

## Destiny 1781

Chapter 1781: Against the Number One Mercenary Group (Part 3)

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"It can copy our techniques and improve them to match their style!? Similar yet also different from the Demon Eyes in terms of application?" mumbled Shin as he read the message that Diablo had sent them.

Thinking about it, he suddenly shouted at Owen, who was protecting Cloe and Alice from possible harm. "Owen, prepare to make your move. Take over my position for a bit."

Hearing that, Owen slightly nodded his head before stepping forward.

"Does he want to try testing the skills of that guy? His bad habits are surfacing again," complained Cloe, pouting her lips. She could see what Shin was trying to do by letting Owen take over his position.

Regardless, she could not do anything about it, as she could also tell that Shin was doing this to gather more information from the opposing side.

"Leo, create an opening for me," said Shin as he retreated from battle.

Sakura and Yamamoto, who were engaging in battle against him, wanted to give chase and planned to push Shin back even further.

But before they could even make their moves, Leonard suddenly appeared before them, brandishing his war axes and forcing them into retreat.

Wang Zhou, who originally wanted to lend them a hand, was forced to retreat after seeing that Alucard was forcing Flouree and Matilda in defensive position.

If it were just about firepower, Crimson, who was a Cannon Master, had a greater advantage compared to Alucard. But his impact was limited only to those fighting at the frontline since his range was noticeably shorter compared to the latter.

Alucard had a faster pace of attack and longer range, which gave him a lot of freedom when he was providing cover.

Having that in mind, Wang Zhou had to leave the frontline to Sakura and Yamamoto and defend the rear with his skills.

At the same time, Crimson would also be providing them some cover from the back, so their offense should not be that weak.

But as he was retreating, he suddenly heard a thunderous sound coming from the other end of the bridge.

Boom!

Looking over, he saw a golden figure enveloped by golden lighting charging at the two.

"This is bad!" an ominous premonition quickly overwhelmed Wang Zhou when he saw this and quickly halted his retreat and charged forward, planning to clash against that incoming golden figure.

Boom!

The other party was much faster than him, especially when the reinforcement of the lightning attribute.

Due to this, Wang Zhou was forced to use one of his advanced skills and charged ahead with all his might.

Boom!

Not long after, Sakura and Yamamoto also realized the incoming attack, so they quickly used their respective skills and swiftly retreated, disengaging from the battle.

Boom!

As the shields of Owen and Wang Zhou clashed against one another, the surrounding air turned into a violent gale and swept through everything.

Crackle! Crackle!

Wang Zhou could not help but frown his brows as he could feel the slight numbness of his body due to being in contact with the golden lightning.

Moving his round shield away, Owen looked at Wang Zhou and said. "Let me accompany the three of you for a while."

"Three?" Wang Zhou raised his brows a little after hearing those words. He could sense the provocative tone from Owen, seemingly trying to challenge them by himself.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

"Since you have left your post, let's see if you can outrun us when we focus on them," said Yamamoto as he charged at Cloe and Alice, who were at the backline.

"Heh!?" Hearing that, Owen could not help but smirk before suddenly activating the abilities of his Divine Tattoos to the fullest.

Crackle! Crackle!

Taking advantage of the speed boosts that they provide, he suddenly turned into a series of blurs before blocking the two one after another.

Bang! Bang!

"Eh!?

"Huh!?"

Sakura and Yamamoto could not help but look at Owen weirdly after being blocked by the latter.

Their speed earlier far surpassed most of the classes, which gave them some confidence in reaching the girls at the backline before Shin and Leonard could even help them.

But who would have thought that a tank like Owen would be so fast and mobile to block the two them almost at the same time.

"What the heck!? A Knight with such speed and mobility? Does this even make sense?" commented Yamamoto as he continued to stare at Owen, a little stunned. "This is going to be a little troublesome. There is another variable."

"Let's just hope that the Captain will be able to handle their side well," said Sakura as she held her daggers tightly before entering stealth.

Seeing her disappear, Owen's eyes suddenly shone with golden light, locking on her figure. "I will not let you escape."

Bang!

He then charged at her, not letting her go anywhere.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

An intense battle quickly broke out as Owen tried to block the three people all by himself, utilizing all the advantages of his Divine Tattoo to the fullest.

With the assistance of Alice and her spell as well as the healing and buffs that Cloe was providing him, he was more than enough to handle these three top-notch Maverick Gods and pin them in place.

He was like a highly mobile wall that kept on blocking all the attempts of the three to reach Cloe and Alice.

In the meantime, Leonard was confronting Crimson in another intense showdown. He was disrupting the rhythm of the latter with his attempt to approach the rear. He was also preventing the Cannon Master from providing more support to those three at the front line.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Due to this, Crimson was forced to separate from the group, trying to lure Leonard away from the main battlefield.

If he could not stop Leonard from approaching him, then it was better to isolate him from the rest, preventing the latter from further affecting their battle formation.

Swoosh!

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Shin suddenly broke through all the obstacles, breaking all the magic traps that Flouree had laid on the ground to reach the rear of their opposition.

Realizing their current situation, Flouree decided to make some adjustments to their plans. "Sylas, I'll leave Matilda's safety in your hands."

"Can you handle both Alucard and Diablo by yourself?" she asked first before executing her plan.

"Ten minutes tops! That is as long as I can handle. These two are not easy to deal with," replied Sylas as he continued to block Diablo's advances and Alucard's sniping attempts at the same time.

"That is, unless Matilda will fully showcase all her strength," he added after a brief pause.

Flouree thought for a moment before nodding. "If we can't gather as much data as we can, then you two are free to do what's necessary."

"If that is the case, then you can leave the rest to us, Captain," nodded Sylas as he felt somewhat excited.

It had been a while since he had gone all-out in battles, so this was such a rare opportunity to fill his hunger.

Flouree slightly nodded her head as her gaze locked on Shin's incoming figure. "Since these guys like to use the Box-1 strategy in their matches, let's isolate their key member this time."

At the same time, she suddenly raised her magic staff and activated a large-scale spell.

Swoosh!

"Huh!?" Shin could not help but raise his brows after seeing the huge magic circle appearing underneath him.

He could not feel any strong danger coming from it, so he was not very worried. But when he saw the intense mana fluctuation filling the air, which was somewhat similar to when he was activating the teleportation arrays in towns or cities, he could not help but click his tongue a little.

"So that is one of their plans," he commented after realizing what the other party was planning.  
"Fortunately, Leo did not go that far in their formation."

Whoosh!

Not long after, Shin found himself being teleported quite far from the main battlefield alongside Flouree.

"Fortunately, she has not sent me outside the bridge," he commented, secretly heaving a sigh of relief.

Seemingly able to read his thoughts, Flouree suddenly explained. "It is not like I don't want to send you off the map. The mana outside the bridge is quite chaotic and unstable, so trying to create a space tunnel toward it is a little hard."

"I can only send you here with me since this does not require much effort," she added while waving her hand to summon an array of magic circles behind her. "And I also can't afford to leave you unchecked, given your odd abilities."

Shin could not help but swallow a little after seeing the stunning array of magic circles and sensing the destructive powers that they possessed. 'It looks like this is quite a trouble.'

He originally wanted to experience the strength of that mysterious Godlike Player, but he was here to be greeted here by a Magic Freak, who has some odd history with his brother.

"I've heard that you are quite close with that 'guy'. Since he is not here, let me bend my anger on you first," she said as she pointed forward and activated all the spells behind her at the same time.

'Symphony of Magic: The Magical Orchestra'

Shin could not help but curse Arthur under his breath after seeing the magic formation that the opposing side was sending him. 'Hah! That guy sure dodges bullets pretty well.'

Chapter 1782: Against the Number One Mercenary Group (Part 4)

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Watching the incoming storm of spells, Shin clicked his tongue a little, still cursing Arthur inside his head for obvious reasons.

At the same time, he had also revealed activated the Meteor Form of Mond's Style Legacy Skill, finally revealing the legendary sword [Durendal] to the world.

But the people were still oblivious of the true background of this sword, especially when Shin had covered it with the 'Divine Constellation Possession', which was one of his signature techniques.

Everyone would only think that this sword was just somewhat special compared to most of the weapons available within the game, which was somehow enhanced by the possession technique.

The flames that the legendary sword was releasing were nothing but special effects of the possession technique in their eyes. After all, they had already seen Shin do such a thing multiple times before.

Shin was already using a triple possession as Solus possessed the [Durendal] while the Whitie and Blackie fused with the [Yamato] with their dual possession.

This was already his limit before, but Shin continued to proceed with another. He summoned Grimrace and let the Eldritch Shadow Spirit possess his armor, initiating another Elemental Possession – the 'Soul Eater Possession (Armor Version)'.

Quadruple possession, Shin was unable to reach this level before. But with all the boosts that his new sword provided, he was barely able to reach the requirements to enter this state.

Moreover, the [Ring of Brilliant Sun] was easing the burden that he was supposed to receive. Since its powers were related to the Sun, particularly the flame and light element, the burden caused by Solus and Whitie's possession was greatly lessened and let him reach this current level.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Crackle! Crackle!

