

## Destiny 1621

### Chapter 1621: The Plagued Lands (Part 5)

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Shin hunted in the Plagued Lands alongside the trio and got a rough grasp of their strength. Based on his initial assessment, they should be at least as strong as the regular members of the Empyrean Talons, slightly beneath the top combatants.

But if it was about their teamwork, then Shin could say that they were at least better than most of the people that he had fought in groups. Their coordination was even slightly better than some of his teammates.

Exheart was a Martial Artist in the real world based on his techniques and unique temperament. His Martial Arts was also not that bad, especially his spearmanship. It might not be very high, but it was still enough to contend against top-notch Martial Arts if properly trained.

As for the combat state that he was using, Shin briefly saw it when they encountered a group of Plagued Monsters, but he could tell that it was the Reality Manifestation. His master over it was not bad either.

As for Bryan – this guy was a natural warrior. Even though he was not a Martial Artist in the real world, his abilities within the game were not that bad.

Adding his ability to enter the Hyperactive Immersion with ease, his strength was not something that could be overlooked, especially when he added a variety of high-level in-game skills to his arsenal.

In terms of battle style, Exheart had a more mature style due to his background as a martial artist. His martial might was cut above Bryan.

But if it was about fighting spirit and natural gift for battle, then Bryan was slightly at edge compared to Exheart. He was able to cancel out the advantages that the latter had over him with these two factors.

Meanwhile, HellBan was the most mysterious among the group. He was using the most basic Magical Formation, but his techniques and spells were amplified to a much higher degree, matching most of the top mages of the game.

He was someone who followed the standard strategies in the book, but he had mixed them with some complexities with his cunning mind.

His style was more of a control mage rather than an offensive one. His spells were mostly meant for capturing and trapping his targets, restricting their movements before launching a series of spells with low but steady damage.

It was somewhat different from what Shin remembered during their first encounter.

This also gave Shin the impression that HellBan was the one who matured more compared to the other two.

The abilities of these three were good, but it was a pity that Shin could not invite them to join the Empyrean Talons. It was not because they were not worthy enough, but because he felt that they did not fit much in the team.

They might be strong and could be a good addition to the team in some perspective, but they would not be able to bring much to increase the overall strength of the team. It would not be that much different from what they already had aside from increasing the number of their members.

Regardless, maintaining a good relationship with them would be beneficial to them.

One of the main reasons was they were now a 'citizen' of his dukedom. They were no different from being his subjects as the lord of the Gold Mountain.

The Black Hounds Mercenary Group that Bryan commanded was quite interesting as well. By chatting with the group, Shin learned that his mercenary group was an odd one.

Not long they did not have any support or healer in their ranks, but they were also filled with Berserkers of the Beastman Race.

Their specialty also fell into a single category, which was fighting. They were a bunch of battle-hungry individuals, who loved to challenge anyone they found strong.

Of course, as a mercenary group, they regularly accepted commissions. But the category always feels in monster subjugation, boss raids, dungeon challenges, and 'assassination' which did not feel like a proper assassination since they always straight up challenged their targets.

Shin found it funny and interesting at the same time.

'Big Sis must have taken interest in their style, which is why she lets them officially affiliated with the Gold Mountain,' thought Shin as he thought about this.

As for Exheart and HellBan, these two seemed to have also taken an interest in the group, which was why they were accompanying Bryan.

But due to Exheart having the natural air of a leader, the other two seemed to have acknowledged him. Even if they regularly denied it, Shin could still feel some respect from Bryan and HellBan whenever he saw the look in their eyes.

...

Bang!

After killing yet another Plague Monster, the group rested for a moment as they had been hunting in this place for quite a while now.

Exheart then turned to Shin and asked. "It seems like you are still training despite being in such an environment."

After fighting alongside Shin, he realized that Shin was not relying on his talisman to ward off the plague filling the region and instead used the powers of his Mana Manipulation Method to fight it back.

Exheart felt that it was bold of Shin to try such a thing, but he thought that the latter would only do it from time to time to improve his control over his special powers.

But to his surprise, Shin seemed to have no intention of using his talisman at all. The latter even fought alongside them without using the talisman to cleanse the plague that invaded his body.

Shin even used his unique method to eliminate all the accumulated plague energy within his body and purify his veins immediately after.

Exheart tried to copy Shin and disable the powers of the talisman to protect him, attempting to use this environment to train his Mana Manipulation Technique. But he did not last that long as he quickly re-activated the talisman not long after.

He did not even last a minute before he felt that he was slowly being overwhelmed by the plague energy.

He quickly understood that this was another proof that there was still a huge gap between him and those Gods of the game, especially the ones at Shin's level.

Bryan also attempted, but the result was even worse than Exheart.

HellBan was slightly different because of the nature of his class and race. But even as an undead, specifically a Fallen Human, he was still affected by the plague energy after they had accumulated enough powers.

Understanding what Exheart meant by saying those words, Shin smiled before saying. "Isn't it the main purpose of coming here?"

The trio was slightly stunned after hearing him and stared at him blankly. They felt that their definition of 'training' differed from what Shin had in his personal dictionary.

Seeing the expression that they were making, Shin chuckled and explained. "It is not that you three are weak. It's just the mana that we control are in different realms."

No matter how he explained it and beautified his words, he was still a complete freak in their eyes.

Shin ignored their gazes before turning in another direction. "I have already adjusted enough in the plague energies of the outer region, so I am planning to head to the deeper area."

Hearing that, the three shook their heads. – "A freak indeed." –

Even if they were hunting the Common Rank Plague Monsters in the outer region, they still felt some pressure during the battle. Since they did not bring any priest or at least a healer to their team, they could not afford to make a single mistake, or the consequences would be serious.

Yet here was this monster before them, who was still thinking of heading to the deeper regions of the Plagued Lands to further 'train'.

They were already fortunate enough not to encounter any Elite Plague Monster, yet Shin seemed to be looking for one.

Even if the three were not afraid to challenge themselves, they still would not blindly charge through such a dangerous place without enough preparation.

They had already experienced how powerful the monsters in the Awakened Continent were and understood how scary they were.

Even if they could take on one while teaming up, they were still not confident that they could win if they fought by themselves.

However, from the tone Shin had, they could tell that he did not put those Elite Monsters in the eyes.

"Sigh," Exheart shook his head before looking at Shin. "We'll come with you. How can we improve if we don't challenge ourselves like you? We can't afford to be left further behind."

Bryan and HellBan did not say anything, but the resolution in their eyes reflected that they agreed with his words.

Shin grinned behind his mask after seeing their expressions, particularly after sensing the strong fighting spirit that they were giving off.

As they were resting, they suddenly sensed multiple presences coming toward them from a certain direction.

Raising their heads, they saw a group of players with 15 to 20 members. Their composition was quite good and somewhat balanced.

But that was not what attracted Shin to them. It was the emblems that they were wearing.

Further grinning beneath his mask, Shin mumbled. "It looks like the first hunt will be a good one."

Chapter 1622 : The Plagued Lands (Part 6)

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Shin stared intently at the group in the distance, particularly the guild emblems that they were wearing on their chests. They were not from the same guild, which was signified by the different emblems that they were wearing. But Shin knew that they were all from the same force as these guilds were now under the Seven Seas Group.

"Are they one of your targets?" asked Exheart after sensing the hint of killing intent that leaked out from Shin's body.

Shin briefly nodded. "Yeah. They are all from the guilds that have been absorbed by the Seven Seas Group after they start investing in the game."

"They have formed an Ultra Guild now, rivaling the forces of the Powerhouse Guild. They may not have announced it in the public yet, but they have finished all the preparations," he added as he started walking. "They have tried to use me for some of their tests, so I have still an unfinished business with them."

"Want us to help?" offered Bryan. He was a battle-hungry person, so he always welcomed any kind of trouble, especially when it came to fighting.

Shin paused for a moment before saying. "If you want to join the fun, then you are more than welcome."

He then thought for a moment as he was reminded of his last encounter with that certain group. He then added with a bit of seriousness. "But if you see them use some weird pill, do your best to eliminate them as soon as possible."

After that, he suddenly disappeared, leaving only a little cloud of dust.

The three exchanged glances with one another. They could sense that Shin was not afraid of facing the opposing group by himself, but it seemed like he was wary of something given the tone that he gave them.

"Let's check it out," said Exheart before walking toward the incoming group.

The two nodded as they followed closely behind.

...

On the other hand, the group that they had seen from a distance was unaware of the danger that they would be facing.

They just finished training in the depths of the Plagued Lands and planned to head back to Divinity City to recuperate. They had been exposed to the plague a little too long, which made the protective talismans that they were wearing slightly lose their effects.

They had been sent here by their superiors to scout the situation within the Plagued Lands. It was also for them to draw the most accurate map, which could help them later once the event kicked off.

They had gotten quite a lot from this trip. Aside from adjusting and familiarizing themselves with the environment of the Plagued Lands, they had also grinded quite a lot of experience points along the way. Some of them even leveled up quite a few times after they had taken down some Elites and Special Elites in the process.

