

Destiny 1891

Chapter 1891: The Mad Alchemist (Part 2)

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While retreating, Alucard seemed to have realized something and swiftly activated another skill, showing yet another type of Vampire Ability.

'Vampire Ability: Psychic Manipulation – Mind Cleansing'

Swoosh!

With this ability, his mind seemed to have been cleansed by intangible power, seemingly releasing him from some sort of restriction.

Snap!

Immediately after, he had heard a sharp snapping sound followed by multiple cracks appearing in his surroundings. It was as if the world around him turned into glass before suddenly crumbling under the might of a powerful force.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The world shattered like fragments of glass, falling apart into pieces.

He then found himself still standing in the middle of the corridor, just like earlier, while a barely noticeable scent dominated the air. He did not know when this scent appeared or when he had been affected by it, but he was sure that it was no ordinary Hallucination Potion to be able to bypass the sharp senses of a vampire.

While he was frowning deeply, he suddenly heard a series of rhythmic and unhurried set of footsteps coming from the depths of the corridor.

Then he heard the voice of the opposing party. "You have already recovered? Is the resistance of Vampires against Hallucinations that strong?"

The other party did not even wait for his response, as they answered their question almost immediately. "No. That's not it. Only Vampires at Baron level and above can have such a strong resistance."

"Is it an item special effect? A Skill? Or another Vampire Special Ability?" he continued to mumble to himself as if he was solving some sort of problem in the middle of an experiment.

Not long after, a man in a loose alchemist's robe gradually appeared from the darkness of the corridor. He seemed to have a laidback and lazy attitude that was reflected by his messy appearance, particularly his slightly long and very untidy hair.

Raising his brows a little, Alucard found it a bit unsettling seeing such an appearance. "Mad Alchemist, indeed."

Then he heard this Mad Alchemist still mumbled to himself. "Dark Phantom, Blood Alchemy, Sanguine Sword, and Psychic Manipulation – that's four already. I wonder how many Vampire Abilities you have."

Alucard ignored the latter and swiftly initiated an attack, disappearing from his current position before reappearing right before his opponent with his rapier stabbing forward.

Shing!

The rapier pushed forward, stabbing straight to the throat of his opponent, but Alucard could not help but frown quite deeply.

It was because he felt that he had hit nothing but air once again.

Snap!

Then he saw that the image of the opposing party snapped like glass before crumbling like shattered pieces along with the surroundings once again.

Later, Alucard found himself standing in the same spot earlier, returning to his initial position.

On the opposing side, he saw Hermes walk out of the darkness once again, still mumbling to himself.

"A hallucination loop?" he mumbled with a deep frown before swiftly rejecting the idea. He could tell that what happened earlier was true without any hint of illusion.

"If there is nothing wrong with my mind, then it must be the surroundings," he mumbled before suddenly raising his free hand.

He controlled the blood energy around him before making a snap that reverberated in the entire corridor, producing a series of ripples in the air.

Snap!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Crimson color then spread in every direction, dyeing the entire place in bloody color, before suddenly forming a spiraling storm that ripped through everything.

'Vampire Abilities: Domain Skill (Unique Version): Blood Field'

Boom!

Summoning such an advanced Domain Skill swiftly affected the surroundings, tearing the walls, cracking the floor, and destroying the ceiling with its horrifying sanguine storm.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Bang! Bang!

Boom!

Immediately after, the entire corridor widened.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

It did not even stop there since the Blood Field continued to expand, seemingly trying to thoroughly change the entire place.

Not long after, this portion of the map had turned into a huge, spacious field filled with rubble and ruined apparatus.

The sanguine storm that was sweeping through everything within the Blood Field not only destroyed the surroundings but also swept through the air, cleansing all the impurities and anomalies mixed in it.

By destroying this portion of the map, Alucard had rendered the traps scattered in this place useless while also creating a more suitable stage where he could showcase his powers.

Barely standing at the very edge of Blood Field, Hermes' figure appeared once again. This time, it was clear that this was his true body, especially when a strange energy flowed throughout the surface of his body, fighting the aggressive sanguine storm that the domain skill possessed.

"You even have the Blood Field that only the pure-blooded nobles among the Vampires can possess. Even among them, only those with the purest bloodline can have this power," commented Hermes before adding. "It seems like the bloodline that you possess is not that simple either."

He seemed to have ignored the rest of the details in their earlier 'exchanges' and only focused on the Vampire Abilities that Alucard was 'showing' him.

He then released a sigh filled with regret before continuing. "It is such a pity that we have met in such a situation. If we are not in the competitive stage, then I will do my best to strike a deal with you."

"Say..." he paused for a moment as he calmly stepped out of the effective range of the Blood Field before continuing. "...how much will you charge for a vial of your blood? I'll make sure to satisfy all your demands."

Hearing those words, the corner of Alucard's mouth could not help but twitch along with a deep frown.

This opponent was strange.

"Truly worthy of your title as the Mad Alchemist," Alucard sighed before staring at the other party with his sharp eyes.

With a wave of his hand, he controlled the violent storm filling the entire Blood Field before pointing forward.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Not long after, blood spears were formed in the air before shooting toward Hermes.

"Tsk! Tsk! Quite snobby, huh?" Hermes clicked his tongue repeatedly before taking out a bunch of vials from the sleeves of his alchemist robe, holding them between his fingers.

Pop! Pop! Pop!

After removing the corks through a slight telekinesis, Hermes let the solutions that those vials contained flow out and drip on the ground.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

These solutions got mixed as they flowed on the ground while also drawing a strange hexagram underneath his feet.

Right before the blood spears reached him, the hexagram suddenly released a blinding light before solidifying and forming a solid barrier.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Alucard did not pause his attack and swiftly continued. Under the enhancements provided by the Blood Field, he summoned another batch of blood armaments through Blood Alchemy before sending them straight to his opponent.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Under the barrage of blood weapons, Hermes calmly took out a glass flask containing an unknown potion before drinking its contents immediately after.

Gulp!

After chugging the potion, Hermes immediately threw the flask away before staring at the incoming attacks.

His eyes glowed brightly under the effects of the potion, along with other enchantments that strengthened his muscles, causing them to bulge and become more compact.

His supposedly loose robes suddenly tightened in an instant in response to the changes in his body.

He flexed his muscles for a moment, pulling back his arms and preparing to throw a punch.

Not long after, his arms seemed to have disappeared for an instant when the blood weapons were almost about to reach him.

Boom!

Not long after, a powerful shockwave suddenly erupted and spread forward, annihilating the hail of weapons that was raining down at him and shattering them into pieces.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Hermes did not pause there. He suddenly stomped into the ground before propelling himself forward like an artillery missile.

Boom!

He broke through the restrictions of Blood Field and flew straight to Alucard, who seemed to be expecting that move already.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

An array of sniper rifles made of blood was already fanning out behind him and aiming straight ahead.

'Vampire Ability: Blood Alchemy – Limitless'

Not long after, those blood rifles simultaneously fired, sending out a powerful beam of crimson light forward.

Boom!

There was a confident smile on Hermes' face as he flew straight to the incoming crimson beam before striking forward.

Swoosh!

BOOM!

A massive explosion immediately erupted right after the collision of powers, sending a set of repeated and overlapping shockwaves in every direction.

Alucard did not even wait for the result to reveal itself, as his body had already split into multiple phantoms that spread in every direction and surrounded the epicenter of that explosion.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

'Vampire Ability: Dark Phantom – Mirror'

Each phantom picked up a blood rifle and aimed forward before firing at the same time.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

He bombarded his opponent with a series of attacks, not giving the Mad Alchemist enough time to respond.

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Chapter 1892: The Mad Alchemist (Part 3)

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Bang! Bang! Bang!

Alucard and his phantoms did not stop firing at the spot where Hermes was. But they all stopped when they realized that nothing was happening.

They waited until the cloud of smoke settled, revealing the figure of the opposing side once again. But they still kept their sniper rifles aimed forward, not daring to lower their guards against such an opponent.

Not long after, Hermes' current figure was revealed to everyone.

This already huge and bulky body had become a bit more exaggerated, rivaling a mini-giant that towered for at least 3 meters in height.

At the same time, his bulky and muscular arms were currently covered with obsidian scales that spread up to his shoulders and even reached around his neck and cheeks.

A pair of antler horns was sticking out of his head, making his appearance quite intimidating.

His eyes were sharp and resembled those of a serpent. They were golden and had thin vertical slits as their pupils.

There was also a long reptilian tail sticking out of his lower back, while his legs resembled those of scaled dragons' hind legs.

He was holding an empty flask in one of his scaled hands, indicating that he had consumed yet another potion to achieve this current appearance.

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"First, it is a Berserk Potion. Now, it was Transformation Potion. This guy sure is crazy," commented Khing (David) from the broadcast.

Both those potions had terrible side effects, which could cause serious problems for the consumer once their effects were exhausted. Even the consequences of just consuming them without proper preparation could cause the consumer to collapse mentally.

Just the Berserk Potion alone was more than enough to make the user crazy due to the uncontrollable and berserk thoughts it produced right after consuming, yet Hermes dared to consume yet another potion with an equally troublesome after and ongoing effect.

