

Destiny 1521

Chapter 1521 Potential Rivals

.....

While most of the World Gaming Organization departments were busy with the 'countermeasures', those assigned to organize the United Cup were busy taking care of the tournament and ensuring everything was going smoothly.

The first few rounds of the early stages were already in full swing, eliminating those weaker teams.

The top teams and those with decent potential were already making their presence known, attracting some attention in the process.

Currently, two of the well-known teams would be competing against each other for the first time in the double-elimination round.

Arthur and Leonard were gathered inside Shin's room as they wanted to watch the competition together.

"Hey, Shin. Did Cloe scold you that much? And why did she look so angry when she left?" asked Arthur as he sat on the nearby sofa.

Leonard sighed as he answered for Shin. "Isn't it because of you, who insisted on coming here despite knowing what is happening?"

Arthur shrugged his shoulder. "I am just worried about this guy. Cloe has become so violent these last few days. What if she beats Shin to the point that he falls into a coma once again? I don't want to deal with that freak once again."

"You mean Uno?" asked Shin, knowing who Arthur was talking about. He then smirked. "For your information – that guy can hear you right now. We shared the same body, after all, and we can switch places at will, so you better be careful with what you say."

"Tsk!" Arthur clicked his tongue but did not say anything more.

On the other hand, Leonard looked at Shin with an amazed look before saying. "An alter ego. I don't know that something like that still exists in this era. And to think that it is someone that I am close with."

"Have you met some Mentalist Doctors to check on you, Shin Bro?" asked Leonard.

Shin chuckled as he heard those words. "Hah! It is not a problem or illness to deal with. Moreover, I like it better this way."

"Uno and I have been together since I was young. We are no different from being brothers, so I will appreciate it if you guys get along well," he added.

The three chatted as Leonard and Shin set the virtual screen.

"What's so good about the teams that will be competing today, anyway? For the two of you want to watch their battle," asked Shin.

Despite being considered one of the top gods of the game, and possessing an official Godlike Title, Shin was still relatively new to the circle compared to these two veteran gods of the virtual world as they had played quite a lot of games already.

Arthur thought for a moment before replying. "There is not much to look at if you ask me. After all, this is just the early stages of the tournament and it is a double-elimination format, so there is no need for either team to reveal their trump cards."

"But I just want to confirm something from this battle," he added as he leaned on the sofa.

"And that is?" asked Shin

"The current gap that we have from other players," said Arthur before adding. "As you already know, our group is somewhat ahead of the outsiders since we have discovered quite a few things before the others did."

"Take the hidden mechanics that you have told us – the special combat states – for example. The Reality Manifestation is already powerful enough to create a huge gap between apex experts within the game despite them supposedly having on the same level."

"There are also some divisions between our combat states and others. So far, the most powerful combat states within the game are the 'Reality Manifestation', 'Hyperactive Immersion', and 'Perfect Demonification' – as the physical and ability enhancements."

"Then there is the 'Magical Formation' for mental and magic-related enhancements which is divided into multiple categories just like Alice's 'Elemental Ignition' and Flouree's 'Magic Circles'."

"These are just a few that are known to us. We still don't know how many are out there, who have their respective versions."

He then paused for a moment as he recalled something before continuing. "Then there are the lesser ones that are learned from the regular Mysterious Instructors. However, they are quite inferior to what we have since we have discovered ours on our own."

This time, Leonard remembered something and chimed in. "There is also another hidden conditional mechanism that is not inferior to the combat states just like the 'Demon Contracts' of the Demonic Players and the 'Dark Corruption' of those from the Corrupted Cult."

"These two have become popular these days after those players that sided with the Evil Faction discovered them. Some even popularized it during the ongoing war."

"Those who sided with the Righteous Churches, on the other hand, match it with 'Divine Blessing' and 'Holy Possession'."

Leonard paused for a moment as he knitted his brow. "The tricky part is those who have discovered the suitable combat states can't use these conditional mechanisms for some reason."

"Or to be more precise, they felt quite restricted when they tried using those under their respective combat state, resulting in their abilities being weakened instead. This is why they choose to use their combat state rather than using these external helps."

Arthur nodded when he heard this and added. "I have also tried it, but the result is the same. It seems like my Reality Manifestation is incompatible with the Divine Blessing of my faction even if it is meant for my race and class."

"I've tried comparing the two when using them independently, and I still rather use my combat state rather than using the latter since I can showcase my full potential that way."

Shin frowned a little as he commented. "The gap between the regular players and the experts somewhat shrinks due to this, don't you think?"

"The true experts managed to find their respective combat states while those players with weaker abilities chose to use external means to match their level."

Hearing his assessment, Leonard and Arthur nodded their heads

"Now that you have put it that way. It does feel like it is meant to be that way," Arthur repeatedly nodded. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he became.

He then stretched his body and arms while commenting. "It seems like those developers are cooking something, and it is quite good for once. I am quite excited about it."

Seeing the disgusting smile on Arthur's face, Shin could not help but shake his head and say. "You... wipe that smile of yours. It seems like you are planning to cause some trouble somewhere."

"Are you not excited about this? I think this game is much better than all the games that I have played since young," said Arthur.

Hearing this, Leonard paused before nodding his head. "I also feel that way. And it is now felt much harder than «True Era Online» now that we are in the Awakened Continent."

Arthur paused before nodding his head. "Yeah. It seems like it."

Then both Arthur and Leonard fell silent before the latter added. "I just hope that it will not end up with the same fate as that game."

Hearing those bitter words and sensing the strange shift in the atmosphere, Shin turned at the two before asking curiously. "Why? What happened in that game? I have been curious about this for quite a while, especially when most of the top experts in the virtual world seem to be from that game."

The two exchanged looks with one another before awkwardly laughing.

"Ha, Ha, let's forget about it. It is not much of a big deal."

"I think we are getting way off our topic. What are we talking about earlier again? Ah! We are talking about the teams that will be competing in today!"

The two tried to change the topic to the best of their abilities, making Shin more suspicious and curious about it at the same time. 'What are these two trying to hide?'

But he did not press further as he knew that they would tell him about it when the time was right.

Not long after, they finished setting up everything for the watch party. But the broadcast that they were waiting for had yet to start, so they could only wait while watching some random battles that were currently being broadcasted.

During that time, Cloe came back along with Lorraine, who was quite excited about this gathering.

"It has been a while since we hang out like this. What are we watching this time?" Lorraine sat shamelessly beside Leonard right after putting the snacks that she had brought on the table in front of them.

Cloe silently sat beside Shin, seemingly occupied with different thoughts filling her head.

At the same time, Lorraine recalled something and asked the three. "Are you guys not going to training inside the virtual space that you have prepared? I think your team is already training there."

"There is still a lot of time before that. Let me watch these old buddies first," replied Arthur nonchalantly while opening a bag of chips.

"Old buddies?" asked Shin with a frown.

Leonard pointed his chin at the virtual screen before answering. "One of the teams competing later is from the group he played with from the previous games."

"Are they good?" asked Shin again.

Hearing that, Arthur smirked before flashing a smug look on his face. "Heh! Since when have I played with trash players? Of course, they are good."

Shin's interest was somewhat piqued this time after learning that Arthur had some history with these players.

Chapter 1522 Potential Rivals (Part 2)

.....

"One of the teams is composed of Arthur's old buddies. They are from a group from a certain competitive game called «Final Survivor». It is a survival royal rumble game."

"It is a type of game where the players are going to be dropped by an aircraft to an isolated island where they have to fight for survival."

"They did not have anything in them right on the drop-off, but they can collect a variety of weapons and supplies that are scattered around the island while fighting against the other participants."

"It is a quite popular game during that time, and you can play it solo or form a team with your friends. It also created a quite competitive tournament where quite a lot of experts have gathered."

"However, it falls out of popularity once some games with more advanced technology and more interesting plotlines started to gain popularity."

"Arthur and his team are one of the top teams during the game's peak, so it will not be hard to imagine how strong they are."

Leonard was introducing one of the teams to Shin as they were waiting for the broadcast of this featured matchup.

Arthur seemed to reminisce his memories of that game and suddenly injected. "It is just a pity that such a good game has been forgotten by the many."

"Fortunately, some people with withy mind come up with an idea of putting that game mode into one of the categories of the competitive tournaments in these times."

"It even became one of the main events in the Hegemon Cup and Guild Wars," he added while laughing.

"How about the other team?" asked Shin.

Leonard thought for a moment before replying. "From the members they have, it seems like they are a part of the Hien Workshop. It is one of the top gaming organizations without the circle."

"They have quite a lot of experts in their ranks. Most of them are professionals who regularly participate in every official tournament."

"They have produced quite several skilled players who are famous in the entire circle. The majority of them are Titled Rankers while the leading players were all Godlike Players or Maverick Gods."

"They are quite a big name in the industry right now," he added as he recalled the members of the said workshop.

"It looks like there are quite a lot of experts out there," commented Shin as he suddenly became more interested in this tournament.

"Of course, there are! Who has no idea how many professional players are out there," said Arthur, laughing.

"At first, these players are quite scattered due to a variety of games competing against one another previously, which is why these players skilled in different of expertise are unable to compete against each other."

"No one ever knows who the best of the best is due to this reason. That is unless they compete in certain tournaments with universal systems. But even then, only a limited number of experts gathered in that place."

"It was until recently when a certain person united all the gaming companies and gathered a lot of experts to form the World Gaming Organization and produce «Destiny's Fate» Online, which dominated the market."

"These experts from different games are now slowly gathering in one place and finally competing against each other."

"Do you know how exciting that is?" asked Arthur with a broad smile plastered on his face.

