

Destiny 631

Chapter 631 Meeting Some Familiar Faces (Part 2)

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A few moments before Akailu and Alucard arrived at Althea City, Owen and Ithilien happened to also arrive at the very same city by using the Teleportation Hall.

"Tsk! What's wrong with Brother Swordsman? First, he asked us to gather some intel regarding the two Kingdoms. And a few moments later, he is going to change his mind and recall us here? Did he know how much the teleportation fees are when traveling between two countries?" complained Owen as they walked out of the Teleportation Hall.

Hearing that, Ithilien giggled a little before quickly adding. "What are you complaining about? It is not like you are the one paying for those fees. Didn't he say that will cover all of the cost in this mission?"

"T-that...!" Owen tried to say something but he couldn't find the right words to refute her words.

Seeing the expression that he was currently making, Ithilien couldn't help but laugh at him once again before saying. "Anyway, didn't you tell me that that guy is a very cunning person? Then there is definitely a reason why he called us back."

"Tch! Of course, I know about that! It just-... I feel like we are wasting too much effort on gathering all of that intel and traveling back and forth between those two countries, then here," said Owen with a deep frown.

After that, he took a brief pause to release a helpless sigh before continuing. "If we are not going to use those informations anyway, then it is better for us to forget about them in the first place to avoid wasting our time and effort," he added in a bitter tone.

They were in the middle of a discussion when Ithilien bumped into a player and fell on her butt. And when Owen saw that, he quickly picked her up from the ground and helped her stand up before glaring at the player in front of them. "What the heck?! Are you blind or something?!"

He was about to engage in battle when he suddenly recognized the identity of the player who bumped into Ithilien. "You! Aren't you the Beastmaster, Akailu?"

"Owen, the Dark Knight?" muttered Akailu as he also recognized Owen.

In the meantime, Alucard who was standing beside the Beastmaster was looking at the sight in front of him with an amused expression on his face before commenting. "This place is becoming more and more interesting as time goes by."

Both sides stared at each other for quite some time before they finally recovered themselves.

"The heck, man! Can you at least look in front of you while walking?" said Owen while maintaining the glaring look that he had.

"Is it only my fault? Why don't you ask that girl if she is also paying attention to her surroundings?" snarled Akailu while getting ready for battle.

"What did you say?!" shouted Owen back while pulling out his longsword and pointing it at Akailu. "I dare you to say it again."

On the other hand, Akailu suddenly smirked when he saw Owen's actions before taking a battle-ready position. "Looks like everyone is looking down on me just because I got eliminated at the Shadow Ranking Cup quite early. I guess I need to start baring my fangs now."

Due to the clashing auras that the opposing sides had released, the attention of every person in the surroundings was immediately attracted and started to form a crowd around them. But before the fight could break out, both Ithilien and Alucard immediately stopped the two from creating more trouble.

"Hey! Didn't you hear what the Nameless Swordsman said? We can't attract any unnecessary attention since our opponents are going to find us sooner," said Ithilien while pulling Owen's arm.

"Hiss! Alright, I get it," said Owen while sheathing back his sword once again.

Meanwhile, Alucard also grabbed Akailu's shoulder to restrain him while saying. "Oi! Don't tell me you already forget that we need to keep a low profile right now. We can't afford to get banned from entering any city in this kingdom as well."

"Tsk! D*mn those people from the Corrupted Cult!" cursed Akailu before dropping his stance.

Seeing that both sides were no longer going to fight, the spectators who gathered around also lost their interest in not seeing a good show and started to scatter.

At the same time, the two sides were also about to separate from each other when they suddenly remembered a couple of keywords that they overheard from each side's conversations.

"Wait! Did you just mention the Nameless Swordsman?"

"Are you guys talking about the Corrupted Cults?"

In the most secluded map around Althea City, Shin and Charlotte were waiting for Owen and Ithilien to arrive.

"Tsk! Why are they taking so long?" complained Shin as he sat up straight from a lying position.

In the meantime, Charlotte was busily browsing on the online forums to see what were the latest updates regarding the war between the Venimuex Guild and the other powerhouse guilds of the Elven Kingdom.

Seeing that, Shin couldn't help but become a little curious and asked. "You've been browsing there for quite some time already. So, did you get anything useful for us?"

Hearing that, Charlotte suddenly threw a glare at him. But she still replied to him regardless. "From the looks of it, those guys are not going to be a problem for us since they seem to be too focused on the war-..."

"...-That you initiated," she added smirkingly after pausing for a brief moment of hesitation.

Cough! Cough!

Hearing that, Shin couldn't help but choke with some air before staring at her with a weird look behind his mask. 'This girl-... she really is someone who holds a grudge.'

"If that is the case, then that is one less problem that we need to concern ourselves with," said Shin with a stiff tone.

Then the eyes of the two suddenly turned sharp as they sensed a small group of players that were rapidly approaching their locations.

But not long after, they discovered that two of them had familiar auras with them. So, they immediately relaxed a little but still acted a little cautiously due to the powerful auras of the other two people traveling with them.

As the group got a little nearer, Shin suddenly noticed that the other guys seemed to be a little familiar to him too. "Eh!? These auras? Are they-...?"

Bang! Bang!

He was still in the middle of talking when a pair of gunshots were sounded from the distance where the group was coming from.

Clang! Clang!

But despite having the element of surprise and possessing an astonishing speed, the incoming bullets were easily blocked by Shin's casual movements of lifting his sheathed sword.

After that, he suddenly flicked his thumb and unsheathed the [Yamato]. Then he caught the hilt of his sword midair before swinging it to his other side.

Clang!

Shin's sword then collided against another sword that came out of nowhere, creating a loud metal-clashing sound alongside some metal sparks that flew in the air.

Shin didn't even bother to take a look at whoever tried to attack him as he quickly leaned forward while pushing his sword upwards.

Bang! Bang!

He did that to dodge the consecutive shots that were fired at him. And due to his actions, the magic bullets flew over his head, barely missing him.

Charlotte was about to help Shin when Owen and Ithilien simultaneously appeared on her side and prevented her from doing anything. She was about to ask them what they were doing when she saw the meaningful smile that they were giving her. And due to that, she decided to not get involved either.

In the meantime, Shin and Alucard were exchanging blows with a series of quick movements before another player appeared behind Shin all of a sudden. And obviously, it was Akailu who was currently in his Beast Form and was in the middle of throwing a powerful punch at Shin.

Seeing that, Alucard quickly coordinated with Akailu's attack and suddenly swung his sword at Shin very strongly while infusing his mana on it.

Swoosh!

Bang!

Unfortunately, their combined attack still failed as Shin blocked both of their attacks perfectly. The sheath of his sword was placed on his back as he held it in a reverse manner to ward off Akailu's huge fist while the sword on his other hand was preventing Alucard's sword from moving forward.

"Tsk! I appreciate your greetings... but isn't this a little overboard?" asked Shin while wearing a bitter smile behind his mask.

Then he stared at the guy in front of him quite closely before saying. "So, this is your real style and appearance? Not so bad, I guess. But you should remember that you still owe me a couple of duels."

After that, he looked over his shoulder before quickly adding. "And this guy should be that 'Beastmaster', am I right? You should have used that form during our match in the Shadow Ranking Cup to make it even more satisfying."

Chapter 632 Raiding The Royal Palace (Part 1)

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Shin and his small group managed to sneak inside the capital city of the Elven Kingdom after carefully dodging all of the guards patrolling within the city.

"Tsk! What have you done to make this city heavily guarded?" said Akailu while clicking his tongue.

"Let's just say that those guys controlling the Royal Forces are quite desperate to catch us after we successfully escape from them," answered Shin while peeking outside the alley.

"Heh! To think that you are still planning to go back to that place after escaping from it, you sure have guts," said Alucard smirkingly.

"It is not like we have another choice," commented Owen from the side while checking his weapons.

Then Akailu looked at Shin and said. "Just remember that you still need to help me with my quest after we are done with everything here."

"Tsk! Yeah, I know. You don't have to repeat it again," replied Shin while waving his hand.

"What's more, your quest is somehow related to ours. So, I'm pretty sure that those guys from the Corrupted Cult in the Beast Glade Kingdom will be shaken quite a bit," he added before sweeping his gaze at everyone.

Seeing that all of them seemed to be ready, he started clarifying their plan once again. "As you guys know, we don't have much time to properly construct a better plan, so we are going with the most basic one that we come up with."

"Owen, Ithilien, and Charlotte will head over the prison to free the King and his subordinates while Alucard, and Akailu will create a diversion and attract as much attention as possible. As for myself, I will sneak inside and find a certain guy to keep him busy."

"We have to make this quick so that we can avoid getting trapped inside the castle," he added with a will supporting his chin with his hand.

He then paused for a moment and looked at Alucard and Akailu before continuing. "You two need to be careful. Aside from the Messenger of the Corrupted Cult, there were still quite a lot of strong NPCs within that place."

"And even if we can fight them with our current level, there are still some NPCs that out-leveled us so much in that place, just like the guards that are always on the Crown Prince's side," added with a serious tone.

After that, he looked at the sky and saw that it was now completely dark, indicating that it was pretty late at night. "It looks like it is already time. We are going to proceed according to what we've discussed earlier."

Then he looked at Alucard and Akailu before reminding them. "You two are 'wanted criminals' in this kingdom, so you can freely roam around the city without worrying about the guards. Given that, you can also get near the main gate of the castle without having a problem. We will leave that place to the two of you."

"As for you three, you guys are going to sneak inside using the secret passage that Charlotte is talking about. She will lead you since she is pretty familiar with the structure of the castle," he added while turning his head at Owen, Ithilien, and Charlotte.

