

## **Destiny 1561**

### Chapter 1561 Team Training (Part 5)

...

Arthur tried his best to get out of the range of the 'Doom Blades' before its ten-second duration ended and exploded. But Shin stuck to him like gum, not letting him get away from it.

With that, Arthur had to use one of his most powerful offensive techniques to send Shin flying in the opposite direction as he ran toward the other.

Bang!

But right after he crossed the border of the 'Doom Blades', a mixture of physical and magical damage exploded on him as a special effect of the skill that Shin had used.

But this damage was more tolerable compared to the maximum damage that he would suffer once all the 'Doom Blades' exploded.

Aside from that, his movement speed had also been slowed down while his Physical Defense and Magic Resist dropped by a considerable margin.

He was about to remove the debuffs with a cleansing skill when he suddenly felt a warm light descend upon him, removing all the negative statuses that he had.

There was also a green light that swept through him, healing his health bar back to full.

Sweeping his gazes at the surroundings, he found that an array of totems was arranged around him. Their arrangement might be a little lackluster and seemed to be placed randomly, but it was more than enough to achieve their purpose.

It was barely passable, but good enough given all the pressure that Huahua was facing. "Not bad, I suppose."

With all the buffs and the healthy HP Bar that he had, Arthur took a throwing stance while holding his dragon spear as if it were a javelin.

His chest expanded as he inhaled a lot of air and focused all his strength. A golden aura also set the dragon spear ablaze and created a series of popping sounds.

Bang!

Then he stomped forward before throwing the spear with all his strength.

Whoosh!

The blazing spear tore through the air while leaving a golden trail behind.

Roar!

Not long after, the blazing aura turned into a manifestation of a golden dragon that opened its mouth while flying toward Owen and Samael, who just stabilized their footing on the ground.

'True Nine Dragon Arts: Golden Dragon soars through the Heaven'

The timing was impeccable that it did not give Owen any opportunity to raise his shield and prepare to defend against it.

But even if he was able to survive this attack, Samael could not be due to the awkward positions that they had.

The angle where the dragon was attacked covered both Owen and Samael, which also was where the knight could not defend the latter due to their distance from each other.

As they stood in front of the golden dragon, which opened its mouth wide open, Shin suddenly appeared before it and blocked its path.

He was currently in his signature sword-drawing stance while channeling his energies toward the sheathed sword.

Click!

When the familiar subtle sound rang in the battlefield, time seemed to have slowed down as Shin pulled the [Yamato] out of its sheath and swung it toward it while releasing all the accumulated energies that it had.

Shing!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Lightning): Eclipse Tiger Draw'

Roar!

A black-and-white tiger was suddenly manifested by the energies that Shin released with his swing, rivaling the size of the incoming golden dragon.

Roar! Roar!

The two energy beasts clashed in the air before erupting into a massive explosion that sent violent shockwaves in every direction.

Fortunately, Shin had given Owen enough time to regain himself with that previous move.

Owen quickly ran toward Samael activated one of his defensive skills and layered it with a series of shield-enhancing effects to block the explosion.

He was not worried about Shin since that guy could take care of himself.

Swoosh!

In the meantime, Arthur flew in the air as he caught his dragon spear. He then spun midair to generate enough momentum while infusing his dragon powers in the spear for another time.

When the accumulation of powers and generation of momentum reached their peak, Arthur threw the spear back in the direction where it came from earlier.

Swoosh!

Due to the thick and blazing cloud of smoke produced by the earlier clash of powers, Arthur could not see anything behind it. He could only rely on his instincts when sending the dragon spear.

Swoosh!

The blazing spear tore through the air and pierced a hole in the blazing cloud of smoke before turning into a golden dragon once again.

Roar!

It was a similar technique, but slightly weaker due to his lack of firm footing in the air.

Shin, who was the target of this descending dragon, was under the protection of the barrier produced by his 'Eclipse Pulse' Skill.

He immediately sensed the incoming dragon and realized that it was perfectly timed to reach him right after the duration of his barrier ended.

Realizing this, Shin made a snap and detonated the barrier creating a shockwave that parted the blazing cloud around him.

With this, he now had enough space to prepare for his next move. He took another sword-drawing stance while channeling his energies into the sheathed sword, preparing for the descending dragon.

Click!

Not long after, Shin pushed the sword with his thumb before fully unsheathing it and swinging the [Yamato] toward the sky.

Shing!

He also released the accumulated energies from the tip of his sword and sent it upwards.

It was a similar skill to before, but with a different variation of it. Instead of releasing a huge tiger, a massive dragon appeared.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Lightning): Eclipse Dragon Draw'

Roar!

Boom!

Yet another explosion erupted as the two dragons entangled and clashed against each other, further turning the already chaotic battlefield into more chaos.

...

As Shin and Arthur fought against each other, Leonard and Diablo were busy dealing with one another.

Leonard was attempting to finish off Owen and Samael, who were trapped in the blazing cloud of smoke. But Diablo stuck to him and threw a series of attack combinations that were enough for harassment.

Leonard had no choice but to deal with Diablo instead since these attacks thrown at him were deadly enough to take his life, especially when there were a series of them that were perfectly linked with one another.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

In another direction, Alucard was forced to detour around this blazing cloud as he started harassing the trio of Alice, Daulla, and Huahua.

As per what Shin had instructed, he did not put that much pressure on Huahua and only interrupted her occasionally whenever she tried to use an advanced spell.

He was mostly fighting against Alice and Daulla in a 1-versus-2 situation, where he showcased how powerful his current class and race were.

...

As the battle continued, the situation somewhat stabilized as Arthur and Leonard got used to the shadowing tactic that Shin's group was using.

They also complied with what Shin was planning, letting everyone familiarized with this new battle strategy that he came up with while also helping Huahua accumulate more experience and forging her mind.

Arthur and Leonard also started showing off a series of combination techniques that almost caught Shin off guard from time to time.

Fortunately, he was quite familiar with them, which was why he was able to survive most of those techniques while Diablo helped him with the rest.

Meanwhile, it took Huahua quite a while before she was able to adjust herself to the pace of everyone. She was still far from matching her other teammates, but she at least found her tempo during the battle.

Cloe, who was paying a lot of attention to this little shaman, thought of something before nodding her head. "I think I finally found a way to train this little girl."

The battle lasted for quite a while until Shin's team won, resulting in Arthur's loss once again.

Arthur wore an ugly look on his face as Shin gave him a slight pat on the shoulder. "Better luck next time, I guess?"

"Are we also going to keep losing our matches in the future if we put him in our roster for team battle?" asked Leonard, teasing Arthur as well.

Arthur whipped his head toward that direction and glared resentfully. "Hey! You are on my team just now!"

Leonard raised his brows and smirked. "But I still have a recovered win in our team training."

"Should I pull up the records?" Cloe raised her hand to join the fun.

"I-... you-..." Arthur's face turned ugly as he tried his best to refute their words, but was unable to say anything.

Seeing him having a hard time defending himself, the entire group started laughing. Even Archimedes, who was somewhat of an introvert, could not hide the smile on his face.

Shin shook his head when he saw Arthur was about to explode before putting his arm around the latter. "Alright, alright. Don't be upset now. I'll help you win once we are teamed together on the next exercise."

"But before that... let's review the previous battle first and evaluate ourselves," he immediately added, preventing Arthur from saying anything.

Arthur glared at Shin with full resentment but did not say anything more.

The entire group then headed toward a certain section of the virtual space where they could watch and discuss the recorded battle.

Chapter 1562 Gold Mountain's Hidden Force

.....

The Empyrean Talons spent all their free time training and evaluating their performance before calling it a day.

They had benefited a lot from this team training, especially when Shin had taught them quite a lot of new strategies and battle formations that they had never seen before.

Some of them were from what he had seen from the special units of the Military, but with little adjustments to match their team compositions, while the rest were what he had formulated after watching some matches of top teams.

"Alright, that should be all for now. Let's do this again in the next team training," said Shin as he wrapped up everything.

It was at this moment when Arthur suddenly raised his hand. "Wait! Before everyone leaves, I have something to ask first!"

The ones that were preparing to leave paused their actions and turned at him with a curious gaze, waiting for what he wanted to say.

"We are currently in the middle of doing a quest and we suspected that we would encounter the first team dungeon of the Awakened Continent. Is there anyone free to join us?" Arthur did not even beat around the bush and went straight to the main point.

"Is it the quest that you have mentioned to me previously?" asked Cloe before adding. "I can't. I am still in the middle of my quest with the Church of Light."

"Tsk! What a pity!" Arthur faked a disappointment before whispering to her. "But Shin is currently helping me with this... too bad."

Cloe suddenly glared at him and opened her mouth, trying to say something. But no words came out from her and could only sigh helplessly.

Even if she wanted to join them, she could not since she was already at the most crucial part of her trial.

"I am trapped inside a special dimension where I am being tested by the elven elders for my current positions in the Elven Council. I think I will take quite a while before I can get out of it," said Alice as she told them her current situation.

"It is the same for me. I am still in the middle of the quest to get accepted by the NPC Organization that scouted me," said Diablo as he leaned on the wall with crossed arms.

"I also need to do some tasks before the Vampire Families of the Awakened Continent can accept me as a new member... much less as a new family head. I can't join you guys as well," said Alucard as he checked on his magic rifle.

The rest, on the other hand, voiced out their willingness to join Arthur and the others. Even if the apex experts of their team would not be able to join them, the other members would be able to lend them a hand at the very least.

After all, exploring the deeper region of the map that they were in was becoming more and more challenging, so extra hands would be of great help.

...

"Alright! That should be everything. I will meet you guys later when we get back in the game," said Arthur after discussing how he would meet the rest later.

He also explained the challenges that they would be facing during their journey so that they would not be caught off guard and avoid any accidents.

After that, everyone was dismissed and went to log in to the game.