While they were on the topic, Shin suddenly recalled something. "Ah! Now that we are talking about old buddies-... how about you tell us about that old friend of yours?"

Arthur frowned in confusion and asked. "Who are you referring to?"

Shin grinned evilly as he said. "Have you forgotten? I am talking about that girl we have met in the Frozen Kingdom."

Hearing those words, the other three suddenly came to a realization and quickly gathered closer, looking at Arthur with eyes full of gossip.

"So~? Who is she? An ex-girlfriend perhaps?" Shin pressed further while wearing a teasing smile.

Leonard somewhat knew about the background story but did not know the entirety of it, so he also became very interested in the topic.

Arthur rolled his eyes as he denied their suspicion. "How can it be? We are just old comrades who happen to go in separate ways. We are just old teammates – nothing more."

"Are you sure that it is just that?" asked Cloe as she also became somewhat invested in it. "But from what I can remember, the look of resentment in her eyes is telling us a whole other story."

"Come on~! Fill up the details! It is rare for you to be involved in a 'scandal'," said Lorraine, seemingly trying to escalate the topic to another level.

The corner of Arthur's mouth twitched when he heard her words before trying to avoid the topic. "That's all into it. Really! Look, an amazing match is about to start. Let's pay attention to it."

"Ah-ah! Don't try to dodge this topic. We know that there is more to it! Tell us what you are hiding," urged Lorraine while snatching the snacks that Arthur had.

"Tell us honestly. Is she one of those pursuing you but got rejected?" teased Cloe as she added. "That explains her violent reaction after seeing you."

"The resentment that she had must be so strong that she chose to team up with Immortal just to mess with you," added Shin, agreeing with the others.

The four continued to pester Arthur until he finally gave in. "Sigh~! It is nothing much. She must be sulking about the promise that I made to her."

"Promise? What promise!?" The four urged with excitement as they could smell something fishy about it.

"It is about me joining or forming a team," answered Arthur helplessly. "She first invited me to create a team with her, but I rejected it as I don't like the other members she has chosen."

"They are not up to par with my standards. Then I suddenly heard that she joined the Earners Mercenary Group instead."

Hearing those words, Shin and the other three became somewhat confused until the former asked. "Where is your promise there?"

Arthur paused as the weird expression washed over his face. "I think I told her that I would never join any of the Adventurer Teams or Guilds out there when we entered this game. Then things happened."

He then quickly tried to defend himself by saying. "Well, to be fair, I never joined any of the existing teams, groups, or guilds. I just created one with you guys."

It was the four's turn to have their mouths twitched when they heard those words.

"You should just die," said Cloe.

"I think I should join her in beating you up," added Lorraine.

Shin and Leonard did not say anything immediately, but the expressions on their faces were more than enough to tell that they agreed with the two.

"Trash!"

"Scumbag."

When Arthur heard the comments of his brother, he glared at them before saying. "Then I will wait until you join me on the other side."

They bickered around for quite some time while watching the broadcasted matches until the main event for today finally arrived.

As they listened to the boring commentary of the two commentators on the live broadcast, Leonard suddenly injected. "Why do I feel that watching other commentators become so boring after listening to Miss Bunny and Big Brother David?"

Lorraine glared at him for some reason before turning to Arthur. "Yours is also quite entertaining. What is your pseudonym again?"

"Cassanova?" she added before bursting out with an intense laughter. Whenever she remembered Arthur using this name, she could not help but laugh at him.

The other three also smirked before starting to tease Arthur.

Arthur rolled his eyes at them before saying. "I was invited by the organizers of the tournament previously, but I refuse because we are participating in it."

"Then you should have introduced Miss Bunny and Big Brother David," said Leonard.

"Miss Bunny is in contract with us as the manager of our official fan site along with her editing team for our battle videos. She also has some contracts with Big Sis and the Flying Dragon Corporation for some projects, so I doubt that she will have enough time to deal with these events," replied Arthur with pursed lips.

"I don't think it will restrict her that much," countered Shin as he was somewhat familiar with the contract.

"Hehe! I bet those people from True Sight Industries are regretting their decision to let her go after seeing her recent success," commented Cloe as she knew some information about the incident that happened before they tried to recruit Miss Bunny.

As they were on the topic, Arthur suddenly recalled something before saying it. "Speaking of her. I have a trivia for you."

The other four simultaneously turned their heads to him with piqued interest.

Arthur cleared his throat before adding. "Do you know what her previous profession was before she became a famous commentator and video editor?"

Cloe and Lorraine rolled their eyes at him as they answered.

"Isn't it being a blogger?"

"She is quite a celebrity during that time."

"Nah-ah!" Arthur waved his finger in front of them as he continued. "Even before that."

"She is quite a good player back then. She is a very skilled scout and an information merchant during her early career in the virtual world," he quickly added, not waiting for them to guess again.

"She has quite a reputation during that time and a lot of connections. Don't you think she is well connected for just being a commentator and video editor? It is all because of her achievements in the past."

Hearing those words, a flood of ideas suddenly entered Shin's mind. At the same time, he turned to Leonard and asked. "Leo, how is that midget friend of yours doing in our city? Is he settling well?"

Leonard and the others were quite confused when they heard him. They were not quite sure why he changed the topic so suddenly.

But the quick-witted Cloe seemed to have realized something and reacted. "Ah! Don't tell me-...!"

Chapter 1523 Potential Rivals (Part 3)

...

After watching the match, Shin and the rest stopped watching as the next matchups did not interest them.

Watching such a high-intensity battle would always ruin the next matchups if they were not up to par.

Shin walked out of the mansion to spar with Arthur and Leonard. They discussed their thoughts and shared their assessments about the battles that they had watched.

"What do you think? Have you confirmed what you want to see?" asked Shin to Arthur as they walked toward the location where Arthur usually trained these days.

Arthur shrugged his shoulders before saying. "It is not that far from what I am expecting. The hierarchy of the players has become affected by these combat states and special combat mechanics."

"So long as you find the perfect match for an individual, they will be able to match the might of those at the expert level. However, I am still leaning towards the former as it is what suits me the best," he added before turning back. "How about you? What do you think of these experts? Passable?"

Shin thought for a moment before nodding. "They are quite powerful, especially that Gunner and Mage from that group of your old buddies. They are quite decent. It is just a pity that the team doesn't have a good frontline in the team battle, making their lineup a little underwhelming."

"I guess it is because they don't have you since you said you are their main tank during your time playing with them."

"As for the other teammates, they are not that bad either. Just a little bit of training, and they will be able to match those at the highest ranking."

He paused for a moment as he recalled the details of the recent match before continuing. "But those old experts are still way ahead, especially their five leading players. If my estimation is right, then they are at least as strong as Big Sis and Senior Brother, especially when they are still hiding their true powers."

"Well, that is to be expected! They are of the same generation after all. They shouldn't be weaker than Brother Jerimiah and Brother Vincent either as they are from the same batch," nodded Arthur.

"There are others as well. And because of their appearances, things have become more interesting and exciting!"

Shin nodded his head and said. "We should do this regularly whenever there is a good matchup that is worthy of our attention. We can also do it with the other members in the virtual space that you have created so that we can have some discussion with them."

"This will help our recruits more insights into team battles and inspire us as well. You should discuss it with them later when you guys get online later."

Arthur made a snap with his fingers as he added. "That's a good idea! Let's do just that!"

At the same time, Shin suddenly recalled someone from the old teammates of Arthur and suddenly asked. "Another thing – the seemed to be a new member from the team of your old buddies. That young mage with unusual elements."

Arthur thought for a moment, trying to recall who Shin was talking about before replying. "Oh! That Poison Master?"

"Yeah, that one," nodded Shin.

"I think he is Sol. He is not that new. He is a younger brother of an old member. I almost can't recognize him because of how he has changed; he has changed his IGN (In-game Name) as well, but he is an 'old timer' or sort," replied Arthur as he tried to recall that young member.

"We used to take care of him before as he is much younger than all of us and his big brother is one of the vice commanders of the team," he added before asking. "What about him?"

Shin frowned slightly before adding. "This is just my gut feeling, but it seems like he doesn't get along that well with the team. There are instances where he seems to be arguing with the team leader during the battle."

"But he performs quite well compared to the other members despite all of that," he added.

Arthur tried to recall as much information about the team as he could before answering. "I am not sure about this, but I think there are some disputes between him and Aldrin, the team leader."

"I also have not seen Sol's big brother, which is quite odd, especially when he is supposedly one of the main members of their roster since its founding," he added as he found it odd as well.

"I should ask them about it later when I get online," he said before turning to Shin. "What about it? Don't tell me you become interested in that kid?"

"I know that he has some potential, but I don't think trying to snatch him from them is going to be easy," Arthur squinted his eyes as he looked at his brother with suspicion.

Shin fell silent for a moment before shaking his head. "That's not it. I just found him quite interesting."

He then paused for a moment as he added. "And he somewhat reminds me of someone I used to know."

"Some you know?" Arthur raised his brows as he pressed further. "From where? I don't think you have that many friends aside from us since you rarely socialize."

Shin tried to think hard before shaking his head once again. "It is not like that. But I do feel that he resembled someone."

"That is why I am asking you-... WHERE?" urged Arthur, emphasizing his point.

Shin halted his steps, raised his head, and looked at the sky. "From the camp."

After that, he resumed his steps and went ahead of Arthur.

Arthur then was stunned at those words. He was frozen in place as he stared at Shin's back for quite a while, only waking up when Leonard caught up to them and tapped his shoulders.

"Hey! What are you standing here for?" asked Leonard, looking at the strange expression that Arthur wore.