Consuming these potions together could cause the user terrible effects on their minds, turning them insane throughout the duration in exchange for the huge boosts in stats and special abilities that they provided.

“Mad Alchemist, indeed!” nodded Miss Bunny, unable to say that much.

This was one of the signature moves that earned Hermes his current reputation within the virtual world. He was crazy for his research and creation of strange potions, but he was even crazier for consuming most of them during battles.

If Adept Hands was known for her style of using chemical solutions during battles that mostly caused terrible effects for her opponents, like explosions, poisons, and other debuffs, then Hermes was notorious for consuming his creations.

Adept Hands also possessed similar potions that could be consumed during battles, which mostly provided her with a variety of buffs. However, these potions were mostly safe to consume and did not have that much of side effects.

On the other hand, Hermes did not care about the negative effects caused by his potions. So long as they could give him enough strength during battles, he would consume them without a second thought.

He would first think about destroying his opponents before thinking about the consequences later.

“It is quite clever of Alucard to destroy this portion of the map, making all the preparations that Hermes has made quite useless,” said David, complementing Alucard’s quick decision.

Miss Bunny nodded her head in agreement. “He has destroyed all those traps in the process, along with those strange potions that Hermes has scattered earlier.”

“Unfortunately, there is more to this map than what is shown on the surface,” she added with a sigh. She then turned to certain parts of the map before continuing. “I wonder how Alucard will deal with them later.”

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“Tsk! Tsk! Look! He has already gone crazy!” said Lia while pointing at the projection before them.

She then repeatedly berated Hermes, scolding him. “How many times do I have to remind him that we can’t be too crazy with his potions! Even though the system within virtual worlds can protect him to a certain extent, repeated usage can still affect his mind!”

“It can result in addiction even within the game. Worst, it can even result in him failing to recognize which is the real world and virtual reality! It can diagnose him with Virtual Reality Disorder!”

(A psychological disorder that makes an individual confused between the virtual world and reality.)

Ashura also shook his head. Even for him, it was quite impossible to control this crazy guy.

“What’s new? That guy has always been crazy! There is nothing much to expect,” commented Kallavan, already used to the situation.

Susanoo also nodded his head, completely agreeing with those words. “Isn’t this the reason why he regularly visits Doctor Renzel in the real world? For his mental consultation?”

Hearing those words, everyone within the team could not help but suppress the twitching of their mouths, feeling a bit strange about this crazy teammate of theirs.

However, no matter how crazy this guy was, he was still among the most reliable comrades that they had. He might be crazy, but he was always reliable when it came to crucial situations.

This was why they were confident about him when it came to serious situations.

Aside from his research and concoction of potions, the other thing that this guy was crazy about was fighting.

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Back on the battlefield, Alucard did not immediately make any moves against his opponent.

His Sanguine Eyes were telling that the current state of his opponent was not easy to deal with. If he recklessly attacked the latter, then there was a high chance of his suffering serious consequences later.

There was a slight standoff between the giant and the vampire phantoms for quite a while before both sides made their respective moves almost at the same time.

Roar!

Hermes, who was currently in the form of a berserk draconic giant, released a deafening roar that shook the entire place, sending repeated and overlapping ripples in every direction.

These ripples sent a strong mental attack, attempting to affect the mind of his opponent, which could force out the real body among these phantoms.

But Alucard seemed to have already anticipated such a move and cast a special hypnotism on himself, guarding against such an attack.

At the same time, he and the phantoms had simultaneously snapped their fingers, controlling the Blood Field to conjure a variety of weapons that they could use.

This domain of his was quite special compared to most of the domain skills of other players. Since it was a unique ability of noble vampires with purest bloodlines, they could be used repeatedly and maintained for quite a long time, so long as the willpower of the user was capable of supporting it.

It also had a variety of effects, such as augmenting all the vampire abilities that the user possessed while also gaining absolute control over the space within its effective range.

Naturally, there were also some restrictions in it, but it was mostly related to the mastery over the Blood Field, the consumption of mana, and the willpower of the said vampire.

In cases where the mana of the user had run out during the duration of the Blood Field, they could just use blood to replenish the energy to support and maintain the domain.

This 'blood' could either be the Health of the user or the blood of his opponents.

In a battlefield where a lot of people were dying, such a domain skill was an absolute cheat. It was a broken ability that could make the vampires a sovereign on the battlefield.

In a one-on-one battle, it might not have such fearless domination. But it could still suppress their opponents by a huge margin, especially when the buffs that they provide in battle had already reached a terrifying level.

Roar!

But despite all these buffs that Alucard and his phantoms were getting from the Blood Field and the suppression that it was giving Hermes, the latter was still able to withstand all the restrictions without much of a problem.

In his crazy and berserk state, Hermes endured all the suppression and started his relentless assault.

Boom!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Taking advantage of his current form, he used force to destroy most of the phantoms that were charging at him from every direction, using his overwhelming strength and raw power to overcome their sheer numbers.

Hu~!

Blazing embers flickered and leaked out of Hermes' mouth after pausing his assault for a second.

A moment later, he suddenly opened his mouth and started breathing out flames in every direction.

Roar!

'Special Ability: Lesser Dragon's Breath'

Swoosh!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Quite a lot of phantoms were swept by the flames. It swept through them with intense heat and scorching fire.

Their blood weapons melted under the intense heat while the flames swallowed their figures whole.

The surrounding phantoms tried to get away from the blazing flames, but most of them were unable to escape such a huge range and were caught by the overwhelming fire.

Despite being an inferior version of a dragon's breath, its effect was still as destructive as the real one. The destruction that it caused was not limited only to these phantoms; even the partial authority that Alucard controlled within the Blood Field was 'burned' by these draconic flames.

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Chapter 1893: Revealing Their Cards (Part 1)

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Seeing that even the Blood Field itself was slowly being affected by the lesser draconic flames that Hermes had just spat out, Alucard could not help but squint his eyes a little and focus his gaze on the latter.

He then looked at those flames a little closer through his Sanguine Eyes and realized something. Those flames were not like any other flames that he could easily suppress with his Blood Powers.

Aside from being a lesser version of a true draconic flame, they also contained a variety of chemicals mixed in them. These chemicals created a certain reaction with these flames that somehow negated the effects of the Blood Field and his partial authority within it.

Moreover, it was also continuously spreading within the Blood Field, fighting the influence of the domain skill within the space.

Realizing this, Alucard swiftly adjusted his control over the Blood Field. Instead of letting the expansion of the domain skill further expand, he forced it to contract into a bit smaller place while also focusing its effects to suppress his opponent and those flames.

He had also dropped a portion of the enhancements and buffs that they provide him and other abilities just to further strengthen the suppression of the Blood Field against his opponent.

Boom!

With the contraction of the Blood Field, the pressure that Hermes was receiving immediately rose by a large margin. He could even feel that his breathing was slowly getting more haggard and heavier.

But he immediately ignored it and focused on offense instead.

Roar!

In his current state, he could not think that much because of the influence of the potions that he had just consumed earlier. The Berserk Potion (Version VII) and Transformation Potion (Model Dragon) were the strongest potions that he currently had, giving him quite a lot of power and special abilities.

Unfortunately, they were also the ones with the most serious side effects, which directly affected his mind right after consumption.

Moreover, these side effects were only growing more serious as time went by. It would continuously make him crazier with every passing second. If he was not careful and or focused on his goal, then he would only let these negative effects grow faster and make him a crazy demon, who knew nothing but destruction.

He would be no different from a savage beast at that time, which would also make it easier to deal with him.

After all, hunting a mindless monster was much easier than hunting a crazy person like him.

He had to be careful of losing control, keeping his mind straight all the time. This also put a timer on him, which was why he had to go all out right from the start. He had to finish this match as fast as he could before it was too late.

Adding that he had added a few more potions in the mix to further enhance his stats and augment the special effects of these two potions, he time was only ticking even faster than how they used to work.

He was as crazy as everyone called him.

Boom!

But if it reached the point where he had lost his mind completely, the other arrangement that he had prepared for this match would be triggered right after.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Hermes went into an intense rampage, attacking everything around him, leaving nothing but destruction in his wake.

The already destroyed place became even more ruined with his series of attacks that created craters in every spot that got attacked.

In the process, the phantoms that Alucard had just summoned to attack Hermes were annihilated and unable to fight back.

The obsidian scales that were covering the surface of his skin were so tough that the blood weapons that were conjured within the Blood Field were ineffective against them.

These blood weapons had also been enhanced by the Blood Power within the domain skill, so their quality was much better compared to the ones that Alucard usually used in battle. Yet they were incapable of penetrating those obsidian scales.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Raising his arm covered with obsidian scales, Hermes blocked yet another attack from the phantoms.

He stared at them savagely for a couple of seconds before swinging his arm to push them back and swiftly swiping the sharp claws in his other arm.

Shing!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Sharp waves flew forward and ripped the phantoms into shreds, not giving them any opportunity to escape.

Roar!

Right after, Hermes looked for another target. He leaped into the air and came crashing down on a different spot, creating yet another crater with his destructive descent.