\*\*\*

Atlas World, Dark Cloud Kingdom

The members of the Pandemonium Descendants were busy solidifying their defenses around the region where the Demon Gate Portal was located.

Right now, the huge portal was in a very stable state that it even released a dense demonic energy that was slowly corrupting the surroundings.

The current state of this region, which had already been demonized to a certain degree, clearly indicated that the Demon Army from the other side of the portal was already about to arrive.

Even if it was just the vanguard army of the Bug Tribe, it was still way powerful for the current players could take on. After all, even the larvae of their tribe were already so strong that it gave Shin and the others quite a lot of trouble.

Paimon was currently reading through the reports about the current state of the war when someone suddenly entered his office.

He did not need to look at who it was as there was only a single person who would enter his office without bothering to knock. "What are you doing here again, Belial? Aren't you supposedly harassing the Hand of Midas and the Golden City with the people that I have lent to you?"

Belial did not immediately reply as he sat on the nearby sofa, collapsing on it. Given his current state, it seemed like he was very exhausted.

Noticing this, Paimon frowned before pausing what he was doing. "What is it? Did you still encounter some trouble despite those from the Empyrean Talons being absent?"

Belial still did not reply as he repeatedly tapped his index finger on the armrest of the sofa. It took him quite a while before he was finally able to say something. "I guess we have underestimated Gold Mountain a little too much."

(Gold Mountain: Name of Shin's Territory)

Hearing that, Paimon further deepened his frown as he asked. "What do you mean? Are there more troublesome people aside from the Assassin Union and God's Paradise?"

He paused for a moment before adding. "Don't tell me Legolas and Aragorn are giving you trouble along with those who are kicked out from the Central Order? What are they called again? Brotherhood Mercenary Group?"

"Or are the Secret Society and Secret Recipe finally showing their backer being the Mystery Pavilion?"

"Or are those remnants of the Butcher Team also joining 'their' side?"

Paimon slightly knitted his brow as he continued. "We have already investigated everything about the powers supporting the Gold Mountain and are busy dealing with their respective business."

"The Assassin Union is facing an internal conflict to the power struggle within the main family that is managing it."

"The God's Paradise, on the other hand, is busy exploring the Frozen Kingdom and trying to rush to the Frost City as fast as they can."

"Aside from those two, I doubt that there is anyone who can give much trouble," he added, ending his assessment.

Belial did not deny any of those as he nodded. "You are right about everything. But that is not my point."

He paused briefly as he stopped tapping his index finger on the armrest of the sofa. "But I never said that they are the problem. Don't you hear me? I said that we have underestimated the 'Gold Mountain' itself."

Paimon suddenly raised his brows as he could sense some seriousness in the other party's tone. "What do you mean?"

Belial went silent for a moment before saying with a heavy tone. "Aside from the Hand of Midas and Empyrean Talons being the main powers owning the entire territory, there was also another mysterious power hiding in the dark."

"Our forces have clashed against them multiple times when we are attempting to sabotage most of the activities within the region, but we have always been obstructed by those people constantly."

"What's more, these guys seem to be highly trained in different areas. Whether it was guerrilla warfare, jungle warfare, stealth operations, naval battle, or even aerial battles – they covered everything."

"Not only they are rich in battle experience, but the units that are designated in certain areas possessed classes that perfectly fit their roles, which makes them very troublesome to deal with."

"In a sense, it is similar to what the Great Leader has envisioned, but also somewhat different at the same time."

Paimon further deepened his frown as he continued to listen. "Another mysterious power? And they possessed the capability to match our forces? It indeed quite troublesome."

"Have you discovered what they called?" he asked after a brief pause.

Belial thought for a moment before replying. "They all seem to be from the same guild as they are all wearing the same guild emblem on their chests."

"As for what they are called... they seem to call themselves 'Deicide'," he added after recalling the name of the guild.

Paimon fell in silence as he tried to contemplate the meaning of that. "Deicide? God Slayer?"

"Are they related to God Slayer Tora and Death God Yami? Or should I say Lawless and Faker?" he asked, trying to make a connection.

But Belial shook his head and denied it. "That is also what I have suspected at first, but it shouldn't be the case."

"How you can be sure?" asked Paimon, not willing to give up.

"Just like I have said, it is also what I have suspected at first, but I later realize that it is nothing but a mere coincidence," said Belial with full seriousness before adding. "But I do have some suspicion about where they got that name."

He paused for a while before saying. "The God-Slaying Army... It seems like someone has discovered it. And from the looks of it, they seem also to know how to get into it."

Hearing this, Paimon's eyes suddenly turned wide as he could not believe what he had just heard. "What!? How can it be!? That's impossible!"

Belial did not bother himself about Paimon's reaction as he was in a similar situation when he made this connection.

His face then grew solemn as he added. "Now... don't you think I am telling the truth? That we have underestimated the Gold Mountain."

"What are you waiting for? Let's report this to the Great Leader as soon as possible!" urged Paimon as he knew the gravity of this piece of information.

"Deicide and the God-Slaying Army? This will greatly affect our plans!"

Chapter 1563 Odd Currents

.....

Shin and their little group rested as they wanted the rest of the Empyrean Talons to arrive. Arthur also went ahead to meet them on the outer region of the map that they were currently to fetch them later.

With their current experience, Shin and the others had already made a rough estimate of how powerful the monsters of the Awakened Continent were and compared them with the player rankings.

If they were only talking about monsters of the same level, then only Titled Rankers or Maverick Rankers could hold themselves against Common Rank Monsters in a one-on-one battle.

As for the regular Rankers and Unofficial Rankers, they had to require a full team just to survive against these Common Ranker Monsters.

This alone signified how difficult to survive in the wilderness of the Awakened Continent.

Even the Godlike Players and Maverick Gods were not safe either as they could only take on an Elite Rank Monsters on their own with a few exemptions, who could somewhat match some Special Elite Rank Monsters.

The level of suppression of the monsters of this place was also much stronger compared to the previous continent, which was why the group was having a hard time dealing with the Iron-Skinned Wild Boars.

With the over ten-level difference, the aura suppression that the monsters were giving them was quite difficult to deal with, especially when they were fighting those Specia Elite Monsters.

Even for someone of Shin, Arthur, and Leonard's level, this was their current limit even after using most of their trump cards.

Even with their equipment and skills that provided them decent effects of ignoring levels, their strength was still not enough to fully deal with the Special Elite Rank Monsters under the level suppression.

Moreover, this was only under the condition that the players were fighting boar-type monsters. Then what about the other monsters from the species just like the wolf-type monsters with high mobility, or bear-type monsters which were the embodiment of strength, or tiger-type monsters that were considered as the king of the mounters?

Then, there were the humanoid monsters that were capable of using techniques similar to the combat techniques of the players. These kinds of monsters were also able to wield powerful weapons.

Given the current information they had in hand, Shin and Arthur felt that the place they were heading would be very troublesome. This was one of the reasons why they had to ask for reinforcements aside from the challenges that they would be facing as they went deeper into the region.

While the group was waiting for the others to arrive, Shin looked for a corner to sit on, where he could browse the current events of the virtual world. He was quite interested to find out how the war between the Righteous Churches and the Evil Factions was going.

From what he had read previously, it seemed like the Dark Cloud Kingdom had fully become a warzone while the guilds and other organizations sided with the Evil Factions and built their bases at the city capital.

As for the location, where the Demon Portal was located, it was heavily guarded by the Demonic Churches, particularly the Demon Church of Gluttony as they were the faithful believers and servants of Beelzebub – the Glutton Demon King of the Flies, who was about to descend to this world through an incarnation.

The information about this news was under the strict control of the Pandemonium Descendants, which was one of the biggest and most influential powers among the Evil Factions.

Due to the recent war, the already strong influence of the Pandemonium Descendants was slowly getting stronger, making them more powerful with every passing second.

If the other Superpowers and Powerhouses did not do anything, then the power balance of the game would start to lean toward it.

What Shin found interesting in his recent discoveries was the fact that the Hydra Guild had still yet to choose a side. They remained neutral up until now alongside a few top guilds and organizations within the game.

Among the list, are the Central Order, the Mystery Pavilion, the Dragon Pavilion, and a couple of merchant groups.

Shin was not surprised about the Dragon Pavilion since their main target was the Hydra Guild. As a long-time rival, the two guilds were always keeping each other in check in every game they got involved in.

Since the Hydra Guild decided not to join the Faction War and chose to develop the territory that they had recently gained, the Dragon Pavilion followed suit and did the same.

These two Powerhouse Guilds focused on exploring the other contents of the game, particularly looking for more clues about the Mysterious Instructors and trying to enter the Royal Cities that appeared in the neutral regions.

The Mystery Pavilion was a neutral power that was full of mystery. Not much information was available about them, but one of their main jobs was to release a constant update on the Godly Ranking List and other types of lists within the game.

It was not surprising for them not to side with anyone.

As for the Central Order, Shin did not know much about their movements as they pulled out all their forces from the Saint Heaven Kingdom and the neighboring countries for some reason before disappearing altogether.

The last news that he had heard from them was when Arthur casually mentioned that this Superpower had decided to focus all their forces on a certain part of the Auror Continent.

As for the reason behind it? Shin did not know as no one heard anything from them since then.

It was as if the entire guild had disappeared.

"Eh!? Why does it sound a little familiar," mumbled Shin as reorganized the information that he had at hand. Then he suddenly remembered something and exclaimed. "Ah! That's right! Those lunatics from the Undying Guild also disappeared alongside Immortal!"

He had recently encountered Immortal along with those powerful Apostles under his command, but he had never seen the other members of the Undying Guild.

Moreover, those guys seemed to be fighting the Corrupted Cult, which was the faction that they previously belonged to.

"Is this just a coincidence? Or there is some sort of connection between them?" mumbled Shin as he felt that he was onto something. "But those two forces are also not on good terms, especially since they recently had a war against each other over the ancient ruins where Solus previously resided."

