

Destiny 1611

Chapter 1611 Looking for a way to free the Forgotten God of the Sea (Part 2)

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Deep in the middle of the Forgotten Sea, Shin brought Cloe and Alice to the underwater temple of the Forgotten God of the Sea – the God of Primordial Waters, Hydros.

Cloe seemed to be still upset about something after listening to Shin's 'explanation' earlier. Even though he could hear her complaining in a low voice, she still followed him here without saying anything.

Regardless, she was still willing to help Shin with anything. She was just sulking since she thought this was finally the time when she could 'solo' Shin and have a time together. But who would have thought that they would be in the presence of a 'third wheel', who happened to have some history and a complicated connection with Shin?

Earlier, she and Alice were somewhat getting along. But after this 'incident', the gap between them seemed to appear once again.

What upset her even more was when she learned that Shin and Alice had gone questing before with just the two of them. And it was not just once, but twice.

Cloe felt like crying since she had yet to spend time with Shin together within the game themselves when her main purpose of playing the game when Arthur first invited her was to play with him in the first place.

But who would have thought that she would have to wait a very long time before Shin joined them?

Then such a precious opportunity was snatched by some other woman!

How could she not be upset because of this?

Alice, on the other hand, was oblivious to this. She remained silent as she followed them here under Shin's invitation. After all, he had helped her before during their time in the Stormy Mountain Range between the Storm Empire and Dark Cloud Kingdom.

Even if Shin had told her that he was also doing his quest by helping her, she still felt somewhat indebted and wanted to repay him.

After all, she had not only formed a contract with such a powerful Elemental Spirit Queen, who was a fallen Primordial God but also had gotten a top-notch secondary combat class during that quest.

She felt that she had taken advantage of Shin by gaining more benefits during that time, so she wanted to take this opportunity to repay that 'debt'.

Since this also happened to be related to contact with another Elemental, the timing, and condition could not be any more perfect.

This was the perfect opportunity to repay him.

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Alice curiously looked around the underwater temple and observed the place. Her eyes were especially attracted by the ancient murals painted and engraved on the walls, which were telling the legends of the sea.

At the same time, she could also feel that her Ocean Spirit King that she had contracted, Suijin, was getting somewhat restless due to the boundless and powerful water element filling this place.

As a Spirit King of the water element, particularly being labeled as a Goddess of the Water during her peak, Suijin felt a certain connection to this place. She could already tell that the owner of this temple was someone who far surpassed her in terms of water affinity and power – at least during the peak of their strength, which was during an Era far harsher than the time she lived in.

[Esteemed Elven Sage, the Elemental Spirit sealed in this place is most likely not inferior to Goddess Gaia.] communicated by Suijin after observing the murals painted on the walls and sensing the dense water-elemental powers filling the entire place.

Suijin, who was said to be one of the absolutes of the sea and formed a contract with the sea itself as a faith god during the end of the Ancient Era to pursue greater power, could feel that the spirit sealed in this place far surpassed her connection with the element of water.

Hearing her words, Gaia could not help but add. [If I am the Goddess of Earth and Nature, then the one who is sealed in this place must be the God of the Primordial Waters. A god who has been forgotten due to the countless wars.]

[We are from the same generation. One of the most Primordial Gods, who have been born from the Primordial Chaos.]

She paused for a moment as she felt a nostalgic feeling before continuing. [Who would have thought that we both would end up in such a state.]

She observed the energies filling the air and followed their flows with her senses and added. [And it seems like his situation is much worse than mine. I have at least been reincarnating countless times while following the passage of time, but he seemed to have been sleeping here for a very long time.]

[I will not be surprised if he has already lost himself after all this.] She paused before warning Alice seriously. [If that is the case, then I must say that you have to be very careful when trying to unseal him.]

[If you committed even the slightest mistake during the unsealing process, then there is a high chance that you will release a God of Destruction instead of awakening a Primordial Elemental Spirit.]

[I now understand why that little kid repeatedly warns the two of you to be careful when studying seal.] She added with a very serious tone.

[But his decurion shouldn't be that far either,] Gaia continued as she recalled the plan that Shin had come up with while sharing this quest with them.

[Given that I am also a Primordial God during my peak, I have a decent knowledge about the methods that are only available to us. Even if I can't help you release the seal directly, I can at least help you deduce the method of unsealing it.]

[Then there is this Faith God Suijin of the Sea, who also has contracted with the Great Sea, and the inheritance that you have gotten from that Elven Sorcerer.]

[If we have combined all our efforts perfectly, then we can indeed help that little girl unseal that ancient seal, especially since a very long time has already passed, making it lose most of its operational powers.]

[This method is indeed more reliable than looking for a Saint Rank Runemaster, who is unfamiliar with him.]

Gaia could not help but become impressed with Shin. He had only heard a few of their abilities, but he had already deduced a great method to deal with their current problem.

She knew that this guy was not that simple since he had contracted several Elemental Spirits with great potential and limitless aptitudes, but she did not know that she would be given such a surprise of this level.

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Not long after, Shin led the two to the hall, where the sleeping God of the Primordial Waters was.

Boom!

When he opened the giant metal gates, an overwhelming pressure quickly rushed out of the hall and tried to drown the three of them.

Shin was relatively fine since he had already familiarized himself with this pressure when he first visited this place. Moreover, his newly improved mental prowess could already withstand this kind of pressure. It was nothing to him.

Cloe and Alice, on the other hand, were somewhat caught off guard by this sudden eruption of pressure. After all, it was their first time coming here.

But they had their respective methods to withstand it.

Alice was protected by Gaia, who released a cleansing aura that washed her mind from mental pressure and protected her from a mind mark that could leave fear deep inside her consciousness, putting trauma in it.

Cloe, on the other hand, released a holy aura that covered her body and protected her mind. The effects of this aura were similar to the one that Gaia had released, but hers possessed more potent cleansing powers due to her high affinity for light and sacred elements.

After recovering their footings, they raised their head and saw a cute little creature that seemed to be a humanoid whale 'floating' in the air while being sealed in a glass-like container made of the purest form of mana.

Their eyes were also attracted by the huge magic formation that almost covered the entire hall.

[It is indeed Hydros of the Primordial Waters.] mumbled Gaia after a brief silence. The form might be different, but she could sense a dense primordial power coming from this little creature.

Aside from that, she could also feel that this 'Hydros' had already lost all his memories after seeing this creature's 'clear' consciousness. It was no different from an infant which had been born into the world.

But what made her frown deeper was when she could no longer sense any divinity from Hydros' current vessel – not even the tiniest hint of it. He had his divine powers completely.

Even she, who had been 'reincarnated' multiple times through different vessels and forms, was still able to retain a small hint of divinity, albeit being broken.

She could not help but sigh after realizing that Hydros might have experienced much harsher conditions than her during the war at 'that' time.

Chapter 1612 Clues about the Forgotten Eras

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Cloe and Alice quickly went to work after finally adjusting themselves.

The former wanted to use these God's Runes as material for study to improve her Runemaster Profession. She would not be able to solve this easily given that her skills and knowledge as a Runemaster were still far from being enough.

But she could tell that she would reach a very high level in this profession if she continued to study these runes. Her experience with this lifestyle profession would reach another level once he completely understood them. She even felt that she would break through at the peak of Grandmaster Rank at the very least.

Even if she could not reach the Grand Scholar Rank, which was equivalent to the Saint Rank of the production profession, she felt that she would not be that far if she managed to fully understand these runes along with their system.

She also got inspired by them and felt that she could do something more with these runes and the mysterious sequences that they were forming.

Adding the principle of the Qi Reinforcement Skills and the unique body refining methods that her master, Martial King Lin Huang, had taught her in the real world, she felt that could create a few unique skills to reinforce her body within the game.

She could also use this as a prototype for the foundation of the secondary combat class that she was planning to take.

Alice, on the other hand, felt that these runes left behind by Hydros would be greatly helpful for her secondary combat class.

Adding with the help of Gaia, she felt that she could upgrade the rank of her grimoire once she learned these runes and understood their mysteries. She felt that the rank of her secondary combat class would progress greatly once they successfully unsealed these seals.

The rune sequences and the sealing formation could also increase the power of the Sorcerer's fighting style to reinforce her spells in battle. She could also use them as a main model to improve the special spells and combat techniques that were recorded in the Sorcerer's Grimoire.

Seeing the two quickly forget about him, Shin felt a little strange as he watched them busily study the sealing formation that was trapping Hydros.

He could only sigh. "This is fine too. It is better than being in Cold War or something."

After that, he summoned Solus. "You were also a god at a certain point, weren't you? Can you help them break this sealing formation?"

Solus was also quite a powerful god before. Even if she was not as powerful as Gaia and Hydros during their peak, she was still quite experienced and knowledgeable. After all, the Sun God, who she followed during that time was among the most powerful gods in the Divine Realm.

In a sense, she also had a magic profession, which was quite related to these kinds of things. He felt that she would also be of great assistance to these girls given her background.

"I will do my best my liege!" Solus bowed as she received the instructions from Shin.

Shin then went to a corner and watched them for a moment. He then stepped out of the hall to visit the other facilities of the underwater temple.