They also encountered some Chieftain-Rank Plagued Monsters, but they did not dare to challenge those as they were aware that they were not strong enough.

Only when they were under the leadership of top-notch Godlike Players or peak Maverick God would they have the courage to hunt such monsters.

The problem was there were no available experts at such a level to make a trip with them due to the big event that took place in Divinity City recently.

Even if the Seven Seas Group were not involved in the incident, they were still not in a good spot since it was said that one of the top combatants of the Empyrean Talons was targeting them.

Even if they were at the same level as Shin and were not that afraid of him, it was still better to be careful, especially when it was said that he was working with a top-notch sniper and a deadly assassin who were not that weaker than him.

But the Seven Seas Group had also somewhat benefited from what happened between the alliance and the Empyrean Talons as they were able to explore the Plagued Lands with little competition.

Aside from those Powerhouse Guilds with solid foundations and hidden organizations comparable to them, the Seven Seas Group did not fear anyone, making them fearlessly advance into the depths of the region.

Just with this trip, the group was able to scout quite a large area, giving them a rough idea of the terrains within the Plagued Lands.

"Captain Han, I heard that some of the top guys from the Lighthouse Guild have been wiped out when they encountered the Battle God, including Jorn," said a Speter Archer in one of the little groups within the game.

He was wearing an emblem that had a pair of bloody daggers forming an 'X' shape on his chest. It was an indication that he was from the House of Bloody Daggers, one of the highly-ranked assassination groups within the game.

They might not be as strong as the top-notch assassination organization like the 'Assassin Union' or 'Soul Killers', but they still had a decent reputation within the circle.

After the Seven Seas Group had approached their leader in the real world, they became a subsidiary guild of the hegemonic financial group and started progressing quite quickly.

After receiving massive funds from this powerful group, the organization started getting bolder and expanded. Just recently, they had conquered a small kingdom in the Aurora Continent, which became their main base of operation.

This gave them a lot of confidence, making them look down on any other guilds.

At this moment, all the top experts of their organization were sent to the Awakened Continent to train after receiving a special invitation from their backer.

They did not know where the Seven Seas Group had gotten those special invitations, but it helped them pass trials of the Mysterious Instructors stationed in the Aurora Continent and become qualified to enter the Awakened Continent.

After arriving, they were immediately grouped with the other subsidiary guilds and organizations under the Seven Seas Group.

But even then, they still had a much better standing compared to the rest due to the uniqueness of their organization.

This was one of the reasons why their group was tasked with leading the team that would be scouting the Plagued Lands.

With this, this Spectral Archer looked down on the other members of this team.

The others were aware of this, but they could not do anything about it since the other party had brought a very strong combatant of their organization – Han, the Demolisher.

He was one of the players, who was gaining fame recently due to his rapid growth. He was a genius nurtured by Seven Seas Group after seeing his talent for assassination despite having a berserker class.

The House of Bloody Daggers was also put under him as a form of test. The higher-ups of the organization wanted to see if he was good enough to be the leader of the assassination group that they were planning to build.

Han, due to his talent and support from a great organization, looked down on everyone. He even had gotten some wins against the Maverick Gods of the subsidiary guilds that the Seven Seas Group and taken under their wing, further making him proud.

He glanced at the Spectral Archer beside him before replying nonchalantly. "What's there to be surprised about? That guy is always been an eyesore. It is a good thing that he has learned his lessons now."

In his eyes, only those gods at the top rankings were worthy enough of his attention, so he ignored everyone else.

"That's right! That's right!" said the Spectral Archer while nodding his head repeatedly. It was clear that he was bootlicking, which made the others look down on him.

There were also top experts in their group, including the three peak Maverick Rankers, who shouldn't be that weaker than this 'Han'.

They did not voice out their displeasure as they were afraid that their leaders would kick them out for provoking the genius of the Seven Seas Group. They would not be able to handle the consequences when it happened.

As they were talking, the group finally saw the trio walking toward them from the distance.

Han was the first to notice as he was walking at the forefront of the group, especially when he could sense a decent threat coming from them.

"These three are not simple," he commented with interest as he looked at the three players up ahead.

The second to react was the peak Maverick Rankers behind him.

"That's-... Saber Demon Bryan!"

"The other is the Wandering Nomad Exheart!"

"If that is the case, then the hooded guy behind him is HellBan, the Hand of the Dead!"

Slightly raising his brows, Han asked. "Who are they? Are they famous?"

Even if the Seven Seas Group nurtured him, he was not that familiar with the 'regular' experts within the gaming community. Aside from the famous Godlike Players and Maverick Gods comparable to them, he did not care about anyone else.

"Captain Han, you better be careful of them. Those three are not ordinary Rankers. Even some of the Godlike Players and Maverick Gods will be aware of them," said one of the Maverick Rankers, who was a Holy Mage.

Han remained unconvinced. He did not even include himself when he asked. "Even with your numbers?"

They were about to reply when they sensed that something was wrong.

They realized that an additional person was standing in their ranks. They silently stood beside the Spectral Archer, slightly behind their captain.

Han had also gotten a sense of dread at that point, giving him serious goosebumps.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The three Maverick Rankers quickly went into action, attacking that hooded figure while Han activated his defensive skill as he retreated in a hurry.

Boom!

The spells and skills landed at the hooded figure, creating a cloud of smoke that blocked their vision.

But despite seeing that their attacks successfully landed on their target, the three Maverick Rankers maintained their formation while staring warily at the receding cloud of smoke.

When the smoke finally settled and disappeared, they saw the confident figure standing in the same spot, protected by a transparent barrier.

"Tsk! I thought I would be able to fish out some information by silently listening. I should have kept a low profile and mixed in the ranks of regular members," commented the hooded figure, seemingly ignoring everyone.

He fearlessly stood in the middle of his enemies, who now surrounded him.

He then turned to Han, who was looking at him with a grim expression from a safe distance. "Anyway, let's have a chat. I have some questions for you."

Chapter 1623 Fighting a Genius of Seven Seas Group (Part 1)

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"Arrogant!" said Han after hearing how Shin acted.

He was about to make his move and teach this guy a lesson when he suddenly saw the mask that the latter was wearing when they slightly raised their head. "You..."

The words were stuck in his throat for a moment due to the immense pressure that suddenly washed over him after his eyes met the latter's gaze.

He was only able to force out his words after using a mind-cleansing skill to strengthen his willpower.  
"Battle Sickarius of the Empyrean Talons!"

"All of you, use the special drugs!" he shouted after realizing that a great enemy was standing before them.

The others did not even hesitate after hearing his orders, especially when they heard that it was the Battle God who they would be facing.

They all took out a pill from their inventory bags and swallowed it without any hint of hesitation.

Shin frowned slightly after seeing this. He was not expecting that this Han guy would be this decisive. He thought that Han was too prideful to use the evil pill.

He was expecting that his person would challenge him straight away rather than relying on these pills after seeing how confident he was in his abilities.

Regardless, Shin could not let these people lose themselves after using these evil pills. But it was quite troublesome to kill them all in an instant because they maintained a good distance to ensure their safety while forming a formation that trapped him inside.

"Fortunately, I am not alone," he mumbled, sending shivers down the spine of the three peak Maverick Rankers of the opposing side.

Due to his overwhelming presence, they had overlooked that three more people were targeting them.

Realizing this, they simultaneously turned their heads toward the other direction and quickly prepared to engage the incoming trio.

They were the only ones, who could match the other three Rankers in this group. Then they could leave the rest to help Han at trying to take down Shin. Even if the chances were low, they had to gamble it anyway since they did not have a choice.

The three moved quickly as they even sent an emergency message to their superiors, reporting that they had encountered the Battle God in the Plagued Lands. They even provided the coordinates, pinpointing their exact location.

But before they could fully separate themselves from the group, Shin suddenly raised his right foot while concentrating his mana on it.

His breathing and energy circulation also followed the Jade Kirin Scripture.

Crackle! Crackle!

At the same time, a series of electric currents danced around his body as he supposed the Primordial Lighting.

In the next instant, he suddenly stomped his foot on the ground, sending a powerful ripple in the air along with a thunderous sound that shook the entire 20-meter radius around him.

'Personal Combat Technique: Thunderclap Step'

Boom!

With a clap of thunder, all the players, who were about to lose their minds from the mind corruption, suddenly snapped out of their dazed states for a moment before their minds got overwhelmed by evil thoughts once again.

Crackle! Crackle!

Electric currents dance in the air, immobilizing everyone who was caught in the explosion.

Aside from Han and the three Maverick Rankers, the rest were paralyzed by the electric currents filling the air.

Han had a solemn expression on his face as he realized that those gods standing at the peak of the game were not someone he could afford to underestimate.

Regardless, he was not afraid as he quickly activated all the buffs available from his arsenal while entering his combat state.

Boom!

He kicked the ground behind him and propelled himself straight to Shin, challenging the latter.

