

Destiny 691

Chapter 691 The Lost Kingdom (Part 2)

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The members of the Empyrean Talon were currently staring at the huge emblem engraved at the wall of ice when a series of system notifications bombarded their ears.

Ding!

System: Quest has been updated!

Ding!

System: You have discovered a mysterious symbol at the frozen end of the Saint Heaven Kingdom.

Historical Note:

According to legends, this place was supposedly one of the lands that were forsaken by the gods due to the ancient civilization that used to live here.

After the Ancient Era War, this place became the burial ground of its own citizens after being defeated by the God of Winter. And aside from its former ruler, no one else managed to survive.

Records from the Ancient Library of the Divine Empire – the great historians of humanity said that the said ruler of the forsaken land passed down the tale of his Kingdom and its fate to his descendants.

Centuries went by and one of the King's descendants found an opportunity to get their revenge.

During the Repelling Era, when the citizens of the Atlas World were fighting the invading forces of the Demon Race, one of the Great Demon Lords happened to arrive in this land while running away from its pursuers.

One day, the descendants of the fallen kingdom encountered the Great Demon Lord and made a contract with each other.

The demon granted the man a power that he could help him for the revenge that his ancestors hoped for in exchange for his own soul.

With the powers granted to him, the descendant of the forsaken kingdom called himself the Monarch of the Everlasting Night.

He then spread a plague that transformed all of the infected into a special type of undead while sharing his blood with a couple of worthy individuals.

Not long after, his army steadily grew and they started invading the neighboring kingdoms.

They won most of their battles but they also suffered a fair share of losses after encountering a couple of formidable foes.

Due to the growing fame of their army, the races that were serving the God of Winter heard about their reputation.

Being led by the most formidable warrior of the Winter Army alongside his closest companion, those races matched their way towards the mysterious kingdom to subjugate the evil forces residing in that area.

A great war occurred when the two sides encountered each other. It was so great that the aftermath of the battle could still be seen today.

But the outcome of the battle was still unclear.

It was because the God of Winter suddenly sent one of her messengers to seal the border of the mysterious kingdom before anyone could even confirm what happened.

And due to the towering wall of ice built by that messenger, no one was able to fully uncover what lies beyond its borders.

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Ding!

System: To know about this event, please look for the grand historian of the Saint Heaven Kingdom.

NPC's last seen location: Maple Cloud City

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Arthur practically ignored all of the other notifications and just focused on the last one that they got. "What the heck! Is this stupid system telling us to look for this NPC after all of the trouble that we went through!? Are you kidding me?"

Hearing that, Shin couldn't help but smile bitterly before shaking his head repeatedly. "Hey, do you think we are in any position to complain? We don't even have any clue on how are we going to proceed with that stupid quest of yours since earlier."

"So, you better keep your mouth shut and just accept it to prevent attracting any bad luck," he added while taking another look at system notifications to see if he overlooked anything.

A few moments later, he looked at the others before quickly saying to them. "We need to go back to the city anyways to organize all of the loot that we got, so it is better if we do it now."

"But we still need to continue looking for more clues, so we are going to form two groups. One is going back to the city to organize the loot and store them in our temporary storage while the other group is going to be left behind to continue exploring," explained Shin further.

He took a brief pause to sweep his gaze at the others before asking. "Is there anyone who wants to volunteer for either group?"

Hearing that, Cloe quickly raised her hand and said. "Me! I want to volunteer!"

"I'll join whichever team you are going to choose!" she added while linking her arms with Shin

Shin rolled his eyes at her when he saw that but still let her do what she wanted and looked at the others instead.

Unfortunately, they didn't respond to him immediately and just stared at him with a weird look on their faces. It was as if they were waiting for him to say something before they answered.

Understanding what they were currently thinking, Shin could only look back at them, speechless.

Then he also ignored the look that they were currently making before saying to them. "If no one wants to volunteer, then let me assign who is going to which group."

Urgh!

Right after he said those words, Shin suddenly heard everyone groaning at the same time while also looking at him with an even weirder look on their faces.

"D*mn! Here he goes again!" said Arthur with a soft voice while leaning over to Leonard. "Hey, which one is better? We leave those two here in the wilderness, or let them hang out in the city?"

Hearing that, Leonard suddenly smirked before saying. "Don't bother. Whatever you choose between the two, Shin Bro will only focus on the task at hand."

"Unless he has free time like last time, don't expect anything from him," he added while looking at him.

"Heh! That is rich coming from you," said Arthur smirkingly.

Seeing that the two were about to break into an argument once again, Shin quickly started assigning each other them. "Alright, I am the one assigned to manage our team's storage, then I will be with the team that is going back to the city."

But before he could even continue, Cloe suddenly commented. "But I am the only healer of the group, so I am needed to be here."

The corner of Shin's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard those words before staring at her. He was clearly aware of what she was trying to say. 'This girl! Seriously?'

– "Then I am needed to be in the city to deal with the NPC and the team's storage," – was what he was planning to say.

Unfortunately, he was weak against the pleading look that Cloe currently had. So, he could only release a helpless sigh before pointing at Arthur and Leonard. "Then they can go back to the city instead. And since Ribbit is quite familiar with them, he will naturally let them have access to the storage."

Hearing that, Arthur suddenly became excited and muttered to himself. "Finally! Free from being the personal heater of this group."

Leonard couldn't help but smirk when he heard those words before correcting his friend. "Objection, your honor! You are not the heater, but the 'jacket' instead."

"F*ck! Heater, Jacket, it is the same difference," cursed Arthur after hearing those words.

In the meantime, Alucard suddenly raised his hand and quickly said. "Then I will go with them. After all, I need to restock my Mana Stones to perform more complicated skills."

"Sheesh! What a really expensive class you have. Literally spending money in exchange for more powerful skills," commented Akailu from the said while shaking his head.

"At least it is much cheaper than the magic scrolls that the Mages need," said Owen as he chimed in their conversation.

On the other hand, Daulla hesitated for a moment before also volunteering herself. "I-I will also go with them."

And since she was a 'package' with Archimedes, the Wingman Archer followed her lead and also said that he was going to join the other group.

Shin looked at the three of them for a moment before nodding his head. "Then it is decided!"

After that, he turned to Arthur and Leonard before warning them. "Hey! You two will be the lead, so stick in the plan and don't get involved in any kind of trouble."

"We already have a lot of things on our plate, so we can't afford to waste any more time on useless things," he added to make it clear to the two.

Hearing that, Arthur waved his hand at Shin before replying in a nonchalant manner. "Yeah, yeah! We get it already, so you don't have to nag us like a mom."

Leonard chuckled a little when he heard those words before saying. "We are going, contact us if something goes wrong."

He then took out a teleportation scroll from his inventory and crushed it without any hint of hesitation. "See you later."

Seeing that, the others also took out their respective scrolls and followed after him, leaving Shin and the remaining members of the team behind.

Shin swept his gazes at the other members around him before instructing. "Alright, let's move ahead. Let us see if this place still has more clues stored for us."

Chapter 692 A Storm Is Brewing

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Forbidden City, Main Residence of the HeadHunter Guild.

And of the executives who were managing the branch of the guild in the Saint Heaven Kingdom were all currently gathered in the conference hall to discuss the future of their in this kingdom.

Earlier, they decided to go with the plan that Cruelty had suggested to explore the eastern borderlands of the kingdom. But at the very last moment, he suddenly 'changed' his mind and proposed a different plan instead.

Naturally, Cruelty and the others were not going to tell these cunning wolves that they failed their original plan. After all, these opportunists were going to stab them in the back the moment they learned about their failure.

Cruelty also made sure that the expert players that were accompanying them earlier were not going to spill the beans by making them sign a nondisclosure contract.

Due to that, none of the executives of the guild knew what really happened in the Sky Deceiving Valley. On top of that, they obviously had no idea why Cruelty had summoned them.

But the moment they learned why they were summoned, they immediately started to cause a ruckus.

"What are you talking about, Cruelty!? Are you out of your mind!?" said one of the executives while slamming his hand on the table.

"Yeah, exploring the border maps is more reasonable. And that is the only reason why we supported you in your proposal," seconded by another.

Hearing that, the others also nodded their heads in agreement. And seeing that everyone seemed to be agreeing with him, the first executive who was first to talk earlier immediately struck while the iron was still hot.

"Waging war to other guilds is not a problem, but challenging a fellow Powerhouse Guild will only hurt our reputation more than profiting from it," he said with a little smirk at the end.

Cruelty suddenly smirked back when he heard those words before refuting grinningly. "What's the problem with that? We are supposedly going to pull all of the forces from this place if our main plan doesn't work."

"Our reputation in this kingdom is already hitting rock bottom, so we are not going to lose anything even if we happen to become defeated in this battle. Instead, we are gaining more profit from it if we manage to win against them."

When the other executives heard those words, all of them couldn't help but shut their mouths as they found his words very reasonable. They were already at the end of their ropes anyway, so it was better for them to bet everything they had in such a do-or-die gamble instead of doing a job with uncertain results.

