

Destiny 1811

Chapter 1811: The Surging Wave of Change

.....

The battle became more intense as time passed, but the people with keen eyes and sharp insights were also able to notice the small advantages that the Emyrean Talons were getting.

Adding the constant disturbances that Shin was creating in the middle of the enemies' ranks, the situation on the battlefield was slowly tilting in their favor.

But that was not the end of their analysis, as they could also see that the morale of some of the members of the Earners Mercenary Group was somewhat affected by something. Based on the previous events that everyone had seen, they could deduce that it was due to what War God Simba had done.

The key members of the mercenary group, such as Flouree, Kael, Sylas, and Aiming, were still fine. But the others were making some silly mistakes here and there, albeit small and negligible.

These small mistakes were slowly accumulating, which would lead to their demise sooner or later.

It was already too late for the others to realize this, especially when Shin had cunningly lured them into committing those mistakes not long after.

The battle had ended just like how the Big Boss of the Earners Mercenary Group had predicted. Their side indeed lost the match due to the accumulated mistakes and affected morale.

Even if it was still a hard-fought battle for the Empyrean Talons – losing four of their members in the process, such as Alice, Chaotic Luck, Huahua, and Owen – the rest of the team were still able to wrap everything up and win the battle in the end.

The Empyrean Talons did not linger on the battlefield for that long, as they quickly returned to their private lounge and did an individual assessment of their respective performances in the match.

Alice was quite eager to check the videos as she could not believe that she lost in the final exchange. Even if it was just a small margin, she could not believe that she had lost in terms of Elemental Magic.

Later, she realized that it was due to the mysterious wheel floating above Kael's head, which was emitting a strange aura.

Meanwhile, the rest of the team were too tired to do anything else, so Shin just dismissed them. He told everyone that they would review the details of the match tomorrow once everyone had fully rested.

Everyone agreed with him, so they went to do their respective tasks.

Shin originally wanted to ask something of Akailu. But he later noticed that the latter had dragged Leonard into one of their virtual space's training areas, seemingly planning to ask for some instructions.

Seeing that, Shin could tell that Akailu had gained quite a lot in the previous battle despite not doing that much in that match.

He had some idea what had happened during that time when Akailu was 'stunned' for an unknown reason, but he was not that sure yet.

But after seeing the eager look that Akailu had, it confirmed all his suspicions.

Seeing that everyone went to do their respective business, Shin fell into thought for a moment, thinking about what to do next.

His original plan was to log out of the game and do some foundation and meditation training. After all, he still needed to further stabilize his current state in the real world due to his recent breakthrough.

But before that, he first wanted to watch the next match. He wanted to see what their friends from the Slayers Adventurer Team were planning.

Even though the Pandemonium Descendant had pulled out most of their main combatants from the tournament and just sent some random officials to continue the competition, their strength was still decent enough to be underestimated.

Some of these guys were even a captain of a Sweeper Unit, which was one of the main forces of the organization.

Shin was anticipating a good show when a piece of shocking news was announced by the tournament organizers.

"Slayers Adventurer Team has withdrawn from the tournament!"

Seeing the announcement, Shin could not help but stare blankly at the virtual screen before him. He could not believe what he was seeing.

"What the heck is this!?"

Unable to believe the announcement, Shin felt that there must be some issues or foul play involved in this matter.

He quickly pulled out his friend list and contacted Lawless, planning to inquire about the situation. He needed a clearer view of this, or else he would assume that something had happened to those two big brothers.

It did not take that long before Lawless answered the call and got bombarded by a series of questions, asking if they were facing some difficulties.

But what Shin had received in return was a heartfelt laugh coming from the other side of the line.

This confused him a little further.

He wanted for quite a while, until Lawless had regained himself, before asking. "What exactly is going on?"

"Cough! Cough!" Lawless cleared his throat for a moment before giving Shin the answer that he was looking for. "It is not as serious as you think. Don't overthink our withdrawal from the tournament. It is truly not a big deal."

"We have voluntarily withdrawn from it because we have more important things to deal with. We are preparing for the big change."

Hearing the latter part of Lawless' words, Shin could not help but inquire further. "Prepare? Prepare for what? Is a big event coming or something?"

Lawless chuckled when he heard those questions before explaining. "There is no need to hide this from you since you will know about it sooner or later."

"A big change is going to happen within the game. It is not just an ordinary change, but a whole new update. A greater patch update."

Shin furrowed his brows a little as he repeated. "A big patch?"

"That's right," said Lawless as he continued. "It is not an ordinary patch as it will change the current power structure within the game."

He paused for a moment for a little suspense, just like he loved to do, teasing Shin a little. He then continued as he knew that the latter was not fond of such things. "In the upcoming path, Void Manifestation Stage Martial Artists, Rulers Realm Mentalist, Weapon Masters, and those on equivalent realms will not be able to enter the game without suffering many restrictions."

"Huh!?" Shin could not help but take a deep breath after hearing those words, unable to say anything for a long time.

He knew the huge implications of such news, especially how it would affect the overall structure of the game.

True veterans of the real world could now enter the game and join the competition and chaos of the virtual world.

Once these experts started flooding into the game, everything would change. Whether it was a good or a bad thing, no one could tell yet.

But the overall situation of the virtual world would collapse greatly.

"No wonder, Brother Lawless and others are taking this situation more seriously," mumbled Shin as he could see what these people were thinking.

He could also relate why the Pandemonium Descendants had suddenly pulled out their main forces from the tournament. He could tell that they must be plotting something in the dark and wanted to focus their forces on that side.

Thinking about this, Shin suddenly realized something as well. "If that is the case, then Brother Lawless and the others are-..."

He could already foresee that these guys wanted to prepare for their respective breakthroughs. After all, he could tell that Jerimiah (Lawless) and Vincient (Faker) were at the peak of the Ethereal Opening Stage and only waiting for opportunities to break through.

From what he could see, these guys were only suppressing their respective states so that they could continue playing the game without restraints.

"If that is the case, then Big Sister and Senior Brother as well!" Shin continued to mumble as he could already see what was happening.

Lawless could also tell that Shin had already figured everything out, so he did not need to explain further about this matter.

He just sighed and continued. "As you can see, our small team can't compete with those big organizations and top guilds when it comes to manpower, so we can only rely on ourselves."

"They can send their subordinates to compete in the stage, while we can only pull out of the tournament as we can't afford to put that much effort into it. We must put all our focus on our respective breakthroughs while preparing for the big update."

He paused for a moment as he quickly added. "Since we are friends, I want you to win everything and raise the United Cup. Don't let Ashura and his gang win a back-to-back championship!"

After joking and laughing for a moment, Lawless continued in a more serious tone. "Based on our deduction, the massive patch will most likely be launched after the United Cup."

"This big update will most likely take place for a month or so, It is somewhat similar to the previous one, but slightly longer. After all, the gaming company had to do some upgrades and lift the restrictions that they had placed in the game."

"It will greatly affect the timeline within the game, so I suggest you do your quests and clear them up as soon as possible to avoid them from being affected."

"But if you think that those quests will not be affected by those changes, then I advise you to focus more on growing your strength both inside and outside the game. You have to keep that synchronization rate as high and sharp as possible."

Then his tone became even more serious as he added. "This update will greatly affect both the real world and the game. If you want to know about it, then I suggest you ask the seniors on your side once you also have your breakthrough."

"I know that you are very close to breaking through. Given your talent, it shouldn't be that long."

"At that point, you will understand the great implications of the game and why a lot of big forces in the real world are too interested in it," he continued before sighing. "This is all I can tell you for now. I will be hanging up, take care!"

After hearing Shin's brief reply, Lawless ended the call almost instantly. He could tell how busy the other side was with just this.

Shin fell into deep thought for a while before standing up. He did not plan to continue staying in the game now and did not have the mood for it.

He wanted to log out and head to the seniors within the Springfield Family to inquire about the so-called secrets of the game that kept being mentioned by the people around him.

Since he had already broken through and reached the Peak of the Grandmaster Realm, he had now reached the bare minimum to be qualified to know these secrets.

"Let's go with Senior Brother first," mumbled Shin as he trusted David more.

He knew that David would not hide anything from him now that he had reached this stage.

Moreover, this Senior Brother knew his situation more than anyone else compared to those around him, so it was better to consult him than the other seniors.

With that in mind, he logged out of the game.

Chapter 1812: The Surging Wave of Change (Part 2)

.....

It was still too early to do his usual routine when Shin logged out of the game. It was still quite late into the night, but somewhat close to dawn.

Looking at the clock, Shin slightly furrowed his brows. "Two in the morning? I guess I still have quite a lot of time."

He went to do his usual morning routine at a much earlier time, but he did not do anything too staining to himself to prevent any harm to his body. After all, his body was still in the middle of transitioning between the Foundation Building Realm and the Ascension Realm as well as the standard Grandmaster Realm and to its peak, so he had to be careful during his current training routines.

He just did some simple foundation training and basic meditation practice before wrapping up.

He then walked out of his room and headed to the place where he usually did his training, along with David. Based on his estimate, his Senior Brother must be doing his morning routine there.

Shin knew that David was doing his training earlier, before helping with his training.

When he arrived at the usual spot in the backyard of the Springfield Household, he immediately saw David doing his usual training sessions.

From the look of it, David seemed to be about to finish with his training and only doing some simple cooldown exercises to relieve the stress in his muscles and bones.

Shin waited patiently until David was done before walking over.

David just finished his morning training routine when he suddenly turned toward Shin's directions and said. "You're quite early."

Shin did not beat around the bush as he quickly went straight to the point. "I come to ask some questions about the so-called secrets of the game."

David paused for a moment, seeming to think about something, before sighing. "You have already stepped into the Peak of the Grandmaster Realm anyway, so you will learn about it sooner or later."

He took another pause to inhale deeply before continuing. "It is not much of a secret if it concerns almost all of the major powers in the real world, anyway."

He was about to continue further when he suddenly recalled something before sighing once again. "But if you want to know more about it, I think it is better to ask one of the people who is somewhat related to it."

After that, he went in silence, waiting for Shin to respond.

Shin, on the other hand, stared at David in silence. He was trying to figure out who the latter was talking about until he finally realized who it was.

Slight frowning, he asked. "Is it Mom?"

David did not reply, but his silence confirmed the doubts that Shin was currently having. It was clear that he wanted the latter to go talk with his mother and make things clear.

Seeing that Shin was still hesitant to answer, David sighed. "How about taking this opportunity to make up with Master? You should know the situation back then, even if you are still too young."

"You have always been clever, so you should know why they have come up with that answer," he added, trying to persuade Shin.

Meanwhile, Shin could only sigh when he heard those words. "I know. I know it very well, especially when I have personally sensed that 'connection' between Demonic Practitioners, particularly those with Seed of Hatred."

He could even 'feel' that sense when he met Old Man Ryong, who was also a carrier of one of the most potent Seeds of Hatred.

