ears of everyone within the Saint Heaven Kingdom.

The ones who were able to quickly recover themselves immediately headed to the teleportation hall of the cities that they were in and chose the Gold Mountain as their destination, particularly the Golden City.

However, they could not help but pause when they saw the entrance fee of the said city was quite expensive. It was worth five gold for every player.

It was nothing in front of the wealthy players or experts of the game, but for ordinary and casual players, such a price was something that they could not afford.

This was a strategy that Shiella had come up with since it would filter out the quality of players that would enter the place, only letting the elites inside, and limiting the population of the city to avoid being overcrowded.

A lot of people instantly dropped the idea of heading to the said city, but the ones that could afford such a fee were teleported there without any hesitation.

Once they arrived in the said city, they could not help but stare blankly at the place, especially when they walked out of the teleportation hall and got a clearer look at the city.

The luxurious buildings and advanced carriages were one thing, but the dreamy view beyond the city walls was another manner. That was when the people realized why the place was called Gold Mountain – they were in a city on top of a mountain.

Looking around, the players that arrived then saw different kinds of views when they looked in different directions.

As for the others who wanted to see if this was a good place for training, they immediately noticed the high density of mana concentrated within the city. It was comparable to the Capital Rank NPC Cities such as the Holy City of the Saint Heaven Kingdom.

They also saw that the Battle Arena within this city was on par with the Divine Arena of the NPC Cities.

People quickly scattered and checked on different places, exploring different parts of the city.

Others also noticed that the so-called Calderock Port situated at the coast below the Gold Mountain was previously Calderock Town.

The members of the top guilds originally wanted to spy on this new city and see if they could launch an attack on it to take it for themselves. But once they saw the affiliated forces through the system, they instantly dropped the idea without any hint of hesitation.

Golden City Affiliated Forces

Owner: Empyrean Talons

Partner: Hand of Midas

Allies:

-Adventurer Teams:

Slayers

God's Paradise

Eternal Hope

Secret Society

-Mercenary Group:

Brotherhood

-Guild/Organization:

Assassin Union

Secret Recipe

Seeing such a lineup was more than enough to discourage the people, who were planning to scheme on the city.

The two leading figures were already powerful and influential enough, but adding the Slayers, God's Paradise, and Assassin Union into the equation would only make the people ask for their deaths if they tried to mess with these guys.

The people, who were thinking of making trouble, immediately dropped the idea after seeing the affiliated groups of the city.

Of course, there were still some exceptions just like the enemies of these groups, particularly those from the evil factions and dark guilds.

There were also quick-witted ones that figured out that the city rightfully belonged to Sickarius after linking the series of regional announcements that they just received to this sudden news.

Because of this, the people could not help but become more impressed with Shin. His might and battle prowess was already something else, so adding his ability to reach such a high social status within the game and even conquer a territory for himself.

Speaking of territory, the people, especially the ones who watched the clash between the Hydra Guild and Central Order for the acquisition of a certain territory, could not help but compare the two.

That was when they realized that Shin had the entirety of the Sky Deceiving Valley under his name, which was way bigger than the territory that the Hydra Guild had acquired.

This makes the powerhouse guilds and big organizations within the game almost die in envy. They were doing everything they could just to acquire a little territory that they could call theirs, yet there was a single person who not only acquired such a huge territory but even built such a majestic city on top of that.

They all knew that the Hand of Midas had something to do with this, but that was only the financial part most probably, which was somewhat easier to acquire than meeting all the requirements to get a territory under their name.

Moreover, the spot that Shin had chosen perfectly fitted the current stage of the game, especially when a high-level neutral kingdom was about to open right beside it.

These huge forces within the game were looking at the Golden City and Gold Mountain full of greed and envy, yet they could not do anything about it as the forces guarding the territory were so powerful and intimidating.

...

In the meantime, while everyone was too busy exploring the newly opened city and the regions around it, the man in question was currently heading toward the coast of the Sky Deceiving Valley to look for the clues for the other part of his solo quest.

Shin was currently exploring the region, recalling the places where he found the village, its residents, as well as the knights that he gathered.

Ding

That was when he received a sudden notification from the system.

System: Quest: Rise of the Dukedom has been updated!

System: The villagers are currently at risk of being sacrificed for a Cult Ceremony. Please make haste and find their location as soon as possible.

System: The timer for the ceremony will start once the cultist altar has been fully built.

Reading through the notification, Shin could not help but frown deeply, feeling quite troubled. He still hadn't found any clue, yet the situation was already getting worse.

However, these notifications also had ironically given him a certain clue.

