

## Destiny 2021

Chapter 2021: Surprise Development

.....

Shin spent the next few days grinding in the secret land, gaining as many levels as he could. Even though levelling up had become much harder the higher his level became, he persisted with his boring daily routine.

The group had already been summoned back by the academy after confirming that everything was fine. They could now go back to the academy and study without thinking much about anything else.

The Magic Ace Academy had already coordinated with the local authorities of the Eastern Sea Region and had reinforced the security throughout the region. The Springfield Family, the Stuart Clan, the Potter Clan, and the Goldstein Family had also made a joint defence with the Magic Ace Academy throughout Ace City and the surrounding places.

Shin and the others could attend their classes without worrying much about any attempt from the Black Serpent Mafia.

Shin had also reported about the spies that the Black Serpent Mafia had infiltrated their ranks to Nathan, and was told that he did not have to worry about it since they had already made their preparations for such situations.

After all, they were aware of how skilled the agents trained by the Black Serpent Mafia were and experienced how tricky to deal with their spies.

However, Shin had taken down quite a lot of talents from their young spies, dealing quite serious damage to their forces.

As for the more talented spies that managed to infiltrate their ranks, the top forces of the Soaring Continent had already prepared themselves for the worst-case scenario.

All Shin and the rest had to do was focus on their studies and the other tasks given to them, especially the ones within the virtual world.

Nothing eventful happened throughout these last few days. Aside from their daily training routine, attending classes during the day, and returning home and playing the game at night, Shin and the rest of the team were not doing that much recently.

It was just a pity that Vincent and Jeremiah were summoned back by their family due to the recent big incidents that successively happened, involving the Soaring Continent and large underworld organizations.

However, they had also gained two new housemates at the same time.

The Potter Twins, Molton Potter and Jillian Potter, joined them, which excited Arthur after learning about it.

Molton joined the boys, while Jilian joined the girls' camp.

Aside from Arthur's annoyingness throughout the day, Shin and the others continued their daily life with ease.

He first thought that Shiella would give him a serious scolding and beating due to his recklessness during the previous big operation. He had already prepared himself for it when he realised that Shiella was surprisingly very busy.

They were barely able to see her in their villa since they moved back for the school. She was leaving very early in the morning and coming back very late as well. At times, she did not come back home at all, worrying them.

Shin could not even contact her within the game due to her very busy schedule. The one who was receiving his report was her right-hand person within the game, who was also the acting leader of the Hand of Midas, Alluring Smile.

Unfortunately, the group could not do anything about the situation, especially when they were not strong enough to deal with a more serious situation. They even heard that some huge companies and global conglomerates were trying to tap into the business of the Flying Dragon Corporation, putting a lot of pressure on them.

Fortunately, Jane Levana, Arthur and Shiella's mother, was doing quite well at fending off all their advances. But in exchange, Shiella had to handle the other business that the family had.

All the group could do was support her and give her their encouragement.

...

Today was Friday, so the special program class did not have much to do aside from attending the special training of their respective departments.

Leonard finished quite early and was currently waiting for the others to finish their respective training so that they could go home together.

Alongside him, Shin had also come back a bit earlier after a quick checkup from Professor Henry's laboratory.

"Are you still trapped in that secret land, Shin Bro?" asked Leonard curiously.

"There is a high chance that I will spend quite a long time exploring that place, especially when I am alone," answered Shin while collapsing on the bench, somewhat drained due to the series of tests that Professor Henry had conducted.

Leonard frowned a little before offering. "Do you need some assistance? Should we come back and lend you a hand?"

"You said that there is a high chance that it concerns an Empire Quest, so trying to clear it alone will be quite difficult even for you," he added.

Shin just waved his hand and rejected the idea. "There is no need to trouble yourself for it. It is not much of a big deal anyway. I am only exploring the place at a steady pace while also grinding some levels. It is not like I will be in trouble that easily."

"Moreover, I don't even have any idea what kind of quest it is, much less where to find the trigger for it."

"You will only waste your time there if you come. It is better to continue what you are doing in the God of War Temple and gain more foothold within it. I hear that training there is also quite beneficial for you."

Leonard stared at Shin for a while before nodding his head. "So, how is your progress overall?"

Shin furrowed his brows quite deeply before shaking his head. "Well, I think I am still far from finding the true purpose of that place."

"I can't even fully map out the entire region due to how large it is. I barely explore a small portion of it, but the monsters that I have encountered along the way are already very troublesome."

"I still have to grind for levels a bit longer before I can proceed to the deeper parts of the region."

He then pursed his lips before complaining a little. "Level up has become very difficult these days. I have spent all my time and effort hunting monsters, yet I have only managed to increase my experience bar by a little over 7.5%."

"That is all I get after grinding nonstop the entire week! It is almost an average of a little over 1% EXP a day! Tsk! Tsk!" he added with a helpless sigh.

Leonard thought about it for a moment before concluding that he also had a similar result even in the Bestial Mountains of the Beastmen Race.

"I think that running dungeons and doing quest has become more important for grinding levels," he said.

Shin thought about it for a moment before nodding his head. "You're right. I think that the game developers are encouraging the players to run more dungeons."

"As for hunting in the wild, it has become more of a material gathering. Harvesting the important materials from monsters' corpses has become more important, especially the ones with high life rating," he mumbled before adding. "The Beast Cores and Elemental Cores have also become more important for lifestyle players' researchers as well."

"I heard that they have become a huge demand in the market," he then suddenly paused, recalling his harvest these last few days and added. "Now that I think about it, I have ground quite a lot of them from the secret land."

"All the monsters there have a decent bloodline, which makes it easier for them to form such cores. Even the defective monsters that have become a bunch of abominations had a small chance of dropping them."

The cores had become a mainstream material that the players were looking for since they could be used in multiple areas. It had even become a unique currency when it came to dealing with a few businesses.

Hearing this, Leonard could not help but laugh. "It looks like we will be earning quite a lot from that place again."

He could not help but recall all the business that their adventurer team had tapped into, along with the Hand of Midas.

There was no need to tell about their gains from the Saint Heaven Kingdom. After all, the influence of the Hand of Midas throughout the kingdom was currently unmatched.

They had countless branches throughout the entire kingdom, almost having a branch in every city, regardless of their rank.

Then there was also the Shin's Dukedom, the 'Gold Mountain' in the Sky Deceiving Valley, which connected the Saint Heaven Kingdom to the neighbouring Frozen Kingdom, which was an extremely high neutral region.

There was only a single access toward the Frozen Kingdom aside from the Golden City and its teleportation formations. The player traffic within the city had become so serious that they required some help from their respective churches to ensure security throughout the city.

Then there was also the Sacred Light Kingdom, which was the capital of the apothecary profession. The Hand of Midas had also spread their influence throughout this kingdom, along with the help of its partners.

Adding this newly founded region that Shin had discovered, Leonard could feel that no one would be able to rival the Hand of Midas and Empyrean Talons when it came to wealth, once they had developed in this region as well.

The two were chatting casually when they both sensed something was amiss. Their eyes suddenly turned sharp as they scanned their surroundings, looking for signs of people watching them from the darkness.

Frowning deeply, Shin squinted his eyes and mumbled. "I wonder who has the guts to make a move within the academy premises."

.....

Chapter 2022: Surprise Development (Part 2)

.....

While Shin and Leonard were feeling a bit tense, someone suddenly stepped out behind the nearby tree and chuckled.

"Quite alert, aren't you?"

Turning toward that direction, the pair saw Laurent, the young master of the Heavenly Taste, walking toward them.

The two could not help but raise their brows while watching the latter, not daring to lower their guard.

"Senior Laurent," greeted Shin with a seemingly warning tone.

Seeing this, Laurent could not help but chuckle at them. "You don't have to be too tense. I am here to test your alertness at the professor's order. They seem to want to make sure that you guys are always on guard."

"Your group and the rest of the students from the special program should expect a few tests like this in the future since it will become a new 'subject' for your class," he added, explaining that it was another arrangement from the faculty office.

The two were not very convinced and continued to hold their guard up while watching Laurent's movements quite closely.

Laurent just chuckled after seeing their continued actions. He then stood before the two and continued. "Aside from the professors' arrangement, I am also here to offer your team a commission."

"Not in the real world, obviously, but within the game," he added, clarifying his intention.

Hearing this, Shin and Leonard further raised their brows before the former asked. "Heavenly Resto-Bar?"

Shin had quite a few interactions with this organization within the game, which seemed to be quite mysterious when he first learned about them from Jeremiah (Lawless).

From what he knew, they were an organization that focused on information gathering. They were an information merchant just like the 'Secret Recipe' that Shin had a lot of transactions with in the game.

However, the information that they were gathering focused more on 'people', both inside and outside the game, rather than any in-game knowledge.

From what he had heard from David, Heavenly Taste also focused on looking for clues about the inheritances hidden within the game as well as their possible locations.

They were experts at piecing together the scattered information throughout the game and figuring out the most detailed information about the said inheritances in the real world.