The war between the Central Order and the Undying Guild in the Blind Abyss Empire caused quite a commotion as it was one of the biggest events that happened during that time.

The monster trio of the Empyrean Talons was also involved in that incident along with the Hand of Midas as they robbed an entire Mana Vein under the noses of those forces.

"Strange~!" mumbled Shin as he felt the situation odd. "My instincts are telling me that those two forces must have found something that the other top powers of the game are unaware of."

"This is getting rather interesting," he mumbled before sharing his suspicions with the others, particularly Shiella, who had the largest information network of them all.

After that, he went to browse through the online forums and other platforms leisurely. After all, it would take a while before Arthur brought the others here.

Not long after, he stumbled into an interesting topic. As for the main character or characters of this particular trend, it was somewhat familiar to him.

"A hidden force of the Gold Mountain? A force capable of jungle warfare, naval battles, and aerial combat? Sweet~! Isn't this the guild that I asked big sis to build? I guess she is doing a good job," he mumbled as he read through the entire article.

"Deicide," mumbled Shin as he looked at the unique emblem at the end of the article.

He could not help but laugh as he realized something. "Hah! To think that she even hired Miss Bunny to write an entire article for this! The others may not be able to notice it since the technique and arrangement are a little different, but she can't hide her great familiarity of the said 'hidden force.'"

"It is obvious that big sis has given her some inside information to make the article more believable and authentic," he shook his head as he knew that this must have been done to increase the hype.

"But why does Big Sis have to do this? Isn't it better to hide the Deicide Guild as much as we can? Why does she need to reveal some of our information rather than conceal it?" he mumbled in confusion as he found the situation rather odd.

"Did something happen?" he suspected as this was the only reason he could think of.

As Shin continued to browse for more interesting topics, he suddenly received a call from someone.

"Eh!?" looking at the ID of the caller, Shin could not help but raise his brows. He then started smiling as he answered.

\*Di\*

Right after the call connected, the face of a young man with messy curly hair and a pair of round glasses appeared on the virtual screen and 'cried' at him.

"How can you do this to us, Brother Shin? How can you leave us behind when all of you head to the Awakened Continent!"

Molton Potter, who happened to be using the same IGN in the game, immediately bombarded Shin with questions right after all the lines connected.

Shin could only smile helplessly as he listened to this young man before finally using a 'trump card' to escape the bombardment. "Ah~! The Imperial Library of Divinity City is quite huge. I wonder how many books it has?"

Right after the words 'Imperial Library' left his mouth, Molton's interest was immediately diverted to it, completely forgetting everything else.

Seeing the look on the latter's face, Shin could not help but shake his head and wear a bitter smile. "This kid is too easy to read."

Chapter 1564 Odd Currents (Part 2)

.....

Atlas World, Aurora Continent

Frozen Kingdom

Bang!

A group of players slayed a huge monster that looked like a hybrid of a monkey and a troll. Its body was covered with white furs while its long arms were always as long as its entire body.

The furs covering its forearms were so thick that they resembled leather armor rather than just a part of its skin. It was the same for its legs which seemed to be as hard as steel.

Sitting on top of the huge corpse of this monster, Ashura was currently resting as he looked at the horizon. He stared at the setting sun in the distance before turning his head toward a certain direction.

Around him, the other members of the God's Paradise were busy dissecting the monster corpses while gathering all the precious materials from them.

Not long after, Lia, the team's chief healer walked over and said to him. "We are done here, Commander. With these corpses, we should have enough Yeti's Furs to complete our commission."

"We can start with the next part of our quest after this," she added after skimming through their schedule.

Yeti – these Level 200 Monsters were all at King Class even with their weakest of them all, yet the God's Paradise had hunted more than a hundred of them just to complete a commission from the Adventurer's Guild of the Frost City.

This signified how strong their adventurer team was, especially when the total number of their members did not exceed twenty.

Ashura briefly nodded before asking. "How is the progress in that quest? Do you think we can get enough recommendation letters for our members?"

Lia briefly looked into the quest before nodding. "I think we can rest assured about it. Given the number of high-ranking commissions that we have completed since we started exploring the Frozen Kingdom, we should have enough merit for it."

Ashura fell silent for a moment before instructing. "Tell Kallavan and Susanoo to come with me later. I want to try hunting some Wyverns before leaving."

Hearing his words, Lia could not help but feel worried and tried to oppose it. "Commander! Wyverns are descendants of dragons. It will be challenging even for our entire team to take down one, much less the three of you."

"The weakest of them are at least Level 250 King Class Monster. They are comparable to a fully grown Yeti of the same level. Trying to challenge them is no different from committing suicide, especially when our levels are away behind them."

"With level difference almost reaching a hundred, even our entire force can get wiped!" she added, trying to change the mind of her commander.

Ashura smiled bitterly as he assured her. "Don't worry. I understand our limits more than anyone. It is not this is my first time doing this."

He paused for a moment as he stared at the settling dusk for another time. "We are not there to hunt that monster. We just want to test our limits and see if we can challenge it."

"We have been quite behind on exploring the Awakened Continent, so we have to find some form of challenge that can let our team catch up with our rivals."

"The high-level neutral regions like Frozen Kingdom and Barren Lands are our only places that can match the Awakened Continent based on our current information."

"We don't do anything now, then we will be further behind the rest, especially when we know that the top guilds and huge organizations are already making their move."

Lia could not help but fall in silence when she heard those words before sighing. "Alright. I understand. But make sure to prioritize your safety. The death penalty in the wilderness is getting more and more absurd as the game progresses."

"It will only put us further behind if you guys get killed accidentally," she added before turning around.

Ashura smiled bitter as he watched her leave before turning at the message notification from the corner of his eyes.

Senior: Our people have discovered the way to get into the Martial Alliance Secret Force – the Martial Seraphs. I have already sent you the details, make sure to look at it.

Raising his brows, he could not help but mumbled. "Already? I guess we also must put some effort in investing our people into it."

\*\*\*

On the outskirts of a secluded region of the Aurora Continent, there was a military base that was built by a certain force.

This force was quite well-known in every game that they had participated in, particularly the top players that were leading it.

It was a collected force that was formed by unifying different guilds in the previous games before being sponsored by the World Government when «Destiny's Fate» Online was first launched.

It then later became known as the Central Order and turned into one of the top Powerhouse Guilds of the game.

They had produced quite a lot of experts under the guidance of the World Government in the real world, especially when the students at the Central Institute, one of the most prestigious schools in the world and the same league as the Top Military School and Magic Ace Academy, started joining the guild.

Currently, the Central Order disappeared from the eyes of the public as their entire forces were ordered to move to this place.

"Head Commander, everything is ready. We have already prepared everything," said a player of an Elven Race who possessed an Archer Class.

The longbow hanging on his back was filled with glowing runes, indicating that it was no ordinary weapon, especially when these runes were also emitting an ancient aura.

This player was currently kneeling on a knee as he kept his head low while waiting for his leader to respond.

Another player was standing a couple of meters away from this guy while looking at the horizon. He was looking in the direction where the Awakened Continent was located while wearing an expressionless face.

It took a while before this person nodded his head. "Alright. Arrange everyone to move to the underground city as soon as possible. We will be raiding the ancient city the moment when the New Order candidates arrive."

The elven archer hesitated for a couple of moments before forcing himself to voice out his concerns. "But Head Commander... are you sure about this? That ancient city is not as simple as it seems."

"It is much more dangerous compared to the high-level neutral regions and almost matching the level of the Forbidden Lands-..."

He wanted to say more but he was immediately cut off by the Head Commander. He swiftly shut his mouth when he saw the raised hand of the other party from behind.

"I will overlook it this time since you have performed quite well during your entire service under me. But there will be no next time," said the Head Commander.

"We are barely able to discover anything after patching up all the scattered clues that we have gathered. But we don't get anything much from it. If we don't take risks now, then the others will overtake us and seize 'that' think before anyone else."

He paused for a moment as he continued to look at the horizon before continuing. "We must find what 'that' man has hidden before that update arrives."

"Things will get much trickier if we fail before that."

\*\*\*

Awakened Continent

The border between the Forsaken Islets and the Corrupted Region of Demons.

It was a land of destruction and chaos as those Undead Race following the true teachings of the Dark Arts, Spirit Magic, and Necromancy were in constant conflict with the Corrupted Beings and Demonified Race of the opposing region.

These two regions were in constant war against each other due to their respective beliefs.

The residents of the Forsaken Islets were following the teachings of the old era that created the Dark Arts and Necromancy, which was the centerpiece of their religion.

The Church of Darkness was the loyal subject of the God of Darkness and Night, who was said to be the creature of the First Undead.

The heretics of the Corrupted Region of Demons were the followers of the Demonic Churches and Corrupted Cult, which used the Dark Arts and Necromancy and modified it with the corrupt powers that were left behind by the Demons when they first invaded the Atlas World.

Due to the clashing beliefs, particularly when the heretics were the reason why the residents of the Forsaken Islets were being branded as evil creatures of the citizens of the Divine Empire and other major regions.

"Boss! We have found it!" Rust rushed toward Immortal's side while carrying a fragment of a huge disc. "This should be the final piece that we are lacking to complete the key!"

Immortal casually glanced at the disc fragment and stared at the broken emblem engraved on its surface before nodding. "This must be it."

He took the fragment and kept it in his inventory before instructing. "Tell the others that it is time to come back. We must hurry back as the Great Legion is about to start selecting their people."

Rust quickly nodded before suddenly disappearing.

Immortal then summoned a huge bone dragon from the ground before stepping onto its bone hands. "Cursed Armor of the Nether Realm – I will make sure to get you before anyone else."

Chapter 1565 Initial Plans

.....

It took quite a while before Arthur brought the rest of the Empyrean Talons to the team. Bringing them here while avoiding the dangerous areas that he had encountered alongside Shin and the others earlier was more challenging than he had expected, which was why it took them longer than their estimated time.

