

Destiny 2001

Chapter 2001: Reliving the Nightmare of the Camp (Part 2)

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Clang! Clang!

Bang!

Andras and Feng were sent flying right after yet another powerful clash against Uno, who remained indifferent since the start of the battle.

Ta-ta! Ta-ta!

The two swiftly tried to regain their footing as fast as they could right after their feet touched the ground. Unfortunately, they were not fast enough since Uno had killed yet another one from their group.

Wearing solemn looks on their faces, the two started to recall the nightmares that always happened during examination trials within their camp.

Staring at Uno, who just pulled the spear piercing the heart of the executioner that he had just taken out, Andras started to realize how foolish it was to think that they would be able to deal with this monster with the little bit of force that they had.

He was confident earlier since they had gotten their hands on the special drug that the new professor of the organization had. They had already experienced the effects of these drugs when they were hunting some of the elite units of the government and other organizations.

They could even fight those with people with a realm higher than them.

Adding that all of them consumed these newly improved drugs, they should be able to take down even the so-called geniuses of the aristocratic and military families.

They were not even afraid of facing someone at the level of the Junior Monsters of the Souring Continent or the Young Ghosts of the Lost Soul Continent, much less someone who was in the same realm as them.

But who would have thought that they would lose most of their forces even with all these advantages?

Among their more than a dozen people, there were only left with five people left. Aside from Andras and Feng, who were the strongest among the group, there was only a sword-wielding executioner, a spear-wielding one, and someone with chained sickles.

Aside from them, everyone else had died one after another.

What made it worse was that Uno had never used any advanced technique when dealing with them. Aside from a simple and basic set of moments, he had only shown them his high-level control of Natural Force.

Moreover, they had never forced him to use more than a bit of his power.

Every time he attacked, he only used a hint of his unique Natural Forces, which could easily break through theirs.

The difference in level was so overwhelming that it made them look like a bunch of useless cannon fodder.

They were supposed to be a group of elites, the young executioners of the notorious Black Serpent Mafia.

Right after they graduated from the training camp, they were supposed to be scattered in every corner of the world and become undercover agents planted in every organization.

They were supposed to live a 'regular' life without caring about any missions. They were supposed to only move as executioners when the organization had given them a special assignment, targeting a specific individual, who was mostly a traitor of the organization.

There were also occasions when they were sent to assassinate individuals who could be a hindrance to the organization's plans.

As their titles suggested, they were the hidden blades of the Black Serpent Mafia, who killed their targets without mercy.

However, no matter how fancy or scary their titles were, they were nothing but a bunch of nobodies before this monster in front of them.

While Andras was having a wake-up call, Feng was more focused on another matter, which was much scarier than what others had realized.

Since the very beginning, Uno had never left the spot where he was not.

If he were to draw a circle on the ground, then Feng would find Uno standing at the center of this circle with a radius of two meters.

This further proved that Uno had never taken them seriously since the very beginning.

Aside from that, Feng had also noticed that Uno had never truly looked at them during the entire battle. Instead, he kept on sweeping his eyes in the surroundings, seemingly looking for something.

It might be obvious that they were only trying to buy time for the main force to arrive. But Feng could tell that Uno was purposely playing with them. It was as if he were purposely waiting for their reinforcements to arrive.

While they were busy dwelling with their respective thoughts, this remaining bunch of young executioners suddenly heard Uno's bored voice.

"This won't do. They are so slow that I am getting bored. I guess it is better to clean this place before waiting for them, no?"

Andras was about to snarl back when he heard those words, when he felt that the surroundings suddenly turned dark.

Boom!

He was unsure what had happened, but he felt that his entire body had suddenly frozen, while his vision had slowly darkened.

It was as if the sky suddenly turned dark for the night to fall.

Feng subconsciously tightened his grip on the sword in his hands while his body started trembling out of control.

The other three executioners had it worse. They started losing control of their bodies and fell on the ground, choking from the pressure. They did not even last that long before passing out from the immense bloodlust that they were feeling.

Uno casually raised the spear in his hands and lightly tapped his shoulder with it. He looked at the five young executioners with a slightly amused look while they were struggling to keep their ground.

Andras and Feng tried their best to stay standing, doing their best not to end up just like the other three.

"What a scary killing intent," mumbled Feng, realizing the massive gap between them and this monster – no, the latter was more like a demon at this point.

From his perspective, he was seeing a boundless sea that could drown him at any moment.

Moreover, it was not an ordinary sea either, but a sea of blood filled with countless skeletal remains floating on its surface.

There was also a crimson sky above them.

Such a sight seemed to be telling him that the end of the world was near. It was as if the great apocalypse had arrived!

"Such a powerful mental suppression!" Feng was doing his best to protect his mind from the great mental pressure that Uno's killing intent was releasing.

Feng felt that those Death Instructors in the camp were the scariest people that he would see. After all, those people had killed countless people and slaughtered myriad monsters in their lives, which made their presence no different from death itself.

Just standing before them was suffocating enough due to the killing intent that they were passively emitting.

However, such puny killing intent was nothing before Uno. Instead, theirs looked more like a tiny drop within this boundless sea of blood.

If they were death itself, then this person was the Death God who ruled over them.

Andras was about to lose his strength as well when Feng suddenly burst out with a very strong power.

Boom!

Gritting his teeth, Feng forcefully fought against the terrifying killing intent that the opposing side was emitting, saving Andras as well.

Andras tried to gasp for as much as he could, trying to do something as well. But when he realized that it was not doing anything, he swiftly took out a black pill from his pocket and immediately swallowed it.

"Argh!"

The effects were almost instantaneous as his body immediately burst out with power, along with a dark miasma coming out from his pores.

Boom!

Uno did not do anything and just let them do whatever while also observing the changes that they were making.

There was an interested look on his face, especially after seeing those pills that they had consumed.

He was not sure yet, but he felt a familiar feeling coming from them – or more specifically, those pills that they had taken.

"It is neither an Evil Qi nor Demonic Power," he mumbled as he slightly squinted his eyes.

A moment later, something crossed his mind, and he started smirking. "Origin? It looks like some lunatic has really done it now, huh?"

He could already imagine what was happening on the other side, where the said lunatic was conducting whatever research was taking place.

"No wonder, the Madam and your anomaly of a father are quite in a rush. This world has truly become such a mess," he mumbled, seemingly talking to Shin, who was watching everything from inside his Sea of Consciousness.

[What do you mean by that?] Shin asked, not understanding what Uno was trying to say.

He could somewhat guess what the 'Origin' meant. But the rest seemed to be quite vague for him, especially when Uno mentioned his parents.

"You will learn about it soon," Uno did not directly answer Shin or give any hint.

Moreover, he was more interested in Andras and Feng right now, who were under the effects of the special drug that they had just taken.

"Tapping on the forbidden realm? Let's see how much you can imitate," he said while throwing the spear to the side.

It seemed like he was still not planning to use a proper weapon to fight the two.

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Chapter 2002: Reliving the Nightmare of the Camp (Part 3)

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Uno stood still while observing the auras that the opposing side was emitting, especially when the familiar feeling was growing stronger, the longer the two were exposed to this power that seemed to be coming from the pill that they consumed.

After watching them for a while, Uno finally opened his mouth, seeming to give his verdict. "A whole minute at most. That is the longest they can last under the exposure of that power."

But he later furrowed his brows before saying to Shin. "But that is still long enough, given that they are not supposed to tap on that power."

Shin understood what Uno was talking about since he was somewhat familiar with this power as well. Even Uno could not freely touch that power despite his condition.

Shin himself had also tried to touch it as well during the time that he was in deep slumber and even after waking up. However, he realized that even with their special situation, tapping into that power was not something that someone at their level.

Even if he could use a part of it from time to time, whatever he controlled was nothing but a tiny drop in that blazing ocean. Any more than that would either drown or burn him to death.

While the two were casually chatting, Andras and Feng finally made their move.

Bang!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Their figures disappeared from their respective positions while producing a strong shockwave behind them during the process.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Andras left a series of afterimages behind him while running around Uno, circling like a shark hunting for its prey.

Whoosh!

At the same time, Feng suddenly cut through the air while charging straight to Uno, who still wore his indifferent expression on his face despite how threatening the two were.

Shing!

Feng swung his sword multiple times, summoning a barrage of bright flashes in the air that intertwined with one another and formed a huge sword net that surrounded Uno.

Uno just stared at the sword net with little interest due to the aura of 'Origin' that was mixed with it, but did not take it that seriously.

After observing them for a while, Uno casually raised his left hand, which was currently covered with immense Primal Demonic Power.

He made a palm blade with it before suddenly swinging it horizontally.

Swoosh!

It was not flashiness this time as well. Aside from a black flash of light that suddenly appeared and cut through the sword net that his opponent had just thrown.

Shing!

However, yet another attack quickly followed.

Feng cut through the air, leaving a trail of light behind him along with the sword in his hands. He had drawn a line with his sword, which flew straight at Uno in almost an instant.

Ding!

Unfortunately, that killer sword suddenly halted when its blade was caught in between Uno's fingers.

He pinched on the sword while trying to observe the aura of 'Origin' a bit closer. That was also when he realized that it was not the pure powers that he was expecting.

"It is neither a byproduct of certain energies nor a cheap copy of the original root, but it still possessed an authentic aura of 'Origin,'" he mumbled before letting go of the sword.

Shing! Shing!

It was at this moment that Andras suddenly materialized behind him and launched a series of slashes with his daggers.