Arthur snapped out of his daze before shaking his head. "Ah! Nothing. It is nothing."

Leonard watched Arthur's back with suspicion as the latter tried to catch up to Shin. He then tilted his head to the side as he stared at their backs with a deep frown.

He then shook his head as he threw those thoughts at the back of his head before following them.

Shin looked at Leonard with a somewhat odd gaze after their sparing match. It took him quite some time to organize his thoughts. "Your Bloodline Powers and the inheritance that you have gotten from the Thunder Lord seem to be in perfect harmony now."

"You even integrated it with your Martial Arts. It is quite a huge progress since our last training," he added as he was impressed with the improvements that Leonard had undertaken.

Moreover, Leonard's style of fighting was also starting to get influenced by the unique energy coming from his bloodline. He was starting to resemble a beast when he was fighting. But it was not a beast that was only using its instincts to battle, but a rational predator that could patiently stalk its prey before making its move.

On top of that, there were also some hints of strange Martial Arts mixed with the original one that Leonard was training. It seemed to be a Beast Arts that was engraved into his bloodline.

"It seems like the Bloodline Awakening that I have undergone has also awakened the inheritance of the Asad Tribe from my bloodline. These martial arts are coming out naturally even if I have never practiced them before," said Leonard as he examined himself.

Shin thought for a moment before turning to Arthur, who was currently resting nearby. "I think it is better to ask uncle or grandfather to look for someone who can train him on how to use that bloodline powers and inheritance."

"It will be dangerous just to let him train this way, especially when his master is on a mission from what I have heard," he added.

Arthur nodded in agreement as he also thought the same. "I have already asked Uncle about it. But he says that it will be hard to find a member of the Asad Tribe as they have been living in seclusion for quite a while now."

"He said that he will try looking for someone, but it will take some time before he gets a reply."

"As for the training regime of our family, even if it is also meant for training our bloodline powers, it seems to be not suitable for Leo since the natures and roots of our powers are different. It will only do him more harm if he tries using our training method."

He then paused for a moment before adding. "Grandfather said that he knows someone but contacting them will also be quite hard since it has been a while since they have talked with each other."

"He is not even sure whether that person is still alive or has already kicked the bucket from his words," he sighed.

While the three of them were discussing, David suddenly appeared out of thin air and chimed in. "I am a solution for that."

The three almost true their powerful attacks at him due to how spooky he appeared while they were having a conversation. They almost blew him with their powerful attacks given the violent energies gathered in their fists.

Fortunately, they were able to recognize him before it was too late.

However, it would still require more than that before they could harm David given his Mentalism attainment.

David waved his hand to remove the Mental Energy gathered around his hand, which he had prepared to protect himself before taking out a tome from his back and tossing it at Leonard.

Leonard caught it with a hand and immediately sensed an intense reaction from his bloodline right after he came in contact with it.

"That is a special practice of the Asad Tribe. You can use it to train yourself while waiting for your master to come back," said David before Leonard could even ask what it was.

He paused for a moment as he recalled something from what one of his aunties had told him before. Then he suddenly added. "And a piece of advice. When training, try to rely more on what your instincts tell you. Your bloodline will naturally guide you to your destination."

Shin stared at David intently, seemingly trying to convey a message – "You have gotten it from Mom, I suppose." –

Understanding that gaze from Shin, David smiled at him before sending a mental-transmission message. [You should meet and talk to her as soon as possible. She worries a lot about you.]

[I'll have to organize myself a little bit more. I am still not ready to face her.] replied Shin, which made David sigh in helplessness.

After that, he suddenly said to them. "Arthur, your grandfather is looking for you. Shin, Elder Ryong, and Professor Henry are also here, wanting to meet you. They seem to want to see your progress. They are with the general."

He then turned around and waved at him before disappearing without making a sound just like how he appeared earlier.

Shin and Arthur exchanged glances with each other before shrugging their shoulders.

"I guess that's it for today. Let's continue again tomorrow," said Arthur as Shin helped him stand up.

Shin then turned to Leonard and said. "Come with us, Leo. Let's consult the elders about your situation."

Leonard hesitated when he heard that as he felt that it was not appropriate for him to be there as he was neither a part of the household nor had a close relationship with the two elders.

Seeing that, Shin shook his head. "What's there to be uncomfortable about? You are our brother, so there is nothing to be afraid of."

"Moreover, you are also an elite student of the academy," he added to reassure Leonard.

Hearing that, Leonard finally gained his confidence and followed them to the mansion.

Chapter 1524 Gifts

.....

The trio of Shin, Arthur, and Leonard arrived at the garden, where General Samuel usually spent his relaxing time, and immediately saw the three elders chatting with one another.

The three quickly went ahead to greet the elders, who responded with nods before General Samuel said to Arthur. "Come with me for a second. I have to discuss something with you."

Arthur slightly knitted his brows before following his grandfather quietly. He turned to Shin and Leonard, gesturing that he would be going ahead first.

Shin and Leonard, on the other hand, briefly nodded their heads and stayed behind.

Shin then turned to his teachers and greeted them for another time. "Professor, Instructor."

The two elders did not immediately respond to him as they closely observed Shin with their keen eyes and senses. They were somewhat surprised at what they were seeing, especially when they could sense an odd power surrounding Shin.

They could hardly recognize him due to this aura alone. Despite their great familiarity with him, they were unable to fully gauge his entire progress during the somewhat short time that they had not seen each other.

From Professor Henry's perspective, Shin's aura seemed to have become more distinct while his Mental Energy was much denser compared to their last meeting.

He could also feel these five elements circling Shin, or more specifically swimming within his Spiritual Sea and revolving around his unique Niwan Palace, the Spirit Pagoda.

This was when he realized that Shin had successfully awakened all his innate attributes and just missing how to figure out the properties of the three elements of metal, earth, and water.

Professor Henry could tell that Shin was very close at breakthrough to the Peak of Grandmaster Realm in terms of Mental Energy.

He could not help but nod in satisfaction after assessing the current progress of his youngest student.

On the other hand, Old Ryong noticed some discomfort from Shin after meeting him. He looked at Shin with squinted eyes before saying. "I see that you are starting to feel the 'Seed of Hatred' within you more clearly."

"You even learned how to suppress it with your unique bloodline-... or should I say it is through instincts?" he added while nodding with the same satisfaction as the old professor beside him. "Regardless, you have improved quite a lot."

Hearing those words, Shin was suddenly enlightened. He was quite confused as to why he was feeling some discomfort in his chest after seeing Old Ryong. His dantian was also starting to become restless despite its sealed state, particularly the half partition that the Demonic Qi and Crimson Core were occupying.

He then realized that it was his Seed of Hatred becoming shaken by Old Ryong's presence.

Shin instinctively suppressed it along with his Jade Kirin Scripture while the rest were being blocked by Uno, who was in the depths of the Sea of Consciousness.

The disturbance that Old Ryong was sensing was just the residual force that Uno failed to suppress, yet it was already strong enough to shake the old man's Demonic Powers.

Aside from that, there was this dangerous aura coming from Shin, which somewhat made Old Ryong uncomfortable. He could not accurately judge what it was, but he was sure that it had something to do with the current state Shin was in.

Noticing Shin's struggle, Old Ryong quickly advanced. "Since you have become aware of the connection between your Seed of Hatred and the Demonic Powers of Demonic Practitioners, I suggest you spend more time training that unique Mentalism Technique of yours and gain a full mastery of your bloodline."

"You will be in great trouble once you encounter someone with Primal Demonic Powers like yours or someone with a Seed of Hatred of similar level, specifically the one with a deep connection with yours."

"You also have to fight the urges that were telling you to devour the other party as it can lead to a dangerous situation," he added, warning Shin with full seriousness.

"I understand, Instructor!" Shin talked to the old man while bowing.

Old Ryong then stood up and bid his farewell first due to Shin's condition. "Then I will be leaving first. There is no need to check on your progress in visualization as I can already see it."

"You have made quite a lot of progress, but do not slack off even for a day. I will visit again for your next lesson once you fully understand the essence of sword principles and my visualization method," he added before walking away.

Now that Shin had become conscious of the unique string that was connecting the Demonic Practitioners and his Seed of Hatred, it would be hard to meet each other again for an extended period as it would only put more burden on Shin, who just gained his basic mastery of this power.

Shin bowed as he sent off the old man with his gaze before turning to Professor Henry and waiting for the old professor to say his new assessment of him.

The professor observed him for quite a while before saying. "You must be lacking the understanding of the three other elements, I suppose."

He then took three boxes out of thin air before laying them on the tea table before them. "I don't have anything that can immediately help you increase your understanding of your innate attributes, but these heavenly treasures should be able to help you to some extent."

He gestured to Shin to open them.

As Shin complied, Professor Henry explained the contents of each box one after another.

The first box contained an ore that seemed to emit different shades of earthen color. It is more like a fragment of a boulder rather than a mineral ore.

"This ore is gifted to me by an old friend from the Silver Wing Continent. There is a place there called the Capital of Mining, which is where most of the suppliers of metals and ores are importing their products."

"This ore can only be found at the deepest part of the earth, where crystals and other minerals can be found."

"This ore is unique as it is birth from a collection of multiple minerals after being melted in the hottest magma."

"It is called the Mineral Fragment. It contains a lot of properties of other ores that could be utilized differently. Depending on how the blacksmith uses it, a different property could be produced."

"It is an ore that is full of mystery. You can use it to study different properties of earth elements by injecting your innate attribute into it."

Shin could not help but be amazed at this ore after hearing the introduction of the old professor about it. It was indeed a full of mystery especially when Shin observed it with his True Sight.