Sensing something, Shin could not help but ask. "What does the senior need from us?"

Laurent liked Shin's straightforwardness and immediately revealed his intention. "Our group have stumbled upon an interesting dungeon recently. Unfortunately, our people are not skilled enough to fully explore it due to certain restrictions."

"We are looking for a few people with Transcendent Race and Class to help us out at the final stages of the dungeon. It was quite a difficult requirement to meet at the very least."

"Within our organization, we only have a couple of people who meet that requirement. Unfortunately, it is not enough to fit the criteria for clearing the dungeon, so we are looking for a few helpers."

He then paused for a moment before laying out the offer that he could give them. "I know that there is nothing much we can offer for your team since you do not lack anything."

"Money was in question, so we can only offer you some important information. It can either be about a certain region or people within the game."

"If you want to learn about a few people in the real world, we can provide you with it as well," he added.

The offer piqued Shin's interest. Unfortunately, most of the members of the Empyrean Talons were currently busy with their respective tasks within the game, particularly the ones as Transcendent Beings.

Shin thought for a moment before asking his head. "We are interested in the commission, Senior. Unfortunately, we don't have any people who can take on it. Our members have been pretty busy these last few days."

"Is that so? What a pity," said Laurent before sighing. "It is pretty easy to look for people who meet the requirements, but the ones whom we can trust are very few."

Shin raised his brows as suggested. "What about Senior Brother or Big Brother Jeremiah and the rest? Even if they can't accept the commission, they at least have the connection to look for more trusted people that can fit your needs."

"Those guys?" Laurent raised his brows before shaking his head. "Of course, we have thought about it as well. Unfortunately, just like I have said, looking for people that we can fully trust is very difficult."

"You guys should be aware of the current situation, both inside and outside of the game. The tension is high, and the atmosphere is in a very unstable state."

He then paused for a moment, recalling some of the information that he had received from his elders, before shaking his head. "There are quite a few big incidents that are happening throughout the world aside from the war that have exploded recently."

"Because of these incidents, the elders do not have a choice but to focus more of their attention on them while ordering the people who have joined the game to focus on their development within the virtual world."

"From their perspective, the answers that they are looking for to solve the issues in the real world are hidden right inside the game."

"You guys should be aware of this as well, so I am sure that you understand our current situation," he added.

Shin and Leonard could not help but pause and turn to each other, seemingly understanding what Laurent was talking about. After all, their elders had also told them about the things within the game and how it concerned the real world.

Shin even knew more about these secrets and understood their true purpose as well.

Laurent looked at this pair of juniors for a while before asking. "Can I ask when your people are available? I think we can delay our process for at least a month."

Hearing this, Shin could not help but squint his eyes a little, realizing that Laurent and the Heavenly Resto-Bar within the game were putting a lot of importance on the said dungeon.

Shin could tell that this dungeon was either concerned with something important or powerful within the game, or it was related to another inheritance in the real world.

It would make sense if it were the latter case. This would make Shin understand why these people wanted to look for more trusted people rather than just highly skilled people to hire.

This further piqued his interest, so he could only turn to Leonard with an inquiring look. "What do you think?"

Leonard could tell that Shin must have figured out something, so he fell into deep thought for a moment before replying. "I can't promise you anything, Senior. But we can do our best to finish our respective business within the game as soon as possible before going back to you."

Laurent thought for a moment before nodding his head. "Alright, I understand. You guys should know how to contact me inside the game, so I trust you to hear some possible news later."

There was a branch of Heavenly Resto-Bar within the Golden City, so contacting them would not be a problem.

Laurent was about to leave when he suddenly recalled something. "Oh! Right, before I forgot!"

"To show you are sincere, let me give you some interesting piece of information," he started before smiling mysteriously. "One of the Powerhouse Guilds within the game, the Wing's Alliance, has been taken over by a mysterious organization."

"We first thought that it was related to the Pandemonium Descendants, but we later discovered that another hegemonic power has gotten involved and reaps all the benefits."

He then looked at Shin and Leonard before continuing. "I hear that you have quite a few friends there. From what we have investigated, all these people have left the guild and scattered everywhere while fending off the pursuit of the new leaders of the guild."

"There is also some news about a few people being captured in the real world alongside their previous Alliance Leader," he added.

After saying that, Laurent walked away and left.

In the meantime, Shin turned to Leonard before asking. "It has become that serious?"

He had already heard about this news during the United Cup, but he was not expecting that it seemed to have already spiraled out of control.

"Now that I think about it, there seems to be a big secret surrounding this guild, given the attention that these mysterious organizations are giving them," he added.

"I am not sure about it either," Leonard shook his head before continuing. "But I did hear that this guild has a long and mysterious history. However, I am not exactly sure about their true background either."

He then suddenly recalled something and said. "Ah! I think Arthur will know more about it. After all, that guy is somewhat obsessed with Irregulars."

"I seem to hear from him that the founders of the Wing's Alliance are somewhat related to that legendary team," he added.

Hearing this, Shin suddenly felt more interested in this mysterious group of people, who seemed to have influenced quite a lot of people.

.....

## Chapter 2023: Discovery

...

Later that day, Shin and the rest of the group went home together while discussing their experiences with their club training and respective progress within the game.

At the same time, Shin had taken that opportunity to ask Arthur about the Wing's Alliance.

"The founders of the Wing's Alliance, huh?" mumbled Arthur while recalling what he knew about their background.

After a while, he answered. "From what I know, those founders of that guild are one of the strongest rivals of Irregulars, who also put the strongest front against them."

"However, the one who is truly capable of fighting head-to-head every member of the Irregulars is the true head of the Wing's Alliance, whom they addressed as the first Alliance Leader."

"From what I heard, the current Alliance Leader – or should I say, the previous Alliance Leader – is the son of that founder."

Reaching this point, Arthur could not help but mumble. "I wonder if that is the reason why those guys held him as a captive."

"There must be another reason. That first Alliance Leader must have some secret on him," said Shin while also trying to figure out the reason.

"Actually, I am more curious about how the Heavenly Taste was able to get such information," said Arthur. "After all, it is supposed to be confidential information tightly held by the organization behind the takeover."

A moment later, Leonard suddenly chimed in. "Let's set aside those guys right now since it does not concern us that much."

"What I want to know is what your plans are for the scattered members of the Wing's Alliance's escaped members," he asked.

Hearing this, Shin could not help but raise his brows before chuckling. "It feels like you are treating our Gold Mountain as some sort of scrap pickers."

He understood what Leonard was talking about. After all, there were quite a few people who were worth recruiting for, or at least adding them to the forces residing in the Gold Mountain.

They had already done this before when they asked those members of Central Order who had been forced out of the guild, who were currently running a mercenary group called Brotherhood under the lead by Legolas and Aragorn.

Leonard shrugged his shoulders before continuing. "That Black Hand is quite good. He is also one of the figures ranked high up in the Top Strategist List alongside you and Immortal."

"He is dubbed as the War Maestro for a reason," nodded Arthur, agreeing with Leonard.

"Moreover, isn't that guy related to Big Brother Black Hammer? I heard that they are from the same family or something," he added, recalling a particular incident when they were doing his Empire Quest previously.

"He seems to be the little brother of Black Hammer from what I remember," nodded Leonard, calling that incident as well.

Shin was not clear about the situation at that time since he was not with them when it happened. However, he had heard about that incident as well.

He pursed his lips for a moment before turning to Arthur. "You should have a way to contact them, right? Then we will leave this to your hands."

He then walked past Arthur while patting the latter's shoulder.

Arthur wanted to refuse at first, but he could not say anything else after recalling that Shin was currently trapped inside a secret land.

While suppressing the twitching of his mouth, Arthur could only nod his head before sighing.

Shin then prepared a feast for everyone for their dinner, which everyone loved very much. After all, they were very exhausted after attending their department's training. Even though it did not last that long, the exhaustion that they felt was affecting them both mentally and physically.

Such a feast pretty much restored all the energy that they had spent throughout the day.

After that, the boys went to their respective rooms while the girls returned to their villa, which was adjacent to it.

...

Swoosh!

Right after returning to the game, Shin immediately surveyed his surroundings before proceeding to head in a certain direction.

He was planning to continue exploring while also grinding some experience points along the way.

Not long after, Shin had finally come across a place that had a clear trace of civilization within the region.

The previous ruins that he had found during his initial exploration were all in total ruins, which were already turning into some sort of forest.

On the other hand, these ruins that he just found were still in a somewhat recognizable place. He could still vividly see the intact structures, which seemed to be the houses of the citizens who had lived in this place previously.

These ruins were still somewhat a part of the place that Hanzo and Solus had brought him initially. However, it was in a somewhat isolated place that made it hard to discover.

There was something strange about this place that made Shin furrow his brows quite deeply.

"The energy in this place is somewhat odd," he mumbled while walking around. He also found it strange that there was no monster roaming around this place. "I can't feel any monsters around either."

He carefully advanced while sharply sweeping his gaze at the surroundings. To make it even safer to explore the place, Shin had even sent out his Elemental Spirits, planning to let them explore the area.

