

Destiny 2031

Chapter 2031: Commission (Part 6): Lost in the Dungeon

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Swoosh!

Bang!

Chaotic Luck fell flat on the ground right after being swallowed by the dungeon gate that he had fallen into.

"Ouch! That hurts!" he rolled on the ground for quite a while, trying to relieve the pain throughout his body.

Fortunately, he did not suffer any serious fall damage from it.

It took him quite a while before the pain disappeared. He then swiftly stood up right after recovering and swiftly summoned a few of his blazing skeletons, ordering them to form a defensive formation.

He had just fallen into a dungeon, so all the other summoned creatures that he had earlier in the outside world were forcefully recalled.

He did not know what kind of dungeon he was in, so it was only natural to be prepared for any sudden ambush that might come out of nowhere.

Although his response was a bit too late.

Fortunately, no one took advantage of his situation earlier, which was only natural since he just entered the dungeon.

The problem was that he did not know why the dungeon did not ask him what kind of difficulty it was before he entered. It might be because he was too shocked and occupied with the sudden turn of events, which made him accidentally press his 'choice' during his fall.

Right now, he did not even know what kind of monsters were waiting for him inside, or if he could even survive this dungeon by himself.

Even if the necromancer class was dubbed as a one-man army due to the legion of undead creatures that they had under their command, soloing a dungeon was still a great challenge.

Moreover, he was currently within the Awakened Continent, which meant that the difficulty of this dungeon was way above the ones that he cleared in the Aurora Continent.

The monsters alone in the Awakened Continent were much more powerful compared to those in the previous continent, which Chaotic Luck had already experienced.

He was not like Shin and the others, who could solo a Chieftain Rank Monster in this continent, but he could at least fight an Elite or even Super Elites, given his current abilities.

Despite his powerful Legion of Chaotic Sun, challenging a Chieftain Rank Monster was still way above his current limit.

Even with the help of his unique version of Death Knight, the Hell Pilgrim, he was still unable to fully defeat such a monster. Taking a draw was the only thing that he could do at most.

Only monstrous individuals like Shin and the others would dare to do such a crazy thing as defeating those powerful monsters.

"Let's just hope that it is one of those conditional dungeons that can be cleared through doing some quests or meeting some special conditions," he mumbled while summoning a few more blazing skeletons and further arranging their formation.

He also sent some of them out to scout ahead, making sure that he would not encounter any monsters way ahead of his league.

He was quite worried that the difficulty of this dungeon and the monsters within it were too powerful for him to overcome. After all, even if dying within the dungeon did not cause any serious penalty like being banned from playing the game for a day or so, he would still lose some experience points during the process.

Given how difficult it was to grind experience points at their current level, dying even once and losing a level would greatly hurt their progress.

His level was still decently high compared to the leading players of the group, but losing a level would deal a great blow to him.

He was currently Level 177, which was way ahead of the pack of most of the players. But it was pretty average when compared to the rest of the Empyrean Talons.

Forget about the Monster Trio and Demonic Duo, since they were abnormal people. The rest of the team was either already in Level 180 or above.

Despite all his luck, he was third to the last among all the members, right above Samael and Huahua.

"Let's do this!" he encouraged himself before daring to advance.

He prepared himself for whatever challenges were waiting for him ahead. He was in full focus, seemingly entering the so-called 'Zone' of most people.

Unfortunately, he suddenly became confused the more he advanced.

"What the heck!? What is happening!?" he mumbled while knitting his brow.

He had been walking around for at least an hour, yet he had not encountered any monsters. Even the scouts that he had sent out were unable to find any clear signs of enemies despite covering a huge area during their reconnaissance.

Given the series of battle marks throughout the path that they had taken, and the broken weapons they found scattered everywhere, they were supposed to encounter at least a couple of monsters along the way.

However, despite advancing and covering a lot of distance, they still had yet to find any enemies that were supposed to be guarding, or at least randomly roaming, throughout the dungeon.

"Why are there no monsters around? Is this really a special dungeon? A condition dungeon?" he mumbled while furrowing his brows.

"Let's continue and see what is waiting ahead. Let's just hope that it is not a powerful monster or something," he said, further encouraging himself.

He advanced alongside his legion, fully prepared to fight anyone they would encounter.

Unfortunately, despite walking for almost a day (In-game Time), they had yet to bump into any hostile entities, much less engage in battle.

"Strange, why is there no one here?" he mumbled, finding that this situation was quite peculiar.

He opened his friend list and tried to contact the other members of the Empyrean Talons, intending to consult them about his current situation.

But he later realized that he could not contact any of them. He could at least browse the online forums and other online platforms, but he was unable to post anything due to certain restrictions.

"A sealed and isolated space? Now, this is troublesome," he mumbled before looking for a few topics in the online forums that had a similar situation to the one he was in.

Unfortunately, he could not find any reliable information that he could use as a reference.

"I guess I have to wait until I log out to contact the others-..." he said before suddenly freezing because he realized something.

"Ah! I forgot that I don't have their numbers in the real world! I am only contacting them through our in-game information!" he smacked his palm on his forehead, realizing this.

"I guess I can only continue this way," he looked ahead before continuing.

He walked for another while and discovered that there were truly no monsters within this peculiar dungeon.

He initially thought that it was some sort of trial dungeon that tested the players' aptitude, but he did not receive any system prompt informing him of the clear conditions.

He thought that it might be a hidden condition or something, but he had already scaled most of the players within the dungeon, yet he still had not found any clues.

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Looking at the virtual map that he drew, he got the rough picture of the dungeon. He also realized that he was actually going in circles the entire time.

After mapping out the path that he had taken alongside his blazing skeletons, he found that he seemed to be trapped in a circular maze, further increasing his suspicion that this was a conditional dungeon.

"According to this map, the third path is the only place that I have yet to explore," he mumbled while looking at the five-way forked path before him.

Each of these roads seemed to be pointing toward a different destination, but he just found out that the four other paths were only leading to this same path.

"I have spent three days (real-world time) exploring the four other paths, but aside from a few rare minerals that I have gotten along the way, I have found nothing else."

"If this path will still end up here, then I guess I will be trapped here forever," he sighed before adding.
"However, given the settings of the game, that should be impossible."

He had tried sending a few blazing skeletons to scout ahead, but he lost his connection with them after reaching a certain distance before being forcefully unsummoned.

Despite the crazy range of control that he had, he still failed to reach the 'end' of each path, which was supposedly where he was currently standing.

This was the reason why he failed to realize that he was going in circles earlier. He just thought that the places he went through were just identical.

He only found out the truth after leaving a mark along the way, which made him realize what was truly happening.

"Let's do this," after resting, Chaotic Luck continued his 'exploration', hoping that he would finally find the end of this maze.

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"Finally! After days of 'struggle', I finally find the exit!" Chaotic Luck cheered.

He was currently standing at a broken gate, which seemed to be leading to the deeper parts of the dungeon.

He ignored the details and the patterns engraved on the fallen gates due to his excitement. He just crossed it without a thought, hoping that he would finally leave this forsaken place.

However, he would not expect what was waiting for him up ahead.

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Chapter 2032: Commission (Part 7)

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Chaotic Luck entered through the broken gates with extreme caution. Since his blazing skeletons were unable to enter, he had to do the scouting himself.

It was not like he was unable to protect himself without them, but fighting by himself was still quite uncomfortable for him since he was not used to fighting alone.

He always had his Legion of Chaotic Sun or the members of Empyrean Talons with him during all the battles that he went through, so this would be his first time truly fighting on his own.

His Solaris Lich was quite a cheat anyway, so he still had quite a lot of battle spells under his arsenal, which covered both offensive, defensive, and auxiliary areas.

Afraid that he would be ambushed through the corridor, Chaotic Luck summoned a blazing bone armor that covered him alongside an illuminating light that floated in the air over his head.

He was threading his way through the narrow corridor with extreme caution, prepared for any kind of ambush that might be waiting for him.

Due to his intense concentration, he failed to notice the patterns and engravings drawn on both walls of the corridor, which seemed to be telling a forgotten history.

Not long after, he finally reached the end of the corridor without fighting anyone, which greatly confused him.

"Still no enemies?" he mumbled with great confusion.

Walking ahead, he found himself standing on a circular platform, which seemed to fit only 7 to 10 people.

Before this platform was an endless abyss, leading to the unknown.

"I wonder how deep this is," he mumbled while slightly looking over the edge of the circular platform that he was on.

He then directed his gaze upfront and saw that there were five other platforms of similar size to the one he was standing on. He also seemed to see that there were dark corridors at the back ends of each platform, similar to the one behind him.

"Don't tell me that there are other people in the dungeon beside me," he mumbled before realizing what kind of dungeon he was in. "A Competition Dungeon? Does it mean that there are other people 'trapped' in this dungeon? There are other entrances as well?"

"....or maybe I am the only one who has discovered this dungeon, and I am trapped here until other players discover it?"

He was getting paranoid when the system finally sent him a notification.

DING

System: Welcome to the stage of opportunities!