[Good Stuff.]

Even Uno could not help but become a little interested in the Mineral Fragment after seeing it through Shin's eyes.

The next item was a block of metal that was constantly releasing an odd luster. It had a very smooth surface that could even reflect its surroundings due to how clean it was.

"This thing is called the Spirit Alloy. It is forged by one of the most skilled blacksmiths in the world. It is a special product that can only be found in the Lost Soul Continent. Most of the families over there will give up a fortune just to forge a weapon with it as the main material."

"It is different from the Golden Ingot, which is the conductor of all elements. But this alloy is the best component when it comes to hardness, sharpness, and other properties of a metal."

"It is forged from a variety of metals like Heavy Silver, Jade Silver, Magic Silver, Star Silver, and many others. It is composed of such metals, so it will be a good material of study for you as well."

Shin slightly nodded his head as he stared at the alloy on the box that was neither heavy nor light just by its appearance alone.

Then he proceeded to open the final box, which contained a vial of transparent liquid that neither looked a water nor a special solution.

He could feel a strange feeling coming from this liquid. It felt like the innate attribute of water within him was being stirred just by looking at it.

"This treasure is called the Goddess Tears," introduced by Professor Henry before continuing. "It is a heavenly treasure that can be found from the depths of the Boundless Lake from the Deep Blue Continent."

"It is made from the purest energy of nature with the water element as its core. Legends say that it will require a hundred years of nurturing before the lake can produce this essence."

"After years of research, the people of that place can lessen that time and can now produce a bottle of essence every nine years, which is neither too long nor too short in this time of age."

"However, this bottle is from the original essence, so it is the real Goddess Tear. Regardless of the benefits that it provides, it is still useless to someone of my age and real as I long passed the ideal period to consume it."

"It is originally meant to awaken the innate talent of an individual, but there are a lot of methods to use it these days."

"Since it is useless to me, you can have it and try to use its mysterious effects to elevate the level of your water attribute."

"It will not be a waste since it will also affect the other elements as well, but just to a certain degree since it complements more with the element of water."

"You also have the Gift of Devouring from what I remember, you can use it to this thing during the process to see if you can benefit more from it."

"It is ideal to restore the balance of your five elements as soon as possible so that you can start nurturing your Spiritual Vessel with their respective properties. This way, you will be able to produce a much stronger Five-Elemental Body before your breakthrough."

Shin could not help but feel moved by the professor after learning more about these treasures, so he bowed deeply as he thanked the old man. "Thank you, Professor! I will make sure to make use of them!"

"Good!" nodded Professor Henry before turning to Leonard. "I suppose you also need some advice for this friend of yours?"

Shin raised his head and stared at the old professor for quite a while nodding his head. "Yes, Professor!"

After that, he proceeded to explain Leonard's situation, making it as detailed and accurate as possible so that the old professor was able to understand the situation more.

Professor Henry fell into silence for quite a while as the two young men quietly waited.

Then the professor nodded his head before continuing. "Alright. I will draw up a training plan for him to follow. After that, we decide how are we going to develop his abilities based on the results that we will be getting after."

The two were quite overjoyed and thanked Professor Henry. "Thank you very much, Professor!"

Professor Henry chuckled a little before patting their heads. "You better become stronger as fast as possible since the future will be depending on your shoulders, young ones."

Chapter 1525 Dragon Viens

.....

General Samuel led Arthur to an isolated courtyard of the Springfield Household before saying in a very serious tone. "You are already on the verge of breaking through the Ascension Realm. You better get ready to go back to the Ancestral Land to awaken your Dragon Viens before it happens."

"Don't worry. It will only take a couple of days to complete everything – an entire week at most. But given that you have already built a very solid foundation, it will only take you a short time to complete the entire process."

He then paused for a moment before continuing. "We have been attracting quite a lot of unwanted attention recently, so it will not be ideal for a young dragon like you to break through here in our household."

"It will cause another huge commotion given that your bloodline is much purer than any of us. It will be better to send you there to avoid the eyes that are directed at us."

Arthur thought for a moment before nodding his head. "I understand, Grandfather. I'll start preparing now."

The Dragon Veins was one of the unique features of the Springfield Family.

Due to the powerful Qi that the unique core that the Springfields had – the Dragon Core – their veins, meridians, and Qi channels needed to be strong enough to support them.

This was when the Springfields poured their powers to nurture their bodies and create strong veins that were tough enough to endure the burden of the powerful flow of energies throughout their bodies once they had been promoted into the Ascension Realm.

Ascension Realm was one of the major realms of Martial Arts while the Ethereal Opening Stage was a core milestone for this path. This was where most of the changes occurred in the bodies and energies of a Martial Artist.

Once a member of the Springfield Family reached this point in their martial journey, they would be undergoing a great transformation.

Their Dragon Cores would become more powerful, which would lead to producing a stronger flow of energy than what it usually had.

The shock that the individual would get from this sudden change and the burst of power that they would be receiving alongside it could lead to a serious injury – or worse, death, if the body was not strong enough to withstand it.

This was why the ancestors of the Springfield Family had created a special technique that would let their descendants survive this ordeal.

That was when the method of producing the 'Dragon Viens' was created. It became one of the major requirements of a Springfield before attempting to break through the next major realm.

The Dragon Viens also became one of the factors why the Springfields were much stronger than the other Martial Arts Families in terms of physical might.

Supported by their powerful bloodline powers and unique Qi circulation techniques that complement these factors, the Springfield Family become one of the most powerful Martial Arts Families within the continent and even listed at the top of the rankings around the world.

A powerful bloodline, a higher form of energy, a world-class Martial Arts, and a sturdy body to support all of these – the Springfield Family possessed everything they needed to become the best on the path of Martial Arts.

This time, it was Arthur's turn to awaken his Dragon Viens, preparing for this critical conjecture.

General Samuel instructed Arthur on all the things that needed to pay attention to when he was breaking through as well as how should be preparing for them.

The old general only let Arthur leave after making sure that this grandson of his had fully understood everything, regardless of the risks and the importance of the preparations needed for the breakthrough of a Springfield.

Contrary to Arthur's usual lazy and leisurely behavior, the young man was quite excited for his breakthrough. He had been waiting for this for quite a while now, so it was impossible to hide his excitement.

General Samuel could only shake his head when he saw this. He understood that this grandson of his was carrying a lot of burden on his shoulders and suppressing his emotion in his chest after Bernard's death, so he could not blame Arthur for his hunger to get stronger.

He was only thankful that Arthur was not led astray by his rage nor formed an inner demon.

He was also quite thankful for Shin's presence as Arthur somewhat returned to his usual self when he 'returned'.

...

Later that day, Shin entered his gaming cabin but did not immediately log into the game.

He was in the middle of an important quest, but fortunately, it could be paused in the middle of each round. It was some sort of resting place where he could log out of the game and recover his state of mind.

The trials would be resumed once he logged into the game once again.

Instead of logging into the game, he went to the virtual space of their Adventurer Team, which was prepared by Arthur and Cloe for the members to train.

He was quite familiar with the design as it was using the same system and model as the one that the military had. Given their background, Shin naturally had used these virtual spaces during specific and targeted training before going into a special mission.

He might still be young, but the main purpose of these virtual spaces was to train young cadets and develop themselves through intense yet somewhat risk-free training.

The younger an individual trained through these virtual spaces, the more developed their experiences could be.

Swoosh!

Right after logging in, Shin was sent into a secluded corner of the virtual space and was immediately greeted by an amazing sight. "What the heck is this place?"

What he was expecting was to see a place filled with training equipment, obstacle courses, and other things that could be used to strengthen someone.

But what he was seeing right now was a garden filled with exotic yet beautiful plants and flowers.

There was even a waterfall not far from where he stood with a huge plunge pool right under it where he could see some of the members playing with the water and swimming leisurely.

The corner of his mouth twitched when he saw that scene before asking himself. "Did I come to the wrong place?"

He then quickly pulled out the information panel to make sure that he did not log in to the wrong channel. After that, he raised his head and saw Alucard and Akailu chatting not far from him. "Hey! What the heck are you guys doing?"

"I thought that this was meant for training purposes!? Then why does it feel like you guys are having a vacation?" he added with a deep frown.

Finally noticing Shin, the pair simultaneously greeted him.

"Oh! Vice Commander, you finally have the time to hang out with us?"

"You have been away for quite a while? What are you up to? You have not joined us in the Awakened Continent either."

Shin opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but quickly shut them up once again and continued with his question. "Answer me first? What is happening really?"

Hearing that, Alucard chuckled as he replied. "I see that the vice commander has not been informed about our virtual space. I thought you were the one who designed it due to how meticulous it was prepared."

From his understanding of Shin, he knew how amazing their vice commander was when it came to planning and designing. He was even more impressed when they learned that the Shin was the main designer of the Golden City. It was on the level of being a professional.

Shin thought for a moment before answering. "From what I've heard, the main designer is Arielle (Cloe) with my big sister helping her. As for the other arrangements, Siegfried (Arthur) has gotten the system from our family."

"I see," nodded Alucard before continuing. "This area is a resting place meant for guys. The girls are in a different segment of the virtual space, which is restricted to us for obvious reasons."

"This is also the main 'entrance' for us whenever we log in," he added before explaining their current situation. "The two of us just finished the individual training routine assigned to us, so we are now resting while waiting for the team training."

He paused for a moment before saying. "If there is any. After all, we don't have any team training scheduled for today."

"I see," said Shin as he nodded his head.

"Are you here to train too, vice commander?" asked Akailu as he leaned on the edge of the pool.