Seeing that Cruelty was able to turn the opinions of the other executives by simply saying those words. And since he didn't know how to refute those words, that particular executive could only shut his mouth while glaring at Cruelty and other Godlike Players who were keeping an eye on him.

In the meantime, Cruelty slightly nodded his head when he saw that the guild executives were pretty convinced with the sudden change of his decision.

The only problem right now was how they were going to convince these people about challenging the Powerhouse Guild that they chose.

,m Fortunately, that 'person' already prepared a material for them to follow.

Now that everyone was still occupied with the topic that he just said earlier, Cruelty immediately started their proposition. "First of all, the Guild that we choose to wage war with is the Wing's Alliance."

Hearing the name of the guild, the expression on the faces of the executives of the HeadHunter Guild suddenly changed. Especially for the particular elder that seemed to be from the other faction within their guild.

"Hey! Out of all the Powerhouse Guilds within the Saint Heaven Kingdom, you choose one of the guilds who are currently in control over the Holy City, the current center of the kingdom," said that person.

"They are currently the kings of this place, so isn't choosing them a foolish move? After all, there are still a lot of choices that we can make. Just like the Miracle Guild, Golden and the powerhouses that suffered similar damages as us," he added with a smirking tone.

The other executives seemed to switch sides once again. They couldn't help but nod their heads at those words since they all knew that it was much wiser to choose a winnable battle instead of an unwinnable one.

It was natural for them to have that kind of reaction since the Wing's Alliance really became one of the most successful guilds within this kingdom alongside the Titan Guild, Dragon Pavilion, and Hydra Guild. So, their forces here were much stronger compared to their rivals.

But Cruelty pretty much expects those reactions before quickly explaining their side. "But choose the weaker powerhouses, the impact that we are going to get will not be the same if we win against a stronger foe."

"Heh! Don't be delusional. Do you honestly believe that we can take them down with the current forces of our guilds? They clearly have the advantage in terms of resources, so we are practically committing suicide by challenging them," said the executive that was opposing Cruelty and his party.

Seeing that his person was still not giving up, Helena couldn't help but shake her head before responding with a bored look on her face. "If it is just a normal occasion, then we are indeed no match against them."

"But I heard that the internal conflict that they had within their guild is starting to get fierce. Which means, everyone was currently on edge against the members of the opposing faction," she added with a smirking tone.

"To put it in simpler terms, our odds of winning against this particular guild is much higher than what all of us are expecting," said Cruelty with a calm tone.

Hearing that, the moods of the other guild executives immediately brightened and made them excited. And due to that, all of them started giving their own suggestions while formulating a plan to take the Wing's Alliance.

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In the meantime, outside the main residence of the HeadHunter Guild, large groups of elite players were currently attracting the attention of every passerby who was walking past their fancy building.

Naturally, such a large movement would never escape the eyes of the other Powerful Guilds that were keeping an eye on their rivals.

"So, they are finally making their move, huh?"

"Keep an eye on them until we get a clear idea of their plan."

"Are they finally giving up in this kingdom and pulling back their main forces from here or are they planning to pull a Hail Mary at the last moment? Let's see what they are hiding under their sleeves."

"Are they putting up a final struggle? Let's see how this one is going to work out."

"Don't let your guard down, we may be the target of this one."

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At the same time, the news about the movements of the HeadHunter Guild also reached the ears of Arthur and Leonard the moment they arrived at Maple Cloud City.

"Heh! Looks like they don't want to drag this any longer, huh?" commented Arthur after reading the message that he got.

"Well, it is understandable. After all, this deal is going to be more disadvantageous to them the longer they try to drag it," said Leonard from the side.

In the meantime, the other three who were currently behind them were pretty clueless about what they were talking about. And even if they were quite curious about the topic, they had no other choice but to remain calm since they were pretty much intimidated by the two gods.

Not long after, Arthur turned his head to the three before giving his instructions. "Alright, we are separating here for now. "

"You guys look for the clues about that particular NPC. The two of us need to take care of the loot first, so we will catch up to you when we are done with our side," he added before turning around and walking back at the teleportation circle.

Leonard also did the same right after nodding his head at the three. "Message us immediately if you manage to find him."

Then their silhouettes disappeared after they re-entered the teleportation device.

Meanwhile, an awkward silence descended between the three right after they were left behind. They stared at the teleportation hall for a couple of moments before turning their heads at each other.

"Then I will go this way. I will restock first before looking for that NPC," said Alucard while pointing at the huge building not far away from the Teleportation Hall. From the looks of it, it was a trading shop, given how busy its entrance was.

"We are also going. Let's meet again later," replied Daulla while bowing to Alucard before quickly turning around and leaving with Archimedes.

The latter also gave them a nod before heading to the shop a few meters away while also muttering to himself. "I felt that a storm is slowly brewing."

Chapter 693 Sorrow Of The Saber Demon

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Due to the large movements of the forces of the HeadHunter Guild, the ordinary players of the game couldn't but become interested in it.

Especially when the other powerhouses were also making their own moves as a response to it.

With a new topic to discuss, the online forums became active once again.

The topics that were being posted on it might not be as big as the previous ones that had been discussed previously. But at the very least, they were able to keep the bored players browsing the internet entertained.

But to the eyes of the large organizations within the game, these kinds of boring topics were something that they couldn't overlook.

After all, the suspicious movements that the HeadHunter Guild was making could only mean a single thing, a war was about to take place at any given moment.

But the question was who would be the target of this declaration of war.

Not knowing who would be the guild that was going to be challenged, the players discussing in the online forums started making their own guesses and deductions. Some even made a couple of predictions about the outcome of the battle once the HeadHunter Guild challenged a particular powerhouse.

Not long after, the targeted guild was finally revealed. And when the players learned about it, they immediately went wild for how crazy the decision that the HeadHunter Guild had made.

In their eyes, the guild was practically committing suicide. The Wing's Alliance was currently one of the hegemons within the Saint Heaven Kingdom yet the HeadHunter Guild dared to challenge them?

For them, the higher-ups of the guild were a bunch of idiots who got blinded by desperation. Naturally, the players of the game were aware that the guild was trying to rebuild their reputation, but choosing a losing battle just for it was literally asking to embarrass themselves.

Due to that, the players started to criticize the HeadHunter Guild left and right. And as if adding oil to the fire, all of the dark past of the guild was also starting to resurface once again.

The executives of the guild would obviously be upset about this backlash. They even started to put all of the blame on Cruelty who suggested this plan.

But despite all of the criticism that they were getting, Cruelty was still able to keep his cool and accept everything. After all, he knew that the only thing that he could do was to prove themselves later in the fight.

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In the meantime, while everyone was currently criticizing the HeadHunter Guild, the Wing's Alliance clearly knew that this was a very wise move.

They were currently having an internal conflict where each faction was currently pointing a knife at each other's neck.

They might also be seeing this situation as an opportunity for them. They could use this particular war to increase their chances of winning against the other side if they manage to defeat the HeadHunter Guild.

Sabotaging the other faction might have some negative effects; it would definitely hurt their reputation if they sold their fellow guild members just to win the power struggle within their guild.

So, that scenario would surely be out of the question. But it was a different story if it was about not providing the other faction any assistance once their respective territories got invaded.

In fact, they might even thank the HeadHunter Guild if they managed to defeat the other faction.

Both of the opposing factions within the Wing's Alliance were currently thinking the same. They could let the other side be defeated before jumping in the prey and striking the weakened forces of the HeadHunter Guild.

That kind of plan might be pretty obvious. But even if that was the chase, either side could only accept it silently since they didn't have any other choice.

In the midst of this power struggle within the guild, the most affected ones were the elite members of the guild who really cared about the guild.

They were stacked between the colossal forces within their guild where they had no choice but to follow the arrangements made by the people above their ranks.

And one of those teams was the party under S.Tigris' leadership.

Bang!

"Hehe! This is why I keep on telling you to mind your own business, old friend. Do you honestly believe that the people supporting you from behind can save you when times like this come?" said D.Romeo after pushing S.Tigris with a powerful strike.

"Keep on dreaming but there is no one in the guild who can lend you a helping hand in these kinds of situations. All of them have no other choice but to abandon you since their hands are tied," he added with a smirking tone.

In the meantime, S.Tigris picked himself up from the ground while glaring at his opponent. "At least, I am not someone like you who is no different from a hunting dog with no dignity."

Hearing that, D.Romeo started laughing heartedly before refuting. "So what if I am indeed a hunting dog? We are the same. Both of us are just tools that can easily be abandoned. But at the very least, I choose the right master to follow."

"And look! These players that you nurtured really hard are now doing the same!" he added while pointing at the players that were currently surrounding S.Tigris from all sides. "This is how this world works! Everyone is always following the winning side regardless of the circumstances!"

S.Tigris swept his gaze at his surroundings, looking at every player around him. He was very familiar with these players since he personally scouted each one of them.