System: This is the legacy platform where the Dark King Tang Hyeon of the Great Tang Clan has left his inheritance.

DING

System: The other participants are still undergoing their respective trials. Please wait until they occupy their respective platforms.

Hearing this, Chaotic Luck could not help but get excited, realizing that he was not alone. "There are other people as well! This is good! This means that I will not be trapped here forever!"

He did not care if the opposing party was powerful or not. All he needed to know was that he would not be trapped in this place helplessly.

He did not care about the so-called legacy as well. He could give it up for all he cared. So long as he could leave this forsaken place, then everything would be fine.

His ongoing quest outside had already been delayed due to being trapped here. Fortunately, there was no time limit for that particular quest, giving him enough time to clear it.

It took him quite a while to calm himself down, which also reminded him of the name of the person who had left the inheritance.

"Dark King Tang Hyeon? The Great Tang Clan? Why does it sound like an ancient family from the era of cultivators? Is it the reference that the game developers have used to design this place? This is interesting!" he mumbled with a now interested look on his face.

While he was having a time for himself, Chaotic Luck had received another notification from the system.

DING

System: As the first party to have reached the main stage, you have been rewarded with an additional buff for the next challenge.

DING

System: You have been assigned as the 'King Piece' for the next round of the challenge! You will receive the King's Decree.

"Eh!? An extra benefit? This is cool!" Chaotic Luck was somewhat excited after seeing the notification.

Aside from finally having other 'sounds' after suffering alone within the dungeon, the notification itself seemed to be quite interesting.

With that, he quickly opened his status window and looked for the effects of the buff he just received.

King's Decree: As a ruler, you will give your subjects great morale whenever you are fighting alongside them.

Buff Effects:

+300% Mana Regen

+200% Magic Power

+150% Casting Time Reduction

+100% Arcane and Elemental Affinity

+100% Elemental Damage

+500% Morale (Increase the strength and the efficiency of Summoned Creatures)

+200% Militia (Increase the size of your troops twofold: For every unit you summon, a duplicate will appear without consuming any additional mana.)

+150% Decree (For every Elite Unit you summoned, an additional buff will strengthen your army. Assigning a General or Commanding General will further increase the efficiency of the army.)

Note 1: This is a temporary buff. It will only last until all the trials have ended.

Note 2: This buff cannot be shared with other participants other than the members of the party.

Note 3: There is a chance that the inferior version of the buff will be retained after leaving the dungeon, depending on your performance. (It will be counted as a new passive skill or spell).

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"What the heck!" Chaotic Luck could not help but curse out loud after seeing the effects of the buff.

His eyes were burning intensely due to how powerful the effects of this buff were giving him.

"Isn't this too broken?" he mumbled after giving it another intense look.

His eyes then turned to the bottommost part of the panel and saw the third note. "I can take this buff away depending on my performance!? The better I perform, the better the version I can get?"

He ignored the note 'chance' written on the note completely, solely focusing on the most interesting part.

"I guess I will have to do my best!" he mumbled while excitedly waiting for the other participants to arrive.

In the meantime, Arthur and Leonard had finally arrived at the end of the dungeon along with the members of the Heavenly Resto-Bar.

They had spent quite a lot of time clearing the entire dungeon, which lasted for a few days (real-world time). This was even with the help of the guides that Laurent and his party had created after running the dungeon a dozen times.

Despite their perfect strategies, clearing the dungeon proved to be more challenging due to the powerful monsters that they had encountered along the way.

They had even fought a few Chieftain Rank Monsters, which acted as the mini-bosses of the dungeon.

"Finally!" exclaimed Arthur while standing before the tall metal gates before them.

"This dungeon is much harder than we anticipated. I feel like we are on the losing end here, Senior. Your payment does not seem to be enough," he complained.

Laurent clicked his tongue while standing before the metal gate. "Tsk! Tsk! You two sure live up to your reputation. Cutting the dungeon time for 4 whole days (real-world time)? Do you know that we have to spend at least an entire (real-world time) week just to reach this place?"

"That is even with the help of our strategies," added Riko while pouting her lips.

She had to admit that adding these two to their party was a huge help in clearing the monsters. Additionally, the buffs that the little shaman that they had brought were quite fantastic as well, increasing the overall efficiency of the entire team.

She could not help but wonder how powerful the entire team of the Empyrean Talon would be when they all gathered together. The combination of the Gentle Goddess, the number one Support of the game, and this little shaman would greatly create a powerful 'chemical reaction'.

She also heard that the big brother of the little shaman was a decent paladin as well. With the three of them buffing the entire time, the overall strength and efficiency of the party would surely increase exponentially.

"Don't change the subject! I am telling you! I will raise a complaint if you don't compensate us properly, Senior!" warned Arthur while glaring sharply at Laurent.

Laurent chuckled and waved his hand. "Alright, alright! Don't worry, I am not that heartless, you know? I know how you pay properly."

"That's good!" nodded Arthur before casting his gaze back at the metal gates before them.

Looking at the patterns and engravings drawn on them, he could not help but understand what Laurent meant when he told them that they would realize that a certain legacy within the game could be related to a true legacy in the real world.

"You understand it now, don't you?" chuckled Laurent to the side before continuing. "If I am not wrong, beyond this gate will give us the clues where to find the true legacy in the real world."

"It is a basic pattern that always been followed with all the real-world legacies that we have encountered. It should be the same for this one," he added.

Arthur nodded before pursing his lips. "Is it just me, or am I just that unlucky? I have been running countless dungeons and doing a lot of quests since the launch of the game, yet I have never discovered anything like this."

"Or we just overlooked them and failed to notice their true significance," said Leonard.

After all, they had just been informed about the true significance of this game and the secrets that it held.

Arthur thought for a moment before nodding his head. "That must be it."

He then turned to Laurent and the other two Transcendent Beings of the party before asking. "So, what's next?"

Laurent then gestured to the two before answering. "Simple, we all have to stand before these gates and place our hands on them before channeling our Transcendent Powers into them."

"What follows will be up to the system instructions," he added.

Hearing that, Arthur and Leonard exchanged glances with each other before nodding their heads.

They then followed the instructions given to them, somewhat excited for what was waiting for them beyond these metal gates.

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Chapter 2033: Commission (Part 8): A Mysterious Individual

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After Arthur, Leonard, and the other three Transcendent Beings from the Heavenly Resto-Bar appeared before a dark corridor leading forward.

The group took a few seconds to adjust themselves to the darkness.

Swoosh!

In response, Riko swiftly threw a talisman in the air, which quickly released a bright light and immediately illuminated the dark corridor.

The group was blinded for a moment due to the sudden appearance of the light, but quickly recovered themselves immediately after.

At the same time, their attention was immediately attracted by the engravings drawing on both sides of the corridor.

"This!?" Arthur could not help but become surprised by what he saw, especially when he was quite familiar with how the patterns were drawn on the walls.

His family, the Springfield Family, was a descendant of the Solar Dragon and a few people who had survived the ancient era. Their method of passing their legacy and narrating the history of their lineage was extremely similar to what was drawn on these walls.

He vividly remembered the time when he visited the Ancestral Land of the Springfield Family within the depths of the Sunset Dragon Valley.

During that time, his great-grandfather had brought him before a wall filled with the engravings of the ancient history of the entire Springfield Lineage.

Moreover, he could also feel the strong Dragon Aura coming from some of the more important engravings, which left a deep impression on him.

"These are the records of ancient history," he mumbled while looking at the engravings on the wall.

In the meantime, Leonard, who was not from the same lineage and grew up as a little kid of poverty in modern times, was unable to relate to what Arthur was feeling.

However, given the history of the Asad Tribe, which was from the lineage of an Ancient Warrior Tribe, they should have similar recording methods as this one.

He could not help but become amazed at these engravings, especially when he could vividly sense the feelings and the powers of the people who had left them here.

Even though they were just a representation of the true legacy left behind by the ancient powers within the virtual world, he could still tell that they were meticulously arranged to mimic the true version of it in the real world.

Looking around, the two were able to see the history of an ancient clan and the powerful experts that emerged from it.

They also saw how they fought a few similarly strong clans or organizations of ancient times, as well as a powerful entity that seemed to be capable of wiping them out of the world.

There was also a very strong individual who came from this family and fought against that overwhelming entity alongside other similarly powerful individuals.

After looking around, Arthur was able to gain a rough grasp of these records. "Some of them are records of ancient techniques and skills of their family. Even though they are not the true legacy of this place, they can still be considered as the foundational techniques of their family's true legacy."

The Springfield Family had a similar way of recording history, so Arthur was very familiar with this method of passing on such techniques.

At the same time, he was also busy recovering everything, planning to bring them back home. After all, these were still ancient records, nevertheless.

Given that the trio from the Heavenly Resto-Bar were doing the same, he was sure that these records were quite reliable.

He then turned toward Laurent before asking. "Senior, given your experience and knowledge, have you figured out which clan these records are from?"

Laurent did not immediately respond because he was too busy comparing the records of this place to the database that they had in the real world. Since they could not contact anyone from the side due to the special restrictions of the dungeon, he had no choice but to do it himself.