Uno slightly turned his body, facing the incoming attack sideways, before swinging his left hand and using it as a blade to block the daggers of his opponent.

Ding! Ding! Ding!

Metallic sounds repeatedly rang as his hand continuously collided against the pair of deadly daggers that were coming after him.

Shing!

Taking advantage of his slight distraction, Feng stepped forward before swinging his sword once again, executing a complicated sword technique that took strange angles to attack and made them harder to deal with.

"Heh!" Uno smirked a little when he saw that before adjusting his stance. He faced both sides sideways, letting them face his left side alone.

Clang!

Ding! Ding! Ding!

A series of metallic collisions rang once more as Uno steadily blocked their attacks with a single hand. There was even a smug smile on his face, seemingly provoking the two on purpose.

Despite being under the effects of the special drugs, the two were still able to maintain their sanity, so they were somewhat affected by the taunting move of their opponent.

This feeling was further intensified when they realized that Uno was still standing within the circle that he had somehow drawn on the ground earlier.

Gritting their teeth, they increased their pace and strongly ignited the circulating energies within their bodies, which further intensified the effects of the drugs that they had taken.

Boom! Boom!

With the stronger wave of power being provided in their bodies, the series of attacks that they were trying at Uno became even more powerful.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

They had also launched much stronger and more advanced techniques, which carried more destructiveness them.

Adding that they were also coordinating with one another on top of that, their attacks became much deadlier compared to what they were doing earlier.

"Heh!" Uno continued to smirk when he saw their actions.

Their attacks were indeed a bit dangerous to deal with, but that would only be the case if they reached their full power.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

His left hand moved in flashes, seemingly striking multiple directions at once.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Feng and Andras then suddenly realized that quite a few meridians in their arms were struck, affecting the firepower of their respective movements.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

A few of the strikes hit some places of their sword and daggers, which killed the momentum of their attacks and made it easier for Uno to deal with.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Whoosh!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Uno swayed left and right, dodging every attack that was coming his way. His feet were moving quite mysteriously, not stepping out of the circle that he had drowned yet still avoiding everything.

None of the attacks of his opponent were able to touch him, aside from the ones that he blocked with his left hand, which he was using as a weapon against them.

Aside from shifting between the Golden Sacred Qi and the Primal Demonic Powers, Uno had never used any advanced techniques against the two.

His foot technique may count as one. But given that he never left the circle since the very beginning, despite how intense the attacks coming from the two, such a technique was somewhat overlooked by his opponents.

In the meantime, Uno was gathering all the information about the aura of Origin that the opposing side was using.

He was more interested in this compared to the fight itself.

"It is somewhat artificial, which makes it impossible to evolve into 'True Origin,'" he continued to mumble while gathering as much information as he could. "But I must admit that they have used an interesting method to 'catch' that intangible energy."

Bang! Bang!

A powerful push suddenly forced Feng and Andras.

They wanted to lunge forward and resume with their assault, but they suddenly realized that their bodies had become heavier. It was as if they were suddenly submerged in a thick and sticky swamp, which greatly restricted their movements.

"What!?"

"This!?"

The two were suddenly taken aback, thinking that they were seriously injured by the previous strike that came from Uno.

But when they looked at their bodies and observed it, they realised that that was not the case. They were still quite healthy and did not have any injuries in their bodies, which further confused the two of them.

It was at that moment that Uno took the initiative to 'explain' it to them. "Do you think that you will be able to get away unscathed after trying to tap into that power? Or the person who hands you those drugs has not told you anything."

"It seems like you two have become their lab rats without your knowledge," he added before suddenly commenting. "Tsk! Tsk! Poor souls."

The two were unable to properly comprehend his words, but they could at least get the gist of it.

However, they could not accept it. After all, they were still the young executioners whom the organisation had painstakingly raised.

Even if they were sometimes sent on suicide missions, such situations were meant to benefit the organization and take down stronger and more important targets.

Even if they wanted to use some people to be their guinea pigs for certain experiments, there was a specific group of agents meant to be used for such situations.

To use their hidden blades, the executioner units, as lab rats was something that they could never imagine.

While the two were still in the middle of their denial state, their bodies were already showing more signs of collapse. Cracks started appearing on the surface of their skin while their eyes became bloodshot.

"Time is up~!" said Uno when he saw this before turning his head to his side and saying. "It's too bad that you have come a bit too late this time."

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Chapter 2003: Reliving the Nightmare of the Camp (Part 4)

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Uno ignored the two who were slowly turning into dust completely and focused his attention on the newcomer who had just arrived.

This person was clearly around Shin's and the others' age, which signified that he was also a very young expert.

He was wearing a black leather jacket over a black shirt, which he paired with durable yet stretchable jeans and combat boots.

His style was quite simple yet also stylish at the same time, especially with that somewhat spiky hairstyle that he had.

He was carrying a huge metal case with his right hand, which was hanging on his back like a regular office bag despite its size. A single look at this metal case was more than enough to tell those who saw it how heavy it was, yet this person was carrying it like it was nothing.

Rowan Blade, one of the brightest stars and most talented among all the young executioners of the Black Serpent Mafia.

Rowan glanced at the crumbling body of Feng for a while before shaking his head. "I have already warned him not to consume those cursed pills, no matter what, since it will spell his death right after taking them."

After 'mourning' for his friend for a couple of seconds, Rowan finally cast his gaze toward Uno, who seemed to be watching him with full interest.

"It has been a while, Uno. It seems like you have yet to change a few of your habits," he said, seemingly greeting Uno.

He addressed Uno as such for a different meaning. He called the latter with such a name, not because he was aware of Uno's real identity or anything. Instead, it was the title that they had given him during their days in the training program.

They might be from different training camps, but they all came from the same batch. Moreover, the Black Serpent Mafia was regularly conducting an exchange between the training camps, making sure that the competitive nature of everyone was at the highest level.

Uno and Shin were almost ranked at the top during those exchanges. They were especially ruthless after the incident concerning Alyssa, where they dominated everyone in almost everything.

Shin was more active during the studying and training sessions, while Uno took over their body during combat and more serious trials.

With their combined efforts, it was only natural for them to dominate the rankings both in the Joker Training Camp and the exchanges between all the camps.

Uno was the title that they had given 'him' since 'he' always placed first in everything.

Uno wore a nonchalant smile while looking at Rowan before replying. "So long as it is, it piques my interest."

Bang!

Placing the heavy metal case that he was carrying, Rowan shook his head and continued. "Ah~! It will be better if you stay in the organization and don't run away from us. We should be working with each other rather than facing like this."

"After all, none of us wants to be your enemy," he added with a slightly solemn tone.

Pssh!

At the same time, he pressed a couple of hidden buttons on the side of the metal case, opening it.

Clank! Clank! Clank! Clank!

Not long after, it revealed a variety of swords. These swords seemed to come from different branches of swords and were used with different styles.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

With a casual wave of his hand, the swords started flying out of the metal case one after another before floating right behind Rowan like his most loyal and obedient army.

Seeing this, Uno raised his brows a little, carrying a hint of interest. He then smirked before commenting. "Magnetism Superpowers and Steel Manipulation? Along with your decent talent in swords, this should be entertaining enough."

"Hmph!" Rowan did not say anything more and started his assault.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Pointing forward, the swords floating behind him suddenly flew forward and headed straight to Uno, who was maintaining the devious grin that he was wearing.

'Demonic Blade Codex: Hail of Swords'

Whoosh!

The flood of sword formed a formation mid-flight and linked the energies connecting them. They then spiraled and formed a sword twister while advancing toward their target.

Uno maintained his cool look while watching the incoming attack. This time, he was not planning to play around, especially when reuniting with a decent 'sparring partner.'

Whoosh!

With a flick of his wrist, the sheathed black katana suddenly appeared in his left hand. Without further ado, he quickly grabbed the hilt of the sword and swiftly unsheathed it.

Shing!

Along with the immense amount of Golden Sacred Qi he channeled instantaneously, he suddenly thrust the sword forward and released everything.

'Yin-Yang Cultivation Arts: Extreme Yang – Breath of the Sun'

Boom!

A blazing beam of light suddenly shot out from the tip of his sword, cutting through the air before piercing through the spiraling storm of swords.

Whoosh!

The intense energy covering the spiraling swords was instantly annihilated right after the blazing beam passed through it.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

However, the hail of swords itself still continued to fly straight to Uno.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Seeing this, Uno suddenly twirled the black katana in his hand before his entire arm seemed to have disappeared for a moment, along with it.

'Yin-Yang Cultivation Arts: Absolute Yin – Snowstorm Blade'

Shing!

There was a series of flashes cutting through the air that appeared for an instant, intertwining with one another while clashing against the descending swords.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

Sparks flew in the air due to the repeated collisions between the two sides.

Ding! Ding! Ding!

The swords that were accompanying the storm earlier were all deflected, either stabbed into the ground around Uno or sent flying back in the air after the collision.

Whoosh!

Right after Uno had deflected all the swords, he suddenly flipped the sword for another time, shifting his grip in a reverse manner.

Shing!

He then spun and swung the sword behind him.

Rowan, who had disappeared amid the storm of swords earlier, suddenly appeared behind Uno and was slashing with a longsword in hand.

Boom!

The collision sent shockwaves in every direction.

The ground sank during the process and created a deep crater while sending rock fragments into the air.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The swords stabbed on the ground around Uno had been freed as well during the prowess.

Rowan then extended his free hand, which released a string of pulses in the air. The surrounding then responded to his actions, suddenly pointing in their direction before swimming in the air like a school of aggressive barracudas in the sea.