Moreover, there were also quite a lot of stray monsters along the way, which was why they had taken a little more time during their travel.

Despite them having more members from the previous group, their members were slightly behind when it came to the experience of dealing with the monsters of the Awakened Continent.

Aside from that Arthur was the only one who was the rank of Godlike Player, so the overall quality of their team composition was inferior to Shin's and the others.

Akailu and Owen were not that much behind compared to the top combatants of the Empyrean Talons. After all, the two of them were also able to awaken an Advanced Combat State like the Shin and the others.

Akailu was successful in finding the best version of a combat state for himself. He took Haowin as his inspiration after watching the battle video between this God of Carnage and Shin, the Battle God.

After getting a series of inspirations from Haowin and incorporating it into his style, Akailu was able to create his version of Perfect Demonification.

But unlike what Haowin had done, Akailu used his understanding of the monster's body and physique instead of utilizing the powers of demons or demon contracts.

In a sense, he had followed the true purpose of using the Physiques of Monstrous Beasts from the real world and incorporated them into the game.

Hence, it could be said that the version of Perfect Demonification that he had created was the true Perfect Demonification that the game developers had in their imaginations.

Owen, on the other hand, followed the path that Shin and the others were taking and used the Reality Manifestation as his combat state. But his master over it was slightly inferior compared to the rest, which was why he was somewhat behind.

But after the team training that they had earlier, he had gotten quite a few inspirations and was able to find the perfect style and utilization of this combat state that fitted himself, making it his own.

With these two assisting Arthur, their journey became a little easier, saving them a lot of trouble.

...

"Alright, you guys worked hard, so you can rest for a while before we proceed to explore the area," said Shin after seeing their exhausted selves right after arriving.

Even Archimedes and Daulla, who rarely complained about anything, were currently in a 'beaten up' state.

"Tsk! How can the regular monsters of this place be so strong? I almost died quite several times," complained Owen as he collapsed on the ground.

As one of the main frontline of the team, the pressure that he was facing when fighting the monsters was much heavier compared to the rest, so it was understandable for him to be in this state.

His role as the secondary tank alone more quite stressful, especially when they did not have any healer in the team when coming here.

"It is because of the super high mana density of this place. The monsters that are born in this environment are meant to become much stronger than any other monsters of the same level and species," explained Shin.

He then turned to the others and continued. "As I have already said earlier, we have to gather as much strength as possible if we want to reach our destination."

"We have to be in our peak forms if we want to continue exploring the area, so I suggest that we log out right now and continue again tomorrow," he added, further clarifying his intention.

"Eh!?" Arthur, who was the main initiator of the question, could not help but look at Shin with pitiful eyes.

Shin shivered when he looked at that expression before explaining. "There is nothing we can do. If we force the others to continue in that state, accidents are meant to happen during our future battles."

"They are not only mentally exhausted from our earlier training, but they have to rush here as well, so it is understandable for them to be in this current state."

"It will be more efficient if we let everyone rest for today and come back again tomorrow," he added before patting Arthur's shoulder. "Don't worry. Even if we are somewhat behind the schedule, we are still way ahead of the others. There is no need to rush anything."

"Moreover, aren't we helping you acquire a fragment of your Divine Armor first before looking for our own? Look at Leo and myself, are we in a rush?" he added while pointing at Leonard, who shrugged his shoulder.

Arthur could only sigh before nodding. "Alright. I get it. We will continue again tomorrow."

Hearing that, the others immediately thanked Shin and swiftly logged out as they could no longer wait to rest.

He could only shake his head as he watched them disappear one after another. This situation left the place with only Shin, Arthur, and Leonard behind.

"So, what is your plan? There is still plenty of time before we should log out," asked Arthur with curiosity.

Shin thought for a moment before answering. "Actually, there is this matter that I keep on delaying because of the recent events that keep on happening."

He then took out the Scroll of Eclipse and presented it to the two while continuing. "I have gotten this special dungeon scroll as my extra reward for meeting the Head of the Mysterious Instructors and passing his trials."

"It is a special item that can lead me to one of the special accessories of my class. It seems to be a racial-specific item as well given the description and is in a set with my current necklace," he added.

Swoosh!

Arthur quickly snatched the scroll from Shin's hand and read through its description before returning it to Shin aggressively. "What kind of sh\*t luck have you been stepping on these days? You keep on getting the best item possible for your class and race!"

"What can I do if the Goddess of Luck loves me?" he shrugged his shoulder innocently while watching Arthur complain in amusement.

"I am sure that you are the 'Mistress' since Chaotic Luck is the real husband," joked Leonard as he chimed in the conversation.

The three laughed and chatted for a while before Arthur suddenly recalled something. "Ah! Before I forget. The real reason why I am rushing you guys to clear this quest is because I have to be awake for a few days up to an entire week or two due to certain reasons."

"What reasons!?" asked the two as they simultaneously turned their heads.

Arthur reorganized his thoughts inside his head before explaining. "I have to go to the Ancestral Land to do something. And for my breakthrough as well if things go smoothly."

"I keep on delaying it because I have to deal with this quest as soon as possible before going. Grandpa has only given me until the end of the week before Uncle Nathan drags me to the Ancestral Land."

Hearing those words, Shin and Leonard could not help but pause before realizing something.

"You are about to break through? Congratulations!"

"Stepping on the Ascension Realm already? That's good!"

Arthur gave them a smug look before saying provokingly. "That's why you two better not slack off. Or else, I will leave the two of you behind."

"Hah! You wish! I am also close to breaking through. I just lack a couple of requirements, but I am ready to go," refuted Shin.

"I will work hard as well!" said Leonard as his competitive spirit burned with more intensity.

The three chatted a little before Leonard suddenly remembered something. "Then what about the United Cup if you are going to be away?"

Arthur chuckled as he heard that. "What's there to worry about? It is not like I will be away for that long. I will make sure to come back as soon as possible."

"Moreover, it is not like you guys will get eliminated in just a couple of rounds that I am away. I will laugh at you for the rest of our lives if it happens," he added.

"Ah! That's right. We don't need you anyway. Given your win-loss record in our internal training, I don't think your presence will make that much of a difference," teased Shin as he poked fun at Arthur.

It was also where it hurt the most, making Arthur glare. "That's because you guys keep on picking on me!"

"How about you put me in the same group as Cloe? Let's see if you can still wear that smug face of yours!" he snarled while challenging the two.

"Haha! Stop making excuses, it is not like it will change anything. Even with the two of you combined, you still can't beat me alone," said Shin, provoking the two.

"Hey, Shin Bro! That's unfair to drag me into this. We are allies right now," complained Leonard.

"How about we give it a try right now? Hey, Leo! Let's teach this arrogant bastard a lesson! Hit him! Hit him!" said Arthur, grabbing Shin from behind and making a triangle choke.

Chapter 1566 Party Play (Part 1)

...

The next day, Shin and the rest of the Empyrean Talons were gathered in the place where they last logged out once again, getting ready to continue their exploration.

Now that everyone was fully recovered, they could now perform to the best of their abilities.

Sweeping his gaze at everyone and checking on their team composition, Shin started arranging their formation. "The monsters starting from here are always in groups, so we have to organize our formation accordingly."

"Since we have Arthur, Owen, and Akailu together, we can run twin-tank tactics on one front while a regular tanking on the other."

"Arthur can handle the Elites and Special Elites leading the group of monsters while Owen will be taking on the Common Rank Monsters alongside Akailu and his summoned beasts."

Since Owen and Akailu were on similar levels, Shin believed that the two of them should be enough to be the main frontlines of the group.

These two could at least hold their grounds against a group of Common Rank Monsters of the Awakened Continent so long as the backline was able to support them.

"Leo and I should be enough to support Arthur while the rest can assist Owen and Akailu with taking down the regular monsters before proceeding to help us," he added before proceeding with the other members.

"Chaotic Luck, you don't have to summon a lot of your Solar Undead. Just a couple that can help keep the monsters in place should be enough. You can just focus on casting spells to help with the DPS instead."

"Samael, since you are already experienced enough with these monsters, you can at least act as a proper sub-tank. Just follow their lead and continue what you have been doing up until now. And remember your main purpose for coming here."

He then waited until those two nodded their head, signifying that they fully understood their respective roles before turning to the mages and marksmen of the group, particularly to Lorraine. "I will not say that much since you are more familiar with this role compared to me. I will be leaving the command over them to you."

"Tsk! You make it sound a little better, but you want to dump all the responsibility on me so that you can focus on fighting those Elite Monsters," Lorraine rolled her eyes as she could see Shin's true intention.

Shin did not bother to deny it but still added. "Well, that's one of the reasons. But I want them to familiarize themselves with the level of the monsters of the Awakened Continent and improve our team synergy."

"Don't worry. I will quickly take over the command once the situation becomes a little messy and save you," he said, trying to reassure her.

"But since we are already together, I will not miss the chance to try doing some strategic maneuvers," he added before turning around and signaling the others to move.

With their current team composition, Ithilien and Archimedes were responsible for scouting the area ahead. Given their respective speed and ability to move free in such an environment, their respective classes were perfect for the role, especially when Diablo was not around.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Ithilien moved across the forest, jumping from one tree branch to another, while Archimedes used some aerial maneuvers as he skillfully navigated his way through the gaps of the trees.

Not long after, they were forced to halt their tracks as they saw a group of monsters ahead.

It was a little horde of iron-skinned wild boars with a Special Elite standing in the middle with five common-rank monsters surrounding it.

They quickly reported the situation to Shin right after making sure that there were no other groups of monsters nearby. After all, it would be troublesome if they were pincered by another horde of monsters while they were still busy dealing with the previous one later.

Being trapped in the middle of two monster groups was still beyond their current abilities.

...

Standing a few distance away from that group of monsters, Shin observed their initial stats before informing the others. "Fortunately, it seems to be a normal group of monsters and not a berserk group. This should be within our current capabilities."