A layer of purple light suddenly covered his entire body as the broadsword hanging on his back was suddenly unsheathed.

He did not even have the intention of warming up as he quickly used one of his strongest techniques right from the start.

'Dark Military Tactic: Might of the Thousand Men'

Swoosh!

He swung the broadsword down with all his might, seemingly carrying an unstoppable force that could crush anything before it.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The electric currents that were filling the air were split open as he charged forward while the fabric of space seemed to have been cut by this mighty strike.

Shin slightly raised his brows as he did not expect that Han would not use the evil pill to directly increase his combat capabilities, and instead use everything in his arsenal to try to match Shin's overwhelming stats.

Seeing the incoming broadsword, which was giving off the feeling that a mountain was crushing at him from above, Shin lowered his stance and spread his feet.

He took his signature stance as he regulated his breathing.

Crackle! Crackle!

The Primordial Lightning gathered around him before being compressed at the sheathed sword.

Click!

Not long after, he pulled the [Yamato] out of its sheath and swung it horizontally, drawing a beautiful line in the air filled with black and white electric currents.

Shing!

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

Swoosh!

The lightning arcs seemed to have cut the massive mountain when the two swords met one another.

Boom!

At the same time, an explosion erupted, which blasted the paralyzed players standing near the center of the collision.

Shin praised the strength of this genius nurtured by the Seven Seas Group. From this single exchange, he could tell that this person was at least as strong as Owen before he awakened the true potential of his Awakened Race.

But what truly interested Shin was the broadsword that the opposing side was wielding. He could feel an ancient and noble aura coming from this sword when Han had activated its powers.

"It is no ordinary artifact," commented Shin as he slightly pushed the sword of his opponent back with a flick of his wrist.

At the same time, he suddenly twirled the sword while turning his wrist outwards, following his previous action.

After deflecting the sword of his opponent and pushing the other party back due to the rebound, Shin's eyes suddenly turned sharp as his feet kicked the ground and strode forward.

Bang!

Alongside it, he borrowed the force of his forward momentum to throw a diagonal strike toward his opponent, targeting the opening that he created.

Swoosh!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: First Movement – Collapsing Wind'

Shing!

The sword cut through the air as electric sparks enveloped its blade and danced along its surface.

The follow-up attack was seamless, grasping the flaw in the opponent's defense and striking at the perfect timing.

If it was any other people, then they would most likely get killed in this single exchange.

Han realized that it was too late to counter, but he would not give up that easily. He followed the backward momentum of his body to take a couple of steps back to create some space for himself.

He then spun around while swinging the broadsword upwards, deflecting the incoming attack. He also reinforced the sword with an immense amount of mana, further enhancing his strength.

'Dark Military Tactics: Turning of the Thousand Troops'

Bang!

Following this spinning momentum, Han continued while using one of the signature skills of the berserker class the 'Whirlwind' skill to be the main moment of his next attack.

'Scarlet Moon Slaying: Dark Tornado'

Shin frowned slightly after seeing the strange moments of the Wind Elemental Mana, particularly the strong suction force that was pulling him forward.

Despite sensing the danger from the tornado that his opponent had created, Shin took a step forward while raising the [Yamato] high up in the air.

The black and white flashes of lighting around him suddenly gathered toward the sword, illuminating the area with the two alternating colors.

He then swung the sword down, drawing a vertical line made of lightning that split the spinning wind along with the suction force that it carried.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Fourth Movement – Tempest Stroke'

As the creation of the tornado was stopped, Han suddenly leaped forward, charging at Shin once again.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The two exchanged a series of moves as they disappeared and reappeared in different places.

Those who were caught in the shockwaves caused by the collisions of powers were further blasted away, sending them flying.

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At the same time, the three Maverick Rankers of the group just freed their paralyzed bodies from the lightning currents when they were greeted by a new disaster.

"Let me take on this guy!" shouted Bryan as he appeared in front of a Fallen Human with a pair of dual swords.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The two were immediately engaged in an intense melee as Bryan fearlessly pushed forward.

Swoosh!

At the same time, Exheart appeared before the other Maverick Ranker, who seemed to be a knight or paladin based on their equipment. Just like the previous pair, they also engaged in battle without any greeting.

The remaining Maverick Ranker, who was a Human Holy Mage, was about to give his two companions support when he sensed a vibration on the ground.

Without any hesitation, he cast Blink and appeared a few meters away from his previous location.

Bang!

That was when a bone cage appeared from the spot where he previously stood, almost catching him.

Turning toward another location, he saw HellBan looking at him coldly, seemingly telling him he was his opponent.

The battlefield was immediately thrown into chaos as the two sides clashed.

Chapter 1624 Fighting a Genius of Seven Seas Group (Part 2)

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The people of the Seven Seas Group tried to surround Shin and the others after re-organizing themselves.

Due to Shin's earlier action, these players, who were about to get corrupted by the artificial seed of hatred, managed to somewhat hold their sanity for a moment. They were able to think straight and ignore the dark thoughts that were invading their minds, but it was only for a short time as they started going berserk not long after.

However, this data could give the researchers and scientists recording the parameters of these players in their laboratory.

Unfortunately, the one who was assigned at this time was the spy the Springfield Family had planted inside. Even if there were other people with him, he managed to delete the scene and erase his tracks without anyone noticing.

Of course, it was not that easy since he had to do it for all the members currently fighting Shin and the trio. The others were also not assigned to him, which was why he had to be careful of his actions.

Fortunately, the fight broke out all of a sudden and the other researchers were currently reporting what was happening to the higher-ups, giving him the chance to invade their computers and erase the earlier scenes of the fight alongside the parameters recorded at that time.

He then silently turned his attention back to the scene projected in front of him while sighing and mumbling to himself. "Young Master Shin seems to always be busy within the game."

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Back in the scene, Shin continued to exchange blows with Han, trying to see if the opposing side had something else in his arsenal.

He also occasionally provoked the latter with words, trying to agitate them and forcing some information out of their mouth. Unfortunately, it was not that successful since Han was quite calm despite his agitated appearance.

But he was not that bothered since that was not his main plan. What he wanted to do was to capture this guy with a prison prism and see what they could do after.

However, catching someone alive was much harder than killing them, so Shin had to put in some effort not to kill the other party by accident.

Han seemed to have noticed something wrong as well after seeing that Shin was not fighting him seriously, unlike what he had seen in the battle videos.

As one of the top talents raised by the Seven Seas Group, he naturally studied the top individuals standing at the peak of the virtual world to prepare himself if ever he encountered them in the field.

Adding the most recent videos circling the gaming community, Han could tell that Shin was holding back most of his strength.

This angered Han even more as he felt that Shin was underestimating him a little too much. He might not have that much of a reputation within the circle, but that did not mean he was any weaker than the top talents of the gaming world.

"Let's see how long you are going to keep this up!" he shouted as he retreated for a moment to create some distance between him and Shin.

After that, he held his broadsword with both of his hands, channeling his mana into it.

Shin focused his eyes as he activated the True Sight ocular skill to the fullest alongside the Sensing Circle and his Spiritual Sense.

Then he saw that Han seemed to be trying to awaken something from the sword that he was holding.

Shin could sense a dark and intimidating aura coming from that sword. It was as if a slumbering monster was slowly being awakened.

He wanted to stop Han from continuing, but he was immediately swarmed by the crazy players, who had lost their minds from the corruption of the artificial seeds of hatred planted in their hearts.

"Tsk!" he clicked his tongue as he prepared to quickly dispose of them.

But as he was taking his signature sword-drawing stance, his instincts suddenly warned him about the impending doom.

Without any hesitation, he used his 'Demonic Telekinesis' to create a psychic barrier around him while also controlling the Powers of Primordial Eclipse to form another layer of barrier over it.

'Slayer Skill: (Modified) Eclipse Pulse'

As the double layer of barrier was set up, the bodies of the players surrounding him exploded one after another, creating a massive explosion that swiftly swallowed him.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The chains of explosions created a massive cloud of blazing smoke that swept through the entire battlefield, destroying everything within its effective radius.

Exheart, Bryan, and HellBan used their respective means to escape the range of explosions.

They appeared in a safe distance while solemnly staring at the massive cloud of blazing smoke. They would most likely have been killed in an instant if they were not fast enough to use their lifesaving skills to escape it.

"Is that guy still alive? With such a massive explosion, it is hard to escape unscratched, especially when he is right at its center," said Bryan while watching the blazing cloud of smoke grow larger and head to the sky.

"You are talking as if you don't know how scary that guy is. Something like this shouldn't be able to kill him," said Exheart as he turned his attention toward another direction.

There, he saw the three Maverick Rankers, who were fighting them earlier.

"Those three seemed to be losing their minds as well. Just what is the thing that they consumed to have such an effect," he mumbled solemnly.

At the start of the battle, the opposing side was able to fight them rationally and kept their style. But as time went by, those mavericks seemed to be slowly becoming crazy and started attacking without any regard for their lives.