"What about you? Are you sure that you will be fine on your own?" asked Alucard while giving Shin a sidelong glance.

Hearing that, Shin smirked at him a little before answering. "You guys don't have to worry about me. Even if I can't fight all of them at once, I can still easily escape from that place if I want to."

p Then he stretched his waist a little before saying to them. "I need to settle a score with that Messenger and I prefer fighting him one on one this time, so I appreciate it if you guys attract the attention of everyone so that no one will interrupt our duel this time."

"Tsk! Look at this guy, enjoying the most exciting part of this mission while letting us suffer from the hardest task," comment Owen while clicking his tongue.

"Tsk! Enough with the chatting already! Let's get moving and wrap this up," said Akailu before walking out of the alley.

Seeing that, Alucard quickly chased after him and said. "Come on~! You are just in a rush because you want us to proceed with your quest as soon as possible."

"Is it good to have some great companions? So, are you planning to join a team or a guild now?" he added, trying to tease the Beastmaster.

On the other hand, Owen patted Shin's shoulders before brushing past him. "Well, we are also going now. Make sure to not lose to whoever that Messenger is. I still need to win a duel against you before anyone else."

After that, Ithilien bowed at Shin before quickly following behind Owen. And at the same time, Charlotte tried to open and close her mouth, trying to say something but no words came out. She just slightly nodded her head at her before chasing after the two.

Meanwhile, Shin stared at their backs for a few moments before opening a virtual screen in front of him and contacting someone.

"Hey! I need a favor to ask..."

"I'll tell you guys the details later... just gather the others for now and head over to the Beast Glaze Kingdom and wait for me."

"I said I'll explain it later!"

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A few moments later, Shin stood on a secluded alley right across a wall surrounding the Royal Castle. He waited for the patrol guards to walk past the area before walking out from the shadows and staring at the tall wall.

"Using my flying ability is going to be a waste, so let's go with the alternative solution," he muttered to himself before flipping his cloak a little while equipping the [Belt of Tomi].

He then touched the flying daggers sheathed on their respective holders before sprinting straight to the wall. And when he reached the ideal distance, he suddenly threw the daggers at the wall and pinned them on it to create a series of small platforms that he could use to climb.

Whenever he was done stepping on a dagger, Shin would always pull them out with the use of his 'Telekinesis' Skill before impaling them on the wall once again to create more platforms.

His speed was quite fast so he was able to reach the top of the wall with ease. He also observed the routine of the patrolling guards roaming on the walls earlier, so perfectly timed his infiltration so that we would not bump into them when he reached the top.

When he was standing on the top of the wall, he quickly entered Stealth and immediately jumped down without any hesitation. And right before he fell on the ground, he cast one of the skills attached to his cloak to descend in a gentle manner.

After that, he quickly sprinted forward and headed straight to the main palace to look for his target.

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In the meantime, Alucard and Akailu just arrived in front of the main gate and immediately created a commotion.

"As I said, we really need to see the King for urgent matters," said Akailu while glaring at the guard blocking his path.

"Any entry to the palace is all rejected! That is the King's order! If you don't want to die then I suggest you leave immediately," shouted the guard while raising his weapon.

Seeing the actions of their captain, the other guards behind him quickly raised their weapons and pointed them at the two.

"Tsk! Now they are pointing their weapons at us. Agitating an NPC sure are simple as real people," muttered Akailu to himself before raising his right hand slowly and snapping with his fingers.

Then a pair of magic circles suddenly appeared on both of his sides, summoning a huge wolf with glacial powers and a fire-wielding tiger of the same size.

Roar!

Awoo!

Then those two beasts immediately jumped at the guards, not giving them any time to react. And since their attacks were too sudden, the guards that were standing at the forefront of the group were immediately devoured without putting up a fight.

The captain was in a slightly better position since he managed to jump backward and dodge the assaults of the two beasts. But his experience could only save him that much because a barrage of magic bullets drilled through his head and body while he was still in midair.

In his final moments, he managed to see Alucard standing behind Akailu holding his gun forward along with its still smoking muzzle. The captain saw the crimson pupils hiding under the shade of Alucard's hat, staring back at him coldly.

"This new feature of the game is really interesting. Now, we can inflict more damage and kill anyone instantly as long as we hit them in their vitals properly," muttered Alucard with a smirk.

Meanwhile, the elven guards blocking their path were immediately thrown into panic when they saw what happened.

"Intruders!"

"They are trying to intrude on the palace, stop them!"

"The captain is dead!"

Due to the sudden actions of the two, and even larger commotion immediately broke out in front of the castle gate. And to make the matter even worse, the two forced their way in and entered the castle while slaughtering every guard who was trying to stop them from entering.

Chapter 633 Raiding The Royal Palace (Part 2)

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The Crown Prince Federith was currently sitting in the throne room and seemingly enjoying his time despite the hall being empty of people. And standing on each of his sides were his personal guards who were radiating with very dangerous auras.

Bang!

Not long after, an elven guard suddenly entered the throne room in a hurry and quickly kneeled a few meters away from the platform where the throne was. "Crown Prince, we are in trouble! There are some intruders in front of the castle!"

Hearing that, Crown Prince Federith suddenly frowned his eyebrows and asked. "So what? Can't you just take care of it?"

"B-but they are quite strong, your highness!" said the elven guard stutteringly.

"Huh? Even the Elite Knights are no match to them?" asked the crown prince with a deep frown.

The elven guard hesitated for a few moments before further lowering his head before answering. "Unfortunately, you are right, your highness. Even the Elite Knights are no match against those monsters."

Prince Federith further deepened the frown that he had when he heard those words before asking another question. "How many are they?"

Hearing that, the elven guard hesitated once again before carefully opening his mouth. "T-two. T-there are only of them, your highness."

"What? Just two? And yet you guys are having trouble with your numbers?" asked the crown prince with a heavy tone.

"I-I..." the elven guard wanted to say something but he couldn't find the right words to defend himself. After all, it was true that they had more numbers compared to their opponents. The problem was they were up against a pair of monsters that had no way of winning.

Regardless, he was not in a position to voice out those thoughts since he was going to get executed on the spot if he tried to talk back to the crown prince. So, he remained quiet and waited for prince Federith to continue.

"Tsk! It doesn't matter. Kulun, go bring some of the Royal Guards with you and go deal with those pests," said the crown prince at the Elf Knight standing on his left side.

Hearing the command, the Elven Knight named Kulun nodded his head without any hesitation and suddenly disappeared from his position.

Then prince Frederith suddenly waved his hand to send the elven guard out. "You are dismissed."

"Yes, your highness," said the elf before bowing once again and leaving the throne room.

When the crown prince made sure that the elven guard really left, he turned his head to the side and said to his other knight. "Head over to the dungeon prison and tell the guards to be on high alert. Since we have some intruders in the main gate, I'm pretty sure that their accomplices will use that distraction to save my father and his attendants."

"Make sure that none of them are going to escape," he emphasized with a heavy tone.

When his other personal guard suddenly disappeared, his personal aide suddenly emerged from the shadow behind the throne and bowed beside Prince Federith. "You don't have to worry, your highness. Messenger Thirio already predicted this to happen so everything is still under control."

"I know about that already. What I am concerned about is the 'Elder Messenger'. Are there still no words from him?" asked the crown prince while wearing a deep frown. "It has been a while since we last heard anything from him?"

Hearing that, his close attendant gave him yet another bow before saying. "I must apologize, your highness. But we still haven't heard any words from him."

"Tsk! Then forget about it! Let's just focus on the task that is left to us for the time being," said prince Federith while waving his hand.

When his attendant heard that, he quickly nodded his head before taking a couple of steps backward and disappeared within the shadows once again.

In the meantime, Thirio was currently watching the battle within the Elven Palace from the highest part of the Castle.

"The Beastmaster: Akailu, huh? He sure has become much stronger since the last time we saw him. It looks like we need to update the information that we have about him," he muttered to himself while focusing his gaze at Akailu.

"But..." he then trailed his words for a moment as he turned his gaze at another player that was accompanying Akailu. "I guess we also need to keep an eye on another individual. Alucard, huh? Another anomaly that may hinder our plans."

"First, those mysterious experts from the 'Pandemonium Troupe' are competing with us, then there go the remnants of the Dark Hero Adventurer Team. And now, even the Nameless Swordsman and his friends are seemingly creating a formidable team – I wonder how many members they have found so far."

"Tsk! It is going to be a little troublesome if the team that Siegfried and Simba are building is going to be related to these guys."

"It looks like the Council needs to make more preparations to avoid some accidents in the future," he added while continuing to stare at Alucard.

Not long after, he suddenly felt a foreign presence walking over from behind. "Oh~! So, you really come back after running for your life earlier."

"Tsk! Don't make me laugh, I only did it since my quest doesn't let me stay for long. But now that I am no longer pressed with time, I guess I can finally destroy you," said Shin as he slowly walked on the roof of one of the buildings within the castle.

Thirio suddenly smirked when heard those words and said. "It looks like your win over Immortal and fluke against Haowin get in your head a little too much. I guess I need to humble you to bring you back to reality."

Shin started chuckling a little when he heard those words before sneering. "Heh! You know what? You keep on mentioning their names since the first time you appeared. It makes me wonder if you are trying to prove that you are stronger than them. Or-... if you are just jealous of those two."

Bang!

"What do you just say?" said Thirio while releasing a powerful aura that was trying to Shin.

Bang!

Unfortunately, Shin just released his own aura and canceled out the pressure that was trying to crush him. Then he suddenly smirked and said with a provoking tone. "Heh! It looks like I hit the right mark."