If someone who was not related to him could pull out such an intense reaction to his Seed of Hatred, then what more the person from whom he had inherited it?

He could only imagine the intensity of the backlash once his fully awakened seed came in contact with its predecessor.

He could already see how hard it was for his mother to come up with such a decision, especially when she truly loved him when he was young.

With a sigh, Shin could only brace himself and agree. "Then I will talk to her."

Hearing those words, David could not hide his joy and excitement, especially when he had only a bit of hope in this matter. He could also see why Shin was upset with the situation, even though it was the only way that they had at that time.

But he also quickly calmed himself down after a few moments. "That's good! You have already agreed to it, alright? There is no backing out later."

"I know," said Shin before hesitating once again. But he strongly braced himself and immediately said. "Alright, where's Mom? Let's go to her now."

It was only at this moment that Shin realized that there was an awkward smile on David's face.

"Huh? What's wrong? Don't tell me-..." Shin seemed to have realized something and could not help but glare at his Senior Brother.

David maintained his awkward smile as he continued. "Hehe... as you can see, no one has expected this. Even if I am trying my luck today, I am not confident that you will agree to my words that easily."

Confirming Shin's suspicion, David continued. "Master is currently not in the household. She is doing some tasks for the Springfield Family to thank them for taking care of you all this time."

"As if I will believe your words. I am sure that they are asking for some favor, taking advantage of her skills," said Shin as if he could already see through the plans of the cunning old foxes of the family.

"What are they planning to do?" he asked with a slight coldness in his words.

Hearing his tone, David could not help but laugh out loud. "That look in your face-... What? Are you worried about Master? Don't worry, she will be fine. No one can easily touch here on this continent. Even those sly old monsters in seclusion will have to think twice before making their move against her."

"Who said I am worried?" said Shin with a slight embarrassment, refusing to admit David's words.

"Okay, okay. I believe you," said David while continuing to shake his head before continuing. "Anyways, it will take Master a week or two before she finishes the task at hand. For now, you must focus on training and stabilizing your current state."

"Don't think about the distracting thoughts you have and focus on yourself. Those answers that you are seeking will naturally come to you," he added.

Shin nodded his head after being reassured by his Senior Brother. He then suddenly remembered something, recalling the words that Jerimiah (Lawless) had told him within the game.

"Senior Brother, I heard that the game will be undergoing a major update that will change the entire structure of the virtual world," he said.

"Hoh!? You have heard about that?" asked David before nodding his head. "That's right. A major change is about to arrive, so a lot of people are preparing for it."

"Those who have been standing at the border between their respective breakthroughs have already been informed ahead of time."

"All of us are already making our preparations for it," he added.

"Senior Brother is also preparing for his breakthrough?" asked Shin.

Hearing that, David chuckled as he answered. "Naturally! Do you even know how long I have been stuck at the Peak of the Grandmaster Realm? I am afraid that if this major update has arrived a little late, then I most likely have broken through right now and am unable to log into the game."

"Forcefully suppressing one's state is not that easy," he added with a bitter smile.

Thinking about this, David suddenly remembered something as well. "The new patch will most likely launch a few days after the Grand Finals of this season's United Cup."

"I will obviously affect the next Hegemon Cup, which will most likely be delayed as well to give everyone some time to adjust to the updated patch."

"Aside from the normal factors that you are already experiencing within the game, some old veterans and almost forgotten monsters will also join the game, abolishing the overall power structure of all major forces."

"Things will be even more chaotic than you expect, so you must thoroughly prepare for it."

David paused for a moment as he haughtily raised his chin and continued. "But you don't have to worry too much about it since this Senior Brother of yours will definitely help you if you encounter anything difficult during this time."

There was a cringed and disgusted look on Shin's face when he heard those words, making the latter upset. "What's with that expression!? This brat has no sense of respect at all!"

Shin then immediately cut him off. "If you are thinking of joining our adventurer team, then I am rejecting your application now."

"What!? This Brat! Just why!? I will definitely be a good addition to your team!" said David, surprised.

Shin shook his head as he answered. "That is the exact reason why I am rejecting you. You are too good for our team, covering all our weaknesses. But it will also hinder the growth of our team as a whole if we add another broken individual and a complete monster into our ranks."

"We already have plenty of such people in our team; adding more will only harm us as a whole with our current state."

Hearing that, David felt a little dejected but did not give up. "You can at least add me to the name roster. I can also be a single combatant in single battles or such!"

"Nah! I knew that you were up to something. You must have seen our current prince in the assets ranking. I knew that you just want to hitch a ride into our success," he mocked the latter with a devious smile.

"Tsk! When I saw how much money is flooding into your pockets with just the ticket sales, I am tempted to kidnap one of you and ask for some ransom money," said David powerlessly.

"The earnings are quite good, but the maintenance fees that we must take care of are quite demanding as well. Fortunately, our team is quite small, so our profits are quite high," nodded Shin.

"How about a manager or a treasurer? Do you need any other manpower to manage your other assets?" asked David with full anticipation.

Shin gave him a mocking look as he replied. "With Big Sis on our side, do you think I need someone to manage our money?"

The corner of David's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard those words, before saying with full resentment. "Alright, let's forget about it. Let's proceed with your training now."

"I know that you are still not familiar with your current strength. How about a quick spar to familiarize yourself with it?"

He did not even wait for Shin to reply as he quickly and forcefully dragged the latter into a sparring match.

The corner of Shin's mouth could only twitch a little before he was thrown into a somewhat highly intensive training session.

Chapter 1813: The Brewing Storm

.....

When Shin returned to the mansion, he was pretty much beaten up from head to toe. He had bruises all over his body, which indicated how much he had suffered from his 'sparring match' with David.

Fortunately, David knew how to hold back as well and only hit Shin where it hurt the most, but would not deal that much damage.

Shin had just broken through and was still stabilizing his realm, so there were a lot of risks if he overworked himself a little too much.

David had skillfully controlled that battle, limiting Shin's abilities and beating him just 'right.'

Ironically, Shin felt a little relieved with his body despite how much of a beating he had suffered. With this, he could tell that David had used some special methods to fix a few things that Shin could not see or sense from his body.

From what Shin could remember, it must be a special method that the Solomon Kingdom usually used whenever unclogging some blocked meridians or in such cases to their younger generations whenever they achieved a certain threshold in their Mentalism Realms.

Sometimes, it was also used to further enhance the later solid foundation of the younger generation.

David might not be very proficient with it, but he was still good enough to further enhance Shin's current foundation.

He was just a little rough at doing it, resulting in the current appearance that Shin currently has.

Feeling the aches in different parts of his body, Shin could not help but curse his Senior Brother a little more as he entered the mansion.

It was also at that time that Leonard returned from his training and bumped into him.

"Yoh, Shin Bro! What's with that appearance? Did you just get beaten up?" chuckled Leonard as he walked over.

Shin rolled his eyes as he answered. "Nah. I just fell from a tree earlier while I was practicing my climbing skills."

After that, he flicked his wrists, summoning a gorgeous flame to cover his entire body and 'burning' all the bruises that he had.

Seeing that, Leonard could not help but click his tongue and say in amazement. "Tsk! Tsk! That ability sure is useful."

"As if your self-healing abilities are not that strong," refuted Shin as he knew that Leonard's current abilities far surpassed ordinary people, particularly the strength of his current physique.

Using his True Sight Technique, he could see that the current Leonard possessed an overwhelming physique that rivaled true warriors that he saw in the game.

"It seems like your training under that Senior is paying off," he commented.

Under his gaze, he could see that Leonard's current physique far surpassed even his own or Arthur's to a certain degree.

From what he could see, Leonard seemed to be fully walking into the path of Body Refinement. Moreover, it was not an ordinary body refining method given the savage and destructive aura that the latter currently possessed.

Body Refining, the path of true warriors of ancient times.

With Leonard's current physique, Shin was not even confident that he would be able to defeat the other party in terms of strength alone.

Leonard scratched the back of his head someone embarrassed, as he replied. "Uncle Scar emphasizes our physique training, so it is not that strange for my body to reach this current level."

"The training is quite harsh, but it is still worth it given the rate of growth that my body is undergoing," he added after a brief pause.

Shin then focused his gaze on the momentum and aura that Leonard currently had and figured out something. "It seems like you are also undergoing the breakthrough process. At least under a week or two, you will most likely complete the process as well."

Nodding his head, Shin gestured with his head to enter. He was quite hungry after getting beaten up by David, so he wanted to have a feast first before returning to his room.

...

The next day, Shin and the others went to do their usual training routines, not caring about anything else.

The next matchups on the other side of the bracket were quite intense, but they did not care too much about them since the Dragon Pavilion and Hydra Guild had also pulled out their main roster just like the others.

Even the Hand of Midas had also pulled out their chiefs from the tournament, seemingly also preparing for the upcoming patch.

Naturally, the ordinary players were not aware of this news, which made them quite confused about the current situation.

This even affected the ticket sales and such of the match, which was quite a huge loss for the company. But they could not do anything about it since they also understood what was happening.

Fortunately, their biggest 'marketing models' did not withdraw from the tournament. The Emphyrean Talons and God's Paradise remained their money-making machines.

These two Adventurer Teams were filled with superstars and the favorites for winning the United Cup. One was the defending champion, while the other was the 'dark horse' that suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

The clash between these two was meant to be the strongest and most entertaining matchup in the history of the United Cup.

This was going to be a huge battle.

The event organizers had even spent quite a lot of funds just to hype this matchup, making the people quite crazy about it as well.

However, this also affects the entirety of the tournament.

Due to the sudden move that the other teams had made, the other matchups became unimportant in the eyes of people, especially when the Earners Mercenary Group had also pulled out of the tournament altogether.

This put the event organizers in an awkward position. The bracket had become a mess, and they were not sure how to proceed.

That was when the representatives of the remaining team had been summoned into a special virtual space that the gaming company had created just for the meeting.

The Slayers Adventurer Team and Earners Mercenary Group had already pulled out of the tournament completely, creating a gap in the bracket.

This was supposed to be a small matter since it would not affect the entirety of the tournament.

However, the main forces of the other four teams had also pulled out of the United Cup, leaving only two teams in a competitive state.

What the other teams had done was not against the rules. After all, this United Cup was supposed to be a team-based game, which was why they could freely swap their members whenever they wanted, so long as they had done it before each match.

The only ones that could be said to be in a quite fickle situation were the teams under the Slayers and Earners, since they had pulled out of the tournament altogether.

But given the issue with the upcoming patch, the higher-ups could not say anything against them as well.

The Slayers Adventurer Team had a legitimate reason for not having enough manpower, while the Earners Mercenary Group had been fined for failing to provide a valid reason for pulling out of the tournament.

The format of the playoff rounds of the current United Cup was a double-elimination format, which put the Emphyrean Talons and God's Paradise in an awkward position.