He couldn't blame them for choosing to betray him since he was also aware of their situations in the real world, especially the ones that were trying to make a living out of the game.

It just pained him really hard to be in this kind of situation. Or he just hated himself more for not being strong enough to take all of them under his wing.

"Hand over the item to us already, S.Tigris! And we will spare a couple of levels on your account," said D.Romeo while wearing a mocking smile.

Hearing that, the expression on S.Tigris' face suddenly turned solemn as he took another quick glance at his status window.

Negative Status Effect: Curse of the Death Calling (Highly Effective)

Note: Can only be undone by Archbishops and similar classes of the same rank.

Details: The player that got affected by this will not be able to get killed no matter how many fatal strikes they receive.

Instead, they would continuously lose their levels and experience points for every damage they get after their HP Bars reach zero.

Conversions: 100 Damage = 1 Experience Points Loss

Remaining Duration: 1 hour and 24 minutes.

S.Tigris didn't know where D.Romeo got the curse scroll from, but he already lost a couple of levels right after he got ambushed earlier, so he didn't have much time to think about it.

Moreover, he clearly knew that he would continue to lose more levels if he let this battle continue.

No matter how strong he currently was, he was completely aware that he wouldn't be a match for all of these players together. Each of them was on par with the Titled Rankers of the game with some of them being worthy enough to belong to the peak of that rank.

Moreover, he also needed to keep an eye on D.Romeo who had a strength that was on par with him. So, unless S.Tigris was a Godlike Player, he would never stand a chance against this group of players.

Fully aware of his current situation, S.Tigris decided to stop this futile struggle and hand over the item that the opposing side was looking for.

After all, that item was a guaranteed drop the moment he died after exhausting all of his current levels. So, it was better for him to hand over the item now instead of suffering more like this.

Naturally, he was also planning to form a contract with D.Romeo to make sure that the latter was going to let him go right after he handed over the item. He was not an idiot who would trust this cunning wolf and his verbal promises.

He was about to say something when he suddenly received a particular message from a player that he was very familiar with.

Raven: Don't do anything stupid yet, boss! We are already here to save you!

Reading the message, S.Tigris suddenly started laughing which made D.Romeo knit his brow. "You still have the time to laugh in this kind of situation? Have you already lost your mind?"

Unfortunately, the WolfKin Master Hunter didn't get the reply that he was expecting.

S.Tigris looked at him with a smirking smile before saying. "You said that everyone always follows the winning side in this world regardless of anything, don't you?"

"Unfortunately, you are wrong. Because there are people like me who love to pick the side with an underdog story," he added while getting ready for another round of battle.

But this time, he was not alone.

Boom!

Then there was a powerful explosion that occurred on one of the rears of his opponents' encirclement, throwing their formation a little off.

And amidst that explosion, a loud and very energetic voice suddenly sounded. "Boss! We are here! Let's get this party started already!"

Receiving the signal, S.Tigris quickly kicked the ground and started slaughtering his way towards the group that just joined the battle.

Boom!

And while he was advancing forward, he suddenly shouted with a very emotional tone. "These are my final instructions to you as your mentor! So, savor this moment and engrave the experience into your soul!"

Chapter 694 Asking For Cooperation

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S.Tigris didn't raise a fuss about the betrayal of the guild executives since he was very aware of why they did that.

They were also not aware that he currently possessed a special item that would be able to change the tide of the game. And D.Romeo was only able to discover about that item because he was betrayed by his subordinates.

The Alliance Leader might have a good impression on him and Black Hand. But since the leader promised not to meddle with the conflicts between the two factions, he would not be able to give S.Tigris any kind of assistance.

Moreover, he was currently looking for a good successor for his position, so he wanted to see who would be the victor in this internal war.

The involvement of the HeadHunter Guild might affect the internal war between the two factions but the Alliance Leader was also thinking that this was a good opportunity to see who would be the better faction between the two.

Currently, the side where S.Tigris belonged was at a slight disadvantage. But even if it was only a small one, their side was repeatedly being pushed back which was also why no one could lend him a helping hand.

After all, he was currently an ordinary guild member in the eyes of those executives. And they didn't have time to waste their time on someone with that rank when they were currently being pressured by the opposing side.

S.Tigris also couldn't mention that particular item to the executives on their side since he knew that they would also try to ask for that item in exchange for the help that they were going to provide.

Even if they tried to hide it in the pretext of protecting the item, S.Tigris knew that they were only going to take it for themselves.

S.Tigris and his main team spent quite a lot of time and effort just to get this item. They also exhausted most of their fortune in buying the special scrolls and potions that they used during the mission, so it was impossible for him to hand it over to anyone.

On top of that, this item might also help them break through the barrier between their current strengths and top-rank experts of the game. So, they couldn't afford to waste this chance just for a little bit of help from the sly foxes on their side.

The Alluring Goddess Amanda might be trustable in this case, but they also had a problem with that. She was currently leading an expedition team somewhere in the unexplored lands within the Saint Heaven Kingdom, so she would not be able to provide any kind of help either.

Left with no other choice, S.Tigris could only endure all of these sufferings for as long as he could. And fortunately, there were still some people that remained on his side after everything that happened.

Hu!

"We finally shake off those annoying guys from chasing after us!" said Raven as he fell on his butt and leaned his back on the tree behind him.

"I've never imagined that there would be a time where we are going to fight all of the experts that Captain has personally nurtured in a real battle," added Ara as she also collapsed on the ground from exhaustion.

On the other hand, Black Hand and Ringo simultaneously turned their heads to their captain who was currently looking at the sky with a lonely expression on his face.

At the same time, Rave suddenly slammed his fist on the ground when he heard her words. "Those ungrateful bastards! I will make sure to give each of them an unforgettable lesson when I get a chance!"

"I will hunt them one by one and make sure to assassinate them repeatedly until they give up playing this game!" he added as he clenched his hand and gritted his teeth.

Black Hand didn't say anything to add since he knew that he was only going to waste his breath at cursing those traitors. What was currently running in his mind was how they were going to escape their current predicament.

They might have escaped D.Romeo and the others at the current moment but that didn't mean that those people were going to stop. They would surely try to find them and hunt them down until they get what they wanted.

"What are we going to do now, Captain? We can't just continue running away like this," said Ringo to voice out the thoughts of the others.

Hearing that, S.Tigris finally came back to his senses before turning his head to Black Hand. At this current moment, this person was the only guy that they could rely on.

"Are you sure that you are going to trust me in this?" asked Black Hand with a serious tone.

S.Tigris suddenly started laughing with a bitter tone before replying. "If even you are someone that I can't trust, then there is no one in this world who is worthy of my trust."

Black Hand was slightly for a moment before saying. "Then we should give up on that item."

The moment he said those words, the other three quickly turned to him with panicked looks on their faces.

"Are you crazy? Have you gone mad? Did you already forget how much trouble we went through just to get this thing!" said Raven in one breath while looking at the priest with wide-open eyes.

Seeing their reactions, Black Hand couldn't help but laugh a little before continuing. "At least let me finish what I am saying first before voicing out your own thoughts."

"Of course, I still remember everything. But that doesn't mean that we can overlook the fact that D.Romeo created a commotion out of that thing."

"Naturally, the higher-ups will take notice of that incident and investigate what really happened. And once they become aware of the existence of the item that we currently possess, I am pretty sure that all of the executives will come after us regardless of which faction they belong to."

Hearing those words, the faces of the other three immediately turned solemn as they knew that they were now going to be hunted down by both sides just to take the item from their captain.

Out of the members of the team, S.Tigris was the only one who was able to keep his calm. In fact, he was even expecting this to happen.

"So, what do you mean by giving up this item?" he asked as he took a particular token from his inventory.

It was a crystalline token that seemed to be carved from ice. The symbol engraved on it also looked a little peculiar. It was a pair of dragons chasing one other while a blue gem with a deep hue was resting on its center.

"We are still not sure its uses. But from the basic information that is written on it, we know that it is a special item that can open a particular region or a very high-leveled dungeon," said Black Hand after seeing the token. "What I am suggesting is we should give up the monopoly of this particular thing."

"We can't immediately go to those places since we are still in the middle of our preparation. But if we ask for some cooperation from other groups, we can immediately start the expedition," he added after a brief moment of pause.

"Logically, we can just ask some help from our guild, but all of us are aware of how the rules within the guild work, so all know that we are going to be at a disadvantage during the deal. Especially with the current state of our guild." he continued while wearing a bitter smile.

"Then an adventurer guild and the trading firms are our best choice in this. After all, it is going to either be cooperation or a plain business deal if we ask some help from them," said Ara while nodding her head.

"The problem is there are only a very few organizations that can guarantee our success in this matter. After all, we can't afford any failure in this matter since we are practically going to waste our time if we do this half-heartedly," commented Ringo.

"And the list is going to be even shorter when they learn that we are currently being hunted down by our own guild," added Raven with a dejected tone.