"And judging from your reaction, the reason should be both of what I've said earlier," he added sneeringly to agitate Thirio even more.

Bang!

Swoosh!

This time, Thirio didn't wait for anything and just lunged forward with great speed before appearing in front of Shin in an instant. And without any hesitation, he swung his war axe in a very powerful manner, seemingly planning to crash his opponent with it.

Bang!

Unfortunately, his attack seemed to be ineffective against Shin as he easily blocked the falling blade of the war axe with his sheathed sword while also using a special combat technique to transfer all of the force that he got towards the roof underneath his feet.

'Heart of Stone sure comes in handy when it comes to this kind of situation,' he thought to himself as he thanked the new Elemental Skills that he recently got.

At the same time, Thirio was staring at Shin confusedly. 'This guy-...! How did he manage to block my attack with ease? Even if it is just a hasty move, I put quite a lot of strength on that attack.'

"Hey! You look so surprised. I thought you are much better than Immortal and Haowin, so how come you are so surprised with something as simple as this?" sneered Shin while staring straight into Thirio's eyes.

And as if he was rubbing more salt on his opponent's wounds, he suddenly added. "I guess you are just someone with a low ranking within your organization. You don't look as intimidating as those two."

Those words hit the right spot and made Thirio even more enraged. "F*cking b*st*rd!"

Then he tried to put more strength on his arm and pressed his war axe on Shin with more force. But to his surprise, the latter seemed to be unaffected and refused to budge even an inch.

'This-...! He didn't have this kind of strength earlier, so how come we are on equal terms now?' thought Thirio to himself as he became even more confused at the current situation.

"Heh! I am telling you, Haowin strikes way heavier than yours," said Shin smirkingly before doing a quick spin and throwing a back kick at his opponent.

Thirio was able to block that attack with his harm but he was still forced to take a couple of steps backward to stabilize himself. After all, he was currently in an awkward position to defend from such an expected attack due to his previous move, so losing his balance after blocking such a swift kick was inevitable.

Then he saw Shin suddenly shorten the gap between them with a simple stride. The latter was currently ducking forward in front of him and was in the middle of unsheathing his sword.

Shing!

Clang!

Fortunately, Thirio was fast enough to lower his war ax and blocked the incoming blade. Though, he was still sent flying due to not having a proper footing to block that attack.

Shin was planning to continue his assault but he immediately stopped himself and quickly swung his katana in front of him because Thirio managed to throw his war axe at him while trying to stabilize his center of gravity midair.

Clang!

The war axe bounced back in the air after colliding with Shin's sword before falling on Thirio's hand as his feet fell back on the roof.

"I don't know what happened after you escaped earlier, but I must admit that you become a little better compared to our last exchange," said Thirio after catching his war axe.

Then he raised his head and stared at Shin with a serious look on his face before adding. "But that doesn't change the fact that you will lose today."

Shin couldn't help but chuckle a little when he heard those before responding with a sneering tone. "I remember that most of my opponents have said similar things before-..."

He trialed his words for a moment to release a much stronger aura than Thirio before continuing. "But all of them suffered the same fate on my blade."

Chapter 634 Plans For The Game Progression

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Real World, World Gaming Corporation Headquarters.

Carlos and his team, the monitoring team, were currently having a meeting with the development team to plan the next course of the game.

"The players are reaching the current 'Cap' of the game, so we need to make an update on this as soon as possible," said Marcus as he shared some of the data that their team had gathered while monitoring the progress of the game.

(*Cap/ Level Cap: Maximum attainable level for the player character.)

"We can't do another major update on the game since we recently got one," said the head assistant of the development team calmly.

"But we also can't ignore the fact that all of the leading players can now fight most of the current NPCs of the game. Aside from the special ones, almost all of the NPCs are no different from normal mobs for these players," said Marcus calmly.

"The mainstream players may still need more time to do such feats, but the leading players are already approaching the current end game stages. We can't neglect this fact, Liam," he added as he showed some statistics on the huge virtual screen projected above the conference table in front of them.

Hearing that, Liam calmly crossed his arms in front of him before replying. "Even if that is the case, their numbers are still in the minority so we can do a major update just because of that. They can just stay max-leveled for a little longer and wait for the mainstream players to catch up a little so that everyone can have an equal start on the next stage of the game."

Bang!

This time, Marcus slightly lost his cool and slammed his hand on the table while saying with a loud voice. "What are you talking about?! The leading players are the ones who are creating the path for all of the players. If their progression is halted, then how can you expect the community to grow?"

"Come on, Marcus. Slowing the progress of the game is still needed in our industry to give a little hope to the players with slower progress. If not, those players with less talent are going to quit playing our game sooner or later," refuted Liam almost immediately.

"If that is the case, then the same goes for the leading players. If we halt their progress and they lose the sense of progression, then aren't they also going to quit the game?" asked Marcus in return.

The two sides continued to argue left and right until it became heated and got the other members involved. Their respective leaders remained silent and continued to listen to their subordinates' arguments.

A few moments later, Troy suddenly tapped his finger on the table to attract the attention of everyone which also halted their discussion. All of them stopped talking and turned their heads at him before waiting for him to say something.

Seeing that they finally calmed down, Troy nodded his head in satisfaction before saying. "We all know that the game is currently in its critical stages which is why we can't make any rushed decisions."

"And friends from the monitoring team, you should understand that we can't do any major update yet since he just updated the game recently. And if we indeed do what you are proposing to us, do you think how much time and effort we need to spend for the next major update? Our jobs are not as simple as monitoring the players."

"Moreover, there are also those major events that are scheduled to happen in the future. So, if you tell us to expand the update now, it will mess up the road map that we already prepared," he added, silencing the people from the monitoring team.

But if there was someone who could refute those words, then it was most likely the head of the monitoring team, Carlos. "Then you should also understand where we stand."

"The game is progressing way faster than we are expecting. There are already a lot of people involved in the 'Grandscale Main Quests' across the world. Just like those players who are closely related to the 'Light Path Alliance' and 'Union of Corrupted Cult and Demonic Church'."

"These two hegemons are already clashing against each other and are involved in a lot of matters regarding different Kingdoms and Empires. And with their spreading influence, the mainstream players are starting to notice the upcoming event related to these forces."

"Given all of these, we are going to have some problems with the system if we don't do anything now. After all, all of the ongoing quests are going to halt if the players involved in them reach the wall that we currently set. And it will destroy the 'Free World' that we are building within the game."

He then paused for a moment to send a file on the huge virtual screen in front of them and opened it before continuing. "Aside from those, there is also the issue regarding the hidden races which are being unlocked left and right."

"First, there are the Wingmen Race and Dire Nagas that have recently been unlocked. Then the Dwarves and Gnomes are currently underway to being available to the public. And aside from those, there are also some teams that are already close to unveiling the mysteries regarding the Giant Race and other Ocean Species."

"With all of these, do you still think that it is possible to slow down the progress of the game?" asked Carlos while staring at Troy with raised eyebrows.

Seeing that, Troy could only sigh helplessly before asking. "So, what are you planning to propose?"

"Let's hear it out and finalize it before we present it at tomorrow's meeting with the other teams and the chairman," he added while crossing his arms in front of his chest and looking at Carlos with squinting eyes.

Hearing those words, Carlos suddenly wore a smirking smile before replying. "Heh! Don't act as if you don't know what I am talking about. We both know what is the best solution in this situation."

"Since the top experts are already reaching the level-150 Cap for players, it is not going to take long for them to get their Tier 3 Promotion quest. And when it happens, we all know that the current hunting grounds will not be able to satisfy them."

"Plus, the major quest will not align with it and reach a dead end. So, the basic solution that we currently have is to open some maps that will make them busy and let those quests advance further."

p All of a sudden, Liam suddenly chimed in and insisted. "Our current hunting grounds are not going to be enough? What does it mean? The maps on the borders of each Kingdom and Empire are going to handle that."

"Those places are filled with Level-200 to Level-250 Monsters in different ranks, so how come those places are still not enough for those so-called top experts?" he added in a dissatisfied tone.

Hearing that, Marcus couldn't contain his laughter and immediately refuted "Hehe... you people from the development team must be focusing too much on the levels and abilities of the monsters and how good the items and equipment that you guys are making."

"You should pay more attention to how scary those guys that we are talking about are. They are not the same as those little kids playing in your homes. These people on our topic are monsters in human disguise. Not only did they exceed our expectations, they even surpassed the calculations that 'AI Chronos' have."

With those words, the members of the development team suddenly turned silent as they also knew about the existence of the monster players that Marcus was talking about. Especially for those people who were marked in the list as Miracle Players.

But despite knowing the truth, their pride as developers of the game couldn't admit that fact easily. They rather make some excuses than acknowledge that their ideas couldn't beat these little monsters.

On the other hand, the two leaders ignored their comments and continued with their discussion.

"So, you are going with that strategy again to buy us more time?" said Troy without removing his gaze at Carlos.

Hearing that, the head of the monitoring team slightly nodded his head and added. "Matching the progress of these players is the best thing that we can do."

"Then which maps are you suggesting to open?" asked Troy in response.

"The Central Territories," answered Carlos in an instant and without showing any hint of hesitation.

Bang!

"That is crazy!"

Hearing those words, the members of the development team immediately went mad and started making a fuss. But before the situation could even escalate, Troy suddenly raised his hand and silenced them.

Then he looked at Carlos before asking. "Which of them and how many?"

This time, Carlos hesitated for a moment before giving his answer. "All of them if possible. Or at least the main bases of the major races that are available to the public."

Bang!

"Have you gone senile? Do you even know what you are talking about?" shouted Liam while standing up and slamming his hand on the table.

