

Destiny 701

Chapter 701 Connecting The Pieces (Part 4)

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Saint Heaven Kingdom, Maple Cloud City

Alucard was getting bored as he waited for Leonard to finish the investigation about the NPCs that were spying on them. And at the same time, Daulla and Archimedes were also starting to feel tired of sitting around and not doing anything.

"Tsk! This is getting more and more boring the more we wait," muttered Alucard while taking a look at his surroundings. He was checking if those NPCs were still monitoring him.

"Should I play with them for a moment? After all, it looks like we are going to fight them later anyway," he said to himself while trying to stand up from his seat.

But before he could even put his thoughts into action, he suddenly got a notification that was saying he got a message.

"Looks like it is finally done," he said with a little disappointment after seeing the sender of that message.

Simba: I got the location of our target. But we have a little problem with it. It looks like we have to clear a series of sub-quests before we can proceed with the main part of the Empire Quest.

Alongside that message, Leonard also attached the basic information of the quest that he suddenly received.

Sub Quest Details: The Grand Historian of the Saint Heaven Kingdom discovered something that he shouldn't have.

Due to this, he became wary of each of his moves. He was afraid that the watchful eyes of the Crown were currently watching him. He was afraid that the current ruler of the Saint Heaven Kingdom would silence him about the truth behind the collapse of the Ancient Kingdom.

His fear made him run away from the Royal Palace and go to Maple Cloud City to seek some protection from his closest friend.

Quest Condition:

-Prove that you are not sent by the King of the Saint Heaven Kingdom.

Quest Reward:

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Quest Penalty:

-Death of the Grand Historian.

-Losing the main lead about the truth of the Lost Kingdom (I)

After sharing the quest with everyone, Leonard quickly added.

Simba: I'm not sure about this quest but it looks like we need to treat this NPC or whoever is helping him as a raid boss.

Attached to that message was a photo of an underground facility that seemed to be heavily guarded by a lot of NPCs and tamed monsters.

Siegfried: A special dungeon? Where is it located? Outside or within the city? And is it an Instance Dungeon or Open Dungeon?

Arthur quickly sent that message after seeing the photo that Leonard had sent. And when the latter saw that message, he immediately responded.

Simba: It is within the city. No, underneath to be exact. And it is definitely an Open Dungeon with at least Abyss Difficulty.

"Tsk!" Arthur clicked his tongue when he got the confirmation. But immediately after that, he quickly became excited since this particular dungeon would definitely give them bountiful rewards.

But his excitement was immediately dampened by Shin's message.

Sickarius: So, it is basically going to be open to the public once we clear it once.

Siegfried: You really are a party pooper. You really know how to shatter someone else's happiness.

Arthur was quite bitter with Shin's sudden message. And due to that, he wanted to criticize Shin for all of his faults and started spamming quite a lot of messages on the party chat panel.

Unfortunately, Shin just ignored all of it and voiced out his main concern.

Sickarius: The guilds that we purposely sent away will immediately turn their attention back to this place once we clear this particular dungeon. After all, a huge open dungeon located within an NPC City will definitely be a hot potato in everyone's eyes.

Sickarius: And when that happens, the risk of our quest being exposed to everyone is going to be high.

Arthur was still ranting in the chat when Cloe suddenly pointed out.

Arielle: What's more, it looks like we need to save or protect this so-called Grand Historian in this particular quest. I am pretty sure that there will be a commotion within the city once we clear this dungeon.

With that, the discussion about the quest immediately started between the members of the team while trying their best to ignore Arthur's rant in the chat.

It was until he sent a particular message that made everyone stop sending messages in the party chat channel.

Siegfried: I have a better way to prove that we are not sent by the king.

The group was silent for quite some time before ignoring him once again and continuing their discussion. All of them thought that he was just fooling around to catch their attention.

Naturally, Arthur was going to throw fit for being treated like that.

Siegfried: F*ck! Goddammit! I am serious this time, so don't ignore me!

This time, everyone stopped sending messages once again and waited for Arthur to continue. And when the latter saw that, the corner of his mouth immediately started twitching as he tried to suppress his frustration.

It took him quite some time to cool his head before telling them what he discovered.

Siegfried: Earlier, I bumped into a few people who seemed to have a special item that was somewhat related to our quest.

Attached to that message was a video where S.Tigris and his group fought against fellow members of their guild. And based on the conversation that they were having during the battle, Shin and the others were able to get the gist of the current situation.

Sickarius: But how are you so sure that the item that they are talking about is related to our quest?

Expecting that question from Shin, Arthur immediately replied with a smirking emoji alongside a picture of a particular token.

Siegfried: Because I already checked it personally.

Seeing that token in the photo, the others immediately realized why Arthur was so confident in his claim. It was because they were also familiar with the symbol engraved on that particular token.

It was the same symbol that they saw engraved on the towering wall of ice in the border of Sky Deceiving Valley.