Given the current absence of competitive spirit within the brackets, these two teams would most likely be facing each other twice in the entire tournament. One was at the Upper Bracket Finals, while the other was at the Grand Finals of the tournament, which would be two-round matches just like the previous ones.

This would make their matches a best-of-four format, which was such an awkward even number.

The event organizers could not change the format of the playoff rounds midway either, resulting in negative feedback from the audience.

This had become a headache for them, unable to find any solutions.

The organizations involved were not that easy to persuade, either, given their respective backgrounds, putting a lot of pressure on them.

It wasn't until both Shin and Ashura had proposed an ideal solution.

If the Empyrean Talons and God's Paradise did meet at the upper-bracket finals, then both teams would propose a Champion's Matchup in both rounds (Home-Away).

Champion's Matchup was a special format in the previous tournaments. It was when the two sides would be sending a single combatant on the field, who would be representing them in the said round and determining the result of the match altogether.

It was just not commonly used these days since it would make the theme of the United Cup disappear altogether.

That was also why the Hegemon Cup was created instead.

With this format, the one-on-one battle of their strongest member would determine who would be facing the 'lucky' team at the lower-bracket finals.

This way, it would not affect the flow of the bracket matchups.

All sides seemed to agree with this solution as well, swiftly drafting a contract and distributing it to everyone. The other teams were also protected by an NDA, preventing them from leaking any information about this 'under-the-table' deal.

The Pandemonium Descendants, Dragon Pavilion, Hydra Guild, and Hand of Midas did not care about this either since they had already planned to drop the entire tournament to focus on the upcoming update.

After all, they were very aware of their chances in this tournament after their main forces had pulled out of it, so they did not put that much attention into it.

If not for the serious penalties that they had to face, particularly the fines, once they had pulled out altogether, then they would have most likely followed the footsteps of the Slayers Adventurer Team and Earners Mercenary Group.

Those two had truly foreseen this event quite far, making them the lucky ones to pull out first and only face some simple punishments.

After that secret meeting, the tournament continued as per schedule.

Chapter 1814: The Brewing Storm (Part 2)

.....

The next few matches of the United Cup were not as exciting as the previous ones due to the lack of main forces of the other teams, other than Empyrean Talons and God's Paradise.

The Empyrean Talon won against the Pandemonium Descendants as expected, but it was not a perfect score like the previous matches.

Shin had taken advantage of the situation to let the rookies and less experienced players of the team gain more experience in this match. All three rookies were sent on the field, letting them take the lead.

The Pandemonium Descendants had chosen to go with the regular match format, which had 2 Single Matches, 1 Group Battle, and 1 Team Competition.

They knew that they would not be the opponent of the Empyrean Talons in any other format of the matches, which included team battles. With that in mind, they would rather take a gamble and go for the regular format since they at least had some chances in single matches.

As the ones to have the Home advantage for this round, they had to make full use of it.

Unfortunately, they had lost the first Single Match against Chaotic Luck, who made the entire match quite weird with his signature 'ability' – his luck.

He had embarrassed the representative of the Pandemonium Descendants, who seemed to have a Unit Captain Title according to Diablo.

The Empyrean Talons then lost the second Single Match due to Samael being a little too nervous in the match. He had encountered a quite skilled Sweeper in that round, who was also quite familiar with Diablo.

According to him, Sweeper was one of the aces of the Sweeper Units within the organization.

In the group battle, the Pandemonium Descendants had chosen another odd choice. They chose the other format of the Group Battle, which included 3 1-vs-1s, where the winner stayed on the field while the loser would be knocked out.

In this round, Archimedes and Daulla had won the Group Battle by themselves, where the former defeated two members of the opposing side and almost won the final match as well. He was just slightly short of making the rare 1-vs-3 scenario.

Then Daulla took to the stage and won the match quite easily.

In the final round, the Team Competition, the Empyrean Talons did not send that much of their core members.

Akailu was quite eager to try his gains from the previous match and volunteered to join the Team Competition. Then Huahua was also sent on the field along with Alice, who was still quite upset about her 'lost' against Kael in the previous match.

Then Alucard and Diablo were sent to fill up the numbers, but did not make any move since the start of the round and became bystanders, who watched everything from the sidelines.

The Empyrean Talons then won the match 9 to 1 at the end.

As for the other matches, the God's Paradise coincidentally had won their match with the same 9 to 1 score against the Dragon Pavilion.

The Hand of Midas, on the other hand, won a clean sweep in their match against the Hydra Guild, almost knocking out the current number one guild of the game from the tournament. It was quite a surprising result, but not many had questioned it as the so-called lifestyle guild had sent their strike team in the match.

The strike teams of the lifestyle guilds were supposedly the sole combat teams of Trading Firms, who were responsible for exploration and gathering materials for the guild.

They were also responsible for escorting the caravans of the guild, which were filled with goods and such. They were elites among elites, so their skills and strength were something that could not be ignored.

In the next rounds, the result was still the same.

The Empyrean Talons had successfully advanced to the Upper Bracket Finals, sending the Pandemonium Descendants down to the lower bracket despite taking the match in such a relaxed and easy manner.

The same for the God's Paradise since they had also sent the Dragon Pavilion down there while they joined the Empyrean Talons in the Upper Bracket Finals, just like everyone had expected.

Hand of Midas, on the other hand, had successfully kicked out the Hydra Guild from the tournament and advanced to the next round.

The upper bracket would be delayed for a moment at that point, as the situation in the lower bracket was quite tricky. With odd numbers, the format of the round would be slightly tricky to deal with.

Hence, the tournament organizers had made it simple and decided to go for a special draw, where the two teams had to fight against one another while the other one would gain a bye advantage and advance to the next round without fighting.

In this draw, the Hand of Midas became very lucky and took the win, becoming the bye for this round.

Meanwhile, the Dragon Pavilion and the Pandemonium Descendants would be facing each other on the next round, wrestling each other to determine who would be advancing.

Given the situation at the lower bracket, the match between the Empyrean Talons and God's Paradise at the upper bracket finals would be slightly delayed.

The next matches would be slightly intense due to the matchups in the lower bracket. The battle between the Soldiers from the Dragon Pavilion and the Sweepers of the Pandemonium Descendants.

The battle between the two sides truly delivered. It was so intense that both sides showed their respective strengths and targeted the weaknesses of their opposition.

But in the end, the side of the Pandemonium Descendants had won due to their home advantage. They had taken advantage of the terrain of the map and its special features to launch a series of ambushes, putting their opponents in an awkward position.

Even if the side of the Dragon Pavilion had rich experience when dealing with different terrains due to their military experience as cadets or veteran soldiers, they were unable to fully showcase their skills due to the strange methods that their opponents were using.

But the Dragon Pavilion made a huge comeback at the next round, which was their home advantage.

Unfortunately, the final score of the two rounds was not in their favor. Since the Pandemonium Descendants had won with an 8 to 2 score in the previous round and only lost with 3 to 7 in this round, the Dragon Pavilion lost with a 9 to 11 final score.

It was a pity since the match was quite close. The audience even wants a third round for this matchup. Unfortunately, the scores were not equal, so a tiebreaker was unnecessary.

Fortunately, the United Cup was still far from over.

The match was quite anticipated as well since it was a battle between the Strike Team of the Hand of Midas and the Sweepers of the Pandemonium Descendants.

This match had also delivered just like the previous one, making everyone believe that this season's United Cup was not that bad.

If not for the main forces of these teams backing out of the tournament, then the would be even more amazing.

The match between the Hand of Midas and Pandemonium Descendants had made everyone view the former team in a different light.

The guild chiefs were already powerful enough to change everyone's perspective about production classes, giving everyone a different view of these non-combative classes.

Then here was the Strike Team of the Trading Firm, showing everyone that their combat prowess was not that bad either.

They had even won the match against a very strong organization in a very convincing manner.

Even though the scores on both rounds were quite with 6 to 4 and 7 to 3 in their favor, they had properly shown their true capabilities that would not lose to any huge organizations or the top guilds of the game.

They had once again reminded everyone that they were also one of the Powerhouse Guilds within the game.

With the Hand of Midas advancing to the lower bracket finals, the match at the upper bracket finals would start the next day.

This matchup had pretty much hyped up everyone, unable to wait for the upcoming clash of the titans.

The event organizers, especially those assigned to the marketing team, had done a beautiful job of hyping this matchup.

All they had to do was wait for the match and enjoy the show later.

...

While everyone was too focused on the events within the game, someone had finally returned home in the real world.

Arthur, who had been away for quite a while, had finally returned!

If someone had paid more attention to his current appearance, they would have noticed some changes in him.

His physical appearance did not change that much, but the aura and momentum that his body was passively emitting had undergone a massive transformation.

Those who would see him right now would most likely bow to him through their subconscious mind as if he were a majestic being that needed to be worshiped.

Those with weaker minds might even have the urge to kneel in front of him due to this unique and majestic aura that he currently possesses.

"At home, at last!" he mumbled as he stood in front of the Springfield Household that he had missed for quite a while now.

Behind him, an old man was staring at this familiar place, bringing him down memory lane. He felt quite nostalgic. "It has been quite a while since I have visited this place as well."

With a slight nod, he turned to Arthur and said. "Brat, you are not home, so this old man has to go back to the Ancestral Land and continue to retreat."

Hearing that, Arthur could not help but furrow his brows and ask. "The elder is not going to visit Grandpa and stay for quite a few days?"

The old man shook his head. "There is no need for that. We, Seniors at the Valley, have already detached ourselves from the events of the outside world."

"Our goal now is either to focus on achieving Transcendence or seek the Original Truths of the world."

He paused for a moment and shook his head once again before adding. "You will also understand once you reach our level."

He then turned to the Springfield Household for a moment before adding. "Unless the family is at great risk, we will not show ourselves and stay our hand away from any form of conflict."

After that, he turned around and started leaving.

It took Arthur quite a while before he regained his composure. He swiftly put his hands together and gave the old man a deep and respectful nod. "Thank you, Elder, for all the guidance that you have imprinted on this junior's mind."

"Thank you, Elder, for bringing this child back. Please be careful on the way, Elder Old Dragon," he added.

The old man did not turn his head as he left and just waved his hand in acknowledgement.

Arthur waited until the old man disappeared from the horizon completely before picking himself up.

He then turned to the household and wore a devious grin. "I wonder how those guys are doing. Should I give them the 'souvenirs' that I have gotten from the Sunset Dragon Valley?"

Chapter 1815: Reunion of the Monster Trio (Part 1)

...

Leonard just finished his training routine under the supervision of Scar, so the momentum of his body was still under the pressure of the intensive training.

His aura was so intense that he was like a savage beast that had just been released from being caged for a very long time.

While he was undergoing a cooldown process, his Bestial Instincts suddenly kicked in as it picked up another apex predator, locking its eyes on him.