At least, that was what he had tried.

Unfortunately, he suddenly realized that he could not summon any of them despite how hard he tried. It also felt like his connection with them and his Reaper's Realm had been severed by some sort of power surrounding this place.

"What!?" He frowned quite deeply, realizing the situation quite late.

He hesitated for a couple of moments before continuing his exploration. He felt that there was something in this place that could greatly benefit him or his Elemental Spirits.

After walking around for quite some time, Shin was still unable to find any specialness in this place. It was as if this were just an abandoned part of the huge city.

After failing to find anything noticeable about the place, Shin decided to look for the clues inside the ruined houses around him.

Looking for a random house to enter, Shin carefully opened the door before entering through it. What he saw next surprised him a little.

"What!? It is pretty tidy here," he commented after seeing that the place was much tidier than he had expected.

Aside from the thick layer of dust covering everything inside, everything else seemed to be in order. He could not even find any sign of fighting that he was expecting to find.

Shin carefully inspected the first floor before proceeding to head to the second floor. However, he was also unable to find anything suspicious about this place.

Not even the remains of the previous owner were found.

Shaking his head, Shin proceeded to explore the other houses, but they also ended up with the same disappointment. He did not find anything noteworthy despite exploring dozens of houses.

"Strange," he mumbled before thinking. "Don't tell me everyone has left this place before the disaster struck the entire region."

This was the only reason that he could think of, especially when thinking about the Elemental Poisoning that Solus and Hanzo had told him.

"It was either everyone leaving the region all at the same time, or they had been wiped out during the disaster," he mumbled, trying to figure out what could have possibly happened to the residents of this place.

"There is also the chance that they have transformed into some sort of abomination after being exposed to high Elemental Poisoning," he mumbled.

He leaned more toward the third option since he felt that it was most likely the case.

However, he immediately rejected the idea after exploring the area for quite some time. He could not find any traces of monsters living in this place, much less wreaking havoc in the residential area.

If those people had truly turned into a bunch of mindless abominations, then they were bound to leave a few traces behind, which would point him toward their lair or something.

On the contrary, he could not find any noticeable signs throughout the area, which made him very confused about the situation.

"It is as if everyone else has disappeared in a single night or something," he mumbled while walking around aimlessly.

Not long after, he reached the center of the area, which looked like a central plaza of a village or something.

"Huh!?"

He then raised his brows when he laid his eyes on the center of the plaza, where a little fountain was currently active.

Right above that foundation was an obsidian crystal that constantly emitted a pulse of black-and-white light, which spread in every direction.

This light then transformed into a gentle wave of invisible energy that enveloped the entire area.

It was at this moment that Shin realized where the strange power enveloping the entire place was coming from.

...

Chapter 2024: Stone of Samsara

...

Shin stared at the obsidian crystal for a while before using his True Sight ocular skill to look into its details.

However, to his surprise, he found that he was unable to glean any form of information coming from this crystal. It was as if there was some sort of invisible power preventing him from seeing through its details.

He suspected that it must be the black-and-white pulses of light that it was constantly releasing.

"What is this thing?" he mumbled before walking forward, trying to approach the crystal.

Unfortunately, he was suddenly subjected to an intense and heavy pressure right after he stepped into the vicinity of the fountain.

Boom!

He almost kneeled on the ground right after the pressure descended and pressed on his body. If not for his quick reflexes and immediate response, then he would have most likely fallen on his knees.

Strengthening his knees and squatting his hips slightly, Shin was able to withstand the pressure and slowly pick himself up.

He then quickly retreated, stepping away from the effective range of this invisible pressure.

Standing right outside of that range, Shin squinted his eyes while observing the obsidian crystal.

He wanted to consult his two experienced elemental spirits, but his connection with them seemed to have been cut off by the invisible powers that engulfed the entire area.

He also noticed that this power had a great effect against elemental mana, which seemed to be devouring any form of elemental mana in the surroundings. This seemed to be the reason why his connection with his elemental spirits was currently in a severed state.

"An Anti-Elemental Powers?" he mumbled, trying to figure out the main features of this strange power.

Unable to think of anything else, Shin tried to look for clues through the official website of the game and the online forums. Unfortunately, he could not find anything about this obsidian crystal despite skimming through everything for a couple of hours.

Troubled, Shin suddenly remembered the new member of their adventurer team, who was an expert when it came to historical records and such.

Sickarius: Yoh! Are you free?

Shin sent a message to Molton, who had already achieved the title of Grand Scholar from the Imperial Library of the Divinity City.

He did not have to wait that long because Molton immediately replied.

Molton: I am free, Brother Shin. Are you referring to the clues about the place where you are trapped? I think I found out about it earlier. Please, wait for a moment.

Molton was using his real name as his in-game ID, which was quite odd these days but not that rare. After all, there were still some people who were also doing the same.

As for what Molton was talking about, Shin had consulted him about his situation previously, asking for some clues about the secret land that he was trapped in. He wanted to at least pinpoint the estimated region of this land from the Aurora Continent.

After all, they had to make a base on this place along with the Hand of Midas and Deicide Guild later, which would become their springboard to connect with the Forgotten Temple and Awakened Continent.

Shin was not in a rush to know about this, which was why he let Molton take his time looking for clues.

He was about to say that it was not the reason why he was contacting him, but Molton had already sent a series of files before he could even say anything.

Molton: Brother Shin, from the information that I have gathered, there are only three places that can fit the characteristics of the place that is currently trapping you.

Molton: The first is the Phantom Island, the mysterious and legendary island that appears and vanishes in the middle of the Sea of Death. But since Brother Shin already knows about this place, we can just scratch it from the list.

Molton: The next is the Quintessence Archipelago, which is the center of the Fog Sea. However, since you said that you are on a massive island, we can also take it out of the list.

Molton: Then that leaves us with the last option, which is the land of the Immortal Empire that vanished a very long time ago.

Shin originally did not want to rush Molton, but since this kid was so diligent and managed to find such clues in such a short amount of time, his interest could not help but piqued in the process.

Sickarius: Let's hear about it.

Molton immediately continued.

Molton: From what I have researched, it seems to be one of the richest and strongest nations throughout the entire Aurora Continent, rivaling the current Storm Empire, Primal Kingdom, and Monster Regional Lands.

Molton: However, since its land is right in the middle of the Everlasting Sea, they are quite isolated from the conflicts that swept through the entire continent during the Warring Era.

Molton: But their forces are quite well-known throughout the world, especially when they are one of the main forces that won against the invading Demon Races during the Repelling Era.

Molton: They are also quite famous for the regional products unique to their land, which makes the merchants brave through the harsh conditions of the Everlasting Sea just to trade with them.

Reading through the messages that Molton had sent, Shin could not help but raise his brows a little, feeling that something was wrong with this place.

Then Molton continued.

Molton: However, this powerful empire has suddenly vanished in a single night due to a certain incident.

Molton: During the final stages of the Repelling Era, a strange meteor suddenly fell from the sky.

Molton: This meteor possessed multicolored flame while leaving a long trail in the sky during its descent.

Molton: Moreover, this meteor had attracted a lot of strong individuals at that time. However, none of them managed to catch it due to its extreme speed before it landed straight in the center of the Immortal Empire.

Molton: Based on the records, the impact that it generated at that time was so strong that it caused a series of huge and overlapping shockwaves that swept through every direction.

Molton: The shockwaves had even caused huge waves to sweep through the sea and formed a terrifying tsunami that swallowed all the nearby islands, erasing them in the process.

Molton: After that incident, the entire empire had suddenly disappeared. Even the absolute experts of the world were unable to find them.

He then paused for a moment, seemingly trying to organize all the information that he had gotten before continuing.

Molton: Based on what Brother Shin has described, it seems that the entire empire has been surrounded by a mysterious power and has hidden it from the outside world.

Hearing the information from Molton, Shin finally realized why there was a massive lake at the center of this huge piece of land.

Based on the latter part of Molton's words, Shin figured that the lake at the center of the region was the point where that mysterious meteor had landed.

"Does it mean-... there is a powerful treasure at the bottom of that lake?" mumbled Shin while turning his gaze toward the direction of the lake.

He seemed to have realized that the answer that could help him leave this place was most likely at the bottom of that lake.

Unfortunately, he did not have the strength to explore that place at the moment due to the powerful monsters residing in the areas near the lake.

Realizing his current situation, Shin set that thought aside for a moment before proceeding to the main reason why he contacted Molton.

Sickarius: There is another thing that I want to consult you about.

He then proceeded to send the images he captured of the obsidian crystal floating right at the center of the fountain to Molton while explaining special features that it had, along with the overwhelming powers that it possessed.

Molton: This-... I think I have seen something like this when I was looking for the information previously.

Molton: Give me a few minutes, Brother Shin. I'll try to look for it.

Shin did not have to wait that long since Molton immediately returned and presented a new batch of information.

Molton: I've found it, Brother Shin! And this thing seems to be quite special!