Unfortunately for him, his team leader gave him a glare and yelled. "Silence!"

After that, Troy turned his attention back before saying. "I'm afraid that it is impossible. And even if I agree with you, I don't think we will be able to convince everyone at tomorrow's meeting."

"But what if we put some special conditions to unlock those places alongside some restrictions that will prevent the players from entering those territories easily?" replied Carlos with a serious expression on his face.

Hearing that, Troy couldn't help but become a little interested and nodded his head. "Go on."

When Carlos saw that he finally piqued the interest of his friend, he immediately continued. "First, the players need to be successful on the quest regarding the hidden races that are currently underway on being unlocked. When that happens, we can have a solid reason that can support us in convincing the other teams for tomorrow's meeting."

"Next, the requirements on entering those Central Territories need to be a little harsh. For example, only players who reach the level-150 mark can enter the cities within those territories. Plus, the players who pass the Tier 3 Promotion Quest are the only ones that have the right to accept the mission from the NPCs in there."

"With these conditions, I am pretty sure that even the chairman will be convinced," he added confidently.

"Requiring the players to at least reach Expert Level before entering those territories and only giving the right of building a 'Social Status' to the players who are in Ranker Levels. Not that bad I suppose!" said Troy with an amused look on his face.

After that, he fell in deep thought as he tried to weigh the pros and cons of the plan that Carlos had proposed before wearing a mysterious grin and nodding his head. "Then how about we start building up a foolproof plan for tomorrow's presentation?"

Chapter 635 Raiding The Royal Palace (Part 3)

.....

Real World, Shin's Residence

Arthur just got a call from Shin and was told to login into the game and head over to the Blade Glade Kingdom for some quest. He was also asked to gather the members of their team if possible since the quest was quite troublesome.

"Tsk! What kind of trouble is this guy getting himself into again?" complained Arthur as he headed over to his room after taking a shower. And while he was climbing the stairs, he suddenly bumped into Leonard who was on his way to the kitchen for some water.

"What is it? Did Shin cause another trouble again?" asked Leonard smirkingly as climbed down the stairs.

Hearing that, Arthur released a helpless sigh before replying. "Not exactly. It looks like he bumps into another major quest with that crazy luck of his."

Leonard chuckled when he heard that and asked. "So, where are we going to hold this party and who are the 'organizers' this time?"

"I am not sure about the details since he said that he is going to explain it later. But the location is in the Beast Glade Kingdom," answered Arthur while shrugging his shoulders.

"Beast Glade Kingdom? You mean that Kingdom under the 'Tri-Kingdom Alliance' alongside that small Kingdom of Dwarves and the Elven Kingdom?" asked Leonard with knitted brows.

"Yeah, that one," said Arthur while nodding his head.

Hearing that, Leonard made a snap with his fingers before saying excitedly. "What a coincidence!? The Temple of War God just gave me a special quest regarding that Kingdom. I heard that the Corrupted Cult is messing with that kingdom. And since that place is under the jurisdiction of our temple, they want me to deal with the situation."

Hearing that, Arthur suddenly clicked his tongue before complaining. "Tsk! I thought it was finally my turn but it looks like I need to wait again. How long do I need to wait for my Empire Quest to be cleared?"

Seeing the dejected expression on Arthur's face, Leonard couldn't help but shake his head a little before patting his friend's shoulder before saying. "Who said that you can senselessly accept an Empire Quest at this stage of the game?"

"Huh~...! Is it my fault then? Are you telling me to refuse such an important quest when it is right in front of my eyes?" asked Arthur with a deep frown.

This time, Leonard refused to give any comment and just shrugged his shoulders before brushing past Arthur and continuing to climb down the stairs. "Let's meet at Shin's residence later."

"And you should contact Archimedes and Daulla too. I heard that they are finally done with the things on their sides. I'm sure that they will like to take part in this quest," he added as he walked towards the kitchen in a hurry.

Going back in the game.

The trio of Charlotte, Owen, and Ithilien managed to infiltrate the dungeon prison without encountering any problem. But despite that being the case, they still didn't dare to lower their guard.

Moreover, Charlotte was also very suspicious of the current situation since she was familiar with the guards of this place. The protection on this place shouldn't be this lax, especially that their opponents were supposedly expecting them to be in here.

Their small group only encountered the weakest of guards so far. So, it was pretty obvious that the most elite ones were currently waiting for them at the deeper parts of the prison.

The three of them continued advancing cautiously while taking down all of the guards that saw them.

Not long after, they finally reached their destination and saw a huge crowd of elite guards waiting for their arrival. And to make the matter worse, Charlotte even spotted the elite Twilight NPCs that she fought alongside Shin earlier among the ranks of their enemies together with one of the personal guards that were always on the side of the crown prince.

"Heh! You guys sure took your time to arrive here. Did you know that I am about to die of boredom while wait for you?" said Silver as he took a step forward.

Owen couldn't help but stare at Silver weirdly when he saw the latter's actions before whispering to Charlotte. "Who is this guy? He is acting as if he is some sort of bigshot or something."

"Don't get fooled by his dumbass attitude, that guy at least has a decent skill to keep up with any Peak Titled Rankers," replied Charlotte without removing her eyes at the huge crowd of enemies in front of them.

"Heh! Don't bother to think of any strategy to win this losing battle. You guys are already surrounded, so just surrender peacefully so that we don't waste our time," said Silver smirkingly. And when those words left his mouth, another group of guards suddenly came out from the corridor where they came from.

"Looks like we are now stacked in a very sticky situation," said Owen with a twitching corner of his mouth after seeing that they suddenly got surrounded from all sides.

"This is no longer a part of the plan, so what are we going to do now? I'm not sure that I can guard both of you with this many enemies," he added as he swept his gaze at the guards surrounding them.

Hearing that, Ithilien slightly nodded her head. They were expecting that their opponents were going to strengthen the security within the prison but they didn't expect that the opposing side would sacrifice the security on the other areas in exchange for focusing all of their forces in a single place.

Meanwhile, Silver was currently smiling from ear to ear as he was confident that Charlotte and her partners would not be able to get out of this place no matter how hard they tried.

He was about to say something to mock the trio when he suddenly heard Charlotte laughing. He raised his eyebrows and asked. "What's so funny?"

Owen and Ithilien were also the same since they also couldn't understand the meaning of her actions.
'Did she have a plan that we are unaware of?'

"I was wondering why he insisted on not taking any more loot earlier. Maybe he already knew that we are going to face this kind of situation," muttered Charlotte laughingly.

Overhearing her words, Owen and Ithilien further knitted their brows as they couldn't understand what she was saying.

It was the same for Silver who was currently wearing a deep frown right now. But at the same time, his senses were telling him that there was something wrong in the current situation. So, he immediately waved his hand and ordered the soldiers to capture the three before something went wrong.

Unfortunately, it was already too late.

Charlotte suddenly took out a scroll from her inventory space and quickly sacrificed a couple of high-quality materials to it before crushing that scroll without any hint of hesitation.

Swoosh!

Then all of the guards suddenly halted their tracks as a powerful aura swept past their bodies. And immediately after that, everyone felt an intense tremble from the earth and shook the entire prison.

Not long after, earth pillars suddenly rose from the ground and pierced the ceilings one after another. Then they formed a strange formation that enclosed the entire place.

When the formation was done, Silver suddenly felt that the mana density within the area became rich. At the same time, he could also sense that the defensive formation that he had set earlier to enclose the castle showed some signs of being disturbed.

"D*mn! The elemental balance has been broken!" cursed Silver out loud before ordering the prison guards and Twilight NPCs that he brought to attack. "What are you doing?! Move!"

Hearing his shout, the NPCs finally regained their senses and resumed attacking. And when Owen and Ithilien saw that they were being besieged from all sides, they couldn't help but curse their luck before getting ready for battle.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

But before the NPCs could even reach them, four simultaneous explosions suddenly blasted the leading NPCs and sent them flying towards their colleagues.

Then the two saw that they were currently surrounded by Charlotte's Elemental Companions on four sides with Suijin floating in the middle of their group.

"Eh!"

Both Owen and Ithilien were taken aback by their sudden appearance but they immediately regained their senses and quickly readjusted their positions to compliment the formations of the Elemental Spirits and took their battle stance.

Owen positioned himself in front of Charlotte while raising his shield in front of him. Then Ithilien stood behind the latter as she loaded a couple of arrows on her bow and infused her magic on them.

Then Charlotte started chanting out some spells and summoned a group of fireballs and icicles above her, fully prepared to be launched at any given moment.

Everything happened a little too fast for Silver to respond, so he could only stare at the group with glaring eyes. And when Charlotte saw that, she immediately smirked and quickly said provokingly. "Where is that smirking face that you had earlier?"

Then she waved her hand and told her Elemental Companions that they were free to go on a rampage for the first time.

Chapter 636 A Monster Closest To Perfection

...

Bang!

There were a series of explosions that kept on flashing above the castle roofs as Shin and Thirio fought against each other.

The flashes of explosions and blazing flares were just the beginning since the collisions of their skills were much stronger than anything else. They were illuminating the night due to their battle. And because of that, they were also attracting the attention of the elven guards battling within the castle walls alongside Akailu and Alucard who were battling against them.

"Tsk! What a showoff. He asked us to create a commotion to attract the attention of everyone but look at him making an even larger scene than us," said Akailu after taking a quick look in the sky.

"Are they holding a firework show? Should we join him a little? It seems fun," said Alucard as he rested his rifle on his shoulder.

Hearing that, Akailu slightly shook his head before replying. "You heard him earlier, right? It is his fight so don't get involved. With his current strength, it will be tough to take him down even if we work together. So, there shouldn't be any problem."