After a while, he seemed to have finally found a match and immediately answered. "Based on the records that we have in the real world, there is a high chance that these are from the famous Tang Clan of the Ancient Era."

"It can also be the ancient Five Poison Sect, which is an organization that was established at that time by the 'traitors' of the Tang Sect and the Beast Palace."

"Although addressing them as 'traitors' due to their brightest descendants falling involved with one another is a bit too much."

He was lost in thought for a moment before quickly adding. "However, I lean more toward the former since the companion beasts here are not the ones recorded in the Five Poison Sect's database that we have."

"Those guys majored in taming snakes, scorpions, centipedes, toads, and spiders. Sometimes, geckos are included as well."

"On the other hand, the poisonous and venomous beasts cover a lot of species in the poisonous and venomous kingdom, so I think that these records are from the Tang Sect."

On the side, Ryuto, the other third Transcendent Being from the Heavenly Resto-Bar, the one from the Aquatic Beast Race, and had the Victor Mare Class, was suddenly injected. "The Tang Clan is famous for their Martial Arts, which are based on poison and hidden weapons."

"Some of them are experts at taming venomous insects and animals. There are also quite a few arts from their lineage that focus on assassinations and proper swordsmanship, but most of them are from the branch clans."

"There is even a branch where they use poison to create some Jiangshi, a type of undead or zombies, during the ancient era."

"In the current era, there are quite a lot of families and sects who have inherited their techniques. However, the most famous ones are the Hidden Scent Sect of the Silver Wing Continent and the House of Toxins of the Lost Soul Continent," he added after recalling the information that he knew.

Hearing this, Arthur could not help but turn to Laurent once again before asking. "Senior, what are your plans after acquiring this knowledge and the legacy of this dungeon?"

"Don't tell me, you are planning to sell it to the concerned parties?" he added while looking at the latter with suspicious eyes.

Laurent chuckled as he waved his hand. "Don't mind the minor details. At the end of the day, everyone is just making a living."

"Tsk! Tsk! No sense of righteousness at all," mocked Arthur before continuing to record all the engravings drawn on the walls of the corridor.

While doing this, he started wondering about the person who was bored enough to create a program to insert all these ancient legacies into the game and why they had to go through all this trouble just to 'hide' them.

During this time, the group advanced very slowly as they recovered everything drawn on the walls. They were afraid that they would miss even a minor detail, so they made sure to cover everything and did it twice as well for double insurance.

After a while, the group finally reached the end of the corridor, which led them to the seemingly floating circular platform.

They looked at the huge hall that had a deep pit of endless abyss at the center.

They immediately realized that there were four tunnels with platforms similar to the one they were standing on.

They immediately realized that the other parties who were involved with the legacy that this dungeon had seemed to have arrived as well.

They swept their gaze at the opposing parties and realized that they were unable to see their appearance due to the powerful veil of energy that was shrouding their platforms.

Aside from the blurry silhouettes that the other parties had, they knew nothing about them. This made it harder for them to gauge the strength of those from the opposing sides.

However, the one that surprised them the most was the sole figure standing on one of the circular platforms.

Unlike the other parties, which had five members in their group, this particular platform only had a single person standing on it.

They seemed to be observing the other parties while they were staring at them. It was as if this person was not sensing any form of pressure coming from these top-notch experts of the game despite gathering their intense gazes being directed to them.

The invisible pressure that they were emitting and directing to them seemed to be nullified by their aura alone.

Looking at his stance, which was standing straight like a pole and holding a scepter behind his back, the four other parties seemed to feel an invisible pressure that was capable of crushing them by this sight alone.

"Senior, didn't you say that it is impossible to enter that gate with a smaller number of Transcendent Beings? Then why is that guy alone?" asked Arthur without taking his gaze away from that mysterious person.

"Based on what we are seeing, I think it is either he wiped out his teammates or threw them off the platform," said Laurent with a somewhat solemn tone before adding. "But since there is an invisible wall preventing us from falling, then it is most likely the case."

Hearing this, everyone within the group could not help but wear a serious expression, especially when they could not think of anyone from the pinnacle of expertise they knew who could achieve such a feat.

Of course, there was also a chance that the other four Transcendent Beings were among the weaker experts of the game, letting this mysterious person defeat them all by themselves.

However, they knew that there was a very small chance of that from happening since they knew how hard for a Transcendent Being to pass their Tier 3 Promotion Quest and how difficult for them to reach the Awakened Continent.

Of course, the trials for the Epic Classes and Races were still the most difficult of all, but that was only because they were trying to break free from the restrictions of their respective races, which were supposed to be the most 'basic' classes within the game.

Their trials were much harder since they had to break the barrier of a regular race and become an 'Epic', rivaling the Ascended and Transcendent Beings.

On the other hand, the Transcendent Trials needed an individual to either become so strong or so talented to pass it, or become extremely powerful during the process.

Either case could only lead to a single conclusion.

This mysterious person must be strong!

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Chapter 2034: Trials of the Dark King (Part 1)

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While everyone was trying to measure the strength of this 'mysterious' individual standing alone on a circular platform, the System had sent a notification to all of them, finally telling them about this dungeon.

Ding

After skimming through everything, everyone could not help but gasp hard, realizing the significance of this place.

"Dark King Tang Hyeon!? One of the great founders of the Tang Clan!?"

They could not help but exclaim in full seriousness, realizing that they could not afford to lose this competition.

Laurent, who was the leader of the group, could not help but add as well. "Dark King Tang Hyeon is said to be the creator of the Ten Thousand Poison Method, which allows the people of the Tang Clan to become immune to all kinds of poison and venom."

"Through this method, it is also said to create the powerful Great Poison Body, also known as the Heavenly Toxin Physique, which can rival the strongest body cultivation methods of that era."

"The Heavenly Toxin Physique possesses a very tough and strong physical prowess, which is built through repeated refinements of countless herbs and toxins in one body. Due to the very same reason, every part of its body contains a very strong toxin that is made of countless combinations of poisons and venoms."

He then paused for a moment to breathe deeply before saying in full excitement. "If this dungeon is related to this old monster of the ancient past, then there is a high chance that his secret methods are also recorded here!"

In the meantime, Arthur could not help his brows from frowning deeply when he heard about this. "The Dark King Tang Hyeon?"

"Based on his achievements and the barely intact ancient records, this person has already surpassed the level of the 'Supreme' Martial Artist or Cultivator at his time. He has transcended that level and reached the level beyond mortal achievements."

"In modern times, he can be considered as an equal to the Transcendent Realm Martial Artists or Exalted Mentalist of the current era."

"However, since he is using the cultivation methods of the ancient era, then he can be considered a bit stronger than these old monsters since the training methods at that time somehow incorporate the unification of mind and body."

"This is a bit different from the modern Martial Arts and Mentalism since these two disciplines are the divided paths of those Cultivation Practices, one focuses on Qi and Physique, while the other majors in Spirit and Mentality."

Laurent nodded his head repeatedly when he heard about this. "This is why the study of the ancient cultivation methods and techniques is quite interesting!"

"If we somehow get his real legacy in the real world as well, then there is a high chance that we will be able to get our hands on an intact and complete cultivation of the ancient past! This will be a great opportunity!" he added, along with a pair of eyes that were shining brightly.

"You said 'we', Senior. Are you telling me that you are willing to share the gains with us?" asked Arthur with full suspicion.

He might not be the brightest, but he was not a complete idiot either. He knew that Laurent was plotting something, even though he could not prove it yet.

"What are you talking about, Junior? Of course, it is to let you have your share. We are going through all this together, so it is only natural to split the gains evenly!" said Laurent with a bright smile.

Unfortunately, such an expression would not work against Arthur, especially when Leonard, who grew up in streets, was with him.

Leonard squinted his eyes while staring intently at this senior before sending a private message to Arthur.

Simba: For such a huge discovery, its impact will not be too different from the one that I have gotten previously, the inheritance left behind by the Thunder Lord.

Simba: If I am not mistaken, he will most likely be trying to get 'us' involved, or more specifically, the Springfield Family behind you as a form of protection or deterrence against the greedily yet powerful parties that may become interested in this legacy.

Realizing this, Arthur could not help but curse out loud before berating Laurent. "You, Evil Senior! You are trying to drag my family to be your shields!? In your dreams!"

"Tsk! Tsk! Am I too obvious?" mumbled Laurent while clicking his tongue. "It is a pity. I thought that this was a good opportunity to gain such a powerful backer!"

"I will be telling Big Sis about this!" warned Arthur, not refusing the so-called split about their gains.

Shiver!

On the other hand, Laurent and his other two companions could not help but tremble when they heard Arthur mention his big sister.

"Shiella!?"

"The President of the Hand of Midas!?"

"That crazy woman who knows nothing but profits!?"

It was clear that they had some dealings with Shiella, given the tone of familiarity that they had with her.

While suppressing the twitching of his mouth, Laurent could not help but concede defeat. "Anything but that, Junior. Let's try to re-negotiate this."