One of the reasons why he left Solus with them, Shin felt somewhat uncomfortable leaving these two girls alone. He felt that something disastrous would happen if he left the two of them alone.

Solus could at least mediate before it could happen.

At the same time, Shin could also not leave the vicinity of the temple since he could not separate from Solus too far. After all, Solus was still dependent on Shin due to their contract. She would instantly be summoned beside Shin once they left a certain distance away from each other.

So, even if Shin wanted to join the event that was about to take place in the Divinity City, he could not leave yet since the distance between this place and the Divine Empire was too far.

He had to stay in this place to maintain the connection between him and Solus.

Fortunately, he had already registered himself before coming to this place, so he could only wait until the two finished dealing with the sealing formation before he joined that event later.

But he was too bored to stay with them in that hall if he could only watch them study those runes. Even if he could also be considered as some sort of a Runemaster due to his understanding of mentalism runes from the real world, he still felt that he could not help the two of them that much given that his level of understanding when it came to these kinds of runes within the game was too limited.

He could at least deduce a very small part of it, but it was far enough given that his background understanding of the runes within the game was too shallow.

It was better to leave it to these two experts and avoid creating trouble for himself.

He should be able to use this opportunity to finally check on the other facilities of this underwater temple.

Even if very little of facilities were available for him due to his current level of authority, he could at least give it a try. He wanted to see what kinds of features of the temples were available for him and understand as much as he could about the temple itself.

Given that Hydros had chosen this place to be the place of his rebirth, there must be something special about this place.

He could also try his luck if there were some clues left behind by Hydros that could tell them how to unseal that sealing formation.

As Shin was traversing the corridors, he watched the murals painted on the walls, which gave him a decent understanding of the history of the sea, particularly during the Great Oceanic War.

This era seemed to have taken place when the 'Atlas World' was still one.

There was still no higher or lower plane during that time. But there was also a concept of higher dimensions, where the most powerful beings of the world live.

But the concept of gods during this era was also different from the other eras that Shin knew like the Warring Era, Repelling Era, and New Age Era.

The Gods during that time were absolute beings, who managed to reach the pinnacle of the world and ascended to a higher dimension. But this said dimension was just another world, which contained a higher level of laws.

These 'Laws' were a higher level of understanding that most beings could not understand. But once they had gained an initial understanding of it, they would be able to step into another world that most of the creatures could not reach.

These 'Laws' seemed to be also related to the 'Divine Authorities' that the Gods wielded.

Shin also 'read' from these murals about the levels and hierarchies between the gods. Not all gods were equal as some were naturally more powerful than others.

The 'Immaculate Beings', who were born from the 'Chaos' itself, were called the Primordial Gods. They were gods who were present from the very beginning. They witnessed the creation of the universe.

Then there were the 'Absolute Beings'. These were the Primordial Gods, who managed to grasp multiple 'laws' and gained an 'authority' that far surpassed the other gods.

These two beings were the peak of that time, which were followed by the 'lesser beings.'

What beneath the Absolute Beings but on the same level as the Immaculate Beings were the 'Boundless Beings'. They were creatures, who managed to gain a certain understanding of the 'laws of the universe' and reached the same height as the Immaculate Beings.

They managed to use the laws that they had grasped to change the constitution of their bodies and got reborn under the blessing of the universe.

There were also a bunch of levels beneath these levels, but these three were the only ones that managed to leave a deep mark on Shin's mind.

But what surprised Shin was that he seemed to have found out why almost all these eras had ended and nearly been erased through the passage of time.

It seemed like each succeeding era was somehow thrown into a war between races, gods, and others.

Shin was still missing the main reason why these eras were always at war, but he could at least guess that it had something to do with the laws of the universe.

The oldest and most powerful races had gone extinct during these countless wars. Even the most powerful Gods of different Origin Races could not survive these cycles of wars. The Ancestral Dragon, Origin Phoenix, Beast God, Titan King, Demonic Primogenitor, Supreme Deity, and many others had fallen through these never-ending wars.

What surprised Shin a lot was the fact that the so-called 'fragment of gods' seemed to have been left behind by these fallen gods.

It seemed like one of the reasons why the 'Old' and 'New' Gods of the preceding eras before the ones recorded in the history books seemed to be fighting for these 'fragments.'

Little did they know that most of them would become a victim of this disaster and turn into 'fragments' themselves.

This gave Shin a shiver after learning that the 'fragment' in his possession was such a dangerous item. "No wonder Hanzo and Solus keep on insisting that I can't use its powers unless I reach Tier 4."

He then paused for a moment before continuing. "But given these clues, I'm afraid that I have to reach the peak of Sovereign Being at the very least before I dare to touch it."

"What will happen if this 'thing' happens to be a fragment related to a very old and pre-historic god?" he could not help but shudder as this thought crossed his mind.

He understood that he would be in deep trouble if it happened to be the case.

Chapter 1613 Nightmare of Divinity City (Part 1)

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As Shin 'watched' the history recovered by the God of Primordial Waters, Hydros, he came to understand that there were still dozens of eras before the Ancient Era that the current denizens of the Atlas World were still looking for clues.

Of course, that was still before Hydros died during these eras, which meant that there was still a huge gap in between that was still unknown.

Shin called this recorded history the 'Mythical Era'. This era was composed of multiple eras during the time Hydros was still alive.

While he was 'watching' the history of the previous world, particularly the history of the Great Ocean, Shin also checked on the other facilities of the Forgotten Temple. But to his disappointment, he did not get that much since all of them were sealed and inaccessible with his current authority.

The Weapon Storage, the Skill and Martial Rhapsody, the Puppet and Golem Room, and many others were all locked.

He even found some rooms with fancy names such as the Dao Enlightenment Room, Starry Sky Temple, the Inner Demon Hut, and Cleansing Mind Chapel.

These rooms piqued Shin's interest as he passed them. He could not help but shake his head and click his tongue, finding that it was a pity that he could not access them.

Fortunately, the method for unlocking them was not hidden from him by the system. All he had to do was to clear all three trials prepared by Hydros before he set himself to reincarnate before he was acknowledged by Forgotten Temple.

Even though Hydros had somewhat failed to completely reincarnate, the rules he set for the Forgotten Temple remained.

The Trial of the Primordial Waters was meant to test if the challenger was worthy enough to inherit the legacy left behind by Hydros, which would reward them the right to become the new 'owner' of the temple.

As for the other trials, they were prepared for the successor to unlock the remaining facilities of the Forgotten Temple, which made Shin's head somewhat ached.

He knew that he was not strong enough to challenge those two trials yet. After all, the Trial of the Primordial Waters had already taught him a lesson.

The two remaining trials shouldn't be that easy, especially when one of them concerned the true inheritance of a fallen Primordial God while the other was related to his Transcendent Race, which he suspected would help him reach the peak of this realm or even ascend to the higher plane.

But he also had to admit that he was quite tempted to try taking these trials as soon as he could, especially when he saw the available facilities within the temple.

As he was about to find a corner to rest, Shin suddenly got a message from Leonard.

Ding

He slightly raised his brows when he saw the message.

Simba: Where are you? Are you with Cloe and Alice?

Shin was not sure, but he felt a little strange when he saw that message. Regardless, he still replied while being somewhat confused. He could feel that something was wrong given the tone Leonard had.

Sickarius: Yeah. We are at the Forgotten Temple. They are trying to see if they can help me with the sealed Elemental Spirit that I have found here.

It did not take long before Leonard replied.

Simba: That's good.

Shin slightly frowned as he was sure that something was wrong. He then asked.

Sickarius: What's wrong? Did something happen?

Simba: Something indeed happened! We are being attacked! By 'we', I mean the whole Empyrean Talons are being attacked.

Shin further raised his brows as he fell in deep thought. He could not help but recall what Shiella had told him as well as the ambush that he just experienced recently. "Are those guys already on the move?"

After a brief moment, he quickly asked.

Sickarius: Who is attacking us? And how they have found us?

Sickarius: The others are all doing their respective quests in secretive locations. Are they that unlucky to suddenly bump into those hostile organizations?

Simba: Some of them are old 'friends' that we have. But most of them are under the guilds that will be competing with us in the United Cup.

Simba: Fortunately, we are quite prepared. Along with your warning earlier, we are able to avoid any casualties.

Simba: As for how they have found us, it is quite troublesome. Someone from Blood Carnival managed to acquire a strange legacy. It can track us through some unknown method.

Simba: Samael that it is some sort of a curse, and it can be dispelled. But it will require quite a lot of effort since it seems to be a type of curse that requires a lot of sacrifices in exchange for being powerful.

Simba: That is why I am asking where you and Cloe are since the two of you have special statuses within your respective factions. Maybe the two of you can help us ask some high-level priests to cleanse this curse.

Shin thought for a moment before frowning. He did not know if he could go back and leave Cloe and Alice behind by themselves.

He did not want to disturb them, but he also could not ignore the situation of the other members of the Empyrean Talons.

Leonard, Diablo, Alucard, and even Owen would be fine. Given their strength, Shin was confident that they could handle any top-notch experts by themselves. Unless there were a bunch of apex experts on the same level, these four should be able to hold their grounds or escape if they wanted.