Boom!

He then swung his claws around, sending sharp waves in every direction that cut through everything on their path.

Shing!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Even the Blood Powers that were filling the Blood Field were also being cut by these sharp waves that were only getting stronger at a noticeable rate.

On top of the strange flames that were constantly being released by Hermes, it seemed like Alucard had stopped the latter from sending more of these sharp waves from his claws, or they would destroy his domain skill sooner or later.

But he had already prepared something for the opposing party.

All he had to do for now was to wait. Wait until the surprise that he had prepared to take effect before making his move.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

He then summoned a few more phantoms and controlled them to siege Hermes with another series of coordinated attacks.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Most of them attacked in a melee range, along with the variety of blood weapons that he had conjured, while the rest were maintaining their distance and providing range support with their blood rifles.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The situation became even more chaotic, making it a bit harder for Hermes to move freely.

Roar!

This then resulted in him becoming even crazier with his attacks, launching an insanely powerful barrage of strikes to deal with the bunch of phantoms that were attacking him from every direction.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

At times, he was taking advantage of his tough body and powerful defense to endure all the attacks while bulldozing his way in random directions.

Shing!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Other times, he was swiping his claws around, tearing everyone around along with the Blood Powers within the Blood Field and affecting its influence against him.

Roar!

Boom!

There were also times when he was spitting out flames from his mouth and spreading them in every direction, melting everything around him.

Impenetrable defense on top of possessing powerful offensive prowess – Hermes was like an unbeatable monster boss that most of the players encountered on the field, which was also wiping them out almost all the time.

These crazy clashes between the two continued for a few more minutes before a chance finally affected the battle.

"What!?"

Hermes was suddenly caught off guard by something that he had not expected.

"Why are the effects of the potions getting much stronger than my estimate?" he frowned deeply as he found it strange that his calculations were way off from what was happening on the field.

"This is impossible. I have already simulated all the data a lot of times and have tested everything before with the others on the team," he mumbled, finding it hard to accept that there were miscalculations in the perfect model that he had already created.

Based on his calculations, he would be able to hold this state for at least thirty minutes with a bit of a 3 to 5-minute margin of error. This even includes situations like intense and chaotic battles, like what he was undergoing right now.

He had even fought against the other members of the team with even stronger solutions before, so he should have built up a bit of resistance against these negative effects.

However, despite using the more 'stable' versions of those potions, he seemed to be losing control at a much faster rate compared to what his calculations and the data collected were telling him.

"There is only a little over fifteen minutes since I have consumed those potions. How come the side effects are already getting this serious?" he mumbled as he tried his best to keep his mind in control while continuing his assault.

The headache was getting stronger in every passing second, making it harder for him to control himself.

Regardless of all of these, his mind was still working at an extremely overloaded state, trying to find the cause of his current situation.

Not long after, he seemed to have finally realized something. "Everything should be fine unless an external factor has affected the results."

Recalling the abilities that his opponents had shown him since the start of the match, Hermes seemed to have finally figured out where the problem lay. "Vampire's mind manipulation!"

Boom!

Hermes swiftly retreated, breaking through the encirclement of the phantoms and distancing himself as much as possible.

Due to his decisive move, he was able to escape the effective range of Blood Field, which had already contracted in a much smaller range compared to earlier.

Standing a few distance away from the Blood Field, Hermes squinted his eyes before saying. "You have planted a psychic poison in my mind, affecting my willpower and hastening the side effects of my potion."

'Vampire Abilities: Psychic Manipulation – Mind Plague'

Alucard walked out from behind his phantoms, revealing his true body. He smirked at Hermes, not answering the latter.

That mocking smile was more than enough of an answer for Hermes, making him narrow his eyes even further.

Not long after, he also started grinning before saying. "Do you think you are the only one with a secret weapon?"

He paused for a moment to spread his arms wide before asking. "Why do you think I have chosen this map for my home advantage? Is it because of those traps? Do you also think so?"

Seeing the crazy grin that the opposing side was giving him, Alucard could not help but squint his eyes, sensing a dangerous premonition.

He could feel that the latter had also prepared a surprise of his own to deal with him. Moreover, it seemed like he had also fallen quite deep into that trap after seeing that wide grin from the Mad Alchemist.

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Chapter 1894: Revealing Their Cards (Part 2)

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Alucard squinted his eyes quite deeply as he stared at his opponent standing right outside of the Blood Field.

What Hermes had said made him a bit suspicious, especially after considering why the other party had chosen this map.

Rumble!

While he was lost in thought, he suddenly sensed that the ground seemed to have trembled quite intensely before hearing some rumbling sounds coming from a distance.

Ding

It was also at this moment that the system informed him of something.

System: The level of the 'intruder' has reached a certain level!

System: The 'Professor' has become aware of your presence.

Ding

System: The 'Subjects' are being released to deal with the intruders!

Alucard could not help but raise his brows after receiving those notifications. "The Experimental Subjects are being released!? But this is a one-on-one battle!"

It was common knowledge for everyone that this map, the Professor's Experimental Laboratory, was among the most complex maps within the area since it contained multiple features.

But most of these features were only unlocked when the specific sections of the map were released based on the mode and format of the match that was taking place on it.

These so-called Experiment Subjects were a special type of monster that were supposed to be released when the sections of the map, the Special Rooms, and the Subject Prisons, were unlocked in the Team Competitive Format of the match.

These 'Subjects' were supposed to be farmed by the players on the field to strengthen themselves before engaging in battles.

Those sections of the map were quite large, rivaling a regular grinding map within the game.

Some of these 'Subjects' were special mobs of the map, which provide buffs and special energies right after being killed. The others were nothing but destructive monsters that were meant to hunt the players on the field, making the match even harder.

There were also other types of experimental subjects with different kinds of purposes.

Regardless, Alucard was not supposed to bother about them since the battle format of this Group Battle was supposed to be a one-on-one battle. These Experiment Subjects were not meant to be released, especially when the two sections that were meant to trigger their release were still sealed.

What made Alucard even more concerned was the notification itself. Based on the contents of the notification, the Subjects that had been released seemed to be meant for hunting intruders.

This meant that they would not provide any sort of buff or similar effects right after being killed.

Roar! Roar! Roar!

Alucard did not have the time to think why these Experiment Subjects were released and how Hermes had triggered it because he could already hear the eerie and savage roars of the Subjects.

They were rapidly approaching this place.

Rumble!

Moreover, based on the rumbles produced by their footsteps, he could tell that there were not just a few of them.

Frowning deeply, Alucard could not help but feel a bit pressured. The main reason was his ability to maintain the Blood Field.

He was only capable of maintaining it for a dozen minutes at best. But that was only if he was only fighting Hermes.

If these Experiment Subjects were added in the mix, then he was not confident that he would be able to maintain it for extended periods, affecting his overall battle capabilities.

Casting his gaze back to Hermes, he saw that this Mad Alchemist was doing well, too. Alucard could at least tell that the opposing party was also trying his best to keep his mind straight and suppress the crazy thoughts that were constantly assaulting him due to the overlapping side effects of the Berserk Potion and Transformation Potion.

It seemed like this had truly become a battle of attrition.

He then saw Hermes drink another potion, which seemed to somewhat relieve him and suppress the side effects of the two broken potions.

Despite relieving those side effects, Hermes did not immediately attack Alucard because he knew that fighting the latter would only worsen his situation.

The Mind Plague that Alucard had planted in his head was not simple, so he had to be careful. It would most likely get worse if he continued to expose himself with the latter's psychic powers.

Moreover, the Experiment Subjects had also been released, so he did not have to work that hard to deal with Alucard.

Even though he was also not safe against those 'subjects' either, he at least knew how to deal with them. He could also avoid them as much as he could since Alucard would lure them to himself due to the Blood Field that was currently active on the battlefield.

The aggro of these Experimental Subjects would focus on him, giving him enough time to at least get rid of the effects of Mind Plague and recover as much of his mental strength as possible.

Considering this, he quickly drank another potion. This time, it was an Invisibility Potion that concealed him.

This Invisibility Potion was not simple either since it had extra effects compared to regular ones that most of the players knew.

It not only turned him invisible but also erased his presence entirely, preventing Alucard from finding him despite using his Sanguine Eyes to the fullest.

Boom!

Before Alucard could even try to look for the traces of his opponent, the first batch of the Experimental Subjects had already reached this place.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The walls collapsed as the subjects broke through them.

Looking over, Alucard saw that these so-called Experiment Subjects came in different forms.

Most of them had humanoid forms with different builds. Some were no different from skeletons due to their bodies lacking any signs of muscles. Others were like overly obese people, having a large and bouncing body. The rest were muscular figures with bloated muscles.

The other type of 'Subjects' were like chimera beasts. They seemed to be hybrid monsters that were either forcefully stitched together or had been crossbred with other species. Most of them were even mutant beasts that had been created from some unknown research project or immoral experiments.

Rumble!

Seeing them rushing at his direction like hordes, Alucard squinted his eyes before finally making his move.

Snap!

He released his tight control over the Blood Field. He released it from its contraction, letting it spread in every direction and covering an even larger area.

