

Destiny 1681

Chapter 1681: Team Competition (Part 1)

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While the audience was waiting for the next round, which was also the Team Battle, they could not help but start discussing with one another.

Some chatted with their friends, who were watching alongside them, while the others were casually talking to the strangers beside them who happened to have the same passion when it came to professional battles.

The live chat displayed along with the live broadcast, on the other hand, was flooded with a variety of comments regarding the previous battles and predictions for the upcoming round.

David and Miss Bunny also took this opportunity to relax and rest a little as they had been commentating the earlier battles quite well. Moreover, they also had to prepare for the upcoming battle as they knew that this one was going to be even more intense and exciting.

While everyone was thinking about the details of the upcoming battle, David was distracted by something else. "I wonder what kind of evil plan that junior brother of mine is cooking this time."

"Let's just hope that it will not cause too much trouble and attract those people from the real world as I will have to clean up the mess once again if Master learns about it."

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It did not take that long for the resting time to end. The arena started to change, showing everyone which stage the Seven Seas Alliance had chosen.

The moment the arena changed, the live audience and online viewers could not help but raise their brows, especially when they saw the whole world within that arena was submerged in deep waters.

Seagrasses and corals also started to appear one after another alongside some rock formations that could be found underneath the deep sea.

There were also some wild sea creatures that the players could regularly see in regular times. Most of these creatures were tamed such as the fishes while some were crabs, shrimps, and lobsters.

Seeing these creatures, everyone felt a little hungry. This match had already been going quite a while now, and it was quite intense to some extent, so it was natural for them to feel like recharging their energy.

A seafood cuisine would be perfect after seeing the scene in the battle arena.

At the same time, the people realized that the setting of the Seven Seas Alliance for this final round of the match was an underwater battle.

"Now this is interesting!"

"No one has ever seen the combatants of the Seven Seas Alliance use this underwater strategy in the previous rounds, so everyone almost forgot that it is their specialty."

"I think this is going to be a little entertaining at the very least. After all, even if the Emyrean Talons had top-notch Godlike Players on their side, an underwater battle is still quite tricky to deal with."

"Even War God Simba is quite powerful in combat, such a stage is still quite hard for him. After all, his specialty is fighting on the land and a 1-against-an-army-type of battle. The same can be said of Battle God Sickarius and that mysterious Shadow Dancer Diablo."

"Even if they have the Gentle Goddess' assistance on their side, fighting the Seven Seas Alliance on such a stage will be very tricky for them."

"You can't be sure about that either. From what I have heard, Simba, that battle maniac, is proficient in fighting at any kind of stage. It is just not many have seen him fight aside from the land, which is why not many people are aware of his true battle prowess. Do you think that his title as the War God is just for show?"

"He became a War God because he is capable of soloing an entire army by himself. From what I have heard, Ares of the Titan Guild is his main contender for that title until Simba has won the duel in the end."

"Nah~! I heard that the Ogong of the Bestial Union is his main rival."

"Tsk! Tsk! Tsk! What are you guys talking about? It must be the Gentle Goddess! She is the main factor that will decide the outcome of this battle!"

"That is right! As the greatest healer of the game, any team that she works with will without a doubt win."

"With the help of our Goddess' help, everything is possible!"

Since the Emphyrean Talons was the seeded team between the two groups, they obviously had more supporters. Moreover, their odds of winning this round were way higher, especially after the results of the previous battles.

The morale and momentum were completely on their side, so their overall advantages were way higher compared to their opponents.

Aside from that, their lineup was filled with star players, so the number of fans that supported them was obviously higher.

Instead of quarreling about the result of this supposedly featured matchup, these supporters and diehard fans were arguing about who would be the MVP for the Team Competition.

As for which team they were talking about? It was without a doubt the Empyrean Talons, who would surely send their most stunning lineup to end this match with an explosive performance.

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In the meantime, David and Miss Bunny were discussing the upcoming match more objectively. They might be confident about the strength of the Empyrean Talons, but they were not confident enough to ignore the capabilities of the Seven Seas Alliance.

"It is not that hard to guess the next lineup of both sides given the earlier arrangements of the two teams," started David as he analyzed the possible lineup of each side. "Now that we have the stage, I am sure that the Seven Seas Alliance will send their members that have an advantage when it comes to underwater combat such as those with oceanic races."

"As for the Empyrean Talons, we don't have to guess that much about them. After all, their lineup had a very obvious composition. It is just a pity that we will not be able to see their strongest lineup here yet because the Dragon God Siegfried seemed to be not present at the moment while Alucard has already participated in the previous battle."

Miss Bunny nodded her head, agreeing to his initial analysis. "Based on the data that is currently available to everyone, the Seven Seas Alliance seem to have quite a few players with oceanic races such as the regular Ocean Naga and the corresponding classes that come alongside it, the Ocean Mages and Aqua Warriors."

She paused for a moment as she thought of something before continuing. "I seem to remember that they also discovered some new races and classes from the Kingdom that they settled in."

"What they called again?" she thought, trying to recall the names of the rare race and class.

"I seem to remember that the race is called-... Tide Crawler while the class seemed to be called Sea Guardian and Ocean Watcher," answered David as he tried to recall what was mentioned by his information network.

"That's right! It also becomes an exclusive class of the guilds under the Seven Seas Group," commented Miss Bunny before suddenly adding. "Ah! I also seem to remember that there is also a new class trend in the Saint Heaven Kingdom."

"Or more specifically, the Gold Mountain-... or should I say-... the Calderock Port, which is now gaining quite a lot of popularity due to some access from certain professions that are quite exclusive to the place."

"It is also perfect for the place that it had, which is right beside the sea. In a sense, it is similar to what the Seven Seas Group has," she was saying that, but she was actually promoting the territory of the Empyrean Talons and the Hand of Midas.

Given her background, she would never miss a chance to promote something when the opportunity presented itself.

The two continued to discuss this topic for a few moments before returning to discuss the upcoming battle.

"How about we start discussing the possible representatives of each side?" asked David, trying to lighten up the mood.

"That sounds interesting," nodded Miss Bunny.

"Since everyone is already very familiar with the top combatants of the Empyrean Talons, let's focus on the members of the Seven Seas Alliance," started David before continuing.

"The first is a quite well-known warrior, Jorick, the Sea Beast. He is a very famous Maverick God who liked to play solo before. But just like the others, he somehow joins the Seven Seas Alliance without notice."

"Next is Stella, the Wave Manipulator. She is neither a Maverick God nor a Godlike Player, but she is known to be able to defeat players of such caliber with ease. She is quite known to the virtual gaming industry, but she already has quite an impact that attracts everyone."

"Then there is the 'Swordman of the Bloody Sea' – Helisung. Another Maverick God with a solid background and reputation within the virtual world."

"Aliya, the Tide Goddess. She is known to be the number one Water Mage from the previous games that she has played. She even snatched quite a few titles from the regular and official tournaments hosted by different huge event organizers."

"There is also Naomi, the Healing Hand. She may not be as famous as those famed healers of different games, but she is also considered one of best support and auxiliary-type of player."

"And last but not the least, Florence, the Warrior Goddess. The sole top-ranking Godlike Player within their team. She is ranked seventh in the official Godly Ranking List that the Mystery Pavilion had released."

Chapter 1682: Team Competition (Part 2)

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Ding

System: Final Round of the match between the Empyrean Talons and Seven Seas Alliance – Team Competition!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

"Whoa! It is finally starting!"

"Get started already! We have been waiting for quite a while now!"

"The score is 5 points to none! Let's see if those guys from the Seven Seas Alliance can make a comeback in their home ground or if they will be swept 10 points to 0!"

"This will be the first clean sweep in the Knockout Rounds of the Tournament if it happens!"

The spectators were already waiting quite impatiently for the match to start. Even if David and Miss Bunny had already done their best to entertain everyone for quite a while, it was still far from being enough to fill their hunger for a more intense battle.

Not long after, the first five combatants of both sides were sent on the field while their respective sixth man was currently on standby at the summoning area, where the teams needed to activate if they wanted to swap their players.

The summoning area was also the same place where the sixth man would automatically appear once one of the team members of either side was eliminated.

The appearance of the representatives of the Seven Seas Alliance did not cause too much commotion from the live audience and online viewers. Aside from the Warrior Goddess, who would be acting as the captain and the main tank of the team, the rest of the members were treated as air.

After all, she was still a highly ranked Godlike Player, so it was very normal for her to have a decent fanbase. Moreover, her beautiful appearance and deadly figure were a huge plus in the eyes of her fans, who were mostly men. Having such a huge number of supporters was nothing special.

But it was a different case for the members of the Emyrean Talons. Most of their top combatants were practically a celebrity within the virtual world, so it would be surprising if their fanbase was inferior to the opposing side.

At the same time, the Empyrean Talons were mostly the center of attention these last couple of months due to their achievements. Most of the huge events that recently happened in the game also had their involvement, especially Shin – mostly known as the Battle God Sickarius right now.

It was impossible to ignore their existence, especially when they now had their own webpage meant to entertain their fans.

Adding the video clips that Miss Bunny had created and posted in their portal and her personal accounts from different online platforms, the brand of the Empyrean Talons was pretty much a huge trend right now.

The marketing value of the team could be said one of the highest among the masses at the moment, at least within the virtual world.