"Heh! Who said that we are helping him? Isn't it more exciting that way?" said Alucard smirkingly while giving Akailu a meaningful look before adding. "And aren't you curious if we really can't beat him together?"

"Heh! Idiot! You know that we can always do it after we are done with this quest. And didn't you say before that you owe him a couple of sparring matches?" said Akailu before ordering his summoned monsters to readjust their positions so that they could defend against the Royal Guards who just joined the battle.

In the meantime, Alucard suddenly disappeared from his current position and appeared beside Akailu while swinging his sword in the air.

Clang!

And not long after, Alucard's sword was blocked by another sword before an elven knight suddenly materialized while holding that very sword.

"Looks like we need to put in a little more effort since we got some decent sparring partners now," he said while staring at his opponent's eyes.

...

Meanwhile, Thirio couldn't believe what was happening right in front of him. "What's wrong with this guy?"

"I already know he already has decent strength and insane speed, but to think that even his defensive capabilities are this good? This is getting really annoying as the time goes by," he added with an annoyed tone.

And as if adding more burden to himself, he suddenly remembered the intel that he got from their headquarters. "Tsk! And based on the information that we gather about this guy, he is also quite skilled in terms of magical skills. Plus, his control over his summons is not that shabby either."

"Is there really nothing that he can't do?" he muttered to himself while looking at Shin solemnly.

He was throwing quite a lot of heavy attacks already but all of those seemed to be not putting a lot of pressure on Shin. And to make the matter even worse, the latter seemed to be not taking him seriously at this point in time. He felt that he was being treated as a training partner right now.

He was feeling that way because Shin was not using his signature twin-sword style with different forms since the start of the battle. The latter didn't even bother to change the form of the sword-sheath on his left hand and just used it like some sort of defensive tool.

If he was holding a shield instead of a sheath, then Thirio would think that Shin was also a knight or something.

The Messenger was quite confused if Shin was looking down on him or it was his real style. But one thing was for sure, the current Shin became much harder to read compared to the Shin that Thirio had read from reports that they received previously.

Because Shin didn't need to change the form of the sheath on his left hand, he could now freely sheath and unsheathe his sword at any given moment and threw some surprise sword-drawing attacks mixed in his current offensive and defensive style.

But what was even worse about this current situation, Thirio also couldn't forget the fact that Shin could still change the form of the sheath at any given moment if he wanted to. And whenever the Messenger thought about this, he couldn't help but think what kind of monster was standing in front of him.

He might be still in an incomplete state, but he was already close to reaching it. Speed and agility, strength and power, vitality and tenacity, intelligence and magical prowess alongside a strong will to control his summons – all of these were gathered within a single entity and were only waiting to become one.

Having that thought in mind, Thirio couldn't help but stare at Shin with a very solemn face. And for a moment, he suddenly saw a silhouette of someone that their leader had described and was currently chasing after.

"Someone who is closest to perfection," he muttered with a soft voice before clenching his hands and tightening his grip over his war before shouting at Shin. "Impossible! It is impossible!"

Boom!

He then activated his two-fold berserk and started walking forward while leaving a trail of heavy footprints behind. His eyes also turned bloodshot as dark glows were flicking at the corner of those eyes.

Hu~!

At the same time, white smoke was also coming out of his mouth and matched his breathing. And alongside it, his entire body was also emitting a very dangerous aura that turned the air around him heavy.

Seeing all of those, Shin slightly knitted his brow before also activating his own two-fold berserk skills successively while fixing his gaze at his opponent.

He was currently on full alert since he could clearly sense that the current state of his opponent was completely different compared to how he used to be. Thirio was currently in a league higher than his previous state.

Bang!

Then Shin heard a loud stomp from the distance ahead of him alongside the disappearance of his opponent.

Swoosh!

Shin subconsciously leaned backward right after he saw that and saved himself from getting cleaved by a war axe that was brushing past right in front of his face.

After dodging, he quickly readjusted his center of gravity while falling backward before spinning around and throwing a back kick at Thirio who suddenly appeared in front of him out of nowhere.

Bang!

But despite getting hit, Thirio refused to budge even though he was currently in the air and couldn't properly defend himself with such a sudden attack.

But at the same time, Shin used the momentum of his previous spin to jump in the air and quickly threw another kick that was heading straight to Thirio's neck.

Thirio was able to see through Shin's movements so he slightly adjusted his position in the air before blocking the incoming kick with his other hand.

Pak!

Ta-ta!

Then Thirio successfully landed back on the ground, switching their positions in an instant. And now that Shin was currently in the air, the Messenger quickly grabbed that opportunity to swing his war axe upwards and seemed to be planning to slice Shin's body into two.

But at that very moment, Shin suddenly used the 'Mondi's Jump' to continue spinning in the air before swinging his sword downwards. And to add more force to his attack, he even used the 'Falling Lightblade' Skill during his descent.

Shing!

Bang!

The blades of their weapons clashed very strongly and held in their positions for a couple of moments before a powerful collision of powers was immediately exploded and sent a shockwave in every direction.

Due to how strong that explosion was, the roof where Thirio stood was unable to withstand the pressure and finally collapsed.

Then the two fell alongside the falling debris from the roof. But during their fall, the two used every debris that they saw near them as platforms to jump around while exchanging more blows in the air.

And when their feet finally reached the ground, both of their figures suddenly blurred and transformed into a pair of silhouettes that kept on clashing against each other.

Clang! Clang!

Bang!

Boom!

As their battle progressed, the entire hall slowly turned into ruins as the collisions of their skills wrecked the entire place. The huge stone columns were instantly blasted while the even floor was either got cleaved or turned into a crater due to their attacks.

Not long after, the intensity of their battle became even fiercer as both of them started to use their specialized Mana to reinforce their attacks while using some complex combat technique.

Thirio enhanced the power behind his attacks with the purple flame enfolding the blades of his war axes but all of his attacks were instantly nullified by Shin who was only using the enhanced version of 'Sunlight Wielding'.

Earlier, during their first encounter, Shin was slightly behind in terms of strength because Thirio had the advantage of his class and race. But at this point in time, they were now fighting on an equal footing when it came to the power behind their attacks alone.

But Shin still had a better edge when it came to speed, so it was pretty natural for Thirio to be at a slight disadvantage in this battle. What's more, the latter could also feel that his opponent seemed to be slowly getting stronger as time went by.

At first, he thought that it was just his imagination. But it didn't take long for him to realize that it wasn't the case. This monster was really gaining experience during battle and slowly evolving into an even stronger creature.

The thought alone was enough for a top-expert like Thirio to be wary. But experiencing it first hand really put the latter in despair.

He was aware that Shin was a Battle Genius after the analysis that they had when watching his previous battles. But Thirio was not expecting that the speed of his growth was as insane as this.

"What kind of monster is this? Is he really on this same level as 'them'?" thought Thirio to himself while looking at Shin solemnly.

He then took out a spherical item with deep crimson color from inventory after some hesitation.

"If that is really the case, then we really need to halt his progress by any means possible," he said with a hoarse voice while tightly gripping that item.

Chapter 637 Turning Misfortune Into Fortune

.....

Shin suddenly felt a sense of danger when he saw Thirio taking out the crimson sphere from his inventory space.

It wasn't a bad premonition about the fight that he usually got during the battle. Instead, it was more like a bad feeling about himself; it was as if something was about to happen to him rather than the result of this battle.

The moment Shin sensed that he suddenly clenched his hand and tightened his grip over his katana before lunging forward and charged towards Thirio with insane speed.

A moment later, Shin arrived in front of his opponent while brandishing the [Yamato] in a very strong manner while also using 'Destructive Slash' to further strengthen the power behind that strike.

Clang!

But before he could even land a strike, the blade of his katana was suddenly stopped by an invisible force and prevented it from advancing forward.

Then Shin saw Thirio crushed the crimson sphere on his hands which suddenly released a blinding crimson light and illuminated the dark hall.

Bang!

And after an instant, a powerful explosion sent Shin flying. The force behind that explosion was quite strong and gave Shin a hard time stabilizing his balance in the air.

Due to that, he decided to use the force that was pushing him away to his advantage. He forced his body to flip multiple times in the air before using 'Mondi's Jump' to step on the air behind him and kicked it all of a sudden, re-launching himself towards Thirio once again.

But during his flight, the corner of his eye suddenly caught a system notification that just came in. Given that, he quickly used another change of 'Mondi's Jump' to halt his advance and jumped backward.

He created enough distance between his opponent and himself so that he could react to any sudden attack that his opponent might throw at him. Then he took a quick glance at the series of notifications that he got.

System: You have been directly exposed to the Cursed Light of the Blood Monarch.

System: You have been cursed by the Blood Monarch Powers.

Curse Details: Dying once is equivalent to dying ten times. The moment you get killed you will lose 10 of your current levels. (This curse will last until you got killed)

At the same time, you will also undergo a weakened state for the entire week (in-game time) right after reviving.

Your EXP gain will reduce to 90% during the weakened state alongside a massive decrease in monster drop rates.

Shin couldn't help but wear a deep frown behind his mask, especially when he saw the penalty after dying once. His face was even twitching quite stiffly as he stared at the curse that was cast on his body.

But that was not the worst thing that he saw. It was because he saw the last note at the end of the final system notification.

Warning: This curse can't be undone by any kind of cleansing blessing even if the quality of the scroll is the highest.

Note: This curse can only be lifted if you went personally on a sacred altar of a certain god.

"Looks like I am f-..." Shin was about to curse to himself when another series of system notifications suddenly appeared in front of his eyes.

This time, he was really not sure what was happening.

Ding!

System: A special power is fighting against the curse. The Power of the Blood Monarch's curse weakened significantly!