Given how profit-driven Shiella was from his memory, Laurent would rather face an old monster than sit in the same room as her and negotiate.

'I will lose all the profits if that crazy woman is involved,' he thought while trying to recall all his interactions with Shiella, along with the losses that he had suffered from her.

'Tsk! Tsk! I don't want to do any form of losing deal with her!' he sighed before casting his gaze ahead.

To change the topic, Riko, the Nine-Tailed Fox Himeko, stepped forward and said. "Based on the rules set by the system, we are supposed to go through five trials where each side will send a representative for each trial."

"It sounds a bit troublesome, don't you think?" said Ryuto, the Aquatic Beast Victor Mare, while sighing helplessly. "We have gone through all the trouble while traversing the entire dungeon, yet it still wants us to go through another set of suffering?"

"It's something that a legendary figure such as the Dark King has prepared for his future successors; it is only natural to make it very challenging," said Riko.

"Dark King Tang Hyeon's reputation is comparable to the King of Thieves, who has his resting place discovered not so long ago."

"Given the great tragedy that happened during that time and the huge 'gains' that the survivors have brought out with them in that incident, the difference in difficulty should not be that different," she added while falling into deep thought.

"Most of the time, the trials within the game are not much different from the ones in the real world, so we have to record everything here and compile all the information we have to make sure that no accidents will happen during the conquest in the real world," said Laurent, telling everyone to make sure to always put their 'record mode' active.

"I wonder what kind of trails they are," mumbled Leonard while squinting his eyes and sweeping his gaze at the opposing parties.

After closely observing for a while, Leonard, along with his Bestial Instincts, seemed to have somewhat figured out the identities of a few of them.

"I feel like a few of our acquaintances are among them," he said while smirking.

Arthur, who seemed to be doing the same thing beside him, smirked as well. "Of course, despite all the additions of the new entries in the Transcendent List, there are no more than a hundred or so of us in it."

"Adding that we know more than half of them, it is not a surprise to learn that a few of them are our acquaintances," he added while looking at the few individuals with distinctive features despite being shrouded by the mysterious veil of energies.

There were supposed to be 25 Transcendent Beings in this hall due to the requirements of opening the metal gates at the end of the tunnel behind them. But since there was only a single person standing on one of the platforms, there were only 21 of them.

Among the over a hundred people within the list, Arthur was familiar with at least 60 of them, which came from different guilds and organizations within the virtual world; some of them were old rivals, while the others were his online friends.

As for the rest, whom he was not familiar with, they should be among the highly secretive organizations that joined the game due to the huge powers behind them, while the others were the lucky ones, who had stumbled upon the Transcendent Legacies due to their insane luck.

Among those we were not aware of, there were a few within their group.

Arthur was very curious about these people, especially when there was a constant inductee on the list from time to time due to the continuous flow of newly joined players in the game.

...

Chapter 2035: Trials of the Dark King (Part 2)

...

Not long after, the system had finally issued the first notification meant for the first trial of the final stage of the dungeon.

Ding

System: The first trial is finally starting!

System: Each team will please assign your first participant.

Seeing the notification, everyone quickly turned to one another, seemingly planning their next course of action.

"This is just the first trial, so we can afford to do anything," said Laurent while looking at everyone. "We can just assign anyone to at least get the gist of the situation."

"Based on the rules that the system has given us earlier, each trial will grow more difficult for each round that has ended. This means that we have to conserve as much strength as possible."

"We have to save our strongest cards until the very end," he added while turning to Arthur and Leonard.

He paused for a moment before continuing. "Moreover, each succeeding round will grant a higher number of points, so it is another reason to save these two monsters as our final trump card."

"Since this is the case, I should take the lead," said Riko, understanding her strength.

Even though she was not weak when it came to combat, her class shone brighter in group battles. Letting her be the first to participate was the best choice that they had.

However, Leonard quickly pointed out something. "Wait, Seniors."

Everyone turned to him with a confused gaze, making him somewhat awkward. Regardless, he still voices his thoughts. "The rules have not stated that we can't send the same person per trial."

"Moreover, we also don't know if the next few trials will be an individual or a group trial. I think it is better to send a combat fighter at this stage," he added.

Hearing his words, the group immediately realized something and suddenly became enlightened.

"That's right! If we can't send the same participant for every trial, then how can that mysterious individual participate in the succeeding rounds?" pointed out by Laurent, making the rest turn at the said individual.

At the same time, seemingly having the same thought as them, the other three teams from the other platforms also turned in the same direction almost at the same time.

"I think it is best to send me first," said Ryoto while stepping forward.

"Winning or losing is not important for this round, but to gather information. Given my class, I can at least buy as much time as I can so long as the trial permits it," he added with full confidence.

"If we win, then that's an extra point. But if we lose, then it is what it is," said Laurent while nodding his head. "Go and prepare. We will be waiting for the good news."

Nodding his head, Ryoto went to the magic circle that suddenly appeared at the center of the platform, which should be the spot meant for this round's participant.

...

In the meantime, a few moments before the system announced the start of the first trial, Chaotic Luck was standing on the same spot while staring blankly at the notification panel before him.

While the other teams were worrying about all the complicated stuff, Chaotic Luck was having his own troubles.

Ding

System: Since you have arrived in the trial grounds for more than a day compared to the other participants, you have gained the special right to assign what kind of trial will be conducted first, according to the will of the Great Dark King of the Tang Clan.

Ding

System: Please choose the mode of trial: A, B, C, D, E.

Special Note:

"Luck is also a part of strength, so being lucky is also a form of victory."

- Dark King Tang Hyeon.

...

Looking at this special note, Chaotic Luck could not help but feel a little weird, finding that the attitude of this so-called Sovereign Being for choosing his successor was a bit too casual and easygoing.

It was as if he were doing a lottery rather than finding a successor.

"The design of this NPC is quite interesting," he mumbled after staring at the notification for a while.

"Since it does not matter which one I choose as the primary mode of competition, then I can just choose whatever," he added before closing his eyes and pressing a random button among the five choices.

Ding

System: The competition mode has been selected successfully!

Hearing the notification, Chaotic Luck swiftly opened his eyes, looking at the next notification excitedly.

However, when he read its contents, he could not help but stare at it blankly once again and felt a bit weird inside.

Ding

System: First Trial – Duel Competition!

Ding

System: Mode Reorganizing Error!

System: This mode is supposed to be the final trial!

System: Readjusting the Trial Rules.

Ding

System: First Trial – Duel Competition!

System: Due to the number of participants being odd, a 'Bye' will be given to a random player!

Ding

System: Bye Selection has been completed!

System: Chosen Bye, Platform Number 1!

...

After skimming through the string of notifications, Chaotic Luck could not help but look at the number of the platform that he was standing on, which was right at the center of it.

Then, the expression on his face suddenly turned weird due to that number being '1'.

The corner of his mouth twitched repeatedly, realizing something.

However, he also later realized that it was a good thing. Since he was exempted from participating in this round, he could just relax and enjoy the show.

"It is what it is! Since I have gotten the 'Bye', then let's wait for my turn later," he said, trying to comport himself.

...

Back at the present.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Four figures suddenly appeared somewhere down the pit of the dungeon.

Two huge platforms were floating within the dark abyss, which were going to be the battle arena for this round.

There were two figures in each arena, which signified what kind of trial this was.

...

Looking at the projected images in the air, Arthur and the others could not help but turn to each other before complaining a little when they saw this.

"A duel competition? Isn't this a bit too boring for a trial to gain such a legacy?" complained Arthur while furrowing his brows deeply.

"Such modes are usually saved for the last stages. I wonder what the Dark King is thinking by designing such a method of choosing his successor?" said Laurent, feeling the same.

...

At the same time, there was another person who was feeling similar to these people.

Troy, who just finished his job, was planning to relax and spend his time watching his favorite players.

Unfortunately, there was a certain alarm in the Monitoring Department, which signified that an emergency had occurred.

They were already familiar with these alarms, which indicated that another 'hidden program' was triggered.

As one of the main developers of the game, Troy was responsible for dealing with such situations, especially when the chairman had personally assigned him as the special personnel overseeing these occasions.

During the hidden program triggers, whatever was happening within the game was unable to be seen by anyone, including the person-in-charge or even the chairman himself.

It was programmed to be hidden from all the other people, aside from the players doing whatever quests or missions within the game.

After all, these 'hidden programs' were the so-called secrets that Adam had put within the game, which everyone was looking for and chasing after.

Even the Super AI, Chronos, that was running the entire game, was forced to follow this 'hidden program' whenever it was triggered. It was not even following the orders of the chairman despite having the supposedly absolute command and control over the system.

It could be considered as some sort of virus when you looked at this in this angle.

The brightest and most skilled programmers of the World Gaming Organization had also tried to decode this hidden program, yet none of them succeeded.

In the end, they could only give up and let this 'hidden program' run in the background, especially when it was not interfering with the game.

Troy, as the one responsible for handling this situation, could not help but curse after seeing the series of notifications flooding his screen. "What the heck!? Who the hell is messing with the program now!?"