This was meant to assist him in dealing with the incoming horde of Experimental Subjects, weakening them while enhancing his stats at the same time.

Aside from that, it was also meant to locate Hermes, who had just disappeared after consuming an Invisibility Potion.

Within the Blood Field, he would be able to sense his surroundings more clearly, which would help him find the traces of this Mad Alchemist.

Roar!

The experiment subject started pouncing at Alucard and his phantoms, attacking with relentless assaults.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Countless blood weapons appeared in the air before falling like rain, piercing through the bodies of experimental subjects and pinning them down.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Roar!

Those with smaller bodies had been cut by the hail of blood weapons pouring down from the sky, while those with muscular bodies managed to withstand the assaults with their durable physiques.

At the same time, Alucard had summoned an even larger number of phantoms, which swiftly picked up the blood weapons scattered on the ground and quickly fought against the experimental subjects.

Shing! Shing! Shing!

Some of them even conjured a sniper rifle each before free firing at the horde.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Roar!

Unfortunately, despite the initial onslaught that Alucard and his phantoms had launched, the number of the experiment subjects seemed not to have dropped due to their overwhelming number that kept on coming from every direction.

Roar! Roar! Roar!

They continued to rush toward the Blood Field with their relentless assaults, slowly overwhelming Alucard and his phantoms.

Seeing this, Alucard immediately changed his method. He quickly dropped his weapons before gently waving his hands.

Swoosh!

Following the gestures of his hands, the movement of the blood powers within the Blood Field moved. It was slow at first, but it quickly spun rapidly after gradually gaining more momentum.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

A huge storm suddenly erupted within the Blood Field, which continued to grow stronger in every passing second.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The strong current of blood powers swiftly halted the advance of the incoming horde before it gradually tore their bodies apart.

The blood weapons that had been conjured were 'picked up' by the strong current as well, dragging them around. They flew along with the destructive currents, piercing through the bodies of the experiment subjects and further destroying their bodies.

Alucard was not even content with this and further increased his means of attack. He summoned a huge swarm of blood tentacles that spread in every direction before grabbing the nearby experimental subjects and tearing them apart along with the powerful currents.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

While he maintained these actions, a pair of huge crimson wings spread out from his back, and his eyes glowed with sanguine light.

A powerful presence swiftly spread in every direction and overwhelmed the space as if a monarch had suddenly descended and announced its authority to everyone.

Boom!

.....

Chapter 1895: Revealing Their Cards (Part 3)

...

Roar! Roar!

Boom!

The collisions between Alucard and the horde of Experimental Subjects that were flooding from every direction continued to escalate to an even more chaotic state.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Bang! Bang!

The clashes were not that simple either, since both sides were doing their best to defeat each other.

The Experimental Subjects were trying to overwhelm Alucard with their relentless assaults that continued to become more serious with every passing second.

Their numbers were also constantly increasing rather than decreasing due to the continuous arrival of more of their 'kins' from the depths of the map.

Roar! Roar!

This gave Alucard even more pressure, forcing him to maintain his Blood Field for an extended period, which put quite a lot of burden on his mind.

Adding that he had to also keep using the more advanced techniques meant for manipulating, the burden cast in his mind was only getting heavier. This also burned quite a lot of his concentration, which would also get worse if he let this continue.

Moreover, this was far from being the main problem that he needed to solve in this match. Instead, it was Hermes, who was currently hiding somewhere and observing him from the darkness.

Aside from that, he could also sense that there was some sort of substance slowly getting mixed into the Blood Power filling and supporting the Blood Field.

It was barely noticeable at first, but it slowly revealed some traces the more time passed.

He was not sure what exactly it was, but he could at least guess that it had something to do with Hermes. It was either from the strange potions of this Mad Alchemist once again, or it came from these Experiment Subjects, which were constantly being torn apart by the Crimson Strom within his Blood Field.

Regardless, it was most likely an arrangement of his opponent.

Because of all these, Alucard could not help but have a sudden sense of urgency, which also forced him to make up his mind.

He was planning to take a gamble this time, risking everything with one move.

He knew that this round was important to their side since winning it would guarantee their win over the opposition.

Given the current scores, they would automatically win the championship once they won the round due to the score difference between the two teams.

The Empyrean Talons had won the previous match with a 9 to 1 score, giving them such a huge advantage. Even if God's Paradise had earned themselves with the 2 points from the first round of this match, the gap was still 9 to 3, which was still in favor of the Empyrean Talons.

So long as Alucard had won this round, the championship title for this season's United Cup would be theirs for the taking.

Unfortunately, the current situation seemed to be slowly getting grimmer for him.

The Mad Alchemist was indeed a huge pain to deal with, especially with how he utilized an unknown trigger within this map. This current situation was quite a huge problem for him.

He was prone to committing a lot of miscalculations during the match, especially since he barely knew any of the abilities of his opponent. The variety of potions under Hermes' arsenal was a huge problem to deal with.

But he did not expect that this Mad Alchemist would rely on the special conditions of the map to win instead of his usual style of experimenting with his potions during the battle.

Usually, it was those potions were the things that someone had to worry about when dealing with Hermes. But who would have thought that this guy would rely on the map to earn himself a winning condition for this match?

Even though those potions also had serious side effects in exchange for the special powers and broken abilities that they provided, it was barely an issue for Hermes since he was already a crazy person to begin with.

The situation became even more troublesome to deal with due to all the factors presented before him.

Understanding his current situation, Alucard knew that he could at least afford to take all the risks since they were still quite ahead of their opposition.

If only he could fully control the Blood Field and use all its abilities to their full potential, then he would have a much easier time dealing with this bunch of Experimental Subjects.

Floating in the air, Alucard spread the pair of sanguine wings behind him while keeping his control over the Crimson Storm, along with the conjured Blood Weapons that were flying everywhere.

He could tell that the time was running out due to the strange substance mixing in the Blood Field. If he let this continue for a bit longer, then he would most likely lose his control over it sooner or later.

No matter which he chose between annihilating the entire army of Experimental Subjects or focusing on getting rid of the strange substance filling the Blood Field, both would only lead to more troubles for him since they were most likely the goal of the opposing side.

Since his original plan to turn this match into a battle of attrition had been 'stopped' by Hermes, he had no choice but to throw all his initial thoughts out the window.

Since prolonging this battle would now be against his favor, it was his turn to make it into a final exchange, where both sides had no choice but to use everything they had in one move that would decide everything.

A long battle would most likely lead to his loss anyway, so it was better to put everything on this one final move and bet everything on it.

There was nothing much he could do anyway, so betting on this final move was much better than waiting for his loss later.

Even if he loses the bet and lets the opposing side get the points for this round, they could still trust the Shin and the others for the final round later.

"Tsk! Such a pity," he clicked his tongue, thinking that he would have most likely lost this round due to the map advantage of his opponent rather than an honest battle against Hermes.

He was looking forward to fighting this Mad Alchemist since it was quite rare to find someone with such a fighting style within the game.

He first thought that this Mad Alchemist would directly accept the challenge earlier, given his crazy personality, especially after seeing him use the double buffs of those highly modified versions of special potions.

Who would have thought this crazy guy would not duke it out with him and choose the much safer choice instead?

Spreading his arms wide, Alucard continued to control the Blood Field along with the blood weapons before manipulating them into a much stronger storm.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

He continued to float higher into the air while the Blood Field rapidly expanded in response. The crimson storm also grew stronger, annihilating all the Experimental Subjects that tried to get near him.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The violent current also grew stronger, dragging all the conjured blood weapons to spin around him.

Not long after, the Blood Field had covered quite a huge area, while the crimson storm within it further destroyed the surroundings during its expansion.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Boom!

More of the walls were destroyed while the ceilings were being torn apart.

The Experimental Subjects tried to endure the storm, but their bodies were also constantly being shredded by blood weapons that were flying in the air and swimming along the strong current of blood powers.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

'Blood Field: Manipulation – Sanguine Calamity'

Bang! Bang! Bang!

With such a powerful and destructive storm, no one could hide themselves. Even the top assassins and thieves would not be able to stay in stealth with such strong currents, which could also locate them easily.

However, Hermes seemed to be able to achieve such a feat, making Alucard frown even deeper.

He did not know what kind of trick Hermes used, but it sure was troublesome. "Since that is the chase, then all I have to do is increase the intensity of the storm."

Spreading his arms and the pair of crimson wings behind him, Alucard strengthened his control over the strong currents of blood power and the crimson storm.

Boom!

The storm then suddenly created a huge tornado that covered the entire area, dragging everything into the air before shredding it apart with its strong currents.

Adding the countless blood powers swimming through the currents, the destructive powers of this crimson storm grew even stronger!

It threatened to destroy this portion of the map completely.

Roar!

Amid the crimson storm, a savage and thunderous roar suddenly reverberated in the entire place. It tore through the commotion that the blood tornado was making and even freed some of the stronger Experimental Subjects from the strong currents.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Not long after, Alucard sensed that the strange substance that mixed itself into the Blood Field suddenly moved and swiftly gathered into a single location.