As the Shadow and Psychic Energy covered his entire body, the powers of the Eternal Flame and the Primordial Lightning flowed violently in both of his swords, making his appearance stunning and majestic.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

With the wave of his swords, the gorgeous flame and the black-and-white lighting intertwined with one another before clashing against the barrage of spells sent by his opponent.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A series of explosions immediately followed, almost shaking the entire bridge.

Amid this chaos, Shin suddenly kicked the ground and leaped into the air, charging through the chaotic storm of explosions and flying straight to Flouree.

Flouree understood that she would not be able to fight Shin with normal means, especially after seeing him enter a quadruple possession.

Given the information network of their mercenary group, she was naturally familiar with these special abilities of the Transcendent Race called Elemental Spirit Possession.

It was such an overpowered ability.

But it did not mean that there was nothing the other places from Ascended or Epic\* could do.

\*(I descended to call the races that evolved from regular races this to avoid confusion. The same for the corresponding classes.)

Ascended Races and Classes had their Ascended Abilities just like Owen's Divine Tattoos, while Epic Races and Classes possessed Extraordinary Powers.

Flouree was a Great Magister, which was a Tier 3 Class evolved from regular Mages. Her race was a Tier 3 Human called Conqueror, an Epic Race.

With her Extraordinary Powers that were perfect for Mage Classes as well as her unique and profound understanding of Magic within the virtual world, her current powers far surpassed regular people.

If she added her unique version of the Magical Formation Combat Method, along with the special powers that the leader of their mercenary group had given her, she was able to create a special method that not only rivaled most of the regular Elemental Spirit Possession but even surpassed them.

Putting Shin's achievements in this area as well as his powerful utilization of Reality Manifestation, this special that Flouree had created was almost at the same level.

### 'Celestial Magic Rule: Awakening of Ancients'

As the magic staff was floating and spitting before her, Flouree suddenly connected her fingers together.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Not long after, multiple ancient patterns spread throughout her body and formed a mystical formation.

Each pattern possessed a unique aura and ability while they were forming.

Four of such patterns overlapped throughout her body, followed by a huge and ancient-looking magic circle forming behind her.

This magic circle was filled with incomprehensible patterns and strange-looking figures, making it look a little hideous and messy at the same time.

Alongside this, the transformation of her body also started to take place. Her eyes became so bright that even her pupils could not be seen, while her hair seemed to become a blazing energy that continued to flow outwards.

Whoosh!

It was only at this moment that Shin broke through the chaotic explosion behind and appeared before Flouree.

Bang!

But before his swords could even reach the opposing party, it was suddenly blocked by an invisible wall of mana.

The time of Shin's swords stopped right before the spinning magic staff, making his brows furrow deeply.

Sensing the intense mana fluctuation within the air, Shin could tell that this was not going to be an easy battle. Adding the current appearance of the other party, he understood that her current state was already comparable to his.

"Is this just the rumored Extraordinary Powers of Epic Races?" mumbled Shin as he closely observed Flouree and the aura that she currently emitting.

Through his True Sight ability, he could tell that there was another mysterious power mixed in the regular mana that magical classes possessed.

"It is neither a natural mana nor an elemental energy. It is also not demonic powers or sacred blessings – just what it is?" he mumbled before suddenly summoning his 'Nephilim's Wings' and flying backward, dodging the magical chains that attempted to catch her.

Recalling his experiences, Shin realized that this power that Flouree was utilizing was similar to the ancient powers of those sea monsters that he had encountered during the Trial of Primordial Waters.

...or more specifically, it was similar to the powers of ancient creatures.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

While he was distracted by his thoughts, Flouree waved her hands and started sending another batch of spells in his direction.

But this time, instead of a chaotic and random attack, she was sending her spells with a specific rhythm and pattern.

Each spell complemented the other, forming a perfect offensive array.

Seeing this, Shin flapped his wings strongly and executed a series of complex aerial maneuvers to dodge each of the spells that were trying to catch him.

This then triggered an intense battle between the two.

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While the intense battle between the two ace players of the teams was currently underway, the battle on the other side of the bridge was also reaching a whole new level.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Owen continued to block the advances of the trio of Maverick Gods before him, executing a series of combat techniques.

By relying on his 'Super Sensitivity' innate trait, he was able to respond in all situations, despite how unexpected they came.

Adding his Battle Genius combat talent, he was also able to slowly grow in battle, albeit not being fast as Shin.

This was his first time using his Divine Tattoos in PvP, which gave him quite a lot of experience. His familiarity with this special ability also grew stronger, making his movements much smoother compared to before.

Adding the assistance that Alice and Cloe were providing him, as well as the occasional shots that Alucard was giving him, Owen was able to overwhelm the three before him to a certain extent.

Fortunately for the three, Matilda had skillfully disengaged from the battle between Sylas and Diablo, which was already reaching a very crucial state.

She had positioned herself quite craftily between the two battlefields, letting her provide some assistance in every direction.

Her teammates, with their great familiarity with one another, swiftly adjusted their formation to complement her position.

Wang Zhou was now focusing on protecting her, preventing any shots from Alucard to snipe her.

Sakura and Yamamoto, on the other hand, spread in two different directions and attempted to attack Alice and Cloe from their respective angles.

Even though Owen could still block their advances by taking advantage of his Thunderbird Tattoo, the pressure he was exerting on them was greatly lessened as they could now receive some heals as well.

This showed the great experience of the mercenary group when facing such predicaments.

At the same time, they had also started revealing some of their trump cards. They now executed their combination techniques, particularly Sakura and Yamamoto.

These two transformed into a flood of cherry blossoms while the other became the violent wind that swept them away.

Together, they turned into a flowery storm that assaulted the opposing side from every direction. Such a storm looked beautiful yet also deadly at the same time.

Along with this, Matilda and Wang Zhou had also combined their powers to form a powerful dome that trapped Alice, Cloe, and Owen within the storm.

This put them in a predicament where the rest of the Empyrean Talons could not help them.

Chapter 1783: Against the Number One Mercenary Group (Part 5)

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Swoosh!

'Earners Combination Technique: Blooming of the Blossom Storm'

The Earners Mercenary Group had finally started using their combination technique, trapping Alice, Cloe, and Owen within it.

The storm of the sakura blossoms formed by the combined techniques of Sakura and Yamamoto swallowed the trio while the barrier created by Wang Zhou and Matilda trapped them inside and preventing them from going anywhere.

Seeing this, Alucard could not help but lower his sniper rifle a little, looking at the battle with his Sanguine Eyes. He was looking for a way to break the barrier. He thought that targeting Wang Zhou and Matilda would be the answer, but he realized that the two were also under the protection of the said barrier.

Without a choice, Alucard could only trust the trio and focused his attention on aiding Leonard and Diablo, who were dealing with Crimson and Sylas, respectively.

But as he was doing that, Leonard suddenly turned around while sending a message through their team channel. "Kept this guy occupied for a moment. I'll let the others lend a hand."

Swoosh!

After that, Leonard swiftly underwent a series of transformations, activating a dual possession. He fused with the Divine Mammoth and Dusk Bear Elemental Beasts, which were the epitome of absolute strength.

Under this elemental possession, his destructive power reached the highest level, giving everyone the impression that he would be able to destroy everything with a single swing of his war axes.

Seeing that Leonard was charging straight to the dome that his teammates had created, Crimson swiftly aimed at the latter's back, planning to stop him from whatever he was planning.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

But before he could even pull the trigger for his huge cannon, a series of gunfire rang in the distance, which was immediately followed by a rain of crimson bullets pouring down at him.

"Tsk!"

Crimson knew that he could not afford to face those attacks; he was forced to lower his cannon and retreat.

He executed a series of movement techniques to dodge the raining bullets, showing everyone an amazing pathing as he approached the other party.

His Cannon Master Class might have a very destructive firepower, but his range was greatly inferior when compared to snipers. He had to approach Alucard at a decent distance to be able to exchange fire.

Another confrontation between a Cannon Master and a Vampire Gunslinger took place right after the two sides met.

But this was different from the Group Battle during the match between the Empyrean Talons and the Wild Brothers from the Seven Seas Alliance.

During that match, Alucard was a cut above his opposition, fully oppressing the latter. But in this battle, despite having a rapid fire rate and advantage in range, he was still forced to repeatedly retreat by his opponent.

Crimson was not just a simple Cannon Master; his gunfighting techniques were not inferior to the ones that Alucard was executing.

Adding the fact that a Cannon Master had a natural advantage when it came to firepower and destructive prowess, Alucard had to be careful not to exchange fire for an extended period. He had to constantly move while exchanging fire, keeping enough distance away from his opponent.

After all, it would be terrible to get swept in the explosions caused by the Cannon of his opponent. He also had to be wary of the shrapnel that the cannon shells produced during the explosions.

Realizing that he would lose in a prolonged battle, due to the rapidly shrinking area that he could maneuver in, Alucard finally decided to show everyone the special abilities of his Vampire Race.

He started conjuring some blood arrows through 'Blood Alchemy' and fired them at his opponent along with every shot that his sniper rifle fired.

At the same time, he had also summoned a pair of huge bat-like wings, which carried him into the air as he fired at his opponent.

He had started regaining the upper hand right after he secured the vantage point. Along with his blood techniques that harassed Crimson from time to time, the tide of the battle started to lean toward his favor.