This was the reason why everyone immediately went crazy the moment when the representative of the Empyrean Talons appeared on the stage.

"Whoa!"

"Whooo!"

"This is it!"

"Whistle~!"

Especially so when these crazy people saw their goddesses standing side-by-side on the battlefield, which was the Gentle Goddess and the Elemental Goddess respectively.

Of course, some brutes worshiped nothing but strength, so they were supporting either the Battle God or the War God.

There were also a couple of people who liked mysteriousness, which happened to perfectly fit Diablo's temperament. He had this aura of mysterious expertise, which was usually hidden due to the nature of his class and race.

But the same he, these people were only admiring their idol in silence, unlike these brutes and fanatics for the gods and goddesses on the stage.

...

Naturally, the combatants in the battle arena had no idea of what was happening outside, but they could somewhat guess it based on their experience, particularly the regular contenders of the professional scene.

Shin and the others floated in the water for a couple of moments before they controlled their bodies and slowly 'landed' at the bottommost part of the sea.

"Our guesses are right. Those guys indeed chose an underwater stage for their home-ground advantage," Shin could not help but grin behind his mask as he saw the current stage.

"Fortunately, we have been training in the Forgotten Sea for quite a while before the Knockout Rounds start. This is going to be much easier than expected," nodded Leonard as he scanned the surroundings before suddenly adding. "But it is much larger than what we have expected."

"That is not a problem. No matter how huge this place is, those guys will not dare to spread out and keep themselves in a group to avoid any accidents," said Shin before turning to the others.

"I will now make my move-... just make sure to catch to me later once I have found them," he added before waving his hand, which was holding the sheathed [Yamato].

He then used the Boundless Ocean Technique, making him feel that familiar sensation when he was inside the trial ground of his previous mission.

"It is feeling a little uncomfortable since I have become a little 'weaker' compared to that time. My body structure is also a little different since I am not from the World Serpent Race in this 'timeline'," commented Shin as he adjusted his body posture, getting ready to swim forward. "But it shouldn't be that much of an issue since I am more familiar with this body."

Swoosh!

Not long after, he seemed to have melded with the water itself as he used one of his stealth skills. There were no signs of him as he utilized the combination of the skill and his breathing technique to their

perfect state, mimicking one of the signature stealth abilities of the World Serpent Race that he had met during the Trial of Primordial Waters.

Seeing Shin swam away, Cloe then turned to the others as she instructed. "Make sure to keep an eye on your oxygen level and always take the underwater breathing pill that we have brought."

"One of their advantages over us in this stage is their ability to freely breathe underwater. Fortunately, we have come prepared, so this is not much of an issue for us," she added before turning to Alice.

There was a slight hesitation in her due to what happened earlier with Shin's naughty little Elemental Spirits.

But she kept it suppressed and maintained her professionalism as she continued. "We will be relying on your Elemental Spirit with this one."

Alice also felt a similar awkward feeling. But as an idol in the real world despite her young age, she was also able to adjust her mood and set aside her feelings. "No problem."

After that, she waved her magic staff as she called out the Elemental Spirit and immediately entered the Elemental Spirit Possession State.

Swoosh!

The moment when Suijin fused with Alice's magic, the latter's senses underwater became much stronger, and their range was quite huge as well.

Alice could feel the surroundings more clearly. She could 'see' everything within the radius of her senses. Nothing could escape her senses within this domain, making her the absolute ruler of the place.

Even the follow of the seawater itself seemed to obey her commands, much less the tiny and harmless creatures of the sea.

She immersed herself in this state for quite a while, trying to adjust and familiarize herself with it, before turning to the others. "The effects are much more effective compared to before."

"I guess it is because of the higher density of mana compared to the Forgotten Sea. But this Mana was also quite tamed compared to those places that we have visited in the Awakened Continent," she added as she gave more information to the others.

"It must be the effects of the lifted restriction of the system. After all, this is a competition stage not the 'real' virtual world within the game," commented Leonard.

On the other hand, Diablo was moving around while trying to familiarize himself with the surroundings. He then nodded his head after finding that he would not have any problem executing the plan later.

He also tried to use some of his stealth skills, testing if he could be discovered when moving underwater.

After all, the ripples that he made, no matter how small they were, could still be a huge clue for their opponents. Especially when those guys had the advantage when it came to racial traits and habitat.

Shin had already laid the plan for them and he also wanted to execute his task perfectly so that he would not be disappointed with his performance later. After all, his mark was not easy to fish, especially in their home ground.

"How is it?" asked Cloe as she noticed his actions.

"Not bad," asked Diablo first before shaking his head. "But I am still not sure how far can I keep myself hidden from our opponent in such a place. After all, I have yet to fully master that trick that the Vice Commander has taught me."

"It is fine," Alice chimed in. "I can help you hide your tracks later anyway. With me controlling the current, I can just guide you toward your target without them noticing your approach."

The group discussed and polished their plans while they were advancing toward a random location, keeping their formation.

Ding

Not long after, they had finally received the signal from Shin, making them swam toward the coordinates that he had sent to them.

Chapter 1683: Team Competition (Part 3)

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On the side of the Seven Seas Alliance, the first five to appear on the stage were Jorick, Helisung, Aliya, Naomi, and Florence, which had a somewhat standard team composition.

Stella, the Wave Manipulator, was sent to the waiting space. She was the one chosen to be the sixth man on the team.

Given the current strategy that they had, it was quite reasonable to send her on the field early to run a dual mages composition. After all, these two were quite a strong mage, especially when both of them were water mages, which were said to be unrivaled within the sea.

But Florence, the Warrior Goddess, who was also the current captain of the team, seemed to be planning to run the standard composition for this battle.

After all, their current lineup was still quite powerful to some extent. It was just they became less appealing when compared to the superstars of the Empyrean Talons.

Aside from that, Florence was also a strong Godlike Player, especially when she was ranked pretty high in the Godly Ranking List. She was quite familiar with her fellow competitors on the big stage, so she was quite used to fighting a team with such odds.

She glanced at her current teammates and started. "I don't what kind of contract you have with the organization, but I guess we still have the same goal in the end."

"I do hope that you will comply with my orders and don't focus on your solo performance to save yourselves."

"You guys should know better than anyone that you will only make yourselves into a laughingstock if you insist on fighting those guys by yourselves. The monsters on their side are not someone anyone can underestimate."

She was very clear about this fact as she could be considered as one of those kinds of players. Her ranking was not just for show.

But her alone was far from being enough to match the other side. At the very least, she could only rely on her current team, which had decent strength, so somewhat held their ground and did not lose too much face when the confrontation started.

"If not for that inheritance item that the Seven Seas Group has, which is also related to my later class advancement, then I will not form a contract with them," she mumbled to herself as she felt somewhat disgusted working with the said corporation.

The shady dealings that the Seven Seas Group were quite well known within the inner circle of the team, but she ignored most of it as she did not want to be associated with them later. All she had to do was to finish the commissioned task that they had given her before leaving later.

This formation of the team to compete on the professional stage was nothing but a mere front to hide their true plans.

The rest of the group were also clear about their respective situations, so they did not voice out that much of a complaint.

They had been working with each other for quite a long time as well, so they were very familiar with one another. They understood their teammates quite well, especially their temperament, so they could be considered as a good team to a certain extent.

The team had been made way longer than the Empyrean Talons, so they refused to believe that they would lose in terms of teamwork and synergy, especially when they were currently in their home ground.

If they still lost miserably like the others from the previous rounds, then they could only blame themselves for being too weak.

While they were discussing and polishing their battle plans, Aliya, the Tide Goddess, sensed some huge movements from the water currents.

She then turned toward the direction where the disturbance was coming from and focused her gaze. Not long after, she quickly saw three silhouettes rapidly swimming toward them.

She did not take that long to realize that the trio were their current opponents. The team was only composed of Gentle Goddess Arielle, Elemental Goddess Charlotte, and War God Simba.

"They are coming!" she quickly warned the others while also casting a series of detection spells to cover their entire surroundings, looking for the traces of the other two opponents, who were currently missing.

She refused to believe that those two, which could be considered the deadliest among their opposition, would be missing out in such a situation. This was also the perfect opportunity to launch an ambush, especially when their attention was attracted to the incoming trio.

But to her surprise, she was unable to detect even the slightest disturbance from the water current of their surroundings, which could lead her to Shin and Diablo's whereabouts.

Aside from the small movements of the little fishes and other sea creatures, she was unable to find any sign that could point to those two.

"Are they not launching an ambush? Am I thinking about it a little too much?" she thought to herself while heightening her detection skills even more.

She refused to believe that those two would not make their move given such a perfect opportunity. She believed that they might be trying to let her guard down before launching a surprise attack.

On the other hand, her teammates quite responded to her warning and went into formation.

Florence, as the main tank, swiftly positioned herself at the forefront of the group, facing the direction where their opponents were coming from.

Jorick was right behind her, acting as the second line of defense, while Helisung was guarding the rear to protect Aliya and Naomi, who were their mage and healer respectively.

Naomi quickly commanded the elemental powers that she was controlling and cast a series of buffs to everyone while also preparing some protection spells on herself.

Their team had very limited information about Diablo, which further proved how deadly he was.

There were said to be two types of assassins, which could be considered the scariest among all.

One of them was those who never cared about anything and let their names shake in the entire world. They were the type who would purposely leave their traces behind to let everyone know about them.