"Cult Ceremony? Don't tell me it is related to those guys once again?" mumbled Shin while frowning deeply.

This also made him recall his encounter with that apostle of Immortal during the early stages of the previous event.

He could not help but consider the said proposal once again. However, the previous pursuit was already over, which made him unsure about the offer.

But there could also be something more to it, which might be helpful to him for the current situation.

Chapter 1388: It's Them, Again (Part 2)

.....

Shin was thinking about contacting Daven to discuss the said proposal once again. Even if he did not add the person as a friend, the latter still left a way to be contacted before leaving.

As he was considering an offer, the corner of his eye caught something. When he looked over, he saw that it was a person, who seemed to be wearing a knight's armor.

Seeing that person, Shin felt lucky as his instincts were telling him that this NPC should be the lead that he was looking for. "It seems like the system is finally doing its job."

When he walked over to check on the knight, he suddenly saw that the NPC was already dead.

"Tsk!" Shin clicked his tongue when he realized this before bending over to check on the corpse.

After examining the corpse of the NPC, Shin noticed that the person seemed to have suffered from corrupted energy before dying, which further confirmed his suspicion. The Corrupted Cult was indeed involved in this matter.

He was not sure how those people managed to sneak into the Sky Deceiving Valley when the borders of the region were closed to everyone. But since they managed to abduct the villagers, it was clear that they had a special method to sneak into a sealed region and even get out from it without getting noticed.

While he was thinking, he raised his head to survey the surroundings. The moment he did, his eyes suddenly turned wide as he saw that there were a lot of corpses scattered around.

All of them seemed to have suffered from corruption of corrupted mana just like the knight lying in front of him.

He quickly stood up and went to check their conditions. After looking around and examining their bodies, Shin realized that they had been in this state for quite some time.

He was frowning his brows when he suddenly heard some movements from the nearby bush. Turning his head toward that direction, and focusing his senses on it, he noticed that someone seemed to be in there.

Walking carefully, and putting his guard up, Shin walked over while cutting the bushes blocking his path. When he walked a little further in, he saw a knight leaning on a tree while enduring unimaginable pain and pressing on a gruesome wound on his waist.

Realizing that this knight seemed to be with the rest behind him, he quickly walked over and checked his condition.

The knight seemed to have sensed his presence and forced himself to raise his head and open his eyes with great difficulty.

Seeing Shin, particularly catching a glimpse of the signature mask under the shade of the hood that Shin was wearing, the knight forced a smile. "Gr-... greetings, S-... Sir Envoy."

Shin raised his brows a little when he heard how the knight had addressed him. He then realized that this knight might be one of the colleagues of the Village Chief when he was still a knight under the Righteous Churches.

"Are you from the village that Village Chief Choi has built?" asked Shin as he bent over while checking the wounds of the knight.

The knight smiled bitterly before nodding his head. "I am with the village chief since he is a captain of the Templar Knights."

"We heard from the village chief that it is because of Sir Envoy that we managed to escape our fates under the hands of those monsters (mindless vampires)," he added, thanking Shin.

Shin realized that there was no saving this knight even if he cast the 'Sacred Light' elemental skill under his skillset. Even the high-quality potions, particularly the Master Rank Health Potion, would not be helpful either.

Understanding his current situation, the knight smiled bitterly when he saw the helplessness in Shin's eyes. "You don't have to feel sorry-... Sir Envoy. All-... all of us are meant to see our end when it is time. Ours-... just happen to arrive earlier than the others."

Seeing that the knight was struggling to talk, Shin understood that he had to ask the main issue. "What happened to the village? And where are the residents as well as the village chief?"

Hearing that, the knight smiled bitterly before saying. "Those-... those wretches suddenly attack the village when-... when we are in a hunt for food."

"They-... come from the sea along with-... an army of corrupted monsters. They razed the village to the ground-... and abducted the residents-... and brought them toward the sea."

The knight paused for a moment as he endured the pain before continuing in great difficulty. "The-... village chief tried to protect the village and buy some time for some of the villagers to escape. But-... there are some powerful people from the cult-... which overpowered him."

"The villagers-... are all captured by them-... along with the village chief-... while seriously injuring us, who tried to fight and rescue them," pausing for another moment, the knight suddenly remembered something. "They also seemed to be... trying to experiment something in the village-... but failed due to some unknown reason."

"They-... then retreated toward the sea," he added before having a hard time maintaining his breathing.

Shin knew that this knight was already at his limits. He slightly nodded before contemplating the clues he had just gotten. "The sea, huh?"