Their target? It was obvious that Uno was standing before their owner.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Uno's pupils made a quick sweep in the surroundings, marking all the incoming swords and reading their trajectories.

Whoosh!

However, while he was doing all that, Rowan suddenly advanced and swung the sword in his hand multiple times, transforming it into a series of shadows swarming at Uno.

He might not have any idea of Uno's current strength, but he was very familiar with the special abilities of the latter, especially when they repeatedly clashed with one another during camp exchanges.

Rowan would not give Uno enough time to fully utilize those scary eyes of his, which would give him a lot of trouble.

Unfortunately, that swift glance was more than enough for Uno, given his current abilities.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Ding! Ding!

By utilizing his strange foot movements, Uno was able to dodge the combined attacks of his opponent and those swords. As for those who managed to sneak through his movements, he blocked them with the sword and the sheath in his hands.

"Still a monster, huh?" commented Rowan after seeing that even this was not enough to force Uno into a corner.

"Then, let's pick up the pace!" he said before extending his free hand once again, sending another invisible ripple in every direction.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Those swords that were sent further away were pulled back as well, adding to the mix of the flying swords around the two.

At the same time, Rowan started executing a series of more complicated techniques while attacking Uno.

Whoosh!

Shing! Shing!

Seeing the more intense series of attacks and the more violent storm of swords, Uno knew that he had to put up more effort in this.

Swoosh!

There was a glint in his eyes, which suddenly turned sharp. This was the indication that he was planning to use his 'Foresight' Talent.

Right after the activation of the talent, the world around him seemed to have become a blank plane filled with gridlines.

Within this world, Uno could see everything more clearly and predict the movements of everything that was within it.

It did not matter if they were objects, living beings, or energies filling the air – nothing could escape his eyes within this world.

The whole world seemed to be within his observation and under his control under this special state.

Boom!

Right after he activated this talent, a strong and heavy pressure suddenly erupted from his body, producing an absolute being that towered over everything within the mortal world.

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Chapter 2004: Reliving the Nightmare of the Camp (Part 5)

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Swoosh!

Clank! Clank!

Rowan Blade danced around Uno, along with the flying swords under his control.

Sometimes, he was coordinating with these swords to launch an attack on Uno. Other times, he was catching the passing sword midair before using it to execute a powerful move against the latter.

Every sword was different and represented a different style, yet Rowan was able to continuously throw an attack with them alongside a corresponding sword technique that perfectly matched them.

Moreover, each sword technique or art he threw was all advanced level, making them more destructive and powerful.

His style was similar to the fighting style that Shin used. A versatile style that possessed a variety of techniques and was filled with multiple variations that covered all his weaknesses.

This alone was more than enough to prove how amazing and talented he was. His talent in terms of swordsmanship and understanding of sword essence could rival those pinnacle geniuses, such as Dylan White, who was said to be the brightest and widely acclaimed Sword Genius around the world.

Yet, despite all these, none of his attacks could truly pose any threat to his opponent.

Uno was able to steadily defend against all his attacks with minimal effort and less powerful techniques.

He was only using tiny drops of his Golden Sacred Qi and Primal Demonic Powers whenever he was executing such techniques, but his utilization was more efficient in comparison, which made them powerful on their own right.

At the same time, he was always targeting the weaknesses of his opponent's techniques, accurately hitting them where they hurt the most.

With such methods, he was able to suppress Rowan despite using less energy during the entire battle.

Aside from this, he was able to read all the future actions of his opponent ahead of time, giving the impression that he could see the future.

Under the abilities of his Foresight Talent, he was able to read all the moves of his opponent even before they could execute them. He was already moving to counter these techniques in advance, making it harder for Rowan to deal real damage to him, much less land a clean hit in the process.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Bang!

Clank! Clank! Clank!

However, this young executioner was not that simple either.

Rowan Blade was able to press harder with his assault. His speed was also continuously increasing the longer they exchanged blows, producing an intense storm throughout the battlefield.

Given that the swords flying across the air were under his absolute control, they were also gaining more speed the more the battle progressed.

The momentum that they generate throughout the battle was gradually getting stronger, putting a decent amount of pressure even for Uno.

Uno knew that he would have a much harder time if he let them generate a much stronger momentum than what they already had.

It would not take that long before they became metal dragons instead of a variety of flying swords covered with metal energy.

Uno knew that he had to do something to stop them from gaining more momentum.

Swoosh!

Twirling the sword in his hand, he suddenly launched a powerful strike forward while coating the sword with an immense amount of Golden Sacred Qi.

‘Yin-Yang Cultivation Arts: Extreme Yang – Sunlight Sword’

Shing!

A sword made of blazing light was manifested in his hand, changing the form of the katana that he was holding.

It left a bright flash behind while cutting through the air and advancing toward his opponent.

The space seemed to have been cut and burnt when this blazing sword of light passed through it, which rapidly spread the more it advanced.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing the incoming attack, Rowan swiftly made a series of gestures with his hands, summoning a bunch of swords before him.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

They crossed and supported each other while forming a blockade in front of Rowan, which was reinforced with the overwhelming amount of metallic Natural Force.

They built a sturdy and towering shield that resembled the great walls of heaven.

‘Ten Thousand Sword Codex: Matrix Formation – Heavenly Sword Rampart’

Boom!

Despite the number of swords and the mighty unification matrix that they formed, the wall was still blasted by Uno’s single strike.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The swords that were forming a wall before Rowan were sent flying in every direction due to the powerful impact that it received.

However, it had already served its purpose, blocking the attack from Uno and nullifying most of its power.

Whoosh!

Waving his hand and moving his finger, Rowan made a series of pulling gestures.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

As if there were a bunch of invisible threads attached to each of the swords, they were suddenly pulled back to Rowan's side with a simple tug of his wrists.

Along with his previous actions, the swords that were sent flying earlier returned to his side in an instant, flipping and spinning in the air.

Rowan paused for a moment, regulating his breathing, before suddenly extending and pulling his hands in and out.

His arms seemed to have disappeared due to how fast his hands were moving, even creating an illusion that he had thousands of hands.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

At the same time, the swords that he summoned to his side started juggling around him, complementing his actions.

Even Uno, who had already activated his Foresight Talent, was having a hard time following the movements of those disappearing arms. Even from his perspective, Rowan seemed to have thousands of hands at this moment.

“Ha!”

With a powerful shout, Rowan suddenly swung his ‘thousands of hands’ at the same time, along with the swords that these hands were juggling around him.

‘Ten Thousand Sword Codex: Killing Move – Thousand Sword Stream’

Shing! Shing! Shing!

Subjected to the thousands of sword attacks, Uno stood his ground while calmly holding the sword in his hand.

“Hoo~!”

Briefly regulating his breathing, the spiraling Golden Sacred Qi and Primal Demonic Powers within his dantian suddenly surged along with the intense pulses that the Golden and Crimson Cores swimming within them respectively.

Swoosh!

The mixture of the two energies suddenly surged out of his sword, swirling and forming a spiral storm around him.

Facing the incoming barrage of attacks before him, Uno gently and steadily swung the sword repeatedly, forming a series of intertwining flashes around him.

‘Yin-Yang Cultivation Art: Unification of Yin and Yang – Sword Transmigration (Single Sword Version)’

Clank! Clank! Clank!

Boom!

A series of clashes swiftly broke out when the two sides met.

Repeated explosions also erupted, followed by this series of collisions. The shockwaves that they produced further destroyed their surroundings, creating huge pits and deep craters in the process.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The seemingly endless tide of attacks rushed at Uno like the violent and raging tides of the boundless ocean, pounding him repeatedly with their relentless force.

Yet, standing at the center of this stormy ocean and towering waves was a man who wielded a single sword in his hand.

He faced the violent and catastrophic storm with just his sword, warding off everything with each swing he made.

Boom!

The raging tides of attacks coming from Rowen continued to rise in power the more they exchanged blows with Uno. The more he threw his attacks, the more powerful the swords he wielded became.

Each collision generated a much stronger momentum for him, which was continuously supplying his endless series of attacks in a cycle.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

However, his opponent remained unfazed despite being subjected to such a terrifying tide of attack.

Uno repeatedly swung his sword to continuously block or deflect the incoming storm of swords. He absorbed most of the force from every collision, which he used to supplement his next attack and return it to his opponent, twice as strong as what he received.

No matter how strong his opponent's attack became, he absorbed and returned it with doubled force.

Boom!

Not long after, Rowan was forced to stop his attack and retreat immediately.

He could no longer withstand the force that the collisions generated, making it hard for his Thousand Sword Stream to absorb.

If he tried to continuously absorb more force from their exchanges and generate more momentum, his control over his technique would most likely break and put him in a grave situation.

“Is this my current limit?” mumbled Rowan while retreating.

Compared to him, Uno seemed to be able to endlessly absorb more force from their collisions and generate a much stronger force in the process, throwing a powerful attack several times stronger than what Rowan could muster.

That last collision had already reached a power beyond Rowan’s ability to fully absorb it.

Standing in the middle of a settling cloud of dust, Uno revealed himself and stared at Rowan. “You have improved a lot, but it is still far from being enough.”

“He is still a monster,” mumbled Rowan. “Fortunately, I am not the only reinforcement sent for this mission.”

Right after saying those words, a huge and bulky figure suddenly jumped out of Uno’s shadow and strongly threw a powerful punch behind the latter.

Swoosh!

As if already expecting this to happen, Uno casually took a step to the side, dodging the sudden ambush with the tiniest margin.