His eyes then suddenly turned bloodshot as he circulated the Blood Power within his body along with the Thousand Beast Force that he had been cultivating since he started training under his Martial Arts Master.

With the activation of these powers, the aura that he was emitting then became similar to a Primordial Beast, which was immediately reflected by the Battle Spirit that manifested behind him.

Right after the apparition of the Primordial Beast was formed, Leonard suddenly turned toward the source of the gaze that locked into him.

When he turned in that direction, he seemed to have seen a huge Golden Dragon staring straight at him with its haughty and prideful eyes.

Boom!

The air around them seemed to have exploded as the auras between these two ancient, powerful beings clashed against one another. Even the ground seemed to be trembling slightly due to the collisions of their auras.

Bang! Bang!

Not long after, the Primordial Beast and the Golden Dragon suddenly charged forward, pouncing at one another.

Roar! Roar!

Boom!

They then clashed against one another, erupting in a massive explosion that sent a storm of shockwaves in every direction.

A few moments after that, two figures were suddenly revealed amid the storm.

Leonard and Arthur were suddenly revealed, extending their fist forward and pressing forward with strong, destructive force.

Bang!

A second shockwave erupted as the two refused to back down and continued channeling their strength into their fists.

Boom!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Right after another shockwave, Leonard and Arthur were pushed back by one another, skidding on the ground and leaving deep trails in it.

"You have also broken through?" said Arthur with a slight frown on his brows. "And it seems like you have also completed the entire process on top of it."

"And what's with that absurdly strong and insanely tough physique? You look like a humanoid beast in disguise!" he added with an even deeper frown.

From his perspective, Leonard seemed to be no different from those monstrous beasts that could be seen at the range of the Sunset Dragon Valley.

The strong momentum that Leonard's physique possessed was strangely similar to a beast rather than a human.

Arthur might be surprised, but Leonard was also having the same thought in his mind. He was confident with his current physique, which had undergone a massive transformation after bathing in a crimson pool produced by a huge number of monstrous beasts' blood.

Adding all the special methods of ancient warrior tribes that he had learned from his Uncle Scar, his physique had already reached the standard of those adults in the Asad Tribe.

If he also added the special methods that he had learned from Joaquin Giovanni, then it was not an understatement to say that he currently possessed an indestructible body, especially when he was against in his peers.

However, the physique that he was so proud of was currently being contested by another person.

From what he could tell, Arthur's physique was not on the same level as his, but it had this strange toughness and overwhelming defense that at least matched what he currently possessed.

"You're not that bad either. To think you will be able to match me in terms of physique?! It seems like you have become a true meat shield now," sneered Leonard as he gestured to Arthur to come at him.

"Tsk! Aren't you underestimating my Clan's Bloodline a little too much? Do you think the physique of a Dragon is worse than a mere beast?" said Arthur as he adjusted his posture, taking a serious battle stance.

"Let me show you how much I have grown after my breakthrough," he said before suddenly activating his Bloodline Powers right off the bat.

Swoosh!

Golden scales suddenly appeared on the surface of his skin while his nails turned sharp and tough, turning into deadly claws.

These scales spread in every part of his body, only stopping after wrapping themselves around his neck.

Meanwhile, his irises turned into vertical slits right after activating his version of special ocular technique after combining it with his Foresight Talent, the Dragon Eyes.

Golden scales also appeared at the corners of his eyes, while a pair of antler-like draconic horns sprouted out from his forehead in the form of dense and solidified Internal Qi.

'Dragon Scale Activation: (Arthur's Version) Divine Golden Dragon Awakening'

It was the signature Permanent Qi Reinforcement Skill of the Springfield Family. But since Arthur possessed the purest dragon bloodline from the entire lineage of the family, his version of Dragon Scales was much different and more advanced compared to the rest.

Roar!

At the same time, a Divine Mark appeared at the center of his forehead along with the mantle of multi-colored flame wrapped around his body and becoming a battle robe.

He had also fully activated his Bloodline Powers, harnessing the ability to wield the Divine Lightning and Imperial Flames.

'Bloodline Inheritance Ability: Battle Robe of the Flame Emperor'

'Divine Golden Dragon Armament: Divine Lightning Spear'

Seeing Arthur's current form, Leonard could not help but raise his brows. "Partial Manifestation Ability? Tsk! You are not even a Void Manifestation Stage Martial Artist yet!"

"Is this the power of those from the Martial Arts Family with a long history?" he added with a little complaint.

But he would not back down as immediately aroused the powers hidden within his body, releasing a monstrous force that seemed to be sleeping for a very long time.

Roar!

With a deafening roar of a prehistoric beast, Leonard's shirt was suddenly ripped as his muscles swelled greatly and suddenly contracted, growing more powerful.

His blood boiled and rushed like a raging river, arousing all the strength hidden within his body.

Swoosh!

At the same time, crimson tattoos suddenly spread in every part of his body, extending to his arms and gathering on his back and chest.

'Supreme Blood Sutra: Asad Tribe Hex Tattoo – Crimson Reinforcement'

At the same time, a beastly force suddenly surrounded his body as he further reinforced his body with the methods of the thousand beasts that he had learned from his master.

'Thousand Beast Method: Spirit of the Ancient Beasts'

As the two forms of permanent Qi Reinforcement Type of skill were activated, a sanguine flame suddenly wrapped itself around Leonard's body, which then transformed into an armor-like protection.

Crackle! Crackle!

Not long after, Leonard had also added his insights from the inheritance of the Thunder Lord that he had gotten, summoning a crimson lightning that fused with his powers.

Extending his right hand to the side, a cluster of energy was suddenly formed and immediately transformed into a weapon that seemed to be a combination of a war axe and a battle hammer.

'Secret Methods of the Thunder Lord: (Leonard's Version) Sanguine Cleaver'

Seeing the current form of Leonard, Arthur could not help but sneer. "Complaining that I am a cheat? Aren't you one yourself?"

Not long after, the two suddenly kicked the ground, launching themselves toward one another.

Bang! Bang!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Boom!

It only took them an instant to reach one another and swing their weapons at one another, erupting in a massive explosion and sending a series of shockwaves in every direction.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Immediately after, they transformed into streaks of light that repeatedly clashed against one another, producing a strong explosion for every collision.

Strangely enough, the other members of the household could not hear the commotion they were making.

With such a huge commotion, the others would most likely think that they were currently under attack.

...

Not far from the battle, there was a group of people watching the two youths pour out their battle hunger to their heart's content.

"Tsk! Tsk! Since when has the Partial Manifestation Ability become common? Aren't these two kinds a little too monstrous for their age? People will most likely think that they are Void Manifestation Experts after seeing how 'easy' they produce those Qi Armor and Weapons," commented a woman, who seemed to be in her early seventies, but still retained her youthful appearance.

She then turned to the two figures standing not far from her and said. "It seems like the future of the Springfield Family and the Asad Tribe is quite bright."

"I am here to visit Old Man Samuel because of his invitation. But who would think that such a good show would greet me right after arriving?" she added with a satisfied smile. "These two were good seedlings."

"Thank you for the praise, Elder Divine Light," said Nathan, who clasped his fist and gave a deep bow.

Scar, who was standing beside him, did not say anything, but also did the same actions as Nathan.

"Good, good! Our future is bright! The future is bright," said the old lady with a growing smile while looking at the ongoing battle.

She then turned toward another direction, where another figure was rushing toward the battlefield at extreme speed, before commenting. "I wonder what surprise the other kid will give us."

Chapter 1816: Reunion of the Monster Trio (Part 2)

.....

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Bang!

"Tsk! Tsk! Since when have you become so strong, Leo?" said Arthur as he retreated a little after an intense confrontation with Leonard.

In terms of power, Arthur was not bit weak compared to the other party. But he did not expect that the difference in raw strength was that big.

In terms of physique, neither was weaker than the other. They were in a similar state, but also possessed unique features compared to the other.

Arthur's mastery of martial arts was perfect for hosting the powers of the ancient dragon. It had powerful defense, possessed an overwhelming strength, and carried a much larger energy compared to other people.

Golden Draconic Body – this was the Natural Physique that Arthur had created after undergoing the baptism of the ancestral pool.

Adding the unique force that the Springfield Family controlled, the Draconic Powers, along with the Dragon Core that housed such an overwhelming power, Arthur's ability had already reached a level that far surpassed most of those in his peer group.

Especially when the unique and powerful martial arts of the Springfields spanned throughout multiple generations, along with their constant improvement and evolution.

On the other hand, Leonard's carrier of martial arts was the symbol of true warriors that lived throughout multiple eras.

The body refining of the Asad Tribe had created a more advanced method, along with the body refining method of Joaquin Giovanni's martial lineage and warrior tribe.

Leonard's physique majored only in two areas – the extreme toughness and destructive strength, hence it was called the Shura War Body.

Leonard did not know where Scar had found huge gallons of blood of highly dangerous and very powerful monstrous beast, but he had battled in the blood pool everyday and felt the changes within his body.

Arthur was right earlier when he said that Leonard seemed to be a humanoid monster when it came to physique.

Arthur might have the power of an ancient dragon in his arsenal, but Leonard faced it with his body alone and relied on its extreme toughness and destructive powers just like a real warrior.

Adding the powerful battle techniques of a warrior tribe with ancient history and the bestial methods that had been created by another martial lineage, Leonard was able to match Arthurs' martial prowess.

Even the current Blood Powers that he possessed far surpassed even most of the warriors of the Ancient Warrior Tribes.

Roar! Roar!

Boom!

The apparition of their respective Battle Spirits, the Crimson Primordial Lion and the Ancient Divine Dragon, continued to wrestle against one another. They were reflecting the current state of the battle between the two monstrous teenagers.

Bang!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

After yet another power collision, Arthur and Leonard were forced to retreat away from one another, relieving the stress on their arms.

"Yoh! You have become so powerful, Leonard. What kind of technique is this? It is so savage and too powerful," commented Arthur as he pulled back, twirling the lightning spear with both his hands and turning around to release the excess force that he had suffered from the previous impact. "It is different from your usual beastly style."

"The Path of the True Warriors. It is the unique fighting method of the Asad Tribe," answered Leonard as he strongly stomped one of his feet into the ground, releasing all the stressful force into it.

Bang!

A small crater was formed underneath his feet as he released that force.

Looking left and right, Arthur then said. "It is impossible for the commotion not to attract any attention, given the intense collisions."

"I guess Uncle Nathan and others have formed an isolation barrier to let him fight to our heart's content," he added before turning to Leonard. "Since that is the case, then let's go all out for once."

"My thoughts exactly! Since the Seniors are protecting us, I don't think there is any need to hold back," said Leonard while resting his weapon over his shoulder.

Arthur smiled as he suddenly changed his stance. "Be careful. I am still not that capable at controlling my new powers, so you better be careful."