Sickarius: How did you get that item from them if they are trying their best to protect it earlier? Don't tell me, you robbed those guys.

Right after Shin sent that message, Leonard and Cloe immediately spammed a disgusted emoji with a different version. And since the others found it amusing, they immediately joined the fun and also sent a similar emoji of their own.

When Arthur saw all of that, the expression on his face immediately turned dark and shouted. "Urgh!! These guys are definitely picking on me! Ah!!!"

His sudden reaction definitely surprised S.Tigris and his group who were currently waiting for him in the distance.

"Someone dares to pick on that guy? I wonder who it is," muttered Raven to himself while staring at Arthur who was currently showing extreme anger.

Hearing that, Black Hand couldn't help but chuckle a little before commenting. "Who else could it be? It can either be the War God Simba or Battle God Sickarius. Aside from those two, I can't think of anyone who will dare to pick a fight with that monster."

"Don't forget about the Gentle Goddess Arielle," said Ara as she chimed in the conversation. She then took a brief pause before adding. "She is the Commander of their team after all."

Finally having a good topic to discuss, the group immediately started talking about the members of the Emptyrean Talons while waiting for Arthur to finish.

In the meantime, Arthur tried to calm himself down before defending himself. "Hey! Do I look like someone that will do something like that?"

Sickarius: Yes.

Simba: Are you not?

Arielle: For the sake of getting attention, yes.

This time, the other members of the group hesitated for a moment since they knew that they were definitely going to be his target later if they said anything right now, especially Chaotic Luck who is usually being 'trained' by Arthur from time to time.

Arthur naturally knew what was running inside their heads and immediately said. "Heh! Look at these b*st*rds! I am about to mark them if they dared to say anything right now."

After that, he ignored the comments of the three before continuing.

Siegfried: I am sure that you guys are pretty familiar with S.Tigris and his main party, especially you, Shin.

Sickarius: I did a quest with them before alongside Leo, so I naturally know who they are.

Siegfried: They are offering this item to us in exchange for getting a ride on our bus.

Siegfried: I usually don't recommend accepting that kind of offer since we are slightly on the losing end, but since we are currently in a tight spot, I guess we don't have any other choice but to agree with their conditions.

Shin thought for a couple of moments before asking.

Sickarius: It is actually not a big deal since we can just draw a contract where we can get priority regarding the loot and rewards that we are going to get while doing the quest. And we can also add their numbers to our manpower.

Sickarius: The problem is their guild. From the looks of it, the opposing faction within their guild is currently targeting them. Moreover, they seem to be abandoned by their own side. What Are you going to do if they affect our plans?

Sickarius: I know that they are currently busy with their current war, but we still can't overlook the possibility of their enemies messing up our plans.

Arielle: Yeah, the Hunting King seems to be very determined at catching them.

Simba: Taking care of those guys is not a problem, but what if they expose our whereabouts in the public? Given our current reputation, anyone will definitely think that we are up to something wherever we go.

Reading their concerns, Arthur paused for a moment and looked at S.Tigris and the others before continuing.

Siegfried: I will explain all of the details when we meet later, but you can definitely trust me in this one. Your concerns have already been dealt with.

Chapter 702 Connecting The Pieces (Part 5): Inviting The Big Sister

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After Arthur convinced Shin and the others to team up with S.Tigris' party, he immediately discussed the conditions that their team wanted in this cooperation.

Naturally, the latter team didn't have much advantage in this matter since the Empyrean Talons didn't necessarily need the token in their possession.

Moreover, S.Tigris and his team were also seeking some protection under the wings of the gods of Empyrean Talons, so all they could do with the conditions presented to them without raising any complaints.

After that, Arthur summoned the contract that Shin had prepared before asking S.Tigris and Black Hand to read it carefully before signing it. Since the two already got the gist of it, they only needed to skim through the contract before finally signing it alongside the other members of the group.

"If you don't have anything to ask, then we can start moving now," said Arthur before asking them to follow him.

Not long after, they finally arrived in front of a rundown building in a secluded place within the city.

Arthur surveyed the surroundings for a couple of moments before signaling to the group to enter the building alongside him.

After that, they waited for a few moments before Alucard, Daulla, and Archimedes met up with them. And quickly after their arrival, Leonard also followed and immediately explained the layout of the place.

"There are no guards in this place. But the entrance to the underground that I've shown you earlier is heavily guarded. Then there are three more floors beyond it and each floor is much larger than the previous ones."

"The guards in the entrance are not much of a problem since each of them are only Special Elites with 125 Levels. But killing them will immediately alert the higher-level guards. Moreover, it will also give us Sin Points every time we kill each one of them."

Hearing that, Arthur couldn't help but knit his eyebrows before falling into deep thought. And when he was doing that, the others were pretty confused about how Leonard was able to gather that much information within a short period of time.

Especially the other members of the Empyrean who were in the meeting earlier. From what they knew, Leonard was only able to explore the outside of that dungeon before how heavily guarded the entrance was.