They gathered at an insane rate, almost gathering at a single point in an instant.

It did not end there, either, since the shredded bodies of the Experimental Subjects were suddenly drawn toward the same direction, converging and forming a huge figure capable of withstanding the crimson storm.

Alucard did not have to guess what was happening since he could already tell that it must be the final preparation of his opponent, especially when he could see the familiar presence coming from that figure along with the overwhelming power that it possessed.

Boom!

With a series of hand gestures, he controlled the current of blood power once again, gathering it into the area above his head and forming a huge and spiral current that resembled a giant spear.

Roar!

Seeing the huge spinning spear above Alucard, the flesh giant released yet another deafening roar, seemingly issuing a challenge toward the latter.

Accepting the challenge, Alucard smirked before strongly swinging his hand forward, sending the huge spiral of blood power forward.

Swoosh!

In response, the huge flesh giant released another deafening roar before pouncing forward and charging straight at it.

Roar!

.....

Chapter 1896: Reaching the Summit or Falling Short?

...

Boom!

The collision between the two sides immediately produced a massive explosion, which continued erupting with a series of overlapping shockwaves in every direction.

The flash monster endured the powerful storm that was trying to tear apart its body while maintaining its suspended body in the air, along with its fist that was thrusting forward.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The flesh that seemed to be forcefully stitched together was repeatedly being shredded by the crimson storm and the spiral current before it, while its body was being repeatedly pierced by the blood weapons swimming through the crimson current.

Alucard's eyes were shining bright as he controlled all the blood power within the Blood Field, trying to forcefully tear the body of his opponent.

The body of the opposing side seemed to be a cluster of flesh that was forcefully molded together like clay to gain its current form.

Its powerful body seemed to have strong regeneration abilities, which constantly tried to rebuild its body despite being forcefully torn apart by its opponent.

The cycle of destruction and regeneration continued.

With such a powerful regeneration ability, quite a lot of people had gotten a false impression that its body was indestructible.

But everyone later realized that the giant body of this flesh monster was growing smaller and getting thinner with every passing second.

Given the rate at which its body was getting shredded, it would not take that long before this flesh monster would turn into a meat paste and fuse with the blood current.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

However, the opposing side did not seem to be doing fine either.

Everyone could see that Alucard was currently struggling to control the blood power filling his surroundings, making the Blood Field somewhat unstable.

Since the bodies of Experiment Subjects seemed to contain a strange substance that could affect the Blood Field, Alucard did not recklessly use their body to supplement the domain skill, afraid that it would only sabotage him later.

Boom!

With a final push, Alucard managed to erupt with a stronger power, gaining enough strength to shred the body of flesh monster completely.

Roar!

Its body turned into a meat paste that slowly scattered into the air while its final roar reverberated in the entire place.

Boom!

But at the same time, Alucard had also reached his limit, forcing him to release the Blood Field completely.

Bang!

He had also lost all his strength to maintain his flight, making him fall to the ground.

Realizing that he still had yet to receive the notification from the system, Alucard knew that he had failed to finish off his opponent.

It was even possible that the flesh monster was not Hermes at all, but something created through a strange method.

Recalling everything that had happened earlier, Alucard felt that it must have something to do with that strange substance that was interfering with his control of the Blood Field earlier.

Swoosh!

Before Alucard could even fully reassess the details of the match, Hermes, who was still in his double empowered state, suddenly materialized behind him.

He was holding a strange syringe filled with runes, seemingly flashing it in front of everyone before stabbing it at Alucard's back.

Puchi!

This syringe seemed to absorb quite a huge amount of blood from Alucard, which further weakened the latter's strength.

"Argh!"

Alucard struggled a little before Hermes pulled the syringe back and put it into his inventory.

Hermes did not wait that long either and swiftly swiped his claws at Alucard, ripping the latter's body apart.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Ding

Not long after, the system finally announced the result of this round.

System: Group Competition Victory – God's Paradise!

Current Total Score: God's Paradise (6) – Empyrean Talons (9)

...

There was silence at first as everyone seemed to be trying to process everything inside their head.

"Whoa!"

"Awesome!"

"Amazing!"

It did not take that long before everyone finally regained themselves and started an uproar. All the players watching from the live stand went crazy, while those watching the live broadcast flooded the live chat with their reactions once again.

The matches in this round were quite intense, making everyone quite excited.

Since there was quite a long time before the next round started due to the break, they could pour all their emotion out and go crazy as much as they could.

At the same time, they also started discussing the scores of both sides.

With these two rounds won by God's Paradise, the Empyrean Talons had yet to win any points for this rematch.

The overwhelming lead that the Empyrean Talons had won from the previous clash against God's Paradise was gradually getting low.

With those two rounds, the scores had reached the 6 to 9 score, which only had a 3-point difference.

This was a huge comeback!

This was a big turnaround for the side of God's Paradise!

Their fans immediately erupted, cheering for their idols and role models! Their Gods were fighting back and gunning for the championship once again!

"Back-to-back Champion!"

Their fans immediately start chanting such words after gaining such huge morale from the two rounds that they had won.

With such momentum, the fans believe that the members of God's Paradise would surely win the next round as well, earning themselves the very first back-to-back championship of the United Cup.

This then became the spark for another round of intense arguments between the fanbases of both sides. The live chat erupted with an intense flood of emoji battles and memes, while those at the live stand were close to breaking into fighting each other, almost starting a riot.

...

While everyone was going crazy, the two teams were already making their respective preparations for the final round.

Swoosh!

Right after Alucard appeared in the private lounge, he was immediately greeted by everyone within the team.

"What a pity. That is a close call," said Leonard after seeing him.

"That guy sure knows how to use the home ground advantage. Those Experimental Subjects sure are troublesome," added Arthur with a slight frown.

Hearing that, Alucard suddenly remembered this issue and asked. "Have you guys seen how he managed to release those guys?"

Everyone went silent for a moment before Shin shook his head. "It is impossible to see how he manages to trigger the conditions for such an event with the information that we currently have."

"Maybe will have to study the recording first before doing some experiment," he added, feeling a bit interested in researching the cause.

He felt that they would be able to use it in other cases in the future.

"I seem to remember that it has something to do with 'threat level,'" said Alucard before adding. "At least, that is what I have gotten from the notification that the system has given me during the match."

Shin nodded, taking note of it.

They discussed the other matches of the Group Battle for a bit too long before proceeding to their preparations for the next round.

The Team Competition would be the deciding factor of this match since the winner and loser of the match. This would also decide who would be the champions of this season's United Cup.

For the side of God's Paradise, this would be a great opportunity to become the very first back-to-back champions of the United Cup, cementing themselves as one of the best and strongest teams in the virtual world.

There were quite a lot of teams from different organizations and guilds, who had proven themselves to be the strongest in the history of the United Cup and even won quite a few titles in the tournament, but no one had managed to win the crown two times in a row.

It was because all the teams that were challenging the title were always strong contenders in the tournament.

Not even those from the older generation had managed to win consecutive titles since the United Cup was first established.

However, it was hard to tell if the rumored 'Irregulars' could not achieve such a feat since they were absolute legends within the virtual world, always winning and never losing any kind of battle since their first appearance.

After all, multiple tournaments had just popped out when the legendary group had stopped appearing in the virtual world.

As for the side of the Empyrean Talons, this would also be another legend that they would carve in the history of the virtual world.

This would also be their very first title as a team, which would also be amazing since their team was recently founded not long ago.

Even though most of their members were already established names within the game, winning a title as a team was still a big deal. Especially when there were also quite a few teams that had tried similar feats before, forming a highly elite team, but fell short when it mattered most.

This final round would determine if the Empyrean Talons would create their legend or become one of those highly elite teams that had failed to earn the title when it was right within their reach.

.....

Chapter 1897: The Battle for the Crown

...

It did not take that long before the system finally announced the start of the match, earning huge and loud cheers from every spectator of the match.

DING

System: United Cup Grand Finals – Second Match!

System: Third Round – Team Competition!

God's Paradise (Home)

Commander:

‘Martial God’ Ashura (Godlike Player)

Members:

‘Origin Cleric’ Lia (Maverick God)

‘Combat King’ Kallavan (Maverick God)

‘Storm Samurai’ Susanoo (Maverick God)

‘Dominion Spear’ Dio (Maverick God)

‘Scavenger King’ Vulture (Maverick God)

‘Godly Guardian’ Valerius (Godlike Player)

Versus

Empyrean Talons (Away)

‘Gentle Goddess’ Arielle (Godlike Player)

Team Members:

‘Battle God’ Sickarius (Godlike Player)

‘Dragon God’ Siegfried (Godlike Player)

‘War God’ Simba (Godlike Player)

‘Elemental Goddess’ Charlotte (Godlike Player)

‘Dancer of Shadows’ Diablo (Maverick God)

‘Dark Knight’ Owen (Peak Titled Ranker: Pseudo God)

...

The lineup of these two teams never ceased to amaze everyone due to the number of gods that each side possessed.

Such godly lineups always put everyone in awe.

Everyone could not do or say anything about them and could only stare at those legendary names and godly titles in admiration.