He knew that it was impossible to interfere with or override the hidden program forcefully, so he was not worried about this.

What made him curse like this was that he knew that there was some variable within the game that had caused such an emergency change from the hidden program.

"Even those in the list of the Miracle Players, only a very few people can force this program to change those 'rules'. I wonder who has caused this," he mumbled before turning toward a certain virtual screen and pulling out a virtual keyboard alongside it.

At the same time, he started opening a few folders while also running a series of command prompt programs.

Not long after, a series of virtual screens started appearing one after another, which projected the scenario happening within the game and the scene where the hidden program was triggered.

If the other people within the World Gaming Organization saw this, then they would surely be shocked by this scene.

This was supposed to be a hidden program that could not be cracked even by the most skilled and brightest programmers within the organization, or even the whole world, yet Troy seemed to have done it with ease.

Moreover, he had even projected the scene directly coming from the game when it was supposed to be hidden from everyone.

Looking at the scene, Troy could not help but raise his brows when he saw what was happening. "Oh! It is this interesting guy!? There are also the brothers of the little guy. This is going to be more interesting."

At the same time, he also realized which 'hidden program' this group had triggered.

"The legacy left behind by Dark King Tang Hyeon? Now, this is the real deal!"

...

Chapter 2036: Trials of the Dark King (Part 3)

.....

Troy did a quick investigation, wanting to know how the rules meant for the trials of the Dark King had ended up like this.

From what he knew, these trials would be based on how the true legacy was set in the real world. It was supposed to follow the arrangements in the real world, creating a mirror scenario of that legacy.

After doing a quick backtracking, Troy finally saw the reason for the sudden adjustment from the system.

"There is a backdoor!? Does it mean the one in the real world has already been secured?" He furrowed his brows quite deeply, realizing this matter.

But he later nodded his head after finding it quite reasonable. "That's right. That guy must have already created a path when they find this legacy. But instead of taking it, he must have left it intact after learning that it cannot help him."

"Since he has destroyed one of the entrances in the real world, he has to make it look like it in the program as well."

"Tsk! Tsk! And the one who has gone through it is a clueless guy who treats it like a regular dungeon run. He has not recorded the entire process nor realized what the implications of this place are," he repeatedly shook his head after learning this.

He then looked at that figure before shaking his head once again. "This can't be considered a bug. I guess this kid happens to be just lucky."

After learning about this, Troy quickly did a quick clearing of the data before proceeding to watch the ongoing scenario. "I hope that this is not going to be a boring one. After all, this is one of the biggest and most important legacies from the previous era."

"I hope that this bunch will be able to show me something interesting," he added before taking out the popcorn that he prepared and leaning his back against his chair. "Let the fun begin!"

In the meantime, back in the ongoing trial.

Ryoto could not help but furrow his brows after seeing that he could still not see the real appearance of his opponent. The mysterious power shrouding the latter was still present, making it impossible to see the other party.

"If this is the case, then the opposing side must be in the same situation as I am," he mumbled before continuing. "Tsk! This makes it trickier to deal with. Without knowing their true appearance, trying to gauge their strength will be quite challenging."

Aside from the weapon of his opponent, which was a pair of sabers, and the outline of their bodies, he could not see anything from the opposition.

This made it hard for him to guess which race or class they had. If he could not even see anything apart from these, then guessing their skills and other abilities would be even harder.

"I guess this is going to be a part of the trial," he mumbled before nodding his head. "This is only natural. This makes it more like a trial prepared by the Dark King of the legendary Tang Clan!"

...

While Ryoto was making his preparations, Arthur and the others had also realized what was happening in the battle arena.

"We can't see the true appearance of the other party?" Laurent raised his brows, feeling a bit troubled. "This is going to be quite challenging."

On the other hand, Arthur felt a bit more excited, realizing that this trial was not going to be that 'boring'. "This is more like it! This is what makes the trials more challenging!"

"Not knowing what your opponents can do and trying to guess their skills and abilities while fighting, huh?" Leonard, who was sitting beside him, nodded his head. "This is going to be quite interesting, indeed!"

"This is more like trying to test our intuition, don't you guys think?" said Riko, attracting the attention of the others.

"By making our opponents look like a shadow, fighting them becomes more challenging because we can't read or guess what their next moves will be. This is a good test for our intuition and responses during the battle," she added.

Realizing this, the others could not help but nod their heads before directing their attention to the match.

Laurent even grinned quite widely before saying. "If that is the case, then this is going to be right in the bag."

Hearing his somewhat arrogant words, Arthur and Leonard could not help but turn to him with an inquiring gaze.

Laurent enjoyed their gaze for quite a while before chuckling. "I can't say for sure about our opponents, but I am confident that Ryoto will not lose when it comes to this."

"Setting aside the abilities of his race and class, his instincts and reflexes are among the best within our organization. Even I will go to him when it comes to this area," he added.

Hearing this, Arthur and Leonard could not help but think about Shin, who possessed the Immediate Response Battle Talent in the real world that had also evolved into Ultra Instinct inside the game.

Arthur also turned to Leonard, who possessed Bestial Instincts at this moment, which let him gain the danger sense and predatory instincts of a beast.

Clicking his tongue, he could not help but add. "Tsk! Tsk! This trial should be perfect for you. What a pity!"

Leonard just shrugged his shoulders before turning on the battlefield. He suddenly became interested in the abilities of this senior, which sounded somewhat similar to his own. "Intuition, huh?"

...

Back on the battlefield, Ryoto was still observing his opponent, who seemed to be doing a similar thing.

Despite receiving the signal from the system to start the battle, neither side immediately made a move and chose to observe each other first.

The target of this trial was still quite vague, but also quite interesting.

They intended to test the waters first, earlier, when they agreed to be the vanguard of their respective time. However, they seemed to have abandoned that thought after realizing the current situation.

– "Going all-out and catching the opposing off-guard is the best course of action for this round!" –

These were the thoughts running through their heads after learning about their current situation.

Since fishing out more information from the other party had become useless due to the veil shrouding their bodies, finishing this fight as soon as possible was their best bet.

Bang!

The first to move was the opponent.

Swoosh!

He kicked the ground and propelled themselves forward, rushing toward Ryoto at extreme speed.

Roar!

There was also a deafening roar coming out of his mouth, trying to assault his opponent's contraction through sonic attacks.

Alongside this, his pair of sabers danced around him, creating a series of sharp flashes surrounding his body during his charge.

Shing! Shing! Shing!

Not long after, he suddenly turned into a violent storm that charged ahead and planned to devour his opponent, shredding them into shreds.

However, before he could even reach a considerable distance away from his opponent, something else had greeted him first.

Whoosh!

A flood of water suddenly gushed out of Ryoto's body and started filling the surroundings.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

With a wave of his hand, the flood followed his orders and formed a torrent of water that clashed against his opponent's storm-like barrage.

Boom!

The opposing side seemed to be quite strong himself, but the water torrent was much stronger than his attacks, which also possessed an overlapping pressure that pounded him repeatedly.

Due to the flood of water, the opposing side was forced to halt their tracks while preventing their bodies from being swept away by the strong current.

Boom!

However, before they could even steady themselves, Ryoto suddenly burst out behind the water torrent while dragging his heavy sword.

He then leaped forward and swung his sword down, which was currently covered with a stream of violent and spinning current that was connected to the surrounding waters.

'Victor Mare Skill (Tier 3): Flood Slash'

Boom!

A torrential downpour suddenly appeared to accompany his sword slash, descending toward his opponent, who was currently being trapped by the surrounding waters.

Boom!

The powerful and unstoppable torrent of water descended and swallowed his opponent in one blow. The water devoured them like the ocean waves flipping a yacht in the middle of the storm.

However, Ryoto did not lower his guard even for a moment despite landing a clean strike. In fact, he swiftly retreated right after finishing his powerful skill because he sensed an immense danger coming from his current location.

Swoosh!

He suddenly submerged in the pool of water and disappeared into the violent waves.

Boom!

Immediately after, a massive explosion suddenly erupted, throwing countless water droplets into the air and drying the surroundings within an instant.

At the same time, the shadow of Ryoto's opponents appeared once again, who seemed to have undergone a massive transformation.

Roar!

A deafening roar erupted from their mouth, sending a series of overlapping sonic waves in every direction that cleared the surrounding waters.

In the distance, Ryoto's figure suddenly emerged from the curtain of waters, looking at his opponent with a slightly solemn expression.

Seeing the current form of his opponent, he fully understood that this was not going to be an easy battle.

...

Chapter 2037: Trials of the Dark King (Part 4)

...

While watching the ongoing battle, Arthur and Leonard could not help but raise their brows, finding that the skills and abilities of all sides were quite interesting in their own right.

Naturally, their initial focus was still the ongoing battle between Ryoto and his opponent. After all, they were still in the team, so they had to analyze the abilities of the opposing sides for the latter stages of the trials.

They were already somewhat familiar with the skills and abilities that Ryoto had in his arsenal since they had been fighting alongside each other during the entire dungeon run earlier.