System: Your Crimson Reaper, the Blood Prince Vladimir sensed the presence of a large amount of Blood Elemental Mana in the air and within your body.

The Mutated Blood Spirit attempted to absorb all of those Blood Elemental Mana and turn it into his own powers.

Ding!

System: Another elemental power was trying to fight against the curse. The power of the Blood Monarch's curse was further weakened.

System: Your Shadow Reaper, the Evolved Abomination Spirit Grimrace sensed the evil energy shrouding the curse cast on your body.

The Abomination Shadow Spirit was trying to absorb the evil energy mixed in the curse to complete his evolution.

...

Shin stared even more blankly at the new set of system notifications in front of his eyes. And even if the stiff expression on his face was being covered by his mask, the frozen muscles of his body showed that he was feeling a little too tense.

Naturally, Thirio was able to notice such a sudden change in Shin's mood given the enhanced senses that he currently had.

"Heh! Why are you so tense? We are just starting," he said smirkingly before getting ready to give everything he could just to take Shin.

But before he could even make his move, he suddenly sensed a very dangerous feeling coming from Shin's dictions. And it was not only coming from a single entity but two of them.

Then he suddenly saw a floating sphere made of blood on Shin's right side followed by the sudden formation of a cluster of black smoke on his other side.

Thirio felt that his entire body suddenly became frozen stiff as the dangerous feeling that he was getting became even stronger. And to make the matter even worse, he suddenly received a system notification that almost dug out his eyes from their sockets.

"Wha-what is the meaning of this? H-how can this b-be p-possible-...? T-that item is s-supposedly a Curse Ball with a Legendary Grade, s-so how come-...?"

Thirio was starting to stutter when he read those notifications and stared at Shin with disbelieving eyes.

On the other hand, Shin didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the new set of system notifications right in front of him. He also didn't know if he was going to thank his opponent or not for the 'blessing' that he just received.

Ding!

System: Congratulations! Blood Price Vladimir was able to fully absorb all of the Blood Elemental Mana! He now became 'Noblesse Crimson Spirit'.

Ding!

System: Congratulations! The Abomination Shadow Spirit Grimrace successfully devoured all of the evil energy belonging to the curse and managed to complete its evolution! He is now an 'Eldritch Psychic Spirit'!

Ding!

System: Due to the newly enhanced powers of your 'Reapers', the Elemental Skills that you received from them were slightly modified.

System: With the assistance of your 'Reapers', the curse that was supposedly cast on your body will be sent back to the other cast as a form of backslash.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

At the same time, the floating sphere made of blood and the cluster of black smoke beside Shin suddenly dissipated and revealed Vladimir Grimrace who was currently in their Elemental Spirit Transformations. But compared to their previous appearance their respective transformations were now giving out a more dangerous feeling.

Vladimir, who was currently in his Blood Sovereign form, was slightly similar to his previous appearance. But the royal robe that he was wearing now had some blood runes swimming on its surface.

The blood wings on his back became even more distinct while a glowing crown was added to his transformation and hovered right above his head. And adding the crimson rapier on his right hand and the long and sharp nails on his other hand, the feeling he was giving out was both savage and majestic.

On the other hand, there was nothing noticeable added on Grimrace's Yaksha Transformation. But given the black smoke radiating from his entire body, the floating shadow daggers revolving around him, and

the vicious and crimson eyes that he had, it was very clear that he was a walking calamity in humanoid form.

Thirio was sweating bullets when he saw the sudden appearance of those Elemental Spirits. And since both of them just finished their respective mutation and evolution, they had the powers to reject the suppressing skill that could forcefully unsummon a summoned creature like them for the time being.

"I'm really speechless on your 'present,'" said Shin sneeringly as he slowly took a step forward. Then he raised his head a little and looked at Thirio before saying with a vicious tone. "And since I am really grateful, I feel like I need to at least 'grant your wish'."

Swoosh!

After that, Shin quickly sprinted forward and lunged his sword forward, planning to end this battle as soon as possible. He was not sure of the situations on the other side, so he really needed to at least finish his job so that he could proceed at helping his teammates.

Both of them were somewhat exhausted from their battle, but Shin knew that he was at a great advantage this time since his opponent's morale was at its weakest.

Moreover, Thirio was still shocked at what just happened, so it was pretty much impossible for him to fight Shin properly with the current state of his mind. And even though he still managed to fend off a couple of attacks thrown at him, he was no longer as strong and shard unlike earlier.

There were a lot of gaps in his defense and multiple flaws in his attacks, so Shin used them to his advantage to slowly chip down the remaining health on Thirio's HP Bar.

Thirio was in a state of panic and could no longer regain himself. And adding the pressure provided by the curse that was reversely cast on him, it was impossible for him to make a comeback.

Given that, he could only stare blankly at the incoming blade that was about to sever his head.

But before all of his hope was gone, an old voice suddenly sounded beside Thirio. "I already knew that this was going to happen. You really are way too careless compared to the other Messengers."

Then Shin saw Thirio disappear in front of him, which also made his sword miss its target. And at the same time, both Vladimir and Grimrace suddenly appeared on each of Shin's sides, blocking a pair of shadow wolves that appeared out of nowhere.

These two elemental spirits didn't make their moves earlier since Shin didn't give them an order. But now that someone interfered in the duel, they two had no choice but to step in and protect their host.

Shin stood straight and looked ahead of him while wearing a deep frown. A few meters away from them, he saw Thirio standing beside an old man in a black robe with an emblem of a skull with torch-like eyes on his right chest.

He couldn't help but have a solemn look on his face since he could sense a very dangerous feeling coming from that old man. And adding the fact that it was an NPC, Shin knew that this mission was going to be even more troublesome than what it was supposed to be.

Chapter 638 A Hollow Victory

.....

Shin looked solemnly at the old man standing beside Thirio as he read the basic details of the NPC. "A Level 300 NPC? Tsk! This is going to be really troublesome."

Then he shifted his gaze at Vladimir and Grimrace who were currently in a special state where they could temporarily regain a portion of their original strength.

"These two are currently Level 250. Defeating that old man may still be impossible due to the level suppression, but pinning him in place shouldn't be a problem," muttered Shin to himself before starting to make some places inside his head. 'And while they are keeping that old man busy, I can take advantage of that situation and eliminate that guy-...'

But while he was in the middle of formulating his plan, the old man suddenly opened his mouth and said something that Shin had never expected. "You did a fine job, Envoy of the Sun and Moon Church. It is our defeat once again."

He then took a brief pause before quickly adding with a sneering tone. "But don't let your guard down yet because the next one may be ours."

Then Shin suddenly sensed a very dangerous feeling coming from the old man. Naturally, both Vladimir and Grimrace would sense it too. So, they quickly put up a defensive stance and get ready for battle.

When the old man saw their reactions, he suddenly smirked and waved his hands before saying. "There is no need to be tense. We both know that it is going to be hard for us to properly fight while protecting our 'baggage'. So, I suggest we stop everything for now."

'Baggage?' thought Shin with a twitching face the moment he heard those words. But aside from that, he didn't say anything to refute the old man's words since he knew that all of it was true. 'It may be hard for this old man to fight both of my Reapers while protecting Thirio. But we are also in the same situation.'

Shin was trying to weigh the result of the battle if they continue fighting. It was already obvious that he currently had the advantage since he would only lose a single level whereas Thirio would lose ten alongside undergoing a weakened state for a week.

But despite that being the case, Shin couldn't help feeling that there was something odd with the old man's words. Even though the tone that the old man had really sounded that he wanted this fight to be over, the feeling that Shin was getting from those words seemed to be quite the opposite; he felt that the old man was trying to provoke them instead.

'Is it a bluff or not? But my instincts can never be wrong when it comes to these kinds of things,' thought Shin to himself as he hesitated whether to continue fighting or not.

While he was still contemplating what he was going to do, he suddenly heard the old man smirking at him. "Heh! You might be a dangerous tiger but you are still too young."

Swoosh!

After that, Shin suddenly saw a shadow around the old man and Thirio moved and circled around the two before transforming into a ring of black flame that slowly rose in the air.

Then the old man continued to wear his smirking smile before saying. "I am looking forward to our next meeting. I wonder how you are going to move your pieces when you are given enough time to look at the board."

Swoosh!

Not long after, the two of them were swallowed by the shadowy flame before dissipating alongside it.

"D*mn it! So, it is indeed a bluff!" cursed Shin out loud before quickly adding to his thoughts. "Now that I think about it, that old man is giving off the same feeling whenever I am talking to Grandfather. So, that is what I felt," while wearing a weird look on his face.

A few moments later, Shin suddenly received a call from Owen and snapped him out of his daze. And right after he picked up the call, the latter quickly reported. "We successfully saved the king and his attendants. We are now dealing with the aftermath, so you better hurry and regroup with us before the royal guards capture you."

Shin didn't respond immediately because he was still in the middle of collecting his thoughts. And when he finally regained himself, he slightly nodded his head before asking. "What about Alucard and Akailu?"

"Well, since we can't share our quest with them, they can't stay inside the castle. So, they immediately fled as soon as they got my message, just like what we had planned," answered Owen in an instant.

"What about the crown prince?" asked Shin immediately after.

Hearing that, Owen released a helpless sigh before answering. "Unfortunately, he managed to escape alongside his closest aide."

Shin slightly nodded his head. "Alright, that's enough for now. Send me your coordinates and I will head over there."

.....

Everything went smoothly since the King was personally dealing with the aftermath. Naturally, his attendants wanted to stop him and asked him to take a rest.