S.Tigris turned to Black Hand once again before asking. "So, who are your choices in this?"

Hearing that, the priest quickly raised three of his fingers before answering. "We only have three choices."

"First is the Hand of Midas Trading Firm. With the power and their influence, our guild will definitely think twice before provoking them. But the problem that we have with this is the deal itself."

"Striking a deal with them is definitely going to be troublesome. Especially if it is handled personally by their guild master. They may even try to offer us to buy the token straight away or exchange it with something with the same value."

Hearing his analysis, the other members of the group started nodding their heads in agreement.

Then Black Hand continued. "The next one is the team that the 'God Slayer' and 'Death God' have. With their team's strength, our success rate will definitely increase with a great margin. We also don't have to worry with our pursuers since their team is strong enough to not get intimidated by anyone."

"I also heard that those two are almost regaining their former forms. And that is a long time ago, so they are most likely back on their former selves at this point in time."

"If we also consider that the 'Winter Demon' and 'Flame Witch' are also reaching a higher level in their respective strengths, I am pretty sure that their team can take back their former glory."

"Personally, I suggest asking for cooperation with them since we are already familiar with them. Moreover, we also worked with their team before," he added while looking at the others.

The other members of their group also agreed with them since it was better to work with a team that they were familiar with when it came to these kinds of situations.

They were about to agree unanimously to choose this option when S.Tigris suddenly remembered that there were supposedly three choices for them to choose.

He looked at Black Hand and asked out of curiosity. "How about the third one?"

Hearing that, the priest smiled bitterly for a couple of moments before answering. "The third choice is actually the best one that we have. We are guaranteed to become successful in this particular expedition while also not worrying about the forces of our guild."

"The only problem is how are we going to convince them," he added with a bitter tone.

The others couldn't help but knit their brows when they heard those words before waiting for him to continue. They were looking forward to who was the third choice for Black Hand to give them much credit.

And when the latter saw the looks on their faces, he was also unable to help himself but flash a bitter smile before continuing.

"Obviously, it is that team who created a lot of sensations recently."

Chapter 695 Unexplored Lands

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After taking care of the loot that they got, Arthur and Leonard immediately proceeded to the next task that Shin had given them.

"Should I go check the progress of Shin's plans? Or should I also head back to Maple Cloud City alongside you?" asked Arthur as he walked out of the Mayor's Residence together with Leonard.

Hearing that, Leonard thought for a brief moment before shaking his head. "I think we should look for that NPC right now so that we can finish this quest as soon as possible. Isn't that what you want in the first place?"

Arthur dodged Leonard's eyes for a moment before replying. "Well, I indeed want to finish this quest as soon as possible but I feel that there is something strange on this quest which is why I need to make sure that no one is going to bother us while doing it."

"Heh! So, you are going to stir more trouble that will keep everyone busy?" said Leonard smirkingly.

Arthur shrugged his shoulders when he heard that and replied. "If that is how you want to put it, then I indeed want to mess with anyone who will dare to muddle with my quest."

Leonard shook his head after hearing that and quickly said. "Then do whatever you want. Just don't complain when Shin Bro nag at you later."

"Don't worry, I will only keep an eye on the state of the war. I will not personally participate in it," replied Arthur with full confidence.

Leonard was a little skeptical with his words and immediately said. "As if you will dodge a spotlight after seeing one. You are the type who will jump on it to be the center of everything."

He didn't wait for Arthur to reply and quickly turned around while waving his hand. "Just make it quick. After all, you are the main initiator of the quest, so we need you there to clear it properly."

"Heh! Don't worry, this is just a piece of cake," replied Arthur while walking in the opposite direction.

In the meantime, Daulla and Archimedes already went to different places to look for the NPC that was mentioned on the quest. But despite looking everywhere, they still couldn't find the historian.

Aside from the restricted areas within the cities, they already visited almost every place of Maple Cloud City.

"Aren't historians supposedly staying in a place with a lot of books just like the library? Then why can't we find any clues about him?" complained Daulla as they walked out from another library.

"This city is full of bookstores and libraries yet we can't find any clues about that NPC!" she added with full frustration.

In the meantime, Archimedes was still acting the same. He didn't talk much but he remained observant of their surroundings. And by relying on his senses, he was able to notice the people that were observing them from afar.

At first, he thought that they were players that had some grudges with the members of their team. But he immediately disregarded that idea when he saw that they did nothing aside from watching them from a distance.

And when he discovered that those people were actually NPCs, Archimedes immediately realized what was happening.

"We are going to stop looking for that NPC for the time being," he said to Daulla.

Hearing that, the Magister suddenly stopped her tracks before looking at Archimedes with a deep frown. "Why? We are currently in a hurry!"

The latter smiled briefly before replying. "I will explain it to you later, so let's take a quick rest for now."

Daulla wanted to say something when Archimedes quickly grabbed her arm and dragged her towards the nearest restaurant before looking for a table on the second floor which was also located right beside the window.

The former was still quite confused at the Wingman Archer's actions when they took a seat beside the window. But not long after, she also noticed a couple of NPCs following them on the second floor of the restaurant before sitting on the tables a few meters away.

She was not suspicious at first, but she also realized that they were being observed by those NPCs after meeting their gaze from time to time. Moreover, she also noticed that there were also a few more NPCs observing them from the outside.

"So, that is the case. No wonder we can't find that historian. Finding someone that is purposely hiding is really not going to be easy," she muttered with a soft voice before looking at Archimedes. "What are we going to do now, dad? It looks like we will not be able to find that NPC if this continues."

"We are still not sure if these guys are with that historian or if they are also looking for him just like us," said Archimedes while sweeping his gaze at the NPCs that were observing them.

"For now, let's report what we have discovered and wait for their instructions," he added before opening a virtual screen in front of him and sending a message on the party channel.

Daulla also did the same while also adding more details to the message that Archimedes had already sent.

Not long after, Alucard also sent a report of his own, saying that the thing was happening to him.

– "Should I try to capture one of them and do some interrogation? Based on their levels, these NPCs seem to be an ordinary bunch." – he asked after shaking off his tails successfully.

A few moments later, they immediately received Shin's instructions. "Don't make any sudden movements yet. We are still not sure which side they are on, so keep your movements low for the time being."

"We can't accidentally provoke the historian if they really happen to be on the same side," he added in the message.

"So, what are we going to do now? Are we going to wait until all of them leave?" asked Daulla.

The reply instantly arrived right after she sent that message. "Don't worry, it will be over in a minute. This type of job is one of my expertise."

Leonard, who just arrived at Maple Cloud City, sent that message. He even added after a brief pause. "Just do what you are doing and act as natural as possible. Meanwhile, I will investigate their origins."

"Then it is decided. You can proceed with that plan," said Shin in the chat before remembering something. He then opened a personal chat box before sending a private message to Leonard. "Hey! Where is Arthur? Don't tell me, he is up to no good once again!"

Reading the message, Leonard couldn't help but wear a bitter smile before replying. "Well, he said that he needs to make sure that no one is going to bother us in the quest. So, he will make sure that everyone else is pretty occupied with something else while we are doing our own thing."

"After all, we are in the middle of clearing an Empire Quest, so we can't afford to encounter an unexpected problem during the process," he added with a bitter tone.

Shin was silent for a couple of moments before nodding his head and replying back. "Just immediately report to me if you encounter any problem, so that I can make a couple of adjustments."

"Of course!" replied Leonard before quickly asking. "How about the situation on your side? Did you find anything special?"

"Nothing much, actually. But given the distance that we've covered from our previous location, I can say that the map beyond this ice wall is really huge. An entire Kingdom perhaps," answered Shin.

He paused for a moment, trying to estimate the size of the map beyond the wall before continuing. "At least, it is a map with the same size as the Saint Heaven Kingdom itself."

Hearing that, Leonard couldn't help but pause his tracks before quickly asking. "Hey! Tell me that it is not true. Do you know how large the Saint Heaven Kingdom is? It is one of the biggest neutral kingdoms of the game."

"And since it is situated in the middle of other countries, a lot of guilds are keeping their eyes on it. And now, you are telling me a high-level map with the same size is sitting right beside it? This is going to be a huge wave for everyone. Definitely!" he added while suppressing the twitching of his cheeks.

"You don't believe me?" said Shin as he initiated a video call. And right after Leonard accepted it, he quickly turned the camera towards the view that he was currently staring at, shocking the latter.

Shin and the others were currently standing at the peak of a particular mountain. And despite its height piercing through the clouds, it was still not high enough to outsize the towering wall of ice.

But at the very least, Shin and the others were able to peek at what lied beyond that wall. It was pretty vague at first because of the thick cloud covering it.

But when Shin turned his gaze to each of his sides, Leonard could see how far the wall was extending. It was as far as his eyes could see and seemingly no end of it.

Boom!

Not long after, a powerful gust of wind suddenly blew from the other side of the wall, clearing the cloud that was covering it.