He then asked the group to get in position before ordering Owen. "Go lure them here."

Owen nodded when he received the order and stepped out of the group. He then stared at the group of wild boars in the distance before inhaling deeply and shouting in the very next instant.

Ha!

'Knight Skill (Tier 1): Taunt'

Right after he shouted, the boars quickly turned their heads toward the direction of the group before charging at them angrily, particularly Owen, who just used his taunting skill.

Shin stared at the boars for a couple of seconds before signaling to Akailu. "Next!"

Akailu did not need Shin to tell him what to do next as he quickly jumped ahead of the group and positioned himself before them. He then leaned forward and shouted, producing a strong gust of wind that swept through the incoming boars.

Roar!

'Hunter Skill (Tier 1): Demoralizing Shout'

It was a strong debuff skill that the Beastmen Race used against beast-type monsters to weaken their morale and reduce their stats.

Even if it was not very effective against the monsters from the Awakened Continent, it was still quite useful to lessen the momentum of the monsters that were charging at them.

But even that was still far from being enough to fully stop the charging boars, so Akailu used another skill on top of this one.

Roar!

An apparition of a Beast King appeared behind Akailu as he released another powerful shout forward, directing it toward the incoming boars.

'Beastmaster Skill (Tier 2): Havoc Howl'

This second layer of shout released a strong current that swept through the bodies of the incoming boars along with the mysterious power of the beasts wasting over them. This then weakened the boars greatly as the debuffs containing that current possessed a strong effect against beast-type monsters.

Now, with the weakened stats and less momentum, Owen could take care of the rest.

Owen did not even wait for Shin to command him as he stepped forward and planted his reticular shield before him. He then erected a huge golden wall that blocked the advance of the incoming boars.

Swoosh!

'Ancient Protector Skill (Tier 2): Enhanced Shield Wall'

As Owen summoned the golden wall, Samael also took the initiative and cast a series of blessings on Owen with a swing of his sword and hand, further boosting the stats of the latter.

BOOM!

It was also at that moment when the boards rammed into the golden wall one after another.

Owen was forced to take a couple of steps back due to the strong impact, but he was able to quickly regain his footing before lowering his stance and strengthening his shoulder supporting the rectangular shield.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

At the same time, a series of wooden totems fell one after another, forming a formation around the boars, before releasing an ominous aura that further weakened their stats.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

It was not the end as there was another group of totems erected around the group. But instead of releasing a harmful energy that could weaken them, they released a warm light that washed over the ground and gave them additional strength.

Huahua had perfectly timed her totems and summoned them right after the group was ready to take on the wild boars.

"Not bad," Shin could not help but comment when he saw that scene before signaling Arthur and Leonard. "Hey, what are you two doing? Get moving already!"

"You don't have to tell us," shouted Arthur as he leaped in the air while Leonard suddenly appeared in the middle of the wild boars.

Bang!

Leonard suddenly stomped his foot on the ground, sending a powerful shockwave that shook the ground and flipped the earth.

The wild boars momentarily lost their footing while the Special Elite that was supposedly leading them was suddenly thrown in the air by Owen, who used a special technique to use its weight against it.

"Nice pass!" shouted Arthur in the air as he suddenly threw his spear forward, sending it to the Special Elite Boar.

Swoosh!

Boom!

The giant boar was sent flying in the opposite direction, separating it from its group.

"I'll be going ahead!" said Arthur as he caught the dragon spear midair after it bounced off from the Special Elite Boar.

Swoosh!

"I'll be leaving the rest to you," said Shin to Lorraine, who was standing beside him, before suddenly disappearing.

Swoosh!

Leonard also chased after the two, leaving the rest behind.

Lorraine could only look at those three with a helpless look on her face before starting to command the rest.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

In the forefront of the group, the frontline members started taking on the wild boars in front of them, blocking their advances to protect the others behind them.

Owen took on a pair of wild boards as he raised his shield, which reduced its size to match his build, while he brandished the holy sword in his other hand.

Bang! Bang!

He was doing relatively fighting against these two monsters despite the difference in size. He had to thank the weakened stats of these monsters, which was why he was able to hold his ground quite well.

Bang! Bang!

In the meantime, Akailu summoned a huge bear to help him hold the two other wild boards that were trying to get past him.

This bear was cladded with the beast armor that Saint Blacksmith Berlin had crafted for him after he ran a couple of errands previously.

He even felt a little jealous of this pet of his as the set of armor that it was wearing was way better than the high-quality equipment that he was wearing. Not only it was on set, but the armor itself possessed a metamorphosis effect that could match any kind of monster pet so long as they met certain requirements.

Bang! Bang!

At the same time, Samael was left to deal with the remaining wild boar. He was panicking at first, but he was able to quickly find his footing after realizing that the monster was not as scary as he thought it would be.

He knew that the two purposely left this monster alone so that he could also train and prepare himself for future battles, so he was very thankful for their trust and expectation.

Together with the assistance that he was getting from the backline members, he had gained enough courage to hold his ground.

It took quite a while before he was able to fully adjust to the battle but was still doing quite well after seeing Owen and Akailu holding two wild boars at once.

Ithilien and Archimedes were firing freely from a safe distance, dealing a lot of damage in the process, while Daulla was also free to bombard the frontline with her spells without holding back.

With such a high vantage point, the two archers were having the time of their lives alongside their skills, especially with such huge targets.

Meanwhile, Daulla could also practice some of the new techniques that she had just learned recently. She was able to put the Mana Manipulation Techniques and Spell Casting Techniques that she had picked up from Alice and Cloe in practice.

With the current state of the battle, Huahua was having an easier time compared to her first time hunting with Shin and the others.

It seemed like the training that she had undergone yesterday during the team battles was quite helpful. After all, what was happening here was nothing compared to what she had experienced during that fast-paced and chaotic battle.

Lorraine oversaw everything from the backline before nodding her head. "It seems like everything is going according to his plan."

She felt that it would not take that long before the entire team was able to become more comfortable with each other, making their hunting time much easier.

"Given our current pace, it will not take that long before we are able to build a very solid synergy before we reach the innermost region of this map."

"It is only at that time when the real challenges will start. I just hope that we will not encounter any Chieftain Rank Monsters before it happens, or else we will be screwed," she mumbled before joining the others.

#### Chapter 1567 Party Play (Part 2)

.....

Bang! Bang! Bang!

After exploring for half a day, the group was able to reach the innermost part of the region. They had discovered quite a few natural treasures along the way and started looting them. But at the same time, the size of the monster groups that they encountered along the way also started to grow in size.

The monsters that they fought increased to ten monsters per group, which was twice the size of the previous groups that they had encountered up until now.

Moreover, there were two to three elite monsters mixed in the group, making it harder for the group to deal with them.

Arthur could at least handle one on his own. Two was his limit and that was under the condition that he was using his Elemental Dragon Fusion so that he could match their respective stats.

Shin and Leonard could roughly the same. But since neither of them possessed a defensive class like Arthur, one was the most ideal number for them.

But if the three of them were locked in dealing with the elite monsters, then the rest of the wild boars would be free to attack the rest of their members.

Owen, Akailu, and Samael were not enough to deal with the common-rank monsters. Even if Lorraine was able to lure away three of the monsters, the number of the remaining ones left for the rest of the group was still too overwhelming for them.

This situation left Shin to come up with a different strategy.

Instead of isolating the elite monsters from the rest of the wild boars, Shin decided to deal with them altogether.

He arranged a standard formation for the group, while constantly giving out orders during the battle.

Arthur and Leonard were the main frontline of the group while Owen and Akailu were the second line of defense.

The former pair were there to face the head-on charge of the monsters as they were the only ones who could withstand such a frontal assault from the horde of boars under their respective Elemental Spirit Possession.

Then there were Samael and Huahua, who could cast occasional buffs and heals to restore their respective HP Bars to their healthy states.

Owen and Akailu, on the other hand, were tasked to prevent any monsters from breaking free from Arthur and Leonard's blockade. Even if it somewhat the chances of that from happening were quite low given the overall capabilities of these two gods, it was never wrong to be extra careful.

With such a solid defensive formation, the rest of the group were free to fire their skills and spells from the backline, especially Daulla, who was constantly throwing a series of large-scale spells that bombarded the wild boars that were trying to break through Arthur and Leonard.

Given that Arthur had a stronger attack power than her, she was free to throw her spells without holding back. She did not have to think about stealing the aggro from him even if she used her most powerful spells – aside from the Forbidden Spells.

Shin, on the other hand, was free do to whatever he wanted as he regularly stabilized the situation whenever their formation was about to collapse.

He always appeared at the right place and the right time, whenever the group needed him. He fixed all the mistakes that the others committed during the battle while throwing a couple of ambushes at the monsters from time to time.

He also eliminated some of the regular monsters to lessen the burden of the group whenever it was needed. But he was mostly leaving everything to the others as he wanted the group to further improve their teamwork and understanding of each other.

...

Fortunately, the group was pretty much experienced now, which was why they never faltered in front of such a predicament.

Instead, they only grew stronger as their bond and teamwork improved at a rapid pace. This was especially true since the group started to build a tacit understanding of one another and was even able to link skills and spells as a combination move.

An insane growth could even be seen in Huahua, who was becoming more confident in her decision-making. Even if she still required some instructions from Lorraine from time to time, this little shaman was able to make some decisive decisions on different occasions.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

A series of totems fell from above and encircled the group of monsters assaulting the group before releasing a dark aura.

This aura swept through all the wild boars, robbing them of their senses. The monsters became somewhat confused about what they were doing as they started to lose their sense of direction.

Roar! Roar! Roar!

But when they were about to go on a rampage, a huge totem was suddenly erected in the middle of their group, which then released a sleeping gas along with a weakening odor.