Shin thought for a moment before nodding his head. "I am originally planning to check how you guys are training. But since you are all resting here, I guess I can only try the training tools we have here."

With a chuckle, he left the pair and headed toward the other segment of the virtual space.

The two stared at Shin's back for quite a while before exchanging glances with one another.

"I feel like the vice commander has become even more powerful than before," commented Alucard as he shook his head.

"I know that this should be coming given his rate of improvement. But I don't expect that his growth would be such a degree," responded Akailu before turning to Alucard for another time. "Say, who do you think will win if the vice commander fights against that Evil God dude?"

Alucard frowned deeply before shaking his head. "I don't know. That guy is scary and powerful. I feel like I will suffocate just by standing in the space like him."

"But the vice commander is giving off a similar feeling right now. It may faint, but there is also another aura shrouding him in the mix."

He then paused and turned in the direction where Shin disappeared before adding. "All I can say is both of them are currently a notch or two levels higher than any of us."

Akailu went silent for a moment before mumbling. "If you are asking me how to describe them, then I will give you a few words."

Alucard turned at him with a curious gaze while waiting.

Akailu then turned to the direction where Shin disappeared just like what Alucard did earlier before saying. "A genius monster and a diabolic fiend."

Chapter 1526 The Emerald of the Seven Seas (Part 1)

...

When Shin logged back in the game, he was immediately greeted by a crowd of sea creatures gathered in front of a platform. He was among those standing on top of the platform with their backs facing the tall altar before a statue of a person clothed with water.

From what he had heard, the person of the statue was one of the Gods of the Sea, or more specifically, the God of Primordial Waters.

Shin did not have to guess to know who this god was. It must be Hydros, especially when he heard about his relationship with the Primordial Waters.

This also confirmed that this ongoing trail was meant for those seeking the inheritance of this God of Primordial Water, especially so when the name of the trail itself came from his name.

After adjusting himself, Shin went to observe the other sea creatures on top of the altar alongside him.

Most of them were those participants that Shin found noticeable since the start of the tournament, and those with the strongest powers.

What was surprising, or rather unsurprising, was more than half of these people were from the World Serpent race. The rest, on the other hand, were also from the Ancient Races of the sea, which was to be expected.

All these participants owned a complete set of the Sea Gems, which meant that they were all the leading conditions for this tournament.

Shin did not know why they were standing in front of everyone, but he felt that they were being displayed like fresh fishes on a wet market from the real world.

Not long after, the person, who appeared to be the host of this tournament, emerged from outside of the barrier once again and floated above everyone.

"This should be the final round of elimination. Those who will be surviving this round are going to be sent to the main battlefield and fight for the right to become the champion of the seas," his voice was like thunder shaking the entire world.

His voice shook everyone to the core, seemingly making their blood boil to an unimaginable degree.

The more Shin learned about this person, the stranger he felt.

When he met this person, he felt like there was a boundless ocean gap between their strength. But when Shin learned and mastered more about the abilities of the World Serpent Race and became more powerful as time went by, the more he felt that the gap between them was only growing larger.

"For those who are standing at the sea platform, they are to protect their Sea Gems for as long as they can while those standing at the bottom will try to snatch those gems from them," that person said as he leisurely lay on the back of the giant whale swimming in the air. "Those who will survive in the end will then proceed to the true trails of the sea."

"There are only thirty-two available slots for the festival, so I hope that you will try your best and prove to the Kings of the Seas that you are worthy of their attention."

"Those who will fail but survive in the end are going to be thrown at the end of the abysmal sea and fight against the Destruction Devils to regain their rights to return."

"I wish you all the luck and await your arrival at the promised sea," he added before the humongous whale opened its mouth and summoned a huge portal that sucked everyone underneath it.

Swoosh!

Shin and the others were unable to fight against the strong suction force that was pulling them toward the portal.

They could only watch themselves get swept by it and enter the portal without fighting back.

When Shin opened his eyes once again, he found himself in the middle of the ocean depths, where not even a single sign of life could be felt aside from himself.

"Where am I sent this time" he frowned deeply as he scanned the surroundings with his Spiritual Sense while enhancing it with the Boundless Ocean Technique.

"I thought that we were going to be sent to a much smaller place where those participants with incomplete sets of Sea Gems could besiege us in every direction. But I guess we are sent to another independent realm with a humongous size."

He then paused for a moment and looked at his inventory. He saw that the seven Sea Gems that he had acquired from the second round had undergone some changes. They were originally as big as his thumb when he first acquired them, but they were now grown to fit his entire palm.

He also noticed that all the other gems that he had gotten from the participants that he had defeated had unknowingly disappeared from his inventory.

If his guesses were right, then there was a high chance that all those gems were absorbed by the seven Sea Gems that now emitting a different light that corresponded to their respective color.

They also seemed to be pulsing with a certain rhythm, but different from one another.

Shin was not sure of it, but he felt that each pulse of the gems represented a certain element, which was quite confusing since they were all supposed to have a single element. They were called Sea Gems, after all.

But from the look of it, his original guess was wrong. Or he might also be unaware of the true purpose of these gems.

It could also be different types of water energies that carry a different property in them, making them resemble the other elements.

Regardless, Shin felt that each of these gemstones was giving him a different resonance. They seemed to be urging him to pick one of them, which became the main composition once they merged.

Shin stared at them for quite a while before refusing to choose any of them. He felt that he would benefit from them more once they had elevated each of them to the same level.

He could feel that each gem was on a different level. It felt like the powers that they could provide him varied depending on the concentration of energies that they had collected.

The one with the brightest color was the red ruby, which was emitting an intense heat. Its energies were much higher than the rest.

Shin felt that it had something to do with the number of Sea Gems that they had absorbed. He remembered that the number of rubies that he had collected during the previous rounds far exceeded the rest, which indirectly told Shin that his suspicion might be right.

He was curious about what would happen if he had elevated the concentration of energies within each gem to the highest level by collecting the gems from the other participants.

"This trial is getting more and more interesting," he mumbled as he turned around, looking for a direction where he would be heading.

But before he could even make his choice, the seven Sea Gems suddenly shot out from his body and formed a circle around him before releasing an intense light.

He could only smile bitterly as he could somewhat tell that these gemstones seemed to be trying to lure those participants toward his direction.

He now knew why those with a complete set of gemstones were scattered in different places of this realm once again. "It will be troublesome if the other top candidates fight right away and collect all the Sea Gems before the main event can even start."

"Those cunning people must be trying to avoid the most powerful candidates to fight one another so that they can enjoy a good show later," he mumbled before smiling bitterly. "Festival of the Sea? More like a fight club where the participants are nothing but entertainment for those so-called Kings of the Seas."

"So much for a glorious title such as the Champion of the Seas," he shook his head.

As Shin was waiting for the arrival of his 'guests', the Sea Gems suddenly stopped emitting their lights and returned to his 'body'.

It was at that moment when the first batch of participants arrived.

"These guys are supposedly hunting me to snatch the Sea Gems from my hands. Their strength shouldn't be that weak either since they have survived the previous rounds as well."

"This is going to be a little trouble, but it will make this hunt quite entertaining as well," he mumbled to himself while scanning his surroundings and taking note of the strongest opponents among these sea creatures.

When he was done marking all the possible threats, some of the most impulsive ones among the batch quickly launched a simultaneous attack at him before he could even prepare himself.

Shin remained calm despite all the attacks targeting him from every direction. He was already used to this routine after all. Ever since the start of this trial, he had been besieged from all directions and had become everyone's target.

He was not sure whether it was on purpose due to the nature of the trail imposed by the system, or all the leading participants were marked with the 'target tag' above their heads. But he felt that there must be some other purpose to it.

An instant later, his entire body seemed to shake due to the vibration of his muscles. This was the sign that he had activated the body-enhancing technique of the World Serpent Race.

Swoosh!

A moment later, his figure suddenly disappeared before reappearing in the same place once again.

Time seemed to have stopped as all the sea creatures attempting to charge at him suddenly halted their advance and stayed in place.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Not long after, a series of flashes appeared in every direction, cutting everyone into diced meat.

"Though, we still have no idea which is the prey and the predator this time," mumbled Shin as he stayed still in the middle of all the chaos around him.

He then turned his in every direction, sweeping through the survivors of his previous attack and the ones who were waiting for their opportunity to ack, and said. "Come! Let's see how much improvement you will provide me this time."

Chapter 1527 The Emerald of the Seven Seas (Part 2)

...

"I see, so all these gems are only a part of the so-called Emerald of the Seven Seas. No, that is not right either. It is better to say that all the Sea Gems are just fragments of this emerald. And all the thirty-two seven-color emeralds are nothing but a part of the main Emerald of the Seven Seas."

"Once gathered, they will naturally merge and become a single gemstone," Shin was sitting on a boulder deep in the ocean as he was organizing the information that he had collected from interrogating some of the participants that he had defeated.

He spared their lives in exchange for this information.

He wanted to do this since the very beginning but could not as the pace of the battles was way too intense to find the opportunity to do so. The continuous wave of opponents did not give him the time to do so.

Despite being more intense, this round had relatively few participants compared to the previous rounds, giving Shin enough time to do more things while waiting for the other challengers who would try to steal his Sea Gems.

He had gained quite a lot from interrogating the sea creatures with weaker minds and afraid to die slowly and painfully. The torturing methods that he had learned from the mafia training camp truly came in handy during times like this.

Aside from the true nature of the Sea Gems, he also learned that the complete Emerald of the Seven Seas was an amazing treasure.

It was a powerful gemstone that held the powers of the seven great water bodies within this realm such as the Blazing Sea, the Boundless Ocean, the Ocean Depths, the Abyssal Trench, the Lake of Mysteries, the River of the Afterlife, and the Sea of Origin.