The problem was the other members, who were slightly weaker. Especially Samael and Huahua, who were slightly inexperienced compared to the rest of the group.

After contemplating it for a moment, he decided to summon everyone here for the time being.

The environment around the Forgotten Temple was not that bad. They could still train in this place without a problem. Moreover, the monsters beyond the territory were quite strong as well, so their progress shouldn't be that slow.

Even though they could not continue clearing their respective quest, their in-game progress shouldn't be that bad.

So long as the quests that were done were not time-limited, they could still delay them until they dealt with the current situation.

Sickarius: Neither Cloe nor I can leave right now. Summon the rest here and let them stay here for the time being.

Sickarius: Tell them to use the tokens that I have given them previously when using the teleportation formations. They will be able to arrive here without a problem.

Sickarius: But ask Diablo, Alucard, and Owen to stay behind. Then with the two of us, we will lead them to hunt those guys.

Sickarius: We can't just do nothing while they are harassing our members. We must counterattack and let them understand that we are not someone to trifle with.

Reading through this string of messages, Leonard could not help but grin evilly as he could read through Shin's mind.

Simba: You want to use this 'curse' against them? And cripple their main forces? I like that!

After that, Shin and Leonard polished their plot while the latter quickly moved as he was instructed and inform the others about their plan.

Even if the others wanted to join the fun, they understood that this plan could only work if there were too few members of the team. If they formed a group, even if it was small, the other side would quickly realize that these monsters were plotting them.

It would backfire instead.

Given that, they could only sigh and follow the arrangement of their superiors. After all, any of the members included in the plan were strong. All of them were strong enough to hold their ground against multiple experts and buy enough time for the others to arrive.

Shin even pulled Lorraine to be their main marksman for this plan. After all, the other side did not know that she had a very close relationship with the Empyrean Talons, so she did not have a mark on herself.

The rest of the Empyrean Talons could already imagine how miserable those guys would be after being assaulted by a group of Godlike Players and Maverick Gods.

Little did these guys know that they were only excluded from the plan because Shin could not leave Cloe and Alice alone after the strange event earlier.

They were only here to guarantee that those girls would not fight.

Even if Shin felt that the chances were low, he still could not feel comfortable whenever he thought about how these two girls were glaring daggers earlier when he first saw them together.

This stressed him quite a lot, so he wanted to vent it to these foolish people who were trying to give them some trouble. He would not let them off the hook that easily.

"These guys came quite perfectly. Let me remind you who we are and drill into your bones an unforgettable experience."

Chapter 1614 Nightmare of the Divinity City (Part 2)

"How is it? Did we get any update for their locations yet?" said a Spectral Assassin as he turned to his partner, an Elven Twilight.

"Still no news yet. But from what I have heard, it seems like everyone from the Empyrean Talons has disappeared at the Teleportation Hall of the Divinity City," the latter shrugged his shoulders as he relayed the words that he had gotten from their superiors.

"Tsk! Then are we wasting our time here, waiting for them to come out of the city gates?" asked the Spectral Assassin.

Unlike the others, who freely enter and exit the city, he needed to go through a quite complicated process before he was permitted to roam around the city.

It was not because the city had discrimination against Undead Creatures. After all, there were quite a few undead roaming in the city and even using some of the public facilities. Some even set up a stall at the central square while the ones with slightly special or wealthy backgrounds possessed a permit to do huge transactions and business in different parts of the city.

After all, the Divine Empire still had a certain connection with those powerful Undead Creatures at the Forsaken Islets and their unique products could help the empire to progress their research against corruption and demonic powers.

But since Undead Creatures were more prone to corruption and the temptation of the demonic powers, the officials of the Dinity City had to filter out all the Undead Race, who would be entering the city.

It was to prevent any spies from entering the city.

Those who failed the filtering process were either sent to the Forsaken Islets – one of the major regions of the Atlas Word and the hope of Undead Race – or put into jail if they happened to be a wanted criminal.

This was why most of the players with Undead Race had a hard time living in the city. They prepared to be 'deported' to the Forsaken Islets and set their base in that place. After all, it was one of the heavenly regions that any of them could ask for.

As for why this Spectral Assassin chose to stay here, he was stationed in this play by their guild leader as their race was crucial for tracking down the members of the Empyrean Talons.

He was not the only one as any Spectral Assassin or Undead Thief stationed here were under the instructions of their superiors. They were the centerpiece of this operation.

They seemed to have been linked with every member of the Empyrean Talons, letting them sense if those guys were near them.

They had scattered and spread a net in all the maps around the Divinity City to cover such a larger area. It was also the reason, why these people were able to accurately pinpoint or roughly guess the locations of the Empyrean Talons.

Their methods were quite special.

These thieves of the Undead Race had a special medium that could sense the players who had already stabilized a solid connection with the mana of the Divine Empire.

Naturally, such people would also be the ones who had stayed the longest within the Awakened Continent, which also meant that they were the members of the Empyrean Talons since they were way ahead of the others.

Then mediums would put a mark on these individuals after coming in contact with these people or if they have been broken by the other party.

The dark aura surrounding these mediums would spread in the bodies of those who had broken them, putting an even stronger mark.

This was also one of the reasons why only thieves of the Undead Race were chosen to hold these mediums. Aside from them being unable to be marked due to the Death Aura that naturally shrouded their bodies, they were also the fastest among the players due to their class.

They could easily perform their task and quickly retreat once it was done.

Next would be the jobs left for the rest, who were holding similar mediums that could sense the marks.

The Empyrean Talons might have fought these guys briefly while hunting and training in the wild or doing their quest – or it could also be because they had unknowingly bumped into these people while roaming around the city.

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The Blood Carnival had spent quite a lot of resources just to set this plan up. They had prepared quite a lot in exchange for putting a mark on each member of the Empyrean Talons.

As one of the biggest Dark Guilds within the game and a criminal organization, they possessed quite a lot of influence within the gaming circle, particularly their mysterious 'Carnival Masters'.

The one who had the loudest voice within this guild and the one with the highest authority was called the 'Ringmaster'. It was said that he was one of the old gods, who was manipulating the scenes from the dark.

It was also said that he was one of the rivals of the old gods of the virtual world such as 'Khing', who was known as the King of Virtual Games, the God Slayer 'Tora' and Death God 'Yami', who were now going with the names of 'Lawless' and 'Faker'.

Within the circle, the higher-ups of each huge guild and powerful organization within the game knew that this 'Ringmaster' was currently using the alias of 'Pierro', but he was still the legendary person who was once standing side by side with the greatest leaders of the game such as 'Yuan' of the Dragon Pavilion, 'Serpent' of Hydra Guild, 'Skull' of HeadHunter Guild, and others.

It was said that this operation was plotted by this mysterious Ringmaster before it was passed down to one of his most trusted subordinates, who was also one of the founders of the Blood Carnival, 'Jester – the Clown of Deceit.'

While the one who put the 'curse' on the members of the Empyrean Talons was 'Harlequin', who was also known as the 'Lady Clown'.

These two were currently hiding within the Divinity City while giving out a series of information to the leaders of the guilds – particularly the dark guilds – who allied against the Empyrean Talons.

They had spent quite a fortune just to craft this batch of cursed mediums before putting a lot of effort just to scan through the Divinity City and the regions around it while looking for the members of the Empyrean Talons.

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Shin did not have this mark yet, which meant that he had yet to bump into these people.

Lorraine, on the other hand, who came to the Awakened Empire alongside them avoided these people since she did bother to hide her identity.

As someone who was leading the 'Secret Society' Adventurer Team these last couple of years, she had built up quite a reputation for herself. She even had a Maverick Title of her own and quite a famous Maverick God within the circle.

But this was not the main reason why these Dark Guilds and other organizations were unwilling to provoke her. It was because of the mysterious background of the 'Secret Society', which was rumored to have some relation with the 'Mystery Pavilion' – one of the most mysterious groups within the virtual world.

As an organization that was able to almost accurately rank the top Godlike Players within the game, their connection was unknowingly huge and quite terrifying, especially since they were skillfully hiding in the dark.

Even though there were some guilds and organizations who were not afraid of them, they did not want to create unnecessary trouble for themselves, especially when they were in a crucial stage of setting their root in the Divinity City.

Unless friction was made, they would not make a move that would lead to such a conflict.

Little did they know that the trouble would come knocking on their door by itself.

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"Is everything ready?" asked Shin as he looked at Leonard, Diablo, Alucard, and Owen who had a mark on their bodies.

They did not bother to head to the Church of the Sun and Moon to remove these marks as they would use these against those superpowers targeting them.

They would be the bait that would lure those experts before the group would hit them before the opposing side knew what struck them.

Shin then distributed a bunch of diamond-like gems to each member of the group before explaining. "These are the instantaneous escape stones that I have gotten from the Church. I have spent quite a lot of merit points to buy so use them sparingly. But if you find yourself trapped in their formation, use them as you see fit."

Then he proceeded to take out six rings before distributing them as well. "These are [Link Rings], and they are reusable rings that can let us sense the location of each other. We can also teleport to any location so long as they are within a thousand kilometers radius."

"We can only use the teleportation skill seven times a day before they go in cooldown, so we have to consider when to use them later carefully."