Right after, he suddenly spun and swiftly threw a powerful elbow strike as a counterattack.

Swoosh!

The bulky guy swiftly responded, lowering his arms and crossing them to protect his side.

Boom!

Unfortunately, the attack was a bit too strong even for someone of his size, sending him flying in the opposite direction.

Regaining his leisure stance, Uno stood and looked in the direction where he sent the bulky guy flying before pursing his lips a little. “Even the musclehead came? Now, this has become even more interesting.”

“But is it just the two of you?” he asked, seemingly a bit disappointed. It was as if he was still not satisfied with these two people.

Right after saying those words, one more person made their appearance, walking out of the forest in the distance.

Seeing this person, Uno suddenly started laughing and quickly became excited. “Even you came!? Now, this is going to be a great reunion!”

“Sword Maniac, Musclehead, and Freak! You three come at me together! That may give you a chance to give me some scratch,” he said, seemingly becoming more excited for some reason.

Shin was somewhat confused at Uno’s actions, finding it strange. The latter was acting out of character, making him somewhat worried.

‘What is happening?’ thought Shin, feeling that this was something serious.

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Chapter 2005: Genius Monster versus Freaks of Nature

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“What is going on?” Shin could not help but feel a bit worried after realizing that something was wrong with Uno’s current situation.

He quickly recalled everything that had happened since earlier, trying to find where things had gone wrong.

He first thought that it had something to do with Rowan Blade, but he quickly rejected the idea since he fully trusted that Uno would not be that careless. The two newcomers were possible suspects as well, but he also denied that thought for the same reason.

That was when something came to his mind.

“Could it be because of his repeated contact with that strange energy that carries that ‘scent’ of Origin?” he mumbled, thinking that the possibility was quite high.

Based on what Uno had said earlier, the Origin Powers that Andras and Feng had temporarily wielded were something formed by a mixture of origin source and artificial origin.

Shin was not sure about the specifics since he was not as familiar as Uno when it came from the subject, but he could tell that there was something wrong with the powers of Origin. It was most likely corrupted by something as well, which somehow affected Uno due to the repeated contact with it.

Thinking about this, Shin could not help but become a bit more curious about those powers. After all, it had affected Uno without being noticed, which was something that even Shin would not expect.

Uno was supposed to be immune to all types of corruption, so this form of corruption should be something special on its own.

When he realized this, Shin swiftly made his move. He did not care about the current situation outside and forcefully pulled Uno back to the depths of his Sea of Consciousness before taking over the control of the main vessel.

On top of that, he also started chanting a series of Buddhist Sanskrit and focused it on Uno, making sure that no accidents would happen.

If Uno was indeed affected by this unknown corruption, then he would be able to help the latter cleanse it with the Buddhist method that he recently learned.

Hum~!

Right after being pulled, Uno instinctively fought back, especially after finding himself being bound by a bunch of golden chains wrapping all around his body.

There were also talismans pressed on his forehead and chest, seemingly trying to purify him.

Along with the Buddhist Mantras ringing throughout the Sea of Consciousness, Uno was suddenly snapped out of his state, returning to normal.

“What are you doing!?” he first tried to question Shin about what he was doing, but he quickly realized what was going on in just a couple of seconds.

“What!?” Even he could not believe that he was suddenly subjected to a certain corruption.

But he later realized why it was the case. “I now remember! It must be because of those dark influences!”

“Dark Influence? What is it this time?” asked Shin, trying to understand the situation.

Unfortunately, Uno did not reply to him and just asked. "You want to deal with them on your own?"

Seeing that Uno was purposely changing the subject, Shin smirked. "Since you don't want to share any information, just stay here and be obedient. Let me deal with these old friends."

"By yourself? Do you think you can handle them?" said Uno with a smirk.

"I should be fine," said Shin before adding. "If it is in regular times, then I will most likely not be their match. But since you have destroyed almost all of Rowan's swords and injured Prabal with that elbow strike earlier, messing up with his innards with that chaotic energy you infused inside his body, fighting with them should be much easier."

"If ever, I only need to keep a close eye on Zhou Ci to avoid any accidents," Shin was quite confident that he would be able to pull it off, given the conditions that Uno had set.

If he could not defeat the three of them, then he could still run away with ease with his current abilities.

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"Prabal and Zhou Ci. Tsk! These two are not so easy either," mumbled Shin after taking over the main body.

Rowan Blade was known to be the number one genius of the Executioner Camp. His talent rivaled Dylan White's in terms of swordsmanship.

Dylan White was said to be the brightest Sword Genius of the younger generation, with a talent rivaling his father, the Sword Immortal Eugene White.

Rowan could learn all kinds of sword techniques regardless of their form or the sword type they were meant to be used with. He was also capable of fusing these sword techniques, producing a whole other set of sword movements that surpassed the original.

His greatest strength was to use all these sword techniques that he had learned together while utilizing numerous swords in battle.

The more swords he had, the stronger he could become.

Meanwhile, Prabal Bal was someone from the Vanguard Camp of the Black Serpent Mafia.

The Vanguard Camp was a special camp within the organization since it trained powerful soldiers who did not fear death.

Most of them were a bunch of savages who were caught or kidnapped by the organization from the primitive folks around the world.

The agents trained under this camp were all gifted for battle and possessed a natural physique meant for intense battles.

They were trained to be the shields and killing machines of the organization, particularly for this reason.

The training methods of this camp were extremely harsh and inhuman, which were meant to produce only the strongest warriors.

Prabal Bal was said to be the monstrous talent that the Vanguard Camp had produced. He was gifted with Superhuman Strength and an extremely tough body that surpassed all the people with similar talents. He was said to be a beast in human clothing.

It was said that he came from a certain primitive tribe of warriors, which had been wiped out by the organization to steal these young talents.

Prabal was the strongest survivor of the hellish training sessions, which made him extremely dangerous.

If not for Uno infusing the mixture of Golden Sacred Qi and Primal Demonic Power into this guy's body to restrict his movements, Shin would want to face this guy in a frontal confrontation.

On the other hand, Zhou Ci was a genius nurtured by the Terror Camp. It was a training camp that specialized in producing the terrifying interrogators of the organization.

The trainees in this camp were taught how to torture and extract information from their subjects. They learned how to deal with the most painful suffering and inflict the most terrifying experience on their targets.

Among the camp, they were among the people with the most bizarre and most troublesome style to deal with.

Due to the training methods of the Terror Camp, their understanding of the human body was extremely deep and precise.

They were not specialized in combat, but they knew how to kill their targets in the most painful way possible if they wanted.

In a sense, they belonged to the category of assassins that the organization had nurtured.

"An executioner, a vanguard soldier, and a terror assassin-... Tsk! Tsk! What a nasty combination," mumbled Shin while taking out his second katana and hanging it on the side of his waist alongside the other one.

He had also activated his True Sight to the fullest while summoning his Spiritual Force, the Five Elemental Lightning, during the process.

"Huh!?"

Seeing this, Rowan, who had been fighting against Uno earlier, could not help but furrow his brows and stare at Shin intently.

From his perspective, this person before him seemed to have undergone a thorough transformation. It was as if he were facing a whole other person altogether.

The difference in aura alone was more than enough to tell him that.

Aside from this, he also saw that the other party was now using their Mental Energy this time instead of the pair of highly advanced Internal Qi earlier. Moreover, this Mental Energy was at least on the same level as those two, if not stronger.

"Is he trying to change his strategy this time?" thought Rowan after seeing the Five Elemental Lightning dancing around Shin.

With their experience in the camp, they knew that Shin was a Martial Artist, which gave them some of his data that they could use.

Even if a long time had already passed since that time, the organization was still monitoring Shin's movements and testing his strength through their special means and the spies that they had planted everywhere.

They were also aware of Shin being a Dual Practitioner, a perfect one at that. However, their understanding of his mentalism method was not as deep as their understanding of his martial arts, since he had been training in it for a shorter period compared to the latter.

Their data was not as accurate as the data they had regarding his martial arts.

In truth, their understanding of 'Shin's' martial arts seemed to be inaccurate as well, given all the exchanges that they had earlier. It was much more powerful and profound than the data that they had.

Fortunately, Rowan was quite strong himself, making him stand his ground up until now.

"Be careful, we don't have enough data on this style of his," said Rowan, warning the other two.

Prabal tried his best to suppress the raging energies wreaking havoc within his body as he nodded. He did feel a lot of pain due to it, but he had been training under such harsh experiences, so this bit of pain was far from his limit.

Unfortunately, it still somewhat affected his movements, especially when he was trying to circulate his Internal Qi within his body.

Zhou Ci, on the other hand, smirked when he heard that and said. "Then this is a good time to gather as much data as we can."

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Chapter 2006: Genius Monster versus Freaks of Nature (Part 2)

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"Go!" ordered Zhou Ci after setting up the necessary preparations for the battle.

Swoosh!

Bang!

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Both Rowan and Prabal immediately made their move right after getting the signal from Zhou Ci. The two of them kicked the ground almost simultaneously and propelled themselves forward, charged at Shin from two different directions for a pincer attack.

Rowan was picking up each of the swords on his path and tossing them in the air, juggling them while charging at his target.

In the meantime, Prabal took the most straightforward approach and just charged straight at Shin, who seemed to be planning to wait for them to reach him.

Rowan started picking up his pace, tossing and catching the swords while sprinting. His arms seemed to have disappeared during the process, while a series of flashes surrounded him before pouncing at Shin.