Shin could not help but raise his brows when he saw the message. From the tone that Molton had, he could tell that the latter seemed to have found something interesting.

Molton: If I am not wrong, then it must be the Stone of Samsara, which is a unique product of the Immortal Empire.

Molton: Based on the information that I have gathered, this magical stone is something that can be used by certain people to increase the density of their bloodline or undergo a special type of soul awakening that can awaken the hidden secrets of their bloodline.

Molton: In the current era, it is something that can awaken a certain trait in multiple races.

Molton: If a player with an Ascended Class uses it, they can instantly awaken their bloodline powers and promote themselves into an Ascended Race. It is not an exaggeration to say that it is a free pass to create an Ascended Race!

Molton could not help but feel quite excited, especially when he could see that the size of the Stone of Samsara before Shin was of high quality.

...

Chapter 2025: Stone of Samsara (Part 2)

...

Shin thought for a moment before saying. "Given the description that Molton has given, this obsidian crystal seems to be a higher version of Bloodstone that the players could use to gain Awakening Skills during the level 100 to 115 marks."

When he asked Molton about it, the latter immediately replied.

Molton: Given their characteristics, Brother Shin is right about it.

Molton: However, Bloodstone can be used to upgrade one's Battle Physique and gain a few Awakening Skills in the process, while the Stone of Samsara directly affects the overall features of a race, particularly their bloodline and racial traits.

"I see," mumbled Shin before thanking Molton and telling the latter to immediately inform him if he found any more clues about this place.

Molton: No problem, Brother Shin! Just ask me anything else you want to know. It is because of your recommendation that I have gained access to the Imperial Library!

Molton: So long as I can find it from the library, I will immediately look for such clues.

After thanking Molton for another time, Shin closed the message panel before proceeding to look at the floating obsidian crystal once again.

"From what Molton has said, this chunk of stone is capable of awakening the hidden traits of an Ascended Class and directly promoting them to an Ascended Class," Shin mumbled, trying to organize the information that he had gotten.

"It is also somewhat useful for Epic Races and Classes, which can give them another set of Extraordinary Powers or further enhance their existing abilities."

"Given its size, the quality of Ascended Abilities or Extraordinary Powers that an individual can get from it will be at the highest possible level."

"However, it is more effective when someone with Ascended Class uses it since these people have more potential that can be squeezed out of their body compared to those with Epic Classes, since they have already drained most of their potential during their promotion quests to become an Epic Race."

"Additionally, since this Stone of Samsara is capable of creating a special domain that negates all kinds of Elemental Powers, the abilities or powers that it can provide will be something related to it."

He then paused for a moment, recalling the most important information that Molton had given him.  
"Unfortunately, this thing is useless for a Transcendent Race since we technically have no 'potential' that needs to be squeezed out."

"Instead, we have these so-called breakpoints that we have to destroy step by step before reaching another level."

"If we want to unlock more of our potential, then we have to constantly discover more about our Transcendent Traits and awaken them through constant tests prepared for their Predecessors, which will directly help us understand more about our powers and gain more Transcendent Abilities."

When Shin thought about this, he could not help but think that they were having an unfair treatment from the game developers and the almighty system.

However, when he also thought about the cheat-like advantages that they had, such as having multiple Elemental Spirits that can form a contract with them, the large numbers of Transcendent Abilities provided by their Racial Traits, and the favorable treatment that the NPCs were giving them, Shin could not help but agree that they were too broken for the game.

The large NPC forces that treated them with the highest respect were more than enough to put them way ahead of the other players from the 'lesser' races.

Moreover, he also recalled the thing that Dracula, the Vampire Primogenitor of the Frozen Kingdom, had told him about the Transcendent Races.

That ancestor-level and Sovereign Being, who stood at the pinnacle of the lower plane, had told him that people with Transcendent Races could constantly improve their level and power without limit and reach the level of a Divine Being with few obstacles.

On the other hand, Ascended Races and Epic Races needed to constantly face multiple tests to break through their limits and escape the constraints of the Heavenly Principle, proving themselves worthy of such transcendent powers.

If he put it in layman's terms, then Transcendent Races were the favorites of the Heavenly Principle, giving them VIP tickets as a special pass through the so-called tests for their promotion.

Meanwhile, the Ascended and Epic Races were the 'regular people' who needed to struggle through all the hardships just to seize the qualifications of passing those tests.

Shin could not help but sigh before realizing the special privileges that he had gotten just by getting this Transcendent Race.

He then looked at the floating Stone of Samara before mumbling to himself. "Based on the information that Molton has provided, this obsidian crystal is something that I can't get through normal means."

"It requires a special container to seal it before I can even put it in my inventory. Unfortunately, I currently have no means to take it away unless I find such a container somewhere."

He then looked around before mumbling to himself. "The question is – how the heck did this thing end up in this place in the first place?"

"This Stone of Samara is said to be a unique product of the Immortal Empire, but how does it come to be? How are they made?"

While he was having such thoughts inside his head, Shin surveyed the surroundings with sharp eyes, even activating his True Sight in the process.

Unfortunately, he could not get anything despite all of it.

"I guess I can only explore the area before coming up with my next move," he mumbled while furrowing his brows. "If I can't find anything within the vicinity, then I can only mark this part of the map and come back again later once I find a way to store it."

Having that in mind, Shin proceeded to explore the other parts of this area, hoping to find any clue about the Stone of Samsara.

Unfortunately, he could not find anything helpful with the current situation, leaving him with the only choice of abandoning this place for the time being.

He would come back again later once he had found a way to deal with that obsidian crystal.

After marking this part of the map, Shin proceeded to head for another location, further exploring the entire region.

He was intending to grind more levels while exploring the outer parts of the massive island before proceeding to the huge lake at the center.

He was still quite powerless to explore that region, so he could only explore the outer layers of the island while strengthening himself.

But to his surprise, he found a few more places with conditions similar to the place where he found the Stone of Samara.

However, these special places had their unique conditions that differentiate it from the first one that he just discovered.

One of those places was filled with Death Energy, which was dreadful and eerie at the same time. It hosted a bunch of zombified creatures that seemed to be the residents of the said place during the reign of the Immortal Empire.

There was also a place that was filled with thick life force, opposite to the previous one. This place was filled with dense botanical life, such as rare herbs and magical trees. There were also no signs of humans in this place, just like the first place that he had discovered, but Shin could feel that some of the magical trees throughout the area seemed to be the people who used to reside in this place.

There was also a place that was dominated by multiple beasts, who seemed to be worshipping the obsidian crystal situated at the center of the area and protecting it with their lives on the line.

Shin had discovered multiple areas with strange environments filled with mysterious powers surrounding them.

All of them had their unique environmental feature, which seemed to come from the obsidian crystal situated at the center of each area.

All these obsidian crystals looked the same on the outside, but they all had different properties unique to them. They were also creating a special environment that seemed to reflect the powers that they contained.

Shin then realized that these Stones of Samsara seemed to be more special than he originally thought.

What shocked him even more was the number of obsidian crystals scattered throughout the region. He was barely able to explore a tenth of this region despite exploring it for an entire week (real-world time), which was already quite long.

During his exploration, he had discovered at least dozens of places scattered throughout the region that he had explored.

From his observations, these places that were hosting an obsidian crystal used to be a village or a town under the jurisdiction of the fallen Immortal Empire.

He had also found a much larger area being covered by the mysterious powers of a particular Stone of Samsara compared to the rest. Moreover, the obsidian stone 'protecting' this place was much larger compared to the others.

Shin suspected that it must be a vassal city of the Immortal Empire, given its size and the more powerful Samsara Stone guarding it.

Looking at the marks on his virtual map and connecting them, Shin was able to draw a rough outline of the other places where a village, a town, or even a city used to be before the empire had suffered such a distance.

Based on this, he was also able to estimate which places he needed to avoid and which were the ones that he could use to grind more levels and such.

In his virtual map, he had already marked the places where a Samsara Stone was located, along with the grinding maps that their forces could use in the future.

Looking at his current progress, Shin could not help but feel somewhat satisfied with himself. "I guess I can be qualified as a bigger explorer now."

...

Chapter 2026: Commission

...

Shin and the rest of the group spent the entire month in a relatively relaxed manner. They spent the day training and attending classes, while the night was spent continuing to continue playing the game.

The Empyrean Talons had made quite a lot of progress in their respective missions and tasks within the game. They had discovered a great deal during the entire process, which also significantly enhanced their strength.

Shin was still trapped within the secret land. However, he was still able to explore a large portion of the region.

He had already marked quite a lot of grinding places, which were perfect for grinding levels and training their combat techniques. There were also farming regions that contained a wealth of rare treasures, including herbs, ores, and other minerals and materials used in production classes.

However, the places that he had explored were the outer layers of the secret land, which meant that there was still a lot left to explore.

Unfortunately, he could not explore those places yet because he was too weak for the monsters living there. He had to at least reach the level 190 mark as the minimum threshold before he would dare to explore those places.