"No matter how many times I see these abilities from Senior Ryoto, I can't help but think that he has mini domain skills whenever he fights," commented Leonard after seeing the constant flood of water coming out from Ryoto's weapon and body.

"This Victor Mare Class is unique and somewhat broken at the same time," chuckled Arthur while nodding his head. "He seems to have a portable pool that he can bring anywhere and use in battle whenever he needs it."

After a hearty laugh, Arthur continued. "On the other hand, his opponent possessed a unique ability as well."

"And quite troublesome on top of that," added Leonard while casting his gaze toward the opposing side.

Seeing the sonic attacks that the opposing side was constantly releasing whenever they attacked, Arthur and the rest of the team could not help but raise their brows in the process.

They knew how problematic such an opponent could be, especially when sonic attacks were something that they could not see and only perceive.

Adding the current situation where they could not clearly see the appearance of their opponent due to the shadow veil shrouding their appearances, reading the actions of the opposing side became even more challenging.

With no signs of his opponent using such abilities, responding to them would become extremely hard, much less doing some sort of preparation or a counter.

Fortunately, Ryoto's intuition was not that bad, letting him sense the dangerous signs before the opposing side could even throw their sonic attacks.

At the same time, the flood of water that he was releasing was constantly producing powerful waves that acted as a natural barrier that could block or weaken these sonic attacks that were heading toward his wave.

Even at point-blank range, the roaring waves helped him nullify most of the sonic attacks of his opponent, limiting their advantage.

However, this person before him was quite tricky to deal with due to their strong combat abilities, particularly in close combat quarters. This made it harder for Ryoto to find a solid advantage throughout the battle.

Despite having a strong footing over his opponent due to his lesser domain-type ability, he was still unable to fully suppress the opposing side.

Squinting his eyes, Leonard could not help but look at the Transcendent Being List, trying to find the class and race of the opposing side. "This guy-... according to the list that we have, he is most likely someone from the Transcendent Beings of the Beastman Race, the Sky Vesper Race."

"Based on the information that I have, they are among the Bat Tribe under the Divine Wings Beastmen, which is supposed to be the strongest form of the Winged Tribe," he added.

Siegfried: Oh!? Is it the Bloodline of Garuda? Archimedes' Class Ancestor? That Divine Wings Tribe?

Arthur sent a private message to Leonard, wanting to hide this crucial information from Laurent and Riko.

As for the information that Leonard had already spilled, he did not care about it since it was something that they could get from the library within the game or any lore displayed on the official website of the game and the online forums.

He was not worried about it, especially when the other two were Transcendent Beings themselves, who also possessed a Transcendent List in them.

At the same time, he could not help but feel that Archimedes was one of the luckiest among the team, especially when his class and race had such huge potential.

Simba: Yes. It is that dude.

Leonard replied positively, causing Arthur to further raise his brows.

At the same time, they continued to discuss their earlier topic.

"Among all the Transcendent Beastmen Races, the Sky Vesper Race is the only one that is capable of sonic wave attacks," said Leonard before furrowing his brows. "Unless there are other races that specialized in such attacks as well."

At the same time, Riko immediately raised an issue. "If that guy is truly from the Sky Vesper Race, which is from the Winged Race, then does it mean Ryoto is in trouble? That guy is still not summoning his wings."

Hearing this, the other three immediately realized the issue as well, making them turn toward the ongoing with a much more serious expression.

"I first thought that this round was in the bag, but I do not expect that we will be having a mismatch right from the start," said Laurent, lamenting about their current situation.

"The situation is not that bad, actually," said Riko before continuing. "Ryoto must have already accumulated enough water energy after fighting for such a long time. Even if his opponent suddenly reveals their wings and flies in the air, he will have a powerful tide that is tall enough to catch his opponent."

After watching this matchup for a while, Arthur and Leonard turned their attention toward the other battlefield, where the other two rivals that they had were fighting.

However, just like Ryoto's opponent, they could only see the silhouettes of the other two combatants on the battle arena and were unable to distinguish their respective appearances.

The same for the skills and abilities that they were using, which were restricted to melee combat.

Unlike Ryoto and his opponent, these two chose the more conservative approach for this round, not willing to reveal their cards early and hiding as much strength as they could.

However, the battle on this side was much more intense compared to the other side due to the extreme melee battle that they were having.

In addition to showcasing their skills and abilities, the two were using their respective combat techniques in the battle alongside the skillful display of their martial might.

Aside from amplifying each of their attacks with their unique mana manipulation techniques, the two had never used any form of skills or advanced offensive methods to overwhelm their opposition.

With such an intense melee, the two could not help but reveal their respective martial arts when fighting one another.

Arthur and the group were able to realize that these two were also Martial Artists in the real world, somewhat exposing themselves to other parties watching them. Moreover, they seemed to be quite familiar with one another, given how familiar they were with each other.

"These two seem to be from rival organizations that have been fighting each other for a very long time. I wonder which organizations they are from," mumbled Arthur before turning to Laurent. "Senior, you said that your side has been contesting with the other organizations when buying time for us, right? Will you mind sharing your findings with us?"

Laurent thought for a moment before shrugging his shoulders. "It is not such a big deal, so I can just tell you."

"One of them is the Hydra Guild, the so-called number 1 guild of the game, while the other is the Black Market, who is gaining quite a lot of power recently," he added while pursing his lips.

"Based on this information, we can just guess these guys," said Arthur while tilting his head to the side. "Let's set aside our side and that mysterious individual occupying a platform by themselves; we will have three choices at hand."

Pointing at the virtual screens projecting the battle, Arthur added. "If we assume that two of these teams are from the Hydra Guild and Black Market, then the other side is either the Dragon Pavilion, the archenemy of the former, or an unknown rival of the latter."

"However, based on the clues at hand, I will be leaning toward the former case since those two fit the styles of the Hydra Guild and Dragon Pavilion," he added while pointing at the intense fight in the other battle arena. "Then it will leave us with the Black Market being the ones we are facing first."

Laurent thought for a moment before nodding his head. "If we follow this setting, then we can indeed guess the identities of these guys while also gauging their strength at the same time."

"Unfortunately, none of these guys were from the list of people that we have about these organizations."

"This can only mean two things. It is either these guys are too good at hiding themselves, or they belong to the hidden forces of those guilds and organizations that we are unaware of," he added, earning the solemn expression from Arthur and the others.

They also knew what the latter part of his words implied, which would most likely affect their overall assessments of these forces.

"Of course, we also can't overlook the idea of them having commissioned a few people just like us. But it was truly what I have said, then these guys have truly hidden themselves quite well," he added before turning his gaze toward the platform of those parties.

.....

Chapter 2038: The Second Trial

.....

It took a while for the first trial to end due to the nature of the trial itself. However, a series of surprises occurred along the way, leading to unexpected results.

The winners of the first round were Ryoto and the one who seemed to be wielding a polearm weapon on the other battlefield.

Swoosh!

After returning to their platform, Ryoto could not help but furrow his brows in confusion due to the strange decision of his opponent during the final moments of their battle.

Right before the battle ended, both sides used their strongest moves to take down each other, thinking of finishing the battle with that final move.

However, right before their attacks could even reach each other, a strange occurrence happened. His opponent seemed to have purposely withdrawn their strength and lost on purpose during that crucial moment, throwing him into confusion.

Knowing what he was thinking, Laurent walked up to him and patted his shoulders. "Don't worry about it. We all know that the opposing side is plotting something, but we can't just prove it."

"I can feel that they are targeting the latter stages of these trial groups, saving their strength as much as possible, just like our earlier plan," said Riko.

They were still in the middle of a discussion when the system suddenly interrupted them with another notification.

DING

System: The Second Trial is about to start! Please, send 2 combatants as your representative!

Hearing the notification, the group immediately turned to one another, not expecting that the next would immediately start right after.

Moreover, just like what they were expecting earlier, the system was not limiting them from sending Ryoto from re-entering the trial grounds despite his victory.

"Two people this time!? Don't tell me it will continue to increase in number for the succeeding rounds," mumbled Riko, realizing the implication of this condition.

"It will be more favorable for the side with a bitter combat strength since they can secure more victories the more rounds they participate in," nodded Arthur, finding it reasonable.

"But in exchanges, that so-called stronger member of their team will most likely exhaust themselves mentally after going through such a series of intense competition on top of exposing all their cards due to the constant battles," said Laurent, pointing out the trap that such a setup had hidden.

Hearing this, Arthur had also realized that he had almost fallen into such a trap.

"This is one of the basic traps that those old monsters in the era of cultivators. After all, during their time, most of the top sects and powerful secretive organizations always sent one of their strongest members or even the leaders themselves just to acquire a certain legacy of a powerful expert," started Laurent before continuing. "It is quite a common custom at that time, given all the historical records that we have acquired and studied."

"It is because of this reason that such traps are hidden among all the trials that a certain ancestor had left for the future generations."

"Most of their trials are purposely targeting these supreme experts, making sure that they would not be the ones to get their legacy and let the younger generation inherit their mantle."