The other type was those 'unknown' assassins, which had never been heard before. It was not because they were weak, but because they had never left anyone alive whenever they did the job. They never left any evidence or witness that could point to their existence.

One of them was a wraith, which haunted everyone with its existence, while the other was a specter, which acted discreetly and never let their presence known.

From what they had observed from Diablo, he seemed to be leaning more toward the latter type of assassin, which made it more troublesome for his targets.

Moreover, his shadow was further hidden by the bright light surrounding him.

With bright stars like the monsters in their group, Diablo's existence was somewhat overshadowed, making him even deadlier for their enemies.

Florence was also aware of this fact as she had already met quite a few experts of such caliber. As someone with a knight class, she had a little advantage over such an opponent despite the difference in terms of speed.

A tanky target such as herself was somewhat a bane of thief-related class as bursting such a 'meaty' opponent was quite challenging even for the top-notch assassins.

She more than welcomed such an opponent on most occasions. But for some unknown reason, she seemed to be getting an unsettling feeling about this situation.

She could not exactly put her finger on it, but she felt that she was being targeted this time.

"Are they planning to do something similar to what they have done to Moyong Qi in the previous round, but with me as their target?" she mumbled as she sharply scanned the surroundings.

She could not find any signs of ambush just like how it confused Aliya, but she still trusted her instincts and instructed. "We will maintain our formation and proceed as planned."

The others nodded as they prepared for the first confrontation.

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As the side of the Seven Seas Alliance was getting ready, Cloe had already issued her command. "We can start now!"

Alice quickly responded as they reached the ideal range to attack. She waved her magic staff and conjured a huge group of icicles underwater before pointing forward.

With the help of her Elemental Spirit Possession, her casting time was greatly reduced, especially when she was using ice and water-related spells.

It only took her an instant to produce a huge hail of icicles that flew straight to their opponents like a group of torpedoes fired underwater.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing the speed of the icicles, Florence could not help but raise her brows as she could tell that this was going to be a little trick to deal with.

The spell might look a little simple on the surface, but she could tell that the technique used alongside it was quite powerful. Moreover, the arrangement of the icicles was meticulously placed in tricky angles, making them hard to deal with.

"As expected to Elemental Goddess. Even a simple spell like 'Ice Formation' is used to its fullest potential," commented Florence as she raised her shield and summoned a shining wall to block the incoming attack.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

White mist was formed right after the coldness of the icicles collided with the barrier, blocking their line of sight.

Florence got a bad feeling about this, which was why she quickly used another protective skill, summoning an even stronger barrier that enveloped the whole team.

Swoosh!

It was at that moment that a huge hole was formed from the mist, revealing Leonard's figure, who pierced through it and headed toward their direction.

Boom!

Leonard hit the barrier with his war axe, making the latter tremble intensely and producing multiple cracks on its surface.

Jorick quickly responded at this point and swiftly charged forward while swinging his huge glaive forward,

Florence also coordinated with him, raising her shield to collide with Leonard's other side. She was planning to pin him in place so that he would be forced to stay in place and be trapped in their formation.

Seeing them charging at him, Leonard suddenly revealed a mocking smile under his lion's helmet, sending shivers down to Florence's spine.

"Not good!" She already figured out that they had fallen into a trap, but it was already too late to salvage their situation.

The moment when she and Jorick 'left' their spots, they had opened a little gap between them and the remaining members of their team, which happened to be enough for Shin to take advantage of.

Shing!

The subtle sound of the sword being pulled out from its sheath reverberated in everyone's ears, making the faces of the Seven Seas Alliance's representatives ugly.

Swoosh!

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – Great Wall of the Northern Heaven'

This skill was supposed to be used defensively, but Shin had made some tricky adjustments to change its nature.

Instead of erecting a towering wall of ice before him to block the attacks of his opponent, he had sent a cold current forward that quickly solidified and formed a wall separating Florence and Jorick from the rest of their team.

But what confused everyone even more was how Shin suddenly appeared near the enemies without their notice.

Fortunately, he was not near enough to launch an ambush on their backline, or else one of them would be killed in an instant the moment right after he made his move.

Responding to the situation, Florence chose to continue charging forward and pin Leonard in place alongside Jorick. She could only trust her teammates to deal with their situation while she teamed up with Jorick to deal with this monster before them.

She believed that Aliya would be able to find a way to take down that ice wall given the number of spells in her arsenal.

Jorick also understood the thoughts of his captain and pressed further forward.

Leonard was not surprised by their decision, so he welcomed their attack with his war axes that he just summoned.

Roar!

His eyes also turned sharp as he quickly underwent a fusion process with his Elemental Beast Companion.

'Elemental Beast Companion (Lion King): Crimson Sovereign'

Boom!

The confrontation of both sides produced a strong shockwave that pushed the surrounding water outwards.

This signaled the official start of the Team Competition.

Chapter 1684: Team Competition (Part 4)

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While Leonard was engaging in an intense battle against Jorick and Florence, the backline of the Seven Seas Alliance quickly responded to the current situation, looking for a way to regroup with their frontline.

Helisung quickly stepped forward, unsheathing his sword and swinging it forward. A deep red glow was also covering the blade of the sword, forming a thin layer of mana that was emitting an immense killing intent.

Shing!

His sword cut through the water before extending forward, trying to the thick wall of ice before them.

Swoosh!

Naomi and Aliya were not idle either. The two of them cast their respective spells, which reinforced his sword and the aura blade that he just created with that powerful swing.

Bang!

A huge portion of the ice wall was destroyed by their combined efforts, giving Florence and Jorick an opportunity to retreat.

But they still hadn't gotten out of the most dangerous place of their current predicament. Florence, with her rich experience, was being urged by her instincts not to retreat as they would only fall into an even more dangerous scenario once they had taken the bait.

Her instincts had saved her multiple times already, so she still chose to trust it and continued exchanging blows with Leonard.

Seeing that their captain was refusing to take a step back, the rest of the group responded.

Jorick took a step forward and intensified his attack while Helisung protected the girls beside him, escorting them forward.

Aliya and Naomi stuck close to Helisung as they knew that they were currently in their most vulnerable state, especially when they were separated with their 'meat shields'.

They in a very organized manner, keep their calm while also sharply scanning their surroundings.

Everything went a little smoothly, making the group somewhat suspicious of the intention of the opposing side, especially when Shin had never made another move despite having the perfect angle to launch an additional ambush.

Moreover, Diablo had never made his move yet, which further made the group somewhat anxious.

Instead, they saw Cloe and Alice working together to cast a combined spell, which required the two of them to coordinate with each other to form a grand magic formation.

Florence had a bad feeling about that spell, especially when she sensed the intense fluctuations of mana within their surroundings, which was somewhat affecting her movements.

Unfortunately, she was not in the position to interfere as her hands were already full of dealing with Leonard.

But Aliya, as a well-known Godlike Player herself, was able to respond in time. She quickly commanded the surrounding water and manipulated their currents to form a strong whirlpool that disrupted the flow of mana within this place.

Her timing was perfect, but it was still not enough to stop the two from finishing the combination spell, especially when it was not meant to be an offensive spell.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

A sealing formation was formed, locking the entire place. A huge hexagonal prison was formed, trapping everyone inside and limiting the area of the battle.

But the most surprising about this spell was when Florence was sent outside the formation, isolating her from the rest of her team, while everyone else was trapped inside.

"This formation! It is the Grand Ancestral Ocean Prison!" Aliya, as a top-notch mage who majored in water elements, was able to quickly recognize the name of the formation.

This also worsened her shock, especially when she knew that the methods of activating such an ancient magic formation were supposed to be lost along with the forgotten history.

"Impossible!" she was unable to believe what she was seeing, especially when she used her Mana Eyes and discovered that it was the authentic magic formation, albeit a weaker version.

But her shock only lasted for an instant as she was aware of the weakness of this formation. "Don't worry! This formation is weak against the Knight's Vow and similar skills. We can destroy it from the inside so long as..."

She had yet to finish her words when she saw their captain standing right on the edge beyond the prison formation.

"...-the captain can use her version of the skill," her words were growing soft and faint as she began to realize their current situation.

Doomed!

That was the only word that could enter her mind after seeing their captain being isolated outside the formation.

The others had also just realized that their positions, as well as their opponents, were meticulously arranged with the purpose of using this skill.

"Wait! Captain seems to be the only one outside! We can still turn this around so long as she repeatedly attacks the formation with her sacred blade!" her spirit seemed to become alive as she thought of this.

Breaking this magic formation from the inside was the easiest as long as a knight was standing within it. After all, the weakness of the formation was the holy powers injected into it, which was also one of the major pillars that maintained the formation.

But breaking it from the outside was also not impossible.

If a holy knight was able to constantly inject their holy powers into the formation, making the balance between its pillars broken, the whole formation would still collapse.

It might require more time and effort, but it was better than nothing.

Moreover, they could also try their best to survive the assaults of the opposition until they were 'rescued' by their captain.

Unfortunately, she had jinxed it once again with those words.

Diablo, who had been waiting outside the range of the formation, had finally made his move. He silently appeared behind Florence like a ghost while thrusting his pointed stiletto.

Swoosh!

Florence had no time to digest all the information inside her head as everything happened a little too quickly.

She could only turn around and block the incoming ambush with her shield, warding off the sudden attack of an assassin.