They seemed to have become mindless monsters, who knew nothing but destruction.

"Didn't Sickarius say that we must take them down as soon as possible after they consumed those pills? I don't know what they are, but I can tell that it is not something beneficial to any of them based on their current appearance," commented HellBan as he was getting a bad feeling as he watched the three Maverick Rankers run at them like mindless beasts.

"It was as if their performance here in the game can influence their bodies in the real world. The more they stayed in this state, the more damage they suffered," he added as he prepared for another round.

"Killing them has always been our objective. It is no different from any other fights we have," said Bryan as he was first to charge forward once again.

Exheart, on the other hand, squinted his eyes as he felt something more into it than what they could see from the surface. He was not sure what it was, but he could think that this was something that could affect the real world.

"I guess I need to report to Big Brother after I get offline later," he mumbled as he followed the two once again.

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In the meantime, Shin, who was at the center of the explosion, stood solemnly after thinking about what happened.

Even if it was good that those guys died as soon as possible and forcefully logged out of the game, he felt that such an insane way of dying could still impact their minds in the real world.

Suicide was not something new in the game as it was a common method used by many on certain occasions. But what he had seen from the eyes of these experts when they initiated the self-explosion, they seemed to be in pain, agony, and unwilling to die.

It was as if something triggered them to die in the real world rather than inside the game.

"What are those bastards thinking?" he mumbled with a frown. He could feel that these guys had done something in the real world to forcefully log out every player in this battle.

Aside from the three peak mavericks who were fighting Exheart, Bryan, and HellBan, he could feel that everyone else who had consumed the evil pill had committed suicide.

As he was lost in his thoughts, he suddenly heard Hanzo's voice inside his head, warning him.

[Brat, before careful! I can sense the immense power of an ancient being upfront!]

Shin quickly raised his head and focused his senses on the surroundings, marking Han's positions from what he could remember.

He then detonated the barrier protecting him by unsheathing his sword and swinging it horizontally, drawing a ring of energy that extended outwards.

'Slayer Skill: (Modified) Eclipse Counter'

As the sharp energy extended, it cut through the blazing cloud surrounding it and cleared everything on its path.

Boom!

But it did not take that long before it collided with something, creating another explosion.

Swoosh!

A violent ripple spread and pushed the blazing smoke, clearing the surroundings.

Shin frowned as he stared at the person standing a dozen meters away from his current position.  
"What's that?"

Chapter 1625 Fighting a Genius of Seven Seas Group (Part 3): Awakening

...

Shin started at Han, who was standing a dozen meters away from him and saw a huge apparition of a crow behind the latter with three crimson eyes staring coldly at him.

Shin could feel that his 'soul' was being pried on after the three eyes locked on him. He even felt a hidden suppression that was trying to crush on him. It was like an invisible mountain that was pressing on him.

Raising his brows, Shin circulated the elemental powers flowing within his body and combined them to form a resistance that fought against the invisible pressure that was pressing on him.

His soul seemed to have been frozen by something and slowly being eroded and corrupted at the same time.

The pressure was so strong that it was directly targeting his soul.

Frowning his brows, Shin felt found it troublesome. He also became wary as he pushed his True Sight skill and combined its powers with the physic powers of the Demonic Telekinesis to fight the pressure of the Three-Eyed Crow.

But even then, he was barely hanging on.

It was at this moment that Hanzo told him about the crow apparition behind Han. [This is the Three-Eyed Demon Bird! It is an ancient being that lived in the Ancient Era alongside the powerful beings of the past like the Ancient Dragons, Primordial Beasts, Celestial Phoenixes, Titans, and others.]

[The Demon Bird Race was known for its powerful mental energy suppression. They were creatures that wield an overwhelming mental energy almost surpassing the rulers of the ancient eras.]

[Even the most powerful beings at that time will think twice before offending a Demon Bird Race.]

[And among the Demon Bird Race, the Three-Eyed Demon Bird, mostly known as the Three-Eyed Demon Crow, can be ranked among the top five of the entire race.]

He then momentarily paused and intently stared at the apparition of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow behind Han, particularly at the broadsword that the latter was holding and especially when the apparition was being projected by it.

[It may not be at its peak state since it has been sealed in that artifact for a very long time and a lot of its powers have already been eroded by time, but this soul is still strong enough to threaten those Sovereign Beings once its powers have been fully released.]

[This kid may not be able to fully release the seal of that sword artifact and can only partially release the ancient soul sealed in it, its power is still more than enough to defeat you if you are not careful enough.]

Hearing those words, Shin could not help but wear a solemn expression as he looked at Han. Even if he could see that the latter was somewhat struggling to control the ancient soul of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow, he still could tell that it was not much of a pressure for the opposing side.

But the real problem was the growing pressure that the apparition of the ancient being was pressing on it.

He was starting to sweat profusely as it was getting heavier.

But at the same time, Shin felt that this was also a rare opportunity.

He could feel some reactions within him, particularly the different forms of mana within his body. The five elements seemed to be showing some strange reactions, seemingly urging him to do something.

Then, a bold idea suddenly struck his mind.

...

Shin utilized the elemental techniques of Regan's Method as the main model to recreate the five-elemental cycle to circulate the elemental mana within his body while relying on Demonic Telekinesis as his Mental Energy within the game then forming a unique system that was similar to the one that he was creating in the real world.

With the unification of all these powers, Shin was able to perfect the circulation method and energy utilization that he ideally had in his mind.

He was already doing this since he had entered the game after his most recent minor breakthrough.

He was always missing some, which was also the most crucial piece that he was looking for.

He only found this missing piece after meeting the powerful and ancient pressure that the apparition of the Three-Eyed Crow was pressing at him.

"I see," he mumbled as he merged everything from a complete system.

Boom!

A silent explosion erupted within his body as the five major elements completed their cycle with the help of psychic powers provided by his Demonic Telekinesis.

Shin felt that something changed within him as well. Then, when he investigated it through inner reflection, he saw that the nature of the Powers of the Primordial Eclipse was divided by something before one of them receded deep within his body just like how all his abilities related to martial arts in the real world whenever his consciousness awakened and swapped with Uno.

It was as if this power suddenly became dormant and slept deep within his body.

Even if he could not 'see' it, Shin could tell that this power became 'part' of Uno, who was currently in an inactive state.

Shin raised his brows when he realized this, but quickly calmed down after realizing that another phenomenon was taking place within his body.

The five elemental mana alongside his psychic powers merged further and melded more smoothly forming a whole new power.

It was not entirely new as he had already felt these powers before, particularly during his battle against the larva of Grand Centipedeus alongside Diablo and Leonard.

It was the power that was formed by the five elements but carried the principles of unification that the Powers of Primordial Eclipse possessed.

This was the five-elemental unification – the Origin of Five Elements.

Alongside these changes, Shin 'saw' that the other half of the Primordial Eclipse fused with this new power, changing the composition of the Primordial Lighting.

Before, the Primordial Lighting was formed by two opposing powers, which melded and harmonized with each other, just like how the unification of the Yin and the Yang was formed.

This followed the philosophical concept that described the idea that opposite forces were complementary and interconnected, and the whole was greater than the sum of its parts.

This form was more suited for the Yin-Yang Arts, or even the Yin-Yang Cultivation Arts that Uno had perfected.

But this time, the Primordial Lighting that was formed was based on the unity of the five elements, which had the concept of the cycle of creation, destruction, and transformation.

The current Primordial Lightning still had the same black and white color, but it now carried a hint of the five elemental powers within Shin such as the Eternal Flame, Primordial Waters, Natural Wood, Earthen Metal, and Metallic Earth.

It was similar yet also different from the Primordial Lighting, which used to carry the Powers of the Brilliant Sun and the Abyssal Moon.

This form, on the other hand, fitted the concept of Shin's Mentalism Method – the Four Symbol Scripture, which was also further perfected just recently.

Taking advantage of these changes, Shin used the visualization method that he had learned from Old Ryong to assist in the formation of new powers within his body.

He might not have mastered this method yet, but it was still better and faster than waiting for the powers to form naturally.

At the same time, Shin also felt some 'movements' in the depths of his consciousness.

He did not have to look into it as he could already tell that Uno must be doing something well.

Uno seemed to be using this opportunity to match Shin. He was also forming something equal to what Shin was doing.

And given the perfect timing, it looked like he had been waiting for this opportunity for a very long time already.

Boom!

Not long after, Shin released a powerful aura as the five elemental powers danced around him.

Roar!

At the same time, the five huge images of divine beasts were formed behind, albeit briefly. They appeared for an instant before turning into streaks of light that melded together and formed a huge diagram behind Shin that was filled with magical runes, which drew the images of the five divine beasts.

This diagram represented Shin's perfected mentalism method, the Four Symbol Scripture.

As this happened, Shin subconsciously entered the state of Reality Manifestation alongside his Natural State, the Perfect Zenith.

This was his most powerful state without using any kind of buffs, berserk skills, or elemental possession.