But his opponent was not an ordinary player either. Realizing that he would be losing in the exchanges due to Alucard gaining a vantage point in the air, Crimson had suddenly equipped a pair of jetpacks on his back, which propelled him in the air and let him fly as well.

Their mercenary group was ranked number one for a reason. Not only did they have access to hidden quests and missions, gaining themselves some unique and special abilities, but their technology within the game was among the most advanced and had a lot of success.

In the technological area, perhaps, only the Engineering Department of the Hand of Midas could match them.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Boom!

The two fly across the 'sky' over the Starlight Bridge, exchanging fire against one another.

Alucard was using his Blood Control and similar techniques while Crimson relied on his advanced tools to match the former.

With their unique yet equally strong gunfighting techniques, their match far surpassed the standard battle between gunners.

In the meantime, Leonard had also reached the energy dome where Alice, Cloe, and Owen were currently trapped.

He did not even hesitate to leap into the air and slam his war axes on the dome, executing one of his most destructive techniques.

Boom!

But the energy dome proved to be quite sturdy as it only shook for a moment before steadyng itself.

However, Leonard was not done yet as he repeatedly swung his war axes down and strongly pounded the dome, making it tremble with great intensity.

Cracks quickly appeared right after, but it was being repaired by Matilda's spell at the same rate, putting both sides in a deadlock.

Unfortunately for the side of the Earners Mercenary Group, these little cracks were more than enough for the opposing side to break the dome.

Boom!

Then a huge figure suddenly broke through the dome and showed everyone its stunning and majestic appearance.

'Empyrean Talons Combination Technique: Elemental Guardian of Sacred Heavens'

The familiar guardian appeared once again, brandishing its elemental spear to scatter the flood of cherry blossoms that was attempting to swallow it.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Sakura and Yamamoto were forced to return to their physical forms right after suffering some elemental damage from the Elemental Guardian.

They swiftly retreated, attempting to get away from the effective range of the Elemental Guardian's attacks.

During this time, Matilda had suddenly issued some commands. "Sakura, Blossom Tides. Wang Zhou, summon the ancient stele. Yamamoto, hold Simba for a moment."

Right after that, she quickly threw her wooden staff in the air, which then transformed into an apparition of a Divine Tree.

This Divine Tree formed a domain where all her allies received a series of buffs while the enemies suffered from a weakened state.

'Guardian of the Divine Tree: Divine Forest'

At the same time, Sakura turned into petals of cherry blossoms once again, but on a much larger scale. She summoned a huge tide of blossoms that spread in every direction and melded with the domain that the Divine Tree had summoned.

Along with her actions, Wang Zhou was suddenly enveloped by an ancient aura that overwhelmed the entire dimension.

In the next instant, a huge apparition of a stone stele suddenly appeared in the middle of the forest domain, which started assaulting the Elemental Guardian with its powerful pressure.

'Guardian of the Northern Heaven: Ancient Suppression Stele'

With all these together, the Elemental Guardian started to suffer some weakening. It was as if it had suffered a deadly illness that could not be cured by anything.

To counter this, Alice, Cloe, and Owen poured more of their powers into the Elemental Guardian, preventing it from collapsing.

But make sure that they would not be spending that much energy to counter the power of the domain surrounding them, they reduced the size of the elemental guardian into a much stable state, which was only as tall as a three-story building.

Seeing this, Wang Zhou, along with the aid of the fusion domain, initiated the battle.

He transformed himself into a tall figure, almost reaching half the size of the current Elemental Guardian.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A series of intense exchanges immediately erupted as the two sides started fighting.

Meanwhile, Leonard, who was originally planning to attack Matilda to disrupt her from maintaining the domain, was locked in an intense battle against Yamamoto.

Yamamoto was also under a special state where a powerful Ancient Ghost possessed his body. His overall battle prowess might still be under what Leonard was capable of, but he was still able to hold his ground with the assistance of the fusion domain that his teammates had summoned.

The battle continued to intensify as the members of each group started to reveal their cards one after another.

The clashes between these teams had also far surpassed the previous matches, perfectly fitting for being the opening act of the playoff rounds.

The spectators did not know where to put their eyes as each battle was more than enough to blow their minds.

They could only shout to their hearts' content and flood the live chat with emoticons to express their feelings.

Adding how Miss Bunny and David dissected the details of the match to further explain how amazing the responses of each side were, the match had far surpassed the expectations of everyone.

This match had already proven itself to be worthy of being a battle between the top eight teams of the United Cup!

Chapter 1784: The Other Half of Demon Eyes

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Bang! Bang! Bang!

Boom!

As the battle from different sides of the Starlight Bridge was growing more intense, the players involved could not help but fully acknowledge one another.

The current first seed of the tournament and the number one mercenary group were worthy of their reputation.

During the battle, Diablo was paying close attention to his opponent, who seemed to possess a pair of eyes that seemed to be very similar to his had. But the factions of those eyes seemed to be somewhat different from what he had.

The first phase of his Demon Eyes was meant for gathering information from his opponent, while the second phase was for countering the collected data.

The third phase was to use the data about the other recorded experts to respond to different situations during the battle.

The fourth phase was copying all the recorded data and using it in battle. The difference between this phase from the previous one was their mode of battle.

The third phase only used the data of the recorded experts as a response to the situations that the user was facing, while the fourth phase copied all that data, which included the responses and movements of the said experts when facing certain situations, before applying them in battle.

As for his current limit, the fifth phase of the Demon Eyes was used to improve all the recorded data and immediately use it in battle.

At this phase, Diablo could be considered an expert who could create a unique martial art inside the game with the help of this special ability. Moreover, the created 'Martial Arts' was meant to counter his current opponent in the said situation.

Meanwhile, the eyes that his current opponent possessed seemed to have a similar yet also different function.

The first phase did not have any differences as they both meant to gather data, while the second phase was for copying the gathered data and applying it in battle.

The third phase was also quite similar, utilizing all the gathered data and applying it to the situations that the user was facing.

Diablo still had no idea about the fourth and fifth phases as Sylas had yet to use them in their exchanges. But if he put the latter two phases of his Demon Eyes, then he could at least have an idea of their respective functions.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

After another series of exchanges, Diablo and Sylas were forced to separate from one another due to the strong impact from the collision.

The two did not immediately resume the battle right after stabilizing their respective footing. They just stood a couple of feet away from one another while observing the other party.

Sylas smiled as he looked at Diablo. There seemed to be a great interest reflected in his eyes as he closely observed the latter. "This is interesting. To think that there is someone who also possesses that system."

He paused for a moment as the expression on his face suddenly turned serious. "What is your relationship with Dr. Luther Paige?"

Hearing the latter words of the other party, the expression on Diablo's face suddenly changed. His eyes turned wide, staring at Sylas, fully stunned.

He was not expecting to hear the name of his father from someone else's mouth, whom he did not even recognize.

Seeing the shocked expression on Diablo's face, Sylas seemed to have gotten some answer. "It seems like you do have some expression from that 'thief'. I guess the stolen half of the Deity Eyes System is in your hands."

The expression on Diablo's face suddenly turned cold when he heard those words, particularly when the word 'thief' was mentioned.

"So, you are one of them," he said solemnly as the aura surrounding him suddenly changed.

The dancing shadows around his body started to turn chaotic, further enhancing the effects of his Divine War Robe.

Hearing the other party, Sylas suddenly started laughing. "Haha Ha Ha-... so that was it! You are the son of that thief!"

He then suddenly flashed a scary expression as he continued. "Do you know what happened to the organization when your father stole that data from the project?!"

"That project is my father's research in the first place. You are the ones who have stolen it from him," said Diablo as his tone turned colder in every word.

Sylas neither admitted nor denied those words and just smiled. "I don't expect that I will see you here in the game. I guess I have to inform the higher-ups later after this match."

"Since you have already revealed yourself, then let me see how you are going to hide yourself again!" he added before releasing a strong flow of mana from his body.

At the same time, his eyes also turned brighter as he activated the fifth phase of his ocular skill, bypassing the previous phase. "But before anything else, let me gather more data from you!"

Bang!

Not long after, he suddenly charged forward, flying straight to Diablo with an unimaginable speed.

Knowing what the other party was planning, Diablo immediately aroused the full potential of his Demon Eyes, swiftly activating the fourth and fifth phases one after another.

Swoosh!

He knew that he would not be able to last that long after activating the fifth phase, especially when Professor Henry and Benedict had repeatedly warned him not to use the later phases of the Demon Eyes under the Hyperactive Immersion.

But this battle became more personal, forcing him to use all his abilities to the fullest.

Right after activation, he swiftly controlled the shadow powers around him, further enhancing his battle capabilities.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Not long after, an even more intense battle between the two broke out. Not only did the phase of their battle increase in such a crazy state, but the destructiveness of each of their techniques also reached an unimaginable level.

During the battle, he had also not forgotten to inform Shin of the situation.

Shin might not know much about him in the real world, but he still trusted this person since he was also from the Research Department and a student of Professor Henry.

He was not sure about the consequences of his action, so he had to at least entrust Shin with the rest if Diablo failed to solve the situation before he reached his absolute limit.

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In the meantime, Shin could not help but pause a little after an unexpected message from Diablo. It was sent to him privately so that the rest of the team would not know about it.

Shin could frown deeply after skimming through the message and sighed with full helplessness.