The wild boars felt that their bodies were being weakened by this gas and wanted to fight back. But before they could even do anything, a rain of bullets, arrows, and spells poured down at them and further robbed them of their movements.

They fell one after another as their legs were gravely injured by those attacks. Even if their health bars were still quite healthy and barely dropped, they still became immobile due to the injuries inflicted by the skills and spells that rained down at them.

This made them a living target of the new batch of skills and spells that immediately followed the previous barrage of attacks.

Even if they were able to recover from these attacks, their health bars slowly dropped from the bombardment of skills and spells.

The only survivors from these attacks were the three elite monsters who were barely able to escape the coverage of those attacks.

But before they were able to fully escape from the encirclement, Arthur suddenly appeared and pinned one of them in place.

Then, Owen and Akailu appeared almost at the same time and took one each.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Seeing that they were being blocked, the elite-rank wild boars quickly went berserk and started fighting back.

Arthur was still fine as he was already expecting this to happen and started bashing the wild boar with his shield and spear, putting it under control.

But Owen and Akailu, on the other hand, were forced to retreat multiple steps back due to the sheer difference in stats. They had no choice but to repeatedly take a step backward for a better footing.

Despite their stats being boosted by the series of buffs, they were still on the losing end when they tried to directly confront the elite-rank monsters. They had even lost a huge portion of their Health Bars after repeatedly blocking the attacks from the boars.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Fortunately, Samael and Huahua were quiet to respond, healing their respective HP Bars back to full using the healing spells and healing totems under their arsenal.

Right after getting their health back to full, the two quickly started pushing the two elite monsters back in the formation, so that the rest of the team could start hitting them with their respective skills and spells.

Lorraine even guided the two as Arthur pushed the one that he was fighting back to where the rest of the regular monsters were gathered.

After the three set up the blockade, Daull immediately released her spell, bombarding the monsters with lightning strikes that dealt almost ten thousand damage each.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Zap! Zap! Zap!

With the paralyzing effect caused by his lightning currents, the movements of the monsters were further weakened, giving Ithilien and Archimedes enough time to fire their arrows without restraint.

The two archers even fired a couple of snaring arrows and cast magic nets to restrict the movements of the wild boars further and prevent them from breaking through the encirclement of the curse totems set up by Huahua.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Alongside these attacks, Chaotic Luck was also throwing his magic spells in the mix, creating a series of explosions due to the fire-elemental attacks.

A storm of fire and lightning was created due to the interaction of his and Daulla's spell, further enhancing the damage of their attacks.

He had even used some of his restriction spells to help the others to hold the monsters in place. There were also some instances where he had to summon some of his Solar Undead to block the wild boars and prevent them from escaping.

Even if he could not use what he had learned about battle formations due to the lack of opportunities to use his Legion of the Chaotic Sun, he was still able to learn quite a few tricks on how to properly cast his magic spells and curse spells after watching the others training previously.

After fighting alongside her in this operation, he even learned some tricks from Daulla. He had learned when to use his spells without disrupting the flow of his allies while also timing when to use his powerful spells if they were needed.

In team battle, the might and destructiveness of his spells were secondary. The main point when fighting alongside his allies was to find the most effective spell that could help his teammates in every situation and when to use his trump cards.

Daulla was not an expert on this either as she had only learned what she knew from Cloe and Alice, who were used to fighting alongside top experts or had a perfect grasp in terms of timing.

The earlier training with the team helped her greatly, especially when she was able to link her spells with those fighting at the frontlines.

It was a whole different sense when fighting alongside Archimedes. The combination of moves and tricks that she had learned from the previous battles further helped her grow as a team member rather than an individual expert.

The sense of accomplishment that she had gotten whenever they won a battle through team effort was different when she was fighting alone with Archimedes.

The teamwork started to take shape and became more solid as time went by.

Even if fighting the group of monsters was becoming more and more challenging as they went deeper at the map, their teamwork and synergy were also improving at a rapid pace.

Given their current improvement, it would not be surprising for them to become a 'true' team later this day.

"Finally! We have reached our destination!"

Not long after, the group found themselves standing in front of a hidden cave deep in the forest.

Chapter 1568 A Battle of Wits

...

\*Ding\*

System: You have discovered the Dungeon 'Lesser Hatchling Lair'!

...

Dungeon Name: Lesser Hatchling Lair

Dungeon Type: Special One-Time Event

Dungeon Difficulty: (Default) Hard

Dungeon Size: 20-member Limit

Dungeon Average Level: 155 to 160

Dungeon Requirements:

- At least one 'Dragonkin' in the team
- The said member should be the bearer of the [Ancient Dragon Token]
- The said member should be the candidate for being the owner of the [Divine Dragon Armor]

#### Dungeon Background:

- This hidden cave is the habitat of Reptilian-type Monsters, which took certain changes due to a strange phenomenon.

The monsters underwent a massive transformation due to this phenomenon and gained powerful abilities that far surpassed their species.

Note: This is a one-time event dungeon. It can only be challenged once before disappearing regardless of the result.

...

Arthur shared the details with the team before falling into deep thought.

From the information that he had gotten from his quest, the [Dragon Chain Armor], which was the fragment of the main divine armor of the Dragon Race – the [Divine Dragon Armor], could be found at the depths of the Eternal Cave.

He first thought that this was the cave that he was looking for, but given the description of the dungeon, there was a high chance that he was wrong.

Seeing the disappointed look on Arthur's face, Shin walked over and patted his shoulders. "There is no need to feel so down. There is also the chance that this dungeon is related to your quest."

"Look at its background – the mysterious phenomenon must be related to that dragon powers that make the monsters within the dungeon evolve," he added, pointing out the clue that they had gotten from the dungeon description.

"And it is only at hard difficult, it shouldn't be that hard to clear," commented Owen from the side.

Bang!

But as he completed his remark, Ithilien suddenly hit him on the back of his head with her bow. "Idiot! Do you think this is still the Aurora Continent? Can't you see what such a difficulty implies?"

"This dungeon should be following the basic standard of the Awakened Continent, so 'it' is indeed 'hard'!" she added, scolding Owen.

"So, what is the plan, Vice Commander? Are we going to challenge it straight away?" asked Akailu as he recovered his stamina and concentration on a boulder.

Shin thought for a moment as he focused his attention on the final remark at the end of the dungeon's description. They only had one chance to clear this dungeon, so it was better to go all-out and clear it in one go.

He shook his head and informed the team. "This is it for today. Let's rest for now and wait for the others to finish their respective tasks and regroup with us."

"We still don't know how difficult the dungeons in this continent are. But given our current understanding of the monsters that we have encountered up until now, I can say that it is going to be very challenging even for us."

"Let's wait for our commander (Cloe) and the rest so that we can challenge it at our best form," he then paused for a moment as thought of something. "If they are still not present by tomorrow, then we can just clear some mobs in the surroundings and grind some levels while waiting."

After all, having a dedicated healer in the team during dungeon raids was important, especially in these kinds of situations where the difficulty of the dungeon was way beyond normal levels.

He then turned to Arthur and asked with a joking tone. "Any questions? Suggestions? Or violent reactions?"

Arthur shook his head as he smiled bitterly. "Alright, alright, I understand. We will follow your arrangements."

Even if he was quite in a hurry to finish this first part of his quest, he knew that it was not going to be easy given the current situation at hand. He just shrugged his shoulders and let Shin make an arrangement.

"Okay. That's it for today. Have a good rest and we will meet again tomorrow," Shin instructed everyone.

...

The next day, the other Cloe, Alice, Diablo, and Alucard were still not done with their respective business, which was why the rest of the Empyrean Talons had no choice but to hunt in the surrounding areas of the dungeon while waiting.

But at the same time, they had also informed the rest that they would not take that long before they were finished.

Later this day (in-game time) would be the earliest while it would be later tomorrow (in-game time) if they were delayed quite late.

After spending a whole day hunting the surrounding areas, the Empyrean Talons were able to level up, which made their day quite satisfying.

Aside from Shin, who was at Level 165 already and way ahead of the group due to his previous quest, the rest of the Empyrean Talons were around Level 158 to Level 159. Only Arthur and Leonard were the ones at Level 160.

Given the difficulty of grinding levels at Tier 3, this level was already quite high compared to the rest of the players.

Regardless, Arthur was still quite annoyed that Shin had left them too behind due to his stupid luck when it came to finding special quests.

This was the reason why Shin did not share any experience points with the others when they were hunting, letting them catch up to him as soon as possible.

Of course, one of the reasons was because of Arthur's complaints, which made it quite amusing for the others, especially when he was throwing 'tantrums.'

However, it would be a whole different case when it came to the levels that Shin would be getting from the special quests that he currently had.

Arthur had no control over that matter, but he also had a set of quests of his own, which were on a similar level or difficulty, so the gap was not that big yet.

The 5-level difference was quite big in Awakened Continent, especially for high-level monsters, which could release Aura Suppression to those with lower levels than them. But it was not insurmountable,

especially when Shin and the others had recently discovered that there were special stats that could overcome these problems.

"Ignore Level difference – this is quite a huge card that we can use against monsters of higher level, particularly here in the Awakened Continent," said Owen as he browsed through the forums while resting.

"These stats are quite well-known before, but players started to ignore them after not seeing that much benefit from them. After all, experts of the highest level can bridge the gaps in strength and level suppression through sheer skill and techniques," commented Akailu from the side.

"Who will think that they are going to be this significant in this continent," said Ithilien as she joined them.

"But how can these people become aware of this when we are the only ones who know how powerful the monsters of this continent are?" said Chaotic Luck, asking the most concerning question.

He then paused before suddenly coming to a realization. "Ah! Don't tell me other players are currently exploring in the Awakened Continent!"

Shin, who overheard their conversation, suddenly chimed in. "It is a possibility. After all, it has been a while since we arrived here. Other experts can also find a way to reach the Awakened Continent through other means."