These bodies of water were ruled by the so-called Kings of the Sea, who were the ones who had initiated the gathering of the seas.

This gathering was supposed to look for candidates who had the potential to become a King of the Sea like them, which would also lead the creatures of the sea to prosperity.

But it later became a competition where these kings flaunt and boast about the greatest talents of their respective races, which made the gathering the Festival of the Sea.

Those who would be crowned as the champions would be the next in line to become the rulers of a particular great water body.

The Emerald of the Seven Seas was a tool to find and evaluate the potential of the crowned champion, which would also grant these worthy individuals a power that would rival the current rulers.

But in exchange, they had to make an oath to protect the seas from the foreign beings that were trying to cause chaos in the world.

The emerald would also grant individual protection that would prevent the other kings from harming them, which was why these kings were unable to raise their weapons against one another despite having an unfathomable power.

This festival could only be held every hundred years.

It was also a selection process that would produce the greatest warrior of the sea.

After learning about all of these, Shin felt that this particular Festival of the Seas was somewhat different from the past.

He was not sure about it, but he could feel that the current kings of the seas seemed to be planning something that was going against the tradition of this gathering.

Moreover, there was also a strange clue that he had gotten from the system previously when he just started the trial.

System: Survive as many rounds as possible.

He first disregarded it and thought that it had something to do with his trial and the evaluation that he would be getting later after it ended. But from the look of it, it seemed like a crucial clue about the setting of the trail.

This should be a hidden feature or requirement of the trial that would lead him to another conclusion for its background story.

"Let's see what kind of history this quest record had," he mumbled as he turned toward another certain direction.

He was sensing multiple powerful energies clashing in that place, seemingly trying to get rid of one another.

"It looks like the plans of those arrogant kings messed up a little as these stubborn young heirs of theirs took the initiative to fight one another," he commented before swimming in that direction.

It would be not like him if he let such an opportunity slip away from his hands. He would join such an exciting party.

Swoosh!

...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"What is the meaning of this, Octo!? Is the 'Lord of the Ocean Depths' trying to break the agreement between the Kings of the Seas and raise a revolt!?"

A humanoid sea creature that carried the features of a clam was currently lying on the seabed as its limbs were being held tightly by tentacles. His shell was also slowly being crushed by these tentacles that were tightly coiling on it like a bunch of giant snakes.

"Urgh!" the sea creature was unable to endure the pain as he was slowly getting crushed by those tentacles.

He glared at the other sea creature in front of him, who seemed to belong to the Kraken Race. From the look of it, the other party belonged to a tribe that was much higher than Zorethar.

"Octo! You and your tribe will surely pay for this! Even the Lord of the Ocean Depths will not be able to withstand the wrath of the Sea Palace!" the sea creature shouted in desperation, glaring sharply at the other party.

The Kraken named Octo grinned as he stared down at the sea creature before saying. "Do you think that us, the Terror Tribe and the direct descendants of the 'Lord', are afraid to the likes of you?"

"The Sea Palace may be powerful. But that is only when all the Kings of the Seas are united," he added as if implying something.

Hearing those words, the sea creature underneath him seemed to have realized something. His eyes suddenly turned wide while stuttering. "You-... don't tell me the Lord of the Ocean Depths is planning to betray the palace!"

"The Kings will not let this pass! They are all watching!" shouted the sea creature.

Octo suddenly smiled deviously as he asked. "Do you think that we are foolish enough to do something we are not confident in? Those foolish kings of yours are seeing nothing right now."

The sea creature refused to believe it as a single King couldn't interfere with the mirror of truth that was projecting the battle to the kings as it was an item crafted by a God.

That was unless other kings betrayed the Sea Palace as well.

As he thought about this, the eyes of the sea creature suddenly turned wider while looking at Octo in great terror.

Having seen that expression, the devious grin that Octo was wearing grew larger as he looked at the other party. "It seems like you have finally figured it out. Unfortunately, it is all for naught as everything is already set in motion."

"Just hand over your Sea Gems so that I can proceed with the next prey," he added as he strongly increased the strength of his tentacles and crushed his victim.

"The Gods of the Sea will never forgive you and your tribe for betraying them!" the sea creature turned into its original form of a clam before dissipating in the water.

Octo picked up the gemstones that were scattered on the seabed before smirking. "Your so-called gods are the ones who betrayed their subjects first."

...

In another place, a group of sea creatures were currently surrounding a single participant, who possessed a muscular build and carried a huge harpoon in hand.

From the look of it, these sea creatures were already dead while their corpses were being controlled by a huge quantity of parasites.

Behind these sea creatures floated a creature with an alluring body. She looked like a personification of temptation due to her seductive figure and beautiful face.

The muscular creature remained calm despite being surrounded by these sea creatures. He stared at the opposing side straight into the eyes before calmly saying. "It seems like the rumors are true. The 'Ruler of the Sea Monsters' is colluding with those filthy demons."

"You are not qualified to question Lord Leviathan's decision, Falan. Not even the leader of your Devouring Whale Tribe is not worthy of our lord," responded the other party.

"You talk big for some who only rely on your parasites, Darya," responded Falan in a provoking tone.

"Moreover, you talk so big about your lord when the Sea Dragon King claps him during their most recent battle," he chuckled, insulting her king.

The expression on Darya's face suddenly turned ugly as she fiercely glared at him. "I see that you have become arrogant after being crowned as the prince of your tribe."

"Let me see if you really can be the strongest candidate in this Festival of the Seas," she added as she commanded her army to attack.

Falan held his harpoon in front of him before mumbling. "In the name of the God of the Primordial Waters, Hydros – I, a descendant of the whales who devour all the evil of the seas, will punish this sinner, who betrayed our kind."

Boom!

The moment when he opened his eyes once again, a suffocating pressure quickly enveloped the entire place, which froze the movements of the sea creatures besieging him.

BOOM!

...

Similar events occurred in different places, making the top seeds of this tournament fight against one another.

These were the followers of the Lord of the Ocean Depths, the Ruler of the Sea Monsters, the Ancient Hydra, and the Overseer of the River of Death were attacking those from the factions of the other Kings of the Seas and powerful tribes.

Amid the chaos, those from the World Serpent Race also started making their moves.

"It is time. Let our brothers know that we can now proceed with the will of our great leader."

Chapter 1528 The War of the Sea (Part 1)

...

Ding

While Shin was heading toward the direction where the two powers were clashing against each other, a system notification suddenly rang in his ears.

System: Trail Update!

System: Some of the Kings of the Seas and Tribe Leaders betrayed the Sea Palace and sided with the demons.

They had raised a coup d'état. They had assassinated some of the Kings and Leaders that might threaten them and currently fighting against the remaining ones.

The Lord of the Ocean Depths and the Ruler of the Sea Monsters, Terror and Leviathan, lead their respective factions to launch an ambush at the Sea Palace alongside the Ancient Hydra.

They were currently engaged in an intense battle outside this realm while their descendants were currently killing all the heirs and champion candidates of the opposing factions and stealing their gemstones.

Ding

System: The second task for the trial has been identified.

Objective No. 1: Save as many candidates as possible.

Objective No. 2 (Optional): Collect all the Sea Gems – gather them and summon the Emerald of the Seven Seas.

Branch Objectives after accomplishing the second objective.

Objective No. 3: Become the Champion of the Seas.

Objective No. 4: Meet the God of the Primordial Waters, Hydros.

...

Shin skimmed through the details of his updated quest and felt that this was not going to be as simple as it looked on the surface.

Moreover, he had read the name Leviathan, who was currently one of the Demon Kings of Hell in the current era of the game.

This could be a crucial clue to what happened during the Ancient Era or even before that.

"It looks like this is going to be much more interesting than I have expected," he mumbled as thoughts and ideas flashed through his mind.

He then paused as he thought of something before mumbling. "But Demons are supposedly from another realm, so how come they appeared in this place? Don't tell me they have been invading this world since the Ancient Times."

He had heard from the mysterious individual hosting the event mentioned something about Destruction Devils, which were Ancient Demons from what Hanzo and Solus had told him before during his battle against Haowin.

"Or is this realm being different from the Atlas World that I am from?" he mumbled as he continued heading toward the direction where powerful individuals were fighting.

As he was advancing, another notification rang in his ears, surprising him.

Ding

System: The Wise Sage of the World Serpent Race has received a divination from the First Ouroboros, the Leader of the World Serpents.

He had told the members of their races about the upcoming disaster, asking them to be prepared for the upcoming war.

The descendants of the World Serpent Race participating in the Festival of the Seas started fighting against the traitors of the Sea Palace.

System: As a member of the race, you are to eliminate these traitors!

...

"A secondary quest?" Shin was slightly taken aback before suddenly realizing something. "I see! Now it explains why the other sea creatures are purposely targeting us. It is not only because our race is one of the strongest, but we are the greatest threat that these traitors would face."

"From what I have heard, the World Serpent Race does not belong to the forces of the Sea Palace and the Oceanic Tribes. We are an independent race that only follows the will of the great leader, the First Ouroboros."

"I guess we are the variable that these traitors are wary of," he added before suddenly halting his tracks.

He finally arrived at his destination and could not help but become a little surprised at what he was seeing.

"Damn~! Will you look at this?" he shook his head at what he was witnessing while commenting. "I heard that he is the first seed in this tournament, so he should be very powerful. But I don't expect that it will be to this degree."

In front of him, was a chaotic battlefield where a muscular man was slaughtering dozens of sea creatures that were currently on their colossal forms.