"These rings are also from the vault of the Church of the Sun and Moon that I have exchanged. I originally planned to ask Samael to work hard and help me exchange for more so that each member of the team can have them."

"Unfortunately, I only have seven of them, so I have yet to distribute them with the rest," he added.

Then he further polished their plan before Shin turned his head outside the widow as he sensed some players gathering outside. "They seem to have already sensed you."

"Let's proceed with the plan!"

Chapter 1615 Nightmare of the Divinity City (Part 3)

.....

Deep in the wilderness around the Divinity City, a group of hooded players run through the trees to the best of their abilities.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Their figures kept disappearing and reappearing in different places as they burst in speed during their sprint.

But instead of having an intimidating presence despite the overwhelming auras surrounding their bodies, which were terrifying enough to scare some of the common rank monsters nearby, these players seemed to be running for their lives as if something more horrifying was chasing after them.

"Damn! How can they be this powerful? This is the fifth company already!" said one of them as they continued running toward the city.

The others also kept on cursing as they also found it ridiculous that the alliance formed by the top experts of multiple guilds was slaughtered by a small group of players. It was not just once or twice, but five times already, which was ridiculous.

They were also experts themselves, which was why they had passed the test of the Mysterious Instructors and gained their recognition. Moreover, they were also in the third tier of their respective classes, so they shouldn't be that weak.

These were also apex experts, who had mastered their respective combat states and created their unique mana manipulation method that became one of the signs of reaching the pinnacle of the game.

Of course, there were some differences and noticeable gaps between experts. But almost every person who had reached the Awakened Continent was not weak, so it was surprising that the gap between them and the group that they were currently targeting was that huge.

What was even more frustrating was they were supposed to have the advantage in terms of numbers. After all, each company that they had sent was composed of at least 20 highly skilled experts when hunting.

Yet, all these people were getting slaughtered one-sidedly despite all the preparations that they had.

"Tsk! We have already expected that these guys are plotting something since they have reappeared since their mysterious appearance. But how can they gather at a single location when we are sure that they are separated from each other after leaving that inn!" cursed the leading figure of the group as they ran as fast as they could.

They were sure that Simba and the rest of the opposing group went in different directions after leaving the inn where they had been staying earlier. They had even put their most skilled assassins and thieves to tail those guys to make sure that they had been marked properly.

After that, the alliance sent their highest number of experts to Simba and Diablo as they were labeled as the ones with the highest level of threat among the group that was left behind.

Almost all the Titled Rankers under their command went to the case after those two high-profile targets while being led by a couple of Godlike Players and Maverick Gods.

Each group had at least two 'Gods' in their ranks, making sure to avoid any accidents. Even if these weaker gods were not as strong as Simba and Diablo, who were known in the circle as one of the peak gods within the game, the ones that they had sent should be strong enough to hold their ground and prevent them from escaping until their reinforcement arrived.

Diablo was quite troublesome to chase due to the nature of his Shadow Dancer Class, which specialized in stealth and fast movements.

The alliance put a lot of consideration into this as they put some highly skilled archers with powerful marking abilities. Adding the cursed mark put on Diablo's body, catching him should be inevitable.

But before they could even catch up to him, the group that was chasing after him was ambushed by some unknown individuals, who swiftly slaughtered the archers before they could even realize what was happening.

One of them was shot in the head, instantly getting killed, while the other got his head severed by an unknown strike, gaining him a similar result.

Then, with Diablo's insane speed and unparalleled assassination skills, the rest of the group was slaughtered without any resistance despite having a pair of Godlike Players or Maverick Gods in their ranks.

The combination of Diablo, the mysterious 'assassin', and the sniper, who was targeting them from who knows where was an absolute nightmare for those two gods.

In the meantime, those who were targeting Simba, had a hard time fighting him as he fought ferociously despite being in number disadvantage.

He never backed down in front of adversity even though he was surrounded by his enemies from all sides.

They knew that trying to take down this God of War would not be easy, which was why the alliance had prepared quite a lot for him. But they still did not expect that the burst in power that Simba had when he entered the state of Reality Manifestation alongside the bunch of inheritances that he had under his arsenal would be that explosive, even pushing those two gods marking him at a disadvantage.

Then his reinforcement came out of nowhere, leading the group to be slaughtered one-sidedly.

These events happened repeatedly despite the groups being completely prepared. The outcome always ended up with their defeat despite all the meticulous traps that they had laid in advance.

It was the same even if they tried to target Alucard, who skillfully kited their forces while running deep into the forces, or Owen, who stubbornly held his ground despite fighting multiple Titled Rankers at the same time and even holding his ground in front of a powerful Maverick God.

What confused the alliance was every time they felt that they were about to succeed, the rest of the group that they were targeting would miraculously appear at the most crucial time and slaughter their forces instead.

What upset them more was the group would mysteriously disappear immediately after and right before the Titled Maverick Gods and Apex Godlike Players of their alliance could reach the scene.

It was as if the Empyrean Talons were always a step ahead of them and leading the alliance by the nose.

Just now, the fifth company was hit right before they could even report to their superiors. The other side took the initiative to attack this time instead of playing guerrilla tactics.

These guys, who were running away, were the scouts that were supposed to coordinate with the fifth company, but they got swept by the chaos right after they arrived.

The few of them were the only ones who managed to survive in their respective class, which either focused on speed or escape skills.

But they were not out of the woods yet since they knew that the opposing side would surely chase after them right after wrapping up the battlefield.

These scouts could not afford to use the return scrolls provided by their respective guilds because all of them needed some channeling time before they could fully activate. They did not dare to stay in place and channel those scrolls when there were a bunch of monsters chasing after them.

They believed that their legs and feet were more reliable than these return scrolls. At the very least, they could still protect themselves and use their respective life-saving skills if they do this rather than staying still and becoming a stationary target.

After all, the opposing side had a very powerful and highly skilled sniper in them, who was still a mystery to them.

Alucard was already a headache for them. But if they added another, who was neither Archimedes nor Ithilien and was already on their list, yet more powerful than those, the problem should be more serious than they had thought.

This mysterious sniper was at least as strong as any Godlike Snipers of the game.

The higher-ups of each guild and organization within the alliance already had a guess, but they did not dare to confirm it yet since it would surely be much more problematic than the current situation that they were already in if it happened to be the case.

After all, this already troublesome situation was bound to become even more complicated if that was the case.

Bang! Bang!

As the running scouts were about to reach the border of the city region, a pair of gunshots could be heard from a distance before two of their companions fell lifelessly on the ground due to their heads being blasted by the exploding bullets that struck their heads.

"Sh*t!" one of them cursed when he saw that and was about to use a forbidden skill to escape.

Shing!

But before he could even execute his thoughts, a flash of light suddenly cut through the air and sliced through his body, killing him in the process.

"Scatter!" said the leader after realizing that those freaks finally caught up to them.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

But before they could even run further, a pair of 'meteors' descended from the sky and struck the ground. These 'meteors' accurately targeted the center of their formations, hitting the place where their members were running.

"Argh!"

"Ugh!"

Those who were trying to run were immediately blasted back by the powerful shockwave produced by the impact, sending them flying in the air.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Then a series of gunshots rang once again before a hail of bullets rained down at the group, killing most of their remembering members.

"Ahh!"

"Ugh!"

"Argh!"

As for those, who managed to survive, they fell one after another without realizing that they died.

As for the leader of the group, his body was split vertically in half as a sword flash fell at him.

Not long after Shin and the others revealed themselves one by one before scanning the battlefield.

"This should be the last of them," said Leonard as he fiercely swept his gaze at the surroundings.

Shin turned to Lorraine, who was currently in disguise and hiding her figure under a special cloak, "This should be enough to discourage them from coming after us for quite a while."

Lorraine nodded. "It should be. After all, they have lost quite a lot from our ambushes. They even suffered greatly as a lot of their experts got slaughtered by us. They shouldn't have that many experts to explore the Awakened Continent by now."

"I doubt they will be stubborn and insist on targeting us. The death penalty may still be tolerable in the Aurora Continent, but it is different here in the Awakened Continent. After all, even a single day is more than enough to be left behind," she added.

She was quite an experienced commander of an adventurer team, so she knew how devastating the damage that the alliance had suffered after this event. Not only their progress in the second continent would be delayed, but they would also lose the initiative at the upcoming big event.

She was confident that they would be unwilling to lose more than what they already had.

Even if they tried to send their strongest combatants, success still needed to be guaranteed. After all, their lineup was not that weak, and it was even monstrous.

There was also a huge risk of failure, which would be the greatest discouragement. They could not afford to lose these people when such a huge event was right around the corner.

After considering everything, they should stop targeting the members of the Empyrean Talons.

"That is unless they are idiots," she added before asking. "So, what's next?"

Shin thought for a moment before asking. "What do you guys want? Should I help you to remove the cursed marks on your bodies or do you want to stay at the underwater temple for the time being and level up peacefully?"

Diablo thought for a moment before answering. "I am done with all my quests here for the time being. Aside from the ones that I can't clear at the moment, there is nothing else that I want to do."

"Trying to hunt underwater shouldn't be that bad. I can use this opportunity to train my underwater skills," he added.

Owen and Alucard felt that it was reasonable and nodded their heads.