No matter how many times they saw those names individually could already leave everyone in awe; what's more, when such names were together.

...

Right after the announcement, the players of both sides were immediately summoned to the battlefield, which was chosen by God's Paradise.

Twisted Paradise – it was a map that was quite familiar to everyone since it was regularly used in PvP Battles in the Divine Colosseum inside the game, or any other tournament in competitive scenes.

But this map choice made everyone confused since such a map was usually used in large-scale battles such as Guild Wars or Survival Matches.

It was a very massive map with a lot of special features, much similar to the Professor's Experimental Laboratory from the previous round.

But unlike the previous map, this particular map had already unlocked all its features right from the very beginning of the match.

Given the features of this map, there should be a lot of supply points at certain locations, along with the monsters scattered in different parts of the map that could give a variety of buffs after being hunted.

This map was among the largest maps within the PvP Arena due to the type of battles that usually took place on it.

“Are the members of God’s Paradise planning to use these buffs and supply points for the match?”

“Isn’t that crazy? If they can do it, the side of Empyrean Talons can as well!”

“This will mostly be a competition of speed if that is the case! Whoever grinds more buffs and special items on the field will most likely be the winner of this match!”

These were the thoughts that were running through everyone’s head when they saw the map. However, everyone immediately realized that it might not be the case.

Looking at the rules and battle mode for this round, everyone learned that all the special features meant for large-scale battles like Survival Battles and Guild Wars, such as supply points and monsters scattered in the map, were currently locked.

Aside from the unique terrains and the size of the map, everything else was not accessible for this round.

At the same time, it seemed like both sides were summoned right at the heart of the map, which was quite ‘close’ to one another considering the size of the Twisted Paradise.

The distance between the two points was still quite far, especially when there were quite a lot of special and difficult terrains in between, which both sides had to trek through before reaching one another.

Still confused why God’s Paradise had chosen this map, everyone was forced to keep quiet and pay close attention to the match since they could sense that there was something big saved for them.

...

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The members of God's Paradise did not immediately initiate using their Unity Skill to fuse right at the start of the match since they knew that it would only put them at a disadvantage in the long run.

Even if they could overwhelm the opposing side right at the start of the match this way, it would also put quite a lot of burden on them, which slowly accumulates as the battle progresses.

Moreover, the members of Empyrean Talons were not pushovers either. Every single one of them was a godly expert of the game, standing at the peak of the gaming world.

They also had their respective means to deal with such situations, countering their opposition.

Aside from this, the Empyrean Talons also had a Unity Skill of their own, which could somewhat contend against them. Even if the Elemental Guardian was inferior to their Variant Golden Immortal, it was still quite hard to deal with, especially when the trio responsible for summoning it were top-notch experts in their respective fields.

Moreover, those guys were not the only ones that they had to deal with, especially when those monsters were a huge problem on their own right.

Putting this into consideration, Ashura and the others knew that they would lose in the long run if they used their Unity Skill right off the bat.

After all, the mental consumption would be no joke when all seven of them would be together.

All the mental burden would fall on Ashura, who would shoulder all the pressure and the massive consumption of concentration, which would be much serious than the previous match.

On the other hand, the side of Empyrean Talons would not be going through such a problem.

They could just separate all the burdens of their members while using huge trump cards to match the Unity Skill of God's Paradise.

The Elemental Guardian and the Eclipse Dragon were already more than enough to keep the Golden Immortal in check. If the others from Empyrean Talons were added to the equation along with their respective cards, then the situation would be even more dangerous for Ashura and the others.

Before finding the chance to use their ultimate trump card, they had to first deal with the other key figures of the opposing side and create an opportunity for themselves later.

Achieving such a feat should still be quite challenging, especially when their main targets were no ordinary opponents. This was also the reason why they had chosen to put Vulture on the field rather than Keir, who was slightly stronger with his Dark Magic, or Berit, who could provide them with a double tank composition like the Empyrean Talons.

Vulture was an expert in such skirmishers, and taking advantage of the chaos, they could fully take advantage of it.

Moreover, he was also an expert at creating opportunities for himself and his colleagues during battles, which would be a great help for them in this match.

Even Shin and the others find it hard and tricky to deal with Vulture, especially in chaotic battles.

But that did not mean that they could not fully deal with him. It just happened that Vulture's current teammates had a very good synergy with him on top of having a good understanding of his abilities, which further heightened his abilities and made him shine even brighter in the field.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Right being summoned on the map, the members of God's Paradise immediately moved according to their plan, not wasting even a fraction of a second.

Swoosh!

Vulture immediately disappeared from everyone's sight as he entered stealth before dashing toward a certain direction, separating himself from the team to scout ahead.

In the meantime, the rest of the team maintained their formation and moved with a steady pace.

...

On the other side of the map, the members of the Empyrean Talons were also summoned on the field, simultaneously appearing on another mountain peak.

"The Twisted Paradise?" frowned Arthur after instantly recognizing the map.

Shin, on the other hand, skimmed through the rules of the match that the system had presented to them before informing everyone. "It is the standard Twisted Paradise Map, but the format of the match is a bit different."

"There are no supply points or special monsters scattered on the map," he explained before adding. "Aside from the size and the unique terrains, there is nothing much we have to worry about."

"Any of you who are familiar with the surrounding terrains?" he asked while joining the rest to survey their surroundings.

"We should be at the center of the map. A hundred kilometers or two from the very heart of the map, the Cardinal City," said Arthur.

As someone who liked competing on the professional stage, he had already battled against others with a variety of maps. He was not too unfamiliar with most of the maps available to everyone, aside from the personalized ones and the newly released maps by the tournament organizers.

"Based on the rules, those guys should be in a similar position as us on the other side," said Cloe before suggesting. "Should we head to the city first?"

Shin thought for a moment before giving out his commands. "That is most likely what they want us to do. We don't know what preparations they have made for us, so we will focus on studying the surrounding terrains first to gain a full understanding of the map before adjusting our plans accordingly."

He then looked ahead, where the silhouette of the city was barely outlined from the horizon, before signaling everyone to move.

"Let's go!"

.....

Chapter 1898: The Battle for the Crown (Part 2)

...

After scouting the map for quite a while, Shin and the rest of the Empyrean Talons could not help but frown deeply while trying to figure out the purpose of their opponents in choosing this map.

This map was too huge for a Team Competition format. It was quite strange for them to make such a choice, especially when there were a lot of map choices they could choose from, which were equally complex and more favorable for their team composition.

They were not sure what it was with this map that made the side of God's Paradise choose this map.

Aside from being overly huge and having multiple strange terrains, this place was nothing but an empty map for them.

Everyone was quite confused about this matter, but they could not do much about it since they had no choice but to survey the map, since they would be put at a massive disadvantage if they blindly scaled through it without a plan.

Just like what the Art of War from a wise man had said – 'Know enemy, know yourself, know your environment, and in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.'

If they carelessly advanced and did not care about their surroundings while moving forward, then they would greatly suffer at their hands of their enemies when they meet later.

The best guess that they could make right now would be the issue with the gigantic size of the Golden Immortal, which was formed with the Unity Skill of their opponents.

There could be a special feature in this map that could enhance the abilities and powers of the Golden Immortal, or it might be solely because of the issue with the size alone.

After reaching the midpoint between their spawn point and the heart of the map, the Cardinal City, Shin signaled everyone to temporarily halt their advance.

Raising his brows, Owen could not help but ask. "Why are we stopping here? If it is to rest and recuperate in their current state, then I don't think this is the best place to do so."

He usually does not question any decision or arrangement from Shin since this guy always knew what he was doing.

However, Owen could not help but doubt it a little this time since the spot that Shin had chosen to pause their advance was a bit too much. It was a terrible choice when it came to strategic standards.

The place was a bit too dense with bushes and had quite a lot of trees surrounding it. It might look good as a hiding place or an ambush point, but it also puts them in quite a prickly situation due to the surroundings themselves – or more specifically, the creatures surrounding them.

There were quite a lot of fireflies flying around them, which seemed to be attracted to other living creatures and converged at their spot.

This would expose their current location. This would indirectly signal their opponents about their location.

Moreover, the fireflies were also gathering from every direction, seemingly calling their kins that they had found some people.

To make it even worse, the converging fireflies were also slowly flying upwards, creating a vague pillar of light that seemed to be calling the opposing side about them.

They seemed to be acting as scouts for God's Paradise, selling out their location.

From his perspective, this was not a good choice, especially when there were other locations that with better conditions and were without strange creatures. There were even some places where they could fully see their surroundings from high ground, preventing the opposing side from launching an ambush.

With a variety of choices, Owen could not understand why Shin chose such a disadvantageous spot for them.

Even if the opposing side should also be still in the middle of traversing the difficult terrains from their spawn point, they could reach the city before the Empyrean Talons.

They were most likely more familiar with the map than everyone else, especially since they had purposely chosen this map for the final round.

They should be much faster than the Empyrean Talons, given such familiarity.

The rest of the team understood Owen's concerns since his thoughts were basically right in a standard sense. However, Shin was someone who did not like following such simple methods.

Understanding the purpose of these strange fireflies, Shin planned to take advantage of them and purposely expose their location to their opponents.