All these sea creatures were quite powerful. After all, they all survived the previous rounds, indicating that their abilities were among the top of this tournament.

Moreover, some of these sea creatures possessed strength that could rival some of the top candidates among the participants. However, it was a little lacking when compared to the ones standing at the very peak of the ladder, just like the muscular guy that they were fighting.

"Falan of the Devouring Whale Tribe. He sure is powerful," mumbled Shin as he watched the whale in humanoid form slaughter all the sea creatures around him.

Based on the state of the battle and the lack of injuries from Falan's body, Shin could tell that this was not a battle but a one-sided slaughter.

Not long after, Shin suddenly frowned his brows as he found something strange from the sea creatures attacking Falan as he observed longer. He later noticed that these sea creatures were nothing but corpses that were moving on their own.

"Zombie monsters?" he frowned further as he realized this. "No. That is not right either. These moving corpses are too powerful to be zombified monsters. They are using the skills and unique bloodline powers these creatures as if they were alive."

"Eh!?" Then something suddenly struck his mind as he recalled something. "Puppet-like creatures? Could it be the Ocean Witch Tribe?"

Among the information that he had collected from those he had tortured; he had also learned about the top candidates of the tournament.

Among the participants in the list, there was someone from the Ocean Witch Tribe, the master of sea parasites.

The tribe could control other creatures by infesting their bodies with the parasites they had, and such an ability would be more effective when used on the corpses of dead creatures.

"The Ocean Witch Tribe belongs to the faction led by Leviathan, the Ruler of Sea Monsters," mumbled Shin, trying to recall the information that he had gotten before turning his gaze toward the individual standing at the back of the sea creatures fighting Falan.

"Given that she can control such a huge number of corpses and give Falan some trouble, she must be Darya, the seventh seed of the tournament," he commented while observing the other party.

"If she is already on the move, then the others must be attacking the other top candidates to try stealing the Sea Gems," he mumbled as he continued to observe the battle. "Should I lend him a hand or not? Given the state of the battle, my presence shouldn't have much effect on the flow."

He then glanced at the notification window at the corner of his eyes. "Since collecting the gemstones has become a secondary objective, this means I have to do something for the top candidates for them to hand over their Sea Gems to me."

"I doubt it has something to do with helping them. They will be fine on their own after all. Given their powers and abilities, they shouldn't need my help at all," he frowned as he thought about this before shaking his head. "Is it to gain their trust or something? Tsk! This is going to be much trickier than defeating them all."

Given the setting, it would be more efficient to defeat everyone and steal the gemstones from them. That way, he would be able to collect everything and merge them to become the Emerald of the Seven Seas.

But with the current situation, where the Sea Palace was currently at war against the traitors, avoiding harming these top candidates would be ideal since his actions could affect the relationship between the Sea Palace and the World Serpents.

Gaining their trust was the obvious choice at hand.

"Then should I wait to make my move now?" asked Shin himself while utilizing the techniques of his current race to erase his presence and hide from the two fighting ahead.

"From what I heard, Falan bellowed to the divine warriors of the Devouring Whale Tribe, who followed the will of the God of Primordial Waters and punished evils of the sea."

"Aside from that, they also have this mindset of 'Sacred Duel'. They will rather die in a pair battle rather than receive help from someone."

"It will only affect my relationship with him if I get involved now. I should wait until something unexpected happens before making my move."

Shin stayed hidden while observing the battle.

Through the help of his True Sight, the Ocean Breathing Technique, and other unique abilities to read the flows of energies within the surroundings of the World Serpent Race, Shin was able to learn how powerful these two top candidates were.

He also felt that their unique abilities and respective bloodlines were much different compared to the other participants that he had fought during the previous rounds.

Comparing them with his current abilities, despite him being confident, he still felt that it would be a great challenge to defeat either of them.

He also felt that he would lose against Falan even if he used everything he had. This made him want to fight this guy with his original in-game avatar.

"He is the top candidate for a reason," he commented before turning to a certain direction after sensing multiple individuals with powerful presences heading in this direction.

"Of course, they will be sending more people to make sure to take him down," he mumbled before stretching his body and heading in that direction, planning to greet the new guests.

"I just hope that they have a top candidate among their ranks so that I can also grow stronger," he added with a devious grin.

Chapter 1529 The War of the Sea (Part 2)

.....

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

A group of sea creatures halted their advance when they saw a figure standing before them, blocking their path.

The leading creature among the group squinted his eyes and glared at the other party, especially when he realized that it was someone from the World Serpent Race.

"We are here to assist Madam Darya, but who would have thought that we would stumble upon one of our main targets along the way?" he said wearing an evil grin.

Shin, who was the one blocking their path, ignored the latter's words and said. "The place ahead is a restricted area. I ask you to turn around and look for another path."

Hearing his words, the leader could not help but laugh. "Hah! Do you think you are a big shot just because you have awakened your bloodline powers once?"

"Do you think you are invincible because you are from the World Serpent Race? Don't make us laugh!" he added as he signaled the sea creatures behind him.

Shin remained calm despite the overwhelming pressures locked at him. He was treating their powerful auras as some gentle breeze of the spring.

He swept his gaze at everyone before shaking his head in disappointment. "Sigh. I thought that there should be at least one top candidate among you given that you are trying to target Falan."

"But there is nothing, but a bunch of small fries here," he added while shaking his head.

With such obvious provocation, the opposing group just smirked at his words before the leader signaled everyone to attack.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing the incoming surge of enemies, Shin sighed before suddenly waving his arm.

Whoosh!

Then a powerful wave swept forward, forcing everyone to either halt their advances or sweep along with it.

The water current only grew stronger in every passing second, forcing the rest enduring it to retreat as well.

They were swept by the current, which suddenly spun rapidly. The flow of water grew stronger until it became a powerful whirlpool that dragged all the sea creatures and trapped them within it.

Despite their respective abilities to swim, they could not escape the range of this whirlpool, which carried a strange power mixed in the waters.

The leader of the group was able to withstand the current for a bit longer due to the protection provided by the blessing of his tribe. But it did not last that long as it was quickly crushed by the overwhelming power carried by the water current.

Bang!

Right after the barrier protecting him was shattered, the leader was swept by the whirlpool just like the rest.

Roar! Roar!

They tried to escape this whirlpool that was slowly growing stronger by releasing their true forms and transforming into colossal beings. But their efforts were futile as their actions only made the whirlpool grow stronger.

'World Serpent Ultimate Skill: The Tide of Endless Abyss'

Their colossal bodies were crushed by the spinning current as they approached the bottom of the whirlpool, which was being sucked into Shin's arms.

They had become pure mana called essence, which was the main nutrient of a World Serpent.

This was one of the unique abilities of the World Serpent Race, which made them notorious throughout the entire ocean.

But what made this skill even scarier was it fused with another unique ability that Shin had gotten from Zorethar, who failed to awaken his bloodline powers after being defeated by Shin in battle.

As a penalty for his failure, his 'Devouring Powers' were absorbed by Shin, which then fused with the unique 'Devouring Powers' of the World Serpent Race.

Shin felt that he was growing stronger every passing second after devouring all the Mana Essences that came from the Sea Creatures that he had defeated.

"This Mana Essence sure is full of wonder. It is mana but different from Elemental Mana and other forms of energies from the Atlas World."

"It is much purer and denser than any form of energies that I have come up until now," mumbled Shin as he compared the energies within this place to the ones that he had encountered up until now.

"Is it because this place is in a higher dimension?" he thought as all the monsters here were much stronger than any beings that he had encountered from other places.

They just looked a little weaker because he, himself, was a broken character in this world as well. His race alone was more than enough proof of that.

"...or if this place is from a recorded history, then there is a high chance that this is how the world looked like before countless wars swept through it," he added as he finished absorbing every drop of Mana Essence.

He then turned to a certain direction and asked. "It seems like you are a strange one. To think you will continue watching your subordinates die."

He seemed to be talking in the water when he said those words, but a blurry figure slowly manifested in that direction right after he said those words.

It was a humanoid figure clad with armor that seemed to be made of the shell of a lobster. This individual also had a pair of hands of huge pincers with the right one being slightly larger than the other.

This creature stared directly at Shin with sharp eyes as his body materialized. "You... you must have devoured someone from the Scarlet-Eyed Kraken Tribe."

"Then you must be the one who has killed Zorethar," he added as the aura surrounding his body grew stronger. "I want to drag you to Octo so that he can punish you for what you have done, but I don't have the time to waste since Darya will not be enough to take down Falan."

"That guy is the greatest obstacle to our cause along with the other warriors of the sea," he added as he suddenly disappeared.

Swoosh!

Shin quickly ducked to the side, barely dodging the pincers that almost crushed his skull just now.

Bang!

The explosion that the pincers produced when they closed indicated how strong that attack was just now. If Shin failed to avoid it just now, then his head would most likely have turned into a meat paste.

Shin did not have the time to dwell much in those thoughts as another barrage of attacks was directed at him.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Shin moved continuously, dodging each attack that was aiming for his life with the slightest margin.

He felt like he was at the razor's edge while dodging these attacks.

"Tsk!" he clicked his tongue as he knew that this was going to be troublesome if he let the situation continue, especially when the opposing side was slowly gaining momentum in every attack he threw.

This could only mean that this humanoid lobster was not as simple as it seemed to be on the surface.

Hup~!

Shin inhaled deeply and held his breath before suddenly throwing a powerful punch toward the exposed side of his opponent right after he dodged another attack.

"Heh! Foolish!" the sea creature sneered at Shin when he saw that simple-looking punch. "Do you think someone like me from the Devil Lobster Tribe will be affected by that kind of attack?"