"Alright. Let's go to the Forgotten Temple first and discuss it with the others," Shin nodded before turning to Lorraine. "You can send the recorded videos to Miss Bunny, and she will know how to handle the rest."

"You are so evil! After beating them in submission, you still want to drag their names in the mud!?" Lorraine shook her head and clicked her tongue before adding. "But I like it!"

Chapter 1616 Nightmare of the Divinity City (Part 4)

...

Due to multiple exciting events within the game, a lot of people were paying attention to the official site of «Destiny's Fate» Online as well as the online forums for any additional news.

Even the different online platforms were being flooded with exciting news about the ongoing events of the game.

Starting from the ongoing war between the two major factions at the Dark Cloud Kingdoms up to the new regions that were being discovered just like the Royal Rank Cities in the middle of the high-level neutral regions then to the preliminaries of the United Cup – everything was either being discussed in the forums or broadcasted live in different platforms.

Not long after, one of the most influential personalities within the community updated her status and posted a video, which quickly went viral.

Miss Bunny, with her reputation within the gaming community, immediately attracted a lot of attention with just a posted video, which quickly circulated on all online platforms.

Her most recent works which were also first published on the official website of the Empyrean Talons already became the number one topic within the gaming community for quite some a while.

Starting from the quest videos about the events at the Frozen Kingdom, all the players went crazy after seeing all the battles and the adventures that the group went through until they completed the quest.

Of course, the most crucial clues about the quests that the group was doing were all cut, but they did not affect the storytelling that the video had under Miss Bunny's skillful editing.

Then there were also the appearances of the Pandemonium Troupes and Silent Night, which were defeated by the Empyrean Talons and their allies.

Then there was also the battle between Immortal and the top combatants of the Empyrean Talons, which was one of the most epic moments, especially when the giant Ice Dragon appeared.

...

The other videos that Miss Bunny posted on the official fan page of the Empyrean Talons were also on the same level, but most of the trending topics always involved the Battle God Sickarius.

After all, every big event that occurred recently was related to this person, which made the players understand why he firmly held the number one spot in the Hall of Fame.

All of Shin's most recent battles were a hot topic on every platform, which propelled his reputation to an even greater height.

Of course, the other members also had their respective contents to show, but they were slightly inferior to Shin's when it came to impact, which frustrated Arthur after comparing the statistics of their page.

...

The other hottest topic about the group was the music video that introduced the new members of the Empyrean Talons.

Even though it was not as sensational as the first music video during the 'debut' of the Empyrean Talons, it was still of the same quality.

The battle clips and storytelling of the entire video were one thing, especially when it was showcasing Diablo's battle capabilities, but the main attraction of the music video was still the background song that perfectly complemented everything that appeared in the entire duration of the video.

All the most recent videos of the Empyrean Talons used unique background music or songs, which were different from what the other guilds or organizations in their respective videos.

What they were using were all original song compositions, which greatly aroused the curiosity of the players who listened to them.

Due to this trend, Miss Bunny even created a special channel on the fan page meant mainly for all the soundtracks that she had used in every video.

Everyone could listen and enjoy the songs at the official page of the Empyrean Talons, which attracted quite a lot of fanbase.

These songs were more than enough to create an album.

It also became one of the main 'attractions' of the fan page aside from the battle and music videos that the group had.

There were also the regular tutorials and tips that the celebrities of the group usually do from their previous pages, which they now transferred to the page of the Empyrean Talons.

The lurkers and visitors of the fan page constantly grew because of this content.

This was also one of the reasons why every post that Miss Bunny made became highly anticipated within the gaming circle.

Then they would quickly swiftly spread in every online platform.

With the number of her followers, it shouldn't be hard to become a number topic within a day or even a couple of hours.

This was also the reason why the most recent video that she had posted quickly spread within the gaming community.

What made the balls of the top guilds and large organizations hurt was the main content of the video, which showed how Shin and the others slaughtered quite a lot of top and apex experts at the Awakened Continent alongside a few Godlike Players and Maverick Gods.

Those who were involved in the incident even had an ugly look on their faces while watching when they saw that the name of their guild was being dragged in the mud by these lunatics.

Their plot to hinder the progress of the Empyrean Talons became content for entertainment, which quickly turned them into the greatest laughingstocks of the online community.

The title of the video?

It was 'The Nightmare of the Divine City' – a very fitting name given that what happened to the members of the alliance was indeed no different from a nightmare.

The players, who had watched the entire video, even felt the traumatic experience of the 'victims' in the video.

"D*mn! This makes me paranoid!"

"I suddenly feel like a sniper is aiming at my head right now."

"Tsk! Diablo makes me feel like I am being stalked."

"I even feel like I will see his masked face when I open my refrigerator for water. Now I can't open it."

"Miss Bunny even uses the sound effects meant for horror movies. Is this a late Halloween special?"

"How can she even use rock music to match those sound effects? It still sounds so good yet scary at the same time!"

...

As this video circulated in the entire gaming community, the expert who had sharper eyes paid more attention to its contents. They could see more details than these regular people, who just watched the video for fun.

Not long after, their expressions suddenly turned grim as they saw how scary the battle tactics that were hidden behind each ambush that the group had launched.

The scary accuracy of the snipers who could hit the heads of their targets from afar, the sudden appearance of the pair of shadows who could kill someone in an instant, and the tenacious warrior and knight who could stand against multiple opponents – all these factors were showcased in the battle video.

They were just some basic strategies, but how Shin and the others had executed them was on a whole other level.

This not only included great timing but the skills and coordination between the players needed to be at the highest level as well.

This showed how scary Empyrean Talons could be once they fought together in the group or team battles at the upcoming main contest of the United Cup.

Given how fast and perfectly Shin and the others had disposed of everyone within the opposing group despite the number of experts in their ranks, the overwhelming power that they had far surpassed most of the people.

What made their rival teams ugly was this was just a fraction of their real capabilities. It was not the full capabilities of the Empyrean Talons as the other members were not present.

Just the thought of the Monster Trio – Battle God Sickarius, War God Simba, and Dragon God Siegfried – was already a headache for them, especially when Gentle Goddess Arielle, the number one healer within the game, was included in their main lineup as well.

Then there was the Elemental Goddess Charlotte, who was a top mage and Elementalist within the Godly Ranking List.

The other members of the group were already decent enough to complete this scary roster, yet a couple of people were even added to the list.

Diablo, despite not being too popular like the rest, was on par with those three gods. This information might only be available to the higher-ups of top guilds and large organizations.

But now that he was constantly appearing in the battle videos released on the official fan page of the Empyrean Talons and showcasing his capabilities, his strength was now in 'full' display.

He was a very strong Maverick God who would not lose to any top Gods within the Godly Ranking List.

Then there was Alucard, who was constantly 'improving'. Every time he appeared in any content that Miss Bunny had released, there was an insane boost in his overall strength.

With the current capabilities that he was showing, it was clear that he was on the same level as top-notch gods at the very least.

What made these 'old' veterans uncomfortable was great his resemblance to a pair of legends of a certain game. What was even more absurd about this was his style seemingly a combination of those legendary players.

Ignoring the other sniper, who seemed to have a mysterious background, Alucard alone was scary enough to be added to the already absurd lineup of the Empyrean Talons.

Then there was Owen, who seemed also to have a sudden improvement in such a short time. He might still be a little inferior to Shin and the other top combatants of the team, but what he just showcased in this battle video was more than enough to make the top teams take him more seriously.

Arthur was already a troublesome frontline for the opposing team to deal with, especially when Cloe was supporting her from the backline, so adding Owen to the equation would only be a disaster.

One was a perfect vanguard, who could break through the defenses of the opposing team and wreak havoc in the middle of their ranks, while the other was a guardian, who would be the main line of defense to protect the backline.

Such a combination was already scary enough, so it was a complete calamity that the other top combatants of the Empyrean Talons were added to the list.

Thinking about this, those experts studying the newly released battle video could only share the same thoughts. – "This is truly the Nightmare of the Divinity City" –

Chapter 1617 The Plagued Lands

...

After taking turns when traveling between Divinity City and the Forgotten Temple, Shin had helped every member of the Empyrean Talons to clear the cursed marks cast on them by the expert of the Blood Carnival.

He managed to ask a powerful Priest from the Church of the Sun and Moon to help them, who also told them what kind of curse was placed on them.

It was called 'Mark of the Cursed Blood'. It was a special 'curse' that was commonly used by the Blood Shamans of the Cursed Fox Tribe living somewhere deep in the Cursed Mountains, one of the hunting maps in the western direction of the Divinity City.

It was a powerful branch of the Foxkin of the Beastman Race, which was also quite notorious for its curses.

This tribe was one of the factions that could produce quite a lot of the Ascended and Enlightened Beings due to the inheritance left behind by their ancestor, which was a powerful Fox God of the Ancient Era.

But due to the tribe being too reliant on these powers and became corrupted in the process. They then started doing some evil deeds that made the Beast Union of the Bestial Mountains chase them away.

The Cursed Fox Tribe then joined the Evil Faction and became one of the faction's main forces.