'Ten Thousand Sword Codex: Assault – Hundred Sword Stream'

Shing! Shing! Shing!

The sword flashes were revolving around him like a violent twister. It was similar to the one that he had used against Uno earlier, but an inferior version of it since he could only use a limited number of swords right now.

After all, most of his swords were destroyed during the fierce exchanges with Uno earlier, so he could not fully showcase his true powers right now.

Charging straight at Shin, Rowan controlled the blade storm around him and pushed it forward.

Shing! Shing! Shing!

At the same time, Prabal dragged his fist behind him while accumulating a strong momentum during his charge. The fist was also covered with an overwhelming amount of Natural Force, which destroyed the path that he had just taken while running.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

When he was about to reach Shin, he suddenly stomped on the ground, instantly halting his advance. He then channeled all the force generated by the abrupt stop toward his fist before throwing it forward.

'Black Serpent Art: Fist Series – Collapsing Fist'

Boom!

Pincerred by the two destructive attacks, Shin calmly took out a talisman, pinching it between his index and middle fingers, before channeling his Divinity Grade Mental Energy into it.

Swoosh!

Immediately after, the talisman dissolved along with his mental energy before turning into a flood of water that revolved around him, forming a dome that covered all directions.

This dome then suddenly solidified and became a sturdy barrier with multiple hexagonal shields stacked together. Each hexagonal shield had an advanced glowing rune of mentalism at its center, which represented the runes of toughness, sturdiness, and unyieldingness – the unbreakable rune.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Heavenly Black Tortoise – Bulwark of the Great Admiral'

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Right after the barrier was formed, the two attacks immediately arrived and bombarded it with powerful collisions.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Boom!

Despite how powerful the combined attacks that the two had thrown, the barrier remained strong and withstood the overwhelming force and powerful destructiveness that they carried.

The two were about to continue their assault, wanting to bombard it with powerful attacks.

Click!

However, they could not help but halt their actions after hearing the subtle sound of a sword opening its lid, separating itself from the sheath.

Without any hesitation, they swiftly retreated while quickly raising their guards to the best of their abilities.

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

Shing!

Right after they retreated, a cold flash of light suddenly came out of the sturdy dome and attacked them.

Swoosh!

It drew a beautiful arc in the air while expanding in a fan-shaped manner before chasing after the two.

Bang! Bang!

The two were pushed back dozens of meters away from their previous location due to the strong impact.

Due to his sturdy body, Prabal was the first to recover his footing. He was about to charge back at Shin when he was suddenly greeted by the tip of a sword that was quickly approaching him and rapidly magnifying before his eyes.

Whoosh!

Behind the sword was a string of clouds that seemed to be freely wandering in the sky.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Holy Azure Dragon (Wind) – Fleeting through the Clouds'

Swoosh!

Prabal barely had any time to respond due to how fast the incoming attack was. The tip of the sword was already upon him and about to pierce through between his brows before he could even do anything about it.

Poof!

However, right after the sword pierced through his head, Prabal's figure suddenly turned into a black miasma and exploded like smoke.

Seeing this, Shin did not even hesitate and swiftly pulled the sword back and quickly put it into its sheath. He then adjusted his center of gravity to slow down his forward momentum midair before controlling every fiber of his body to turn around.

By assuming the same sword-drawing stance in the air, Shin faced his back, particularly his shadow underneath him, which was moving alongside his body.

Click!

With a series of familiar actions, Shin flicked the guard of the sword with his thumb, pushing it out of its sheath.

He waited for a couple of seconds before pulling the sword out and throwing a forward stab toward his shadow, along with the Spiritual Force that he had channeled into it.

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

Shing!

Right at the same time, Prabal suddenly jumped out of his shadow, utilizing his unique ability, the Shadow Movement.

He then threw a powerful punch right after appearing, punching straight at the incoming sword covered with lightning.

'Black Serpent Art: Special Move – Shadow Strike'

Boom!

The tip of the sword and the fist collided in the next instant, pushing both sides toward opposite directions.

Swoosh!

Bang!

Shin was sent flying upon the impact, while Prabal was thrown back into the ground, smashing his body against it for failing to withstand the impact.

Midair, Shin suddenly noticed that he was currently surrounded by a bunch of black 'dots', which were starting to form a swarm.

"These are the trained insects?" mumbled Shin after using his True Sight to inspect them a bit closer.

Realizing what they were, Shin swiftly twirled his sword midair to generate flames with it before swinging it around to form a blazing sphere that protected him in all directions.

'Four Symbol Scripture: Celestial Vermillion Bird – Blazing Embrace'

Swoosh! Swoosh!

With the sphere of gorgeous flames, the little insects that were trying to surround him were burned into crisps before they could even swarm at him.

"Zhou Ci has taken the insect master path of the Terror Camp? Tsk! Tsk! Worthy of being the Freak," mumbled Shin right after his feet touched the ground.

Immediately after, he noticed that the spot that he had landed on was currently filled with a swarm of crawling insects, such as venomous centipedes and other poisonous bugs.

Whoosh!

They quickly swarm at him right after seeing him land right at the center of their formation.

Seeing this, Shin swiftly straightened his body before raising his right foot and channeling his Five Elemental Lighting into his sole.

Crackle! Crackle!

Along with the dancing lightning surrounding his body, Shin suddenly stomped his foot and produced a powerful explosion, resembling the deafening clap of thunder in the sky.

'Jade Kirin Scripture: Foot Technique – Thunderclap Step'

Boom!

The ground instantly collapsed with that stomp, sending rock fragments into the air along with the venomous and poisonous bugs surrounding him.

Adding that he also channeled his Five Elemental Lightning with this move, these bugs were burnt and crushed in the process.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

While all these were happening, Shin suddenly sensed that a bunch of swords were flying in his direction.

Clank! Clank!

Using his sword to deflect some of them while dodging the rest, Shin turned his attention to Zhou Ci, who seemed to be observing him from a distance.

The agents from the Terror Camp did not major in combat, but their bizarre methods were quite tricky to deal with. Moreover, they were also skilled at plotting against their enemies and targets, so it was better to take his guy down so that Shin could focus on the other two.

He knew that Zhou Ci would most likely throw more sneak attacks while he was facing the other two. This guy would also gather as much information about him as possible, particularly with his fighting style.

Familiar with how these guys operate, Shin knew that he had to deal with Zhou Ci first before the situation could even get worse.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

However, seemingly aware of his thoughts, Rowan and Prabal swiftly charged at him for another time, pressing him with their combined attacks and seamless coordination.

Bang! Bang!

Clank! Clank! Clank!

Boom!

The two tried to suppress Shin with their attacks, but the latter was able to hold his ground against them without problem.

Given that Prabal was suppressing the raging energies sent by Uno earlier and Rowan was lacking in swords, fighting them was not as difficult as Shin expected.

However, they were still quite troublesome to deal with, especially when they were starting to launch more advanced and powerful techniques under their arsenal despite their current situations.

There was also Zhou Ci, who kept on throwing sneak attacks in the process, controlling the battle and its rhythm to their favor.

Unfortunately, the battle tempo was not so easy to control, especially when facing someone like Shin.

With his unique fighting method and strange combat style, Shin was able to repeatedly disrupt the rhythm of his opponents, especially when he was using his Myriad Transformation Swordsmanship.

Along with his Mentalism Methods and Rune Techniques, his style had become more complicated and hard to deal with.

With his constantly changing style and swift 'swapping' of swords, the three could not fully control the battle tempo.

His style greatly resembled Rowan's fighting method. But instead of having multiple swords and using them all at once, Shin was only relying on the pair of swords in his hands, which were constantly changing their forms with the help of Mentalism Enchantments and Rune Techniques.

He was able to produce a similar result when Mentalists at Ruler's Realm were using their Mentalism Armaments, which were their counterpart for the Qi Armor and Weapons of the Void Manifestation Stage Martial Artists and Mind Sword of the Swordmasters.

Since Shin did not require more swords to use a variety of sword techniques, transitioning between each style was much faster and smoother than what Rowan could do.

He was also not restricted in his movements, making it easier for him to execute more complicated and advanced techniques during the process.

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Chapter 2007: Failure

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Boom!

Bang! Bang!

During the exchanges, Shin was able to somewhat suppress the three in the beginning despite them working together.

He showcased his combat prowess that reached an extremely high level for someone of their level. He might not be as overwhelming as his Uno in terms of overall might and his mastery over his skills and techniques, but the complexity of his battle style and combat techniques covered such gaps to a certain degree.

Adding that Rowan and Prabal were somewhat restricted from showcasing their full powers, Shin was able to take advantage of their weaknesses to gain the upper hand in the battle.

However, such advantages were steadily dwindling the more the battle progressed.

If the three of them were to continue being suppressed by Shin throughout the battle, then they would be unworthy of their titles of being the monstrous geniuses of the Black Serpent Mafia.

After adjusting to the battle style that their opponent was showcasing throughout the battle, the three were able to quickly adapt to their situations and found their respective means to deal with Shin's troublesome style.

Rowan Blade, as a genius when learning swordsmanship and sword principles, was not only able to quickly adapt to his current restrictions but also got inspired by Shin's current style.

Instead of relying on too many swords to maintain his style, he put a limit on himself. He was planning to use four swords of different types while focusing all his attention on them.

He had also further reinforced their durability with his special abilities and Internal Qi, which he transformed into a Natural Force with a high-level metal element.

With a smaller number of swords, he was able to swiftly switch between each of them and instantly change the sword techniques that fitted them.