Then the War God saw a flock of giant birds flying across the sky before diving back underneath the cloud.

After that, Shin suddenly smirked before asking. "So, do you believe me now?"

Chapter 696 Plans Ahead

...

After ending the call with Leonard, Shin quickly turned his head back to the others before saying. "We are climbing down the mountain, get ready to descend, and don't forget to maintain our formation."

Hearing those words, the other members of the group quickly moved to their respective positions before descending from the mountain.

They didn't encounter any kind of monster so far, but Shin made sure to keep their discipline. After all, they didn't know when they were going to bump into an unexpected situation, so it was better to keep vigilant at all times.

The discipline that Shin got during his training sessions since he was young was really paying off this time. Though, the other members of the group were practically suffering from how strict he was. Especially Chaotic Luck who was also keeping a separate formation for his undead monsters.

The Solaris Lich was slowly exhausting his concentration for keeping his summoned undeads organized. If not for the occasional rest that they were having, then the game most likely forced him to log out of the game for being mentally exhausted.

Fortunately, Shin was observant enough to notice his suffering, so he purposely picked a good time and place when taking a rest. It was for Chaotic Luck to properly regain some of his mental prowess.

After traveling for quite some time, Shin and the others finally noticed something strange. The fog in the area was starting to thin down while the temperature was also dropping at the same time.

"Did we finally arrive at the end of this wall?" muttered Shin softly, voicing out the thoughts that were running inside everyone's head.

He was partially right since they arrived on top of a deep cliff. And below it was the raging waves that were slamming on the cliff walls.

In front of them was a view of a vast ocean that was drawing the line of the horizon.

"So, this is the part of the 'Sea of Death' near the Saint Heaven Kingdom," muttered Shin after checking their location on the virtual map.

He then his gaze fell on the edge of the cliff before following it. He didn't even bother to look at the towering wall of ice since he already knew that it was only extending towards the opposite direction, closing the borders of the mysterious land beyond it.

"If you can't find any clue from the wall itself, then it is better if we take a different approach," muttered Shin before walking along the edge of the cliff.

The others were quite confused with Shin's actions but they still followed after him without asking anything. After all, no one would dare to question his decisions after personally experiencing the feats that he did.

Naturally, Cloe was an exemption. She quickly hopped her way beside Shin before asking. "Hey! Where are you going? Are you not going to investigate that wall anymore?"

Shin gave her a quick sidelong glance before continuing to move ahead. "As I said earlier, there is no purpose in investigating that wall anymore. We have already reached the end of its side, so we are most likely going to waste our time on the other sides of the wall if we continue investigating them."

"From what I can see, it is better if we wait for the others to find that historian before proceeding to the next part of the quest," he added after a quick moment of pause.

"So, where are we heading now?" asked Cloe out of curiosity.

"I am looking for a settlement around this area," answered Shin instantly, which shocked the others.

Well, that was a natural reaction. After all, they couldn't even find a single monster in the area due to the terrible environment, so it was even more impossible to find any people who would dare to live in this place.

Naturally, Shin was able to read what was running inside the heads of his teammates. So, he quickly explained. "Of course, it is impossible for anyone to live in the area near that ice wall. But the places a few kilometers from it are still habitable."

"Even in the real world, people are able to find a way to live even with the harshest environment. So, if this game was trying to replicate the real world, then it is possible for us to find a settlement around this area."

"Moreover, there are no monsters roaming around here, so it can be the perfect place to build a small town or village. Especially those areas beside the ocean. Who knows? We may even find a huge port around," he added with a tone that was slowly becoming excited.

Since she was very close with Shin, Cloe was able to notice the minimal changes in his mood. Given that, she couldn't help but squinted her eyes before asking with full suspicion. "Why do I feel that you are planning something again?"

"Come on! Spit it out and share it with us!" she added as her eyes turned sharp.

Seeing that she was able to see through him, Shin could only smile bitterly before replying. "Since you know me well, I am pretty sure that you already know what I am planning."

He paused for a moment to clear his throat before continuing. "You already know that I am looking for a perfect place to relocate the Calderock Town before promoting it into a city. And from the looks of it, this place suited my taste perfectly."

"Not only does it have a large high-level map beside it, but it is also near the 'Sea of Death' which has a high-level hunting ground of its own."

"One of them is for land while the other is for the sea. With these two regions, the resources that the places can get will definitely be abundant."

"With that reason alone, I am pretty confident that that city will become one of the best cities within the game," he added smirkingly.

Hearing that, Cloe immediately understood what Shin was currently planning. She also agreed with his plan since this place was definitely going to be a hot potato when they unlocked the region beyond the ice wall.

"That sounds like a good plan..." she was about to praise Shin when she suddenly remembered the view on top of the mountain earlier. She then halted her tracks as she started organizing the ideas that flashed through her head.

Noticing her actions, Shin also paused his steps before turning to her. And when he saw that she was currently concentrating on thinking, he slightly knitted his eyebrows before waiting for her to finish.

Not long after, Cloe suddenly raised her head at Shin and looked at him with a brightened expression.
"That's it!"

Shin was slightly taken aback by her actions and quickly asked. "What is it? Is that idea of yours that amazing for you to be that excited?"

Hearing that, Cloe nodded her head without any hesitation before saying with full confidence. "Yeah! It is definitely amazing!"

Shin was a little skeptical at her words since he knew her pretty well. This girl was pretty easy to please. Well, for him at the very least. So, he didn't put much thought into her words. "Alright, please tell me what it is. Share that brilliant idea of yours."

Cloe calmed herself down before voicing her thoughts. "How about building a city on top of a mountain?"

Right after those words left her mouth, the atmosphere surrounding the group suddenly turned odd as the others turned to Cloe with a weird expression on their faces. Even Shin was staring at her stunned.

Seeing that, Cloe couldn't help but pout her lips as she misunderstood that look that they were giving her. "Why? Is it not plausible?"

"I am just thinking that it is a pretty good idea since aside from being situated in between two high-level regions, it can also be a good tourist spot for the players that are not good at fighting and only want to enjoy the stunning view within the game."

"And I also want to share how I felt when we saw the view on top of the mountain earlier," she muttered softly as her voice slowly turned quieter with every word she said.

But to her surprise, Shin suddenly patted her head before saying. "What's with that look? Of course, your idea is brilliant!"

"Really!?" asked Cloe with an excited look on her face while waiting for Shin to praise her more.

"Yeah! I am not joking," reassured Shin before continuing. "What's more, I also heard from Big Sis that the virtual shops are also going to be available in the game after a week or two, so it is going to be perfect!"

"On top of that, we can also use the terrain of the mountain to our advantage. It can easily become a defensive fortress on its own," he added while wearing a huge grin.

The idea that they suddenly got started to take shape as a well-rounded plan.

Chapter 697 Shiella's Talents

.....

Real World, Soaring Continent, Eastern Sea Region

Ace City.

Shiella was currently handling all of their family businesses around this area despite her being so young.

Since she was young, she showed some interest in the area of entrepreneurship which made the maternal side of her family excited. And due to that, she was trained to be an elite of this field, preparing her to be the heir of their legacy.

On top of that, she also inherited the peak-class talent that her mother had. And with her unique way of using this particular ability, she was able to excel in studying.

'Prudent Ace', this martial talent was supposedly one of the most brilliant talents in the world of martial arts.

It might not be as scary as the combat-related talents like 'Battle Genius', 'Martial-Art Prodigy', and 'Gifted Adept'. But at the very least, it was a talent that also focused on counterattacking.

Prudent Ace also didn't enhance the combat capabilities of its wielder. But they were slowly becoming harder and harder to deal with as time went by. It was not because they were getting stronger, but it was due to them being familiar with their opponent.

A martial artist with a 'Prudent Ace' talent was able to think much faster than most people. They were also able to remember a lot of things just by seeing them once.

Battle Geniuses were practically fighting based on their instincts which made them a monster in prolonged battle

Meanwhile Martial-Art Prodigies and Gifted Adept were experts when it came to counterattacks, one was able to spot the flaws in their opponent's movements while the other was able to counter those skills just by seeing them once.

On the other hand, Prudent Ace was more like a combination of those two categories. They were like strategists that were studying their opponents first before striking back at the most optimal time.

Similar to Battle Geniuses, Prudent Aces were most troublesome when it came to a prolonged battle. And the longer the battle took, the scarier they became.

Aside from that, Martial-Artists with this kind of talent were also calm most of the time since they were also experts at making plans ahead. It was for them to counter any kind of unexpected scenarios that they might encounter in the future.

This was how most of the Prudent Aces used their talents to their advantage. And it was pretty much effective in any kind of combat.

But Shiella was quite an exemption in this.

It was because she was not only using her ability to think fast in battle, but she was also using it for other purposes.

Just like in her studies.

With her thinking ability, she rarely encountered any problem in her studies. And with her good memory, she was naturally able to become ahead of her peers just by studying the advanced topics ahead of time.