Alongside all of these, multiple runes appeared in different parts of his body. He seemed to have subconsciously used the Mentalism Rune Techniques, particularly the Mentalism Enchantments, which he had learned from the realm world and recreated within the game.

Seemingly responding to all of these, the portion of bloodline powers of his Transcendent Race had been awakened.

Right at this moment, Shin looked like a deity as he floated in the air while looking down at Han's direction, particularly at the apparition of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow behind him.

The entire process sounded long, but these changes all happened within a couple of breaths to complete.

It was at this moment when a notification sounded at Shin's ears.

\*Ding\*

System: Your Origin Powers have been awakened!

## Chapter 1626 Fighting a Genius of Seven Seas Group (Part 4)

...

Han stared solemnly at Shin after seeing the latter's sudden transformation. The current appearance of Shin was not included in any information that they had gathered about him.

But what made his expression grimmer was the overwhelming and suffocating aura that Shin was releasing after this change.

But he was not afraid. He was confident with himself, especially when he had this sword artifact that he had gotten from the Seven Seas Group. He believed and was convinced that the soul sealed within the artifact far surpassed anything that a player had at the current stage of the game.

Even the mysterious spirits that the players with Transcendent Race and Class were not a match to this soul of Three-Eyed Demon Crow. This conclusion was based on his results whenever he fought someone with such class and race.

However, those he had fought were not on the same level as the apex gods of the game, so he still did not know the full capabilities of these beings.

This opportunity right before him was the best chance he had to test whether it was true or not.

"Hah!" Han shouted as he activated the power limit that he could achieve with his current abilities.

In response, the apparition of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow behind him became a little more distinct, making it releasing an even stronger mental suppression to Shin.

At the same time, it slowly merged with his body, changing his appearance.

'Weapon Skill (Demonic Sword of Madness): Ancient Soul Possession – Three-Eyed Demon Crow'

Boom!

His aura immediately erupted into a whole new level, pressing on everything around him. The set of armor that he was wearing also changed as it turned into an armor made of black feathers with a purple hue while a pair of huge crow wings grew on his back.

At the same time, a vertical slit opened at the center of his forehead, revealing a blood-colored eye.

While Han was undergoing his transformation, Shin ignored everything else as he put his focus on the changes within his body.

This was not only meant for his avatar within the game but also an important piece of information for his body in the real world.

He observed every change within his body while engraving everything in his mind. He was also burning all the processes inside his head, particularly the responses of the five elemental powers to complement his Mentalism Method.

At the same time, he could also see within the depths of his Sea of Consciousness that Uno was undergoing a similar change.

At the center of the white world, Uno was sitting cross-legged, seemingly in deep meditation. The aura around him was no weaker than the one that Shin was currently emitting.

Aside from that, Shin could also see a huge symbol of Eight Trigrams underneath Uno, which possessed the same mysteries and profoundness of the Four Symbol Diagram of Divine Beasts behind him.

Uno sat at the center of the yin-yang symbol in the middle of the diagram as he released a mysterious air.

Shin realized something with this, especially when he saw that Uno had entered his Natural State – the True Equinox.

Not long after, Shin took his eyes off his Sea of Consciousness and paid his attention back to the outside world.

It was at this moment that he realized that Han had transformed.

Shin slightly raised his brows in interest as he watched the entire process of his opponent's transformation.

He even waited for the entire process to be completed, letting Han reach his strangest state.

Han also realized this, making him even more angry as Shin was underestimating him a little too much.  
"Arrogant!"

Boom!

After a powerful and domineering shout, Han suddenly stomped his foot on the ground and leaped into the air. He also flapped his wings strongly to further propel himself toward his target at an even faster speed.

Swoosh!

He left a black trail behind while being accompanied by the booming sounds of the wind during his flight.

He arrived in front of Shin within an instant while swinging his broadsword with all his might.

Shing!

The sword carried a powerful mental energy that merged with his physical strength to a certain degree. His mana manipulation method also set his sword ablaze with an icy mana flame that seemed to be able to freeze the air by absorbing all the heat in the surroundings.

'Sword of the Seven Seas: Might of the Thousand Waves'

Despite how fast the opposing side was, Shin remained calm. He slowly raised his left arm as he held the sheath of the [Yamato] with it, which now transformed into a greatsword.

'Legacy Skill: Mondi's Style – Judgement Form'

Not long after, Astaroth also appeared behind Shin very briefly before transforming into a speck of light that merged with the 'Judgement Form' and changed its appearance while giving Shin the power to control the power of Metallic Earth.

'Elemental Spirit Possession: (Metallic Earth) Summit Shaper'

Holding the greatsword in a reverse manner, Shin changed the flow of energy within him and manipulated the elemental powers of the earth by changing his breathing into the 'Great Dominator Technique'.

As all of this happened, his weight seemed to have increased, somewhat transforming his aura into an immovable mountain, as he faced the incoming strike.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Divine Yellow Dragon – Great Mountain'

Boom!

A powerful explosion erupted as the two sides collided against each other, sending a powerful shockwave in every direction. The air rippled violently, turning into a devastating storm that swept through everything for a moment before subduing once again.

Han raised his brows as he saw that Shin did not even move an inch despite the devasting power behind his strike.

Unconvinced, he suddenly retracted his broadsword before throwing a series of slashes in front of him that left an overwhelming amount of flashes in the air, which were charging toward Shin from every angle.

'Sword of the Seven Seas: School of Swordfishes'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Shin maintained his calm composure as he flipped the greatsword in his left hand and held it in a forehand manner.

During the process, the 'Judgement Form' changed into a transparent longsword while maintaining its possession state. But instead of the elemental powers of earth, he was commanding the elemental powers of metal this time.

He also changed from the 'Great Dominator Technique' into the 'Golden Immortality Technique' as controlled the Mental Elemental Mana within his body.

'Legacy Skill: Mondi's Style – Conviction Form'

'Elemental Spirit Possession: (Earthen Metal) Summit Shaper'

Holding the longsword, Shin's left arm suddenly flicked for an instant while an explosion of killing intent erupted from his body.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Sacred White Tiger – Savage Killing'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

In the next instant, flashes of sword silhouettes filled the air before him, cutting through everything.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The collision between the two powers produced yet another series of explosions that further sent multiple ripples in the air that turned into another storm.

Han was also forced to retreat due to the violent wind produced by the sword collisions, especially when the residual forces from their attacks started to hit them.

Han summoned an invisible barrier to protect himself from the storm while Shin remained unmoved from his position, ignoring the residual forces that were trying to sweep him away.

Seeing this, Han gritted his teeth as he held the broadsword with both of his hands while channeling his energy into it.

Boom!

Not long after, the apparition of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow appeared behind him once again as he used another sword technique while swinging the broadsword downwards.

Swoosh!

'Sword of the Seven Seas: Beast of the Depths'

Roar!

Along with his slash, a huge shark was manifested and charged toward Shin while widely opening its jaws wide and seemingly trying to devour him in a single bite.

At the same time, the Three-Eyed Demon Crow behind Han suddenly released an overwhelming amount of mental energy that merged with the humongous manifestation of the shark, making it more alive and powerful.

Shin slightly raised his brows when he saw this but still maintained his calm demeanor. Given his current control over the five elements and mastery of his techniques, such a display before him was nothing but fancy tricks.

"It is a good technique. It's just a pity that he can't fully unleash its true might because he puts all his focus on the power of skill and not its depths," he commented as he held the [Yamato] a little tighter while letting Solus possess it.

'Elemental Spirit Possession: (Eternal Flame) Divine Constellation'

The sword was set ablaze with a gorgeous flame as he adjusted his breathing for another time, shifting to the 'Solar Breathing Technique'.

He wanted to test the might of the Heavenly Black Tortoise Method of his Four Symbol Scripture, along with the reinforcement of the 'Boundless Ocean Technique,' against a decent technique with a similar element.

Unfortunately, he still hadn't gotten his hands on an Elemental Spirit that would complement the form of the sword and the techniques, which would prevent him from showcasing their true might.

But when he thought that he would be getting one later, he erased all these thoughts as he casually swung the [Yamato] in the form of 'Divine Constellation' forward.

Swoosh!

'Four Symbol Scripture: Celestial Vermillion Bird – Phoenix Slash'

Shriek!

A cry of a phoenix immediately reverberated in the air as a flaming bird appeared in the air as Shin slashed the sword forward.

It then flew straight to the incoming shark made of water elements and reinforced by mental energy that was about to descend to Shin.

Boom!

The explosion created a thick mixture of cold fog and hot steam in the air, blocking the view of both parties, as the water shark and blazing bird dissipated in the air after the collision.

Seeing this, Han's expression turned even uglier as he could tell Shin was using him as a sharpening stone to test his new powers from those couple exchanges.

It was also at this moment when he realized that the might of a peak Godlike Player with a widely recognized title was not something to be trifled with.

Chapter 1627 Finding the Way

...

Han stared at Shin grimly, especially after realizing the huge gap between them. Not only their overall stats were too apart from one another, but their techniques, abilities, and mana were in two different dimensions.