He was not sure about it, but it felt like their team was full of stubborn people when it came to certain things.

"Tsk! I guess I have to go all-out now," he mumbled as he understood that he could not let Diablo suffer from serious consequences for using that troublesome technique for an extended period.

He continued to dodge the spells coming from Flouree while giving some instructions to the rest of the team.

"Leo, we are wrapping up early. Use whatever you have to finish your opponent off."

"Alucard, there is no need to hide your more advanced techniques. Use your more advanced Blood Manipulation Technique."

"Alice, Cloe, and Owen – use that destructive combination technique that you have used during our training sessions."

The rest of the Empyrean Talons could not help but pause a little after receiving the message from Shin.

They had already discussed earlier that they would only be using the cards that the public already knew about them, saving the rest of their trump cards for future battles.

Even if there were some accidents during the process, everything was still within their expectations. They could still hold out for a little longer, fully confident that they would still win regardless of the situation.

They did not know what had happened, forcing Shin to tell them to use their cards this early.

Regardless of their doubts and confusion, they still proceeded to execute his command without question. They fully trusted him with his decisions in these situations. They knew that there must be a reason why he suddenly changed their plans midway.

...

As everyone were getting ready to follow their respective orders, Shin, who was currently exchanging moves against Flouree, suddenly halted his tracks and looked at the latter.

"It looks like we have to end this a little earlier," he said as he twirled the two swords around.

Flouree could not help but raise her brows a little when she heard those words, slightly confused. Regardless, those words were also quite favorable for her.

She knew her limit quite well. She also understood that she was far from matching Shin in an extended battle, as she could only use the 'Celestial Magic Rule' for a limited time. She was still far from fully mastering these powers that she had recently acquired.

Moreover, she was already forcing herself to the limit after using 'Rules' together to match Shin's quadruple possession.

Since Shin wanted to end this battle earlier, she would welcome it with open arms.

Chapter 1785: The First to Score Victory

...

Right after 'agreeing' with Shin to end this battle with a final exchange, Flouree swiftly floated higher in the air while joining the tips of her fingers together.

At the same time, a massive ancient array appeared behind her, almost covering the galaxy above her and Shin.

The ancient array spun along with the magic patterns that it had on it before sucking all the energies from the surroundings.

Her magic staff also spun rapidly before her as she chanted a series of ancient syllables.

A few moments later, she finished chanting out the spell and extended her arms forward, pointing her joined fingers toward Shin.

'Symphony of Magic: Forbidden Spell – Grand Magic Orchestra'

Swoosh!

In the next instant, the massive array behind her suddenly released a blinding light before a barrage of spells suddenly came out from it and started bombarding Shin.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

In the meantime, Shin suddenly took a stance in the air, holding the inheritance sword [Yamato] and legendary sword [Durendal] in each of his hands.

The gorgeous flames produced by the legendary sword danced around, revealing a massive apparition of a majestic phoenix on his left side.

The black-and-white lightning also danced around the inheritance sword as it projected an image of a ferocious tiger on his right side, which represent the fusion form of Whitie and Blackie.

Not long after, he suddenly thrust the [Durendal] forward before swinging the [Yamato] immediately after.

The thrust sent a pointed, blazing pillar forward while the swing released a huge lightning crescent wave.

Shriek!

'Four Symbol Scripture: Celestial Vermillion Bird – Pheonix Annihilation'

Roar!

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Seventh Movement – Thunder Eclipse'

The two skills immediately greeted the incoming rain of spells, one after another.

Boom!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The blazing pillar thrust forward, piercing through the storm of spells and creating a path for the following attack behind it.

With this pillar having finally broken through the barrage of spells pouring down from above, it had already exhausted all its power, which made it slowly dissipate into beautiful embers.

Swoosh!

Not long after, the lightning crescent swiftly zoomed in, cutting through the air and flying straight to Flouree, who was still in the ending posture of her forbidden spell.

Boom!

Crackle! Crackle!

But before it could even reach its target, a thick but transparent barrier suddenly blocked its advance, making it fail.

However, it had already achieved its purpose!

The barrier immediately crumbled right after withstanding the destructive power of that lightning crescent.

Swoosh!

What followed was the swift figure that appeared before Flouree in almost an instant.

"Ah!" Flouree wanted to continue casting another spell to protect herself. But before she could even open her mouth, an intense nausea suddenly assaulted her head, making her spell fail to activate.

She knew that she had already reached her limit at maintaining her current state, forcing her to exit her special form.

Swoosh!

"Ugh!"

Immediately after, a sharp sword suddenly stabbed her chest, piercing through her heart and coming out of her back.

Shin stared straight into her eyes while holding the hilt of the [Yamato] with both of his hands and pressing it forward.

In that brief moment, Shin understood that he was still quite lucky. Flouree was still far from fully mastering that mysterious power and could not maintain the special form for a long time.

If she could still hold on for a bit longer, then this battle would most likely continue for a few more minutes at most.

"A pity," mumbled Flouree as she stared intently at Shin's eyes before adding. "The next match will not end that easily."

Bang!

Right after those words left her mouth, the lightning current that was flowing through the blade of the [Yamato] intensified before exploding.

Alongside it, Flouree's body also exploded into specks of light, signifying that she had already died.

Shin slightly frowned as he looked at the huge wound on his abdomen, which almost severed his body.

"That was close," he mumbled before casting the 'Sacred Light' Elemental Skill on himself, restoring his HP Bar to a healthy state and healing the gruesome wound.

Not long after, he rushed toward the other side of the Starlight Bridge, where the battle was still underway. Even though he was confident that the others would be able to take care of themselves, it would not hurt to rush back and lend them a hand to avoid any accidents.

...

During the final exchange between Shin and Flouree, the other side of the battlefield was also reaching its most crucial stage.

The Elemental Guardian continued to exchange more blows with the transformed Wang Zhou, producing a series of explosions in every collision.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

BOOM!

Not long after, Wang Zhou was forced to retreat as he received a powerful attack from the Elemental Guardian.

Raising his head, he saw that the elemental spear he was holding was currently surrounded by a power current of energy produced by multiple elements.

A suddenly ominous feeling overwhelmed him when he looked at the other party, sending shivers down his spine. "I've got a bad feeling about this."

It did not take long for the opposing party to prove him right as the Elemental Guardian had suddenly pointed the elemental spear upwards, sending a towering pillar of elemental light into the galaxy above them.

The elemental light seemed to have pierced through multiple layers of the universe, as the space seemed to have caved in at the spot where it was connected.

Not long after, the Elemental Guardian suddenly swung the spear down, dragging all the elemental energy around it and tearing through the space.

'Empyrean Talons Combination Technique: Elemental Calamity of Nine Heavens'

Seeing the destructiveness of the attack, Wang Zhou did not dare to be negligent as he signaled Matilda and Sakura to activate their combined domains into full power.

He had also fused with the Ancient Suppressing Stele, propelling all his powers to an unimaginable level.

Right after receiving the full buffs from the domain, he had suddenly raised his shield, planning to block the incoming attack head-on.

It was already impossible to escape the rage of this destructive attack, so he had no choice but to face it with the best of his abilities and hoping to survive the final collision later.

"Arrgh!"

Boom!

At the same time, Leonard had coordinated with the Elemental Guardian, locking Yamamoto in the path of the descending attack.

Yamamoto could only think that Leonard had gone insane for not leaving the range of such a destructive attack just to pin him down. In his mind, this crazy guy seemed to be sacrificing himself just to drag him into death.

"You're crazy!" he could only shout at Leonard when he realized that it was already impossible to escape the range of the destructive elemental storm.

Leonard just gave him a devious grin as he continued to stand before Yamamoto, ready to stop the latter if he had any thoughts of escaping.

With resentful eyes, Yamamoto could only summon his remaining powers to reinforce Wang Zhou, who was already prepared to face the descending calamity head-on.

Boom!

Not long after, a blinding light of destruction illuminated the entire Starlight Bridge, resembling a supernova exploding in the middle of the galaxy.

The entire bridge shook as a series of explosions repeatedly bombarded it.

When everything settled down, the spectators could see the figures of Alice, Cloe, and Owen lying on the ground. They were completely drained of energy and thoroughly exhausted.

They were still alive, but they could no longer move their bodies as the drawbacks of using such a powerful technique were already kicking in.

It was already impossible for them to continue fighting.

Meanwhile, Leonard slowly walked out of the settling cloud of dust, puzzling everyone. They were pretty much confused by his appearance. Not only had he survived such a destructive explosion, but he also had not received any serious damage, especially when there were no visible injuries on his body.

As for their opponents, they were no longer present on the battlefield; not even their corpses could be found on the Starlight Bridge.

This told everyone that, just like Flouree, they had turned into specks of light and dissipated in the air.

...

In the meantime, on a secluded spot of the bridge, Crimson could be found lying on the ground with multiple weapons struck on his body.

These weapons of different varieties seemed to be made through Blood Alchemy. Their features clearly told everyone that they were made of blood with their color alone.

Crimson was pinned on the Starlight Bridge by these Blood Weapons, signifying that he had already lost this battle.

His advanced tools, such as the jetpacks, the cannons, and other broken segments of different scientific weapons, were scattered on the ground.

The marks left on them were more than enough to tell everyone that they had been torn by sharp weapons or pierced by high-caliber bullets.