After thinking about these things, he turned back to the knight, who was already at the end of his ropes. Shin was trying to decide whether to end the suffering of the knight or leave.

But when he saw the desperate expression that the knight was giving him, seemingly asked him to end this suffering already.

Sighing, Shin unsheathed the [Yamato] before placing it vertically before him and closing his eyes. He chanted the prayers meant to honor the heroes of the Righteous Church.

He then stabbed the sword accurately at the heart of the knight, making it as quick and painless as possible.

After that, he cleared the area, cutting the trees and bushes, before gathering all the corpses of the fallen knights. He piled them together before burning them with the Eternal Flame, which also purified their corrupted body so that they would not affect the forest.

He was sure that it was the reason why the Corrupted Cult left their bodies behind.

Shin watched the corpses of the knights turn into ashes before using the powers of Earth and Metal to make the ground sink and close it. At the same time, he also summoned a huge boulder with the help of those elements before engraving some words on it to honor the fallen knights.

He stared at this monument or tombstone that he had built before turning around and exploring the forest a little more to make sure that he did not miss any corrupted corpses of the knights.

In the meantime, inside the base that God's Paradise had within the Golden City after garrisoning here, Jia was currently studying the battle videos she had recorded earlier.

Not long after, Sheryl, the team's main marksman, suddenly entered the room and saw their healer was as busy as she had always been. "Why are you watching them again? Afraid that you have overlooked anything?"

Jia gave her a sidelong glance before replying. "It will never hurt to study our competitors a little more."

Sheryl thought for a moment before nodding her head. "Knowing yourself and knowing your enemy will always help you in future battles."

She then turned back to Jia before asking. "So, how many weaknesses have you listed now?"

Jain collected her thoughts briefly before answering. "They are strong. Stupidly strong on that of that, especially individually. But there are quite a lot of weaknesses when it comes to being a team."

"Aside from Simba, Siegfried, and Arielle – the rest of the team are quite disorganized when put in a team. They have the basic teamwork and decent understanding of each other, but it is not solid enough to match the teams on our level, who have been working together for a very long time."

"That knight Owen and the archer Ithilien are quite a good duo as well as that guy Archimedes with the Wingman Race and that Lightning Mage Daulla, who have better teamwork. But if they are put together in a team with the rest, they could not synergize that well, especially when faced with long-time partners like us."

"The assassin Diablo and that vampire Alucard are pretty powerful too, but their respective styles don't match with the rest as well... or at least not yet. As for the beastmaster Akailu, he possesses a great understanding of his class and knows when to use his advantages in battle, but he doesn't know how to properly work with the team."

"As solo players, these guys are quite hard to deal with, but quite 'weak' during a team battle, which is one of the main factors of the upcoming United Cup."

"Then there is that strange summoner or necromancer of sort. He is quite an odd member of the group. He could be their secret weapon or a self-poison depending on how he performs."

She paused for a moment before continuing. "That is for the member assessment that I can see. As for the other aspects of being a team, they are also lacking in a certain area, particularly in having someone who can put a debuff on their opponents."

"Team battles are filled with a lot of unexpected developments. There were also a series of situations that you have to deal with while countering your opposition."

"Putting debuffs on the opposing side to limit their movements and lessen their advantages. Such a member is crucial in a team battle, especially when it is a chaotic one such as the team battles in the United Cup."

"The Empyrean Talons have quite a lineup, especially when it comes to firepower, but they are still lacking in quite a few areas," she added as she crossed her arms in front of her.

Hearing her assessment, Sheryl suddenly joined Jia in watching the battle videos while discussing. She particularly paid more attention to Alucard as she was completely suppressed by the guy during their previous battles.

Moreover, she also wanted to study the playstyle of Alucard, especially after seeing the resemblance of his techniques with the two rivals that she had in the previous game that she majored in.

While they were watching, Susanoo suddenly entered and saw them. "There you are. What are you two doing here? We are about to head out to clear some places in this region."

"We are garrisoned here, so we better do our job. The city provides quite a lot of benefits after all, especially such a high mana density and top-class Battle Arena," he added while leaning on the door jamb and crossing his arms.

Jia looked at him and refuted. "Aren't the others also arriving here? We are migrating anyway, so there is no need for all of us to be around."

"We can wait until the Frozen Kingdom is available before forming an expedition team. I reckon that the borders of the kingdom will be open tomorrow or the day after," she added before turning back to studying the battle videos.

Sheryl, on the other hand, squinted her eyes as she scrutinized Susanoo with her gaze. "Where is Kallavan? I seem to remember that it is his turn to oversee the activities of our team this time."