Even if he had the help of the ancient soul of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow, Han knew that he was still far from being able to bridge the gap between the two of them.

"So, this is how powerful a top Godlike Player of the game is," he had not started to acknowledge that he was still far from being enough to match these apex gods of the virtual world.

Realizing this, he did not have a choice but to accept the reality, especially his incapability of matching a highly ranked Godlike Player of the game.

Throwing every else at the back of his head, Han gritted his teeth and took a pill from his inventory bag.

This pill was different from what the others usually took. It seemed to be a black pellet but possessed some golden engravings on its surface.

Given how small this pill was, it was very hard to notice this detail, but with the help of the True Sight ocular skill and his enhanced senses in his current state, Shin could see everything.

He was sure that this evil pill had a somewhat different effect compared to the ones that the other members of the opposing group had taken earlier.

Han did not care about Shin's thoughts as he decisively took the black pill after gritting his teeth. "I know that it is still at the testing pace, but I can't afford to die here since I am currently holding one of the inheritance maps that the organization has taken."

"If I lose this, then the consequences will be dire," he was thinking of how he would escape this situation, especially when he was currently facing an empowered version of Shin.

He did not expect that he would encounter such a predicament when they were exploring the plagued lands. After all, their information network had informed them that the members of the Empyrean Talons had mysteriously disappeared from the Divine Empire for some unknown reason.

Not even Harlequin, the Female Clown of the Blood Carnival, could not sense them despite having the help of her mysterious tracking skill. Even if she could feel that one of the members of the Empyrean Talons was still marked with her curse, she was unable to pinpoint their exact location due to the extreme distance.

This information was not hidden from the other organizations that had a feud with the Empyrean Talons as it was purposely leaked by the Blood Carnival itself.

Aside from this reason, Han was confident of himself as well. He did not believe that he would lose to anyone in the wilderness, especially when he was being accompanied by a couple of peak mavericks.

He also had the sword artifact that was bestowed upon him by the great leader of the Seven Seas Group, further boosting his confidence.

What he did not expect was the overwhelming gap between him and a true god of the game.

But he was still not in despair since he knew that there was still a chance for him to turn the tables around. With this black pill in his hand, he was confident that he could leave this place at the very least even if he could not defeat Shin.

All he needed to do was to make sure that he would not lose himself during the battle while finding a way to use the special escaping scroll in his hands.

It was a scroll that could let him randomly teleport within a hundred-mile radius so long as he was able to fully activate it. Then he could use his return scroll which would need a 10-second activation to return to the city.

The special escaping scroll would require him at least 2 to 3 seconds before it is activated, so he could not just use it in front of Shin, who was closely watching him.

Taking the black pill was ideal since it would not only take him a second to swallow it, but he would also gain a sudden boost in his powers once he did it. That was more than enough for him to protect himself if Shin suddenly attacked him in that timeframe.

Unlike when he would attempt to use the escaping scroll.

"Argh!"

Right after taking the black pill, Han's eyes instantly turned bloodshot as his aura suddenly changed. He felt like he was losing his mind and about to turn into a mindless demon.

This black pill contained a more potent energy compared to the ones that the others had taken. Its effects were also much faster and more violent compared to regular ones.

It could instantly influence his mind not only within the game but in the real world as well. His body in the real world was also affected by this pill, seemingly triggering something deep within his consciousness.

Right after 'its' awakening, dark thoughts immediately flooded his mind and tried to overwhelm him.

If not for his strong mind that was currently being supported by the ancient soul of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow, then he would most likely have lost his sanity.

The next instant, he turned to Shin, glaringly fiercely.

It was as if he wanted to slaughter Shin in the most brutal way possible. But Han forcefully suppressed these thoughts as he knew that it would become more dangerous, even for him, if he tried to let these thoughts control him.

Forget about dying in the game and get forcefully logged out by the system, he might even lose his sanity in the real world if these dark thoughts overwhelmed him for an extended period of time.

It was better to end this as soon as possible – or more specifically, escape from this place.

Swoosh!

Taking the initiative to attack, Han waved his broadsword and sent a massive sword energy toward Shin.

This sword energy was not only filled with his mana but also reinforced by the mental energy provided by the apparition of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow.

Seeing this, Shin could not help but slightly raise his brows. This technique was something that only a few individuals in the real world.

This unification of mana and mental energy was somewhat similar to what many had pursued in the real world – the Unification of Martial Arts and Mentalism.

From what Shin knew, there were only two to three individuals who could do this individually.

One of them was Doctor Frankenstein, the man who had done a lot of immoral experiments, while the other was the Great Demon Jan Mateo, who had let himself be consumed by the Seed of Hatred within him and embraced being a Demon.

As for the third person, Shin felt that Professor Henry could somewhat do similar things but not on the same scale as those two monsters. At the very least, the old professor could create certain techniques that combined the principles of the two disciplines such as Unified Strengthening and Secret Arts.

There were also the said couple that Professor Plum had mentioned before, the legendary couple – Heavenly Demon Adam and Celestial Pheonix Evangeline Rose. These two had found a way to perfectly combine the Martial Arts and Mentalism disciplines, but it required a combined effort from the two, unlike the previous ones.

Seeing this incoming attack, Shin seemed to have finally realized what those guys from the Seven Seas Group were thinking.

"Those guys must be using the lives of these players as a test subject for this experiment," he mumbled grimly after realizing what the other side was planning to do.

Then, with a wave of his sword, he sent a similarly strong sword wave that clashed against the incoming attack.

Boom!

As the opposing powers collided against one another, a massive explosion erupted. But unlike the previous collisions it contained a more profound power.

When he squinted his eyes, Shin could see that this mental energy from the Three-Eyed Demon Crow was very similar to what Mentalists in the real world.

But the difference was this mental energy was similar to the elemental powers within the game – somewhat similar to mana filling the air but carrying a different principle.

Shin had already realized this before, but he only went into details after seeing what the Three-Eyed Demon Crow had done.

As Shin thought about this, he took the initiative to attack. This time, he wanted to see how this ancient soul was using his mental energy so that he could copy it and take it for himself.

He might not copy the 'mental energy' itself as he already controlled multiple special elemental powers, which were supposed to follow a similar principle. But he could at least still get something from it, especially how to utilize them to their full potential.

Shin squinted his eyes as he suddenly got an idea. Now that he had already perfected his breathing technique, he wanted to find the right way to utilize his newly found powers and techniques to their strongest and highest point.

Chapter 1628 Finding the Way (Part 2)

...

"I see. So that is it," Shin mumbled to himself after exchanging more blows with Han.

During their exchanges, he realized what were the similarities and differences between the elemental powers that he controlled and the mental energy that the Three-Eyed Demon Crow was providing.

The Mental Energy of this ancient soul was pure energy released by the soul without any hint of mixture from any other source of powers while the Elemental Powers that he controlled were energies that were formed after the combination of the elemental mana in the atmosphere and the power of the soul.

As for the higher form of mana that he controlled such as the Eternal Flame, Natural Wood, Primordial Waters, Earthen Metal, and Metallic Earth, they were the purest and highest form of Elemental Powers that were created after the natural elements perfectly merged with the power of the soul.

Such pure elemental powers could only be found in Elemental Beings, particularly those at the level of Spirit Kings, Supreme Elementals, and Elemental Monarchs.

On the other hand, the Mental Energy that the Three-Eyed Demon Crow was releasing was pure energy released by the soul itself. It did not have any mix of other sources of energy. It was just pure energy produced by the soul similar to what the Mental Energy a Mentalist had in the real world.

On the other hand, the Elemental Powers that Shin had were more of a Spiritual Force, which was the combination of Mental Energy and Innate Attributes that an individual had.

They followed the same principle, but the difference was this Mental Energy being a little stronger and much purer than what a regular Mental Energy had.

In the meantime, the other higher forms of mana such as the Powers of the Brilliant Sun and the Abyssal Moon were some energies that were refined to perfectly match an individual. They were more of the Internal Energy that the Martial Artists trained in the real world, which then transformed into Natural Force.

Shin also realized the different advantages of these forms of mana, which followed different principles.

After exchanging a couple more blows against Han, Shin was finally able to pinpoint the exact differences between these energies.

Boom!

Separating from one another, Shin stared at Han and the apparition of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow behind the latter, observing the other party closely.

After seeing that Han was about to lose his mind completely, Shin sighed and said. "I guess this is as far as we can go."

Even if he did not get what he wanted to know, he at least had gotten quite a lot from this encounter with this genius from the Seven Seas Group.

He had gotten quite an idea of what these guys were planning and what their experiments were meant for both inside the game and the real world.

He had also benefited from his encounter with the Three-Eyed Demon Crow, particularly the completion of his five-elemental breathing cycle and understanding of the energies within the game.

There was also the hint that he had gotten about the bloodlines of the Transcendent Beings, which was similar to the clues that Arthur had gotten from that mysterious Sigurd Dragonborn of the Dragon Slayer Family – about how the Transcendent Beings would advance in the future.