Clang!

The expression on her face immediately turned ugly as she could feel that the opposing side was no ordinary opponent.

That seemingly simple strike did not only 'kill' her balance, but she was also unable to disperse the force from the impact as the latter seemed to have purposely targeted the place where it could disrupt her center of gravity and further strengthen the attack itself.

"What!?" her expression immediately turned serious as she quickly retreated, especially when she saw that Diablo did not stop there and continued to press with an even stronger attack.

If it was on a normal occasion, then Florence would not bother to dodge these incoming strikes as she could just tank them and their damage while exchanging with powerful strikes of her own.

She refused to believe that any thief-related class would dare to exchange blows against such a tanky target.

Unfortunately, she could sense an immense threat coming from these attacks, especially when she could see that their trajectory was heading straight to her vitals, or more specifically to the little gaps in her armor.

The parts of her body that were being targeted felt like being pierced by those attacks just with their killing intent.

She quickly responded by adjusting her stance and repeatedly raising her shield to block and deflect the attacks while looking for some opportunity to counterattack.

She kept her calm despite losing the initiative at everything. After all, she had the advantage when it came to class and racial traits, especially when fighting underwater. She refused to believe that Diablo continued keeping such pressure for a long time without catching his breath.

Her only concern right now was those guys trapped inside the Grand Ancestral Ocean Prison. She did not know how long they would be able to keep themselves alive after being trapped along with such scary monsters.

She just hoped those guys would not mess up and use that 'thing' in frustration after being suppressed for a long time.

What they had might be different from the prototypes that the 'lab rats' were using for the in-game experiments. But it could still raise suspicion from other top organizations investing in the game.

They had already attracted quite a lot of attention from other organizations due to the hastiness of the current heir of the entire Seven Seas Group.

She might not want to be involved with those guys, but it would still be quite troublesome if those guys used that 'thing' here on the professional stage.

It might not be against the rules, but it could still cause them some trouble from the eyes of the other organizations watching them.

With such thoughts in mind, she could not help but bite her lower lip under her knight's helmet, wearing a solemn expression.

...

In the meantime, those who were left inside the prison formation were currently in a tough situation.

Shin and Leonard flanked the four members of the Seven Seas Alliance while Cloe and Alice stood further away as they had to maintain the formation with their mana.

Even if they could afford to join the battle while maintaining the formation since the task did not consume that much mana and concertation, they still chose to stay behind as per Shin's arrangement.

After all, this evil guy was planning to do something devious in this match.

Or more specifically, he just did not want to share this 'little' bit of entertainment that they had as the final round of this match.

Chapter 1685: New Possession (Part 1): Depths Devourer

...

The time seemed to have stopped when those on the side of the Seven Seas Alliance realized their current situation. Dealing a single monstrous player was already plenty enough for them to handle, and what more adding additional ones, who were not weaker than the first one.

They started at Leonard before them before turning their heads behind, where Shin fully revealed himself and seemingly did not plan to hide anymore.

There were also Cloe and Alice behind Leonard, who did not show any thoughts of joining the battle.

Regardless, Shin and Leonard alone were more than enough for them to handle, so it was going a huge trouble for them even if they worked together.

But they also could not be sure that those two girls at the back would not make their move given that this was an important competition, so they still had to be wary of potential interference from those two goddesses of the game.

What they did not know was Shin wanted to try testing some of the gains that these girls had gotten from studying the ancient runes within the sealing hall where his newest Elemental Spirit was slumbering and locked up for a very long time.

He was quite bold to try testing such a 'trial' spell on a professional stage, but he did not care that much since he believed that they could deal with the consequences given their respective strengths.

Moreover, the worst-case scenario was just the two failing to activate the magic formation, which did not affect their arrangement that much.

Worst, the Seven Seas Alliance would be facing an even more torturous experience as Alice and Cloe would have more freedom to do whatever they wanted.

But since everything worked out so well, Shin's head was now flooded with insane ideas on how he would utilize these additional cards that their team had just acquired for their future matches.

But before anything else, they first had to deal with whatever was in front of them.

Shin, on the other hand, had no interest in their internal thoughts and struggles as he was planning to go further and beyond by testing something else against them.

It was as if these guys had turned into his personal lab rats to experiment on.

Looking for decent 'training dummies' to test some of his new skills and techniques was quite rare to find. Even if he could use them against the other elite members of the Empyrean Talons, he still chose to use someone else for the 'testing process'.

He found it more interesting to test these newly acquired tools on someone else rather than his close friends.

He did not care about the other people knowing about it as they still had those trump cards that were even more powerful than these additional 'tools.'

"Let's start with the new kid first," mumbled Shin before calling out Ronan. "Ocean Reaper!"

Swoosh!

At the same time, he had unsheathed the [Yamato] and transformed the sheath into a shortsword with a broad blade with visible lines on its surface which signified its segmented layers.

It was a whip sword!

'Legacy Skill: Mondī's Style – Abyssal Form'

'Elemental Spirit Possession (Ocean): Depths Devourer'

The whip sword underwent a series of transformations, changing its appearance. It now had an exquisite design, which had also formed a flow of mana that looked like a thin current of water around its body.

It was the new form of his possession as Ronan was a new addition to his Reapers.

Ronan (Ocean Reaper): Depths Devourer – Rapier Swords, Whip Swords, and Ritual Swords

- Increase your Awareness Stats and Reaction Speed by (50%)

- Magic Affinity would increase by (50%), this will be doubled if you are in the vicinity or near any bodies of water.

Note 1: This Possession still had a lot of potential as the contracted elemental was still far from reaching its peak state.

Note 2: The higher control you have over your Elemental Spirits, the better the effects this Possession can give.

The aura surrounding Shin also changed as his sword and new possession resonated with his Boundless Ocean Technique.

There were also some changes in his eyes. His pupils seemed to be a little different. They looked like a pair of serpent's eyes. Alongside this, his perception also changed. He could now sense the movements within the water through soundwaves and the water current itself.

"This is quite a foreign feeling, yet also somewhat familiar at the same time," he mumbled before turning to their opponents.

With an evil smirk under his mask, he waved the sword, making its segregated parts to become longer.

The whip blade surrounded and twirled around him like flowing water as he flipped his wrist. He then waved his arm forward, sending the whip blade toward his enemies.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

With a flip of his wrist, the whip blade transformed into multiple afterimages, which then became a group of serpents with wide open mouths.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – Nest of the Thousand Serpents'

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

Seeing the horde of serpent-like attack coming at them, the representatives of the Seven Seas Alliance quickly responded.

Helisung quickly faced Shin's direction while unsheathing his sword. He then swung it forward, sending a series of sword waves that sliced through the majority of the serpents before dissipating after losing all their energy.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

As for the rest of the serpents, they continued to head toward their targets, ignoring the residual of the sword waves that the opposing side had sent.

It was at this moment that Naomi raised her staff and produced a barrier that blocked the rest of the attack.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The barrier shook violently due to the serpent's attacks. There were even some cracks on its surface, signifying that it was about to collapse at any given second.

Fortunately, it still withstood the barrage of attacks, saving everyone from the intensity of the successive attacks.

But it was also at that moment that Leonard made his move. He stomped his foot into the seafloor and propelled himself forward, charging straight to the barrier with his war axes.

Boom!

His aggressive and powerful charge produced a strong current that he had dragged as he advanced.

"Ha!"

Expecting this to happen, Jorick also made his move. He roared at the top of his lungs as he charged to meet Leonard with his charge. At the same time, Aliya, who was right behind him, cast a series of spells to summon a group of ice walls lined up together to hinder Leonard's advance.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Leonard ignored all the ice walls and charged through them as he advanced, which also reduced the momentum that he had.

Boom!

He then clashed against Jorick, who was forced to take a series of steps backward due to the strong collision. This single clash was more than enough to prove that the difference in their respective strengths was quite huge.

If not for Aliya's help, then he would have most likely been sent flying back to his teammates.

Regardless, he still forced himself to stand strong before continuing to advance and clash a few more times against the primordial beast in human skin before him.

Roar!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Each collision of their weapons produced a series of strong shockwaves that swept through the entire sea. It disrupted the surface of the sea that they were into the point that towering waves appeared, creating a huge tsunami.

Fortunately, they were currently inside a trapping formation, which prevented them from being affected by the strong currents outside.

But the strong ripples that they had created within the formation bounced back and forth from the formation walls, which still hindered their movements to a certain extent.

The trembling of the seafloor had already extended outside the formation, which also made the tsunami even more violent.

But since it was in the middle of the sea, there was nothing much to worry about.

It was as if they were someone outside the formation just like Diablo and Florence, who were still clashing against each other.

Florence was still fine as her set of heavy armor somewhat helped her to plant her feet on the seafloor. Adding the special features of her unique race that belonged to the aquatic races, she was relatively doing despite the chaotic current of the sea.

Diablo, on the other hand, was showcasing his amazing combat prowess, especially when it came to control. He looked more like a humanoid sea creature compared to his opponent as he was riding the violent water current with ease.

It was true that he was inferior when it came to a frontal confrontation against someone like Florence who had all the advantages underwater. But given his experiences when hunting with the rest of the Emphyrean Talons around the Forgotten Sea, this kind of situation was nothing.

He had experienced something worse when they tried to hunt a Lord Rank field boss in that region, which almost wiped out the entire team.