"This is why taking the inheritances left behind in the real world is quite tricky to deal with, especially when our methods are different from the ones in the past, which made it harder to acquire those legacies," he added before sighing.

The group went silent for a couple of moments before Leonard finally decided to step forward.

"Since that is the case, then there is no need for us to be that meticulous about our arrangements," he started before pointing to himself, then to Arthur, and then to Laurent. "We can just take the safest approach. We will be taking the stage alternatively for the next couple of rounds, having at least an insurance for emergency purposes."

"If the three of us are at least present on each round, or better two of us together, then our chance of winning will be much higher as well," he added. "Even if there is a sudden change in rules later, we will still be able to cover up such unexpected scenarios."

Hearing this, Laurent nodded before turning to Riko. "You join him. And if the succeeding rounds will truly increase the number of participants by one and not prevent us from repeating the same member from participating again, then you will most likely be present in all of those rounds."

Hearing this, Riko just smiled and shrugged her shoulders. "It is what it is. This is our main plan anyway, so it is not much different aside from me expending more energy and effort."

After that, she sighed with a somewhat helpless smile before adding. "Hays. I am supposed to be the most ideal one among this party since I am from the auxiliary class, how come it ends up that I am the busiest one?"

She then stopped beside Leonard, who was already standing right at the transfer point, before beaming at him. "I will be in your care, junior~!"

Before Leonard could even give his reply, the magic circle underneath their feet immediately released a blinding light and swallowed them before disappearing.

...

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Immediately after, Leonard and Riko were transported to the main battlefield. However, this time, they did not find themselves in a battle area, unlike the ones from the previous round.

Instead, they found themselves standing in a somewhat narrow corridor that could only fit two people.

Above them was a series of pearl-like marbles shining in the dark corridor with their dim light. There were also quite a few crystalline glows coming out of the gems embedded on both sides of the walls, further illuminating the surroundings and creating a somewhat mystifying effect.

While they were still busy observing their surroundings, the system had finally sent the notification to all the participants.

DING

System: "They all said that threading through the path of power is lonely. If you want to be the strongest, then you are supposed to stand at the peak by yourself."

"However, I learned it too late that being on the top does not mean you have to be alone. You can either help the people around you to become stronger, encouraging each other to grow together."

"People of the future generation! Never get blinded by your pursuit of strength since standing at the top by yourself is meaningless."

"You may have become the strongest in the world, but those you cherish and the reason why you are pursuing that strength either died or already left you behind."

– Dark King Tang Hyeon.

DING

System: As the representation of the words that the Dark King has left behind, these corridors of death were made.

System: Run through these corridors alongside your companion. Failing to reach the end of the corridor together is considered a failure.

System: The first people to reach the end will be the final winners of this trial.

The pairs that follow will receive fewer points according to their placement.

The last pair or those who fail to reach the end will receive a point deduction from the previous round.

Those without points have to eject one member of their party before they could proceed to the next round.

...

Seeing the string of notifications, everyone was finally able to realize what kind of trial ground the Dark King had sent.

Not only would they test their respective strength and talent, but their morals and sense of camaraderie as well.

Moreover, based on the final notification that the system had given everyone, they also realized the other arrangements that this old ancestor had left for them.

Standing in different corridors, the participants could not help but curse after realizing the setting that they were in.

They also realized that they had been duped to some extent. They were expecting a much more intense competition rather than a race like this.

"It looks like I am really in your care, junior," said Riko after understanding the mechanics of the current trial.

Sniff! Sniff!

Leonard did not immediately reply since he was focusing on something else. His Bestial Instincts were warning him about something more serious while his sharp nose was picking up an extremely unpleasant smell.

"Senior, I don't think that it is just a simple race," he said before squinting his eyes and turning toward the front and back of the corridor.

Roar! Roar! Roar!

Not long after, Riko began hearing the violent and eerie roars reverberating throughout the corridor, causing her to tremble.

"What are those!?" she asked while taking out a bunch of talismans and getting ready to fight.

Immediately after, she started seeing a flood of zombies rushing toward them from both directions.

The corner of Leonard's mouth immediately twitched when he saw this before quickly making his move.

Boom!

Punching the air before him, he sent a powerful shockwave that halted the incoming zombies before signaling to Riko.

"Follow me closely, senior!" he said before charging straight to incoming zombies upfront.

This was still a race after all, so charging ahead was their only choice.

"Tsk! Tsk! What a nasty taste! Zombies chasing us from behind and Zombies hounding us from the front?" Riko cursed while quickly chasing after Leonard.

...

Chapter 2039: The Second Trial (Part 2)

...

Boom!

Leonard continued to charge ahead while punching and smashing all the incoming zombies before them. He was constantly throwing his punches and making the heads of those he hit explode like a watermelon.

He did not dare to pause his movements due to the violent roars coming from behind. The moment they stopped moving, they would surely be trapped by the flanking hordes of zombies.

Once it happened, they could forget about passing the entire trial and focus on surviving instead.

Fortunately, there were three saving graces for this trial.

The first was the narrow corridor that could only fit two people, which made it harder for the zombies to blindly charge at them. At most, they could only jump in the air and try to overwhelm Leonard with such reckless attacks.

This made it easier for Leonard to move around while the opposing side was being restricted. Adding that he could fuse his battleaxes with his arms as another combat form, the maneuvers that he could use in such a tight space were not much hindered in combat, making the elimination of the monsters much easier.

Moreover, these zombies, despite how threatening they looked, were quite easy to kill. So long as he blasted off their heads or obliterated their bodies with a single strike, they would be unable to recover themselves and die in an instant.

However, their overwhelming numbers were still a big issue, especially when their bodies were starting to clog the corridor, making it a bit harder to move as more time went by.

Leonard had no choice but to crush the corpses of the zombies, making sure that they would not accumulate enough pile to hinder their movements while advancing.

As for those that were left behind, they just let them be since they could slowly build a rampart that would hinder the movements of the zombies that were trying to catch up to them from behind.

The third good grace that they had in this trial was the speed of the zombies that were trying to catch them from behind. These zombies were quite slow despite the overwhelming presence that they possessed.

Leonard could sense that they were at least on the level of an Emperor Rank Monsters based on their aura alone, or even stronger.

He knew that once those zombies caught up to them, it would be over.

Fortunately, they were slow-type monsters.

In a sense, these zombies were a powerful bunch but possessed very slow moments. However, once they caught their targets, they would surely not show any mercy.

While Leonard was focusing on clearing the path for them and advancing without any hint of hesitation, Riko, who was following closely behind, could not help but admire this little junior.

Strength was just one of the factors needed to move forward in front of such an endless number of enemies. What truly made her admire this junior was his fearlessness and ability to step forward without any hint of hesitation.

Moreover, Leonard also looked very manly during this time, making her blush after releasing what she was thinking in the middle of such a situation.

After clearing her mind, she resumed doing her job, which was continuously assisting Leonard with her buffs and strengthening talismans.

Her class was a Transcendent variant of the Shaman Class, which focused on assisting and strengthening her allies through her specially made talismans.

Her combat style also centered around these talismans, which she could also use in battle.

However, unlike most of the shamans from the regular pathway, they could debuff their enemies and summon some spirits, ghosts, and such monsters to assist them in battle.

Instead, her talismans could transform into spells just like the magic scrolls that the mages created.

It was quite an expensive ability since she had to constantly create these talismans. She still had quite a few spells that she could use without these talismans, but the effects of these spells increased exponentially once they were cast with her talismans.

Her main weapon was quite special as well. It was called the Haraegushi, which was a traditional purification wand used in special rituals to wave away negative energy. It was a wand with several shide tied on its tip.

With the two of them working together, they were able to cover a huge distance from where they started.

Unfortunately, despite keeping up with this pace for a couple of hours, they were unable to find the end of this corridor. Along with the endless horde of zombies, they felt that they would have to continue like this forever.

They were not sure if they could even find the end of the corridor after running for an entire day.

It was also at this moment that they realized that this trial not only tested their sense of camaraderie but also their will. It was a form of test for their resilience and tenacity.

The longer they stayed in this corridor, the more they felt the pressure coming from all the factors present within it.

The stronger their will, the longer they could stay and continue with the path ahead of them.

However, the moment they lose a bit of their will and slip up a little, the consequences would surely be quite disastrous.

...

While everyone on the trial grounds was doing their best, their respective teammates could not help but furrow their brows, especially after seeing the struggles of their allies.

Moreover, they could not see the progress of the other teams this time around. They were unable to see the other participants of this trial, making the race much tenser.

Due to this, they were also unable to see how one of the more problematic people within the trial was doing.

...

Due to Chaotic Luck not being able to join the previous round, his points were set to default. He had received nothing from that trial, which made him frown.

He was quite lucky not to face any opponent, but he had also received nothing in return, which put him in an awkward situation.

The system was truly 'fair' and 'just'.

"Tsk! If know that this was going to happen, then I should not chosen senselessly during that time," he complained to himself a little while thinking about this.

Little did he know that the opponents that he was supposed to face during that round were a bunch of monsters compared to his skill level.