Reorganizing his thoughts, Shin stared at Han, who was currently charging straight at him with bloodshot eyes.

He sighed before releasing the 'Judgement Form' of the sword on his left hand and turned it back to its original sheath form before putting the [Yamato] back into it.

He then took his signature sword-drawing stance as he changed his breathing according to the 'Solar Breathing Technique', making him breathe out hot steam from his mouth.

He watched Han reach his ideal range before suddenly disappearing from his current position and transforming into a blazing streak of light.

This technique was something had created after being enlightened during this battle. It was a technique that was formed with the combination of the 'Jade Kirin Scripture' and any of the five elemental breathings in addition to the sword principles that he had learned from the real world, particularly about the concept of a swift and sharp sword.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw – (Blazing) Phoenix's Path'

Shing!

As Shin unsheathed the sword during his flight, a trail of gorgeous followed the path of his sword, which then turned into a huge image of a blazing bird that enveloped him.

Swoosh!

His figure then disappeared as if he merged with the blazing bird, which then devoured Han, who was being protected by the ancient soul projection of the Three-Eyed Demon Crow.

Shriek!

The two birds clashed against one another, producing a blinding light that illuminated the entire battle.

The clash between the pure mental energy and the gorgeous flames created a storm of energy that even burned the plague filling the environment.

This collision of powers then formed a blazing sphere, which expanded in every direction, further burning the environment and somewhat purifying the land as well.

The trio of Exheart, Bryan, and HellBan even ran away from the explosion, defeating their respective opponents.

They then turned at the blazing storm after reaching a safe distance while suppressing the twitching of their face.

"Such power! So, this is a glimpse of his true powers?" mumbled Exheart as he stared intently at the blazing sphere made by the explosion.

Not long after, the figures of Shin and Han were revealed at the center of the receding storm with their backs facing one another.

They stayed still for a couple of moments before Shin straightened his back and sheathed his sword.

Click!

When the [Yamato] fully returned to its sheath, Han, who was standing in the distance, was suddenly set ablaze and turned into ashes.

In the end, Han had never found the opportunity to escape and was forced to fight until the end. He had used everything he had yet still lost miserably without Shin showcasing his full capabilities.

He then left a tattered beast skin, which seemed to contain a map of an unknown place, after dying.

Shin slowly walked over picked up the beast's skin and checked what was drawn in it. He slightly frowned his brows when he saw the contents, particularly after realizing that it was some important map.

What confused him was he could not see much of the details of this thing even though he was using the True Sight ocular skill to identify it.

"What is this thing," he mumbled after failing to identify the item multiple times. Aside from having a rough idea that it was a map for something special, he had no idea where exactly it was pointing.

He thought for a moment before putting it inside his inventory bag, saving it for later. Since it was guaranteed to drop, he was sure that it was something of utmost importance, especially after sensing an ancient feeling coming from the map.

After that, he raised his head and scanned the surroundings. He then raised his brows after seeing that the land, on which the final exchange occurred, had been 'purified' by the blazing storm.

The range was somewhat larger, which gave Shin a rough idea of how strong the final clash was. Even if it was not as huge as the strongest collisions from his previous huge battles, it was still large enough to be considered devastating.

After slightly nodding his head, he turned to the Exheart, Bryan, and HellBan, who were already clearing the battlefield and looting all the drops that the opposing group had left behind.

Those people were still elites and experts in the game, especially as part of such a huge organization. This could only mean that their equipment shouldn't be that bad and worth a fortune, particularly the three peak Maverick Rankers they fought earlier.

After making sure that they did not miss anything, the trio walked toward Shin to discuss how they would divide the spoils of war.

Seeing them walk over, Shin understood what they wanted to discuss and said. "You can keep those things."

Even if those pieces of equipment could cost a fortune, they were nothing in front of Shin, who could be considered one of the wealthiest individuals in the game.

Forget about his city and dukedom, even the equipment that he was wearing was more than enough the combined prices of these three had collected. This even excluded the special items in his possession such as the [Yamato], an inheritance weapon of the Nephilim Race; the [Death's Shadow], a cloak that transformed into a sacred relic; and the [Proof of Eclipse], which was a dissonant wish.

There were also others, which were of equal value such as the fragment of [Balmung], which a legendary sword, was also one of them.

In his eyes, the items and equipment that the trio had collected were nothing but a bunch of junk.

He then turned toward the depths of the Plagued Lands before saying. "Let's continue. I feel like those people watching us will give us more surprises than this group."

Chapter 1629 The Perpetrators

...

In the depths of the Plagued Lands, there was a group of players gathered inside a tomb. Their current appearance was neither of any races available to the public.

They looked like an undead, but not at the same time.

Some of them looked like a sick person and were on the verge of dying, while the others seemed to have been infected by a contiguous disease, making them look weak and would collapse at any time.

But despite all of these, they looked quite intimidating and powerful, which was quite the opposite of their outer appearances.

These players were the ones who had discovered this ancient tomb and disturbed the rest of the fallen king. Due to what they had done, they had been cursed with the plague and tasked to spread it and accumulate enough life force to resurrect the fallen king.

This was a special quest or sort, which they had always wanted. But the ending was still not something that they had expected.

The first time they had discovered the tomb, they were quite excited about it, thinking that they had found a treasure trove. But who would have thought that instead of discovering any treasures, they would become like this?

"Our progress has been halted due to the involvement of the Righteous Churches. We can no longer expand as they have already set up the purifying outposts to block our advance," said one of these players, who seemed to be a zombified person.

He had a decaying mouth, which looked quite hideous, especially when with those teeth that were being revealed due to his missing cheeks. One of his eyes was also almost popping out due to the lack of muscles and flesh surrounding it.

There was a constant flow of black miasma coming out from different parts of his body, particularly from the gaps left by the decaying wounds all around him.

There was a sheathed katana on his waist, which signified his previous class before he 'died'.

"What can we do? It is to be expected, especially when we are somewhat close to the Divinity City. That is why I suggested earlier that we expand toward the opposite direction, towards the smaller city, since it is the much safer choice," this time, it was a woman with a pale face.

She was sighing as her companions were not listening to her. Even if they had become somewhat stronger than their previous selves due to the class and racial conversion of the plague that swallowed them, she still knew that they were far from threatening such a massive Imperial City, especially when it was the capital of the Divine Empire.

She was quite a beauty before she got 'sick'. Her face was like a fairy due to her smooth skin, particularly her emerald-like eyes that were as clear as water.

Even if her face had lost its color due to the lack of blood, she was still quite gorgeous, especially with the current set of clothes that she was wearing. It was a dress that seemed to have been made from the finest fabrics and reinforced by some ancient magic used during the old era.

She was also holding a long scepter that had a butterfly-like head, spreading its beautiful and majestic wings. The black gem attached to its tip was constantly releasing a black miasma, corroding the surrounding mana before it absorbed them.

"But we have the time for that," said another member of the group, who looked like a ghost due to the black miasma that was covering his entire body.

This person looked like a spirit because his silhouette was the only thing that could be seen. Aside from the outline of his body, nothing could be seen from him, not even his clothes and weapons.

The thick miasma shrouding his body was also helping him hide his presence by connecting with the surrounding air that had been contaminated by it, melding him into the environment.

"As we already know, we don't have that much time before the king devours us and turns us into nutrients, which will result in an existence wipe. It is no different from a character deletion."

"He has already controlled our fates right after we have disturbed his rest and come in contact with the plague."

"We are already quite lucky that we have been given a chance to live a little bit longer. We also have the opportunity to redeem ourselves by collecting more nutrients for the king by turning more lands into his territory."

He then paused for a moment before sighing. "But we also have a limited amount of time before we can regain our freedom."

"If we choose to spread toward the smaller cities, which are quite far from there, we will die before we can even reach our destination."

"Even if the nutrients that we can collect from the surrounding monsters are quite good, they still can't compare with the ones that we can get from a human and other races."

"It will take us quite a lot of time before we reach the other cities, which have the nutrients that we are looking for, and it will already be too late for us if we can't meet our quota in this process."

"We don't have a choice but to take the risk and try to invade the territory of the Divinity City and hope that they will not send any powerful being to eradicate us until we collect enough nutrients."

There was also a huge person standing not far from this ghost-like person. He had a muscular body, which seemed to have been made of different corpses and stitched together.

He was more of a corpse golem rather than a person. His head had also been hidden by a black sack, which only had a pair of holes for his eyes to see.

This black sack covering his head was similar to those of punishers or executioners during ancient times. But despite its plain appearance, this item seemed to carry a mysterious and eerie power that could enhance the strength of its wearer.

His appearance was very hideous and intimidating at the same time, especially with his huge size which looked like a giant person.

There was also a huge weapon leaning on the wall beside him, which looked like a combination of a huge hammer and a battle axe.

The sharp edges of the axe were somewhat serrated like a huge saw while the hammer side behind it had angular and pointed spikes on its head.