The Churches of the Righteous Faction wanted to eradicate this force, especially when they built a base and settled in the neutral region between the Divine Empire and the Bestial Mountains. Even more so when they further provoke them by creating a branch near Divinity City.

But unfortunately, these foxes knew what they were doing. They were able to constantly escape from the encirclement of the Righteous Churches due to their unique escaping methods.

Then they patiently waited until they were strong enough to hold themselves.

Unless the big shots of these churches decided to make a move, it was impossible to eradicate them. After all, those old devils from the Evil Factions would most likely make theirs as well the moment it happened.

Then it would lead to another big war between the two factions, which the Righteous Churches were trying to avoid due to the hidden threats in the dark such as the Abyss Brink, Fallen Grotto, and Cursed Archipelago.

Those three forbidden lands were hiding a serious threat that could make them wary. Unless the Great Leaders and Legendary Heroes were able to uncover the mysteries that these places were hiding and solve the threats hidden within them, the Righteous Faction was unwilling to suffer any great losses from a huge war.

This was one of the reasons why there were some cursed lands in the regions slightly away from Divinity City, where the two factions constantly fought.

This piece of information gave Shin some idea of how well the forces of the Blood Carnival were doing in Divinity City.

"Tsk! This is going to be a little tricky," Shin clicked his tongue after realizing that the dark forces from the Aurora Continent were starting to settle in the Awakened Continent quite well.

He also realized that the Blood Carnival seemed to have been used by the alliance to test their methods if they would be effective. On top of that, those cunning wolves and sly foxes seemed to have taken advantage of the situation to eliminate more of their rivals from the competition.

From the information that he had gotten from Shiella and Lorraine, the Blood Carnival seemed to have tricked those dark guilds and other organizations into this operation and became their test subjects.

He just found out that the Blood Carnival, who supposedly were the main force of the operation, did not send that many of their people. They had tricked the alliance under the pretext that they had already spent quite a lot of resources putting everything in motion.

Even if they did lose quite a lot after the failure, Shin could see that they still had earned something in the long run.

Just eliminating their rivals from the competition of being acknowledged by the Evil Factions hiding in the Divine Empire was more than enough for them to monopolize almost everything.

Aside from their biggest rivals such as the largest dark guilds like themselves or the Hydra Guild, who were slowly transitioning to covert their forces into the Evil Faction, they would be way ahead of the others after suffering such big losses from the last incident.

"Tsk! Now it looks like we have to help them instead," Shin shook his head as he thought of this.

It was indeed a problem.

Fortunately, not everything was bad news. Owen seemed to have earned something from this 'cursed mark'.

The High Priest of the Church of the Sun and Moon had told them some of the special features of the Sacred Neanderthals, which was to absorb some powers from these kinds of special marks and convert them into unique tattoos.

Then they could slowly nurture these tattoos and turn them into Divine Tattoo like the one that Owen had used previously during their last dungeon raid.

They had acquired the special nurturing methods from the High Priest, but they could not help Owen awaken more Divine Tattoos.

However, they had gotten some clue where some Neanderthal Tribes lived, which Owen could follow to further his study about this Ascended Race.

This could help Owen greatly in strengthening himself. After all, these Divine Tattoos were comparable to Elemental Spirit Possession.

This also gave Shin the idea that the Ascended Classes most likely had special methods that could match the cards of the Transcended Races.

But for the time being, he had to stay at the Forgotten Sea while he was trying to convert the cursed mark into a special tattoo to avoid being targeted by the Blood Carnival. After all, this cursed mark could still track him.

Training with the rest of the Empyrean Talons at the Forgotten Sea was the best choice for him at this moment.

...

After leaving the Empyrean Talons in the Forgotten Temple, Shin went to the region, which was supposed to be the main battle for the upcoming event.

The event had yet to start, but a lot of people were already heading to that place.

The timer for the event was meant only for the registration and when the Righteous Churches would send their paladins to assist the players in clearing the plagued land and set up some barracks at its borders, which the players could use as the resting points.

These paladins would also strengthen the borders to prevent the mysterious plague from spreading further.

The seals that were previously set up were only a temporary measure, and they could also be broken after being exposed to much from the plague, while the ones that the paladins and clerics would set up were the reinforced version.

As for the players that the top guilds had sent to scout the area, they were their most skilled thieves and assassins, who would be able to escape for their lives if something unexpected happened.

They also had special talismans in their possessions to protect themselves from the plague.

Shin had a few goals in coming to this place ahead of time. Just like the top guilds, he also wanted to scout the place to understand what was happening and familiarize himself with the environment of the plagued lands.

Aside from that, he also wanted to target the scouts that the guilds from the alliance had sent, cutting off all their path survival after the recent incident.

After they plotted against the Empyrean Talons, how could Shin let them off that easily?

They had to pay the price for their actions!

Shin had already memorized all the guilds involved in the incident and even imprinted their guild emblems, so they would not be able to escape him.

Even if those guilds chose to lie low after Shin and the others had massacred their forces, he refused to believe that they would not send any people to join such a big event, especially when it was the first event that would be taking place at the Awakened Continent.

Shin also wanted to see if his old 'acquaintances', such as the Pandemonium Troupe, would be present.

Even if these people were part of the Demonic Churches and had a different channel to reach the Awakened Continent, Shin knew that they would have some tricks under their sleeves to infiltrate the Divinity City based on his understanding of them.

But he really wanted to meet the expert of the Hydra Guild. After all, he had heard from Shiella that these guys had a deep connection with many underworld organizations in the real world, particularly the Black Serpent Mafia.

He also heard that the Black Serpent Mafia controlled the main echelons of the guild, which piqued his interest.

He wanted to see if he would be able to recognize some of their experts.

This also made him curious if that guy that he had met during the Shadowing Ranking Cup and fought at the finals was also part of the Hydra Guild. After all, that guy was also a graduate of a training camp and became an Executioner.

"Let's see what you have."

Chapter 1618 The Plagued Lands (Part 2)

.....

Atlas World, Awakened Continent.

Divine Empire, Eastern Divinity City Region – Plagued Lands.

Shin arrived at the place and could not help but click his tongue as he commented. "It is indeed a plagued land."

Everywhere, he could see the withered trees and the dried soil of the land. It came completely desolate place, especially with the grey land and plants that it currently had.

It was a different type of corruption. It could also be said that it was indeed plagued just like how it was named.

There was even a visible miasma that was constantly coming out from the ground and plants. Even without using his True Sight, he could see that this black miasma was not simple.

Even if it was not potent enough to directly affect anyone who inhaled it, constant exposure to it could accumulate enough plague within one's body and make them fall ill.

As Shin was observing the plagued lands right beside its borders, he suddenly got an idea.

He did not activate the talisman given to him by the High Priest of the Church of the Sun and Moon and just stepped into it without that much protection.

Given his senses and realm within the game, he was able to instantly realize how deadly this plague was. Not only that, but he could also feel that the black miasma that invaded his body was constantly trying to spread through his meridians.

Within a thought, Shin activated the powers of the Brilliant Sun and Abyssal Moon to eliminate the plague. But to his surprise, the process was quite slow despite how domineering these two powers were.

They were supposed to be the bane of all kinds of corruption, yet they could not eliminate the plague within his body.

With that, Shin slightly frowned before combining the two powers and turning them into the Power of the Primordial Eclipse instead.

Swoosh!

There was indeed a change, but it was still not that effective. The process of eliminating the black miasma was still quite slow compared to what he was expecting.

"It seems like I have underestimated this plague," he mumbled before switching to a more domineering power. He used the Primordial Lightning this time, which quickly eliminated the plague within his body.

He realized that only this level of Mana could eliminate the plague from his system.

But he was not done yet as he started experimenting with the other breathing techniques under his arsenal and used the other forms of mana that he controlled to fight against the black miasma that was trying to invade his body.

Not long after, he discovered that all the elemental powers that he controlled were strong enough to fight against the plague.

"This is interesting," he mumbled as he realized something.

This was just the border of the plagued lands, so the place only had the mildest plague. It could not be compared to the one that was affecting the depths of the region. Much less its core, which was also the source of the plague.

What made him interested was this plague lands were not only a harmful region but could also be considered a cultivation paradise as well.

The black miasma was not only meant to plague those who were exposed to it but it could also be used as material to assist someone's training. By constantly fighting against it, an individual could practice his control over his mana and improve his unique Mana Manipulation Technique.

They would be able to understand the unique energies that they controlled more and uncover their mysteries along the way.

It could also strengthen the Mana itself through a constant battle against the black miasma.

This was not very helpful to someone of Shin's level, especially when he already had a decent understanding of the unique powers that he controlled. Moreover, he also had the help of multiple resources meant to train in a similar direction.

The Phantom Island and his Reaper's Realm even had better effects for this. There were also the Elemental Spirits, who had a complete understanding of their respective elements, so Shin was not much interested in this place.

What's more, this place was only formed through a limited event, so it would disappear sooner or later.

What he had, on the other hand, was permanent.

But that was for him. It was a different case for those who did not have access to such resources.

For regular experts, particularly those who remained independent and wanted to train alone, this place was a perfect place to train themselves.

"I should inform Big Sis about this," he mumbled as he quickly pulled out his friend list to find Shiella's name and sent her a message.