They might have survived that battle, but they had never won it. However, the lesson they had gained from the experience was more than helpful in different situations they encountered during their hunt.

At the same time, Diablo was also watching every movement of his opponent while waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike with his deadly move.

He was not planning to make this battle last longer as he knew that a long battle was disadvantageous for him, so he would rather end this with a series with a single burst of his skill rotation than play it safe.

As he was doing this, he could not help but glance at the ongoing battle within the formation and see what Shin was doing.

Then a flash of thought crossed his mind, making him mumble. "Should I also try using the shadow skills that I have just learned?"

Due to Shin's actions, some people started to think about such things as well. Little did everyone know that Shin was starting to 'corrupt' these experts' minds to a certain extent.

Chapter 1686: New Possession (Part 2)

...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Amid the barrage of attacks that players from the Seven Seas Alliance were suffering, Helisung, who was the first to confront them was unable to hold his ground for that long.

He was a skilled Maverick God himself and possessed a very peculiar swordsmanship that he had learned from the real world. But despite all the tricks that he had under his sleeves, he was still unable to withstand the vicious barrage coming from the whip sword that seemed to be being waved by Shin in a very casual manner.

Due to Shin only focusing on testing all the tricks and techniques that he could use with the whip sword, the force from his attacks was rather 'weak' compared to his regular attacks.

But as time went by, he was getting used to these techniques and even polished most of them along with his familiarity with the other sword and whip techniques that he had 'learned' from that certain World Serpent that used the same type of weapon within that Trial of the Primordial Waters.

He combined everything with the Heavenly Black Tortoise Method of the Four Symbol Scripture, further enhancing the Mentalism Method, which was also making himself stronger.

After testing a variety of techniques related to the whip swords, Shin flipped his wrist retracted the extended blade of his sword, and returned it to his regular appearance.

At the same time, he released the 'Abyssal Form' of Mondí's Style Legacy Skill while maintaining the 'Depths Devourer Possession'.

He then switched the form of the sword into a rapier, which still had the stunning and exquisite design of the current possession despite being in a different form.

Moreover, the current appearance of this rapier looked more noble, especially with such a complicated yet elegant guard that was protecting the hand holding its hilt.

The thin blade was so slender that it looked more like a huge needle rather than a sword. If not for the cold blue light that it was regularly emitting, then it would be hard to notice the blade as it was closer to being transparent and incorporeal.

It was a different version of 'Depths Devourer Possession', which had two different forms just like the 'Summit Shaper Possession' that could switch between a greatsword and a longsword.

Shin held the [Yamato] with his right hand, but he was not planning to use it yet as he wanted to focus more on the new possessions that he had.

He placed the [Yamato] behind him, holding it firmly and horizontally. It was straight and parallel to his back while maintaining a decent distance from his body.

In the meantime, the rapier form of the 'Depths Devourer' was placed before him, mimicking how an honorable knight of a noble house held their swords while saluting to their lord.

Maintaining this posture for a couple of seconds, the air around Shin suddenly changed, making Helisung wear an even grimmer expression on his face.

Naomi and Aliya, who were busily supporting both Helisung and Jorick to the best of their abilities, also sensed the sudden change in the atmosphere.

The moment when they turned their heads toward the source of this change, their perspective saw a pair of serpentine eyes staring at them.

Their bodies froze as they felt that their souls were being stared upon by a cold-blooded monster.

Not long after, Aliya sensed a strong fluctuation in the surrounding water as Shin made his move.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – Fangs of the White Serpent'

Swoosh!

The water seemed to have been cut by a thin blade of heaven as Shin flashed forward and appeared before Helisung in almost an instant.

The water on the path that Shin had taken seemed to have been split apart as he advanced before solidifying by intense coldness, creating a 'dry' spot where the carpet of frost was laid.

Clank!

Helisung was unable to respond in time due to how fast Shin had moved. Fortunately, Aliya had sensed the attack ahead of time, making her summon a thick wall of ice that protected him from the sudden stab that almost took his life.

That stab was accurately targeting the center of his forehead. Adding what just happened to the path that Shin had taken, Helisung would most likely have his head frozen as well if the rapier pierced through his head, insta-killing him in the process.

But he did not have that much time to dwell in his thoughts as the ice wall before him quickly shattered not long after and made him vulnerable once again.

He did not hesitate this time as he swiftly took a step back to create a decent stance to execute his sword techniques before quickly swinging his sword, which was now enveloped with a bloody aura.

He was using his signature martial arts through his version of Reality Manifestation.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

His sword left a series of bloody trails in the water, cutting through everything as they advanced toward their target.

Shu! Shu! Shu!

But what greeted them was a series of cold flashes that Shin had created by stabbing the rapier forward with an extreme speed.

Those sword flashes looked like a swarm of venomous vipers that were pouncing at a single target at the same. But instead of having deadly venoms from their fangs, what they had was biting cold energy that could freeze anything that they bit on.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – Serpents of the Cold Wind'

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Shin quickly retracted his rapier right after the series of clashes. He had taken a step back for a little space to prepare for an even stronger assault.

His momentum was so strong that it made his opponents tremble in fear.

But Helisung could only grit his teeth as he prepared himself for an even more intense exchange, hoping that he could still survive it this time. "Bring it on!"

...

In the meantime, Leonard was somewhat getting bored at dealing with Jorick after a couple more exchanges. He could feel that the opposing party was slowly losing its footing the more they clashed against each other.

Not only the difference in stats was huge, but even their respective foundation in martial arts had an imaginable gap, which made the opposing side unable to keep up with him.

Leonard originally had terrible martial fundamentals as he had started learning martial arts quite 'late'. He was quite far from the likes of Shin and Arthur, who had been training since a very tender age.

All he knew was his barbaric method of fighting that he had learned from the streets when fighting some delinquents and grownups with evil intentions for him and his little sister.

But after being together with Shin and Arthur, he started building up his foundation and made it stronger as time went by, especially after training with the two regularly.

Then he had awakened his bloodline after that terrible incident with the Shadow Alliance, which was immediately followed with him leaning under the tutelage of his master.

He had also accepted some inheritance during the incident with the Black Serpent Mafia, the Thunder Lord, and that mysterious priestess.

When all of these came together, his martial arts would no longer be weaker compared to those geniuses who had powerful backgrounds.

This was what made his Reality Manifestation much stronger compared to the others, rivaling Shin and Arthur's levels.

Looking back, Leonard could not help but feel some pity for his current opponent. He could somewhat see his previous self in Jorick, who seemed to have a similar background as him in the real world.

He could see how terrible he was during that time and why Shin and Arthur always joked around about his Barbarian Style of fighting.

At the same time, fighting Jorick also made Leonard aware of the hidden flaws that he had failed to notice.

It was similar to the bad habits that he had built up during his 'younger' years when he was still barely surviving in the streets along with his little sister.

"Master has mentioned that the best habit for martial artists is not to have any habits at all," he mumbled as he pushed Jorick once again before continuing. "While the best way to study one's habit by themselves is to look at their 'reflection' in the 'mirror'."

He then looked at Jorick before sweeping his gaze at the entire battlefield. "No wonder Shin Bro likes to 'play' around when fighting anyone. Aside from it being the 'side effects' of his Battle Genius Talent, he also discovers a lot of things through battle. They can either be intentional or unintentional discovery."

With such 'dangerous' thoughts, Leonard suddenly felt a little more motivated for this battle, which put his opponent an immense pressure pressing on him.

Jorick felt that the current fighting spirit that Leonard had just ignited was something someone of his level felt suffocated.

Leonard might only be emitting such an aura passively through the battle, but Jorick could sense that he was currently in a terrible situation that he would be unable to escape from.

It felt like the sleeping beast was suddenly woken up by something and was now ready to slaughter whoever had disturbed it.

"Tsk! Tsk! Let's see how bad my 'reflection' back then," mumbled Leonard as he clanged his war axes while making his aggressive nature further awakened.

Chapter 1687: The Scheme's Aim

...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The team competition had already been going on for quite a while yet the intensity was only getting stronger as time went by.

What surprised the audience though was the fact that War God Simba was getting more active in his attacks despite somewhat holding back his strength.

The battle underwater was different from those on the ground, especially when the movements of every one were restricted by the water resistance and the strong current that they had. Adding the water pressure that was only getting worse as time went by, such a battle would only get worse the more it progressed.

What the experts who were watching this battle found ridiculous was how Shin and Leonard were taking this battle. They were more like experimenting with a couple of things rather than taking this battle seriously.

Naturally, those representatives of the Seven Seas Alliance had also realized what was going on given their rich experience.

They were not only being beaten one-sidedly on a competitive stage but also being humiliated by being treated as lab rats of their opponents.

Losing against powerful opponents was fine as it was how it was supposed to be. But being treated this way in front of tens of millions of players in the gaming industry was a whole different matter.

Due to Helisung and Jorick being on the direct receiving end, their minds started to get a little loose, making them furious and somewhat lose their reason.

"Don't underestimate me!" shouted Helisung as he quickly activated his strongest berserk skills, which also gave him a quadruple-fold berserk state.

Roar!

A ferocious roar came out of his mouth as his appearance started to take some major changes. The surface of his skin was now covered with emerald-like scales while his pupils started to resemble someone from a reptilian race.