Because he was still trapped in this secret land, Shin was unable to give any response to the invitation that Laurent had extended for the Empyrean Talons.

The month-long deadline had already been reached, so they needed to give Laurent a clear answer from the commission that he was offering to the group.

Fortunately, Leonard and Arthur agreed to it, especially when they were quite curious about the operation the Heavenly Resto-Bar was planning to do.

Moreover, Laurent and the organization behind him had also offered a significant prize that the Empyrean Talons could not refuse.

It was a clear clue about the inheritance gem that the Empyrean Talons had gotten from winning the United Cup, alongside a few more pieces of information that concerned a few important quests related to their respective Transcendent Races.

Among these clues was a quest related to Ancient Dragons, which piqued Arthur's interest, especially when one of his ongoing quests was pointing in the same direction.

There was also another clue leading to the Legendary Behemoth, which Leonard was looking for. This monster was one of the World Bosses that he needed to hunt to gain the rare material needed for his Divine Armor.

The two agreed to help Laurent and the people from the Heavenly Resto-Bar while bringing Huahua alone.

It was a good opportunity for the girl to gain considerable experience. It was a high-level exploration quest, which involved an elite group of players who could rank quite high in their respective professions.

This was a good training opportunity for Huahua, experiencing how a highly elite group operated and how difficult the missions that the pinnacle experts of the game usually face.

Since the Heavenly Resto-Bar focused more on the trusted people who could help them, they did not think about how Leonard and Arthur had brought Huahua with them. After all, these two monsters alone were more than enough for them.

...

While the top experts of the game were busy dealing with their respective businesses, those new players who just joined the game were also causing quite a lot of commotion.

There was a huge influx of players joining the game due to the burst of popularity that it had gained after the United Cup.

There were also those experts from the real world joining the game. These people were at the Void Manifestation Stage, Ruler's Realm, and Swordmaster Realm of the three major disciplines of the modern era.

They were either joining the game for fun and wanting to prove themselves, or had been sent by the huge organization behind them to look for the clues that had been left by Adam and Evangeline within the game.

The huge organizations launched big operations within the game, taking control of certain regions that had yet to be seized by the large guilds within the game.

Chaos immediately broke out due to the repeated clashes of these newly emerging forces and the old-timers of the game.

Aside from the regions that had been in tight control of the Powerhouse Guilds and powerful organizations within the game, most of the kingdoms and empires were thrown into absolute chaos.

The underground arenas were bursting in business due to the huge influx of experts appearing everywhere.

This place was the perfect place to grind some levels or wealth due to the special betting system that they had.

The Winner-takes-it-all format was the most famous one among all the experts since it would take everything from the losers before transferring it to the victors. This included the money, the items, the skills, and even the quest progression of the losers. All their assets will be taken away from them.

This was the same method that David had used when he just joined the game, letting him catch up to the mainstream players and even reach the level of the leading experts in the game.

This method had become famous, making the experts, who just joined the game, take the same path.

However, because of the huge number of experts flooding into the underground arenas, the system was forced to step in and place a series of conditions before they could join the battles.

The first requirement was the level requirement. Players below level 50 could no longer join the all-in battles or winner-takes-it-all bets.

They first needed to explore the game to a certain degree before they could even enter the underground arenas. There was even a series of quests that they needed to clear before they could even step into those arenas.

Even the players, who were running these underground arenas, were forced to comply with the new rules set by the Almighty System, making the real-world profits that they could earn from the combatants drop considerably.

However, the battles between the preceding combatants had become more intense because all the players joining them had become more experienced with the mechanics of the game.

Due to these new players being true experts in the real world, their adjustment period was a lot less than that of the casual players, making them catch up to the mainstream players a bit faster.

Even though they could still not use the hidden mechanics and special states that the top players of the game used, real-world experts were still able to build their strong and solid fighting style that would not lose to Godlike Players and Maverick Gods.

A lot of stars were also appearing one after another, giving the Mystery Pavilion, which was responsible for ranking the top Gods of the game, some pressure.

Most of the lists that they had released had become somewhat 'unreliable' due to the constant appearances of powerful individuals regardless of their age.

Even the players from Production Profession could not escape the 'invasion' due to a series of production experts appearing one after another.

Everyone knew that most of these lists needed to be updated as soon as possible.

Unfortunately for these newly joined experts, there was still a huge gap between them and the top experts of the game, who were mostly exploring the highest level of quests and regions that were still unavailable to them.

If they wanted to prove themselves, then they still had to pass all the trials before them, such as the Mysterious Instructor's test and the Tier 3 Promotion Quest.

After all, what was inside the game was still different from what was in the real world.

However, these experts of Void Manifestation Stage, Ruler's Realm, and Swordmaster Realm still had a better edge compared to most of the players within the game due to their deeper understanding of

'strength' from their respective disciplines, just like how a weapon specialist understood their weapons better than the others.

The impact of these newly added experts in the game would still be huge, especially for those top guilds and other organizations within the game.

After all, these experts would have a better standing than most of the elders of these forces just by the difference in their strength alone.

Among the most powerful and most influential forces within the game, the one that had undergone a massive change was the Wing's Alliance.

Due to its fame and overwhelming status as one of the Powerhouse Guilds within the game, its influence within the game was quite huge. They could even tilt the power balance of certain battles due to their influence alone.

No one knew who leaked the information first, but it was said that the Wing's Alliance had changed hands due to the most recent power struggle.

The previous Alliance Leader was said to have been overthrown due to the involvement of a third party supporting the Supreme Elder of the guild, but there was no definite evidence to support this claim.

However, it was true that the leader of this super guild had changed, which was specifically leaked by a few leaders within the game.

It was also said that some of the remnant forces under the direct command of the previous leader were being pursued by the forces under the Supreme Elder.

There was even a video clip of S.Tigris and his team fighting against a Golden Feather, one of the most elite forces under the Wing's Alliance.

S.Tigris and Black Hand were among the more famous members of the Wing's Alliance due to their battle achievements. The latter was even listed in the Strategist List revealed to the public, proving that he was one of the brightest minds within the game.

With these two famous players being pursued by the Wing's Alliance's Golden Feather, the rumor surrounding the guild was immediately proven.

With the fans of the previous Alliance Leader causing a ruckus, the guild was suddenly thrown into an awkward position, especially after being scrutinized due to how ruthless the takeover was.

However, the higher echelons of the guild ignored everything and just focused on the process of taking over.

In their eyes, everything else was irrelevant so long as they properly seize the entire Wing's Alliance.

...

Chapter 2027: Commission (Part 2)

.....

Arthur and Leonard arrived at the meeting point that Laurent had given them. They were currently waiting for the other party to arrive while also discussing what kind of dungeon the Heavenly Resto-Bar had found.

"What do you think of the dungeon that they have found?" asked Leonard while waiting.

Arthur thought for a moment before shaking his head. "I have no idea. But since it is located here in the Awakened Continent, I am pretty sure that it is not going to be an easy one."

Recalling their experience when dealing with the Lesser Hatchling Cave previously.

Leonard thought for a moment before shaking his head. "I don't think that it will be on the same level as that one. After all, your quest at that time is related to the clues of your Divine Armor."

Arthur shrugged his shoulders before shaking his head.

If not for the clues that the Heavenly Resto-Bar could provide them about a Dragon's nest that they had recently discovered and the Legendary Behemoth that Leonard needed to hunt, then he would have no time helping these people.

After all, they still have a lot of business that they need to deal with.

"From what they have said, it seems like they need a few people with Transcendent Race and Class at the final stages of the dungeon, so I guess that it concerns a certain inheritance similar to the one that you have gotten from that cave," mumbled Leonard.

Recalling this information, Arthur slightly nodded his head. "It can be. But I still think that it is a bit harder to do that one since they require quite a few Transcendent Beings to finish the final stages."

Given the limited information that they had, the two could tell that the final stages of that dungeon were quite special.

Huahua, who was behaving herself the entire time, suddenly raised her head, seemingly sensing something.

Not long after, she saw a group of players walking toward them. Given the auras that each member of this group was emitting, she could tell that all of them were quite powerful.

A few of them were as strong as Arthur and Leonard when it came to aura alone, while the rest were not weaker than the secondary combatants of the Empyrean Talons.

She could not help but act a bit timidly after sensing their auras, feeling a bit inferior due to her limited strength.

Arthur and Leonard, who were casually chatting just now, also noticed the arrival of the group and turned their attention toward them.

Squinting their eyes, the two could feel that the strength of this group was decent enough.

"Not bad," commented Arthur after sensing that there were three Transcendent Beings from the opposing group while the rest were either an Ascended Being or someone from Epic Race.

There were a total of 12 members from the opposing group, so the two had to admit that their achievements were not that bad.

After all, reaching the Awakened Continent in the current stages of the game was still quite challenging. Having a dozen people altogether was already amazing enough.

Walking at the forefront of this group was a player who seemed to have a spearman class. He was also among the three Transcendent Beings of the group, who were clearly their strongest member.

The two did not have to guess the identity of this person since they could already see the appearance of the other party.