Due to his not being able to join in that round, he was unable to see the battles between the other parties.

As for the current trial, he could not help but wear a weird expression on his face due to the current situation that he was in.

While the others were struggling with their respective corridors, Chaotic Luck was currently having a walk in the park due to the absence of any challenges on his path.

The zombies that were supposed to hinder his path and chase after him were currently in a slumber state, letting him walk through them without any problem.

This phenomenon was caused by the blessings that he had gotten from that council of Archliches when he was forced to accept their quest.

This blessing let him gain the ability to mimic the aura of any undead around him. It would constantly change and adjust itself to match the undead creatures in his surroundings, making them believe that he was one of them.

Unless he took the initiative to attack those undead creatures, they would not attack him. He was a non-hostile creature in their 'eyes'.

Due to this Undead Blessing, he was able to walk through the corridor without encountering any hindrances or pressure.

However, since this was a race, he still had to rush as fast as he could and 'compete' against the other parties.

Because of his class, he was innately slower than physical-oriented classes. He could only rely on constant teleportation to move further ahead while also trying his best to avoid disturbing the surrounding zombies.

Even though he was quite interested in these zombies and wanted to study them due to the poison attribute that they had, which was also the cause of the strengthening and weakening effects of their bodies depending on how potent the poison was injected into their bodies, he had to continue sprinting forward.

He might have accidentally fallen into this dungeon, but he still wanted to see it through to the end. Since he was already here, it was best to see how far he could go against those opponents.

He sprinted toward the end of the corridor for a couple of hours without stopping while also carrying the body of another zombie.

This particular zombie was something that the system had assigned to him since he was alone.

After all, the trial was about reaching the end alongside a partner, so he had to have someone who could reach the finish line alongside him.

Fortunately, this zombie was quite dumb and only knew how to chase after him while also avoiding the zombies along the path.

It seemed like the system had ordered it to solely follow Chaotic Luck and not do anything else, which somehow worked in his favor. It might not be doing anything else, but it was in his best interest. If it was meant to assist him while also having some other debuff, such as attracting all the nearby zombies, then he would have most likely suffered greatly in the process.

Due to his constant teleportation and unhindered run, he was able to cover such a huge distance, almost making him believe that he would reach the finish line in no time.

If the other teams learned about his current situation, then they would most likely curse him to death alongside the system due to the unfair advantages that he had.

...

Chapter 2040: The Secon Trial (Part 3)

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It did not take that long for Chaotic Luck to reach the end of the corridor due to his path being unhindered by any obstacle. Even though he had spent quite some time reaching the end, he was still able to cross the finish line before everyone else.

After all, the other parties were currently being held and obstructed by the horde of zombies in their respective corridors.

Swoosh!

Right after reaching the end, Chaotic Luck immediately received a notification from the system, informing him that he had won the 'race'.

Ding

System: Congratulations! You are the first to cross the finish line alongside your 'partner'! You have gained the perfect score for this round!

"Eh!?" Chaotic Luck was still in the middle of confusion when he suddenly realized that he was sent back to his platform immediately after.

"Eh!? What!? It is over already?" he mumbled while looking around, realizing that the people from the other platforms were currently looking at him.

Even though he could not see their expressions, he could at least tell that they were currently giving a serious and worried look right after he appeared on his platform.

"Tsk! I guess I have worsened my impression with this," he mumbled with a somewhat worried tone, afraid that they would work together to take him down later.

...

Ding

At the same time, right before Chaotic Luck appeared on his platform, Arthur and the rest of them could not help but raise their brows after hearing the familiar sound from the system.

Right after opening their system logs and seeing the notification, making sure that they did not hear it wrong.

System: Congratulations to Player XXX for reaching the finish line first alongside the default zombie partner!

System: They will receive the perfect score for this round!

Right after reading through the pair of notifications, everyone swiftly raised their heads and turned toward the direction of an empty platform.

Sure enough!

The moment they turned their heads toward that direction, they immediately saw that a figure suddenly appeared there, returning to his rightful spot.

He seemed to have sensed their gazes as well, making him raise his head and sweep his gaze back at everyone.

Tremble!

The bodies of the respective members of the other parties could not help but shiver intensely due to that cold and indifferent gaze.

It was as if it were a reminder to everyone that they were not on the same level despite having a Transcendent Race and Class.

It was as if he was mocking them, the 'little' and 'slow' progress of the representatives that they sent for this trial.

They could also feel the words that his eyes were telling them. – "I even have zombie baggage that I need to carry throughout the run, yet I still win first place." –

Most of them could not help but glare at him, unable to stand that 'mocking' gaze that he was giving them.

Others remained indifferent, seemingly telling the others that such a 'provocation' was nothing to them. As powerful experts themselves, they were confident in their individual skills and respective abilities.

There were also people like Arthur, who were quite eager to fight this mysterious person. He was itching to step into the battlefield or on the next trial, unable to suppress his excitement in battle.

In the meantime, those still in the midst of the trial could not help but frown deeply after receiving the notification from the system.

They were still in the middle of the trial and did not know how long they had to run and fight until they reached the end of this never-ending corridor and endless horde of zombies.

"Someone has already reached the end!? Who is it?"

They frowned deeply, wondering from which platform the first placer came. However, they all had an idea about it. After all, that particular individual gave all of them quite an impression.

After learning that that person had managed to reach the end, they all thought that they were also quite near the finish line.

Thinking about this, they started increasing the pace and rushed toward the end, thinking that the other parties were somewhat ahead of them.

This was a blind race after all, so they had to give their best if they wanted to be ahead of everyone else.

They started going all out and used most of their trump cards just to clear a path for themselves.

After picking up their pace, their progress started growing as well. This time, it was a contest between the rest of the participants.

Unfortunately for them, their excitement was short-lived. The distance that they were thinking was near, but turned out to be much farther than they had expected.

Despite sprinting for another half an hour, they were still unable to find the exit, making them believe that this was an endless corridor once again.

A few of them even frown and thought that they were running in the wrong direction the whole time, doubting their choice. They thought that the zombies that were supposed to change after them from behind were nothing but an illusion created to scare them.

However, none of them dared to turn back and lost all their progress up until now. They could not shake off the question of what if they were wrong again.

This made them believe that this was another part of the test set by the Dark King, making them admire that legendary expert for another time.

They could not help but believe that everything within these trial grounds was not as simple as it seemed to be. Even the trails themselves possessed multiple layers of arrangements meant to test a lot of aptitude.

Little did they know that this was just a misunderstanding created by Chaotic Luck's situation. His overwhelming and unreasonable luck had caused a series of misunderstandings that led to the current situation.

He had also managed to mess with the minds of his competitors, who were starting to have some doubts.

A few moments later, the first victim to fall and crumble under pressure finally made their move.

One of the parties continuing their race turned back and started running in the opposite direction.

Unfortunately, what greeted them back there was something that they would never imagine. They had already died before they could even realize what happened, much less see the thing that had killed them.

Ding

System: The Participants from Platform Number 3 have been eliminated!

The notification was given to everyone, making it ring in their ears a couple of times before stopping.

Arthur, who was focused on what Leonard was doing, smirked in response. "Someone has finally lost it!? They have given up when they are already right before the sights of victory."

He was not sure how long this trial would last, but he could tell that it would not take that long.

At the same time, this notification had proven something to everyone present within the dungeon.

They could not help but turn in the direction of that mysterious individual once again, treating him as some sort of final boss.

...

His words were right since the participants finally reached their exit from that hellish corridor after another thirty minutes of running, finishing the trial one after another.

Surprisingly, Leonard and Riko reached the end in third place, making them furrow their brows.

The mysterious individual was the first to reach the exit, while the pair, who came from the platform of the suspected Black Market members, came second. The person whom Ryoto fought earlier also came from this platform as well, so this 'win' was to make up for that loss.

Leonard and Riko exited their corridor not long after, which made it quite a pity for them.

The fourth and final group to reach the exit was coincidentally from the platform that also lost in the previous round, making up for their zero point as well.

This created an odd state in the point rankings. Aside from the platform where the members of Heavenly Resto-Bar representatives and the one where the mysterious individual stood, everyone else suffered a loss.

This put Arthur and the rest in a direct competition with that mysterious individual.

"The next trial will be a crucial one. I wonder what kind of test the Dark King had prepared for us this time," said Arthur in full excitement, eager to step onto the stage.

Unfortunately, Laurent immediately stepped forward and prevented him from going. "You are another trump card that we have prepared. I suggest that you stay for now and conserve your strength."

Arthur glared at Laurent when he heard this, but the latter immediately added. "You will be participating in the next two rounds consecutively if our suspicion about the situation is right."

"I think you should observe a little more and see if we can gather more information about the opposing parties before making your move."

Arthur hesitated for a moment before sighing and nodding his head. He understood where this senior was coming from, especially after 'witnessing' what that mysterious individual was capable of.

As one of the top gods within the game, Arthur needed to hide their strength, acting as the final trump card of the group if needed.

He just hoped he wouldn't have to wait that long, as he was itching to stretch his muscles after staying still for quite some time.