Susanoo awkwardly avoided her gaze before clearing his throat. He then betrayed his friend without any hesitation after feeling the pressure from her gaze. "He said that the Heavenly Resto-Bar of the Saint Heaven Kingdom is quite renowned, so he wants to try them out."

Sherly and Jia clicked their tongues when she heard those words before shaking their heads. They then ignored him and went back to what they were doing.

At this point, Ashura suddenly walked over. "Susanoo, come with me for a moment. I heard from our sources that Zero is around. Let's go try challenging him."

Hearing that, Susanoo could not help looking at his commander while suppressing the twitching of his mouth. "Ashura, don't you feel tired at all? You just have an intense battle with Sickarius, yet here you are asking for trouble with Zero?"

Ashura shrugged his shoulders, seemingly saying that he could not do anything about it. He then smiled and added. "It seems like coming to this kingdom is the right decision after all."

Susanoo helplessly shook his head before following his commander.

Ding

That was when they received a sudden notification from the system, which made them pause their tracks.

Chapter 1389: The Hype of the Frozen Kingdom, and a Cooperation

...

A sudden regional announcement shook the entire player bases of the neighboring kingdoms and empires around the Frozen Kingdom. The announcement told everyone that the borders of the said kingdom were opened to the public.

This came a little too sudden since the players were expecting that it would be opened after a day or two more. But it seemed like an unexpected event occurred that made the kingdom open its borders much earlier.

Regardless, this did not stop the players from flocking toward the Frozen Kingdom to explore this newly opened high-level neutral kingdom.

But it did not take long for everyone to realize that getting into the kingdom was easier said than done. It was because they all needed to traverse a quite high-level region before getting there. These regions were filled with high-level monsters, which would be a major obstacle for them.

Aside from that, the said regions were also quite large to traverse, which required quite an effort to traverse. Their supplies and energies would already be exhausted before they could even reach their destination.

This was where the significance of the Golden City and Gold Mountain came into play. With the city being situated in the middle of the Sky Deceiving Valley, the players would be able to save a lot of time, effort, and resources when traveling toward the Frozen Kingdom.

Not only that but there was also a special teleportation formation connected to the city, which the players could use to enter the Frozen Kingdom much easier.

Moreover, the teleportation formation was also surrounded by an advanced settlement that the players could use as some sort of base when adventuring the kingdom.

This teleportation formation that Shin had stolen from Immortal during their previous clash in the Frozen Kingdom. The formation indeed came in handy, especially when the Hand of Midas was able to build a decent settlement around it along with a defensive formation that would be able to fend off and confuse the stray monsters roaming around it.

With this benefit, a lot of players immediately flocked toward the Golden City, not caring about the five gold entry fees on top of the teleportation fee that was being collected.

This was quite a rip-off or sort, but the players did not care, particularly the elites and experts, since the return that they would get once they arrived at the Frozen Kingdom would be able to cover their losses.

Shiella was grinning from ear to ear when she saw all of these. Her strategy indeed worked out and even exceeded it in some way.

Partnering with her brother was indeed the right choice. She was able to foresee this the moment she heard the plan that Shin had, which was why she did not ask much when Shin gave her his proposal.

Moreover, this was just the start of everything. Once the players realized how hard it was to explore the regions in the Frozen Kingdom, they would have to go back and develop in a place with a slightly lower difficulty, which was what the Sky Deceiving Valley had.

The hype of the Frozen Kingdom would last for quite a while before everyone was able to calm down, especially when the exploring players repeatedly stumble upon a lot of things such as finding a pack of Dire Artic Wolves, which was filled with Level 175 Chieftain Rank Monsters that were comparable to Level 150 Lord Rank Monsters.

There was also a nest of Wyverns or a tribe of Glacial Trolls, which were Level 200 Lord Rank Monsters.

A lot of people died during the process of discovering them, but they did not mind as they were too excited to see such monsters.

Aside from these, there were also a few additions to the game that made the people very excited.

A new religion called Dragon Worshippers was added right after the Frozen Kingdom became available to the public. When the players looked at the official website to see what kind of classes were under the said religion, everyone became even crazier.

It was because the class names alone were more than enough to make them want to switch their classes. Names such as Wyvern Rider, Draconic Fighter, and Silver Hunter were so cool that the players wanted to reach Frozen City as soon as possible.

But the said city was situated in the deeper parts of the kingdom, which was currently impossible to reach with the current strength of the players.