Leonard lifted the corners of his mouth with a sneer as he replied provokingly. "You take the words from my mouth. You better not cry later after you lose."

"Ha! Big words! You better call me Big Brother later after I beat you!" replied Arthur.

Bang! Bang!

Immediately after, they launched themselves at each other once again, carrying a much stronger momentum in the process.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Arthur thrust his spear forward, transforming it into multiple silhouettes that became a swarm of golden dragons immediately after.

'True Nine Dragon Arts: Imperial Tactics – Nine Dragon Obliteration'

Roar! Roar! Roar!

In response, Leonard suddenly stomped into the ground, dragging his heavy weapon behind.

Bang!

The ground shook as pebbles flew in the air as he struck with a powerful cleave that wanted to annihilate everything before him.

Swoosh!

'Supreme Blood Sutra: Asad Slaying – Sanguine Annihilation'

Their respective attacks were about to reach one another, showing an intense intent of destruction and trying to devour the opposing side.

But before those powers could even clash, something much faster suddenly appeared and obstructed their attacks.

Swoosh!

A blinding light suddenly flashed between the two and met their attacks, making it a three-way collision.

Boom!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Arthur and Leonard swiftly retreated, running away from the center of the explosions while protecting their bodies with their respective defensive methods.

There was a deep frown on their faces as they did not expect a sudden interruption just now.

Even though they were focused on fighting each other, they were still always on guard and constantly surveying their surroundings for any form of ambush.

This was a habit that they had built after undergoing their respective training.

Arthur had his Dragon Eyes while Leonard possessed the Bestial Instincts, under these two very advanced techniques, it was very hard to launch an ambush against them.

That was unless the other party greatly surpassed their powers or if that person possessed a special method to erase their presence, preventing the two from perceiving them until it was at the final moment.

Showing their dissatisfaction, the two seemed to silently agree to teach whoever it was a lesson.

It was at that moment when they saw someone walking out of the woods while saying. "Tsk! Tsk! You two are having some fun here and planning to leave me behind? What a pair of good brothers I have."

Shin revealed himself while wearing a smirk on his face.

He then looked around and saw the destruction that the two had created just like the deep craters, huge pits, and uprooted trees.

"Tsk! Tsk! Look at what you have done to our 'yard'. Auntie Jane will surely scold us later if she learns about it," he shook his head and commented before adding. "Fortunately, it is not her garden, or else we will be forced to work overtime to help her with her fancy events later."

Arthur then squinted his eyes as he complained. "Hey! You are the one ruining the fun now."

"Heh! You just got home and are already wreaking havoc in the 'garden'. Let's see how she will scold you later," sneered Shin in response.

"Then how about we pull Shin Bro in and make him a partner in crime?" said Leonard as he was quite eager to create trouble for Shin.

"Ah! Good idea!" said Arthur as he turned his gaze to Shin. "Since you are the 'witness', then either become one of us or get beaten by us."

The corner of Shin's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard that. He indeed came here to join the fun. After all, he was also quite eager to test his strength after consolidating his realm for a few days.

But if these two joined forces and created trouble for him, then it was not going to be so fun. The two were the only ones who would be having all the fun by themselves.

However, he could not show any weakness right now. Not in front of these two, or else they would be making fun of him all their lives. "Heh! Do you think I am afraid of you?"

"Let me show you something interesting that I have learned recently," he said while awakening all the powers within his body.

His vessel of mentalism, the Five Cycle Embryo, immediately responded to his call. The powers of the five elements suddenly appeared around him and reinforced the different parts of his body.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

At the same time, different runes suddenly spread on the surface of his skin, joining together and forming a series of strange patterns.

Not long after, these Mentalism Runes became a magical formation drawn throughout his body, further strengthening all his abilities and powers.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Mentalism Enchantment – Infinite Revolution'

It had been a while since he had used his mentalism rune techniques in battle, so he wanted to immediately go all out.

Swoosh!

At the same time, a symbol of a nine-story pagoda suddenly appeared at the center of his forehead while he activated the powers of his unique Niwan Palace, the Spirit Pagoda, within his mind.

The five elements that were dancing around his body also fused with one another, taking the form of a lightning with different colors.

The Five Elemental Lightning danced around him while being reinforced by his Divinity Grade Mental Energy, creating a very powerful type of Spiritual Force.

Shin had still not named this technique since he had just created it recently, along with David's guidance. But since it was one of the advanced applications of Jade Kirin Scripture, he temporarily called it the 'Jade Kirin Force Enchantment'.

At the same time, something appeared behind him.

Unlike Arthur and Leonard, who had manifested their Battle Spirit behind them, Shin had summoned something entirely different.

He was a Mentalist at this moment, so his method was slightly different from Martial Artists.

Instead of a manifested figure, a huge diagram suddenly appeared behind him. It was the diagram formed by the images of the five guardian beasts.

"Partial Manifestation Ability. I may not know how to use it, but I have something more interesting in me," he said after undergoing all these changes.

He unsheathed one of the katana hanging on his waist before swinging it around.

A flow of Divinity Grade Mental Energy wrapped itself around the sword before forming an extra layer over it. It was formless and ever-changing, smoothly taking different forms every second.

Sometimes it made the sword look like a greatsword, other times it took the form of a longsword, then changing into a rapier, or such.

"Cool, isn't it?" said Shin as he looked at the two provocatively.

It was the only method that he could think of on how he would be able to recreate one of his signature techniques in the game into the real world, the Mond's Style.

He also understood why Old Demon Ryong used such a repetitive training of swinging different types of swords and other weapons to understand all the sword principles and intents before.

Old Ryong also told him that he would be able to use this unique technique in a different way in the future since he was a Mentalist Swordsman.

Shin might not have reached the level of mastery that Old Ryong had shown at that time, where he could showcase all types of sword principles and intents despite using a single sword and apply them in battle with ease.

But with this way of using the sword as a medium along with unique Mentalism Method, he could at least mimic the process and create a version of his own.

"Hah! Fancy tricks!" commented Arthur, refusing to admit that it was indeed cool.

Bang!

On the other hand, Leonard took the initiative to attack while shouting. "Let me see if it is truly that good!"

Seeing that, Arthur suddenly laughed and swiftly charged at Shin. "That's right! Let's see if it is as good as you say!"

Swoosh!

Seeing that two were charging at him aggressively, Shin could not help but feel a little aggrieved. "You too are being too cheeky. Do you think I am afraid of you?"

Chapter 1817: Reunion of the Monster Trio (Part 3)

.....

Swoosh! Swoosh!

At the Leonard and Arthur charged at Shin, they simultaneously released their respective Natural Force and another form of energy to reinforce their attacks.

Now that they were at the Ethereal Opening Stage of the Ascension Realm, their means of attack had become more powerful and gained a lot of variations.

With these new powers to augment their respective Martial Skills, they felt that they now had more freedom whenever they moved their bodies.

However, they were not the only ones who felt this way.

These two were not the only ones who could feel that they could do anything after breaking through. Shin also felt this sense of freedom, particularly when it came to controlling the energies within his body and connecting them with the environment.

With such control and connection, Shin felt that the shackles that were restraining him before were finally broken.

He felt that he could finally showcase the true might of a Mentalist, particularly the unique and special methods that he had inherited from Grandmaster Benn.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing the incoming pair, Shin smirked as he suddenly retreated the sword behind him while extending his free hand forward.

He then focused a dense amount of Divinity Grade Mental Energy at the tip of his index finger before writing a series of mentalism runes in the air, which linked with one another and formed a magical sequence.

Not long after, this magical sequence dissolved and summoned a group of cold and icy hexagonal shields before Shin. They linked with each other and formed a dome-shaped barrier that surrounded Shin and protected him.

There was also an advanced rune at the center of each hexagon, further enhancing their defensive capabilities.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – Defense of the Turtle General'

Swoosh!

Not long after the barrier was formed, the two attacks immediately arrived.

Boom! Boom!

The barrier violently trembled for a couple of seconds before finally collapsing under the might of the two attacks. It was shattered like a glass before slowly dissipating in the air.

However, it had already done its purpose. Shin remained safe and healthy under its protection despite how devastating those attacks were.

Swoosh!

Leonard swiftly circled behind Shin while dragging his huge and heavy weapon behind. "Tsk! What a tough barrier. You look like a turtle, Shin Bro."

Swoosh!

Immediately, he swung his weapon with unstoppable might and overwhelming strength.

"Ha! It is supposed to be like that! It is under the Black Tortoise Method, after all!" Shin laughed as he suddenly spun and confronted the attack with a swing of his sword, which was now covered with dense Earth Elemental Mental Energy in the form of a greatsword blade.

Boom!

With the principles of the Heavy Sword and Domineering Sword, the power of his attack was no weaker than what Leonard had thrown.

"Tsk! Even that can't blow you away!? What a tough guy!" commented Leonard before sneering. "But I am not the only one you have to think about!"

Swoosh!

Right on cue, Arthur's figure was suddenly revealed behind the cloud of dust produced by the earlier collision.

"That's right! Don't forget about me!" said Arthur as he suddenly swung his golden lightning spear at Shin's fully exposed back.

"I never forget about you!" replied Shin without looking back.

With that, he suddenly tapped one of his feet on the ground a couple of times, followed by a powerful stomp that sent ripples through the earth.

Bang!

In the next instant, the ground behind him suddenly rose and shot upwards, summoning a stone pillar that struck Arthur and launched him into the air.

"What the f-...!?" Arthur could only curse after seeing the sudden move. He swiftly changed the trajectory of his swing, but it was already too late at that time.

Bang!

Even Leonard's face suddenly turned weird when he saw that. "What are you? A magician?"

Shin sneered when he heard that. "It looks like you guys have forgotten that I am still a Mentalist. Let me show you how someone of the Peak Grandmaster Realm fights!"

With that, he pushed Leonard back before retracting his sword.

Bang!

At the same time, his other hand suddenly pushed forward, throwing a palm strike.

It looked like a simple strike on the surface, so Leonard did not think too much about it. But the expression on his face suddenly turned grim after the palm came in contact with his weapon.

Bang!

That palm strike was filled with heavy force, along with a pounding force that successively hit his weapon, which sent him flying in the opposite direction.

That strike also carried the combined powers of Earth and Water Elemental Mental Energy, which caught Leonard off guard.

The two had never seen Shin use different elements before, so they did not expect his attacks to carry these effects, especially when he had applied his Mentalism Method alongside them.

From their perspective, Shin seemed to have brought his in-game avatar into the real world just by seeing these few tricks.

"This guy is truly a cheat," said Arthur as he adjusted his posture in the air.

Facing downwards, he then held his golden lightning spear in a throwing manner. "But don't think that you are the only one with fancy tricks!"

Roar!

In the next instant, a flaming dragon of seven colors suddenly coiled around him, staring at Shin before opening its mouth wide.

Swoosh!

With a powerful force, he suddenly threw the spear down, sending it straight to Shin.