Adding the insights that he had gotten from fighting Shin, Rowan was also able to reorganize his special techniques and unique battle forms, creating a whole other style during the battle.

Shing! Shing! Shing!

With all these, his offensive prowess had increased severalfold alongside the growing intensity of his attacks. His attacks and combinations had become much fiercer despite the limited number of swords.

He had now gotten a whole different understanding of his special abilities. He could still use his previous style, but the current style that he was using perfectly fit their current situation, where he had to constantly coordinate with Zhou Ci and Prabal Bal.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

Blocking all the sword strikes that Rowan managed to sneak through the gaps of his movements, Shin could not help but retreat a little.

He was starting to feel more pressure from the three from the last few exchanges.

"They have adapted quite well," mumbled Shin during his retreat.

With a brief pause, he swiftly swung and swung his swords alongside it, sending a storm of blazing strikes in every direction.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The blazing crescents that came out from his swords cut through the surrounding shadows that were creeping out of the ground and trying to catch him.

Whoosh!

Prabal forcefully broke through the firestorm with his extremely tough body, ignoring the burns that he suffered from it.

He then suddenly swung his fist forward, striking Shin with a powerful punch that seemed to be capable of destroying the latter.

Swoosh!

Shin swiftly responded.

Borrowing the centrifugal force that he had generated during his spin, he struck with both of his swords, which were currently carrying the powers of fire and metal elements.

These two attributes melded with one another, forming a bright, liquified metal. This molten metal flowed through the swords and traced a bright path with the blazing splashes that they had left behind.

'Myriad Transformation Swordsmanship: Molten Metal – Crimson Slash'

Boom!

The collision caused a massive eruption, which forced Shin and Prabal away from each other.

"This guy's physique and tenacity sure are terrifying," commented Shin after realizing that Prabal was steadily regaining his strength.

From his observation throughout the battle, Prabal was forcibly containing the chaos that Uno's dual Qi was causing within his body.

He was enduring the wracking pain that the two energies were dealing within his body, relying on his extremely strong vitality to recover from those internal injuries while using his powerful physique to forcefully move his body and execute all the advanced techniques he used throughout the battle.

Shin must admit that this guy was a true monster when it came to physical prowess.

Adding his ability to control the shadows and travel through them, his combat powers were among those that Shin found very troublesome.

The forceful and constant charges that Prabal was aggressively making throughout the battle, Shin's rhythm was slowly decreasing and rapidly getting out of control.

With Rowan and Prabal working together, they were able to regain their footing in the battle and force Shin to give up his overwhelming advantage earlier.

However, they were not the ones that gave Shin the biggest headache in this battle.

It was Zhou Ci, and his variety of bugs were the ones that were giving Shin the greatest trouble.

Zhou Ci was constantly gathering information about Shin's battle style and mentalism techniques, steadily updating the data that they had about the latter.

With all the data that he had collected, he was able to create certain strategies to deal with the latter during the battle.

He was also throwing a couple of sneak attacks, which complemented the coordination that Rowan and Prabal had built, giving Shin more problems to deal with.

Aside from that, he was also able to summon more bugs that could deal with the different abilities that Shin possessed.

Some of them were immune to fire, others were capable of withstanding lightning, a few were able to devour earth and metal, while the rest could swim through water and break through ice and frozen state.

These bugs were meant to counter all the innate capabilities that Shin wielded.

Aside from the others that were meant to deal with his lightning abilities, which were still being killed by his Five Elemental Lightning in an instant, the rest were able to fully counter most of his elemental abilities.

There were also those other strange bugs with a variety of abilities and different uses, which sneaked into his defenses from time to time.

If not for his special physique and the natural vessel that he had built up to complement it, the Five Cycle Embryo, then he would have most likely been influenced by their strange venoms after getting bitten by them.

He could just ignore most of these venomous bugs so long as they were from regular species. His physique was special enough to ignore and purify their venoms.

However, Shin would have to be wary of them if they were special or artificially bred bugs. These guys were more troublesome to deal with, especially after undergoing those mutations.

Cling! Claing!

"Tsk! What's more, there are also those sneaky mental attacks that he threw at me randomly," said Shin after hearing a series of gentle and rhythmic rings of a bell.

These bell rings carried a special sound that could deal mental attacks to those who had heard them and were targeted by the wielder.

Fortunately, Shin was a mentalist who had a monstrous willpower, so the effects of these sound attacks were not as effective as they were supposed to be.

However, he still had to keep his guard at all times since Zhou Ci had a very strong grasp of timing, skillfully targeting him with such attacks during crucial times to disrupt his concentration.

Even the tiniest of mistakes could lead to a dangerous situation for him, so he could not afford to lower his guard even for a single moment.

Bang! Bang!

Forcing the Rowan and Prabal in retreat, Shin quickly disengaged from the battle and swiftly distanced himself from them.

The situation was already getting dangerous, so he had to break the rhythm that they had already gotten used to.

He had also summoned a twisting storm of fire and ice that swept through the surroundings, clearing the bugs that were trying to chase after him.

Prabal was about to charge again when he suddenly felt an intense pain coming from his chest. Despite his extremely high tolerance to pain, this one that suddenly assaulted him broke past that limit.

He was forced to halt his tracks and focus on what was happening inside his body.

Cough! Cough!

A moment later, he could not help but spit out some blood to expel some of the contamination that he had within his body. There was also a residual energy that the two types of power were wreaking havoc within his body.

He did not know how 'Shin' had done it, but those chaotic powers were able to invade his body with such a single exchange earlier.

He managed to expel most of them throughout the battle, but the damage that he had suffered during the process was still something that he could not ignore.

Moreover, these injuries were slowly getting worse the more he fought, further aggravating his situation.

"This is getting annoying," he mumbled while glaring fiercely at Shin.

He knew that if he let this situation continue, then it could possibly cause him a more serious consequence in the future, such as permanent damage to his foundation.

He had to stop for a while and focus on dealing with these 'troublemakers' within his body before more problems arose.

Unfortunately, he did not have that luxury since their opponent was equally troublesome.

Rowan, who was about to coordinate with Prabal once again, could not help but halt his tracks as well after seeing the latter's action.

He immediately realized the problem with just a single look at his current partner. Understanding their current situation, he could not help but look at Zhou Ci, who was observing them from a distance.

Knowing what Rowan was trying to tell him, Zhou Ci could not sigh in helplessness. He knew that this operation was a failure right after seeing Prabal's actions.

He could not help but give Shin a meaningful look due to this, knowing that Shin had purposely pushed Prabal into this situation.

During their exchanges, Shin was constantly targeting Prabal, challenging the latter in intense clashes after another. This further worsened Prabal's injuries, which led them to the current situation.

With yet another sigh, Zhou Ci signaled the two to retreat. It was a pity that they could still not capture Shin or deal with him permanently, but they managed to gather enough data about him, which they could use in the future.

He looked at Shin for a while before saying. "We will meet again, 'Uno.' At that time, I will be more prepared."

Right after saying those 'parting' words, the trio was suddenly covered with shadows, swallowing their bodies.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Not long after, their figures disappeared alongside those shadows, leaving Shin behind.

Shin did not immediately lower his guard after seeing this. He repeatedly scanned the surroundings with his sharp eyes, which were augmented by his True Sight, making sure that the trio had truly left.

He then started sprinting away from this place as fast as he could, afraid that those people would send more powerful people to deal with him.

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Chapter 2008: Return

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Shin ran for quite a while before finding a small town to settle and rest for a while. He had already contacted the Springfield Household about his situation, so all he needed to do now was to wait for them to arrive.

Naturally, he made sure to cover all his tracks when looking for a safe place to rest. He had even bypassed a couple of towns and villages along the way to make sure that the people from the Black Serpent Mafia would not be able to find him that easily.

After finding a decent inn where he could rest, Shin took a quick shower before lying on the bed, exhausted.

However, he did not immediately go to sleep. Aside from still needing to be on guard, he also needed to hear some explanation from Uno.

“Alright, can you now explain what happened earlier? How come you have been affected by some sort of corruption? What is that dark influence that you are talking about?” asked Shin.

However, Uno did not respond to him.

Shin frowned slightly when he saw this. He also realised something about the silence of the latter. “Is it related to the so-called secret that Mom is talking about and the people they are fighting?”

He paused for a moment before frowning further. “But aren’t those people the so-called Remnants of the Past and the Voidwalkers?”

Uno still refused to respond for a while, but sighed after. [What your seniors mentioned at that time is just a part of the truth.]

[The so-called Remnants of the Past that they are talking about are just a few of the types of what they truly are.]

He then paused for a moment, seemingly recalling something, before continuing. [I can tell more about them if you want, but didn't the Madam tell you that it is better to learn about them yourself?]

[All the clues are within that game that you are playing along with your friends. All you need to do is to play it normally and enjoy the entire process along the way.]

[You will learn more about them if you continue exploring that world.]

With yet another pause, Uno recalled his experiences within the game before continuing. [If I am not wrong, the secret on how to truly escape the 'curse of Heaven' that everyone is talking about is somewhat related to an even bigger secret.]

[I am not sure about the exact details myself, but I can tell there must be a reason why they are talking such a roundabout way to reveal to everyone this secret.]

[It is useless for you to learn about it now, so stop trying to peer into it through me. Just follow the clues that are given to you along with the arrangements of your parents.]

Shin did not accept Uno's suggestion right away. But he still nodded his head after a couple of considerations.

However, he still could not shake off the thoughts of Uno being corrupted by something. He could not help but become curious about this so-called 'dark influence'.