The audience did not know what exactly happened on this side due to the blinding light earlier. But based on Crimson's current appearance and Alucard's, who had yet to exit his 'Awakened Vampire Form,' it was not hard to imagine that a one-sided battle had taken place on this part of the battlefield.

Among all the members of the Earners Mercenary Group, only Sylas was left behind.

Seeing that all his teammates had already perished in battle, Sylas knew that there was no point in continuing.

Even if he found it a little pity that he could not gather more data from the Empyrean Talons, especially Diablo, who seemed to possess the other half of 'his' eyes, he had no choice but to give up any resistance.

He stared at Diablo for a while before exiting the battlefield, signaling the system to announce the match's result.

\*Ding\*

System: Victory – Empyrean Talons!

Chapter 1786: The Battle Mode and Format for the Re-Match

...

It took the live audience and online viewers quite a while to process the result of the match due to how suddenly it ended. Moreover, the ending was quite stunning, especially the last few exchanges that both sides had used.

But what truly stunned everyone was the final combination attack that Alice, Cloe, and Owen had used during that final exchange. That destructive skill that could tear down space was so terrifying that it could even make the viewers feel the terror of it.

Moreover, the aftermath of that combination technique was more destructive than it appeared to be. Everyone just could not see it clearly due to the blinding light that it produced during the final moments.

But with the eyes of the top experts of the game, they could tell that this technique was much more powerful than what they could see on the surface. From their analysis, the damage that it could make would be much larger than it appeared to be. If not for the special features of the Starlight Bridge, then the aftermath that they would be seeing might not just be that blinding light.

Everyone was only able to respond after regaining themselves for a while. They had only gone into an uproar after seeing the members of the Empyrean Talons disappear from the battlefield.

"Whoa! That's intense!"

"That is crazy! That battle is nuts!"

"Insane!"

"I am very pumped right now! I want to go to the Divine Arena right now and beat some \*sses!"

"I can even fight my pet right now!"

"Who wants to duel me? Let's do it here, right now!"

The people took quite a while before they could even calm themselves. The live audience discussed with one another even though they did not know the other party, while the online viewers could only flood the live chat with a variety of emoticons or memes to express their current feelings.

They were full of energy and excitement that they had the urge to fight anyone at that very moment.

These feelings were further ignited when Miss Bunny and David broke down the details of the match and discussed it with the audience. They did not go too deep into the details, but it was more than enough for everyone to notice the hidden details that they could not see during the match.

They had taken the entire break time to discuss all of these and only rested for a few minutes until the system had informed everyone that the next match was about to start.

But there was still enough time for the pair to calm everyone down before it started. Miss Bunny and David had even joked with everyone to further calm their nerves and focus on the next match.

...

Meanwhile, as everyone was lost in the previous match, the members of the Empyrean Talons stayed in their private lounge prepared by the system.

They did not immediately leave as they also wanted to watch the next match from this private room and discuss the details together.

But before the match could even start, they had received a message from the tournament officials, which told them about the decision of the Earners Mercenary Group for the mode and format of the next match.

Winner-Takes-It-All – All-Out Battle, Team Competition.

The mode and overall format did not much surprise Shin and the others due to the result of the previously ended match. With the ten points that the Empyrean Talons had earned for winning that match, the opposing side had to win at least a perfect score for the next match to force a tie-breaker.

The Earners Mercenary Group could not afford to choose the standard format since there were risks of losing some points from the Single Matches and Group Battle once things went slightly wrong.

By choosing the Winner-Takes-It-All Mode, they could not only guarantee to get a minimum of ten points by winning the match, but they could also snatch all the points of their opponent once they won the next match.

This was the most logical choice that they could have, especially with the current situation that they were in.

But what made the Empyrean Talons furrow their brows was the type of team competition that the opposing side had chosen.

All-Out Battle.

This was a type of format that forced one of the groups to send the maximum number of members they had in battle, so long as it would not exceed twenty. After all, what was next to twenty was at least fifty members, which was the minimum requirement needed for 'War', which was the format only available for 'War Tournaments' like 'Guild Wars' and such.

All the available members of the challenged team must be present on the field, forcing them to show their true powers.

Shin could not help but fall into deep thought as he tried to recall the details about this format. "They are forcing us to send all our players to the next match. What are they planning?"

He could at least guess that the opposing side was trying to cook something for them, which would surely surprise everyone.

After all, the Empyrean Talons were somewhat famed for having a very scary army, which debuted in the professional tournament during their match against Hien Workshop.

That battle was terrifying enough to scare most of the teams due to how large that army was. The combined forces of Chaotic Luck's famed Legion of Chaotic Sun, Huahua's Ghost Soldiers, and Akailu's Monster Pets were strong enough to be called a true army.

It might even be scarier than Immortal's Undying Army, which made everyone terrified when it first appeared before everyone.

At that time, he had bullied everyone with the number advantage alone. But it was only enough to suppress the most regular people and not effective against the most elite experts of the game, such as the top-ranking Godlike Players, as well as the Monster Class Players at an earlier time.

But when he started utilizing the elite route of the Necromancer Class, where he could summon the more advanced and elite undead creatures, things started to turn around.

Adding the scheming mind that he had and the top-class battle strategies that he had earned him a spot in the Top Strategist List of the virtual world, the threat level that he could pose to everyone had already reached an unimaginable level.

It was also at that time that he solidified himself as the title of Lich God.

At this moment, the army that the Empyrean Talons had was no way inferior to what Immortal had back then, even surpassing it by a level.

At this point, everyone was also aware of the Devil Strategist that the Empyrean Talons possessed, who was said to be not inferior to any strategist within the said list.

If the army and such a strategist were put together on the field, it was not that hard to guess the outcome of the battle.

When Shin thought about this, he could not help but feel a little suspicious. He could tell that the opposing side was scheming something after putting all this information together.

He could also say that the Earners Mercenary Group was also trying to put as many of its experts on the field as possible, especially since all its members were Monster Class Players of the previous player rankings.

It was not hard to tell that the quality of their members was 'slightly' better than the Empyrean Talons.

Putting this into consideration and adding the destructive powers of a Cannon Master and a Magister as well as their large-scale skills and spells, Shin could understand what the opposing side was thinking.

"This may be a little tricky to deal with," he mumbled while furrowing his brows.

He then turned to Leonard and asked. "Do you have any information on the elite members of the Earners Mercenary Group?"

Leonard frowned a little before nodding. "I have some. I've got it from both Little Jiang and Miss Bunny."

Shin nodded as he eased the solemnness that his face was conveying. "Let's take a look at it later and try to figure out their possible lineup for the re-match."

"A hundred Monster Class Players? Tsk! That is indeed troublesome," commented Alucard as he also recalled what he knew about their current opponents.

Akailu, who was sitting beside him, could only nod his head in agreement. "That is indeed scary. If they are really trying to take advantage of the quality of their members as well as the fact that we have some Rookies on our side, then I can also see what they are trying to do."

"I wonder if Arthur will be back by that time," said Cloe. "It will be a little easier for us to deal with any situations at that time since we will be having two tanks to both hold the front and guard the rear."

With Owen and Arthur together, they could be more aggressive with their strategies and even more flexible as well.

Moreover, the synergy and full potential between the Monster Trio and Cloe would be fully showcased at that time, showing everyone the true might of the Empyrean Talons.

Hearing her, Shin could only purse his lips as he was thinking the same. "Let's just hope that he can make it in time."

Chapter 1787: Scheme?

...

The current problem at hand was temporarily set aside by the Empyrean Talons as they wanted to focus more on the next match.

The next match was between the Pandemonium Descendants and Slayers Adventurer Team, which would decide their next opponent if they were successful at defeating the Earners Mercenary Group.

They were quite familiar with these two teams as they had some relationship with them. There was no need to talk about the Slayers Adventurer Team as Shin and the others were friends with their core moments.

Lawless and Faker even lived with Shin, Leonard, Arthur, and David in the real world, so their familiarity with one another was not that simple.

The three were also quite familiar with Morgan, who was the main marksman of the team, as he was an elite cadet from the forces under the Springfield Family. He was also the one who helped Shin look for

Leonard's whereabouts when he was abducted to one of the secret laboratories of the Shadow Alliance in the Central Region.

The Empyrean Talons had also collaborated with them quite a few times before, especially during their initial exploration of the Frozen Kingdom.

As for the Pandemonium Descendants, the Empyrean Talons had already clashed with them quite a lot. It was not even strange to say that these two were mortal enemies at this point, especially when Shin had already 'sabotaged' their plans on multiple occasions.

Shin and the rest of the Empyrean Talons had quite an impression of the Pandemonium Descendants, especially when one of their members, Diablo, had quite a history with them.

There might be no one else within the game who was more familiar with the overwhelming power of the Pandemonium Descendants than their group. This included those who were from the Corrupted Cult and the Demonic Churches.

But what happened next not only surprised everyone but also confused them.

Not only did the Pandemonium Descendants lose the match, but they also lost it pretty badly. It was a one-sided battle from start to finish.

However, this was still not enough to shock everyone. But it was the current roster that the Pandemonium Descendants had. They seemed to have changed their entire roster in this match, not sending their overpowered members, which were supposedly from their most elite group – the Pandemonium Troupe.

...