"Or it can also be because of them stumbling into certain places filled with monsters of similar levels. After all, I have been in such places as the Phantom Island and the Forgotten Sea, which were quite a mysterious place."

"I will not be surprised if other players discovered similar places," he added.

Leonard also nodded and agreed. "Moreover, there are also those Neutral Regions filled with High-Level Monsters such as the Frozen Kingdom and the Barren Lands. Even if the monsters there are not as strong as the ones here, their levels and life ratings are a problem itself."

"They are equally troublesome, especially those Yetis, Frost Drakes, and Wendigos of the Frozen Kingdom, which were from special category monsters," he added.

Arthur thought for a moment before joining in. "I heard that the Barren Lands is filled with Earth Drakes, Salamanders, and Golems. All are also at the average level of 250 up to 300."

"I must say that the difficulty level of those regions is not much inferior to Awakened Continent. At least for the time being since we still have yet to explore regions where we can find similar monsters."

While they were discussing, Owen, who initiated the topic, suddenly saw something from the forums. He frowned when he saw the title of the trend before taking a quick look at it.

It was then he saw something astonishing. His eyes turned wide before turning to the others. "Vice Commander Sickarius and Vice Commander Siegfried! Take a look at this."

The two were quite confused at his reaction before hearing the sound of the system that they had received a message.

Looking at it, they saw that Owen had sent something to the team chat channel. Then the expression on their faces also turned grim as they saw the screenshots and the content of the entire trend.

– "Players of the Evil Faction have a chance to enter another World!" –

– "Portal towards Hell can lead the evil and demonic players to enter another dimension!" –

– "Once the Demons entered the Atlas World, the Demonic Players can enter the Hell Dimension?" –

Reading through the contents of the trend, Shin and the others could tell that everything was authentic as the player who leaked the quests related to it even did a live feed while sharing his status window and quest panel.

Moreover, it was also supported by some independent players, who chose the Demonic Churches as their main faction.

This news was already spreading throughout the online platforms.

Shin and the others could tell how much this particular quest affected the current flow of the game, especially when the top guilds and big organizations siding with the Evil Faction got involved.

Those guys would never let such an opportunity slip away from their grasp. This will also lead the Faction War that was currently happening in the Dark Cloud Kingdom to elevate to another level as these guilds and organizations would without a doubt do their best to hasten the process of the Portal Opening.

The war would also escalate further as an immediate effect of these hegemons getting involved.

This would also lead the population of the players to be thoroughly divided.

Those who would be siding with the Righteous Churches needed to hasten their progress to quality exploring the Awakened Continent while the demonic and evil players would be doing their best to enter Hell as soon as possible.

Neither side would want the other to take the lead nor be left behind, so they would surely do anything to get an advantage over the other.

But at the same time, those on the side of the Righteous Churches would also be slightly disadvantaged since the demonic and evil players could still explore the Awakened Continent through different means while their sides could not enter Hell and seek opportunities.

Shin squinted his eyes as he read through the trend before mumbling. "Whoever leaked this quest sure knows what they are doing."

"Not only can they lead other players to side with the Evil Faction, but they can also discourage those players trying to choose the Righteous Churches."

"They have listed out all the benefits while hiding the consequences. Regardless, this is more than enough to sway the decision of other players, especially those working independently," he added as he assessed the entire situation.

"They have weakened the support of the Righteous Churches while gaining more believers for the Evil Faction?" commented Owen before cursing. "Tsk! They sure are sly."

"Forget about it. It is not our problem anyway. It is just the other players don't know what benefits the Righteous Churches can give them here in the Awakened Continent," said Arthur as he added. "Once they do, they sure will have second thoughts."

Thinking along this line, Arthur seemed to have thought of something before turning to Shin. "How about we also leak some information about the Righteous Churches. It is not like it is any secret anyway."

"We can just reveal it to the public and let those sly foxes have a taste of their own medicine," he added, encouraging Shin.

Shin thought for a moment before nodding. "Not a bad idea."

He then formulated a plan inside his head before saying. "Contact Miss Bunny. Tell her that we have a special job for her."

Chapter 1569 Gathered

.....

Later that day, the ones that Shin and the others were waiting for finally arrived.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The group arrived together as they traveled alongside each other to reach this place. Diablo was leading the group as he was the fastest and the one scouting for the others.

He was also acting as the temporary 'tank' as he was the melee-dictated class. Even if he could not block the attacks of the wild boars in a frontal confrontation, he could still control their movements by leading them to his desired location while taking advantage of his insane speed to dodge.

Then Alice and Alucard would bombard the wild boars to death, using their powerful spells and skills. Cloe was also helping them with her buffs and healing while also throwing a couple of offensive spells in the mix.

Their journey was quite smooth even if they did not have Arthur leading their team. Moreover, Arthur was busy training Owen, Akailu, and Samael and teaching them how to play as a proper frontline.

Owen and Akailu were not strangers to this role as they were experts themselves. But what Arthur was teaching them was how to match their movements, skills, and techniques with the pace of a Godlike Player.

There was an unimaginable gap between apex experts and Godlike Players, which was also the dividing line between these players.

What Arthur was teaching them was how to bridge this gap or at least get used to this pace so that they could match those monsters in the future, especially when they would most likely be facing such gods in the upcoming rounds of the United Cup.

Shin and Leonard could not help but raise their brows as they watched the four arrive, especially when they noticed the auras that were enveloping them.

Diablo seemed to have learned how to hide his presence. It was a different way of erasing one's presence that assassins like Faker were using. Instead, he seemed to have melded with the surroundings by utilizing the Shadow Powers that he had recently gained.

Moreover, Shin could also tell that Diablo must have mastered the martial manuals that he had given to him. Diablo must have reached a certain level where it almost matched the martial arts from the real world.

Alucard was on a similar level. The aura that he was emitting was overwhelmingly dense, particularly the scent of blood that he possessed. He felt more like a beast than a human from the perspective of an expert.

With the sniper rifle resting on his shoulder, he felt like a veteran soldier who had experienced countless wars in the real world. His posture also indicated that he was ready to fight at any given time, especially when his other hand was resting on the hilt of the rapier sheathed beside his waist.

Charlotte (Alice), on the other hand, was giving off a strange sense of 'fullness'. Her presence was overwhelming with vitality and elemental energy. It felt like the surrounding mana was obeying her and matching every move she made.

She was blending with the surroundings, but in a different way than how assassins like Diablo and Faker hid their presence. It felt like the surroundings were taking the initiative to hide her presence rather than actively doing it with her techniques.

Then there was Arielle (Cloe), who was constantly emitting a noble air around her. The holy aura surrounding her also made her look like a Saintess descending to the world.

Shin even felt that she possessed the same level of holy aura as Cardinal Ronald, who was almost approaching the limits of this plane. If it was based on aura alone, then Shin could feel that Cloe had far surpassed everyone here.

"It seems like you guys have benefited a lot from your respective quests," commented Shin as he observed them.

Diablo and Alucard shrugged their shoulders, refusing to give any comments. But they acknowledged that they indeed had gotten a lot stronger compared to the first they had arrived on this continent.

The two of them were even confident that they would not lose to Shin, Arthur, and Leonard if they battled right now, especially Alucard, who did not have a Transcendent Race and Class.

He had learned quite a few tricks from the Vampire Families of the Awakened Continent. Even if their lineage was from a different root compared to King Dracula of the Frozen Kingdom, the principles of their techniques and skills shared a lot of similarities.

He was confident that the Blood Arts that he had learned from them could help him match these guys even if they used their respective Elemental Possession.

Cloe, on the other hand, quickly hopped over Shin's side and interlocked his arm with hers. "You bet! I have learned quite a lot of powerful spells this time around! I will give you a big surprise later!"

Alice stared at the two, particularly the interlocked arms, for quite a while before turning her attention to where Arthur and the others were training. "The monsters here are much more powerful than what we have expected, especially those at Elite and Special Elite Ranks."

She paused for a moment before continuing. "But it is not an insurmountable gap. We can just use the Elemental Spirit Possession to bridge it and even overwhelm them."

"Why are you guys not using it?" she asked as she became somewhat confused about Arthur struggling against a Special Elite Iron-Skinned Wild Boar in the distance.

The others also turned their heads and seconded her thoughts by nodding their heads.

Leonard chuckled as he answered. "It is Shin Bro's idea. He said it is a form of training."

Hearing those words, the others could not help but turn to Shin, giving him an inquiring look. The expressions that they were making indicated that they wanted him to further explain.

Shin shrugged his shoulders. "We are aware of that as well. But it will be a waste if we don't take advantage of this opportunity to train ourselves."

"We may have been adjusted with the mana density of the Awakened Continent, but the benefits that we can get from staying in this condition don't end at enhancing our techniques and skills."

"Can't you see? The more we fight under constant stress along with the strong pressure given by the environment, the faster we improve ourselves?"

He paused for a moment as he directed his gaze at Arthur and the others. "The density of the mana filling the air is forming a certain level of hindrance in our movements, especially when we are using our combat techniques and special skills."

"This is giving us a hint about the flaws that we don't notice up until now. Adding the pressure that we are getting from the powerful monsters, we are able to constantly press ourselves to the limit and repeatedly surpass it."

"That's right, using our Elemental Possessions can help us defeat these monsters much easier. We can even challenge a Chieftain Rank Monster given our overall composition."

"But if we rely on our Elemental Possessions a little too much, then it will limit our growth in the long run."

He then paused for another time as he looked at Alice and Diablo, who also had Transcendent Races, and gave them some advice. "Those cards are our powerful trump card, but that doesn't mean that we have to rely on them every time."

"We can also use them as a reference to improve our Martial Arts or Mentalism in the real world. But striving to become stronger through our own strength is quite good as well," he added as he turned to Alice.

He had learned this lesson when he was inside the Trail Grounds previously. He had learned quite a lot from utilizing his abilities to the fullest, so he wanted others to learn something as well.