Unfortunately for them, they couldn't respond to the king when he said that it was his responsibility to clean up the mess that his son had made. And with such a strong argument, the attendants could only shut their mouths and comply with his words.

The entire castle was really overturned due to the battle. There were quite a lot of places that were destroyed during the process. Even the main palace suffered some serious damage. Well, it was natural since that was the place where Shin and Thirio mainly fought, so it was natural for it to become in ruins.

There were also a lot of elven guards who died in battle while the survivors were either fatally wounded or became crippled. They were NPCs, so they couldn't revive nor regrow their limbs. And due to these, the military forces of the castle suffered greatly.

Looking at all of these, Shin couldn't help but think if this was really what the Corrupted Cult was after. And since the capital city of the Elven Kingdom suffered such a devastating blow, the other cities within the kingdom couldn't help but be on high alert and strengthen their defense.

After all, they were not sure if the members of the Corrupted Cult were lurking within their borders.

In the meantime, the Elven Council was in a mess. And since they were still in the middle of recovering, the 'Crown' was not in a position to hold a ceremony to honor the achievement of Shin and the others.

Fortunately, their rewards were still given to them after meeting the King. Though, they could tell that they didn't manage to ace the quest since they didn't receive any special rewards nor a follow-up quest.

Well, that was to be expected given how much damage the castle had suffered. So, to put it bluntly, they really scored very low in this particular quest.

After that, Shin and Charlotte mentioned the situation of the Beast Glade Kingdom and proposed a couple of ways to assist them. And one of them was sending some delegates that would visit their allied kingdom. This was one of their original plans for the Elven Kingdom previously. But since they couldn't do it earlier, they were trying to see if it would work the other way around.

Unfortunately, they were immediately rejected by the council right after they presented their proposition. Shin tried his hardest to convince them but they were repeatedly rejected by the elders of the council.

One of the reasons why they were rejected was because these elves were looking for someone to vent their anger. And since one of the 'intruders' who killed most of the elven guards earlier was a Beastman, it was natural for them to direct their anger to Akailu.

Fortunately, Charlotte couldn't share the quest with Alucard and Akailu, so Shin was able to say that they did not belong to their group. If the quest was shared with those two, then Shin and the others would surely be in trouble. Or worse, they would be the ones locked within the prison even though they managed to save the king.

Given all of that, Shin and Charlotte walked out of the castle dejectedly. They failed to convince the council. And due to that, the former couldn't shake off the feeling that it was one of the Corrupted Cults schemes.

"What if their real target is the Beast Glade Kingdom and not the Elven Kingdom in the first place?" muttered Shin as he started looking from a different perspective. "How about both?"

"There is definitely something odd going on with that Elder from the Corrupted Cult. He is talking a little leisurely earlier too. It is as if the failure of taking over the Elven Kingdom is not a big deal."

"If they manage to win earlier, then they will be able to take control of the Elven Kingdom and their plans for the Beast Glade Kingdom will proceed smoothly since the former will not be able to provide any assistance."

"But now that they lose to us... F*ck! The Elven Kingdom still couldn't assist the Beast Glade Kingdom due to the heavy blow that they suffered from the earlier battle!"

"At the same time, the other cities can't give any help since they are afraid that they are the next target of the Corrupted Cult. Or worse, some of their cities have already been taken over unnoticed."

Shin then halted his steps and looked at the sky before closing his eyes. "So, that is the real reason why I am getting that ominous feeling earlier. We are already in a lose-lose battle from the very start."

"Now, I am starting to suspect that whatever is happening in the Dwarf Kingdom is also one of the Corrupted Cult's tricks to isolate the Beast Glade Kingdom from their allies. I wonder who plotted such a grand scheme. Is it really that old man or someone else?"

After that, he clenched his hands quite tightly before muttering with an annoyed tone. "This is my first time feeling unhappy despite winning a battle."

"Looks like this is going to be an interesting match. I wonder who I am up against," he added while wearing a huge grin under his mask.

Chapter 639 Exposed?

...

On a secluded map within the Elven Kingdom, Owen and the others were waiting for Shin and Charlotte to arrive before proceeding to their next destination.

"Tsk! They are taking longer than what we have expected," said Akailu while wearing a deep frown.

Hearing that, Alucard couldn't help but turn his head to him before asking. "How many times have you said it already? Eleven times? Thirteen? Sixteen? Honestly, I already lost count when it surpasses ten."

Akailu suddenly smirked when he heard that and said sarcastically. "Are you flexing your ability to count? Being able to count from one to ten sure is amazing-... For kids, of course."

"What? Are you picking a fight? How about we find out which one of us is really stronger?" asked Alucard while standing up from sitting position and putting his left hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Finishing what we started earlier? Sure, I am really getting tired of you," said Akailu with a huge grin while staring to summon his monster beasts one by one.

Sigh~!

In the meantime, Owen was sighing helplessly from the sidelines. "Here they are again. How long are they going to keep on fighting each other?"

"Are you not going to stop them?" asked Ithilien while watching from the side.

"Hiss...! Stop them? Why would I? It is their problem now ours," said Owen before sitting under the tree and planning to rest a little more while waiting for Shin and Charlotte to arrive.

The fight between Alucard and Akailu was about to break out when Shin suddenly appeared in between them and stopped their tracks. "Tsk! It is really hard to leave the two of you alone. Since you guys have that much energy, then how about you guys head over to the Beast Glade Kingdom and pick a fight there?"

"I'm pretty sure that you will never get bored when you arrive there," he added smirkingly while shifting his gaze between those two.

The two suddenly stopped moving not because Shin had stopped them but because they were able to read between the lines of what they just heard.

"Us? Then what about you? Don't tell me you are going to ditch us after getting what you want?" said Akailu while wearing a deep frown.

"Tsk! I think too highly of you. I guess I am all wrong," said Alucard sneeringly.

Aside from Owen, Charlotte and Ithilien were also looking at Shin quite weirdly. They seemed to be starting to look at him negatively.

Understanding what they were thinking, Shin couldn't help but chuckle a little before explaining himself. "I know that this sounds like an excuse, but there is really an emergency that I need to take care of, so I can't accompany you with this."

"Hey-...!" Akailu was about to curse at Shin when the latter suddenly stopped him from taking by raising his hand.

"Hesh! Let me finish first before saying anything," said Shin to calm Akailu down before continuing. "I may not be accompanying you, but you will get better teammates this time. I can even guarantee that you will be grateful to me for not partaking on this quest."

"Heh! Stop making it sound too overrated. You are making it sound as if an elite group of top-ranked players is joining us," commented Alucard.

He was trying to mock Shin's words by saying that but Shin just shrugged his shoulders and replied nonchalantly. "You can also put it like that. Their skill levels and combat capabilities are at least 'decent' enough to stand at the peak of this game."

Alucard and Akailu couldn't help but laugh at Shin's words as they found it ridiculous. It sounded like a joke to them.

"How about telling us the name of this great team?" asked Akailu with a sarcastic tone while also wearing a huge grin.

But to his surprise, Shin really answered his question with the same nonchalant attitude that he currently had. "I heard that it is still not an official adventurer team, but they indeed have a name already. It is called 'Empyrean Talons', from what I remember."

Hearing such a straightforward answer, the two could no longer laugh at Shin nor say anything to refute back. And when Shin saw that both of them suddenly turned silent, he immediately continued. "If you don't have anything anymore, then I will be going now."

"If you want to know more about them, then go ask them directly. Or... you can ask him for more details since I heard that he is also a member of that team," he added while pointing at Owen.

Hearing that, the other four simultaneously turned their heads at Owen while wearing a weird look on their faces.

"You have joined an Adventurer Team? How come you never mentioned it to me?" said Ithilien while wearing a deep frown.

"You are a part of an Adventurer Team? So, you are no longer a solo gamer," said Alucard as he looked at Owen curiously.

On the other hand, Akailu was currently fuming with anger and quickly appeared beside Owen to grab his shoulder. "You piece of a-...! If you really are a part of an adventure team, then why didn't you ask some help from them when we are doing that stupid quest earlier?!"

"I-I..." Owen became overwhelmed by the sudden shift of the situation. He didn't even know which of them he needed to answer first. All he could do was turn his head at Shin while sending a pleading look to save him.

Unfortunately, Shin had no plan of taking the aggro back especially when he successfully took it off from him. So, he just ignored all of the pleading looks that Owen was giving him. Instead, he even added more oil to the fire by saying. "I already sent the details to your commander so all you need to do is brief them a little when you meet up later."

"Ah~! And say hi for me to that 'guy'," he added as he started to walk away.

"Hey! Hey-...! Are you really leaving me like this?" shouted Owen desperately as he watched Shin walk away.

The other three, on the other hand, already lost their interest in Shin the moment they learned that Owen joined an adventurer team. Such news was big enough to attract the attention of some big guilds and organizations.

Itlhien was close to Owen so she was only a little surprised when she heard that news. But it was quite different for Alucard and Akailu since both of them were also solo gamers who received a lot of invitations from different guilds and adventurer teams. Though, Owen's case was a special one since he was a tank.

Skilled damage dealers were everywhere, but it was different when it came to talented Tanks and Healers. And since Owen could be ranked as one of the best Tanks within the game, it was natural for him to receive some generous offers from famous organizations such as Powerhouse Guilds.

With that thought alone, the trio was sure that whatever team did Owen had joined, their members shouldn't be too shabby. In fact, they might even be a very formidable group.

Moreover, Owen was also quite picky on the team or guild that he was going to join. So, their suspicion became even stronger that he might join a powerful adventurer team. They even forgot that Shin told them that it was only an adventurer team in the making.

While those three were busy interrogating Owen about his team, Charlotte chased after Shin instead and blocked his path.