This person might have altered facial features just like everyone else within the game to prevent other people from knowing their identities in the real world.

However, since the two had a few interactions with Laurent in the real world and had become more familiar with his aura, the two could at least recognize him just by his presence alone.

"It seems like we are late," said Laurent, seemingly greeting the two.

Observing his appearance for a bit more, his race seemed to be from the subcategory of the Elven Race.

The two had quite a few friends who came from the Transcendent Elves, such as Diablo (Wade) as an Underworld Elf, Charlotte (Alice) as an Ancient Elf, and Faker (Vincent) as an Abyss Elf. All three were powerful on their own right and possessed unique abilities and specialties.

Comparing those two to Laurent, the two could not help but become a bit curious about this new Transcendent Elf that they had discovered.

Arthur shook his head before extending his hand for a handshake. "We have not waited that long, so there is no need to apologize, Senior."

Accepting the handshake, Laurent nodded before gesturing toward his group. "We are expecting great cooperation."

He then started introducing the members of his team.

Three of them came from the subraces of Epic Humans. Two were Conquerors, while the other was a Dominator.

The two Conquerors were a Priest and a Paladin, respectively. Both were from the Church of Light who had passed the Tier 3 Promotion Quest and became an Archbishop and a Crusader.

The Dominator seemed to come from an ethnic tribe similar to Barbarians of the Frozen Kingdom. His class was quite interesting as well, which seemed to be in a category of Pugilist Class.

Then there was an Epic Beastman, who seemed to have evolved into a powerful Wolfkin after being promoted to Tier 3 Class. He seemed to be a Predator Class, which was the Master Grade of the Hunter Class (Thief Class of Beastman Race).

Besides this, Wolfkin Predator was two people from Ascended Classes and had fully awakened as Ascended Beings.

One was an Ascended Naga with Aquamancer as their main class. They were holding a strange staff that looked like a coral and wearing a cape that seemed to be made from a variety of sea grasses. Their

appearance was somewhat strange, but the dangerous aura that this person was emitting was quite powerful.

The other was an Ascended Being of a Winged Race. She seemed to come from a different lineage than Archimedes, who was Garuda's Descendant.

Her wings were pitch-black, seemingly signifying that she came from a Raven's Lineage.

However, the class seemed to come from the same category. She seemed to be an archer or something due to the huge bow that she was carrying and a quiver filled with specialized arrows behind her waist.

The other two were Epic Races of Undead Race.

One was an Epic Spectral Thief, who seemed to be constantly shifting between tangible and incorporeal forms. He was standing silently under the shades of the trees, which further hid his presence.

The other was an Epic Fallen Human with a Shadowmacer Class, which seemed to be a Tier 3 Promotion Shadow Priest Class. This person seemed to be quite ordinary compared to the rest of the team, but his dark and eerie presence could make those around him uncomfortable.

The final member of the group was an Ascended Elf, who had become an Elemental Lord after passing the Tier 3 Promotion Quest. It was a more powerful Elementalist Class, which had a higher output of elemental magic and stronger firepower.

Each member of the group had unique powers of their own. Their classes also covered each other's weaknesses and further enhanced their strengths.

However, the ones that piqued the interest of Arthur and Leonard were the other two Transcendent Beings aside from Laurent.

The first person was someone from the Foxkin Race. However, unlike the regular Foxkin of the game, this person possessed nine tails behind her, which indicated that she was from the Nine-Tailed Clan.

As for her class, it seemed to be from the Shaman Class, especially with her current outfit that perfectly fit the said class category. The white and red outfit, along with the gold-plated copper crown she was wearing, reminded the two of a certain Shaman from the historical and fantasy backgrounds they had encountered in other games they played.

From the List of Transcendent Class and Race that Arthur and Leonard had, there were only three people from the Nine-Tailed Clan, so they could instantly recognize her.

Nine-Tailed Fox, Himiko Class.

The other Transcendent Being was from the Ocean Nagas. This person seemed to be not much different from other Ocean Nagas. Aside from the purple scales that were covering his body, most of his appearance was very similar to the other Nagas.

If there was anything noticeable from him, then it was the pair of small antlers sticking out of his head and the huge and broad sword hanging on his back.

Based on the List of Transcendent Bings, this person must be the 'Aquatic Beast Race' and the 'Victor Mare Class'.

Arthur and Leonard could help but become more curious about these two, especially when they could sense a bit of threat coming from them.

Since it was rare to find other Transcendent Beings aside from the people they were close with, the two felt a bit eager to test the abilities of the other party.

...

Chapter 2028: Commission (Part 3)

...

Right after introducing everyone, Laurent immediately stepped forward and said. "Alright, that should be it. Let's move on and head to the main location."

He could already sense the overwhelming battle intent coming from the two top gods of the game. He could already imagine these two challenging all of them in a fight despite being greatly outnumbered.

He knew how crazy these two were when it came to fighting strong people. He even heard that they would dare to fight anyone who caught their interest.

Now that a few Transcendent Beings were standing before them and a bunch of highly skilled experts that were slightly weaker than them, if not equally powerful, the battle intent that the two were currently feeling was at its peak.

Laurent even forgot that he was included in the people that these two wanted to challenge.

Most of the players with Transcendent Race and Class were in the Hall of Fame. However, there were still a few who wanted to stay as lowkey as possible and avoid any unnecessary attention.

Most of these experts were equally strong as those listed on the rankings, such as these people before them.

The two felt that it would be a pity not to experience their abilities now that they had the opportunity to clash against them.

Fortunately, rationality took over them and managed to stop themselves.

Arthur took his gaze away from the group before turning to Laurent. "Now that you have mentioned it, Senior. You still have yet to explain our real task for this commission."

Laurent smiled awkwardly when he heard those words before continuing. "You can't blame me for this. After all, this is something that concerns the true inheritance from the real world. We can't afford any leaks."

After that, he suddenly took out a scroll from his inventory before gesturing to everyone to come closer. "Now that we are all here, it is time to head to the dungeon."

Seeing that scroll in Laurent's hands, Arthur and Leonard could not help but raise their brows.

"A long-distance teleportation scroll!? An extreme level at that!? Your organization seemed to have put a lot of investment into this commission," commented Arthur with a somewhat sarcastic tone.

The teleportation scrolls in the Awakened Continent were extremely expensive. The regular ones were still within the acceptable range of highly elite people such as themselves. However, when it came to special teleportation scrolls, the price varied depending on their usage.

The Random Instantaneous Scrolls, Group Teleportation Scrolls, and Extreme Teleportation Scrolls were just a few of the more expensive ones. Each represents the activation time, the large number of people that could cover them, and the distance that they covered upon activation.

Judging the extremely complex pattern and absurdly high density of mana that the scroll had from Laurent's hands, Arthur could already guess that it was a first-class scroll even among all the teleportation scrolls that he knew.

Both the casting time, the number of people it could accommodate, and the distance it covered were top-notch.

Arthur could already guess that the real location of the dungeon was extremely far from this place. It might even be from another major region.

"You have quite a lot of precautions, huh?" he sneered after realizing the arrangement that Laurent had prepared.

"Being careful never hurts," commented Laurent before crushing the scroll.

Snap!

Swoosh!

Within an instant, a huge magic circle suddenly appeared underneath the group and immediately summoned a towering pillar of light that swallowed everyone.

Whoosh!

A moment later, everyone suddenly disappeared from the forest, leaving only an empty spot where they stood.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

A few seconds later, a group of hooded individuals suddenly appeared and looked at the empty spot with ugly expressions on their faces.

"We have been had on! Those people from Heavenly Taste already knew that we have people on their tail since the very beginning!" said a person, who seemed to be the leading figure of the group.

After spitting out a series of curses, he suddenly opened a virtual panel and connected something.

Right after the call connected, the leader did not bother for the other side to say anything else and immediately said. "We have lost them! Tell the Boss that we can only rely on Plan B."

"Roger!" answered the person from the other side of the line before ending the call.

The leader looked at the spot where Arthur and the others disappeared before turning around. "Let's go. There is no point staying here now."

Swoosh!

...

Whoosh!

In the meantime, Arthur, Leonard, Huahua, and the people from the Heavenly Resto-Bar appeared in a foreign land.

Looking around, Arthur and Leonard immediately realized where they were.

"Forsaken Islets?" asked Arthur after seeing the thick miasma coming out of the ground and the seemingly dead soil underneath their feet.

"No, it is the Corrupted Lands between the Divine Empire and the Forsaken Islets, to be exact," Laurent shook his head.

He then proceeded to explain their purpose of coming here. "This place is quite special due to the energies of Life and Death being in complete harmony in this place."

"We are still investigating the reason for this phenomenon, but that is something that I can share for later," he said before signaling everyone to follow him.

"Our expert explorers have stumbled upon this place by accident, which also led to them finding the Legacy Dungeon," he added.

Reaching this point, Arthur could no longer suppress his curiosity and asked. "Wait a minute, Senior. It has been bugging me for a while now, but how can you be sure that these legacies are directly related to the ones in the real world?"