Aside from that, the description of each class indicated that these special classes were potential Ascended Classes that could lead the players to promote their respective races to ascended ones.

However, they were unaware that converting to those classes required them to have a lot of skill and decent strength to pass the difficult trials prepared by the Dragon Worshipers Temple.

Only those who were worthy could become Ascended.

Speaking of Ascended Races, new races were also added along with the opening of the Frozen Kingdom. The said races were the Vampire Race, a cool race that seemed to fall under the undead category, and the Barbarian Race, which was from a Northern Warrior Tribe living deep in the frozen hills and glacial plains of the kingdom.

The Vampire Race was quite a special one since it did not have any specific classes under it. But it was an evolving race that could fully rival Transcendent Races once it reached its full potential, especially the rank of Vampire Monarch.

On the contrary, the Barbarian Race was filled with another set of Ascended Classes such as the Wolf Riders, Giant Descendants, Avalanche Defenders, Glacial Archers, and Combat Shamans.

With these new classes available, the players wanted to head over to the territory of the Barbarians to convert their race and switch their classes.

But there was one problem that the players had to face before reaching the Northern Warrior Tribe – the players had to traverse the frozen land filled with monsters spanning from level 200 to 250, which indicated that these classes could only be available to top elites of the game.

Or at least until most of the mainstream players reached such levels and were powerful enough to explore those places.

While everyone was busy exploring the newly opened kingdom, Shin was currently dealing with his problem.

He stood at the coast of the Sky Deceiving Valley, looking at the horizon in front of him. He raised his brows as he recalled what the fallen knight had told him earlier. "They are abducted toward the sea, huh?"

Thinking about that, Shin suddenly leaped into the sky and summoned his wings before flying toward the horizon. He was planning to look for the place where the Corrupted Cult had brought the villagers.

Swoosh!

At the same time, he also summoned Grimrace, who just finished digesting all the residual powers of the Sea Soul and was promoted to a real Supreme Elemental, and Hanzo, who was very knowledgeable.

While flying, Shin also used his stealth skills to hide his presence. If the Corrupted Cult indeed had a base here, then it would not be strange for them to build a defensive formation that could detect intruders.

Grimrace and Hanzo did the same as such a trick was nothing to them.

Not long after, Shin finally found an island that seemed to be inhabited for a moment. At first glance, there seemed to be nothing wrong with this island, but before he could even land on its coast, Hanzo and Grimrace suddenly stopped him.

"There is an isolation barrier and illusion formation surrounding the entire island. There is also a quite strong defensive formation on that of those. Entering it senselessly will alert the opposing side," said Hanzo as he scanned the entire island. There was a purple aura that was shrouding his body, preventing others from seeing him.

When Shin heard that, his suspicion instantly came true. If such formations were currently protecting such an inhabited island indicated that something was happening inside.

"Can you deal with it?" asked Shin.

Hanzo thought for a moment before replying. "Bypassing such a formation was not a problem, but I will not be much of use to you later since I have to restrain the entire formation from acting strangely and informing the other side from noticing our presence."

"Don't worry, Old Man. With me here, there will not be a problem. I can slaughter everyone without a problem," sneered Grimrace, clearly showing that he was eager to create some trouble.

This nutjob indeed became much stronger after successfully being promoted, but it seemed like his personality became even more troublesome.

Shin could already imagine the future headaches that would come because of this troublemaker elemental spirit.

Since the clock was ticking, Shin did not hesitate any longer and turned to Hanzo. "Let's do it."

Receiving his orders, Hanzo extended his index finger forward before stroking downwards. Then a void suddenly appeared in front of them as if a zipper in space was opened.

Hanzo jumped first, then followed by Grimrace. Shin only stepped into it after learning that there was no danger on the other side.

Swoosh!

When Shin stepped on the island, he was immediately greeted by a foul smell that almost made him puke. At the same time, he also felt the mana filling the air was so corrupted that it was visible to the naked eye.

Raising his head and scanning his surroundings, Shin could not help but frown deeply. It was because he discovered that the entire place was completely different from what he had seen from the outside.

"So, the isolation barrier and illusion formation are meant to hide this, huh?" mumbled Shin after adjusting himself. He also used the Power of Brilliant Sun to purify the mana that he was breathing and expel the toxins mixed in it.

After observing the surroundings for a little more, Shin summoned Blackie and asked her and Grimrace to explore the island. "Go to the center to see if the villagers are there."

"Don't do anything unnecessary until I give you permission and save the villagers if you see them in danger," he instructed, particularly glaring at Grimrace.