At the same time, he also waved his arm, planning to smash Shin with the spikes of the armor protecting his forearm.

Bang!

The fist landed on the armor protecting his waist. It seemed to be a very weak punch as it did not even produce any sound despite how fast the punch was.

But the smug look on this guy's face immediately contorted when he sensed something exploded within his body.

Little did he know that this punch was packed with Yin Energy that focused on penetration and internal damage rather than an explosive force that dealt external damage.

Combined with the unique abilities and powers of a World Serpent and the Mentalism Techniques he had learned, this particular punch dealt more serious damage than expected.

It was the perfect counter for opponents, who were confident with their external defense just like this lobster monster.

"Argh!"

The sea creature was pushed back as he endured the pain of his innards exploding. Fortunately, the toughness of his entire body and internal organs was quite high along with its strong tolerance against any kind of internal damage.

His regeneration was quite strong, and the injuries he just received rapidly healed.

Normally, Shin was supposed to chase after his opponent for a follow-up attack, riding the sudden turn of moments and gaining the upper hand in the battle.

But he did not do it this time as his arm was quite damaged as well. The bones in his fist were shattered due after it collided with the shell armor earlier.

He quickly circulated his energy according to the Boundless Ocean Technique to amply the natural healing abilities of the World Serpents to heal his hand while fixing his eyes on his opponent.

"As expected to the fourth seed-... you really can't be underestimated, Gammarus," said Shin while shaking his hand, trying to get used to the newly healed hand.

On the other hand, Gammarus, the Devil Lobster, stared at Shin for quite a while before shaking his head. "I must apologize for underestimating you. A World Serpent is still a World Serpent after all."

"Regardless of just recently awakening your bloodline, you still belonged to that cursed race – the Watchers of the Sea," he added while getting ready for a much more intense battle than he had expected.

"I guess I have to show you why I am a seeded candidate for this festival."

Chapter 1530 The War of the Sea (Part 3)

.....

Shin rolled his shoulders while twisting his neck a little, producing a series of popping sounds, as he got ready for the battle.

He was facing a seeded candidate right now, so this was going to be much harder compared to the previous battles that he had in this realm. But he was also quite excited at the same time given that it was something that he was looking forward to since he had mastered the abilities of the World Serpent Race and incorporated them with his techniques.

Swoosh!

Right at that moment, his opponent suddenly disappeared from his current location while leaving a strong shockwave behind.

Bang!

Gammarus then appeared right in front of Shin while swinging his right arm forward with his pincers widely opened.

Shin tried to dodge them as fast as he could, but the trajectory of the attack swiftly changed and closely followed his actions.

It was trying to force him to block, which was something he could not afford given the crushing force that those pincers had. His bones would be crushed instantly if he tried to block them.

The pincers were fast approaching and sealed his retreat paths, forcing him to face them head-on.

Shin then quickly retreated a little to create some space between him and the pincers before throwing an uppercut.

Bang!

His fist landed on the bottom of the pincers, changing their trajectory. With the barely missed attack, Shin tried to retaliate with a quick punch but was immediately blocked by the sturdy shell armor of his opponent.

Bang!

His bones were crushed once again the moment when his fist hit the shell armor of his opponent.

He quickly retreated, trying to buy some time to heal his hands. But Gammarus was quick to respond and swiftly blocked his path.

Shin was quickly bombarded by a barrage of attacks, forcing him into a passive position once again.

He could not afford to exchange blows in a frontal confrontation, so he had to find a way to break through the powerful defenses of his opponent.

Using attacks empowered with Yin Force was the most ideal since it was the most effective against opponents with strong defensive capabilities. The penetrative effects and internal damage that such attacks could produce were the bane of defensive-type opponents.

But the problem right now was the strong reflective effects that the shell armor of his opponent had. Such an ability was quite annoying to deal with, especially with it was this powerful.

The attack that it reflected was not just twice what he just dealt, but at least ten times the original power. This was why his bones almost broke every time his fist landed on the shell armor.

Even if it did not reflect the damage that he had dealt internally, the external punch was still packed with decent force, which was why the return damage that Shin had received was strong enough to crush his bones.

"I guess I should change my approach?" mumbled Shin as he created a space between him and his opponent. "Should I try sowing the seeds that I planted?"

He tightened his fingers while forming a claw with both of his hands. Then he channeled his energies in those claws before swinging them forward, sending a barrage of crescent energies toward the devil lobster.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

A storm of energy swept through his opponent, trying to slice the hard shell of protecting the humanoid lobster. But all Shin dealt was a bunch of scratched marks on its armor, signifying that even this move was not dealing that much damage against his opponent.

Gammarus smirked with that and shouted. "Do you think such a pitiful attack can harm me? It can't even-..."

He was about to say something when he sensed an overwhelming amount of Mana Essence gathered around Shin.

Then he saw Shin taking a stance while the Mana Essence from the surroundings was gathering around his fist.

Gammarus sensed an immense threat coming from Shin at this moment, making him wary. He was about to do something when he suddenly sensed something strange from his body, particularly the area where Shin had hit him earlier.

Those areas were quite stiff for some reason as if something was restraining from within. At the same time, his armor also felt somewhat colder compared to how it usually was. The cold energy mixed in the crescent waves that Shin had sent seemed to be quite tricky to deal with.

It was at this moment when Gammarus realized that the earlier attacks were not as random as they seemed on the surface.

"Do you think that I am that easy?" shouted Gammarus before putting his pincers together to gather a large amount of Mana Essence in between them.

He then pushed those pincers forward, forming a huge sphere of energy made of pure Mana Essence. The surrounding waters even trembled, which led to the formation of a huge whirlpool that pulled everything to it.

Bang!

He then sent the sphere straight to Shin when the accumulation of energies reached its peak.

Swoosh!

Right at the same time, Shin suddenly threw his rotating fist forward, sending a spinning torrent forward right after he released all the accumulated energies from his fist.

Bang!

A moment later, the torrent formed a head of a huge head of a white serpent that opened its mouth wide, trying to swallow the incoming energy ball heading at it.

Roar!

BOOM!

The collision between the two powers threw the sea into chaos, even forming a huge tsunami on the surface alongside a destructive storm in the sky.

A violent water current swept through the entire place, disrupting the original flow of the sea. The two currents then clashed against each other, making the surroundings even more chaotic.

The unpredictable current crushed the surrounding rocks at the seabed along with the corals and other things in that place.

A thick cloud was also formed, blocking the vision of both parties that were currently engaged in battle.

But Shin and Gammarus ignored all the chaos around them and continued to send their attacks at one another.

Energy spheres, water blades, water arrows, ice spears, and other range attacks were being thrown by Shin toward his opponent while the opposing side crushed them with raw power alone.

But this time, Gammarus did not solely rely on his shell armor due to what happened earlier. He had almost fallen into the trap that Shin had laid since the first strike the latter had given him, so he had to be extra careful this time to avoid any accidents.

He had dispelled the foreign energy that hid within his body as well as reinforced his armor with his unique energy to further strengthen their toughness and defensive capabilities. It was also to fight against the cold that Shin had mixed with his energy attacks.

What was even more annoying about these attacks was they were a mixture of different kinds of techniques.

As one of the young elite warriors of his tribe, he was quite experienced at battling those from different races and tribes, so he should be familiar with the abilities that a World Serpent had.

He should be able to handle someone like Shin, who was just a hatchling compared to the other World Serpents that had faced up until now.

But he was strangely being held back by his opponent due to the strange techniques that Shin was using, mixed with the powers of a World Serpent.

Moreover, these techniques were not just from a simple adjustment of World Serpent's techniques, but an advanced modification that not only enhanced the effects of the original versions but added a few effects as well.

"I guess combining the World Serpent Techniques with the Heavenly Black Tortoise Method is effective," mumbled Shin as he continuously waved his hands, sending a series of spells toward his opponent.

The Heavenly Turtle Method of the Four Symbol Scripture was originally meant for illusion and defensive techniques along with a few that could reinforce the other techniques from his arsenal.

It could also be used for offensive techniques, but when he added the unique techniques of a World Serpent, he could have a variety of offensive spells.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – Hail of Ice and Snow'

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

A huge group of ice shards appeared behind Shin while pointing their sharp and pointed ends toward Gammarus, who was currently being bombarded by the previous spells.

Shin then pointed forward, commanding those shards to fly toward his opponent with a speed that could not be caught by the naked eye.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing the new wave of attacks heading in his direction, Gammarus suddenly shouted, releasing a powerful shockwave mixed with his powers.

Roar!

The shockwave produced multiple layers of violent ripples that repeatedly hit the barrage of ice shards heading his way, destroying them in the process.

"I can no longer take this! I am going to shred you in pieces!" Gammarus felt very humiliated after being on the receiving end of Shin's attacks.

He felt like a lab rat laid on an experimentation table. He could tell that Shin was using him as a training dummy to test the current abilities that he possessed.

He was the fourth seed for this festival of the seas, so he should be the one looking down on everyone else, who was fighting for opportunities.

Even though Shin's attacks were ineffective against him due to his powerful defense, being a 'punching bag' was still humiliating for someone like him, who was one of the top geniuses of the seas.

Roar!

Gammarus' body grew larger, and so did the shell armor that he was wearing. Sharp spikes grew from his shoulders and forearms, matching his new size.

He was much bigger than his previous size but was not as big as the colossal beings when they transformed with their 'Gigantification Skills'.

Shin smiled when he saw that his 'punching bag' grew larger. "This is getting a little more interesting."

He then bumped his fists before a set of ice armor surfaced from his body with a sleek design. "I guess I should be picking up my pace as well."