"No one wants to be like our other companions, who have already been devoured by the slumbering king earlier," said this giant person as he sighed.

He could not help but shiver whenever he recalled the hideous scene where the other members of their adventurer team had been pulled and shredded into pieces by the black fog that was filling the tomb room of the king.

"Berdugo is right. We are already lucky to be chosen by the king and avoid the same fate as the others. If we want to survive and escape such an ending further, then we can only follow the orders of the king and be 'faithful' to him," said another person, who seemed to have the most authority within the group.

He was the previous leader of the team, who was now the 'trusted aide' of the king.

Even though he was pained to lose his brothers and sisters, who had been fighting with them since the start of their journey from the previous games that they played, he could not do anything since they lacked the power to resist.

Aside from the fairy-like lady, his appearance was the most 'normal' out of everyone in the room, as he was more of a 'human' than the rest.

Compared to the others, he was wearing quite luxurious clothing, which seemed to be used by the ancient kings. The red robe, particularly, was so majestic that it made him like a true ruler of ancient times.

The golden embroidery that the robe also had a majestic feeling that was making him more of a noble rather than an ordinary person.

It was also filled with invisible magic runes that were used by ancient magicians, who were loyal to the king.

This king's robe was without a doubt a powerful artifact, especially when it was constantly releasing a mighty aura that could force those before him to kneel.

But despite all of these, Axion, the leader of the team, was not happy. It was because this robe was a cursed item that had been forced onto him by the spirit guarding the tomb of the king.

It was meant to be given to the perfect vessel that the king could use when he finally descended back to this world and became fully resurrected.

Axion knew that he was nothing but a sacrificial pawn that was meant to be the main ingredient for the resurrection of the fallen king.

Even if he was unwilling, he could not do anything about it since his 'soul' would instantly be devoured by the robe once he had any unfaithful thoughts against the king.

He had already been cursed and destined to die in this game, but there was still a sliver of hope that he was desperately clinging on.

So long as the king had successfully resurrected, his chances of survival would increase, which was quite ironic compared to the current situation.

The personal quest he had received told him that he could still survive this predicament after the king's revival.

His 'soul' would then get a new vessel, which would be specifically tailored just for him.

If he was lucky enough to survive, then he would most likely become more powerful than his current self and even surpass most of the experts here in the Awakened Continent.

"I just hope that we will survive until the very end of the event," he mumbled with a hopeful tone.

Chapter 1630 Who were the True Fishermen?

...

The day of the start of the Plagued Lands came a little too suddenly as the players, who were trying to scout the location of the event were still in the middle of their tasks when the system suddenly announced that the event was already starting.

It was somewhat confusing since it was said that the army of the Righteous Churches was supposed to lead the players and solidify the defenses of the outposts that had been set up ahead of time.

The regional announcement came a little too sudden, making those who were still in the middle of preparations unable to react in time. Both the independent individuals and those from the elite groups and top guilds were somewhat late due to the sudden announcement.

As for the players who were still scouting the area, they had gotten a little off guard due to the sudden increase of the Plagued Monsters within the region, which made it hard for them to continue advancing.

Some even failed to come back in time and were forced to use their precious return scrolls in the middle of the Plagued Lands since their protective talismans were starting to lose their effects.

They had been trapped within the Plagued Lands as the Plagued Monsters started to spawn one after another.

If they did not escape as soon as possible, then they would most likely die and turn into a plagued monster themselves.

As for those, who had been training in the region and treating the place as a regular hunting ground, such a change was more than welcome.

They were somewhat disappointed that their efficiency when hunting was a little lackluster due to the limited number of Plagued Monsters. But since the event had already been started fully, these experts started getting more active and hunted as many Plagued Monsters as possible.

After all, the system had just announced that for every Plagued Monster they killed, a corresponding event point would be rewarded depending on the rank and powers of those that they had hunted.

They saved their thoughts about the event shops set up in the safety post right at the border of the Plagued and waited until they had accumulated enough points before exchanging for something that would catch their eyes.

Unlike those who were struggling to survive in this region, these experts started showcasing their hunger and slaughtered all the Plagued Monsters they encountered.

Even though most of the Plagued Monsters they met along the way were only at common rank, the numbers were still quite overwhelming, making it quite challenging.

There were also those elite ones, which were more troublesome to deal with, so they either tried to avoid fighting those in a frontal confrontation or ran away depending on the situation.

Only those who were the most skilled and powerful compared to the others could contend against these Elite Plagued Monsters on an equal footing. But even they would have to avoid meeting anything stronger than these monsters.

Right after the regional announcement was released, things at Divinity City became a little busier, especially due to the movements of the top guilds and larger organizations.

Not only there was a direct competition, but there were also hidden plots lying around in the dark as they were backstabbing each other to gain as much advantage as they could over their rivals.

They were all doing their best to hinder the progress of their competitors while also making sure to earn as many event points as they could.

They wanted to monopolize the top 100 spots on the ranking board that would be displayed after a certain period during the event.

The prestige that they would be getting just by showcasing the names of their guild members in the leaderboard was not small. After all, this was the Awakened Continent, which was still hard to reach for most of the player base of the game.

...

As this news spread, most of the players who were paying attention to any kind of news about the Awakened Continent immediately saw the details of the event once someone posted it online.

The different online platforms were also spreading the news further, making it as sensational as the war between the two major factions at the Dark Cloud Kingdom.

The news about the two biggest events within the game spread like wildfire in the forest. The players went crazy after seeing the familiar and famous names appearing one after another, particularly those with a lot of prestige and influence within the virtual world.

Even though there were not many names that appeared from the Awakened Continent, every one of them would cause a ripple in different online platforms, especially when this could be a prelude or a teaser for the upcoming elimination rounds of the ongoing United Cup.

The names that appeared in both in-game events were also those who were the favorites to win the United Cup.

Some of these top players were also clashing against one another, making the people go crazier whenever they saw the battle clips from both sides.

The competition was so intense that these big names started to appear more frequently than expected.

Multiple sides also clashed, particularly those teams from the top guilds and large organizations within the game.

What excited the players more were the battles between famous Godlike Players and Maverick Gods.

The battle clips that were released by the Empyrean Talons on their page were already one of the most trending topics right now, but these collisions between the titans of the game were another thing altogether, especially when most of them were old-time rivals.

The most recent and hottest topic right now was about the clash between Hydra Guild and Dragon Pavilion, these archrivals, at the Plagued Lands.

The battle between the two sides caused a huge commotion. Not even the surrounding guilds who were planning to create some trouble and fish some benefits from troubled waters were unable to do anything.

They could not step in even until the battle continued for quite a while as the members of these two Powerhouse Guilds showcased their powers, making the onlookers greatly discouraged.

Following their lead, more and more collisions between the hegemonic groups started to appear one after another – just like the Titan Guild and Blood Carnival, Purple Crows and Death Knell, and Assassin Union and Black Skulls.

Such old rivalries between guilds, adventurer teams, mercenary groups, and different organizations were awakened once again as the competition in the Plagued Lands grew more intense.

That was when the situation within the Plagued Lands became more complicated.

But the ones who were benefiting the most from these situations were the so-called 'professionals' when it came to taking advantage of people, particularly during 'war' – the merchants.

While everyone was busy competing for supremacy over the Plagued Lands, the people of the Hand of Midas were doing their things.

Some of the chiefs that Shiella had brought to the Awakened Continent focused more on improving the level of their respective professions.

Moreover, they continuously produced the guild's signature products, which the firm sold to these big guilds through different channels.

As a merchant guild, they focused more on 'supplying' these guilds with their products rather than competing with them.

But the thing that they had hidden from the rest of the guilds and organizations that were keeping an eye on them was the fact that they had already started exploring most of the places that the players could access in the Divine Empire.

Shiella had already issued a command to her people to scatter in different parts of the Divine Empire and even invested quite a lot of gold just to send them to different NPC Cities using the teleportation hall of the Divinity City.

Fortunately, Shin and the others had quite a reputation within the city, giving them some special privileges.

Since Shin regularly gave Shiella a lot of work to do whenever she was 'free', she took advantage of their privileges and even used them to the fullest.

At this very moment, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Hand of Midas was the one with the most access to different channels of the empire.

Even if they were barely able to hang on due to their pockets constantly bleeding, Shiella persisted, as they were also gaining access to unique resources from different cities.

At the same time, the current event that most of the top powers within the Divinity City was a great opportunity for them to earn more fortune.

These guilds and organizations had no choice but to buy their products since they were the only ones who could provide everyone with such high quality yet 'affordable' equipment and special items in this place.

They could also choose the things that the shops in Divinity City sold. However, the cost was something that they could not afford with their current financial powers and resources.

In the end, while everyone was busy competing with one another, the Hand of Midas was the one who earned and benefited the most.

The top guilds were fully aware of this, but they could not do anything about it since it would risk them their only source of 'affordable' supplies.

All they could do was curse secretly while Shiella and her guild enjoyed the constant flow of money.