A long tail also sprouted on the back of his waist and extended outwards, resembling the tail of an oversized lizard.

A crimson aura also started shrouding his entire body, giving him an eerie and horrifying appearance.

He did not stop there as he also took out a pill from his inventory and quickly crushed it with his mouth, swallowing the fragments afterward.

Not long after, his eyes turned bloodshot as the aura surrounding him became darker and even more horrifying.

At the same time, the sword that he was holding also transformed into a something a bone-like object, which had a huge eye at the spot where the blade and the guard of the sword were connected.

Roar!

At this moment, Helisung looked more like a humanoid beast rather than a player.

But he was not the only one as Jorick had also done the same. Right after activating his berserk skills, he had also taken the same pill, which quickly charged the aura surrounding him.

His already bulky body became even more muscular while a layer of the shell of a sea creature covered the different parts of his body, acting as if they were a set of armor.

Swoosh!

The weapon that he was holding also grew alongside the growing size of his already large build, turning into a huge double-headed axe that seemed to have been made from the spine of an unknown gigantic creature.

Hu~!

A visible hot vapor could be seen coming out from the gaps of the helmet covering his head as he breathed out.

The surrounding water near him was also slowly getting hotter due to the high temperature that his body was emitting.

But even with all those changes, the evil aura he was now emitting was not something that could be hidden. It immediately spread in every direction, further amplifying the already heavy and dark atmosphere that the surroundings had due to Helisung's transformation.

The two moved too frustratedly, which made the two girls behind them unable to stop everything.

The two could only look at one another with a helpless look at each other before shaking their heads.

They had been given some special drugs by the Seven Seas Group and instructed to use them on certain occasions to save their lives within the game. After all, each of them possessed something that the organization had lent them for their respective missions, which was something that they could not afford to drop once they had been killed in action.

They could use them anytime so long as they did not display their effects in public events such as regular tournaments that were held throughout the professional seasons.

It was because the organization wanted to hide the effects of those drugs from their competitors as well as some other organizations that were keeping an eye on the game.

The effects of these miracle drugs within the game were somewhat different from what those guys had ambushed Shin before, but they still shared some similar features.

But the main difference that these drugs had was the existence of the artificial seed of hatred that the company in the real world was secretly experimenting on.

The version that those guys had used during that time was meant for the members of the organization, who had 'volunteered' to be an experimental subject of the project. Every one of them possessed a respective seed of hatred that was artificially created through immoral means.

As for the ones that the experts of the Seven Seas Alliance had, they were a special version meant to be used in a 'safer' way. These special drugs did not need someone to have an artificial seed of hatred in them, but they could produce one of the types of hatred the real seed had if they were used regularly and excessively.

The members were not fully aware of its side effects, but they somewhat had an idea about their terrible end if they kept on relying on these evil pills a little too much.

They knew that they were being tricked or forced by the Seven Seas Group, so they were only working with them from a professional standpoint. They were more like a group of mercenaries hired by the commissioner to do a certain job.

They were bound and restricted by their respective contracts, which would cost them serious trouble once they had messed it up.

Naomi and Aliya knew that it was already too late to save these two brutes, so they could only save themselves by performing to the best of their abilities.

They no longer concerned themselves with the overall result of this match. What they wanted to do now was to save themselves by using everything they had while avoiding any suspicions that would link them with those evil drugs.

They did not have to care about how the Seven Seas Group would deal with the aftermath as they were sure that such a huge company in the real world would have countermeasures when such accidents happened.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two quickly moved as they started casting a spell after another. One focused on buffs and other auxiliary-type spells while the other was preparing her offensive and defensive spells so that they could be used any time.

Now that the two frontline fighters had lost their minds despite gaining such immense power, they knew that this was going to be an even more troublesome battle with much more intense clashes.

...

In the meantime, Shin, who had just finished familiarizing himself with all the offensive and defensive techniques under the Heavenly Black Tortoise Method and combined them with the Boundless Ocean Technique and the Depths Devourer Possession, paused as he watched the opposing side underwent such a flashy transformation.

He quickly understood what was going on, especially after sensing the evil aura that Helisung and Jorick were emitting.

"It looks like they have finally lost it and are forced to use those drugs," he mumbled before smirking.

This was one of the plans that he was scheming when he told the others to not end the battle as quickly as they could. He wanted to bait the opposing to use their miracle drugs so that they would be exposed to the public much earlier.

Even if the transformation these guys had undergone was masked by their respective berserk skills, which could fool most of the players and other experts watching the match, Shin believed that those who were more aware of what was currently happening both in the real world and inside the game would not miss such a major clue.

Those from the Central Order, which was under the direct influence of the World Government in the real world, and the Dragon Pavillion, which was headed by the Federal Army and other military forces, would most likely be the ones with the greatest concerns.

Such a thing also came with some risks such as being discovered by the underworld organizations, which would surely do their best to communicate with the Seven Seas Group in secret once they became aware of the true nature of the 'berserk state' that these guys had undergone.

Forces such as those Shin and the others had come in contact with in the real world such as the Shadow Alliance, Hextech Laboratory, and Black Serpent Mafia would most likely take this opportunity to do something later.

Shin had heard from David before that each of these people was trying to create 'something' to achieve the ideal result that Project Genius had failed to achieve.

The Hextech Laboratory was focusing on Unforgiven Ones while the Black Serpent Mafia had created those Artificial Mutants.

Shin had guessed that whatever the Seven Seas Group was trying to achieve, it was something related to what these two dark organizations wanted.

"I don't know what Uncle Nathan and those elders are planning in the real world since I am not strong enough to be involved with it," he mumbled as he fixed his grip on the swords that he was holding before continuing. "But if what Senior Brother has said is true-... and the virtual world is about to be swept alongside the 'war'-..."

"...-then I guess our roles are about to be changed," he continued while a decisive look washed over his face that was hidden by the [Nephilim's Gemini Mask].

"Becoming the strongest has always been the answer!"

Chapter 1688: End of the Match

.....

After adjusting his form, Shin quickly launched himself forward, swimming straight to Helisung while stabbing forward with the rapier in his hand.

Swoosh!

Helisung swiftly raised his sword and perfectly deflected the attack.

Clang!

During the brief collision of their weapons, there was a decently strong shockwave that spread in every direction. The seafloor trembled while the surrounding water was redirected in different directions, briefly making the area around them a dry land.

Shin ignored all of these as he quickly retracted the sword before suddenly stabbing forward once again, leaving a series of afterimages in the 'air'.

Shu! Shu! Shu!

The speed of his stabs was so fast that it almost turned into a swarm of attacks that overwhelmed the space before his opponent.

But despite all of that, his opponent was able to respond to his attacks, especially when he was being supported by Aliya and Naomi, who never stopped casting their spells.

They were coordinating quite well with Helisung, who was able to keep up with Shin's current speed. However, it was also clear that he struggled to resist something.

His bloodshot eyes were telling everyone that he was enduring something. But no one knew what it was.

Regardless, he was still doing pretty well when fighting. He seemed to be getting stronger and better as the battle progressed. His attacks were also becoming more powerful and much fiercer, which was somewhat giving Shin some pressure, especially since the girls behind him were no longer holding back with their spells.

Leonard was also in a similar situation as Jorick exploded with a burst of power that far surpassed his current level. He was even rivaling Leonard, who was supposed to be unrivaled when it came to physique.

Shin and Leonard knew that they would no longer be able to continue 'honing' their skills through the battle.

They also could no longer be too laidback in this battle as these two guys were slowly turning into mindless beasts as time went by.

Even if they were enemies, they did not want these people to die or turn into mindless demons in the real world.

Leonard was also quite familiar with a few of them as he was a professional gamer just like them. He had quite a couple of encounters with them, which was why he felt pity when he thought that they would become experimental subjects for those people from the Seven Seas Group.

He wanted to do as much as he could to save these poor guys from such a fate.

But could not reveal too much of their cards, so Leonard looked at Shin, who happened to be looking back in his direction.

Having a tacit understanding with one another, the two decided to fully work with each other this time.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Right after giving each other a signal, the two made their moves almost simultaneously.

Shin suddenly disappeared from the vision of everyone before reappearing at the location where he was facing the whole group of the Seven Seas Alliance.

At the same time, he suddenly swung the whip sword that suddenly appeared on his left hand, forming a huge group of intertwining shadows that was heading toward the opposing party.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – The Mist of the Northern Wind'

Swoosh!

The huge shadow turned into a white fog as the whip blade spread its coldness in every direction. They covered a quite huge area, especially what was surrounding the members of the Seven Seas Alliance.

At the same time, this mist contained silhouettes of Shin, which were scattered in every direction and confusing the opposing group.

This time, Shin was planning to utilize the illusion techniques of the Heavenly Black Tortoise Method alongside his other sword techniques, confusing their opponents.

Aliya and Naomi suddenly felt an immense threat coming from the surrounding mist and the shadows hidden behind them.

They further felt this sudden sense of dread the moment when they realized that the two guys, who were supposedly protecting them, were slowly losing themselves after seeing those shadows.

"This is bad!" mumbled Aliya before quickly waving her magic staff and summoning a strong current that tried to push the mist away.

Naomi also did the same while also preparing some of the defensive spells that could protect her and Aliya from any possible ambush.

Swoosh!

But right before the two could complete the series of preparations with their spells, something fell from above.