On top of that, he also mentioned that the Open Dungeon had three floors with a map size bigger than the other. They were not sure if they were going to believe what he just said since it was pretty impossible for them to explore such a huge place with just a limited amount of time.

Additionally, he also said that they were going to get corresponding Sin Points every time they killed one of those guards.

Sin Points could be reflected by the IGN (In-game Name) of the players. It was slowly turning red every time they attacked an NPC or a Player. And even redder if they killed anyone.

But the name above Leonard's head was so clean that they couldn't find any stains on it. So, it was pretty natural for them to be a little suspicious of his words.

But on the other hand, they were currently talking about the War God here, so they were not entirely sure what kind of impossible feats he could do. So, they could only nod their heads while waiting for him to continue.

Naturally, Leonard was pretty aware of the thoughts that were currently running inside theirs. But he was pretty lazy to explain himself and just continued. "As for that Grand Scholar, I didn't really see him. But I suspect that he is hiding inside the room on the lowest floor of the dungeon."

"Who knows, he may actually be the hidden boss of the dungeon," he added while opening a virtual screen in front of him which was projecting the entire map of the dungeon. There was also a metal door located at the very end of the third floor.

Aside from that, there were also some glowing dots in different parts of the dungeon, seemingly indicating the locations of the monsters and NPCs guarding the place.

– "Since when did he draw that map? Don't tell me, he gathered all of that information while waiting for us?" – this was the new thought that emerged in everyone's mind when they saw how detailed the virtual map was in front of them.

Arthur copied the virtual map that Leonard had shown before studying for himself. This guy who hated reading books was currently immersed in memorizing a particular within the game.

Black Hand, who was also able to keep his rationality after learning everything that Leonard had done while waiting for them, also copied the virtual and started studying it. And after a few moments, he also asked for the basic details of the sub-quest that Leonard had received.

Since the other side was bound with the contract, Leonard shared the quest details with them without a problem.

Black Hand studied the details of the quest very closely before asking. "With this, we can assume that we need to protect this so-called Grand Historian while escorting him towards the main part of the quest."

"But the suspicious thing is whether this so-called friend of the Grand Historian is really a friend or just a spy that the Crown had purposely planted on his side to closely monitor him."

Hearing that, Arthur immediately understood what he was trying to say and immediately chimed in. "So, you are saying that the Sin Points that we are going to get from killing the guards within the dungeon are either addressed to the King or the Grand Historian himself."

Black Hand quickly nodded his head when he heard Arthur's remark and continued. "And that is why we need to lower the number of the guards that we are going to encounter within the dungeon. After all, we are not sure which side we are going to provoke by killing them."

"It is fine if my assumption is wrong since we can just use the token to prove to the Grand Historian that we are investigating the truth behind the mystery of this so-called 'Lost Kingdom'."

"But we are indeed going to provoke the current ruler of the Saint Heaven Kingdom by killing those guards, then we are going to be in great trouble. After all, we are most likely going to be a national criminal within this kingdom if something goes wrong."

After that, he turned his head to Leonard before saying. "So, I suggest we go with the way the War God entered the dungeon."

Hearing that, Leonard immediately knew what he was trying to say and quickly responded. "Sneaking instead is going to be hard given the size of our party. If I am going to sneak back again by myself, then it is just going to be a walk in the park. But that is practically impossible."

"And also, I actually want to finish this sub-quest alone if only I could. Unfortunately, it is practically impossible since my instincts are telling me that whoever the dungeon boss is lying in wait behind that door is someone that I can't take on alone," he emphasized.

This time, S.Tigris joined the conversation and asked. "How about we take this particular route? It seems like the safest path we can take," while pointing to a certain spot on the virtual map.

Leonard immediately nodded his head when he heard that before saying. "That path is indeed plausible since it had a very small number of guards."

"But the problem is the strength of the guards around that area. The weakest guard in that place is at least a Level 175 NPC in 'Knight Rank'. There are also a couple of guards in 'Cavalier Rank' guarding those places."

(Special NPC Ranks – Elite, Special Elite, Knight, Cavalier, Royal Knights, and General)

*NPCs are slightly stronger than monsters in terms of strengths.

*They are equivalent to monsters with ranks of (Chieftain, Commander, Lord, King Class, Overlord, and Emperor)

Hearing those words from Leonard, the faces of the group immediately turned weird as they understood how scary this particular dungeon was.

Well, aside from Arthur who casually commented. "So, this Open Dungeon is indeed in Nightmare Difficulty."

'This place is a lot bigger than what we expected. Maybe I should inform Big Sis about this matter,' he thought to himself before turning his attention back to the virtual screen. 'Given the size of this dungeon, I am pretty sure that she will immediately send an elite team to secure the entrance.'

'No, she may even send a full-raid team to seal the entire area. Tsk! With the way her mind is working, I am pretty sure that she wants to monopolize the entire thing,' he added as he started to formulate a plan inside his head.