Due to that, Shiella didn't have to study which gave her a lot of freedom to train. It even reached the point where studying became her pastime. And when her mother realized that, she immediately suggested letting Shiella handle a couple of their business as a form of training her.

It only started with a little store and it slowly grew into a market. Then they added more tasks to her plate which made her familiar with how the business world worked.

Naturally, there were still some people who were guiding her in handling those jobs. But given how talented she was in this field and adding the fact that she took advantage of her 'Prudent Ace' talent, she immediately became an elite entrepreneur at a very young age.

In the martial-art world, Shiella was known as one of the Junior Monsters of the Soaring Kingdom, the proud Junior Dragoness who came from the renowned Springfield Family.

But in the business world, in the world where businessmen and entrepreneurs clashed, she was known as the youngest elite of that field. They were even calling her little foxy since her mother was known in the field as a sly fox that was hard to deal with.

...

Shiella just finished reading all of the reports that were sent to her and were about to take a quick nap to recover some of her energy.

But before she could even close her eyes, Anna suddenly entered her office and quickly said. "Young Miss, a report from your assistant in the game just arrived."

Hearing that, the expression on Shiella's face immediately turned dark before snarling at her assistant bodyguard. "Auntie, am I not allowed to at least have a little rest? And why are you not knocking before entering??"

Anna just gave Shiella a meek smile when she heard that before ignoring the sharp glare that she was getting. "I don't intend to interrupt your rest, young miss. But this report is pretty urgent."

Shiella just rolled her eyes at Anna when she heard those words before refuting. "You didn't interrupt my rest since I still haven't gotten any in the first place."

Shen then rested her back on her chair and released a helpless sigh before asking. "So, what is it? It better be good news or else I am going to decrease your salary for this month for disobeying my instructions lately."

Anna shook her head repeatedly when she heard those words before quickly saying a mysterious smirk. "Then I must apologize once again since I can't regard this as good news since it is practically an adaptation work."

The corner of Shiella's mouth twitched for a moment before saying powerlessly. "Come one, spit it out already, so that I can finally rest after dealing with it."

Hearing that, Anna walked towards and put down a tablet on the table before projecting a virtual screen from it. Then she tapped the screen in front of her a couple of times, showing multiple contracts at once.

"It looks like the game is finally releasing the Virtual Shops. And these contracts are from our business partners," she said while organizing the contracts on the virtual screen.

She took a pause until she was done organizing them before turning to Shiella once again. "It looks like they are planning to build a shop in the cities and towns that we partially controlled."

Virtual Shop, just like the name it implied, was a shop within the virtual world. But unlike the usual shops that the game had, these kinds of shops were virtual representations of the shops in the real world. And anything that could be brought from these shops was going to be delivered to the outside world.

In a sense, it was like a special portal in the real world where the people could buy. It was practically online shopping.

Before, people who were too lazy to go outside but wanted to buy something used the internet to buy literally anything. Whether it was clothes, appliances, and foods could be brought from different portals. Even furniture could be brought from them.

But there was a fatal flaw in this method.

The people could see the physical conditions of the things that they were buying online. Sometimes, the clothes that they brought didn't suit them. There were also times where the appliances and furniture

were either too big or too small than what they had expected, which only made them waste their money.

,m Due to that problem, buying online took a sudden fall from how they used to be.

But two years ago, virtual games created a revolution that shook the business industry. They introduced the virtual shops where the players could actually see what they were going to buy and even try it themselves.

As long as they had the money to afford them, the players could easily buy anything that they wanted. And on top of that, they also could use the currency within the game to buy those things.

Naturally, not every company could join this kind of transition. There were a lot of prerequisites before their business got accepted within the game.

But despite that being the case, there were still a lot of companies that were trying their luck at applying. And since the gaming company couldn't handle all of them, they chose some of the biggest companies from different countries before partnering with them while also asking them to handle the basic procedures at handling these smaller companies.

With Shiella being a part of the game for quite some time, she was one of the pioneers who initiated this revolution. And due to that, the company of her family was able to secure one of the spots that were offered by different gaming companies during the first launch of the virtual shops.

And because of these reasons why the Hand of Midas Guild became the biggest trading firm within the virtual world.

"It is time for that already?" said Shiella with a cheerful look on her face before sitting up straight while looking at Anna with a huge grin. "Then I guess it is also time for us to prepare ourselves for a large sum of money."

Chapter 698 Connecting The Pieces (Part 1)

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In-game

Atlas World, Saint Heaven Kingdom, Sky Deceiving Valley

After walking for quite some time, Shin and the others finally found a little settlement along the coast of the kingdom. It was a pretty small village, much smaller than most of the NPC Villages inside the game.

It was even smaller than the beginner's village that the players first encountered when they were still starting to play the game.

Regardless, Shin was still smiling from ear to ear when he entered the village and quickly headed towards it.

Seeing that Shin seemed to be acting like an excited kid who saw something he liked in the mall. "Look at this guy acting like a spoiled brat."

After that, she still followed Shin along with the other members of the group. And just like what Shin was expecting, this place was similar to the previous state of Calderock Town when it was still in the village rank.

So, the group immediately received a series of system notifications which informed them that they were the first players who discovered the place.

Ding!

System: Congratulations! You have discovered the Misty Village!

Ding!

System: Being the first batch of players to discover this place, you will be granted to have all of the pioneering rights within the village.

Ding!

System Warning: Please proceed with caution! The villagers are hostile towards outsiders.

Special Note: Bringing a large amount of food will be able to help you in this situation.

...

Seeing the notifications that were sent to them, Shin suddenly started grinning from ear to ear before muttering to himself. "Giving us a quest from the get-go? How generous of you, 'Devs'!"

"Don't worry, we will make sure to squeeze everything here until its last drop," he added before entering the village alongside the others.

In the meantime, Arthur was currently surveying the area where the HeadHunter Guild and Wing's Alliance were fighting. And just like what they were expecting, the battle between the two Powerhouse Guilds was devastating.

It was still not yet as big as the collision between the Central Order and Undying Guild that took place in the Blind Abyss Empire. But at the very least, the forces between the two guilds were strong enough to force everyone to move away from the battlefield.

No one dared to spy on the battle unless they were expert players that were sent by the other Powerhouses to observe the state of the battle.

After all, whoever got caught by either guild was going to be an immediate target regardless of their motives. To their eyes, anyone who was not wearing the same emblem as them was an enemy.

The other powerhouse guilds were naturally going to send their finest scouts to observe the battle. They were obviously acting as the true fishermen in this battle since they were all planning to devour the territories of the loser of this battle.

Or it was much better if the winner also suffered great losses during the war so that they could also try to rip them apart.

Unfortunately, the Guild War was still in its early stages, so the two guilds were still trying to test the waters. And because of this, the heat of the battle was still at its coolest where neither side was able to gain any clear advantage.

But all of these were pretty useless for Arthur who only came here to monitor the battle. He was actually quite surprised that the HeadHunter Guild followed all of Shin's arrangements.

Shin didn't care who was the guild that Cruelty was going to choose, all they wanted was to make sure that the biggest forces within the Kingdom were pretty much occupied while they were doing an Empire Quest.

And in exchange for that, Shin and the others were going to provide them with some helpful information regarding the targeted guild.

Shin already commissioned the Assassin Union regarding this matter before. He gathered as much information as he could since he knew that this was going to be useful for him in the future.

Buying such sensitive intel was pretty hard since it concerned the major powers within the Saint Heaven Kingdom. But since the current branch leader of the Union was pretty close with Shiella, Shin used that particular connection to his advantage.

Given that, he was able to get his hands on those important pieces of information without having much of a problem. But naturally, it was exchanged for the right amount of gold.

Though, he somewhat didn't expect that he was going to use those kinds of information like this.

In the meantime, the HeadHunter Guild choice pretty worked to the group's advantage since most of the territories that the Wing's Alliance had were situated at the complete opposite side of the map, where Shin and the others were doing their quest.

And since everyone was currently focused on that side, the members of the Empyrean Talons were free to do whatever they wanted on that side of the map.

...

After making sure that all of the other forces were occupied with this event, Arthur decided to head back and regroup with the other members of the team.

After all, the group that he was supposedly leading seemed to encounter a little problem. And he was planning to sort it out as quickly as possible.

But while he was traveling along the forest of a particular map, he suddenly saw something that he did not expect.

While the other members of the Wing's Alliance were busy with the war, some of its 'bored' members of the guild seemed to be picking a fight with their guildmates.

"Looks like the internal conflict within this guild is that serious. To think that they are still fighting each other even though they are currently in the middle of a war? I don't know if I am going to praise their dedication or criticize their stubbornness," muttered Arthur to himself before stopping his tracks and deciding to watch them a little.

He was not sure what exactly it was, but his senses were telling him that he needed to see why these guys were still fighting despite their guild's current situation.

Not long after, he was able to recognize the small group that was being chased by their fellow guild members.