It was like a huge meteor that came crashing into the middle of the ocean and was about to hit its bed with a powerful momentum.

Leonard, who was being covered by the mist, suddenly descended along with his war axes. He raised his arms high over his head before suddenly slamming the war axes down with an unstoppable force.

Jorick, who was somewhat relying on his instincts to keep himself, quickly responded as he tightly held onto the huge spine-like axe in his hands and jumped upwards to meet the incoming 'meteor'.

Shing!

But while he was 'flying' upwards, a flash of light suddenly appeared from the middle of the mist and flew straight in his direction.

Swoosh!

It did not take long for everyone to realize that Shin had not chosen to ambush the two girls at the backline and instead used Leonard as bait to lure Jorick out of the formation before launching a perfectly timed ambush.

But Helisung, who was doing his best to suppress the berserk state that his mind was currently experiencing, had also made his move.

A trail of bloody light pierced through the mist and cut through all the illusions within it. He did not stop there as he proceeded to intercept Shin, who was about to reach Jorick.

His speed seemed to have somewhat surpassed Shin, who had an overwhelming advantage in terms of speed earlier.

Clang!

It did not take that long for the two sides to clash their swords given the speed that they had. Shin was pushed back while Helisung was also forced to retreat.

But Jorick continued to head straight to the descending 'meteor'.

The two sides were about to collide when Leonard suddenly diverted his direction with a slight adjustment of his body, targeting the space between Helisung and Jorick instead.

He seemed to be not targeting the two girls underneath but instead wanted to do something else against these two frontline players of the group.

Boom!

A massive shockwave was shot in every direction right after Leonard swung his war axes, sending the water away alongside Helisung and Jorick, who were caught in the explosion.

"This is bad! We have been had on!" shouted Aliya as she realized something. "The one earlier is nothing but a mere decoy!"

But it was already too late as Shin had suddenly appeared before them swinging the rapier in his left hand.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Using one of his long-forgotten skills that had never been used for quite a long time – the Crescent Cleave Skill – as the main model for this technique, Shin sent five huge vertical waves toward his Aliya and Naomi, who were somewhat caught off guard by his sudden appearance.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – Fangs of the White Serpent'

Seeing the incoming attack, the girls quickly activated the defensive spells that they had long prepared for this situation, summoning a series of ice walls, water bubbles, and barriers to protect themselves.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Shin did not stop there as he swung the rapier for another time, sending a huge horizontal slash forward, which turned into a crescent wave that headed toward the already trembling barrier.

It was his old skill, the Half-Moon Slash, this time!

Swoosh!

Boom!

Shin did not pour that much strength into that attack as he was focusing on the speed of his attacks. He did not have the time to convert it into a real sword technique despite being under the state of the Reality Manifestation.

But with the help of his earlier attacks, the defensive spells that the protecting the two girls had finally collapsed, making them vulnerable once again.

Helisung and Jorick were barely able to regain their balance at this point and used their strongest movement skills to arrive beside Shin, who was preparing to finish off the girls.

Jorick dragged his huge spine-looking war axe before slamming it down with everything he had while Helisung threw a series of slashes at Shin, leaving multiple trails of bloody light with his bone sword.

Their attacks were surprisingly well-coordinated despite the current state of their minds. Both covered all the possible routes Shin could take to escape. They had also blocked the path to advance with the tricky angle of their attacks, making it trickier to deal with.

But Shin just smirked underneath his mask when he saw their actions before using one of the rare applications of the Boundless Ocean Technique to respond to their attacks.

The force within Shin's body seemed to have been divided into two parts, which headed toward different directions.

One of them reinforced his right arm, which he was using to hold the [Yamato]. The special technique enhanced his sturdy form, making him resemble an unmovable mountain, as he blocked the descending war axe.

Boom!

On the other hand, the other half of the boundless force within his body headed toward his left arm and hand, where he held the exquisite rapier. His entire arm seemed to have turned into a flexible water whip as he swung it repeatedly while using the rapier to clash against the multiple bloody lights that were trying to assault him from the other direction.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Aliya and Naomi subconsciously heaved a sigh of relief when they saw that the two had successfully held Shin in place.

They were about to prepare another skill series when they realized they had forgotten someone.

Leonard, who just sent the two guys flying earlier, had suddenly appeared behind them with horrifying bloody lights coming from his pair of eyes.

It was at this moment that they realized that their pointless struggle had finally come to an end.

A series of simple coordinated attacks from Shin and Leonard had all it took to end this battle. It was clear that these two were just playing with them earlier, which further upset the girls.

In the meantime, Stella, who was patiently waiting for her turn from the place meant for reserve players, could not help but sigh when she saw everything. "The gap is still too huge for us to overcome."

Chapter 1689: A Clean Sweep

.....

In the meantime, before Shin and Leonard had made their coordinated moves, the side where Diablo and Florence were fighting was getting more and more heated as time went by.

The battle between two sides with opposite styles would only be decided by the skills of the respective players.

Diablo, who possessed extreme speed but was restricted by the environment, particularly by the water resistance underwater, was clearly in a disadvantageous situation. But his techniques and Ancient Shadow Powers greatly helped him in the battle.

In the meantime, Florence, as the Warrior Goddess, was a very skilled Godlike Player. She was even ranked seventh in the latest issue of the Godly Ranking List, so her skills were something that could not be underestimated even if her style of fighting was meant for a vanguard position.

She might be slow, but her steadiness in battle and tanky style of battle greatly countered Diablo's, especially when she had the advantage when it came to underwater battle given her racial traits.

The two sides were in a complete deadlock despite the intense exchanges that they were throwing at one another.

Diablo refrained from using any of his Shadow Equip Skills and just relied on the tricks that he had learned from fighting against the monsters of the Forgotten Sea.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Bang!

Florence had to admit that she would have most likely lost if they were fighting on land, especially after seeing how Diablo utilized that unique combat state that he had – his version of Hyperactive Simulation.

Moreover, she kept having a bad feeling whenever she saw that dangerous glint in Diablo's eyes. She felt that all the secrets she had in terms of fighting were slowly being disclosed by those cold eyes whenever they flickered with purple lights.

She had no idea about Diablo's unique skill – the Demon Eyes – but she somewhat had an idea of what those eyes were hiding given that she had also experienced fighting against other geniuses with similar abilities.

Arthur, widely known as Dragon God Seigfried within the virtual world, was one of them. Even if the effects of his special abilities were not as direct as Diablo's Demon Eyes and Shin's Battle Genius talent that could continuously evolve during the battle, his ability to adapt to situations and improve still surpassed most of the players of the game.

This was one of the reasons why Arthur was one of the current legendary players of the game.

Even if Florence was ranked fairly high in the Godly Ranking List, her talent was somewhat on the mediocre side, especially when compared to those absolute monsters of the game.

What made her what she is today was her extreme persistence, unbreakable will, and countless of time invested in hard work.

She was among the type of people with stubborn personality and would never give up once they put their minds to it.

Fortunately, her efforts had paid off, which was why she was standing at the peak of the virtual world at this moment.

She wanted to have an honest battle against someone like Diablo, who she found had a similar personality to her to some extent.

She had already fought with the likes of Leonard and Arthur in the previous competitive tournaments held by different gaming companies, so she was quite keen on judging someone, especially after fighting against them.

Diablo, on the other hand, realized that a highly ranked Godlike Player was truly not that simple. He regularly sparred with Shin, Leonard, and Arthur, who were among the peak of the Godlike Player. But since he was somewhat familiar with them, the pressure that they were giving him was somewhat reduced.

It was only at this moment that he realized that everyone with a fairly high ranking in any type of ranking list was worthy of their reputation.

He had never found the chance to execute his initial plan of doing a burst attack to eliminate Florence, who had a very sturdy and steady defensive stance. He had never found a clear opening other than those obvious baits that she had purposely opened to lure him in.

They were evenly matched, but Diablo's main purpose was to hold Florence until Shin and the others finished everything that they wanted to achieve from this match.

As they were fighting, a sudden disturbance forced the two to pause their actions, making them look over the commotion happening within the Trapping Formation.

Seeing what was happening, Florence could not help but curse under her breath. "Tsk! Those idiots still use them in the end! As if it will change anything."

Realizing that the situation was already out of hand, Florence could only sigh helplessly and was about to give up this battle.

But since it was already like this, she could only enjoy her battle against a worthy opponent. She was no longer concerned herself about breaking through the formation since it was already too late to save those guys, especially when Diablo was stalling for time.

"I guess I can finally focus on our battle then," she said before exploding with power as she activated a couple of her buffs.

"Before those guys got killed by those two monsters, accompany with this dance for a bit," she added as she took the initiative to attack this time.

Bang!

The seafloor where she stood exploded as she kicked it and sent a thick cloud of mud behind her.

Seeing that, Diablo, who had never underestimated an enemy, quickly adjusted his posture and prepared for an even more intense clash.

He would naturally not dare to confront the opposing side in a direct battle, so he quickly melded himself with the surroundings by using his stealth skills and the trick that Shin had taught him to further hide his tracks underwater.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Disregarding any thoughts about the ongoing battle between their respective teammates, the two decided to give their best in this battle while also hiding some of their greatest trump cards.

This confrontation between the two became the highlight of the team competition due to the intensity of their battle, especially when the battle on the other side of the battlefield was a little lackluster in comparison.