Shin did not want to discourage them from using their Elemental Possession. He just wanted to learn that these elements were another form of power and not a shortcut to becoming powerful.

Once they have learned how to properly utilize their individual strength at the highest level, then combine them with the Elemental Powers provided by each possession, the level that they would reach would be unimaginable.

He could even remember when Uno had used the Dual Elemental Possession from the latter's memory. Even if Uno was holding back at that time, the strength that he had showcased during that time far surpassed their current level.

He had even defeated Arthur in a single strike right after he fully unleashed a fraction of his real power even in an instant.

He wanted the others to reach a similar level in their own right. He knew that it was impossible to catch up to Uno with just that, but he at least believed that the others could find their way of reaching that level with their respective strength and understanding of their abilities.

Setting that thought aside, Shin turned to everyone and said. "Since we all are gathered, let's proceed with raiding the dungeon."

Chapter 1570 Dungeon: Lesser Hatchling Lair (Part 1)

.....

After organizing the team, Shin led the group toward the dungeon entrance alongside Arthur. The latter was already getting impatient and wanted to finish this quest as soon as possible. He wanted to proceed to the next clue so that he could already get the fragment of his Divine Armor.

The entire Empyrean Talons alongside Lorraine stood before the dungeon entrance with solemn expressions on their faces. This 16-man team would be challenging the first dungeon of the Awakened Continent, which was at the Hard Difficulty.

If it was in the standard of the Aurora Continent, then they would not be thinking too much about it.

But since this dungeon would be following the standard of the Awakened Continent, it was quite a challenge even for their top experts. They were feeling quite nervous and excited at the same time.

They were expecting to get a real challenge this time around!

"Let's go!" said Shin, signaling Arthur to activate the entrance since he was the main initiator of the quest.

Arthur also did not wait any longer as he quickly placed his palm on the invisible barrier covering the cave entrance before initiating the challenge through his thoughts.

Swoosh!

Then the group disappeared in the very next instant, transforming into specks of lights that slowly dissipated in the air.

...

Whoosh!

Not long after, the group found themselves standing in the middle of a dark cave. They could not see due to the darkness, which also led them to put their alertness to the highest level.

"Cloe, Chaos!" called out Shin as he tried to scan the surroundings of his Spiritual Sense.

But right after he tried entering his combat state of Reality Manifestation, he immediately something strange.

His concentration was dropping at an alarming rate. The consumption rate of his Reality Manifestation grew exponentially, making him quickly exited the combat state soon after.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

It was at this moment when Cloe and Chaotic Luck raised their staffs and shot a beam of light in the air.

'Priest Basic Skill: Illuminating Light'

'Solaris Lich Basic Skill: Torch'

A pair of glowing spheres appeared on each end of the group, illuminating their surroundings. But since the cave seemed to have been shrouded by a mysterious power that amplified the darkness filling it, the light that the group got did not exceed the 15-meter range each.

Such a range was already good enough, but not at the satisfying level given the level of the two and their mastery over their spells.

This indicated that their respective abilities were greatly restricted in this place.

"There is something wrong with this place," it was at this point that Shin informed the others. "The consumption of my Concentration is absurdly high."

The hidden stat called Concentration was an important key that the top experts used, especially when using powerful skills, special abilities, and advanced combat techniques.

It was also the most important factor that divided the ordinary experts into the apex gods.

Using the Elemental Spirit Possession consumed a large amount of concentration alongside the mana manipulation techniques unique to every expert. Adding the special combat states that they used during battle, an individual would require quite a lot of concentration to keep all of them together.

Using powerful tools also required a lot of concentration to utilize their special abilities to their fullest potential just like Shin's sword, the [Yamato], especially when he was using the 'Nephilim's Wings' ability.

What Shin discovered just now indicated that their abilities would be greatly restricted in this place. This was because they would no longer be able to use their Elemental Spirit Possession senselessly as well as their unique Combat States.

"Tsk! This is going to be quite an issue," commented Leonard as he also realized the same problem.

"It seems like the mysterious energy enveloping the entire dungeon is preventing us from using our fullest potential," said Alice as she was able to sense the root of their problem after observing the surroundings.

"Is this the reason why it is categorized as Hard Difficulty here in the Awakened Continent?" suspected Cloe as she felt that there were some restrictions cast on their bodies right after entering the dungeon.

"If that is the case, then the difficulty standard of the Awakened Continent is a little different compared to the Aurora Continent," said Lorraine as she also assessed the situation.

As a Commander of an Adventurer Team herself, Lorraine was quite familiar with raiding dungeons. She was also quite used to assessing the situation within the dungeon as a form of habit.

Quickly comparing what they were experiencing right now and the situations that she was in previously, she was able to instantly discover the differences between the dungeons of the two continents.

If her assessment was right, then the difficulty level of the dungeons in the previous continent focused on the powerful monsters within the dungeon, the special conditions within it like the weather and terrains, and the average ability of the players who were trying to challenge it.

On the other hand, the immediate restriction cast upon the players when challenging the dungeon of the Awakened Continent was already one of the factors in addition to those mentioned conditions from the previous continent.

Of course, this was just her initial assessment since they had yet to engage in battle in this place and properly challenge the dungeon. But this piece of information that they just discovered was already serious enough to make them take the dungeon more seriously.

After organizing their thoughts and findings, Shin signaled the group to get moving. "Get in your positions. We are going with C-Formation while advancing."

They quickly moved in succession as they were already familiar with the formation that Shin was talking about.

Arthur and Owen walked at the forefront of the group, acting as the vanguards. Leonard was standing right behind them as the secondary line of defense.

Then there were Samael and Akailu walking slightly behind Leonard as they covered the left and right side respectively. Their positions also fell in the secondary line of defense, but they were slightly away from Leonard as they were meant to protect those from the backline.

Then there was Chaotic Luck walking behind those two with Cloe right behind him. Alice and Daulla were covering each of their flanks as they constantly released a subtle amount of mana to detect any movements from their surroundings.

Then the four marksmen were situated at the rear. Since they were the ones with the longest range, positioning at farthest back was the most ideal position for them, especially when their sharp senses as marksmen made them able to constantly scan their surroundings and detect any danger from the rear.

Moreover, Alucard was also stationed beside them. With him overseeing the rear, the rest would be able to deal with any danger coming from behind, especially when they could fight in either melee or long-range battle due to the uniqueness of his class.

But as an extra precaution, the Akailu summoned two dire wolves to guard the rear alongside a pair of Skeleton Knights that Chaotic Luck had summoned earlier.

This was quite a solid formation that covered every direction. It was also the most ideal formation given that they were moving in a narrow corridor of the cave.

In the meantime, Shin and Diablo were tasked to scout the path ahead as they were the fastest among the group and possessed stealth skills that could hide their presence against monsters.

Diablo was also tasked to disarm any traps that they would be encountering along the way. Since Shadow Dancers fell in the category of thieves, he possessed a set of skills and abilities meant for such situations.

They did not encounter any traps quite unexpectedly, which also indicated that this dungeon was housing unintelligent monsters that were incapable of setting up such complicated tasks.

As they were advancing, Shin suddenly halted his steps before signaling Diablo to stop. The latter was somewhat slow to respond but was still able to pause his actions in time.

Bang! Bang!

It was at that moment when the two heard a series of heavy footsteps coming from ahead, indicating that they had finally found the first monster of the dungeon.

But what made them frown on their brows was that this set of footsteps was too heavy for an ordinary monster to have.

Given the heaviness of each step, Shin could tell that this was a massive monster, especially after hearing the explosiveness of each sound it made.

Slowly advancing, Shin stuck close to the cave walls and hid under the shades that it had.

Diablo also followed closely behind, utilizing his stealth techniques.

When the two reached the end of the cave corridor, they slowly stuck out their heads through the gaps in the rock formations to see what was happening ahead of them.

It was at that moment when they saw a massive lizard scratching the cave walls for some reason. The size of this monster was as huge as a large bus in the real world.

The size of the monster alone was overwhelming enough, but the aura that it was emitting was on a whole different level.

Using his True Sight Skill, Shin tried to see what kind of monster it was.

---

[Monster Name]: Cave Komodo Lizard (Hatchling)

[Monster Type]: Beast (Reptilian Family)

[Monster Rank]: Special Elite (Berserk)

[Life Rating]: Lesser Draconic Species

[Monster Level]: 155

Health Points: 20 Million

Description:

A Komodo Lizard underwent a series of mutations after an extended exposure to the mysterious power within its habitat.

It possessed tough scales that could rival any sturdy armor and sharp claws that could cut steel as if it were tofu.

Its mouth had a strength that could easily crush boulders and metals.

Under the constant exposure to the mysterious power within the cave, it also gained some features of draconic species, which greatly enhanced its overall capabilities.

At the same time, it had also gained a certain control over Earth Elemental Mana.

Note 1: The body of this monster could not be harvested as it was a dungeon monster, but there was a high chance that a Beast Core or an Elemental Core would drop upon death.

Note 2: There was also a small chance that a Soul Crystal would drop upon being killed.

Note 3: There was also a very low chance that a fragment of a Lesser Dragon Core would drop upon its death.

---

There was a strange look on Shin's face as he looked at the overall description of the monster before shaking his head. "I hope that this shouldn't be that bad."

After that, he quickly sent the details to the rest of the team before informing them to rush over as fast as they could since he knew this would not be an easy battle, especially after seeing the Life Rating of the monster.

After all, monsters that possessed life ratings were much stronger than those with normal beast ratings.

Therefore, even if this 'Cave Komodo Lizard' possessed a slightly lower level than the most recent 'Iron-Skilled Wild Boars' that they had encountered outside the dungeon, its strength far surpassed the latter.

Moreover, it was from the 'Lesser Draconic Species' which was a descendant of the Dragons. This alone was enough to tell the group that this monster was not as simple as it seemed.

"But we welcome challenges all the time," he mumbled as he stared at the monster with a blazing fighting spirit.