He was just purposely summoning the opposing side to avoid any complicated details of the match and start the fight already.

Since both sides were pretty much familiar with the respective strengths and weaknesses of each other, there was no point in going through a lot of trouble, avoiding any appetizers, and going straight to the main course instead.

Even though he did not mind playing with tricks just like the opposing side would most likely like, Shin was too lazy to bother with the complicated stuff this time and wanted to clash with the opposing side straight away.

Aside from this, Shin could also feel something ominous about this map. He felt that it would be more disadvantageous for them if they delayed this match for much longer. A prolonged battle would be quite risky for them, so it was better to invite the opposing side to attack them as soon as possible rather than playing a strategic game with them.

On top of this, Shin also knew that they would only be stepping into the traps that their opponents had set up on the other side if they continued with the current pace that they had, so it would be better to lure their opponents toward their direction, avoiding the unnecessary troubles along the way.

Arthur, Leonard, and Cloe, who were very familiar with Shin, could also somewhat tell what he was thinking. They did not ask anything because they knew that it was better to fully restore their mental state to their peak and ready themselves for the battle.

As for Diablo and Alice, they did not say anything else since the other three remained calm and followed their lead.

Seeing that the others were not saying anything, Owen could only sigh and copy them. He went to a corner and sat to recuperate his mental state.

After a while, Shin opened his eyes and started giving orders once again. "Diablo, come with me and scout ahead. It should be about time for them to notice us."

"The rest, you maintain your position and wait for my signal. But keep your guard up while waiting. Who knows if those guys will suddenly appear behind us out of nowhere?"

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Following his instructions, the group immediately responded and moved accordingly swiftly.

Shin and Diablo disappeared into the woods, entering stealth while dashing across the forest. Meanwhile, the rest of the team swiftly picked up their respective weapons and prepared themselves.

...

Within the Cardinal City, the members of God's Paradise had already set up their preparations and were currently waiting for the opposing side.

Unfortunately, there were no signs of their opponents despite waiting for quite a while now.

Confused, Ashura ran toward the highest building within the city and looked in the distance, seemingly trying to find their opponents.

To his surprise, the opposing side did not seem to be planning to hide their locations. "What are these guys plotting this time?"

Seeing the huge cluster of lights in the distance, Ashura could already tell that the Empyrean Talons were purposely exposing themselves and taking the initiative to invite them in a frontal confrontation.

"That guy is most likely scheming something troublesome," he mumbled, feeling that Shin was trying to play a card on them once again.

Recalling the details of the Team Competition from the previous match, Ashura could not help but feel a bit pressured.

Shin's tactics and arrangements were ruthless, particularly with those attacks that utilized the void gates from the previous match. Even Ashura and the others were quite helpless to deal with it.

If not for Keir sacrificing himself at that time and letting Dio take over the stage, then they would most likely have had to endure Charlotte's (Alice) endless barrage of spells at that time, which could have further exhausted their energy and concentration much faster.

Thinking about those troublesome arrangements, Ashura hesitated for a moment, whether to accept the invitation or stay in the city.

However, the answer is already obvious. Since they had already arranged everything, there was no need to take more risks and hurt their plans.

However, he would also not stand by and let Shin make more arrangements while they were waiting inside the city.

He turned to the others, who were waiting under the tower, before issuing his commands. "Vulture and Dio, you two scout the surroundings of the city. Susanoo and Kallavan, stay in the city and make sure that there are no accidents."

"Sir Valerius and I will be escorting Lia underground," he added before jumping off the roof of the tower.

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Chapter 1899: The Battle for the Crown (Part 3)

.....

Before long, Shin and Diablo arrived at the vicinity of the Cardenal City without any obstruction, which made the former a bit more suspicious about the plans of their opponents.

On top of these suspicions, his instincts were also telling him that there was something dangerous within this city. He might not be able to put his fingers on what exactly it was, but he could at least tell that it was not going to be great for their team once it revealed itself.

The two remained in stealth while observing the city, but they could not get that much information by staring at its wall. They could only sneak into the city if they wanted to gather more information.

Given that the place did not have anyone guarding it, sneaking inside was not an issue. But since his instincts were telling him that something terrifying was hiding within the city, Shin could not help but hesitate for a moment.

At the same time, it was also quite confusing to him since this map was not supposed to have any monsters in it alongside those supply points.

This then led Shin to review a few more details about the maps that concerned large-scale battle formats such as Battle Royale, Survival Mode, Guild Wars, and others.

He then eliminated the larger modes that concerned large armies and involved wars. He focused more on Battle Royale and Survival Mode, particularly the ones with supply points and monsters to grind.

Since he was still quite unknown to the competitive scene, he had no choice but to ask others for more information, particularly Arthur and Leonard.

Arthur was the first one to respond since he was among the players who were more active in such official tournaments. [Survival Modes and Battle Royales? If you are asking for their unique features aside from what people commonly know, then the hidden cores and magical formations?]

[They are scattered across the map, particularly in these fantasy games and especially those that include Sword and Magic.]

[So long as it includes large-scale maps, those two are always present.] He added before suddenly pausing.

It did not take long before everyone within the team realized what Shin was implying.

[Don't tell us-...!?]

"I am not sure yet, but it is most likely the case," said Shin before smiling bitterly. "I guess there are still quite a lot that I have to learn about these maps."

He then turned to the city before continuing. "We now have no choice but to face them head-on."

"If we continue to wait for them to come at us, it will already be too late for us to turn the situation around, since they will most likely finish controlling either one of the cores or formations of the map."

"But if we come straight at them, then we will have no choice but to face the traps that they have prepared for us," he added with a helpless smile.

He now understood why those guys from God's Paradise had chosen such a map. Aside from having a large distance that separated the two groups, they could also utilize their great familiarity with the map to find those cores and formations ahead of time.

The distance had brought them enough time to set up traps while trying to take control of the so-called cores or formations.

Once they were done with all the preparations, the side of Empyrean Talons would suffer greatly under all these conditions.

Shin and the others were forced to pick their poison, which would put them at great disadvantage.

Considering the situation, Shin knew that it was better to scale through the traps that their opponents had prepared rather than facing the opposing side after taking over whatever was hidden within this city.

They had to stop the opposing side from controlling whatever it was before it was too late.

Realizing their current situation, Shin swiftly issued another series of commands, telling the others to come to the city while he and Diablo scout inside.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Shin and Diablo, still in their stealth state, swiftly climbed the walls of the city and stealthily sneaked inside.

The size of Cardinal City was quite huge, almost rivaling those major cities within the Aurora Continent. The buildings and other forms of structures made this place a bit more complicated than the forest behind them.

Of course, the terrain within the forest was still more complex and difficult to deal with. But with the number of buildings within the city that varied in different sizes, the situation over here would also be a bit more complicated in a different sense.

“We will scout separately and gather more information,” said Shin before quickly adding. “Make sure not to engage in battle as much as possible. We must wait until the others reach us before clashing with the opposing side.”

Diablo nodded before jumping off the city and disappearing into the darkness.

Shin was confident that Diablo would be able to escape the opposing side under the blanket of the night. He was not sure why these guys had chosen the night as the time setting for the match.

With the two of them possessing top-notch stealth abilities, Shin and Diablo would have a better environment to take advantage of.

Regardless, Shin had to set these thoughts aside for now before jumping off the city walls and dashing toward another direction.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

When Shin and Diablo disappeared into the city, the figures of Vulture and Dio suddenly appeared on the spot where the former pair had been standing earlier.

"It seems like we are a bit late," said Dio as he squatted down and touched the city wall.

He was channeling his mana into the walls, seemingly communicating with it. The wall, in response, projected the silhouettes of Shin and Diablo, replaying what the two did when they climbed the walls.

"It is those two, as expected," mumbled Dio before turning to Vulture. "What's the plan?"

Vulture thought for a moment before replying. "Ashura, Valerius, and Lia are currently underground. There is only a single entrance towards, so there is no need for us to worry about them."

"Susanoo and Kallavan are guarding the eastern and western parts of the city," he mumbled before adding. "Let's contact those two and ask them to mark Diablo and Sickarius."

"As for us... let's continue scouting and look for the other members of Empyrean Talons. We have to delay them as much as possible until Lia takes over the magic formation of the city," he added.

"Alright," nodded Dio before jumping off the city wall and heading to the forest.

Vulture then disappeared and quickly followed.

They were not to engage in any skirmish against the members of Empyrean Talons as much as possible, so they would not go deep into the forest and just scout the vicinity.

...

Within the city, Susanoo and Kallavan were currently standing on the roof of a clock tower and bell tower, respectively.

These were the two highest points within the city, which were also the two places where they could overlook the entire place.

They were also utilizing their respective means to scan the entire city.

Susanoo was utilizing his connection with the wind element. He was constantly releasing a series of gentle currents that swept through the entire city and informed him about any changes or movements within its walls.

Meanwhile, Kallavan seemed to be using a special technique to oversee the entire city. His eyes were pulsing with mysterious light while scanning through the city.

“Huh!?”

“Hmm!?”