His instincts were telling him that they must be related to the so-called 'curse of Heaven' that he had been hearing about now.

In the meantime, back in the Springfield Household, the elders of the family had just gotten the signal that Shin had sent.

"Has he been found?" asked Samuel while reading a book in his study.

He might look relaxed on the surface, but the aura that his body was passively emitting was as heavy as a mountain, making those within the room feel suffocated just by looking at him.

The Head Butler, who was also the personal assistant of Samuel Springfield, bowed as he gave his report. "Young Master Shin has already given us his current coordinates. We have also sent two squads from the Golden Dragon Unit to fetch him, making sure to avoid any accidents."

"They will be able to bring him back in at least a couple of hours at most."

"As for those mice?" Samuel slightly nodded and continued to ask.

This time, the cold and heavy pressure that he was emitting earlier had already weakened by a large margin, making the Head Butler sigh in relief.

The Head Butler immediately replied. "Unfortunately, we cannot find any signs of those young talents of the Black Serpent Mafia. But we are already sending the information that Young Master Shin has given us to the Intelligence Unit to handle them."

"As for the Black Serpent Agents that they have sent into the surrounding areas, our forces have already dealt with them. We have even captured a few agents with pretty decent rankings within their organisation."

"However, we highly doubt that it will do anything. After all, we are already familiar with how they operate."

"Capturing more of their people will be useless unless those people are their core members."

"At most, 'hired' people such as Coffin Maker, Buther, Spellbreaker, and others are more worthy of being captured compared to these people who have been trained within their organisation from a young age."

“Their loyalty to the organisation is absolute. Keeping them on our side will only bring more trouble rather than gaining anything from them.”

Hearing this, Samuel paused for a moment and tapped his finger on the book that he was reading.

He then nodded for a moment before asking. “So, what did Nathan plan on doing with them?”

“Master Nathan has decided to leave them to the Green Family under their request,” replied the Head Butler.

“Hmm? It seems like that old guy has discovered something,” commented Samuel before shaking his head. “Leave them be. It is their choice after all.”

“Moreover, I have given them my word, so there is no need to trouble ourselves with trivial matters,” he added before signalling the Head Butler to continue.

This time, the Head Butler started reporting about the state of the war and the problems that they had encountered along the way.

The entire session lasted for quite a while before the Head Butler was dismissed.

Clank!

Right after the Head Butler left, two old men entered the room and made themselves comfortable.

“Both of you are back earlier,” said Samuel after seeing the two old men.

Grandmaster Benn had come back after handling everything that needed to be dealt with from the operation in the Sun-Moon Continent. They had encountered quite a few problems along the way, but everything had been dealt with.

He had even encountered another accident during Shin's transport, which he had sensed a bit too late.

Fortunately, Shin was still safe despite all of it.

He was supposed to personally fetch Shin right after sensing the latter's aura during his escape from the isolation barrier. But he suddenly became lazy after learning that someone was already there to look after him.

Instead, he went to greet an old friend, who had just come back from another mission.

Professor Plum, who was sent to guard a 'hole', had just gotten back when he learned about the troubles that the Springfield Family were creating throughout the world.

"I heard that the little lass has come back after separating from her troublemaker of a husband. Where is she now?" asked Professor Plum right after sitting.

"It is inconvenient for Evangline to go out right now, given the current situation. You should know that the World Government have that person as well," said Samuel while putting down the book in his hand.

"Since you are here, does that mean that the situation on the borders has been dealt with?" asked Grandmaster Benn.

Professor Plum took a random liquor from the nearby glass cabinet and chugged its contents in mouthfuls before replying. "The situation there should have stabilised already. But I still asked Old Hermit to send a couple of his clones and guard the place just to be safe."

"Speaking of, I heard that you have encountered a strong elder from the Void Tribe. How is it?" he asked after recalling the news that he had gotten earlier.

Grandmaster Benn frowned a little before trying to recall his experience when fighting Elder Zhi. After a while, he could only sigh. "They are indeed getting stronger. Even though I am not using my full strength at that time, that Voidwalker can handle my Divine Beast Constructs just fine."

"Given the current situation, they will most likely recover their peak strength sooner or later," he added before sighing. "They have even stirred up trouble everywhere by conspiring with underworld organisations now, so the situation will most likely be much worse compared to those times."

"The flowers on the cliff are already blooming beautifully, so it is natural for the troubled times to arrive a bit sooner," said Professor Plum before chugging another mouthful of the liquor in his hands.

"Ah~! That hits the spot! A good liquor, as always," he commented while looking at the bottle in his hand before turning to Samuel. "What about the other matter? Are those two truly found the 'clues'?"

Samuel suddenly wore a serious expression after being asked that question before nodding. "The two founders have found it. And it seems like the situation is not that optimistic for us as well."

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Chapter 2009: Incidents

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It had been two weeks since the top forces of the Soaring Continent had waged war against the Black Serpent Mafia and their allies.

The other members of the One Day Dairy Club had also returned from their mission. They did not encounter any accidents along the way, given that they were under the tight security of the military forces escorting them.

There was also the private security of the Flying Dragon Corporation, so their journey was relatively safe compared to the chaos that was currently enveloping the entire world.

Shiella had fully recovered from her injuries as well. But as workaholic as she was, she immediately went back to work right after recovering.

She was enraged when she learned about Shin's situation, but she was quickly pacified by the elders, reassuring her that everything was fine.

She also learned about the 'little' accident that happened when Shin escaped from the Sun-Moon Continent and got teleported to the outskirts of the Soaring Continent instead of the area controlled by the Springfield Family at the Eastern Sea Region.

However, it was immediately solved by Shin himself before he got escorted back by the Golden Dragon Unit of the Springfield Family, avoiding any further accidents.

Since they were meant to go back to school right after all these were settled, Shiella needed to finish the report before they returned.

She also had to personally take care of Anna, who had been beaten up by Butcher previously.

Anna had suffered serious injuries during that ambush, putting her in a deep coma. Her parameters were still normal, indicating that she was still fine.

Regardless, Shiella was still thinking of bringing Anna to the Potter Family. Among all the Mentalist Clans, the Potter Family was among those who had a specialisation in healing spells and similar abilities.

This was the reason why Shiella did not immediately go back to the Springfield Household right after returning to the Soaring Continent.

In the meantime, Arthur and the others went to their respective families before returning to the academy.

They had to wait until the situation settled a little before they could return. After all, the operation this time was quite a big one, especially when it concerned the hegemons of the world.

They had to wait until everything calmed down a little and made sure that the Black Serpent Mafia would not try any desperate counterattack. After all, they had planted quite a lot of spies around the world.

What happened to Shin was just one of the accidents that they were trying to avoid.

They wanted to make sure that such a thing would not happen, especially when Arthur and the others were among the main culprits who made the operation of the Black Serpent Mafia in the Sun-Moon Continent fail.

They did not want any kind of retaliation to happen, which put these geniuses at risk, so the higher-ups of the Magic Ace Academy decided to let these little monsters stay in their respective homes before recalling them back to the academy after making sure that everything was handled properly.

Moreover, these families did not want to put their children at such serious risk right after doing such a big operation.

Aside from Cloe, who was staying in the Springfield Family, everyone from the club was sent back to their respective families.

Even Vincent and Jeremiah were summoned back by the Valentine Family due to how huge the incident had become, especially when the Voidwalkers had been involved.

Meanwhile, Shin was reprimanded by his mother right after returning, telling him how dangerous what he had done was.

As a 'punishment', he had to stay with Evangeline until they were instructed to return to the academy. He also had to prepare all three meals of the day for her, aside from the snacks in between.

They still had to wait until the servers of the game became available again, so Shin did not have much to do until then.

Aside from his daily training and sparring with Arthur and Leonard, all he did was accompany his mother.

While Shin and the others were waiting for the summoning of the academy, the situation around the world had also taken another change.

Due to the war between the Black Serpent Mafia and the top forces of the Soaring Continent, the conflict started to spread and affected the other organisations.

The Shadow Alliance, which also had some conflict with the Soaring Continent, was swept up in the conflict as well.

This made the mess even bigger, making the enemies of enemies and allies of allies start joining the conflict, almost breaking out into a huge world war.

However, before the situation could even reach that point, a certain incident had suddenly shaken the entire world.

It was the incident that concerned the pinnacle experts and old monsters of this world. It was a matter that involved the Founder of the Magic Ace Academy and Supreme General of the Top Military School of the Soaring Continent, who were also among the first batch of Transcendent Realm Experts of the current era.

Due to these two old monsters revealing themselves, all the other forces became curious reason that pulled them out of their seclusion. This was the reason why they had sent a few of their old monsters, who were at the same level.

They wanted to know why they had to personally move themselves.

However, what these top forces had gotten was something that they could not afford to pay for.

The full information was sealed and became highly confidential, but it was said that all the old monsters that went to that place to investigate were forced to run away for their lives and went back to their respective forces with serious injuries.

Their injuries might not be that grave, but they still required them to seclude themselves for a couple of years before they could fully recover.

When this news was leaked, the unrest throughout the world suddenly calmed down.

Even the top forces of the Soaring Continent were forced to halt their actions, temporarily ceasing all their operations against the Black Serpent Mafia and their affiliated forces.

Everyone was shocked and shaken after learning that all the old monsters were forced to run for their lives and return with serious injuries.

It had to be said that all these old monsters were standing at the pinnacle of their respective disciplines – Transcendent Realm Martial Artists, Exalted Realm Mentalism, and Sword Saint Paragons – all of them were either in these realms or at least with equal strength.