"What is happening? Why are they not sending anyone from the Pandemonium Troupe?" Leonard frowned deeply as he continued to stare at the screen projected before them.

"What are those guys planning this time?" mumbled Diablo as he was also quite confused at the current situation.

"From the looks of it, they seem to be planning to give up on the tournament," commented Alucard after falling silent for a moment.

It was quite obvious already! Anyone could see it as well, especially after seeing that none of the Troupe Members made an appearance, not even one of them.

"They must be planning to do something somewhere else," said Diablo as he started recalling the operations that the Pandemonium Descendants had done recently.

Shin did not have to make a guess as he could already see what they were planning. "The invasion of the Bug Tribe!"

Hearing that, the expression on everyone's face could not help but turn stiff. This news was indeed huge, especially with the current state of the war that was taking place on the Soaring Continent.

The war between the two major factions of the game was already reaching an unimaginable height, indicating that the most crucial moments were already near.

Diablo also could not think of anything else that could force the Pandemonium Descendants to drop the United Cup aside from this issue.

"Isn't it still early? From what I remember, there is still quite a lot of time before it happens," said Shin with a frown as he opened the quest panel related to this matter.

But the expression on his face immediately turned grim when he saw that there was only an entire month (in-game time) left before the vanguard forces of the Bug Tribe arrive.

Fortunately, it no longer mentioned that he would suffer any penalties if they failed to spot the descent of the Demon Army.

"Does this mean that the Glutton Demon King of the Flies has already finished descending on Beelzebub's body?" asked Cloe with a slight frown.

"It may not be the case, but he must have already received quite a large portion of it to stabilize the bridge between the Atlas World and Hell," said Diablo as he shook his head.

When it came to familiarity with the matters related to the Pandemonium Descendants, Diablo was the clearest about them.

He then turned to the others and asked. "So, what's your plan about this?"

Shin fell silent for a moment before shaking his head. "We can't do anything about it for a moment. We are still too busy exploring the Awaken Continent and the Forgotten Sea. We don't have much time on our hands."

"Additionally, we are also currently in the middle of an intense tournament. The time is conflicting a little too much."

"If the United Cup happens to end before the scheduled descent, then it will be perfect. We can just go back to the Aurora Continent and participate in the war later."

He paused for a moment as he turned to the rest of the team. "Just keep an eye on the news from the Churches for now, especially when it comes to the missions that they release."

He then added immediately. "But for now, let's focus on preparing for our match. I've got a bad feeling about the current format that our opponents are planning."

Everyone then nodded before logging out of the game and entering their team's virtual space. For now, they were planning to review the details of the battle along with the analyses that Miss Bunny and David had made during the previous match.

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Real World, Soaring Continent

Central Region, Capital City

At the same time, an advanced military armored vehicle arrived at the Springfield Household.

"We've arrived, General," said the driver to the person sitting in the back seat.

That person sitting at the back seemed to be taking a comfortable nap, given how relaxed he was. He looked like a very old person given the deep wrinkles that he had and the white strands of hair over his head.

His white facial hair seemed to be properly trimmed as it made him look quite clean and manly despite his old age.

There was also a noticeable monocle on the side of his right eye. It looked like a thin transparent glass which seemed to be made of very advanced technology, especially when it was attached to a mechanical device stuck on his right ear.

He was wearing a military uniform, which was slightly different from what the soldiers of the Springfield Family had, indicating that he belonged to a different faction.

But the eye-catching batches attached to the left side of his chest could not be ignored, particularly the five-star epaulettes on his shoulders that indicated his military rank.

This person slowly opened his eyes, which immediately released a cold glint. The aura surrounding him also changed, seemingly releasing some invisible electricity that affected his surroundings.

He controlled this special energy and suppressed it within him before turning the driver. "You can wait for him in her. I'll be going alone."

That driver nodded his head silently as he watched the old man open the door and get off the military vehicle.

At the entrance of the Springfield Household, Samuel was already waiting for this person, emitting an equally strong pressure.

He wanted the other party to reach him before greeting the latter. "So, you really arrived."

The old man sneered at Samuel before saying. "We may be rivals and competitors, but we are still on the same side."

"If someone is threatening the 'peace' within our continent, then I will naturally be willing to set aside our conflicts and join forces with you to protect our homeland," he added as he approached strongly.

The Soaring Continent's military forces were said to be the strongest in the world, but there were many internal conflicts within them due to differences in beliefs.

The Military Circle was in constant conflicts, schemes, and plots against one another, but when it came to true problems, they would unite with one another to ward off the external forces together.

"The World Government is growing ambitious recently and setting its sights on our lands and resources. My Green Family can't just sit idly and let them devour us, especially when those from the Underworld Organizations are also hungrily waiting in the dark," said the old man solemnly before adding. "I would rather join forces with my archrival rather than jump into the pit of fire."

Samuel grinned widely when he heard those words as he nodded. "As expected, you are still the same after all this time, Desmond Green."

He then turned slightly while giving the other party an inviting gesture. "Let's go inside. The others are already waiting."

Chapter 1788: The Other Side of the Bracket

.....

The next day was another big event as the other bracket of the playoff rounds would be taking place.

The matchup for this bracket was also quite interesting, especially when the first faceoff was between the long-time rivals of virtual games – the rivalry between the Dragon Pavilion and the Hydra Guild.

This matchup had already gone down in the history of the virtual reality games, especially when they were almost been at odds with one another whenever they met.

There was no clear winner between the two forces as they had pretty close wins and losses against one another.

Everyone was very excited about this match as they knew that this was going to be a great battle, as it always had been.

Sure enough, the two teams had delivered what everyone was expecting. The battle was so close and intense that the players watching the match were unable to contain their excitement and burst out in a crazy uproar during the entire match.

Each round was so close that it was impossible to guess who would be winning the match even until the final moments.

The Dragon Pavilion and Hydra Guild were too familiar with one another, so their arrangements did not include many schemes and just relied on the skills of their members.

In this match, everyone had also seen the most famous members of each team, such as their most elite groups, the Dragon Talons and Hydra Heads.

Both elite groups were composed of the strongest and most skilled members of each side, who were either Godlike Players or Maverick Gods. There were also some Peak Titled Rankers and Peak Maverick Rankers, who could rival some of the gods standing at the apex of the Godly Ranking List.

Each matchup in this round could only be described as one word – Bloody!

In the end, the final result proved that the Dragon Pavilion had a slight advantage due to their good form. They had won the opening Single Match of the first round and barely lost the second one.

Then they proceeded to the Group Battle of the second round, which they had unfortunately lost due to the miracle play of Phyton, who had used a Life-Risking Strike to exchange his life to eliminate the core member of the Dragon Pavilion in that 3-vs-3 round.

The Team Competition, on the other hand, was very chaotic as both the heads of the two teams had made their appearance.

Yuan, the Pavilion Master of the Dragon Pavilion, and Serpent, the Guild Leader of the Hydra Guild, had exchanged tactics that not only targeted the weakness of each side but also heightened the strengths of their teams.

These two were also included on the current Strategists List due to their style of leading the troops.

Yuan's style of commanding his team was quite straightforward, relying on the overwhelming strength of his members and their solid team composition. He was even leading the group personally at times when it was needed, also acting as a great general who would lead his army to victory.

Meanwhile, his archrival, Serpent, relied on tricks and schemes. His style of leading focused more on luring his enemies to commit a mistake and creating opportunities. He was the type of strategist with a cunning mind who was filled with tricks and underhanded methods up his sleeves.

The two sides had a very different style of leading their team, which showcased the distinct styles of their teams even more.

But at this time, the one who had emerged victorious was the side of the Dragon Pavilion, which had a better team composition for the matchup.

However, the Hydra Guild had not lost that badly, as they had proved to be a great menace even until the end. They had even found multiple opportunities where they almost turned the situation around.

If not for Yuan suppressing their frontline by himself at that time, then they would have most likely lost that battle.

But at the same time, it was also clear that the Hydra Guild had not shown everything they could in that battle, especially when Serpent seemed to be more focused on observing their opponents rather than winning the match.

It had been a while since their sides had clashed against one another, so he might have wanted to collect more information about their opponents rather than winning the match.

After all, the final score was quite close, with 6 to 4 points.

There were still many chances they could turn this around in the rematch two days later. Then there were also the other changes of the two sides clashing against one another in the future, such as the Guild Wars Tournament or other forms of war within the game.

From the eyes of the experts, this cunning guy was surely thinking about the bigger picture and how they would win in the long run.

Yuan was also aware of this, especially when he was very familiar with this long-time rival of his. But he did not care since he was the type to focus more on what was in front of him and win every battle he encountered.

Regardless of what adversity he was facing, he would charge through it with force and without looking back.

This was what most of the godly experts of the virtual games admired him for the most.

...

Meanwhile, the next up after this one was the competition between the defending champions against the unexpected participants of this tournament – God's Paradise and the Hand of Midas.

There was no need to question the strength of God's Paradise, especially with such a huge number of all-star players on their side. Among all the teams participating in the United Cup, only the Empyrean Talons and Earners Mercenary Group could match them in this area.

But even then, God's Paradise had the slight advantage due to them being the defending champions.

The lead players of their team, as well as the rest of the core members, had distinct abilities that could cover all kinds of situations. They had a lot of strong points that allowed them to be a team with almost no weaknesses.