Seeing the disappointed look on Grimrace's face, Shin suddenly added. "You will have your fun later once we secure the safety of the villagers."

Hearing that, this Eldritch Psychic Spirit suddenly became lively and eager to do a good job.

After that, Grimrace and Blackie disappeared into the forest under their respective stealth abilities.

Shin then walked forward, advancing cautiously along with Hanzo, who was keeping the formation in check.

He was a little deep into the island when a summon suddenly appeared in front of him. Surprisingly, or unsurprisingly, this person saw somewhat familiar.

Daven looked at Shin and said. "I know that you will be coming. What do you think? Interested in accepting our proposal?"

Shin raised his brows slightly after hearing what the other party had said. From the look of it, Daven had been waiting for him here since the time they met each other in the Shunkai Forest.

This time, Shin did not brush the latter off as he knew that there was something more to it than what he could see from this island. He decided to hear them out and figure out what they were after. "What do you want?"

Hearing that Shin did not instantly reject him, unlike their first encounter, Daven suddenly smiled and said. "Since you no longer need our help in fending off those people hunting you, we are adding a few more conditions along with the information that we are providing you."

"We will help you save the sacrifices and let them leave this island safe and sound on top of the previous conditions that I have proposed," he added.

Shin did not immediately respond to the other party and kept his silence.

Seeing that, Daven continued. "We will also not harm you in any way or plot anything against you or the villagers. You can even list all the conditions that you want, and we will accept it as long as it is an honest partnership."

"Honest, huh?" said Shin skeptically as he knew very well not to trust the words of these people. Regardless, he still asked. "So, like I said – what do you guys want from me?"

Daven smiled as he answered. "We just don't want you to get involved in our matters when the 'honored' guest that we are waiting for arrives on this island."

"Don't worry. That guest is from the Corrupted Cult, and this is an 'internal' conflict that we have to deal with ourselves," he added after seeing a glint in Shin's eyes.

'It looks like they are afraid that I will sabotage their mission,' he thought as he got the confirmation that Immortal and his people indeed betrayed the Corrupted Cult.

Given their encounter with Shin, it seemed like Immortal had already learned his lesson and did not want to clash until he had absolute confidence in his plans.

Shin considered the proposal while keeping his guard up. His priority was to save the villagers and sabotage whatever the Corrupted Cult was planning to do here. Since it was quite near to his territory, he did not want any trouble to arise in the future after leaving some loose ends.

His second objective seemed to align with what Daven was planning to do, so he felt that it was somewhat plausible.

After considering it for a moment, he suddenly took out a pair of prison prism and said. "I need some assurance, so let me capture those two hiding behind the trees until this cooperation is over."

"We can write additional conditions for it in the contract," he added with a tone that Daven could not reject.

Regardless, Daven smiled in satisfaction before complementing Shin. "It seems like you are more amazing than what our boss has described."

At the same time, Rust, who was the ' betrayer' of the Silent Night, and a swordsman of a fallen race stepped out from behind the trees that they were hiding.

Rust was wearing a deep frown while the swordsman was glaring sharply at Shin, but they never voiced out any complaint, seemingly accepting the decision that Daven would make.

"You have our deal," Daven smiled as he agreed with what Shin had proposed. It seemed like he was completely unbothered using his comrades as a form of collateral.

Seeing that expression, Shin could not help but become a little more suspicious of the situation. 'It seems like their mission is much bigger than I expected.'

Chapter 1390: The Apostles (Part 1)

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With Daven's help, Shin could easily sneak inside the island without relying on Hanzo's assistance. He was able to dodge most of the monitoring formations scattered in the entire island and even avoided the scouts of the Corrupted Cult.

Due to this, Hanzo also did not have to suppress the barrier surrounding the island, relieving some burden from his shoulders.

But despite that being the case, Shin did not let his guard down even for a second. Knowing how cunning these guys were, he would not let himself be caught in a trap just like what happened to the rest of the Silent Night.

Not long after, Blackie and Grimrace, who he had sent to investigate the area earlier, finally contacted him through their connection. They told him that they had found the location of the missing villagers.

The villagers were currently gathered in front of an altar built by the cult members, unconscious. Blackie reassured him that they were only unconscious and none of them were seriously injured or died.

Shin nodded slightly and instructed them to hide while waiting for more orders.

Daven and Shin traverse the island in a specific route, where they avoid most of the traps and monitoring formations that the cult had set up.

A few moments later, the pair finally arrived at the center of the island, where most of the cult members were gathered.

The two hid behind the trees and bush while erasing their presence as much as possible. Daven did not need to do much since he still carried the aura unique to the cult, which would help him disguise himself.