He only explained the benefits of this place briefly, but he trusted that Shiella would get it and lead her people to participate in the event.

As for the members of Empyrean Talons, Shin could just bring them to the Phantom Island to train later when he had the time to set a teleportation formation between it and the Forgotten Temple.

They would not be losing that much by missing this event.

But this place could still help Shin with something, and that was helping him perfect and smoothen his transition between the five breathing techniques and completely form the one true cycle to complement his current powers.

He had created something similar before, but due to the recent improvement he had in the real world and his acquisition of new powers within the game, he had to re-establish the balance and re-create a new cycle.

He might be too bold to try to experiment on his body in such a way that he could die with a single mistake. But he was confident that he would be fine given the number of special powers he controlled.

He also wanted to test something in the process. He wanted to explore the power of 'Origin' that he had acquired from the Primordial Eclipse during the battle with the Grand Centipedeus.

He could somewhat tell that the key was his understanding of the five elements.

...

As Shin was scouting the Plagued Lands, he suddenly bumped into the first monster that had been infected by the mysterious plague.

It was a monster that seemed to resemble a four-legged mammal, particularly from the feline family, due to its appearance.

However, the main difference that this monster had from regular beast monsters was its lack of fur. Aside from the whiskers, not a single strand of fur could be seen from any parts of its muscular body.

It was more like a panther due to the appearance caused by its baldness. But the features of a tiger could not be erased from it, giving Shin a strange impression.

Regardless of its strange appearance, Shin could feel that this monster was somewhat troublesome to deal with, especially when he saw the constant flow of black miasma leaking out from its body.

Even its breath was releasing a black smoke everything it exhaled.

[Monster Name]: Plagued Monster (Tiger)

[Monster Type]: Beast (Plague Infected)

[Monster Rank]: Common (Mutated)

[Level]: 165

[Health]: 2,000,000

Details:

A tiger-type beast that was living in the mountains in the eastern parts of the Divinity City. It was infected with the mysterious plague, which led to its mutation.

It possessed a powerful attack power and insane agility that it inherited from its original race.

It also carried a potent aura of the plague that could affect those who had been wounded by its claws and fangs.

Note 1: It carried the rottenness of the plague on its flesh, making it inedible.

Warning: Its corpse could also release all the accumulated plague energy within its body once it died. Extreme caution was recommended.

After using his True Sight to the monster to learn its basic information, Shin could not help but slightly raise his brows.

It was more straightforward than the other monsters he had seen before. It did not even have any bloodline powers, giving him the impression that this monster shouldn't be that strong.

But what made him cautious was the warning that the system had given him at the end of the monster's details. Since it was indicated in the description of the monster and even specifically noted as a warning, Shin could not underestimate it.

"Since you are the first monster that I bumped into in this environment, let me give you a treat," he said as he walked toward the monster.

He flipped his cloak coolly, letting it flutter along with the wind.

Putting his hand on the hilt of his sword and about to unsheathe it, Shin was preparing for the battle.

But before he could even make his move, he suddenly heard a series of swooshing sounds coming from behind.

Hearing the sharp sound of the air being split apart, Shin swiftly shifted his body and ducked to the side.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

That was when a hail of bone spears flew past over his head, heading straight to the plagued beast.

Shin ignored the monster and turned his body to face the powers, who fired those bone spears and wanted to steal this monster from him.

He was ready to slaughter the person, who was interrupting him. But when he finally saw who it was, he could not help but pause for a moment and stare at the other party.

"Yoh! I knew that I couldn't be mistaken. Your aura is something that I will not forget!"

Shin could not immediately reply as he was somewhat surprised to see the other party. It was not an individual, but a trio.

Chapter 1619 The Plagued Lands (Part 3)

.....

Shin stared somewhat stunned at the three newcomers standing not too far from where he was. The composition of this team was somewhat odd not because of their classes, but because they were supposedly 'enemies' of one another based on what he remembered.

One of the three was a Blood Elf, who was wielding a two-meter spear in crimson color. This elf was wearing a steel armor that was filled with mystical runes. He did not have a pauldron to cover his shoulders, revealing his upper arm along with the black tattoos drawn over his red skin.

He also had a pair of bracers to protect his arm, which were also releasing a pulsing light due to the glowing runes engraved on them. The lower armor and boots that he was wearing also complemented the entire design of his bracers and upper armor, indicating that they were a set.

As for his long crimson spear, the section connecting the shaft and the tip was releasing a shadowy flame that seemed to be acting as a tassel.

The aura surrounding this person, on the other hand, seemed to be somewhat contradicting his fierce appearance. He was more like a scholar rather than a fighter due to his calm demeanor and the tranquil air surrounding him.

Regardless, any person would instantly realize that he was a powerful expert just by seeing him.

Walking slightly behind this Blood Elf was a Wolfkin with an arrogant and stubborn personality. He had a fierce face always wearing a frown that could scare anyone who would try to block his path.

If the Blood Elf had a tranquil and easy-going air around him, then this Wolfkin possessed a suppressive and heavy aura. His presence alone was more than enough to discourage anyone from picking a fight with him.

As for the equipment that he was wearing, this Wolfkin had an entire set of leather armor that seemed to possess an ancient air in it, especially when that hot air was constantly being released by the armor itself. It was as if the equipment was telling the people around him that he was always ready to fight.

The huge saber on his hand and resting on his shoulder was not simple either, especially with the dark ancient filling its surface. The black glow that these runes were releasing was almost dyeing the color of the blade black, giving an illusion that it was a blade made from shadows.

This Wolfkin was glaring sharply at Shin as they walked over, seemingly telling the latter that there was some unsettled score between them.

Looking over to the other side of the Blood Elf, Shin found a hooded person who seemed to be shrouded in black mist. This person possessed a mysterious air around him that could tell the others that he was an expert player as well.

His aura was not weaker than the other two. The threat that he was giving was even more dangerous than the Wolfkin, who was constantly releasing an oppressive air to instill fear in the people.

The aura that this hooded person had was dark and eerie, clearly indicating that he was not a good person. But it was not deep enough to make him an evil person.

He also held a tall bone scepter, which indicated that his class leaned more on the side of Necromancer or Dark Magician.

...

Shin stared at these three for quite a while, seemingly trying to make sure that he had seen them right. He was not surprised about their strength, but it was their identity.

He was surprised because he knew these three ways back when he was still a 'newbie' in the game.

"What are these three doing here?" he mumbled as he observed them more clearly. "They have gotten quite strong as well."

He remembered that these three were his old rivals in a certain battle when he first entered the Divine Colosseum in the Saint Heaven Kingdom. It was at the time when he was trying to create his Battle Physique for his Tier 2 Class.

They had given him quite an impression due to their skills and unique personality.

But what confused him was the reason why they were together. After all, these three shouldn't have the best relationship based on what he had seen during that time.

[Player Name]: Exheart

Level: 158

Race: Elf (Ascended)

-Tribe: Blood Elf

Life Rating: (Dormant Bloodline Inheritance)

Class:

- Main (Tier 3): Ascended Regular Elven Class (Blood Spearman) – Crimson Spear Bearer

- Sub: None

Lifestyle Profession: Alchemist

Affiliation:

- Guild: None

- Adventurer Team: None

- Mercenary Group: None

Player's Classification: Official Titled Ranker (Peak)

Ranker's Title: Wandering Nomad

[Player Name]: Bryan

Level: 157

Race: Beastman (Ascended)

-Tribe: Wolfkin

Life Rating: (Dormant Bloodline Inheritance)

Class:

- Main (Tier 3): Ascended Regular Beastman Class (Berserker) – Warlord (Saber Path)

- Sub: None

Lifestyle Profession: Weaponsmith

Affiliation:

- Guild: None

- Adventurer Team: None

- Mercenary Group: Black Hound

Player's Classification: Official Titled Ranker (Peak)

Ranker's Title: Saber Demon

[Player Name]: HellBan

Level: 159

Race: Undead (Ascended)

-Tribe: Fallen Human

Life Rating: Undetected

Class:

- Main (Tier 3): Ascended Hidden Class – Bone Maker

- Sub: None

Lifestyle Profession: Dark Alchemist

Affiliation:

- Guild: None

- Adventurer Team: None

- Mercenary Group: None

Player's Classification: Official Titled Ranker (Peak)

Ranker's Title: Hand of the Dead

Shin could not help but give the trio a complementing look after seeing their basic information through his True Skill Ocular Skill.

If it were any other player with regular identification skills, then they might not get similar results. But since his ocular skill was quite strong and high-leveled, he was able to uncover more information compared to regular players.

He could not help but have a better impression of Exheart and Bryan after seeing their respective classes and races.

He had heard that the trials for regular classes were much harder than those with special and hidden classes due to the 'restrictions' and 'limits' set for regular races.

But due to this, those players who managed to clear their Tier 3 Class Promotion Quest through this method were much stronger than regular players due to them surpassing their limits.

They would get better buffs and higher bonus stat rewards after passing those trials. They also could improve the skills recovered in their Skill Trees to complement their styles and battle techniques, creating tailor-made skills unique to themselves.

This was meant to balance the gap between players, who had access to special skills and abilities from the hidden and rare classes.