Not long after, the two sensed a strange fluctuation of mana coming from two different places.

It was also at that moment that they received a message from Vulture, informing them about the infiltration of Shin and Diablo.

“Tsk! As expected, it is those two,” said Susanoo before turning toward Kallavan, who was standing on the bell tower in the distance.

He could already see that this old partner of his was already quite itching for a battle, especially after learning about their opponent’s infiltration.

With a sigh, he focused his gaze in a certain direction, locking on the blurry silhouette that was dashing through the streets of the city.

By communicating with the wind, he was able to figure out who he would be facing. “It is Diablo this time, huh? I guess this is going to be trickier.”

Dealing with a thief and assassin had always been the most troublesome due to their possession of various lifesaving skills and survival abilities that could help them escape all kinds of scenarios.

Moreover, among all such opponents, Diablo was among the most difficult guys to deal with, given his skills. He was almost on the same level as Death God Faker, Shadow God Zoldryck, and God of Trickery Loki, who were the peak of assassins and thieves.

Setting those distracted thoughts aside, Susanoo jumped off the clock tower before dashing toward his opponent.

Swoosh!

At the same time, a massive explosion erupted on the other side of the city, signifying the first collision between Kallavan and Shin.

Boom!

This then signaled the start of the final match of the United Cup!

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Chapter 1900: The Battle for the Crown (Part 4)

...

Boom!

A tall cloud of dust immediately rose right after Kallavan crushed into the ground. The impact also affected the surrounding buildings, making the nearest ones around the epicenter instantly collapse.

Swoosh!

Amid the scattering and spreading cloud of dust, a figure suddenly flew out, leaving a noticeable trail behind him.

He could not help but frown a little, confused how Kallavan managed to find him despite the great distance between them, especially when he was still in stealth.

His cloaking stats might not be as high as those with the thief and assassin professions, but his cloaking ability shouldn't be that low. After all, he still had both Blackie and Grimrace, who could provide him with extra assistance to cover what he was missing.

His ability to control the darkness and shadow element shouldn't be that low either, especially when he could also use the Demonic Telekinesis to further enhance all his cloaking abilities and mimic his skills in the real world.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

A moment later, the cloud of dust started to settle, revealing Kallavan. He was still standing at the center of the impact, which was now a huge crater that extended for dozens of meters.

Kallavan's current form was a bit different from the previous encounters that Shin and the others had with him.

He was currently wearing a full-body armor that was filled with glowing runes, particularly his arms and legs, which were constantly emitting a series of energy currents flowing upwards.

His helmet was also in the same state. It covered his entire head, only revealing enough gap for his eyes and little holes for him to breathe.

The glowing runes covering the helmet were also emitting the same energy current, making his head look blazing with blue fire.

There was also a glowing horn sticking out from the center of his forehead. It was curving upwards, resembling a rhinoceros' horn.

"Tsk! I want to avoid as much fighting as possible before getting a clear picture of what they are planning, but I guess I can't avoid it now," said Shin after seeing the current form of the opponent before him.

He could just retreat as well since the initial plan already failed. But after sensing his surroundings and realizing that the opposing party was currently alone, Shin felt that there was something more to their plan than what he originally thought.

'They must be protecting something behind them!' thought Shin after thinking about it for a moment.

He was supposedly heading toward the center of the city, where a huge castle was located. The dangerous threat that he was sensing was coming from that direction, which was why he wanted to check that area first.

Since the paths heading toward that direction needed him to pass by the bell tower, Shin somewhat guessed how Kallavan saw through his stealth, especially after sensing that Kallavan seemed to have somewhat merged with the surroundings.

Activating his True Sight, he was able to see some invisible threads connecting the different parts of his opponent's body.

There was also a vague mana signature coming from the ground that seemed to connect with Kallavan's body. It was as if the entire city was supplying Kallavan a vast amount of mana.

This at least gave Shin an idea of what was hiding underneath this city.

"It must be a massive magic formation," he mumbled before focusing his gaze on his opponent.

From the look of it, Kallavan seemed to have accumulated enough mana supply and was fully ready for battle.

Even Shin could sense an overwhelming power coming from the opposing party, which could somewhat threaten him to a certain degree.

Shin thought about what would happen if he retreated now, wasting all the energy that Kallavan had just accumulated.

Boom! Boom!

Unfortunately, these thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a series of explosions coming from the other part of the city.

"It seems like even Diablo is caught sneaking inside," he mumbled before asking the status of the other side. [What's the situation on that side?]

It took some time before Diablo could even respond to him, signifying how hectic it was on the other side. [It is still manageable, but it seems like passing through this guy is going to be a bit more troublesome. He seems to be getting an infinite amount of energy from the city itself.]

This somewhat confirmed some of the suspicions Shin had inside his head.

Bang!

While he was still lost in his thoughts and considering whether to continue scouting ahead or retreat, Kallavan suddenly kicked the ground and launched himself forward.

Swoosh!

He almost reached Shin in an instant, which showcased the huge boosts that he had gotten from all the buffs that he currently possessed.

Despite how fast he moved, Shin still kept his calm and raised his sheathed sword to block the incoming fist.

Boom!

The impact caught Shin a bit off guard since the strength behind that attack was a bit stronger than what he had expected, but he was still able to regain his footing within an instant.

He adjusted his stance and only took a step back to stabilize his footing before forcing a deadlock with his opponent.

'I want to see what they are hiding inside, but it will take quite a lot of effort to pass through this guy,' he thought for a moment while staring at Kallavan. 'Moreover, there are also those traps that they had prepared.'

He pushed forward, forcing the latter to retreat a little before continuing his thoughts. 'Moreover, retreating will also give them more time to organize their plans.'

"Tsk! Whatever we choose will lead to another problem. I guess the competitive scene is much more complicated than what I had expected," he mumbled before leaning back to dodge the incoming kick from Kallavan.

Swoosh!

Boom!

The air exploded as the armored leg flew past over his head, signifying how powerful the kick was. It even produced a powerful wind current that swept through the streets and made the streetlamps fall one after another.

"Since either choice is going to be troublesome..." he mumbled as he continued to dodge the series of attacks from Kallavan through a series of mysterious foot techniques. "...I guess it will not hurt to accept such a challenge."

Swoosh!

Right after dodging yet another destructive punch, Shin suddenly kicked the ground and pushed himself sliding back, distancing himself away from his opponent.

Bang!

Kallavan gave chase while dragging his right arm behind him and leaving a long trail of light produced by his glowing fist.

But he could not help but slow down a little when he saw Shin assuming his signature sword-drawing stance right after creating enough distance and channeling a huge amount of cold energy toward the sheathed sword.

Click!

Right after hearing the familiar sound of the sword separating from its sheath, Kallavan swiftly stomped his foot before him and pivoted before throwing a powerful punch forward.

Boom!

He released a huge amount of mana accumulated in his fist, sending a huge beam of light that covered the entire street.

Shing!

At the same time, Shin had fully unsheathed the [Yamato] and swung it forward, releasing a cold flash of light that flew forward.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Quick Draw (Freezing) – Lunar Flash'

Swoosh!

This sharp flash of light cut through the incoming beam sent by his opponent while also freezing even the mana filling the air, along with the space itself.

Shing!

The cold flash continued flying toward Kallavan, making his expression hidden under his battle helmet grim.

Swoosh!

Swiftly raising his arms forward, he covered his entire body with a blazing flow of mana to block the incoming attack.

Boom!

He was neither blasted away by that sharp energy nor forced to break his stance. Instead, the surface of his arm started showing some signs of freeze, particularly his arms that blocked the previous attack.

He could also feel that his body was starting to get affected by the intense freezing effect of that attack, making his movements a bit stiff.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

It did not even end there as Shin suddenly swung his sword multiple times, releasing huge vertical waves that moved forward and fanned out to cover a large area.

'Myriad Transformation SwordsmanSHIP: Crescent Cleaver'

Kallavan tightened his muscles and made them budge to release his body from the freezing effects of the previous attack.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The frost spreading throughout his body shattered in an instant, freeing him from the freezing effect.

Swoosh!

With the blazing mana covering his body, he suddenly punched forward multiple times.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Each punch released a series of explosions that clashed against the incoming vertical waves, annihilating them.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Kallavan was preparing for a big move when he suddenly sensed a chill coming from the back of his neck.

Swoosh!

Without any hesitation, he swiftly clapped his hands. He joined his palms together, releasing a strong shockwave that spread in every direction along with a series of mana ripples that created chaos around him.

Boom!

Shin, who just materialized behind Kallavan, was suddenly pushed back by that shockwave.

He slid back while trying to nullify those overlapping shockwaves before colliding with multiple streetlamps behind.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Boom!

Not long after, Kallavan suddenly chased after him, initiating another intense melee battle.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The two clashed multiple times, exchanging a variety of moves that destroyed all the surrounding buildings and other structures in their wake.

But since Shin was 'quite' a crafty person, he purposely led their battle toward the castle located at the heart of the city.

He might have forcefully chosen to engage in a battle, but he still did not forget his real purpose in coming here. He would do his best to find what these guys from God's Paradise were hiding in that place.

...