Shin, on the other hand, seemed to have merged with the surroundings after employing the stealth skills inside the game along with the techniques under the Heavenly Black Tortoise Method of the Perfected Four Symbol Scripture.

After seeing Shin 'disappear' right beside him, Daven could not help but raise his brows deeply. He also felt that he had to reevaluate Shin given the tricks that he could use aside from the data that they had gathered.

Looking through the bushes, Shin saw that most of the cult members were currently concentrated in this area. All of them were currently kneeling on the ground and seemingly praying. Their simultaneous chants were giving Shin a shiver due to how sinister their tones and voices were.

After seeing the cult members, Shin gazed at the surroundings, closely observing everything. But after not finding the villagers despite the huge altar at the center of the cult members, he could not help but frown deeply under his mask.

Seemingly able to read what was running inside Shin's head, Daven suddenly added. "The sacrifices are gathered on another part of the island because they must be placed on specific locations to form the cult's pentagram."

Hearing that, Shin suddenly asked. "Are you telling me that the villagers were not the only ones that got abducted?"

Daven chuckled when he heard that. "Don't tell me that you are expecting that the residents of a small village are enough to sacrifice for the Cult Ceremony?"

He then paused for a moment to turn back at the altar not far from them before continuing. "This is the center of the pentagram. It is where the cult members had to concentrate their powers to call upon the Divine Demon that the cult worships."

"They are using this opportunity to build the connection between this realm and the Divine Demon, taking advantage of the crack that the Demonic Churches have created due to the summoning of the Glutton Demon King of the Flies, Beelzebub."

Hearing that explanation, Shin could not help but raise his brows as it seemed like this was somewhat connected to the recent events in the Sacred Light Kingdom.

Seeing that Shin had most likely figured out everything, Daven continued. "As for why the cult has chosen this place-..."

Even before Daven completed his words, Shin had already figured out the reason. "It is because the Frozen Kingdom is near here. Due to the kingdom opening its borders to the outside world, the overwhelming mana that accumulated for a very long time within that place is going to leak outside. It will be the best source that the cult can use for such a ceremony."

He then paused and gave Daven a sidelong glance before continuing. "I don't know how these guys are going to gather that residual mana, but I guess that they are using a similar method that the Demonic Churches have used in the Sacred Light Kingdom."

"Now that I think about it... that is also an event where the Demonic Churches and Corrupted Cult have collaborated. Since they are using each other, I can assume that one of the reasons why the cult participates in that event is to copy the methods of the Demonic Churches," he added after a brief thought.

Hearing Shin figuring out the methods that the Corrupted Cult had used, Daven could not help but feel a little scared of this person. He now had gotten another reason why their leader repeatedly suffered losses against Shin.

'No wonder the boss is gathering us much earlier than we have planned. With an enemy like this, our plans will most likely fail if we approach it like we used to do,' he thought before opening a virtual map that projected the entire island.

He pointed out a few places before saying. "These places are the main points of the pentagram. The sacrifices are most likely in these places along with the sub-altars."

"If you want to save them, then you must conduct the rescue simultaneously without missing a second since the altars will suck their life force the moment all the preparations for the ceremony are completed."

"Or at least destroy those altars before they start devouring the life force of those people," he was about to add more when Shin suddenly interrupted him.

"But I can't my move until the guest that you are waiting for arrives," Shin thought for a moment before adding. "Or should I say... until the item that that 'guest' has brought is here?"

'What a sharp individual,' thought Daven solemnly as he started to get a clearer look at how scary Shin could be. 'It seems like trying to hide something from him will not work either.'

"We can't get our hands on that item if the sacrifices suddenly disappear. You should understand what it means, don't you?" said Daven.

Shin nodded his head as he decided to wait here before making his move.

In the meantime, Daven suddenly took out five cubes from his inventory before handing it to Shin. "These are similar to prison prisms but can hold more people in comparison."

"This is also similar to the ones that those guys have used when capturing those sacrifices," he added.

Shin took the prisms and inspected them true 'True Sight' to make sure that there was no underlying trap hidden in them. After confirming that there was nothing strange about this item, even with the help of Solus and Hanzo, who told examined them through their respective means, he kept the prisms inside his inventory while waiting for the right opportunity to move.

He then waited in their hiding place until a group of hood individuals arrived at the center of the island.

Shin knew that the guest that Daven was waiting was among them given that the latter got ready to move.

Seeing that, Shin went on the move and went to the other side of the altar, opposite the place where Daven was hiding. He wanted to observe what Daven was trying to do, but he did not want the latter to see his movements, so he went to hide in another place.