This also gave them quite an edge against those players who had used their hidden and special classes as a shortcut through their trials.

After all, the latter relied on their powerful skills to pass those tests while the other used their efforts and raw power in the process.

Of course, this did not include those players with Transcendent Races since their Class Promotion Quests were also much harder than regular players due to their access to special abilities and powers like Elemental Spirit Possession and unique energies.

At most, the players who had ascended their regular class and race were comparable with players with Hidden Ascended Classes.

In a sense, they were still considered Ascended Races and Classes, which had the potential to rival the Transcendent Races after reaching their peak power.

From what Shin understood, the 'Human Race' had the most variety of Ascended Paths due to their unique adaptability and evolution method. The 'Conquerors' and 'Neanderthals' were just a few of these Ascended Paths.

On the other hand, the other regular races such as Elves, Dwarves, Beastmen, Undeads, and Oceanic Races evolved according to their tribes and species, which were following a designated path unless they inherited an Ascended Path (Class) that could lead them to a different evolution.

Shin briefly glanced at the Plagued Monster behind him, impaled on the ground by the huge bone spears. There was even a bone cage that further restricted its movements, so it could not free itself any time soon.

After making sure that this monster would not be able to cause any immediate trouble, Shin turned his attention back to the trio and observed them closely.

Based on their movements, it seemed like they were not planning to fight with him, and instead wanted to greet an old 'friend'.

They could be considered acquaintances for Shin, especially when he had a good impression with Exheart.

Since the other two were walking slightly behind him, Shin could only think that he was the leading figure of this trio.

He slightly raised his head to reveal his signature mask, which also confirmed the suspicion of the three experts walking toward him.

"I knew it!" said Exheart as he smiled. "It is rare to meet a god such as yourself. But to think we have crossed blades when you are still in your rookie years? I can't help but feel honored."

"Tsk!" Bryan clicked his tongue and did not say anything. His current expression was quite ugly, reflecting his annoyance and denying that he had lost to Shin, but his eyes could not hide his acknowledgment of the other party.

HellBan, on the other hand, slightly nodded his head to greet Shin.

Chapter 1620 : The Plagued Lands (Part 4)

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The three observed Shin closely as they reached him. Even though they were strong themselves and quite confident with their abilities, they could still feel an immense threat coming from the latter.

He was just standing there, yet they could already feel the dread just by sensing the air around him.

He was not releasing that much threat compared to the other apex experts that they had met. He more like merged with nature itself because they could not feel his presence, which made the three of them sweat profusely. They even felt that he could kill them without their notice if they got ambushed by him in the wilderness.

He was like a sheathed blade that was hiding its sharpness, which could only be revealed once it was fully unsheathed.

Even if the three of them were Peak Titled Rankers, who could hold themselves against Godlike Players and Maverick Gods, they were still not confident that they would be able to defeat Shin even if they worked together.

Unless they used their most powerful cards, which had serious consequences, they would not dare fight him.

"Here to train?" asked Exheart after assessing the gap between them just based on their presence alone.

"To hunt as well," replied Shin mysteriously, seemingly trying to imply something.

Hearing those words, the trio could not help but recall the most recent incident in the maps surrounding the Divinity City.

They had heard that quite a few top guilds and other organizations worked together, trying to suppress the Empyrean Talons. They had even plotted a very huge scheme that involved a couple of Godlike Players and Maverick Gods.

But despite all their preparations, they were still unable to do anything against their target. They even became the hunted in the end.

Understanding the hidden implications of Shin's words, Exheart said. "Is that so? Do you want to team up? We happen to be looking for something interesting to do."

Shin looked at him in surprise before asking. "You are not worried about being targeted by those superpowers?"

Exheart chuckled as he asked jokingly. "If so, how about taking us under your wing? Is there any available room in your adventurer team?"

Shin did not take those words seriously as he could tell that Exheart was not that serious. Even if there was some hint of hope in his tone, he could still tell that the latter did not have that much expectation.

"We are currently not lacking any members," answered Shin in the same joking tone.

"Tsk! Too bad," Exheart faked a disappointment before laughing. "We are actually with the Gold Mountain now, so we are basically on the same side."

Shin raised his brows in surprise as he looked at them. He was silent for a moment before turning to Bryan.

Understanding the meaning of that gaze, Bryan said. "I have some brothers that I have to take care of in the real world, so we have created a brotherhood in the game, which later became the Black Hounds Mercenary Group."

He knew that Shin was talking about his Mercenary Group. If they tried to join Shin in hunting those members from the top guilds, who targeted the Empyrean Talons, his mercenary group would most likely become targeted when those superpowers retaliated.

"They are currently garrisoned in the Golden City and Calderock Port, treating it as their main base. So, there is nothing to worry about as we are one family," added Exheart while patting Bryan's shoulder.

Bryan glared at Exheart as he added. "It just happened."

Shin briefly nodded while thinking that he had yet to get any update from Shiella about the progress of the Gold Mountain, his dukedom.

When he thought about that, he could not help but feel a little guilty. It was his territory, yet he never had properly managed it and just left everything to his big sister.

But he was not that guilty either as he kept on giving her more pile of tasks after having some ideas. He just trusted her that she could handle everything.

After throwing that thought at the back of his head, he then turned to the three and asked. "By the way, how are the three of you together?"

"From what I can remember, the three of you don't get along that well. It is quite odd to see you in the same group," this somewhat confused and made him quite interested.

Bryan refused to answer as he did not want to admit it.

HellBan, on the other hand, remained quiet, which was somewhat different from what Shin remembered. This was not the first impression that he had gotten from this guy during their first encounter.

Meanwhile, Exheart smiled as he answered. "After you have defeated us at that time, we come back to the Divine Colosseum to get a better Battle Physique."

"We can't settle for anything worse than the top-notch physique, right? After all, it is the main foundation for the players at Tier 2 Class," he added with a smile.

"Then we fight for a couple of more rounds until we have gotten our desired Battle Physiques. After all, we regularly spar with each other until we got used to being at each other's company, so we decided to form a team while hunting and leveling in the wild."

Shin nodded before turning toward the Plagued Monster that was about to break free from the bone cage. "Let's chat while hunting then."

These three piqued his interest. Since they were 'citizens' of his territory, he wanted to build a decent relationship with them.

"Alright," nodded Exheart as he pulled the spear hanging on his back.

Swoosh!

Bryan, on the other hand, swiftly dashed forward. He was already itching to fight since earlier, so he impatiently took the initiative to attack.

Seeing that, Exheart repeatedly shook his head and quickly followed. With the crimson spear resting on his shoulders, he sprinted toward the Plagued Monster.

HellBan then waved his hand, taking the initiative to cancel his Tier 3 Spell that trapped the monster and clearing the bone spikes to avoid any obstruction blocking their path.

Swoosh!

Bryan held his huge saber with both of his hands and swung it diagonally at the monster as he leaped forward.

Shing!

A streak of light quickly cut through the air and passed through the body of the Plagued Monster, which just regained its freedom.

(-123,232)

Roar!

The Plagued Monster roared as it received serious damage from a single strike from its enemy.

It was about to turn and pouch at Bryan, who was still hovering in the air after that attack. But before the monster could even fully adjust its body, another attack swiftly followed the previous one.

Whoosh!

Sensing the danger, the Plagued Monster attempted to jump sideways, trying to dodge. But a crimson light already caught it and pierced a portion of its belly.

(-200,112)

A chunk of rotten flesh could be seen flying in the air as Exheart brushed past the monster after striking.

There was a black miasma coming out from those pieces of shredded flesh, and attempting to attach themselves to Exheart's body, who was the nearest living lifeform around them.

But the talisman that Exheart had in his possession, quickly released a warm light and shrouded his body. It protected him from the black miasma as he swiftly retreated.

Seeing their damage, Shin slightly raised his brows and commented. "Not bad."

Those attacks were not performed with their respective skills and only executed by combat techniques alone, yet their damage was decent enough to seriously hurt a Common Rank Monster of Awakened Continent.

Shin could tell that these two had focused more on honing their techniques rather than relying on their powerful skills.

They did not even enter their respective combat state when executing those attacks, which meant that their mana manipulation techniques were trained to the highest level.

If Tier 2 players were classified based on their Battle Physiques and Mana Manipulation Methods, then players in Tier 3 Classes were defenestrated by their Combat States, which determine the level of their fighting styles.

But those single attacks performed by Bryan and Exheart showed Shin that their battle techniques were thoroughly polished and fully matured. It was enough to put them on the same level as some Godlike Players of the game.

Shin felt that they only needed an opportunity to prove themselves and reveal their strengths at an official event to gain such standing.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

At the same time, he saw HellBan slammed his bone scepter on the ground, sending a silent ripple on the ground.

Bang!

Not long after, another cage trapped the Plagued monster, preventing it from moving.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Not long after, a barrage of bone spikes shot out from the ground and pierced the body of the monster, hurting it further.

(-15,236), (-15,661), (-15, 892), ...

The individual damage might not be as strong as what the two had dealt earlier, but the accumulated damage when added together was equal to theirs.

Shin whistled after seeing their seamless coordination. He had to admit that they had built quite a decent tacit understanding of one another.

He nodded in acknowledgment before swiftly making his move to join them.