Raising his eyebrows behind his mask, Shin suddenly asked. "What? Do you still need something from me?"

Charlotte didn't immediately reply to his words and continued to stare at him for a few moments. She might have a little interaction with Shin but she was sure that he was not the type to suddenly go back to his words.

She also saw how stubborn he was when she was working with Lawless and the others. So, she knew that he was not the type that would suddenly stop in the middle of something. Her instincts were telling her that he was plotting something.

"Hey! What are you planning this time?" asked Charlotte while squinting her eyes.

Hearing that, Shin slightly knitted his brow before replying with a question of his own. "What are you talking about?"

"Suddenly changing your plans and... asking for some assistance from your friends? I can tell that there is something going on," said Charlotte while moving closer to Shin.

"And don't try to dodge the question by telling me you don't know what I am trying to say. I am pretty sure that the team that you are talking about is the same team that Siegfried and Simba are trying to build," she added, which made Shin's face twitch. If not for his mask, then it was the same as him admitting her words.

'Is this the famous 'woman's intuition' that they were talking about? It is really a scary 'talent',' thought Shin to himself as he stared back at her eyes.

Unfortunately for him, Charlotte had a hidden card under her sleeves and was able to read what was running inside his head.

It was already too late when Shin noticed it. 'Mind Reading? Sh*t, I let my guard down!'

With that Charlotte finally got her answer without Shin telling her. And even if she only got little parts of it, but it was more than enough for her to understand his plan. Moreover, it looked like she learned one of 'Shin's weaknesses' that only a very few people knew about.

Satisfied, her veil showed some slight upward movements, indicating that she just smiled. "Oh~! So, that was it. I understand now! Don't ignore me when we meet again in the Beast Glade Kingdom, alright."

Then she gently patted Shin's shoulder before brushing past him and hopping towards Owen and the others.

"D*mn it! I've got a bad feeling about this," muttered Shin before turning around and looking at Charlotte's back.

Chapter 640 Empyrean Talons (Part 1)

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Beast Glade Kingdom, Glory Mountain Range

This map was the place that Shin chose to be their ravenous point. And when he arrived at that place, the entire gang was already waiting for him.

"Here comes Mr. Important. You finally arrive!" said Arthur the moment he saw Shin walking towards them.

Hearing that, the others also turned their heads at him.

Archimedes, who was currently sitting on a tree branch, slightly nodded his head at him as a form of greeting before closing his eyes and going back to his nap. Daulla, on the other hand, bowed at Shin before turning her attention back to the virtual screen in front of her.

Meanwhile, Leonard walked over to Shin and put his arm around the latter's shoulder before saying. "Hey! Why do you always leave us behind whenever you are going to an exciting place? What kind of brother are you? At least, share the fun with us."

Shin sighed helplessly when he heard that before replying. "It is not like I can always be with you guys when I am using my dual identity. I am using the 'Nameless Swordsman' earlier, so I chose not to ask any assistance from you guys since it will arouse a lot of suspicions."

He was currently using his other identity right now, the Emperor of the Night Sickarius.

"Tsk! Tsk! Alright, you win," said Leonard while taking off his arms at Shin.

But right after he did that, Cloe immediately took over and quickly clung her arms on Shin's arms before pouting her lips. "How dare you leave me behind? And I heard you are questing with a girl, are you cheating on me?"

'This girl sure is bold,' thought Shin to himself after hearing those words. Then he looked at her before replying. "Do I have to tell you where I need to go? It is not like you are my mom or something."

"What?" Cloe was suddenly taken aback by those words and stared blankly at Shin for a couple of seconds before muttering with a dejected tone. "So, it is indeed a girl. Tsk! Dating someone behind my back, huh? Are you cheating on me!"

Hearing that, Shin slightly leaned over her which made Cloe's face turn rosy, especially that his face was close to hers. Then he flicked her forehead before saying. "Idiot! As if I have time to doing something like that. And don't make it sound as if we are going out together."

After that, he freed his arm from her before walking over to Arthur and Leonard to brief them a little about their quest.

In the meantime, Cloe was left standing on her spot while watching Shin walk away while rubbing her forehead. She totally forgot about her plan to act upset so that she could strike another 'deal' with him. "Tsk! I think I am the one that got tricked instead!"

...

"So, you are telling me that even the Racial Unlocking Quest happening in the Dwarf Kingdom is one of their schemes," asked Arthur as he knitted his brow.

"Well, it is too suspicious of all three kingdoms to have 3 regional quests all at once," said Shin while shrugging his shoulders.

Then he suddenly turned to Leonard before saying. "Anyway, things work out well for us since Leo's quest is somehow connected with our current problem."

"Tsk! Tsk! Temple of the War God sure is busy fighting the Corrupted Cults and Demonic Churches," commented Arthur from the side in a sarcastic manner. Then he turned his head at Cloe before continuing. "The same for the Church of Light. You got the same quest, aren't you?"

"You have the same quest?" asked Shin, chiming in.

"Come on! Share it with us so that we can see if we can get more clues by having all three quests together," he added, urging Cloe to hurry up.

"Hmph! You only remember whenever you need something!" said Cloe as she pouted her lips.

And to add more oil to the fire, both Arthur and Leonard suddenly injected some comments.

"Yeah, that is what kind of guy he is."

"Tsk! Tsk! How can you ignore her? Such a heartless guy."

Shin gave them a snarling look when he heard their comments before turning his head back to Cloe. "Our dear Cloe, you know that we don't have much time, am I right? How about we stop this play for now and set aside it for later?"

"Hmph! If you remove the word 'our' then I may reconsider it," said Cloe, trying to 'test' the water a little more.

Unfortunately, Shin didn't respond as she wanted and immediately turned around. "If you don't want to, then I will not force you. All you have to say is no, so why bother prolonging it?"

Cloe was taken aback by the sudden turn of events and quickly chased after Shin. "Eh!? Wait, Shin! You know that we are just joking, right? Why are you taking it too seriously? Hey!"

...

Not long after, Owen and the others finally arrived and walked over to the group. But when they finally got near and had a clear look at Shin and the others, their bodies suddenly turned stiff and refused to budge.

Alucard and Akailu were already expecting that whatever team Owen had joined, it would surely be a formidable group. But never in their dreams that it was 'this' formidable.

In fact, it was already an understatement to address them that way. This kind of lineup was already comparable to the top Adventurer Teams of the game alongside the main forces of Powerhouse Guilds.

Three Gods who stood at the peak of their respective classes, these three alone were more than enough to scare anyone that would encounter them.

Aside from them, there was also a Titled Ranker who was a champion of an official tournament that was almost comparable to Shadow Ranking Cup. And alongside him was the Electro-Mage who came from the same kingdom as him. Moreover, she was also a Maverick Ranker with an unofficial title of her own.

After that, there was a player who started gaining some fame just recently. He might not be as famous as the others but his special class and strange undead summonses piqued the interest of some powerful guilds. And after the recent incident in the Primal Kingdom, this player also got his own unofficial title.

Then, in the middle of this group, was a player who was 'rumored' to be comparable to the Nameless swordsman who was the champion of the Shadow Ranking Cup and had the title of Angel of Death.

Alucard, Akailu, and Ithilien were all experts so it was natural for them to be updated about the recent news regarding the game. So, they naturally heard about the rumor that the Dragon God Siegfried and

War God Simba were creating an adventurer team of their own. But they never did expect that they would stand in front of this rumored team, much less imagine that this was the team that Owen had joined.

Looking at Shin and the others, the three finally understood the meaning behind the Nameless Swordsman's words. They were really thankful to him now that they learned who they were working with this time.

Then they simultaneously turned their heads to Owen and gave him a sharp and questioning look as if they were demanding some explanation.

Little did they know, this was also the first time Owen had seen his team. And since Shin indeed invited him to join an adventurer team, he kind of expected this to happen. After all, Shin didn't bother to hide his real IGN when they were adding each other as friends.

And adding the fact that he read what happened in Blind Abyss Empire and the Primal Kingdom online, it was quite easy for him to guess who his teammates going to be by putting two and two together.

But knowing about it and seeing for himself were two different matters. So, he also couldn't help but stare blankly in front of him when he finally saw his team in person. Especially when he could sense the scary aura radiating from their bodies.

Compared to them, Charlotte was acting rather composed. She indeed read a few things within Shin's mind earlier, so there was no reason for her to be surprised.

Seeing that the other group was refusing to move, Shin decided to take the initiative at greeting them. He stood up from the boulder that he was sitting on and walked over to Owen and the others before extending his hand. "It has been a while, how are you doing?"

Seeing that, the others couldn't help look at Owen once again while sending yet another questioning look. – "You know each other?" –

Being able to read what was the meaning of those looks, Owen suddenly rolled his eyes at them as if he was saying. – "What kind of stupid question is that? Of course, we know each other! How can I join their team if we don't?" –

He then turned his attention back to Shin and shook the latter's hand. "I'm fine. And don't worry, I'm already done with everything on my side so I can formally join now."

"But before that, how about the favor that I asked about?" he added while looking straight into Shin's eyes.

Hearing that, Shin slightly leaned his head to the side to look behind Owen where Ithilien stood. "I already told you, it is not for me to decide. We still need the approval from the others."

He then paused for a moment to let go of the shake before adding. "But since we are going to work with each other now, this can be a perfect time for us to have a good look at her skills."

The two had a little vague topic, so the others were not sure what they were talking about. But after reading between the lines, they immediately understood what they meant.

Ithilien was taken aback while Alucard and Akialu couldn't help but shift their gaze between her and the members of the 'Empyrean Talons' before whispering to each other.

"Should we also give it a try?"

"My thoughts exactly!"