'True Nine Dragon Arts: Imperial Tactics – Golden Dragon Descent'

Roar!

Shin chuckled when he saw the descending dragon.

He then held the 'greatsword' with both of his hands, then twirled it around to gather momentum and pull the energy filling the surroundings before fusing them with his Divinity Grade Mental Energy.

Right after accumulating enough power, he suddenly swung the 'greatsword' up and sent all the energy that he gathered, transforming it into a huge earthen dragon that greeted the descending one.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Divine Yellow Dragon – Earth Dragon Ascension'

Roar!

Boom!

An intense explosion immediately erupted right after the collision.

"Tsk!" Arthur clicked his tongue when he saw that before conjuring another golden lightning spear.

Ta-ta!

He was about to launch an attack when he suddenly sensed something.

Swoosh!

His expression immediately turned ugly as he saw Leonard appear beside him and brandishing his weapon.

"Hey! We are supposed to be teammates here!" shouted Arthur, raising his lightning spear to block the incoming strike.

Boom!

"How did you say that we are a team!? This is a free-for-all!" replied Leonard triumphantly after forcing Arthur to kneel before him.

That strike was quite heavy, after all.

"Look at this guy getting cheek! Let's teach a kid a lesson, Shin!" said Arthur while gritting his teeth.

He then flipped the spear and let Leonard's strange weapon side and strike the ground before tripping the latter.

Bang!

Unfortunately, Leonard's form was too firm and sturdy, making his tripping fail. "Hey! Cheap tricks like that will never work on this warrior's body!"

"I know!" replied Arthur as he used the momentum of his spin to suddenly dash back and ram his shoulder at Leonard with unstoppable force.

Boom!

This strike sent the latter flying, where Shin was already waiting.

"Hey! This is unfair!" shouted Leonard as he tried his best to adjust his body midair.

"This pass!" said Shin as he assumed a sword-drawing stance and channeling a huge amount of fire elemental mental energy into his sheathed sword.

Shing!

Not long after, he suddenly pulled the sword out and swung it forward, releasing all the accumulated energy in the form of a blazing crescent wave.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Blazing) – Solar Flare'

"D*mn! He really brings his in-game avatar outside the game!" commented Leonard after seeing the incoming blazing crescent.

Boom!

Arthur and Shin saw Leonard face the attack head-on, directly letting it hit his body. But their expression immediately weird after seeing the latter emerge from the smoke unscathed.

"D*mn! This guy has truly become a monster."

"What a tough body, yet you are complaining about me being a cheat?"

Arthur and Shin commented respectively while suppressing the intense twitching of their mouth.

Swoosh!

As Leonard broke through the hot smoke, he extended and curved his body midair, leaving trails behind, before landing on the ground with a loud sound.

Bang!

He left deep trails on the ground as he slid forward.

Bang!

He then pounced forward while dragging the battle weapon in the air.

Roar!

The apparition of the Battle Spirit behind him also responded, turning into an even larger beast before fusing with his weapon.

'Thousand Beast Method: Savage Crimson'

Seeing the incoming attack, Shin's expression suddenly turned serious. He swiftly retreated while drawing another series of runes in the air, summoning yet another barrier.

But this time, Arthur appeared behind him, seemingly planning to launch another pincer attack.

"Aha! You are wide open here!" shouted Arthur while also preparing for his attack.

He twirled his spear and gathered many multi-colored flames, swiftly turning into a coiling dragon that surrounded his body.

Roar!

He then charged at Shin while thrusting the spear forward.

Swoosh!

Along with his charge, the familiar technique appeared once again, but with a blazing, seven-colored dragon this time.

'True Nine Dragon Arts: Imperial Flame – Breaking Through of the Dragon'

Roar!

Chapter 1818: Interest

.....

Bang! Bang!

Boom!

In the distance, Nathan and Scar observed the battle between the three troublemakers along with the old lady.

"It looks like you have been training that brat Leonard quite well. He has even mastered the Body Refining Techniques of your Asad Tribe and combined it with the Thousand Beast Method," said Nathan as he saw Leonard's extremely tough physique.

"That is only because he has awakened the hereditary memory of his bloodline along with the help of the inheritance left by the Thunder Lord," replied Scar before turning to Arthur. "On the other hand, your family's prince seems to have fully awakened an ancient bloodline."

"It is even purer than yours," he added as he gave Nathan a sidelong glance.

While they were discussing among themselves, the old lady was paying close attention to another person. Her eyes never left Shin since the time he had joined the battle.

"Applying Rune Mentalism in battle along with a Mentalism Technique that includes five different methods?! There is also that strange swordsmanship, which includes the utilization of multiple sword principles and incorporates Mentalism," she mumbled while squinting her eyes.

"That kid, what is his relationship with Old Fatty Benn and Old Demon Ryong?" she asked with a hint of solemnness in her tone.

Nathan hesitated for a moment before answering. "He is their student. Grandmaster is that kid's Mentalism Teacher while Old Master Ryong teaches the kid swordsmanship."

The old lady did not say anything for quite a while before nodding. "No wonder. Only those two are crude enough to teach such a talent with enough nonsense."

"Fortunately, the kid is good enough to realize their ideals and produce unexpected results," she added as he continued to watch Shin. "He is now walking a unique path that is solely meant for him."

Hearing this, Nathan hesitated for a moment before adding. "Professor Plum also teaches the kid Martial Arts. He is also the direct disciple-..."

Nathan had yet to finish his words when the old lady suddenly turned to him and gave a sharp glare. "That Old Monster is also involved!?"

She then turned her attention back to Shin before frowning deeply. "Then that makes this kid a Dual Practitioner. But why can't I feel any hint of Martial Arts from this kid aside from the manner he fights?"

"Not even a hint of Internal Qi is present in his body," she added, doubting Nathan's words.

"The kid has a peculiar situation that sealed his Martial Arts, which is why such signs are hidden within his body," replied Nathan.

"Peculiar situation?" mumbled the old lady before smirking. "This kid is getting more and more interesting."

"He suddenly reminded me of those two brats," she added, which suddenly made her smile.

She was still unaware of Shin's real identity, so Nathan did not bother to explain more. It was better to hide Shin's identity from others and let them make wild guesses while the Springfields would keep quiet and refuse to comment on the issue.

They continued to watch for quite a while before the old lady turned around, planning to leave. "I guess that's enough for now. These three are good seedlings. You guys are lucky to have such gems."

"Nurture them well. Not long after, they will be our future," she added with a caring smile.

Behind, Nathan and Scar gave her a salute, sending her away with their gaze. "Thank you, Elder Divine Light!"

...

Not long after, the trio of Shin, Arthur, and Leonard could be found lying on the ground and unable to move their bodies.

"Tsk! Tsk! I can no longer move my muscles. Leo, get up and bring us home," said Arthur as he tried his best to regulate his breathing.

"I am too lazy to move now. Maybe later," said Leonard while catching his breath.

"Heh! Just admit that you are beaten and exhausted! You are supposed to be the toughest out of us three," mocked Arthur.

"If there is someone who is beaten, then it should be Shin Bro!" refuted Leonard.

Shin was too lazy to reply and focused on regulating his breathing rather than bickering with the other two.

He was too tired to join the two with their little arguments.

Not long after, Arthur suddenly sat up, regaining his energy. He turned to the two and said. "Ah! I just remembered. You guys have entered the upper bracket finals!"

"Not bad! You managed not to lose even without me. Not bad. Not bad at all!" he laughed, seemingly trying to provoke the two into another fight.

The corner of Leonard's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard that and refuted. "What do you mean by 'managed not to lose'? We won overwhelmingly! We crush all those guys!"

"We don't need a lousy knight like you anymore! Shoo~! Shoo~!" he gestured along with a smug look on his face.

"Ha! Says the one who has been killed by those trash from Earners Mercenary Group!" laughed Arthur, along with an annoying hand gesture.

"That's a 4-vs-1 against Maverick Gods and a Godlike Player! And I have killed three and almost defeated Aiming as well! If only I had more health, then I could crush that guy as well!" snarled Leonard, itching for another round.

He was now worthy of being a Body Refiner of a Warrior's Tribe. He had managed to regain his strength and energy with just a short amount of rest.

"Nah~! You still fall in the end. If it were me, then I would use some guerrilla tactics and lure them to my pace rather than foolishly using your brute and reckless way of exchanging health for damage!" said Arthur, continuing to make fun of the other.

"Ha! Then try doing something better in the next rounds if you dare! Let's see how well you are going to fight then," sneered Leonard, challenging Arthur.

"Ha! Watch me wipe the floor with these trash in the next round," said Arthur confidently.

He might not have played the game for quite a while, but he was still confident in his skills. He was a professional gamer for a reason!

It was at this moment that Shin joined the conversation. "Unfortunately, you have to wait until the Grand Finals to do that. The battle mode for the next match has already been determined."

"Eh!? Really? Which mode is it? Don't tell me that you have chosen that boring regular mode?" asked Arthur curiously.

"It is not like that," Shin shook his head before continuing. "There is a meeting before the second round of matches starts due to a sudden decision of the two teams pulling out of the tournament, along with the main forces of the other teams."

"Due to the lack of top combatants continuing in the latter parts of the tournament, the competitive spirit of the United Cup has been lost."

"We have decided to go with Champion's Battle if we advance in the upper bracket finals along with the God's Paradise," he added.

"Eh!? Just 1-vs-1s? Tsk! That's even more boring," complained Arthur.

Shin just ignored it and continued. "Since it will be 1-vs-1 battles, both matches will be held on the same day."

"If both teams managed to win 1 round each, there will be a tie-breaker match immediately after. The system will randomly choose the map by then."

Arthur clicked his tongue in dissatisfaction and said. "I know about such rules already. You don't have to tell me about it. This is not my first time encountering such things."

"So, have you chosen our representative in both matches?" he asked with little interest.

It was Leonard who had replied to him this time. "What do you mean? Since you are already here, do some work! You will be representing us in one of the rounds."

"Eh!?" Before Arthur could even say anything, Shin had already agreed. "Leo has a point. You will be representing us in the first round."

Arthur tried to say something before sneering. "Alright. Since I am here, I will show you how a heroic entrance is supposed to be done. This will be a good opportunity for a 'comeback fight'."

"What comeback fight? What are you? A retired veteran?" said Leonard mockingly, igniting another round of bickering.

Not long after, the two abruptly stopped, remembering something.

They simultaneously turned to Shin and asked at the same time. "There will be another round, right? Who will be the other one?"

Then Arthur suddenly added. "Put this guy on the field! Let me see how he will embarrass himself once I win the first round and he loses the other!"

"Huh! Don't cry later once the opposite happens!" Leonard snarled back.

Shin thought for a moment before answering. "Since it is supposed to be 'two' matches held at the same time, let's see what will happen first before deciding."

He then paused for a second before continuing. "But I do have someone in mind already."