For all of them to be forced to run for their lives, whatever they had encountered at the said place must be absolutely terrifying.

Moreover, all of them were said to have suffered serious injuries.

Such news thoroughly shook the world.

It was said that aside from the Great Ones, who had absolute powers and had been training in their respective realms for a very long time, everyone else almost lost their lives during the incident.

Both the Founder of the Magic Ace Academy and the Supreme Commander of the Top Military School, who were the main 'culprits' of the incident, had also suffered quite greatly. After all, they were the ones who were leading everyone to the said place.

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At this moment, the members of the Elders' Council were having a meeting, concerned about this incident as well.

It was quite rare for all the members of the council to gather together, but all of them were currently present for this particular meeting.

"What happened?" asked Luvenia Potter, the Lotus of Death, right after taking her seat.

She particularly stared at Professor Plum, Grandmaster Benn, and General Samuel, who were said to be the ones to first receive the news.

"We are not exactly sure about the details either. Even the three of us are taken aback when we receive the signal from the two founders," said Professor Plum.

"Have the ancestors of your family said anything, Demon Fist General?" asked the Hermit.

General Samuel shook his head in response. "The Ancestors have not told us much about it as well. But they have warned us to always be on alert."

Galileo Freeman, the Blood Slaughtering Fist and Joaquin Giovanni's master, suddenly asked. "Alert? Alert from what?"

This old person looked frail and sickly, yet there was a dangerous air constantly being emitted by his body. There was also a hint of bloodlust hidden in his eyes, which was flashing out from time to time.

"This should be a pretty serious matter since all the Transcendent, Exalted, and Paragons are involved," said Su Li, the Sword Demon.

This old person was a crazy swordsman who was very close to achieving the realm of sword paragons.

"I heard that the forces who have suffered the most during the incident are the Deep Blue Continent and Clear Sky Continent?" asked an old lady, who had a gentle and kind bearing.

She was one of the elders of the Stuart Clan. The Witch of the West, Daphne Wayne.

Sitting beside her was her husband, who was also the clan's current patriarch. The Sage of the East, Gerardo Stuart.

The two of them rarely left the clan, but they could not afford not to attend this meeting, as it concerned a major incident.

"Their injuries that their Transcendent Experts have suffered are pretty serious. I heard that it is the Great Sea Scholar is forced to exit his seclusion as well to heal those two esteemed seniors," answered Grandmaster Benn before turning toward a certain direction, where the representative of the said continents was sitting.

There was a total of 24 elders present within the room, filling all the seats of the council.

All these elders were from all over the world, and each of them was a step away from reaching the pinnacle of their respective disciplines.

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Chapter 2010: Making the Undercurrents

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Not only were the Elders' Council the ones who were conducting a serious meeting regarding the big incident that had happened just earlier.

The forces that were directly involved had even placed utmost importance on this incident, particularly the Deep Blue Continent and Clear Sky Continent, which were the ones that suffered the most due to it.

In response, the unrest that the ongoing war between the top forces of the Soaring Continent and the Black Serpent Mafia and their allies had caused suddenly calmed down.

The forces of the Soaring Continent had no other choice, especially when the old monsters who were standing at the pinnacle of the world's powers were involved.

The World Government and the Shadow Alliance, which are supposed to be the leading organizations in their respective group, seemed to have come up with a tacit agreement as well.

They set aside their respective conflicts for a moment, focusing on dealing with the current situation at hand.

The World Government contacted all the local governments of each nation, summoning their leaders for the first world conference in a long time, while the Shadow Alliance did a similar thing for all the biggest underworld organizations based on the Dark Continent.

Everyone knew that this incident would cause an even bigger wave throughout the world, so they all had to be prepared for it.

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However, while the older generations were busy dealing with this issue, those from the younger generation went back to their respective lives.

After all, it was the tallest people of the world who would hold up the sky first when the heavens collapsed for everyone.

Shin and the others did not know that a huge incident had shaken the entire world aside from the supposedly war between the top forces.

However, another issue had come knocking on their door when they were still recovering from the previous operation that they had gone through.

The game servers of «Destiny's Fate» Online were about to become available once again. The servers would be up in just a couple of days.

Because their elders repeatedly emphasized that this game was not simple and involved a big secret, Shin and the others put more serious thoughts into it.

This time, they were no longer playing just for fun. They now had to consider looking for the clues about these so-called secrets and fighting the experts that the other forces had sent to join the game.

Given the latest update of the game, people with high attainments in their respective disciplines would be joining the game, such as those Void Manifestation Stage Martial Artists, Ruler's Realm Mentalists, and Swordmasters.

Most of them would be much older than Shin and the rest of the geniuses from the younger generation. They would most likely be battle-hardened veterans with vast experience.

In the meantime, Shin, who knew a bit more about these so-called secrets, would have to constantly look for the clues that would point him to the true secret that his parents had hidden in the game.

Even though he could not actively look for them since he would most likely arouse the suspicions of some people, he was still free to look for certain clues so long as he acted that it was just some regular quest from the game.

However, he was also unaware of what the right clues were that he needed to follow, so he had to carefully and thoroughly investigate every quest that he would encounter from now on.

"Speaking of quests and clues, I guess it is better to ask Molton about the history of the world within 'Destiny's Fate' Online," mumbled Shin before adding. "I heard that he has already become a Grand Scholar of the Royal Library of the Divine Empire. Maybe I should start asking him for some materials that I can use when looking for those clues."

He was currently sitting right before his computer, browsing through the game forums and looking for interesting topics, while waiting for the servers to be opened once again.

He just finished accompanying his mother and barely escaped from her.

He could say that he had a relatively relaxing time these past few days compared to before. After all, his daily schedule circulated between his regular training and sparring with the others, accompanying his mother while also cooking some meals and preparing snacks for her in between.

He did not have to worry about any kind of mission or special operations given to them, especially given the current situation. They could not even leave the household while waiting for the situation to settle down a little, much less do more of such dangerous missions.

Aside from being annoyed by Arthur from time to time and playing with Laura, who was also brought back to the household for safety reasons, he did not have to worry about dealing with any troublesome situations.

"Coincidentally, the game servers will be up a week from now, which happens to be the same as the estimated day that we are supposed to come back to the academy," mumbled Shin while browsing through the official website of the game.

He was currently checking if any interesting updates could pique his interest.

At the same time, he was also reading through the quests and historical backgrounds of the game, looking for possible clues.

Naturally, this would take him quite a long time if he read through them one by one, especially when there were a lot of historical backgrounds recorded on the website.

They might not be as deep and detailed as the ones recovered in the books within the libraries of the game, but they could at least provide him with decent information.

The only problem was that he did not know what exactly he was looking for.

Aside from the vast lore recorded here for the game, there was also the other information that his father had inputted in the mix, which was also about real treasures and ruins of the real world.

He must admit that such an idea was quite clever of them.

While browsing, he suddenly came across a certain topic that piqued his interest. "The Secret Realms?"

Seeing the title, Shin suspected that it must be about the different worlds that the players in the main servers meant to discover and unlock.

While having such thoughts, he was about to click on it when an idea suddenly struck him. "Wait... realms?"

"A realm-... a world-..." he repeatedly mumbled these words, seemingly trying to figure out something.

It was right at the tip of his tongue, which he felt would lead him to what he was looking for.

"A realm-... a plane-... a world-... a different world-... That's right! Each of these worlds has its own history! They should also have unique historical backgrounds and rules of heaven in them!"

"Just like the difference between the 'Hell' and the Atlas World! There is also that mysterious world in the Abyss Brink that Commander Longinus has mentioned when I am taking the trails set by the Mysterious Instructors!"

"What if one or more of these worlds or realms are a reflection of the real world, or at least a place which had the setting of our world or the previous era!?"

The more Shin thought about this, the more convinced he became about it. After all, this was the most reasonable setting that he could think of when putting these 'clues' within the game.

"For other people, these worlds can only be one of the clues that will point them to the treasures and inheritances that the previous era had left behind."

"But for me, who knows more about it, such places are the perfect place to 'set' an independent world that has our history without arousing any suspicion."

Thinking about this, Shin knew that he was currently on the right path. "This may lead me to just one of those clues, but I at least have a direction to follow now."

With that, Shin started browsing through the different realms posted on the official website of the game and skimmed through their respective backgrounds.

Even though he knew that not all of them would be released after the current update, learning about them ahead of time would always be helpful.

Who knew if he could stumble upon a certain clue about them within the game?

...

At the same time, somewhere in the Eastern Sea Region of the Soaring Continent, a certain group was currently having a secret gathering.

This group seemed to be divided into two smaller groups, which represented the respective organizations behind them.

One of the group was the said Three Kings of the East of the Magic Ace Academy, the trio of Jean Camus, Thomas Brooks, and Simone Bartholomeo.

Right across the trio was Diel Hendirckson and Falcon Hawkins, who were from the same class at the opposing party and Shin's group.

"Why do you want to meet us, Diel? From what I know, we never have a good relationship with one another," said Jean while squinting his eyes.

Diel grinned widely when he heard that, but did not immediately respond. He waited for quite a while before opening his mouth. "Don't play dumb. I know that you are aware of my other identity now, just like how I learn about yours."

Jean narrowed his eyes a bit further but did not make any move. He patiently waited for the other party to reveal their intention first before deciding what to do.

Diel naturally knew what Jean was thinking, so he stopped beating around the bush and went straight to the point. "Let's team up."

"Both here in the real world and inside the game," he added, clarifying his intentions.