Meanwhile, their opponents were not that simple either. As the Chiefs of the Hand of Midas, they were among the peak when it came to production classes.

With this information alone, no one would dare to underestimate them, especially when their strength came from special tools, odd potions, and unique equipment. On top of that, all of these would be the best of the best since all these Chiefs were the best within their respective lifestyle professions.

They had also repeatedly proved to everyone that their classes were not just for crafting, as they had already beaten quite a lot of people during the entire tournament and the other incidents where they had showcased their battle capabilities.

The first Single Match of the first round did not surprise everyone that much since God's Paradise had won it pretty easily.

But the next one shocked everyone as Black Hammer had almost trashed his opponent. Moreover, the representative that God's Paradise had sent for this match was not a simple player either – it was the Berserker Swordsman 'Jihan', who was quite a famous Maverick God.

Jihan might not be as strong as the all-star players within the tournament, but he was still a powerful Maverick God, nevertheless. But despite all his achievements, he was still beaten very badly to the point that he became a regular player in the eyes of everyone compared to his opponent.

Black Hammer, this number one blacksmith within the game, had proved to everyone that he was not just good at crafting and forging top-notch equipment, but in combat as well.

The second round, the Group Battle, was quite a shocker as well. Tinker, the best engineer, Harmony, the best tailor, and Adept Hands, the best alchemist, had won the 3-vs-3 battle in a very convincing manner.

It was not as one-sided as how Black Hammer had won the previous match, but it was still a very strong victory.

These three had shown everyone how a person of their profession could fight against powerful opponents, even against strong Godlike Players of the game.

Tinker had shown everyone how powerful the advanced tools and mechanical equipment of an engineer could be when fighting. His mechanical box alone, which could transform into different kinds of weapons, was more than enough to tempt all men to change their classes.

With his flashy moves and futuristic equipment, people had even given him a special title – Battle Mechanic Tinker.

Meanwhile, Harmony had used special strings or threads during the battle. She kept on flicking her fingers, which then pulled and tugged the almost invisible strings that either wrapped themselves around her targets or sliced through their flesh.

The way she moved looked very cool, especially when she manipulated these strings along with the kite daggers attached to their tips.

Adept Hands, on the other hand, looked like a crazy witch who kept on throwing her potions everywhere. These special solutions exploded everyone, producing a variety of effects.

Some of them created a poison fog while the others were just plain explosives, which dealt some negative statuses to their opponents.

With these three oddities, the representatives of God's Paradise were quite lost and unable to properly respond, leading to their loss.

As for the final round, the Team Competition, the Hand of Midas did not send their main roster, which surprised everyone once again.

This round did not arouse that much excitement from everyone as the God's Paradise had won it somewhat one-sidedly, especially when Martial God Asura was among their ranks.

With this, God's Paradise had won the match with a 6 to 4 score, just like the previous one.

Such a score surprised everyone very much, as they were expecting this to be a somewhat one-sided fight. This also made everyone look forward to the re-match between these two teams, especially when they could tell that both sides would surely give their all.

The people even thought that the mysterious guild leader of the Hand of Midas would be making their appearance.

Chapter 1789: Unexpected Breakthrough (Part 1)

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After watching the battles from the other bracket, the Empyrean Talons immediately went into intensive training.

They had also reviewed the battle videos about the other members of the Earners Mercenary Group, particularly the ones with the highest fame outside the virtual gaming industry.

Shin had even consulted David and Shiella about their opinions regarding these people, as most of them were from their generation. Even the ones who were more famous than they were from the previous generations had also been reviewed.

Even though these two did not fight against those Monster Class Players older than them, they still had some ideas about them, given their respective reputations.

Based on the analyses that they had made, there was a very low chance for the even older experts to make their appearance, as most of them had already retired from virtual gaming, while the others had already broken through to their respective achievements in the disciplines that they were practicing.

Unless the gaming company released the restriction that was preventing those with higher realms in their respective achievements from showcasing their real powers, they couldn't make an appearance in this game.

It was still too early for that to happen.

David had told Shin that they had to only focus on those from the same generation as Wizard King Julius and those from his peers, as well as the younger ones from the generation after them.

After narrowing down the list, Shin had already gotten some ideas about the possible arrangements that the Earners Mercenary Group would be using against them.

Shin had even arranged some specific training practices that targeted these styles in their virtual space.

Fortunately, the time flow within the virtual space was the same as the game, giving them three whole days of practice before their match.

Naturally, they still had to log out to do their respective routines in the real world and also to get some rest at the same time, further lessening their training time.

But they still managed to do everything that Shin had arranged for the training.

It was just a pity that there were no signs of Arthur, which somewhat confirmed that he would not be able to make it in time for this match.

He even asked Nathan about it. But the latter had only told him not to worry about Arthur since he was doing fine in their Ancestral Land.

Nathan had only told him that the longer Arthur took, the better the benefits he would receive during his breakthrough.

When Shin thought about Arthur's breakthrough, Shin could not help but think about his current situation.

He was only lacking a single piece at this moment, which was to create his version of Spiritual Force, but he felt that he would be stuck at this stage for a bit longer.

He just hoped that it would not take that long, as he did not want to be left behind by his peers.

...

On this day, the morning before the match later in the night, Shin felt something strange while he was meditating under David's supervision.

"Huh!?"

David had also noticed it after sensing the strange fluctuations of energy around Shin. He swiftly rose from his lying position and turned to his Junior Brother while activating his Enlightened Eyes.

That was when he saw that the invisible energy surrounding Shin was being absorbed at an insane rate as if they were being pulled by something.

"This!"

He did not have to guess what was happening, especially after seeing the five different elements that were revolving around Shin.

He quickly regained his composure and immediately shouted at Shin. "Quick! Activate the Jade Kirin Scripture along with your Perfect Four Symbol Scripture!"

Shin did not even hesitate and swiftly activated the two scriptures along with the special breathing technique that was produced by combining the five elemental breathing techniques.

Not long after, the innate attributes within Shin's body acted accordingly and followed the simulation of the techniques that he had activated.

Shin was trying to absorb all the energies from the surroundings while keeping all of them under control.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

David had also moved at the same time, swiftly activating the Grand Gather Array that his master had set up ahead of time to complement Shin's rate of absorption.

He did not dare to make any mistakes as this was the most crucial part of Shin's breakthrough process. Even if it would not directly help him reach the next stage, it would still help him build a solid foundation for it.

Once Shin had completed this process, he would be able to create his version of Spiritual Force.

After this, he would then reach the peak of the Grandmaster Realm, propelling his Mentalism Attainment to match those at Martial Artist at the Ethereal Opening Stage of the Ascension Realm.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Boom!

Not long after, five huge diagrams appeared behind Shin, which represented a divine beast each – the White Tiger of the West, the Azure Dragon of the East, the Black Tortoise of the North, the Vermillion Bird of the South, and the Yellow Dragon of the Center.

The four beasts, along with the elements that they possessed, mental, wood, water, and fire, revolved around the Yellow Dragon as well as the earth element it represented.

These four diagrams of the four guardian beasts continued to revolve around the one at the center before slowly melding and fusing, forming a larger diagram.

At the same time, the five elements continued to move around before fusing and taking the form of a five-colored lightning.

Shin did not want what was happening around him as he continued to chant the mantras of the Four Symbol Scripture along with the Jade Kirin Scripture.

Seeing that everything was going smoothly, David heaved a sigh of relief. He believed that Shin would not face any problem later if he continued to be this steady.

Shin had already built a very solid foundation for his breakthrough, so there was not much of a problem preventing him from reaching the next stage.

So long as there were no accidents in the process, Shin would slowly transition to the Peak of the Grandmaster Realm.

Boom!

But before he could even fully relax, something unexpected suddenly occurred.

He could not help but curse a little after seeing what was happening. "I knew that this would not go as smoothly as I am hoping for."

Whoosh!

As the Divine Beasts Diagram was formed behind Shin, the ground where he was sitting suddenly trembled as a huge Yin-Yang Symbol appeared underneath him, along with the huge Eight Trigrams surrounding it.

Seeing that image, David knew that Uno, who was residing within Shin, had also taken advantage of this situation to make a breakthrough.

Moreover, from the look of it, Uno seemed to be waiting for this opportunity for quite a while now. It was as if he were only waiting for Shin to break through so that he could finally do the same.

However, it was not just a simple breakthrough process, but a true breakthrough!

Uno seemed to be forcefully trying to step into the Ethereal Opening Stage directly, which was also forcing Shin to forcibly bypass the natural process and directly reach the Peak of the Grandmaster Realm.

David could not help but curse a little as he knew that this would cause some disturbances within Shin's body.

Due to the different physiques that the two possessed, along with the set of special talents that they had, this 'dual' breakthrough produced a series of ripples that could affect the two of them.

But since it was a breakthrough process, David could not do anything yet, since he would only be messing up the entire process if he forcefully stopped everything.

He could also not disturb either of the two, as it would risk their safety once a minor mistake occurred.

All he could do right now was pray that Shin and Uno would be able to synchronize with one another perfectly well during the entire process, moving forward together.

There was no retreating in this process as it could only jeopardize the entire procedure if even a hint of hesitation appeared.