"Who!?" asked the two almost at the same time, very curious.

Shin smirked before giving them a mystifying answer. "You will know later."

"You are not talking about yourself, aren't you?" asked the two with full suspicion.

Shin chuckled as he confirmed. "It is not me at the very least."

He then looked at his advanced watch and saw the time. "Speaking of the match. It is already later this night, so you better get ready, Arthur."

.....

When the trio logged in the game together, the rest of the team was already gathered at their private lounge, waiting for the match to start.

Even if they knew that only one of them would be fighting for this match due to the mode that the two teams had agreed upon earlier, they still preferred to watch the match together since they could exchange thoughts and insights about the battle.

Seeing Arthur logged in the game along with Shin and Leonard, the group was surprised at first before quickly showing a huge smile on their faces.

"Back finally?" asked Lorraine before adding. "When did you come back?"

"Just earlier," answered Arthur casually.

"Earlier? But I did not see you-..." Cloe squinted her eyes as she tried to guess what time Arthur came back.

She then remembered something, realizing what had happened. "Ah! That commotion earlier! You three go and ruin the backyard again!"

Arthur rolled his eyes as he tried to defend. "We don't have a choice. We-..."

But before he could even complete his words, Leonard immediately injected. "Hah! It is all this guy's fault! I just finished my regular training when he suddenly launched an ambush at me!"

"Auntie Jane will surely scold you guys again!" said Cloe as she made a face by wrinkling her nose and brows and pouting her lips.

The group bickered for quite a while before recalling why they were supposed to be here.

"So, who will be representing us in the first match?" asked Cloe curiously.

Right after hearing her words, a wave of fighting spirit appeared one after another from the main force of the team, such as Diablo, Alucard, Leonard, and Arthur.

As for the rest, they did not show much, even if they also wanted to fight just like Owen, who was confident, and Akailu, who wanted to test his most recent enlightenment on the most intense stage of the game.

After all, they knew how important this match was for the team.

Shin looked at the group before chuckling. "What's with the looks? Of course, we must give the returnee a good welcome. Let him have this one since he has not done anything up until now."

"We can't just let him ride on our hard work and rip the benefits for free, right?" he added before sneering. "But if he lost this one, then we can ask him to take responsibility."

Hearing his words, the group all turned to Arthur with 'unkind' gazes.

Shin was right. It was more interesting this way. They could make fun of this arrogant dude for a long time if he did lose. After all, their opponents were not simple.

God's Paradise was the current defending champion of the season, so underestimating them would cause serious consequences.

Seeing them looking at him this way, Arthur shook his head and said. "Heh! Don't hope about my loss too much. My record against those guys is still quite high."

"I hope Ashura takes on the stage and wipes you out," chuckled Leonard, fully aware of the abilities of the opposing side.

Among their current opponents, Ashura was the only one who had a high chance of defeating Arthur. However, it was still quite close, given the abilities of both sides.

"Heh! This guy can only win a draw against that dude," said Arthur while pointing at Shin before adding. "Let me show you how to defeat that guy. Watch me wipe his *ss on the field."

The rest ignored Arthur as they turned at Shin, with Leonard asking. "What about the other one? Who will be taking the stage?"

Shin thought for a moment before smiling mysteriously. "Let's save it for later. It depends on this guy. Let's see whether he will win or lose first."

The team nodded, not questioning his decision. They all trusted him and believed that he already had his plans, so there was no need to worry about it.

Arthur continued to bicker with the others while waiting for the start of the match, making the atmosphere within the team even livelier.

When it was time, Arthur was immediately summoned by the system.

"Watch me, I'll be back with a big W?" he said along with his smug face before disappearing.

...

Ding

System: United Cup Upper Bracket Finals – God's Paradise (Home) versus Emphyrean Talons (Away)!

System: Battle Mode – Champion's Battle!

...

Seeing the battle mode, the people watching the match could not help but go crazy, not expecting this to happen.

They did not know that the two teams had already come to a special agreement, so they were very surprised that the two teams would be deciding on who would be advancing to the grand finals first in such a simple battle format.

But they did not have the time to dwell on it that long because they suddenly saw the two representatives of the two teams.

...

Ding

System: Whale God Cetus (Godlike Player) versus Dragon God Siegfried (Godlike Player)

...

Everyone was shocked for two different reasons. This even included the two teams.

The first reason was the Whale God Cetus. This Godlike Player was quite well-known within the circle, particularly for his wealth. He was the type of player who would spend all his money within the game just to get whatever he wanted, regardless of the price.

This was also where he had gotten his title 'Whale God'.

The term 'whale' was usually used by gamers to address those players who were spending a lot of money on the game.

But Cetus was not just a whale who only knew how to spend money in the game. His skills were quite high as well, which was how he had earned himself a Godlike Title.

Even though he had not earned a lot of titles, unlike those standing at the top of the Godly Ranking Lists, he was frequent in huge tournaments.

He had even participated in almost all Professional Ranking Tournaments and Title Events, which also earned him another nickname of Crazy Whale – a crazy whale who would not let go of any opportunity to become stronger.

Because of this, he had quite a rich experience when it came to fighting top and godly experts of the game.

Moreover, he was also no stranger to facing them in the most competitive stage of the virtual games they played.

But what surprised everyone more was the fact that Cetus represented the God's Paradise in the match. After all, he was supposed to be an independent player in all the games that he played.

He was quite well-known for being a lone wolf within the virtual world.

At the same time, he could also build a team of his own, given the wealth that he possessed.

How come this prideful whale agreed to join a team that he was not the 'superstar'?

In the meantime, the others were quite surprised after seeing Arthur step onto the battlefield, representing the Emyrean Talons.

Since the start of the tournament, this was their first time seeing him.

They were quite surprised that he was now willing to take on the stage and represent this group of monsters on the field.

Now that he had returned, the lineup of the Emyrean Talons had become crazier, which further confused everyone.

Some suspected that this was the reason why the God's Paradise chose this battle format for this round, saying that they were not confident of facing the strongest lineup of the Emyrean Talons in team competition.

Others refused to believe this and said that it was just a coincidence.

Regardless of the reason, the people were quite curious about this match since they were also quite familiar with the current matchup.

These two could be considered rivals. After all, they had met each other on multiple occasions now.

...

In the private room of God's Paradise, the group could not help but click their tongue after seeing the player representing the opposing side.

"Tsk! Tsk! Is it a coincidence, or did those guys have prepared such a card at this moment? The timing is too 'right,'" said Susanoo after seeing Arthur on the stage.

"Did we just get played?" asked Kallavan before adding. "If we know that this is going to be like this, then I should have taken this position and represented us."

"We have chosen Catus for this match since this guy's class is somewhat a counter for the other guys. He even prepared some 'tools' against the other key members of the opposing team. With this, all his preparations are in vain," commented Susanoo while suppressing his laughter.

"Worse, he even encountered the most annoying guy within the circle," said Kallavan, laughing.

Ashura, on the other hand, smiled as he found the situation more interesting. "This is going to be even more entertaining now."

The other two nodded, agreeing with their commander.

"Since this is the case, who will be sending on the next match? Given the history of these two, Cetus will be at a disadvantage in the matchup," said Susanoo.

"We should prepare for the worst," nodded Kallavan.

Ashura thought for a moment, agreeing with these two. "Worst-case scenario, I will step in for the next match. Win back a point and force a tie-breaker."

He then gave the two a sidelong glance and added. "You two should prepare for the next one after mine. I will most likely reveal all my cards in this one."

The two nodded, agreeing with his thoughts, but they still wore solemn expressions on their faces. After all, their opponents were not so simple.

They were confident in Ashura and his abilities, but there was also another monster on the opposing side who could match their commander in terms of everything.

It would most likely be an early rematch between these two.

Chapter 1819: A Whale and a Dragon (Part 1)

.....

When the trio logged in the game together, the rest of the team was already gathered at their private lounge, waiting for the match to start.

Even if they knew that only one of them would be fighting for this match due to the mode that the two teams had agreed upon earlier, they still preferred to watch the match together since they could exchange thoughts and insights about the battle.

Seeing Arthur logged in the game along with Shin and Leonard, the group was surprised at first before quickly showing a huge smile on their faces.

"Back finally?" asked Lorraine before adding. "When did you come back?"

"Just earlier," answered Arthur casually.

"Earlier? But I did not see you-..." Cloe squinted her eyes as she tried to guess what time Arthur came back.

She then remembered something, realizing what had happened. "Ah! That commotion earlier! You three go and ruin the backyard again!"

Arthur rolled his eyes as he tried to defend. "We don't have a choice. We-..."

But before he could even complete his words, Leonard immediately injected. "Hah! It is all this guy's fault! I just finished my regular training when he suddenly launched an ambush at me!"

"Auntie Jane will surely scold you guys again!" said Cloe as she made a face by wrinkling her nose and brows and pouting her lips.

The group bickered for quite a while before recalling why they were supposed to be here.

"So, who will be representing us in the first match?" asked Cloe curiously.

Right after hearing her words, a wave of fighting spirit appeared one after another from the main force of the team, such as Diablo, Alucard, Leonard, and Arthur.

As for the rest, they did not show much, even if they also wanted to fight just like Owen, who was confident, and Akailu, who wanted to test his most recent enlightenment on the most intense stage of the game.

After all, they knew how important this match was for the team.

Shin looked at the group before chuckling. "What's with the looks? Of course, we must give the returnee a good welcome. Let him have this one since he has not done anything up until now."

"We can't just let him ride on our hard work and rip the benefits for free, right?" he added before sneering. "But if he lost this one, then we can ask him to take responsibility."

Hearing his words, the group all turned to Arthur with 'unkind' gazes.

Shin was right. It was more interesting this way. They could make fun of this arrogant dude for a long time if he did lose. After all, their opponents were not simple.

God's Paradise was the current defending champion of the season, so underestimating them would cause serious consequences.

Seeing them looking at him this way, Arthur shook his head and said. "Heh! Don't hope about my loss too much. My record against those guys is still quite high."

"I hope Ashura takes on the stage and wipes you out," chuckled Leonard, fully aware of the abilities of the opposing side.

Among their current opponents, Ashura was the only one who had a high chance of defeating Arthur. However, it was still quite close, given the abilities of both sides.

"Heh! This guy can only win a draw against that dude," said Arthur while pointing at Shin before adding. "Let me show you how to defeat that guy. Watch me wipe his *ss on the field."

The rest ignored Arthur as they turned at Shin, with Leonard asking. "What about the other one? Who will be taking the stage?"

Shin thought for a moment before smiling mysteriously. "Let's save it for later. It depends on this guy. Let's see whether he will win or lose first."

The team nodded, not questioning his decision. They all trusted him and believed that he already had his plans, so there was no need to worry about it.

Arthur continued to bicker with the others while waiting for the start of the match, making the atmosphere within the team even livelier.