After a couple of moments, he opened the party chat channel and consulted the other members of the group about his idea.

Not long after, Shin also agreed with his plan since they had no other choice. After all, it was better for Shiella to handle these kinds of things since her Trading Firm was big enough to swallow such a big pie.

'This was also a good opportunity to discuss my plans for Calderock Town with her. I also gathered all of the cards that I need for this deal, so I am currently in the upper hand,' thought Shin to himself before giving Arthur the go signal.

Chapter 703 Gathering In The Maple Cloud City

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,m Arthur immediately contacted Shiella right after Shin agreed with his suggestion. And when he was done talking to her, he immediately turned to the others and said. "We are going to wait here until our reinforcements come."

"But make sure to keep an eye on the vicinity to make sure that no accidents can happen," he added before asking Leonard, Black Hand, and S.Tigris to come with him. He was planning to discuss the course of action that they were going to do.

"First, we want to add something in the contract," said Arthur after they moved a little further from the others.

Hearing that, both Black Hand and S.Tigris couldn't help but knit their eyebrows, showing some dissatisfaction. They literally were not benefiting from the current contract yet Arthur wanted to add something more? Of course, they were not going to feel good about that.

Naturally, Arthur knew what they were currently thinking, so he immediately added. "I know what you are thinking but you don't have to worry. It is not like that. We just want you to sign a confidentiality contract."

"The identity of our reinforcement is quite sensitive you know? So, we want to keep this operation as secretive as possible," he quickly added when he saw that the expression on Black Hammer and S.Tigris was starting to turn solemn.

Seeing that, Leonard also chimed in. "We will be honest with you. We know that you are still a part of the Wing's Alliance. So, despite the current conflict that your guild has, we still can't rule out the possibility that you might expose the location of this place and the identity of our reinforcement when you got everything that you need from us."

Black Hand and S.Tigris nodded their heads in agreement when they heard those words. And after a couple of moments, the latter immediately said. "Alright, we understand. But we also want to add some conditions of our own."

"As long as it is also reasonable, then it is not going to be a problem," said Arthur with a nonchalant tone.

"We are not going to ask to be a part of your quest or join the distribution of the loot along the way. Instead, protect us from the assassins that the Grand Elder sends to come after us," said Black Hand while signaling S.Tigris to keep quiet.

"You know that we can't protect you forever, don't you? We are also quite busy, so at least let us know how long we are going to protect you," replied Arthur in an instant.

"At least until Vice Guild Master Amanda is back," replied Black Hand.

Arthur and Leonard exchanged glances with each other for a moment, communicating with just eye contact.

'I am pretty sure that those assassins are going to be skilled,' said Arthur.

Understanding what he was currently thinking, Leonard quickly nodded his head before replying. 'That means we can use them to further train our new recruits.'

After that, Arthur started grinning from ear to ear. 'Not a bad deal. We don't have anything to lose in this one.'

He then turned his head back to Black Hand and extended his hand. "Alright, it is decided by them."

Black Hand didn't know what it was but he could sense that these two gods were definitely plotting something. But regardless, he still nodded his head to S.Tigris.

After revising the contract, Black Hand immediately voiced his concern out. "Did you guys find a way to deal with the guards without accumulating much Sin Points?"

Hearing that, Arthur suddenly smirked and replied. "You don't have to worry about that either. That is the job for our reinforcement, not ours anymore."

He then took a brief Pause and sent a file to Black Hand and S.Tigris. It was the possible routes that they were going to take once they started raiding the Dungeon.

'They already drew a plan without consulting us?' thought Black Hand when he saw the specific routes on the file. There were also other routes that they could take if something went wrong.

Seeing the expression that they were making, Arthur suddenly smirked and patted the priest's shoulders while saying. "Honestly, we are not the ones who drew that plan. If you have some problems with it, then you can ask for our reinforcement later when they arrive."

After that, Arthur walked past Black Hand alongside Leonard. And when they create enough distance, the former suddenly said. "We should prepare a couple of things before the force of the Hand of Midas arrives."

"Will they be alright with this? Given the size of the Dungeon, the amount of manpower that they are going to spend will definitely not be small," asked Leonard while knitting his eyebrows a little.

"The Hand of Midas Trading Firm is much bigger than the other trading firms, so they should be fine," replied Arthur in a nonchalant manner.

"They may not have a lot of 'Pardon Cards' to cleanse all of the Sin Points that her people will accumulate players. But at the very least, they could just transfer some of their members from other branches in here while they are dealing with this Dungeon."

"After that, she can just transfer those players back to their previous assignments when they are done with this place or when their accumulated Sin Points hit its limit," he added while shrugging his shoulders.

In the meantime, Shiella was currently hurrying over to their home as fast she could. She was also wearing a deep frown as she browsed on the virtual screen in front of her.

She was currently dealing with the papers that were sent to her earlier, but she needed to drop all of them after receiving the message from Arthur.