After all, the battle on that side was more of a one-sided beat down rather than a fight, especially after Shin and Leonard started working together.

It did not take that long before the match finally concluded. With Leonard finishing off Aliya and Naomi almost at the same time, Jorick and Helisung were unable to withstand the next series of coordinated attacks from Shin and Leonard.

They might have put up some resistance due to their respective state, but it did not take that long before Shin and Leonard finished them off.

On the other hand, the battle between Florence and Diablo was only getting more intense, which made Shin and the others somewhat reluctant to interfere.

But since Stella, the last member of the Seven Seas Alliance, was not thinking of leaving the summoning zone, it was concluded that she had already given up on the battle.

Taking the current situation into consideration, the system notified Florence, asking her if she still wanted to continue.

This made her regain her senses and remember what was going in. She first distanced herself away from Diablo before sweeping her gaze at the surroundings.

Realizing that it was finally time to end this match, Florence felt a little pity that she could not fight to her heart's content this time.

She looked at Diablo, who also stopped his actions, before saying. "You are strong. I hope to see you again in the next Hegemon Cup. I am looking forward to how you will perform there."

She had little hope about whether they would meet again in this tournament, especially after their performance.

She was sure that they would never have a chance to meet again despite the double-elimination format given how tough the entire bracket was. If they could not even win against the Empyrean Talons, then their chances of winning against the other top contenders would most likely be the same.

In response to her, Diablo just shrugged his shoulders. "I don't think I will be participating in that one, though."

Hearing his response, Florence looked at the people, who she was familiar with such as Leonard, Alice, and Cloe. Her questioning gaze seemed to be asking them what he meant by those words.

Leonard also shrugged his shoulders, leaving it to Cloe to answer. With a helpless sigh, the latter explained. "Our Adventurer Team is quite free and easygoing. Things like requiring our members to have a quota when it comes to participating in any professional and official tournament are unnecessary."

"We are not a club, after all," she added, seemingly emphasizing something.

Florence seemed to have realized something before nodding her head. "I understand. But it is a pity that such a decent rival will not compete in the most competitive stage."

"Well, this is not the first time. There are plenty of apex experts with such a lowkey personality," responded Leonard before quickly urging her to concede the match. "Come on! Concede already! You will not be getting anything from extra exposure anyway."

The corner of Florence's mouth suddenly twitched when she heard those words, especially with his annoying tone.

She waved her hand as she conceded. "Let's meet again some other time."

With that, she was sent out of the battle arena as the system had finally announced the final results.

– "Victory – Empyrean Talons!" –

– "Final Result! Empyrean Talons 10:0!"

Chapter 1690: Nothing Special

...

Right after the result of the battle between the Empyrean Talon and Seven Seas Alliance, the results from the other matches were also been announced to the public alongside the updated standings.

This became a heated discussion because there were quite a lot of unexpected results such as some veteran players losing to a rookie or a famous group losing to a less favored team.

Some of these results also included the total scores of each match, which was also somewhat guessed by most of the players, who were paying attention to it, especially those who had bet quite a fortune on any gambling sites.

Most of the scores were somewhat aligned with what these expert gamblers and diehard fans had guessed. This included some unexpected results from certain rounds due to unexpected variables.

But what surprised everyone was the clean sweep that the Empyrean Talons had done to the Seven Seas Alliance. It was not just an overwhelming victory, but it was as if the former had read their opponents like a book, making the latter unable to find any way to turn the tables around.

The entire match was quite entertaining altogether, but it was not as intense as what everyone was looking for as each round had only shown how big of a gap between a non-seeded team to a seeded one.

This also proved that the Empyrean Talons were much stronger than most people had originally thought, especially when they were the only teams that had won in such an overwhelming manner.

Even the defending champions, the God's Paradise, had lost two of their rounds due to the surprises that their opponents had prepared. Both losses came from the first round, which was the Single Matches.

The God's Paradise had not sent their strongest combatants to represent them in those first two matches, but those two players were still very strong and quite well-known within the gaming community, they had still lost against some unknown mavericks.

Regardless, the team still overwhelmingly won the next two rounds, regaining their reputation.

Similar accidents also occurred in other matches, which was why none had won a perfect score aside from the Empyrean Talons.

What the Empyrean Talons had down was the complete opposite of those matches, winning a round with a dark horse rookie such as Chaotic Luck. Moreover, the way he won that round was so 'memorable' that the players would never forget about it.

Due to the series of events, the favorability of the players toward the Seven Seas Alliance dropped sharply, making the tournament organizers change the featured match to the next round.

The next matches would still have the same matchup, but the home and away teams would change. This was why the players had lost interest in this matchup.

– "If the Seven Seas Alliance were unable to win with their home advantage, then how they were going to win against their opposition if it was Empyrean Talons' turn to have that advantage?" –

These were the thoughts of everyone, making the organizers think of another matchup to be featured for the next round two days later.

On the other hand, the top teams were paying attention to what happened to the other matches, particularly those who they would be facing in the next round.

A lot had studied the matches of their potential rivals.

Even the Empyrean Talons were also doing the same as well as reviewing their performance from the previous match.

...

"That's it for today," said Shin as he stopped before everyone alongside a huge virtual screen behind him, which was showing the recorded video of their previous match.

"I know that everyone is quite tired, so we should rest first before discussing our next plan for the upcoming round the day after tomorrow," he added before pausing for a moment. "At the same time, we will also look at the other matches and discuss our plans against them if ever we meet them in the next few rounds."

"But that is for later. For now, you guys can do whatever you want. Whether you want to relax or do some quest within the game, it is up to you," he added, planning to dismiss everyone.

Cloe, who was watching him the entire time while supporting her chin with both of her hands, finally snapped out of her daze after being tapped by Leonard. "Eh!? What's it!?"

"It is already over. You can now finally wipe that saliva from the corner of your mouth," teased Lorraine, who joined the fun once again, while giggling.

"Eh!?" Cloe subconsciously wiped her mouth with her hands before suddenly pausing after realizing something. "You! You tricked me again!"

The two laughed as they bickered with one another for a while before Cloe suddenly became a little embarrassed. "What can I do? He is so attractive when he is seriously doing something. It has been a while since I have seen him act like this."

While the two girls were whispering and gossiping with each other, Shin suddenly walked over and asked. "What are your plans after this?"

Hearing those words, Lorraine giggled as she could not help herself from teasing him. "What? Are you going to invite her on a date?"

Shin was already used to her teasing so he just ignored her as he continued. "I am planning to continue participating in the Plagued Lands Event, so I am wondering if you can accompany me for a while."

"I heard that the Church of Light is still issuing some quests about the event. Want to join me?" he continued, ignoring Lorraine's existence completely.

Seeing that, Lorraine chuckled before taking it as a cue to exit. "Then I will not be disturbing you planning your date."

On the other hand, Cloe thought for a moment as she tried to recall the current state of the said event. "From what I know, that event is already at its most crucial stages. The battle between the Righteous Churches and the Plague Race is already at its highest state."

Glancing at the leaderboards, Shin pursed his lips a little as he added. "My accumulated points are still at the very top of the event, but the gap between me and the others is no longer that huge."

"And you are inviting me because?" asked Cloe with a pair of squinting eyes.

Shin felt an immense threat coming from her gaze despite the beautiful smile she was giving him.

As someone who was already used to her plots, Shin decided to dodge the bullet by turning his head to the side and saying. "If you are not free, then I guess I'll go alone again."

"Tsk!" Cloe clicked her tongue after seeing him avoid his trap again. "That's cheating, you know?"

She then turned to the side while crossing her arms before her chest. "Hmph! I guess I will accompany you this time. Who knows you will find other people to quest with."

The corner of his mouth suddenly twitched when he heard those words as he knew what she was trying to say. She was still sulking about the fact that he did more quests with Alice than they did together. – "She is still on that topic? I thought we were already clear about it?" –

Seeing the current expression that he was making, Cloe squinted her eyes once again before asking. "What!? Do you have any problem with that!?"

Shin forced a smile as he shook his head. "No-... nothing-... nothing at all!"

Satisfied with his answer, Cloe turned around, planning to head to the Church of Light straightaway. "Wait for me. Let me accept the quest first, then we can head out after."

At the same time, the other members of the Emyrean Talons went to arrange their respective plans.

Diablo walked over to where Owen was and asked. "Have a quick round of sparring with me. I've been inspired by something earlier. Let me test it with your defensive style."

The corner of Owen's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard that before complaining. "Can I reject the offer? I also want my date just like Brother Swordsman."

Ithilien, who was right beside him, rolled her eyes before saying. "It is fine. I have to log out for a moment anyway. You two do whatever."

She then logged out without waiting for Owen to say anything.

"Wait-... didn't you just say that-..." Owen was unable to finish what he wanted to say as he could only stare blankly at the spot where she disappeared.

He then glared at Diablo before saying aggressively. "Lead the way! I also want to test a few more things I haven't tried earlier during the match."

As everyone was making their respective arrangements, the complete rookies such as Chaotic Luck and Samael, who 'participated' in the earlier match, were unable to understand the situation.

From their perspective, the 'huge' victory that they had achieved was nothing but a trivial thing. The expected celebration that was supposed to take place right after winning the match never occurred.

The two could only look at each other helplessly before sighing. – "I guess their sense of achievement is different from us, 'Mortals'."