When it was time, Arthur was immediately summoned by the system.

"Watch me, I'll be back with a big W?" he said along with his smug face before disappearing.

...

Ding

System: United Cup Upper Bracket Finals – God's Paradise (Home) versus Empyrean Talons (Away)!

System: Battle Mode – Champion's Battle!

...

Seeing the battle mode, the people watching the match could not help but go crazy, not expecting this to happen.

They did not know that the two teams had already come to a special agreement, so they were very surprised that the two teams would be deciding on who would be advancing to the grand finals first in such a simple battle format.

But they did not have the time to dwell on it that long because they suddenly saw the two representatives of the two teams.

...

Ding

System: Whale God Cetus (Godlike Player) versus Dragon God Siegfried (Godlike Player)

...

Everyone was shocked for two different reasons. This even included the two teams.

The first reason was the Whale God Cetus. This Godlike Player was quite well-known within the circle, particularly for his wealth. He was the type of player who would spend all his money within the game just to get whatever he wanted, regardless of the price.

This was also where he had gotten his title 'Whale God'.

The term 'whale' was usually used by gamers to address those players who were spending a lot of money on the game.

But Cetus was not just a whale who only knew how to spend money in the game. His skills were quite high as well, which was how he had earned himself a Godlike Title.

Even though he had not earned a lot of titles, unlike those standing at the top of the Godly Ranking Lists, he was frequent in huge tournaments.

He had even participated in almost all Professional Ranking Tournaments and Title Events, which also earned him another nickname of Crazy Whale – a crazy whale who would not let go of any opportunity to become stronger.

Because of this, he had quite a rich experience when it came to fighting top and godly experts of the game.

Moreover, he was also no stranger to facing them in the most competitive stage of the virtual games they played.

But what surprised everyone more was the fact that Cetus represented the God's Paradise in the match. After all, he was supposed to be an independent player in all the games that he played.

He was quite well-known for being a lone wolf within the virtual world.

At the same time, he could also build a team of his own, given the wealth that he possessed.

How come this prideful whale agreed to join a team that he was not the 'superstar'?

In the meantime, the others were quite surprised after seeing Arthur step onto the battlefield, representing the Empyrean Talons.

Since the start of the tournament, this was their first time seeing him.

They were quite surprised that he was now willing to take on the stage and represent this group of monsters on the field.

Now that he had returned, the lineup of the Empyrean Talons had become crazier, which further confused everyone.

Some suspected that this was the reason why the God's Paradise chose this battle format for this round, saying that they were not confident of facing the strongest lineup of the Empyrean Talons in team competition.

Others refused to believe this and said that it was just a coincidence.

Regardless of the reason, the people were quite curious about this match since they were also quite familiar with the current matchup.

These two could be considered rivals. After all, they had met each other on multiple occasions now.

...

In the private room of God's Paradise, the group could not help but click their tongue after seeing the player representing the opposing side.

"Tsk! Tsk! Is it a coincidence, or did those guys have prepared such a card at this moment? The timing is too 'right,'" said Susanoo after seeing Arthur on the stage.

"Did we just get played?" asked Kallavan before adding. "If we know that this is going to be like this, then I should have taken this position and represented us."

"We have chosen Catus for this match since this guy's class is somewhat a counter for the other guys. He even prepared some 'tools' against the other key members of the opposing team. With this, all his preparations are in vain," commented Susanoo while suppressing his laughter.

"Worse, he even encountered the most annoying guy within the circle," said Kallavan, laughing.

Ashura, on the other hand, smiled as he found the situation more interesting. "This is going to be even more entertaining now."

The other two nodded, agreeing with their commander.

"Since this is the case, who will be sending on the next match? Given the history of these two, Cetus will be at a disadvantage in the matchup," said Susanoo.

"We should prepare for the worst," nodded Kallavan.

Ashura thought for a moment, agreeing with these two. "Worst-case scenario, I will step in for the next match. Win back a point and force a tie-breaker."

He then gave the two a sidelong glance and added. "You two should prepare for the next one after mine. I will most likely reveal all my cards in this one."

The two nodded, agreeing with his thoughts, but they still wore solemn expressions on their faces. After all, their opponents were not so simple.

They were confident in Ashura and his abilities, but there was also another monster on the opposing side who could match their commander in terms of everything.

It would most likely be an early rematch between these two.

Chapter 1820: A Whale and a Dragon (Part 2)

.....

Right after appearing on the field, Arthur excitedly surveyed the arena. He was quite eager to fight since this would be his first professional match for quite a while.

His last battle in the professional stage was a couple of months before the release of «Destiny's Fate» Online. It was not that long for most, but it was still quite a long time when the profession of professional gaming was concerned.

Arthur was full of energy when he appeared on the field, but his enthusiasm suddenly disappeared in almost an instant for two reasons.

The first reason was the appearance of the battlefield.

Since God's Paradise had the home advantage on this round, they naturally had the right to choose which map to use in the match.

Most of the time, the teams with this advantage used it to the fullest, choosing maps that they were most familiar with. Some even used some complicated maps with special features that could either strengthen their strengths or weaken their opponents.

However, at this moment, Arthur was greeted by an oversimplified map that was usually used in regular matches in the online area – the Gladiator's Area.

This version was quite huge for half a kilometer wide, but it was still the simplest map without any complicated terrain or special features.

Aside from the ten-meter-tall statue of a knight at the center of the map, no other features were present on the field.

The other reason for Arthur's disappointment was his current opponent in this match.

"It's you!? What are you doing on that side? Why are you on that team? And where is Ashura!? He is supposed to fight in this comeback match of mine!" said Arthur in one breath, making the face of his opponent contorted a little.

Little did he know, the opposing side was also quite surprised at his appearance.

"What the heck!? You are still alive!? Why are you representing them now? And why now?" shouted Cetus from the other side, right after seeing Arthur.

With the appearance of this annoying guy, he knew that all the preparations that he had made for the other main forces of the Empyrean Talons had gone to waste.

While Cetus was still trying to readjust his thoughts, he suddenly heard the next annoying words from Arthur.

"The heck! You, a person who only has money and has no skills, can also enter that team? How much have you paid them to get a spot?"

"And don't you hate being a team? Why are you in such a team now?" Arthur continued to shout from the other side of the map, spitting out a series of insults one after another.

If his words could also deal real damage, then the opposing side would have most likely lost more than half of their health bar at this point, given the amount of emotional damage he had spat out.

Suppressing the intense twitching of his mouth, Cetus immediately refuted. "What about you? How come a 'free spirit' like you, who loves to jump from one place to another, settle on an adventurer team now?"

"Aren't you one of those who look down on having a permanent team or something?" he added as he fixed his grip on his weapon.

Despite the words that he was saying, Cetus also acknowledged that this person was not an easy opponent.

This was the famous Dragon God, after all.

"Heh! This 'place' is not your random place out there. This is home," said Arthur with a smug expression, despite his face being hidden under his dragon helmet.

He then focused his gaze on the equipment of his opponent, activating his unique ocular skill, the Dragon Eyes, and said. "Tsk! Tsk! Still the same. You still love to spend your money on useless things. What a fancy equipment set. How much money did you spend this time?"

He did not even wait for the opposing side to reply, as he quickly added. "It does not matter since it will not make any difference. Whether it is a broom or a vacuum cleaner, their main purpose is almost the same."

The corner of Cetus' mouth suddenly twitched when he heard those words. "Is this guy telling me that I am nothing but a fancy cleaning tool?"

"You are still as arrogant as ever. Let me show you how much I've changed since the last time you saw me in this stage," he gritted his teeth before conjuring an array of magic circles behind him and firing a series of magic spells in the next instant.

His race was a Blessed Human. It was nothing but a somewhat special race with little advantage over regular humans in the earlier stages of the game.

It was neither an Ascended Race or an Epic Race, but it had its special features.

One of them was the series of special buffs and stats that were unique to them, while the other was a variety of classes available for them, which also had a lot of potential.

It was just a 'regular' special race that the players could find in the early stages of the game. It was unique in those stages, but it did not have a lot of advantages during that time.

However, their true potential only appeared once the Tier 3 Classes and Races were released.

Blessed Human could not be evolved into an Ascended Race or an Epic Race after the individual got promoted to Tier 3 Class. However, they had a unique blessing that could be considered a cheat within the game.

They could earn the skills and acquire the abilities of other classes, so long as they met certain conditions for it.

Aside from that, they could also use the weapons and equipment meet for other classes, complementing those skills and abilities.

What was even more of a cheat about this was the other unique ability that those with this race had. It was the ability to freely reset and change the ability tree that they had built up, so long as they had enough gold in exchange when consulting the class instructor assigned to every regular class.

It was quite costly, but it was worth it if it was meant to counter certain classes and races in the professional and competitive stage of the game.

As for the preparations that Cetus had made to counter Shin and the others, it was naturally the set of skills and abilities that he had learned right before the match.

The theme of his class was 'Magic Knight' profession, which could fight with both physical and magical abilities during the battle. Adding the decent defense of the knight class, he was pretty much an all-rounder with his current abilities.

As for the other preparations, they lay on the unique items and special tools that he had bought for this match.

"It does not matter anymore. Since this annoying guy is already here, there is no point in crying over spilled milk," mumbled Cetus as he charged forward while continuing to send a series of spells toward Arthur's direction.

Whoosh!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

In the meantime, Arthur raised his shield after seeing the incoming barrage of spells. He might have said all of that, but he also knew that it was unwise to underestimate this guy in front of him.

After all, Cetus still had quite solid prestige within the game. His Godlike Title was not won by fluke in those tournaments. It was earned in a legitimate way, working from the bottom up to winning a championship with sheer dedication and effort.

If Arthur gave this guy enough window to showcase his skill, then he would pay for it quite dearly.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Right after blocking the first barrage of spells, Arthur covered his entire body with his golden aura, activating his signature Mana Manipulation Technique – the Dragon Power.

Boom!

After the final spell exploded on his shield and around him, he suddenly kicked the ground and propelled himself forward.

Bang!

Swoosh!

During his charge, the aura that was covering his body and the trail that he had left behind turned into a huge golden dragon that opened its mouth wide while breaking through the cloud of dust and smoke produced by the previous explosion.

Roar!

'True Nine Dragon Arts: Breaking Through of the Golden Dragon'

Seeing the signature move of Arthur, the audience immediately went crazy as they knew that the show had finally started.

Boom!

Not long after, Arthur collided with his opponent, who had already anticipated his move.

"Tsk! Tsk! You have never changed, Siegfried! You still love to use fancy techniques as an opposing move," said Cetus as he accurately blocked the attack of the opposing side.

"Of course! I am not like you, who only knows how to spend money rather than honing their skills," responded Arthur with a smirk, continuing with his trash-talking.

Bang!

After that, he pushed the opponent back, forcing Cetus into retreat and not giving them any chance to fire back with their counter trash talk.