The papers that she had earlier were about the virtual shops that they were going to build once the next update happened. They were supposedly her main priority right now since it would improve their current profit within the game by a large margin.

But the moment she received the news about a huge open dungeon within a city, she had no other choice but to set aside her current plans and immediately check the location that Arthur had sent to her.

From the basic details that she got, the dungeon had at least three floors with a very high difficulty. That information alone was more than enough for her to imagine how much money they were going to get just by farming the mobs residing there.

Moreover, the Sin Points that the players were going to receive from killing those mobs was something that could work to their advantage. They could also use it to monopolize all of the resources that they were going to get from that dungeon.

Aside from this, Shiella also received a separate message from Shin that was telling her about the plans that he prepared for Calderock Town. And given the timing of things, she could already guess what her little brother was trying to pull right now.

"So, this is why these little rascals are lying low right now after all of the huge events that they just did," muttered Shiella with a deep frown while reading the reports from her subordinates inside the game.

She took her eyes from the virtual screen for a moment and asked Anna. "Are we still not there yet, Auntie? I still have a lot of things to prepare after I log back into the game."

"Don't worry, young miss. We are almost in there," replied Anna before stepping on the gas to accelerate the speed of the car.

In the meantime, Shiella quickly opened a panel on her virtual screen before contacting her personal assistant inside the game, Delusive Smile. And when the latter answered the call, she immediately gave out her instructions. "Smile, summon all of the available experts that we have from the other kingdoms as soon as possible. We have something to take care of urgently."

"Eh!?" Delusive Smile was taken aback by the sudden order and couldn't help but ask. "All of them? That it will take some time to contact-..."

She was still in the middle of talking when she was immediately interrupted by Shiella. "Don't ask any questions for now. Just tell them that this is an emergency and I will give them a bonus if we are successful in this operation."

"And remember! From the other Kingdoms. Our people in the Saint Heaven Kingdom need to be on standby," she emphasized.

"Eh!?" Delusive Smile became even more confused when she heard those words but still took note of that regardless.

"Anything else, Young Miss?" she asked to make sure that she would not miss anything.

Shiella paused for a moment before saying. "You can also tell Black Hammer and Tinker to tag along. I have a special job for them."

After making sure that they didn't forget anything, Shiella ended the call before closing her eyes and leaning backward. She was planning to have a little rest before things could get hectic once again.

Chapter 704 The Missing Knights (Part 1)

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"Alright! That should be everything!" said Shin as he submitted the last quest to the chief of the Misty Village. And immediately after that, the group received a system notification that they were waiting for.

Ding!

System: Congratulations! You've reached the Worship Status for the Misty Village, you will now be able to have all of the privileges within the village.

Current Available Privileges:

First Priority when it comes to the future quest.

50% discount on all available transactions within the village.

Free renting of boats every five days (In-game Time)

Note: Doing specific tasks may give you additional privileges.

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Seeing the notification, the members of the group simultaneously nodded their heads, showing their satisfaction.

After that, the others turned their heads at Shin at the same time, waiting for his next instruction.

Shin naturally knew that they were currently thinking, so we quickly waved his head and said to them. "We already finished everything so there is nothing for you to do anymore. You are free to do whatever you want for the time being while we are waiting for the other group to finish their task."

"But make sure to always be ready for my summons. I will contact you again when we are about to continue the Empire Quest," he added.

Hearing that, the others immediately became overjoyed since they were finally free to do anything.

"Finally! Freedom!" muttered Chaotic Luck while doing a triumphed pose.

Beside him, Akailu quickly ran towards the nearest house. And based on the signboard hanging in front of it, that place seemed to be a material shop. "I can finally buy those rare materials at a cheaper price."

Seeing him running that way, Owen immediately chased after him and quickly shouted. "Hey, spare me some metals and ores! They are really selling high quality ones!"

Ithilien sighed helplessly when she saw that before following after the knight while also saying to herself. "Sigh~! He is at it again."

Shin shook his head a little when he saw that before turning to Cloe. "How about you? You are not planning to relax?"

Cloe smiled brightly when she heard that before answering. "It's fine. I am satisfied with accompanying you."

Shin shrugged his shoulders and responded. "Fine, as long as you're happy."

After that, he turned his attention back to the system notifications that he got before wearing a satisfied smile.

System: Congratulations! As someone who has a lot of contribution in the Misty Village, you become qualified to take on the special quest prepared by the village chief.

Please meet Chief Choi to know more about the quest.

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Reading that particular notification, Shin couldn't stop smiling as he could already guess what kind of quest was coming.

"It is definitely going to be similar to what happened to the previous Calderock Village," he muttered to himself before re-entering the house of the Village Chief alongside Cloe. "Let's go."

They didn't even need to knock on the door as Chief Choi immediately opened the door right after he sensed the presence of the two standing in front of it.

'This old man is definitely not simple,' thought Shin to himself when he witnessed what happened.