"How can you recognize that a certain legacy is something that comes from the real world?" he added with a deep frown.

"About this...It is not something that I can share..." Laurent hesitated for a moment before shaking his head. "Forget it, you will learn about it sooner or later anyway."

"There are certain clues that connect these legacies within the game to its counterpart in the real world," he then paused and glanced at Arthur and Leonard before sighing. "I can tell that you two have yet to fully explore this area since you solely focus on enjoying the game until recently."

"However, you will sooner or later realize that I am talking about once you finally realize these things," he added.

Hearing that, Arthur frowned quite deeply before snorting. "You basically have not said anything, Senior."

Laurent chuckled. "You will understand what I mean when the time comes."

He then shifted the topic toward their main purpose of coming here. "Junior, it is better to focus on the task at hand. After all, we still need to work together later."

"Tsk!" Arthur clicked his tongue but did not say anything more.

"Your task is quite simple, actually," started Laurent before continuing. "Even though it is a 15-man dungeon with extremely high difficulty, we have already cleared the majority of the dungeon and have memorized everything that we need to be careful of."

"Unfortunately, the final stages are a bit tricky to deal with. There is a door leading to the final boss room, which only lets Transcendent Beings."

"The number of people that need to be present is 5 people, which means that we need to have 5 Transcendent Beings of different races."

"I'll be honest and tell you that our Heavenly Taste does have more than 5 Transcendent Beings in our ranks. Unfortunately, the others have a more special mission that they need to deal with, which is why the three of us are the only ones left available," he said while pointing at the two Transcendent Beings behind them.

"We originally wanted to wait until our people become all available. Unfortunately, our situation does not allow us have any other options."

"We have just discovered that the dungeon seems to have another entrance somewhere," he added while giving the duo a knowing look.

Arthur and Leonard immediately understood what was happening after hearing this.

"A Competition-Type Dungeon?" mumbled Leonard while becoming more interested in this job. "This means that we may be able to encounter other people at the final stage of the dungeon."

"Now, this has become more interesting," commented Arthur, finding it quite intriguing as well.

"It can be one or more teams, actually," said Laurent before continuing. "We are still not sure about the exact situation, but our people have already figured out one of the opposing parties."

"Although we have also revealed ourselves to them," he added with a somewhat helpless tone.

"Both sides have been delaying each other's progress by sabotaging the important business that each other has."

"Since we don't know where the entrances of each side are, we can only cause some trouble with each other, hoping that we can weaken their main forces."

Arthur and Leonard nodded in understanding, realizing the situation.

"If you guys have not answered us soon enough, then we have no choice but to hire other people, risking all the possible troubles along the way," said Laurent, clearly telling the two that the Empyrean Talons sure had taken their sweet time.

"Anyway, that was the gist of it. You can just relax on the early stages of the dungeon while we handle the rest," then paused and looked at Huahua, who remained silent up until now, before adding. "We can also help you train the little girl as an extra payment."

...

#### Chapter 2029: Commission (Part 4)

...

What Laurent had said previously was true. The people from the Heavenly Resto-Bar were indeed capable of clearing the entire dungeon by themselves. Arthur and Leonard did not need to do anything since they could handle everything.

Aside from the average skills of the team, their understanding of the dungeon was quite deep, regardless of the powerful monsters within the dungeon.

This dungeon was filled with strange creatures with odd abilities.

These creatures were similar to Beastmen, which leaned more toward being a furry with dominant beast features rather than the standard Demi-Human team of the game that had a more human appearance.

Most of these Beastmen fought with insanely high combat AI, which gave most of the people they faced a lot of challenges.

Their skills, techniques, and other combat prowess reached an exceptionally high level, rivalling even those of the top experts in the game.

This feature of the dungeon alone had already proven that it was much more challenging compared to the Lesser Hatchling Cave that the Empyrean Talons had explored previously, especially when these Beastmen also possessed a high level of coordination and battle formations.

In a sense, the group was fighting a standard military force defending the dungeon rather than a bunch of random monsters from regular dungeons of the game.

Fighting these Beastmen was quite beneficial for the leading players of the game, who liked to hone their skills through combat.

This was a perfect place to train the troops of top organizations, especially when the experience points that these Beastmen provided were decent enough to satisfy the needs of these leading players.

Leveling up at their current level was getting harder as time went by, even after reaching the Awakened Continent.

Places like this, which could both give a decent amount of experience points and hone the skills of the players was something that everyone would seek after, especially the top guilds and huge organizations of the game.

If not for the sense of urgency and the existence of the other entrances of this dungeon, which the other forces could use to explore, then Laurent and his Heavenly Resto-Bar would do their best to take advantage of the benefits that this place provided and maximize them to the fullest.

It was a pity that it was a competition-type of dungeon, where multiple parties needed to fight over it and race for its clearance.

...

In the meantime, despite not needing to make their moves, Arthur and Leonard took the initiative to join the battle and even acted as the frontliners of the team.

They were not a type to leech experience points at the back while the rest of the team were doing their best to clear the dungeon.

They would rather struggle at the frontlines rather than do nothing at the backlines.

Moreover, after seeing how powerful and skilled these monsters were, the two immediately ignited their competitive spirit and battled hunger to join the fun.

They were taking an active role in clearing the dungeon, not willing to miss this opportunity to challenge themselves along with these new types of monsters that they encountered.

This was a great opportunity to train, so why would they waste this chance and let it slip through their fingers?

"Those two are truly a pair of monsters," commented Renz, one of the Transcendent Beings of the group, who was also from the Ocean Naga Race and had the Vitor Mare Class.

"We have taken a couple of hours to adjust ourselves to the battle styles and combat formations of this bunch of strange monsters, but they have only taken a dozen minutes or so to find their rhythm."

"Top Gods sure are different," he added, watching the two fight at the forefront of the group and leading everyone while advancing.

Laurent, who was overseeing everything from the back, shook his head before smiling bitterly. "Those two are indeed from a different breed. Their reputation within the game is not unfounded."

Renz nodded his head before having some doubts. "We both are Transcendent Beings, yet the gap is still quite noticeable."

He then turned to Laurent and said. "Aside from you, young master, I don't think anyone from our organization is capable of rivaling them."

"Well, that is only because of my higher realm in the real world, along with my richer experience in comparison," said Laurent before shaking his head. "However, their understanding of their class, race, and the mechanics of the game is much deeper than mine."

"That is only the reason why everything else is balanced," he added before recalling a few people that he knew.

"However, when we compare them with Khing, Snow White, and those old title holders from the previous games, I must say that these two are still a bit wet behind their ears," he said, giving a serious remark.

Renz furrowed his brows for a moment before asking. "Isn't it a bit exaggerated?"

"Do you think so?" said Laurent before smirking. "Do you think that the reputation of those people is empty words now and has become beautiful flattery to honor themselves?"

"Let me tell you... before these two can even establish their names during the reign of «True Era» Online, those people from the previous generation's ranking list can beat them in submission."

"Even if these two have improved and reached such unprecedented levels, I can still name quite a few, or even a dozen, people, who have higher odds of winning against them."

He paused for a moment, thinking of those people, before continuing. "Let's set aside Khing and Snow White for obvious reasons, as well as Faker and Lawless, who have just returned to their respective forms..."

"Those lunatics who have formed the Blood Carnival are no joke, particularly Pierro, the Jester, Joker, and are just a few of them. Those guys are demons of another level, rivaling Khing and the bunch."

"Then there are also the old monsters joining the game, which clearly have higher attainments when it comes to life-and-death combat."

"Some of the retired players, who have stepped out of the virtual world due to their higher attainments from different disciplines, will most likely return as well due to various reasons."

Thinking about these people, Laurent could not help but shake his head before adding. "I can't help but imagine how chaotic the office of the Mystery Pavilion is due to this."

"I am sure that they are having trouble trying to reorganize the ranking lists that they are proud of," he chuckled after learning about this.

...

While the two were chatting, Riko, who was the third Transcendent Being of the team, was focusing on another matter.

Her race was the Nine-Tailed Fox with a Class of Himiko, which was a Transcendent Class of Shaman profession.

As someone with a similar race and class, Riko could not help but become interested in Huahua, especially when the latter was too cute.

"You are quite good, little sister. Where have you learned those tricks?" she asked while hopping to Huahua's side.

Among the members of this team, this little Foxkin was the only one who was taking this dungeon exploration very seriously.

Everyone else within the team were experts on their own right, which greatly put a lot of pressure on Huahua. After all, she was still a rookie when it came to playing games.

If not for the rain that she underwent from the Empyrean Talons, then she would have most likely collapsed under such pressure.

She was able to calm herself down and coordinate with the team well, supporting everyone with her totems and ghost spells.

The Shaman Class was among the more complicated classes of the game since it had different paths that the players needed to focus on while building their combat style.

Shamans had quite a complicated skill distribution due to the series of combat styles to choose from.

Among them, Summoning Type, who commanded Ghost Soldiers and mythical creatures, was one of the more famous paths.