"S.Tigris and his crew? Why are they being chased? Isn't his position within the guild somewhat special?" muttered Arthur after seeing them.

He then took a brief pause before turning his head towards the other group. And not long after, he was able to get the gist of the situation. "D.Romeo? I see. It looks like this guy is still insecure with the famous 'Saber Demon'."

Arthur continued to watch for quite some time to entertain himself a little. But it didn't take long for him to become bored because of the lack of intense action. All he saw was S.Tigris and his small group slaughtering their way out whenever they got cornered by the opposing side.

If not for the little drama that was happening from time to time, then Arthur already left this place to do his own thing.

The individual strength of both sides was pretty much in equal terms. But what made S.Tigris' group different was their perfect teamwork and unspoken coordination. They didn't need to say anything to each other to know the thoughts of their teammates. Simple eye contact was more than enough for them to understand each other.

"That kind of coordination, I wonder how long they fight together to hone it to that level," said Arthur to himself as they remembered how long he fought with Shin and Leonard to reach that level of coordination.

Aside from that, nothing was able to keep him entertained anymore which was why he was planning to leave this place. But before he was able to fully think about that, he suddenly heard something that piqued his interest.

He was not sure at first, but after hearing more details about it, he immediately became sure that he was not mistaken.

"My accumulated experience in playing the game has never been wrong when it comes to these things," he muttered to himself before changing his mind. "Let's get involved this time."

"We can't continue like this, boss! We are going to exhaust all of our potions if we keep up with this," said Raven in the party voice channel after assassinating a couple of healers from the opposing group.

"He is right, captain. I am already running low in mana potions, and I am not sure if I can still keep using my skills later if this goes on," seconded Ara before releasing a couple of magic arrows from her bow.

Ringo also nodded his head as he agreed with the two. Even he, the tank of the team, was starting to feel fatigued after fighting the opposing group for so long.

Hearing their complaints, S.Tigris suddenly turned to Black Hand before asking. "Are you still not able to lift the curse cast on our bodies? Without this, he can easily leave this place without any problem."

The priest couldn't help but wear a bitter smile when he heard that before answering. "Of course, I am fully aware of that. But how can I cast a channeling skill in this situation? Healing the four of you is already troublesome enough, much less lifting our curse."

They were still in the middle of discussing what they were going to do when someone suddenly interrupted them by saying. "Do you want me to lend you a hand?"

Boom!

Then a powerful explosion suddenly occurred in the middle of their enemies, catching the attention of everyone.

"Who dares to-..." D.Romeo was about to curse the person who dared to interfere with their operation when he suddenly recognized who it was. Instead, he immediately shut his mouth and stared blankly at the newcomer, not even daring to release gas from his ass.

In the meantime, Arthur ignored everyone else and walked towards S.Tigris and the others while saying. "But let me warn you. Hiring me as a bodyguard is pretty expensive."

"Are you sure that you guys can afford it?" he asked with a smirking tone after seeing everyone was currently focused on him.

'Ah~! I missed this feeling. The feeling of being worshipped by everyone!'

Chapter 699 Connecting The Pieces (Part 2)

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Time seemed to stop for a moment the moment Arthur appeared. Both of the groups suddenly stopped fighting and stared at him with blank expressions on their faces, especially S.Tigris and his group. After all, Arthur was offering them his help.

In the meantime, D.Romeo was currently wearing a solemn expression on his face while staring at Arthur with a sharp gaze. 'Dragon God Siegfried, what is this monster doing here?'

Due to how hostile his gaze was, Arthur suddenly turned his head at him before saying with a warning tone. "Oi! I don't like that gaze of yours. Stop looking at me like that."

Hearing that, D.Romeo immediately diverted his gaze from Arthur and looked somewhere else. 'Tsk! This is going to be a problem. I need to get that item from S.Tigris as soon as possible before the executives of the guild discover what is happening.'

Being at the end of their ropes, D.Romeo gritted his teeth and said desperately. "This is a problem between the members of the Wing's Alliances, Dragon God Siegfried. You shouldn't get involved in this matter."

Arthur suddenly raised his eyebrows when he heard those words and asked sharply. "Is that so? But what if I insisted on getting involved? What are you going to do then?"

Bang!

Then a powerful aura was released from Arthur's body all of a sudden before trying to crush the members of D.Romeo's group. And when he saw that the latter didn't give him an answer, he further increased the pressure that was crushing those players before saying. "What now? Did you suddenly get mute or something? Why are you not saying anything?"

Urgh!

D.Romeo and the others struggled to maintain their footing when the pressure crushing on them suddenly increased.

"D*mn it! Don't f*cking underestimate us!" shouted D.Romeo while also activating all of his strength-boosting skills alongside his berserk skill.

Following his lead, the other members of his group also activated their respective berserk skills and other buffs that could enhance their battle capabilities. And due to that, they were able to withstand the pressure that was crushing at them.

"Hoh~! You guys are not so bad. I guess you can at least keep me a little entertained," said Arthur with a sarcastic tone when he saw them acting so tough in front of him.

In the meantime, S.Tigris still couldn't move nor know what to say with the current situation that they were in. He already met quite a lot of experts in his gaming career but this was the first time that he experienced this kind of crushing pressure.

Even if that pressure was not directed to them, S.Tigris and his group still could feel the heaviness of the air around them due to the aura that was being released by Arthur.

This intimidating pressure was pretty different from the one that he got from War God Simba. After all, that monstrous player was suppressing his aura during their meeting due to the presence of the Nameless Swordsman – no, that person was known as the 'Battle God' at this point in time.

On the other hand, Black Hand was able to catch up with what Arthur was currently planning. He was sure that this godlike player overheard the conversation earlier, so he was pretty confident that they piqued the interest of this particular god.

Realizing that, the priest quickly sent a message to the other members of their group through the party chat channel. And when the others read the content of the message, he quickly nodded their heads in agreement before looking at Arthur.

With Arthur's senses, it was pretty natural for him to notice their meaningful gazes. After all, they were not planning to hide the intention that they had inside their heads.

"Heh! Now, this is going to be easy," said Arthur to himself with a smirking tone before directing his attention at the opponents in front of him. And top of that, he also turned on the visibility effects of his help which indicated that he was getting ready for battle.

Seeing that, D.Romeo and the members of his party immediately turned tense due to the intimidation that they were getting from Arthur.

'This is bad,' thought D.Romeo to himself as he greeted his teeth while looking at Arthur. "What do you think are you doing, Dragon God? Do you think that you are going to get away easily after getting involved with the matters within our guild?"

Arthur couldn't help but laugh out loud to hear such a ridiculous composition of words. "Heh! Are you trying to use the name of your guild now? That's funny!"

"Do you know that even if you ask some help from the executives of your guild, none of them was going to lend you a hand!?" he added while looking at D.Romeo mockingly.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Arthur was about to make his move when a couple of figures suddenly appeared in front of D.Romeo and blocked his way.

Seeing that, Arthur suddenly knitted his eyebrows for a moment before wearing a smirking smile after recognizing them. "Hoh~! That is more like it. If you want to face me, you have to bring your most elite group to at least have a slim chance of surviving."

In front of him, there was a pair of players who were wearing a black cloak around their bodies, hiding their appearance. Those cloaks were quite peculiar since they had silver feathers embroidered on their surfaces.

At the same time, both of the groups from the Wing's Alliance seemed to recognize those cloaks since the expression on their faces immediately changed.

S.Tigris and his team were looking at the pair with solemn expressions on their faces while D.Romeo seemed to see a ray of hope after seeing their appearance.

"Those cloaks! They are from the guild's secret regiment, the 'Slaying Feathers'!" said D.Romeo to himself while looking at the two with brightened eyes.

Unfortunately, those two mysterious players seemed to be quite hostile to him as one of them suddenly looked at D.Romeo over his shoulders while saying. "The Grand Elder is very disappointed in you right now, 'Hunting King D.Romeo'. So, expect a heavy punishment when you go back."

Hearing that, D.Romeo suddenly froze before wearing an even solemn look on his face. He didn't know which one was better, being slaughtered by one of the greatest players of the game or getting punishment from the grand elder of their guild.

Realizing his current situation, he suddenly thought that the former choice was much better than the latter. Too bad, there was nothing he could do right now but accept his fate.

Meanwhile, the other hooded player refused to even look at the other players around them and just locked his gaze at Arthur.

After a few moments, that person finally talked. "You should back down now, Dragon God Siegfried. This is not a good time to provoke us."

Arthur suddenly started grinning from ear to ear when he heard those words before replying. "Did I hear it right? Are you trying to threaten me knowing that you are still weaker than me?"

"Don't get too cocky just because you are wearing that flashy cloak. I can still crush you even if one of my arms is tied," he added aggressively while taking a couple of steps forward.

Seeing that, the other player quickly positioned himself in front of the previous guy and quickly said. "Don't misunderstand, Dragon God! We just want to negotiate with you."