"Ho-ho~! I knew that we were going to meet each other again," greeted Chief Choi after seeing the two before inviting them to come inside. "Come on in. I know why you are here."

"Feel free to sit anywhere that you want and make yourselves comfortable. This might take a while," said the Village Chief after inviting the two.

Shin followed Chief Choi with his gaze and saw that the NPC was preparing a snack and tea for them. 'This game is really interesting, to think that even the NPCs know how to show proper etiquette in receiving their guests.'

Then he noticed that the technique that the village chief used to prepare their tea was rather peculiar. He slightly knitted his eyebrows before focusing his gaze at what the chief was doing.

Not long after, Chief Choi finally served the tea to Shin and Cloe alongside some biscuits. After that, he sat on the chair across the two before saying. "I will not beat around the bush and go straight to the point. Be the next chief of this village."

'I knew it!' shouted Shin inside his head but didn't show it outside. After all, he knew that this was not going to be that simple given all of the experiences that he accumulated within the game.

He knew that there was something more to it so he quickly asked. "And in exchange for?"

Hearing that, Chief Choi started laughing out loud before saying. "I knew from the start that you are different compared to the other people. Most of them are going to accept it after hearing what I've said, especially those Otherworld Individuals such as yourselves."

Shin couldn't help but smirk when he heard that before responding. "I just know that there is no such thing as free lunch in this world. So, I always look at everything a little differently."

Chief Choi slightly nodded his head with those words before saying. "I knew that I would like you the moment I first saw you. My eyes have never been wrong!"

The corner of Shin's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard those words as he still vividly remembered his first encounter with this particular NPC. 'How come I remember it differently. You almost killed our entire team during our first meeting.'

Regardless of the thoughts that were running inside his head, Shin was still able to maintain the smile that he was wearing before asking. "So, what did the Village Chief want us to do in order to take over your position?"

Chief Choi started laughing once again when he heard those words as he found Shin more and more amusing. "And you are also a straightforward person. I like it!"

After that, the look on his face suddenly turned a little serious before smirking at Shin. "As you can see, I am not your average village chief."

"Truth is we are assigned in this place by the Righteous Council to monitor the state of that towering wall of ice. And because of its existence, we can't freely leave this place as we please," he added after a brief moment of pause.

Meanwhile, Shin immediately picked up a couple of things that could become a clue for him in this quest. 'We? Then that means that there are quite a few of them in this place. Does it also mean that there are more villages in this region?'

It didn't take long for Chief Choi to confirm Shin's suspicion. "Originally, there were a lot of knights assigned to this place. But from some unknown reason, the other knights suddenly disappeared one after the other."

"Aside from us who built a village to continue staying in this place, most of the knights that were originally sent in this place are nowhere to be found."

Shin slightly knitted his brows when he heard those words and suddenly asked. "So, you want us to investigate what happened to those knights in your place?"

"Quite clever, huh?" answered Chief Choi when he heard that question and continued. "But you are right. We can't investigate what happened to them because we don't know if we are purposely being targeted."

"We are partially connected with each other so we are not sure what will happen to us once we try to learn the truth behind their disappearance."

Shin slightly nodded his head when he heard the reason behind it. But he was still not fully convinced and asked. "But if it is something even you, Knights from the Righteous Council, can't handle. Then I am afraid that even us are going to be powerless about it."

"Ha!" Chief Choi laughed once again when he heard those words before saying. "I really like your cleverness. Of course, we are not going to let you die easily."

He then paused for a moment and took out a particular item and put it down on the table. It was a flute-like item that resembled the legendary griffin.

Shin carefully looked at that item before asking. "And this is?"

"That thing will help save your lives when you encounter something that you can't handle," said the Village Chief smirkingly before adding. "Just blow that whistle and we will immediately head over to your location as fast as we can."

"We understand that we are asking something dangerous, but we assure you that you will be rewarded handsomely once we are successful in this mission," he quickly added after seeing Shin falling in deep thought.

Unknown to him, Shin was already making plans inside his head when heard all of the basic information that he needed for this particular quest.

After a couple of moments, he suddenly started grinning inside before accepting the quest. "Alright, you can rely on us on this one."

Seeing that he was accepting the quest, Chief Choi suddenly became overjoyed and said, "That's good, then let me tell you the exact places that you need to investigate specifically."

The moment the village chief said those words, he quickly took out a map and showed it to Shin. And in the meantime, the latter was already grinning from ear to ear as he read the details of the quest that he just received.

"This is going to be interesting," muttered Shin with a soft voice.

On the other hand, Cloe, who remained quiet up until now, suddenly shook her head in a bitter manner before commenting. "More like smelling some profit. Are you sure that you are not Big Sis Shiella's biological brother?"