At the same time, he also summoned Vladimir, Astaroth, and Solus and instructed them to head toward the other places where the other NPCs were being held.

He told them to wait for his signal before they could make their moves.

A few moments later, Shin saw that someone from the hooded figures that just arrived walked out of the group and climbed to the platform where the altar was located.

Watched closely and saw that this person had taken out something from under his cloak. Upon closer inspection, Shin saw that it was a strange-looking box.

Bang!

When the hooded person opened that box, a dark and sinister aura suddenly overwhelmed the entire surroundings before spreading in every direction, seemingly trying to envelop the entire island.

Shin felt somewhat suppressed by the pressure that was pressing on him. But his Battle Physique was able to withstand the pressure and freed him from its restraints.

After his recent battle against Ashura, the Battle Physique seemed to have become more active and started giving him surprises from time to time. It even started to integrate with the Sword Heart that he recently acquired with the help of the old elven seer of the Sacred Light Kingdom.

Squinting his eyes to get a clear look at the item hidden inside that box, Shin saw that it was a black pearl filled with corrupted mana. Even from a distance, Shin could see the black smoke that was formed due to the high concentration of corruption.

At this moment, Shin finally realized why Immortal coveted this item. With such condensed corrupted mana it contained, this item must be a rare treasure even within the cult.

He then started to become curious about what Immortal was planning to use this weapon for.

Then, when the hooded figure placed the pearl at the center of the altar, the chants of the cultists behind him and around the altar started to become louder.

At the same time, crimson and black lights started to illuminate the entire island, indicating that the cult pentagram was about to activate.

Shin frowned deeply as he still could not see Daven making his move. If he waited a little longer, then the villagers and the other sacrifices would lose their lives.

He was starting to have doubts when a huge shadow was suddenly cast over the center of the island, indicating that a humongous figure appeared above them.

Raising his head, Shin saw a familiar creature flying in the sky. It was a Zombie Dragon that fought against his Eclipse Dragon before.

Standing at the head of the dragon was the familiar enemy that clashed against him multiple times.

"Immortal," mumbled Shin solemnly when he sensed the current power that Immortal had. It was so overwhelming that it could even suppress him with such a distance. Moreover, he could also sense that there was another power mixed in the usual corrupted mana that Immortal possessed.

"Demonic Energy?" the expression that Shin frowned deeply as his tone became slightly grave. This guy must have done something strange once again and it even made him much stronger.

"Immortal! You traitor! What are you planning to do now!?"

At the same time, the person standing on the altar and in front of the black pearl shouted at Immortal after seeing the huge dragon. There was a clear anger in his tone, indicating that there was a deep enmity between them.

Immortal stood haughty in the sky before grinning sinisterly. "Elder, if you want to blame someone, then blame yourself for being incompetent."

Hearing those words, the cult elder suddenly looked at the cult members behind him and pointed toward the sky. "What are you waiting for? Capture that bastard and prevent him from getting in the way of our sacred ceremony!"

The cult members were finally wakened up from their daze and started preparing to attack.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

But before they could even do anything, the shadows underneath their feet suddenly moved and spitted out a bunch of skeleton knights.

They appeared behind every member of the cult without a sound and started massacring everyone, both the NPCs and the players included.

The only person who was not attacked was the leader of the players, who was acting as the leader of the group. He grabbed his cloak and threw it on the ground, revealing his true appearance. "Ah~! I can finally stretch myself."

"You-...! What are you doing Kazin? What is the meaning of this?" said one of the players that came with him.

The guy named Kazin did not respond and just smiled at that player. He then took out a spear and started stabbing the person repeatedly. "You have been an eyesore since the start of this mission. Let me vent out all my frustrations on you."

Not long after, the only person left was the cult elder. He was standing alone while being surrounded by the skeleton knights.

Then Kazin and Daven gathered as Immortal descended from the sky. They stood on each of his sides silently, acting as his loyal subordinates.

Seeing this, Shin quickly issued a command to his Elemental Spirits to destroy the rest of the altars through their mind connection.

He was having a bad feeling about this, but he was not that concerned as he also felt that could deal with the current situation.

Moreover, his main objective in coming here was to rescue the villagers and the rest of the people who were captured by the cult.

Thinking about this, Shin summoned all his clones and left them behind to watch over the situation before he headed toward the locations where the captured people were located. He was planning to save them first before coming back here.

"Let's see what this lunatic is planning to do later. I have to make sure the safety of the villagers first."