There was also the Curse Type, who liked to give their opponents stacks of negative statuses and debuffs during the battle – a complete auxiliary type of play style.

There was also the Talisman Type, who majored in creating a bunch of talismans with different effects. These talismans contained a variety of spells in them, mimicking the Spell Scrolls of the Mage Class.

This type of Shaman could also summon a series of spell formations with the help of their talismans and by linking them with one another.

The other Shaman Type was the Totem Type, which Huahua chose to be her main style among all these paths.

This type of Shaman focused on supporting their allies by summoning a series of totems, which had different effects depending on which type they summoned.

They could also create a series of Totem Formations, which generate special effects by linking different totems with one another.

These were just a few of the paths that the Shaman Class could follow during their progress.

Riko leaned more on the Talisman Type due to the unique features of her Himiko Class.

What made her curious about Huahua was her unique style, which seemed to be a hybrid type that followed multiple paths of the Shaman Class.

However, the main focus of this style still centered around the Totem Style, which she had mastered to a certain degree.

'This little girl is interesting. Hmm, I wonder if the Leader will let me bring her back to the base to train with her. Her Class is quite special as well, especially those strange ghost soldiers,' thought Riko, seemingly cooking up something inside her head.

...

### Chapter 2030: Commission (Part 5)

...

During the time that the team was resting, Arthur finally noticed how Riko teased Huahua and seemed to be trying to lure the innocent girl to join them at their training camp.

Arthur was unsure about the grade training camp, but he was aware that it must be related to the private training grounds of the huge organizations within the game, particularly their personal virtual spaces.

Watching them for a while, Arthur knew that this vixen must be trying to lure the innocent girl to join the Heavenly Resto-Bar, especially the special unit concerning the Foxkin Beastmen.

"She must be interested in Huahua's class," commented Leonard, who also noticed what was happening.

Arthur pursed his lips for a moment, waiting for Huahua to make her stance before lending her a hand. He believed that the little shaman needed to stand up for herself and stop being timid.

In certain cases, being strong-headed was an important mindset that could help them escape multiple dangers.

Huahua's current state of mind still needed to be fixed.

Even though she had already improved after being around the rest of the Empyrean Talons and training with them from time to time, she was still having some troubles when facing other people.

Cloe and Alice had trained this girl in terms of her combat capabilities and auxiliary techniques, but her mindset remained quite troublesome.

After a while, Huahua could no longer stand Riko's teasing and said. "I am sorry, Big Sister, but I am happy with where I am now. Moreover, Big Brother is here as well, so-..."

However, before she could even finish her words, Riko immediately cut her off. "Don't worry, little sister. It is not like you are going to leave your team. You are only going to join us while staying committed to them."

"Being a part of an Adventurer Team does not mean that you can't join other organizations. And from what I have heard, the Empyrean Talons are quite loose when it comes to it. I heard that you are free to do whatever you want."

"Aside from that, our goals don't differ that much, and the schedule when it comes to doing commissions with them and working with us can still be negotiated."

Riko tried to employ some manipulative words to trick the little girl, but the latter remained resolute in refusing to join them.

It was at this point that Arthur finally chimed in. "You can give up now, Sister Riko. You will not be able to change her mind."

"Moreover, Arielle (Cloe) and Charlotte (Alice) have trained this little girl. We also have our own private virtual space, which I am confident will not be lost to any top organization when it comes to training facilities," he added while chuckling.

Hearing this, Riko tried to refute, but only managed to open her mouth before closing it again. After contemplating the words that Arthur had said, she could tell that tricking the little girl was impossible.

"What a pity~! I just hope to add another sister to our unit," she sighed helplessly before dropping the topic altogether.

It was at this moment that Laurent finally spoke. "I heard some interesting rumors recently."

Everyone suddenly turned to him almost at the same time, curious about his next words. They all could tell that it was not just some little rumors, given the background of Heavenly Taste.

Successfully attracting their attention, Laurent suddenly smirked before continuing. "I heard that your Empyrean Talons will be recruiting another member. I wonder if it is true."

The corner of Arthur and Leonard's mouth could not help but twitch after hearing his words. They wanted to deny it at first, but their brief silence was already enough for an answer to confirm such speculation.

"It is an internal matter that only a few, even within us, I wonder where Senior has heard such a rumor," asked Arthur while raising his brows.

However, Laurent did not answer him directly and looked at this Dragon God with meaningful eyes.

It took Arthur a while to realize what happened. He then could not help but curse after figuring it out on his own. "Tsk! Tsk! Those people from God's Paradise must have spilled the beans!"

Leonard, who was beside him, nodded his head and added. "I bet that it must be Kallavan."

"It must be him without a doubt! He is famous for being a musclehead and a loudmouth after all!" cursed Arthur when he heard about this.

Hearing them, Laurent could not help but click his tongue before commenting. "Cetus joining you in your Adventurer Team? Tsk! Tsk! This is big news! A headline!"

"Everyone knows that you hate each other's guts! Surely a lot of people will have a heart attack once they learn about this," he repeatedly shook his head after confirming the news.

"I wonder how much this information will cost if I sell it to those interested groups?" he mumbled, seemingly finding a good opportunity to make some money.

Even though it will not cost that much, money was still money regardless of the amount. Moreover, this piece of information would surely be valuable, especially for those who were willing to purchase it.

He then turned to Arthur and asked. "When will you guys announce this news? Are you going to make another Music Video just like the previous instances? How about delaying it for a while so that we can earn some quick cash from those people?"

The corner of Leonard's mouth twitched uncontrollably once again when he heard this. He was about to scold this senior when he suddenly saw Arthur taking a seat on Laurent's side and excitedly rubbing his hands together.

"How much is our cut? We should have some commission from it, right? After all, we are the target of interest!" said Arthur with an evil grin.

Leonard could not help but smack his forehead with his palm before sighing helplessly.

...

While the group was currently resting, a certain figure was traversing the border of the Forsaken Islets and the Divine Empire and exploring a part of it.

"Hoo~!"

The figure suddenly removed the hood covering his head and revealed his face. This person was another member of Empyrean Talons, who was supposedly training in the Forsaken Islets.

Chaotic Luck, the Herald of Chaos and the Lord of the Legion of Chaotic Sun.

"Hoo~! Being a magic class sure is weak when it comes to physicality!" he mumbled while wiping the sweat on his forehead.

"But those Liches don't have this problem because they are mostly undead!" he complained a little after recalling his encounters with this powerful being living at the center of the Islets.

He had been doing a quest when he accidentally fell into a pit, which somehow led to a secret chamber where a secretive meeting was currently taking place.

He thought that he would die at that time, especially when he realized that all of those people were too high-leveled for his inspection skill to see through them. They were also passively emitting a strong dark aura that almost suffocated him to death.

Adding that all of them were Undead Liches with either a skeletal body or flesh body that seemed to be stitched together, their scary appearance almost scared him to death.

Fortunately, the Liches were not from the Evil Faction.

He discovered that they were Arch Liches, who were good-aligned undead beings. Based on the lore that he had read before, they had transformed themselves into undead to serve a noble cause, retaining their morality and memories.

Even though they resembled the eerie appearance of evil liches from the Corrupted Cults and Demonic Churches, they were defined by their power and purpose to protect a place, a person, or a certain goal that contributes to Righteous Churches.

Adding the information that he had gathered before moving to Forsaken Islets, Chaotic Luck guessed that these Arch Liches were from the Church of Paleness, which was a part of the Righteous Churches that focused on necromancy, curses, and dark magic.

Regardless, Chaotic Luck still thought that he would be killed by those scary NPCs due to his interrupting their conference.

But who would have thought that they would welcome him with open arms instead?

Not only did they not scold him or impose certain punishments, but they seemed to be constantly praising him to the point that they seemed to be close to worshipping him.

He was so confused at the series of events that he had never realized that he had gotten an S Rank quest from them. He did not know how that quest had ended up in his quest panel, but it was there, nevertheless.

That was how he ended up in this place.

"This should be the spot. But where is that target that I need to hunt?" Chaotic Luck repeatedly scanned the surroundings and even spread his blazing skeletons to cover a huge area, yet he still could not find his final target.

He had already cleared the rest of the targets these last few days, which gave him quite a lot of trouble during the process.

However, he found them relatively easy compared to what he was expecting. After all, it was an S Rank Quest that came from the Awakened Continent, so it was supposedly supposed to clear, yet the targets that he had taken down were too weak to be assigned as targets.

This was a great mystery for him, and unable to figure it out.

In the end, he gave up on thinking about it and focused solely on clearing the quest.

While he was looking around, his foot suddenly stepped on a fragile soil, which suddenly collapsed right after.

Bang!

"Eh!?" he was suddenly taken aback, but the sudden turn of events before a sense of déjà vu hit him.

"Not again!" he said during the freefall while trying his best to turn his body around and look at the bottom where he was supposed to land.

"What's that!?" he blurted out after seeing a massive spatial gate that looked somewhat familiar. "A dungeon gate?"