Chapter 705 The Missing Knights (Part 2)

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Quest Name: The Missing Knights

Quest Type: Hidden Investigative Quest

Quest Difficulty: Nightmare (V+)

Quest Details:

-The Council of the Righteous Church around the Atlas World felt that there was something suspicious about the 'Ice Wall of the Eastern End'. And due to that, they sent an elite group of knights to do some investigation on it while also monitoring its state. But because of an unknown phenomenon, the knights started to disappear one after another.

,m After struggling for long, Lucas Choi, one of the surviving knights, discovered that they could only avoid disappearing if they stayed within the villages around the Sky Deceiving Valley.

With this discovery, he immediately passed on the information to his fellow knights and said that they needed to stay in those villages for the time being.

Time went by and they still couldn't uncover what really was happening. Most of his colleagues died due to some disease while the others continued to live on while being the village chiefs of the said villages.

Quest Condition:

-Knight Lucas Choi wanted you to investigate the areas where the other knights disappeared.

Additional Clue:

-Talk to the other surviving knights to know more about the event.

Quest Rewards:

+10 levels

+50 000 Reputation Points

+1000 Fame

+25 LP (Legacy Points)

-Being the Leader of all of the settlements within the Sky Deceiving Valley

-Additional Clues for the Quest 'The Lost Kingdom'

Quest Penalties:

-20 levels

-100 000 Reputation Points

-2000 Fame

= Destruction of all the settlements

= Death of the Knights from the Righteous Church

= Your Favorability from the Righteous Church will drop drastically.

"Tsk! The penalties of failing the quest have always been harsh. And this one doesn't even have any additional rewards," complained Shin after reading the details of the quest.

"Moreover, it also has some suspicious parts just like the quest that I got from the previous chief of the Calderock Village," he added as he recalled the events that happened when he first encountered a tricky quest.

"Let's just hope that your gut feeling is wrong," said Cloe as she happened beside Shin while looking at him with a bright smile.

Hearing that, Shin rolled his eyes at her before saying. "You are saying that despite knowing how accurate my instincts are?"

"My point exactly! What is the point of thinking about it if you already know that there is something wrong with it?" said Cloe before dragging her with both of her hands. "Stop procrastinating and get moving already!"

"Tsk! Tsk!" Shin kept clicking his tongue as he thought about how they were going to clear this quest without affecting their main objective.

While Cloe was contacting the others and telling them that it was time to regroup, Shin suddenly sensed a couple of gazes observing them from the dark.

He tried to find their locations but he failed to locate any of them despite sharpening his senses. But since he couldn't feel any hostility from them, he decided to forget about them for the time being.

Not long after, the group gathered once again in the center of the village. But despite being physically present, they seemed to leave their minds elsewhere.

"D*mn! How come those metals are that expensive? A small batch of them is as costly as my previous equipment set," muttered Owen while staring blankly in the air.

"I know, right? Even those stupid leathers are even more expensive than those leather suits that are being sold by the Hand of Midas Trading Firm," said Akailu absentmindedly before complaining a little more. "I thought we already have a 50% discount on every transaction within this village, why do I feel that they've gotten more expensive?"

"That is because the owner changed the materials that he is selling from Black Mithril to Obsidian Rank," commented Ithilien from the side while also rolling her eyes at the same time. "Why do you complain that much when they are selling something that you can't find anywhere."

"Because we can't afford any of them," answered Chaotic Luck while wearing a dejected look on his face.

He paused for a couple of moments before turning his head at Shin and asking with a desperate tone. "Big Brother, can you lend me some gold? I'll make sure to pay them when I become big in the future."

The corner of Shin's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard those words before saying. "Then how about you offer your service to the Hand of Midas Trading Firm? I am pretty sure that their chief miner will welcome you with open arms."

The expression on Chaotic Luck's face immediately turned dark when he heard those words. Especially when he recalled Chief Miner Walsh of the Hand of Midas, who treated his undead summonses as some first-class miners.

After that, Shin waved his head and shared the new quest with them. "That's enough for now. I'll help you buy a couple of those materials if we are able to clear this quest without any problem."

The others quickly became energized when they heard those words and swiftly looked at Shin with a brightened look on their face. "Really!?"

Seeing the expression that they had, Shin couldn't help but smile at them and quickly added. "Well, that is also based on your performances."

The other members stared blankly at Shin for a couple of moments before shouting in excitement. And when the latter saw that, he immediately waved his head and instructed. "But before that, follow me to our first target. I'll explain the plan along the way."

...

After a few moments of venturing within the Sky Deceiving Valley, the group encountered a couple of monsters that they did see earlier.

"Did new types of monsters spawn or did we just miss these guys because we were exploring the other earlier?" said Owen after cutting down a monster with an appearance of a strange plant with multiple clams on its body.

"I say, these monsters are quite new. After all, we already encountered most types of monsters earlier and most of them have dark auras and frosty traits, but these ones are completely different. Not only in terms of elements but also to unique auras," commented Akailu while commanding his monster summons through his mind.

In the meantime, Shin was currently frowning quite deeply due to what they were experiencing. Since the time they left the Misty Village, not only the aggro of the monsters completely locked on them but the nature of those monsters also changed.