"Negotiate?" said Arthur with a skeptical tone before sneering at them. "Too bad, your status is still way below mine to try to negotiate with me."

Bang!

He then kicked the ground beneath his feet, launching himself forward alongside his spear.

Swoosh!

Seeing that, the two members of the so-called 'Slaying Feathers' quickly moved out of his way while shouting at their fellow members of the guild. "Scatter!"

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Unfortunately, aside from D.Romeo and other members with quick reactions, most of the players on their side were pierced by Arthur's spear before getting devoured by the golden mana that was accompanying his charge.

Then Arthur suddenly spun his body around and stopped his charge before looking at his opponents. "Oi~! Listen up. If you guys are serious at taking me on, then you better bring an entire unit of your Slaying Feathers in silver rank or at least a couple of them with golden rank."

"That way, you can at least have a little chance of winning," he added before disappearing from his spot once again.

And in a mere instant, he suddenly reappeared right in the middle of his enemies' ranks, where most of their members were gathered.

Swoosh!

Roar!

Then a golden dragon suddenly coiled around Arthur and devoured all of the enemies around him. No one was able to react in time when that happened, so all of those players died instantly without putting up any kind of resistance.

After that, Arthur swept his gaze at his opponents once again before saying with a warning tone. "A friendly reminder, do you dare take your eyes off me if you don't want to lose your level since I am not in a good mood to spare any of you."

"Especially that person!" he added while locking his gaze at the person who dared to threaten Arthur earlier. "I will make sure to educate you properly."

Chapter 700 Connecting The Pieces (Part 3): Proposition

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Cling! Cling!

Bang!

"Hahaha! Not bad, not bad at all! As expected of the most elite unit of a Powerhouse Guild, its members are really not so simple," said Arthur after sending the two Slaying Feathers that were attacking him.

"Unfortunately, it is still not enough," he added with a smirking tone while looking at them.

On the other hand, aside from those two Slaying Feathers and D.Romeo, no one else was able to survive Arthur's repeated assault. The gap between their strengths was so huge to the point they couldn't even land a proper hit on him. Instead, they were the ones who were getting killed one by one despite their numerical advantage.

S.Tigris and his gang didn't even do a single thing to help him aside from watching the battle from the very beginning. Even Blank Hand didn't lift a finger to cast a heal on Arthur.

Well, that was obviously unneeded since the Dragon God still lived up to his name. He didn't suffer any kind of damage that would be able to threaten his life.

Arthur looked at the three opponents who managed to survive up until now before saying smirkingly. "Why are guys still standing there and not doing anything? I thought your time is pretty tight right now, so why are we wasting it here?"

"If you are not planning to attack anymore, then how about you run away instead? I already got my fill so I can let you go this time," he added with a tone that was clearly mocking them.

It was natural for his opponents to be enraged when they heard those words. But strangely enough, the three seemed to be rather calm compared to how they were supposed to react.

Seeing that, Arthur immediately realized what they were thinking and immediately said. "Heh! Are you guys planning to wait until your reinforcements arrive? Too bad, that plan is way too obvious for me not to notice."

"And unfortunately for you, I already wasted a lot of time here keeping you company. It is time for me to leave now," continued Arthur before turning his head towards S.Tigris and his group, especially Black Hand who just finished casting a cleansing spell on the entire party.

"I will buy you enough time to leave this place, so you better cast your teleportation scrolls right now before things get rowdy," said Arthur before turning his attention back to the three opponents that he was fighting earlier.

After that, Arthur sent a request for direct messages to S.Tigris as he wanted to tell something privately. And when the latter accepted the request, Arthur quickly sent a coordinate to the berserker alongside a message. "I will collect the payment later, so go to that location once you leave this place."

"I don't have enough time to look for you after this, so you guys better not take any detours and straight to that place."

"You should know your own guild better than anyone, so you need to look for us as soon as possible before they can find your locations," he added before casting a blazing barrier on the group to make sure that no one was going to interrupt them while they were using their teleportation scrolls.

In the meantime, S.Tigris clearly got the message that Arthur was trying to tell them, which was why he immediately told the members of his group to crush their respective teleportation scrolls.

Naturally, D.Romeo and the two members of the 'Slaying Fathers' wanted to stop the group from leaving. But they all knew that it was going to be impossible unless they were able to find a way to escape the clutches of this particular monster in front of them.

Given that, they could only watch S.Tigris and the others leave the place without doing anything. And when the final member of the group turned into a streak of light, the three reluctantly gave up on them.

But before they could even leave the place, Arthur suddenly opened his mouth and said with a warning tone. "Hey! I know that this is far from over. But if you guys want to drag this long, then don't blame us for taking advantage of the current situation to give your guild a deadly blow that can turn the tides of the war against you."

"And I am not saying this as a warning since I am just telling the truth. Just tell your 'master' to not send more of his hunting dogs. I'm sure that he will not like it when we get involved in every matter that he was planning to do," he added before signaling them to leave.

The three would naturally feel insulted after seeing his actions but since they were clearly the weaker side, they had no other choice but to swallow everything and leave silently.

In the meantime, Arthur turned his head towards a particular tree before saying. "Oi~! Isn't it time for you to reveal yourself now? I think you already observe enough to understand what is going on."

The moment those words left his mouth, a hooded player suddenly walked out from behind that tree, revealing himself to Arthur.

Given the six-winged emblem that he had on his chest, it was clear that he was also from the Wing's Alliance. Moreover, he was also wearing a similar cloak that the two 'Slayer Feathers' were wearing earlier. But instead of silver feathers, his cloak had golden patterns embroidered on its surface.

"What's your number? Given that you are able to hide your presence that much, I am pretty sure that you belong to single digits," said Arthur in a casual manner while looking at that person.

Hearing those words, the other person didn't bother to hide his identity and removed the hood hanging over his head. "To think that you are pretty familiar with the hidden groups within our guild. As expected of the Dragon God, not only your combat prowess and battle capabilities are top-notch, but your information gathering is also very accurate."

"I am Golden Eagle, fifth among the Golden Slaying Feathers," he introduced while staring straight into Arthur's eyes with a burning competitive spirit.

"Hoh~! Not so bad, I guess," commented Arthur after seeing the burning desire for battle from this particular player. And after a brief moment of pause, he suddenly added. "So, want to also test your skills after doing your main job?"

Arthur bent his neck left and right to create some cracking sounds before continuing. "Just like what you heard earlier, my time is quite limited, so the 'tuition fee' is much higher than what you can think of."

Golden Eagle shook his head a little when he heard those words before answering. "Well, you are right about me wanting to test my current strength. After all, it is quite rare for someone like me to bump into these kinds of situations."

"Unfortunately, I still need to report my findings to the Alliance Leader as soon as possible before the great elder can erase all of the evidence."

Hearing that, Arthur couldn't help but nod his head in agreement before saying. "Well, that is good for me too. After all, I am also quite busy."

He was about to say his goodbyes when Golden Eagle suddenly added. "But I still have a message that I need to deliver."

Arthur suddenly halted his steps when he heard the seriousness of those words. The look on his face also became serious as his senses were telling him that this was going to be a little troublesome.

On the other hand, Golden Eagle immediately said. "This is not my actual task, but since all of us from the golden unit are informed to deliver this message, I will still relay the message."

He then took a brief pause to clear his throat before continuing. "The Alliance Master wants to ask for cooperation with your team. We don't know the exact details, but he told us that it is a very important matter."

Hearing that, Arthur slightly knitted his eyebrows before answering. "Heh! If it is something about helping you in the war, then I have to refuse him despite how good his offer is. We don't want to be dragged into the conflicts between any guilds," while trying his best to suppress the twitching of his cheeks.

"We also don't want to get involved with the power struggles within your guild since it was practically a similar matter," he added before Golden Eagle could even say anything.

Golden Eagle immediately smiled bitterly when he heard those words and quickly said. "Of course, our leader is aware of that."

"What the Alliance Leader wants is your help against a particular organization that is trying to extend their influence within our guild."

"The Alliance Leader originally didn't want to get involved with the power struggles between the two factions of our guild. But after discovering some suspicious movements from the Grand Elder, it looks like he no longer able to keep lying down."

Arthur knitted his eyebrows for a moment as he seemed to get an idea of which organization they were talking about. 'So, they want us to keep an eye on the outside while they were cleaning the mess inside. I wonder what kind of compensation we are going to receive from them.'

'I feel a little guilty for what is currently happening right now but since it has already come to this, I guess we can at least lend them a helping hand to ease our guilt a little.'

After a few moments of silence, he raised his head and looked at Golden Eagle before nodding his head. "Go tell your leader that we got his message. But we still need to discuss this matter so he needs to give us some time to decide."

Golden Eagle quickly bowed at Arthur when he heard those words before disappearing from his place like a ghost.

In the meantime, Arthur clicked his tongue repeatedly while also shaking his head at the same time. "Tsk! Tsk! I'll just let Shin take care of this. Dealing with these complicated things is his job after all."