Even though this was a dangerous process, David could also understand why Uno was taking the risk. The two shared the same body, so if one of them was breaking through to the next stage of their respective discipline, the other had to have to follow to maintain the balance.

At the same time, the benefits that they could get from it would also double once they were successful.

Due to this, the Five Cycle Embryo that Shin had created previously was activated by itself along with the newly formed Spiritual Force.

The Divinity Grade Mental Energy had also poured out from the Spirit Pagoda (his version of Niwan Palace that was uniquely created by the Four Symbol Scripture). Along with the Five Elemental Lighting, this pure and violent Mental Energy constructed the entire pagoda and completed all its nine floors.

This signified that Shin had already stepped into the Peak of the Grandmaster Realm.

Along with it, the new permanent Qi Reinforcement Skill engraved on Shin's body also released an intense light along with the True Sacred Qi and Primal Demonic Power that his dual core within his dantian was producing.

Uno had yet to give a new name for this Qi Reinforcement Skill after he combined the Sacred God Physique and Chaotic Demon Body previously.

At this moment, the Qi Reinforcement Skill had already fused with the Heavenly Martial Body just like how Shin had fused his Spiritual Embryo with his five innate elements, forming a new Martial Body.

Five Cycle Embryo and Divine Marital Body, these two physiques were currently active along with the respective energies that Shin and Uno were emitting – the Divinity Grade Five Elemental Lightning and the True Sacred Qi and Primal Demonic Power.

These powers were clashing as they tried to assert their dominance over the 'main vessel'.

Sensing this, Shin and Uno simultaneously deactivated their current states, planning to consolidate their current states through meditation.

They might have already stepped into the Peak of the Grandmaster Realm and Ethereal Opening Stage, respectively, but they had yet to adjust to their current powers fully.

It would still take some time before they could fully transform their current powers into real strength.

They would most likely have to consolidate their respective realms for a week or two before they could fully call themselves experts in the said realms.

Regardless, they had already achieved this unexpected breakthrough.

David, who was watching from the side, could not help but curse as he realized something. "Tsk! So that is why Uno waited until now before breaking through. He is really like a cheat!"

Chapter 1790: Unexpected Breakthrough (Part 2)

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After consolidating his current state, he slowly opened his eyes. Despite his accidental breakthrough, he was not showing any signs of joy and intensely wore a confused expression on his face.

He turned to David as he asked. "Senior Brother-... what was that just now? Why did I just enter the breakthrough process all of a sudden?"

Hearing that, David could not help but sigh as he spoke. "I am not exactly sure either, but it must be related to Uno. Who knows what he has done when you have just formed your Spiritual Force?"

"Thankfully, it was all successful, or else Master will surely kill me if a real accident happened," he added, complaining.

He then turned to Shin as he said. "If you want to know more details about it, then you must ask that guy and understand your situation a little more."

He paused for a moment as he hesitated before sighing. "But I do have some ideas."

Shin turned to David, waiting for his Senior Brother to explain it further.

David thought for a moment before saying. "One of the reasons might be because of what happened right before you awoke from your deep slumber."

"At that time, Uno had already met all the requirements for breaking through the Foundation Realm and set one of his feet on reaching the Ascension Realm."

"But during that time, the other half of the 'vessel' that you two are sharing was still far from reaching the next realm, making his realm to be suppressed and remain at the border between the two realms."

Hearing this, Shin seemed to have also realized something and said. "Because the other half of the main 'vessel' is stuck in that pace, all the energies that are accumulated by our body are focused on nurturing the other half of it."

"Then, adding the completion of my Mentalism Method along with the full awakening of my five innate attributes, the process hastened a bit. Then right after I have completed all the necessary steps for my breakthrough, everything has become fully prepared to move to the next step."

David nodded as he continued. "You have already completed all the requirements for quite a while now and are only waiting for the right opportunity."

"Adding the intensive training that we have been doing during the week has hastened the entire process, giving you enough boost for everything."

"The moment when your five innate attributes have reached their absolute balance, they immediately create an equilibrium that helps you fuse them with one another and form your version of Spiritual Force."

"A little bit of effort is all you need to proceed to the entire breakthrough process."

He then paused for a moment before smiling bitterly. "But that troublesome 'half' of yourself seems to be looking for some real trouble."

"Right after you have acquired that piece you need, he pushes you into the entire breakthrough process. This forces you to directly step into the higher stage of your Mentalism Method, skipping through multiple steps."

He then looked at Shin for a moment before sighing. "With your current state, you will most likely transition into the peak of the Grandmaster Realm in a week or two at most."

He paused for a moment as he thought of something before continuing. "In the upcoming week, you must focus on consolidating your realm and stabilizing the energies within your body."

"You must fully transition to this realm naturally to avoid any form of hidden issues. Since you have skipped several steps already, you can't afford to leisurely skim through everything."

"No intensive training for you during this period to make sure that you will not hurt your foundation," he then paused as he hesitated for a moment before continuing. "I'll consult Master about this later, so be ready to meet her."

Shin went silent for a moment before sighing. He then nodded his head as he stood up. "I understand."

Seeing Shin walk away, David could not help but sigh once again and asked. "Are you still... mad at them?"

Shin halted his tracks for a moment before answering. "It is not like that. I understand the decision they have made at that time, given our situation."

He paused for a moment as he tried to organize his thoughts before continuing. "I guess it is just disappointment or... I may be throwing some late tantrums?"

He laughed bitterly for a moment before leaving.

David watched Shin's back for a while before sighing. He then smiled bitterly as he mumbled to himself. "This family sure has some issues."

Right after those words left his mouth, he could not help but feel an intense shiver running down his spine.

His eyes turned wide as he felt a sudden premonition. An ominous feeling suddenly overwhelmed him as his head slowly turned to the side like a broken robot.

That was when he saw Evangeline looking at him with a beautiful smile.

David suddenly straightened his back as he greeted her stutteringly. "Mas-... Master!"

Evangeline set aside his earlier words for a moment before asking. "Explain what just happened. Don't leave any details."

David nodded his head as he started narrating everything.

...

Later that day, Shin finished the initial stabilization of his realm.

He exhaled deeply before opening his eyes. He thoroughly examined his current state before sighing.

Fortunately, there was nothing wrong with his body.

Earlier, he tried to communicate with Uno, asking what the guy was thinking for pushing him into his current state. Unfortunately, the latter seemed to be refusing his attempts or trying to do something within his mind realm (Sea of Consciousness).

He was not sure what Uno was planning, but Shin could at least feel the urgency of their current situation. This incident seemed to be a way for Uno to warn him about the dangers of the Seed of Hatred within him.

He was aware that the more frequently Uno established a connection with the physical realm, the stronger the corruption of the 'Seed' became. It was because of the last outburst that had happened previously when he witnessed Bernad's death.

Their body was currently in an extremely fragile state, where the seed could easily influence them once a sign of weakness appeared.

He knew that Uno was trying his best to suppress that monster residing within him, especially when the seal that his mother had placed was already becoming less effective.

"Fortunately, we can still somewhat communicate within the game since the virtual world can be considered as the special realm of consciousness, different from the physical realm," he mumbled with a sigh.

After that, he went to take a quick shower to wash off all the sweat from his body before heading to his gaming cabin.

He lay himself in there for a moment before he logged into the virtual world. "Initiate Login!"

...

Swoosh!

Since there were still a couple of hours before their match against the Earners Mercenary Group started, Shin and the rest of the Empyrean Talons first gathered in their team's virtual space to make their final preparations.

When he logged in, the rest of the team had already gathered, seemingly waiting for him.

Shin swept his gaze at everyone before nodding his head. He then told them the bad news.  
"Unfortunately, Siegfried will still not be joining us in this match, so we can only proceed with the arrangement that we have already prepared."

"We can't just let him laugh at us later when he returns, right? So, we must do our best for this match and proceed to the next match!"

"We don't know what those guys have prepared for us in this match, but we can at least rely on our strength and teamwork to break through everything they have!"

He then proceeded to finalize everything before asking them all to simultaneously log in to the game.

...

Swoosh!

Not long after, they all appeared in their private lounge within the game, which was also where they could see the entire virtual venue of their match.

They could see the overwhelming number of players who had brought tickets to watch their match in the live stand and could not help but inhale deeply.

"It is still unbelievable that a lot of people have gathered and will be watching us just for this match," commented Samael, who was a complete rookie on the team.

Huahua, his sister, did not know what to say as this was her first time seeing such a huge number of people. This made her even more anxious, afraid that she would mess up later and cause their team to lose.

Sensing her anxiety, Cloe walked a little closer to her and said. "There is no need to be too tense."

She then pointed at the members of the Empyrean Talons while adding. "Our team is quite strong, you know? They will make sure that we win this match!"

Huahua then turned her gaze around and saw that everyone seemed to maintain a good mindset despite seeing such a huge audience. Instead, an overwhelming fighting spirit seemed to be awakened in their eyes, signifying their eagerness to step onto the stage and showcase their powers.

Particularly Shin, Leonard, Diablo, Alucard, and Owen, who seemed to be already getting impatient.

Not long after, the system had suddenly informed them about the start of the match, asking for their permission to be teleported to the battlefield.

Shin smirked as he looked at the virtual screen flashing before him, before saying to the others. "Let's give them a good show, shall we?"