Aside from the points that Akailu had pointed out, all of the monsters that they encountered so far possessed a hint of sacred powers within their bodies.

It might be too faint for the others to notice but for Shin, who just received a special power related to sacred elements, such a small amount of energy was very distinguishable.

Moreover, Cloe who was a member of the Church of Light was also quite sensitive to such energies. And since she was also telling him about her thoughts about those monsters, Shin was now fully convinced that his suspicion about this particular quest was right.

"Is it just me or are all the Village Chief's Quests like these?" complained Shin while knitting his eyebrows.

Beside him, Cloe giggled a little before answering for him. "I heard that most of the quests about transferring the ownership of NPC Villages are not like this. So, maybe it is just your luck."

"Tsk! Tsk!" Shin clicked his tongue repeatedly after hearing those words before raising his hand and calling the others. "Alright, we are picking up the pace."

"We need to head over the first targeted location before deciding our next move," he added before stepping forward and unsheathing his sword.

Seeing his actions, the others couldn't help but stare at him for a moment while knitting their eyebrows. Since the first time they set their feet in this region, Shin rarely partook in the battle since he was focusing on instructing the others.

He was only proving some assistance to the group whenever his help was truly necessary. But the help that he was proving them was only ranged supports that were attacking the monsters that were attacking the others from their blind spots. Aside from that, he was not giving them any help at all.

Due to that, most of the work was given to the other members of the group, especially Chaotic Luck who needed to maintain the formation of summoned undead monsters while traveling.

So, no matter how curious the group about how strong Shin had truly become, they couldn't see it personally.

But now that he was planning to take action, the other couldn't help but look forward to it. Especially Owen and Akailu, who were also battle maniacs like Shin. After all, seeing his battle through a virtual screen and witnessing his true strength firsthand were two different things after all.

"Owen, focus on protecting our backlines alongside Akailu. Luck, just maintain the formation of your Blazing Undeads while we are moving forward," instructed Shin as he looked in front of him, which was currently filled with plant-type monsters.

Seeing that Shin was getting ready for battle, Cloe quickly cast a couple of buffs on him, enhancing his battle capacities.

Shing!

And without further ado, Shin swung his sword in front of him and sent a vertical sword wave that created a path for them.

"I'll be leading the charge ahead, so try to keep up with my speed," he said while lunging forward and cutting all of the monsters that were blocking his path.

Chapter 706 The Missing Knights (Part 3)

...

Swoosh!

The group stared blankly at Shin as he continuously cut down all of the monsters that they encountered. He didn't even bother to slow down his speed even if the monsters blocking their way were high-leveled ones.

"I know that he really became strong after the recent upgrade of his equipment, but I still don't expect that he is this strong to treat these monsters as wild grasses," commented Akailu from the rear of the group while chasing after Shin alongside the others.

Hearing that, Owen couldn't help but shake his head bitterly while agreeing. "I thought that the gap between our strengths shortened a little after I switched my equipment with the previous items that the 'Demon God' had. But I guess I am still wrong."

Contrary to what they were talking about, Chaotic Luck suddenly pursed his lips before saying. "But from what I can see, Big Brother's equipment is just a small addition to his current strength."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the other two at the same time while turning their heads at the Solaris Lich.

Chaotic Luck knitted his eyebrows for a moment before explaining. "Isn't he using both of his battle styles now? He may not be switching his equipment set and weapons just like what he did during his previous match, but he is at least using most of the skills from both of his identities."

"Now that you mention it," muttered Owen before turning his eyes back to Shin and closely observing him.

From time to time, Shin was using his sword drawing skills before changing the form of his sword sheath and using a variety of skills related to each form. Sometimes, he was using stealth skills to avoid the monster's detection before striking their cores.

At first glance, Shin seemed to be battling with a couple of simple skills given how easy he was able to execute them. But upon a closer inspection, it was pretty clear that the variety of moves that he was using in battle were a set of complex movements.

Now that Owen and Akailu noticed those tiny details from Shin, they could now clearly see the larger gap between them and this monster.

"Tsk! I try to test my strength again once I am done with my class conversion quest," muttered Owen while wearing a determined look on his face.

In the meantime, Akailu sighed helplessly before commenting with a skeptical tone. "Yeah, right. Go test your strength against those monsters."

Hearing that, Owen suddenly felt a chill on his spine as he tried to imagine himself battling against Shin and the other two gods in their team. After seeing himself getting beat up left and right, he immediately turned his head to Akailu and said. "Should I try to use you and Alucard as test subjects?"

"Trying to bully the weak while avoiding the strong? Such a practical way of thinking," said Akailu with a skeptical tone before saying with a provocative tone. "Well, we still don't know who will bully who when the time comes."

Not long after, the group arrived in a particular ruin. And from the look of it, this place seemed to be pretty old especially with the mosses and vine wrapped around the fallen structures.

And right after their arrival, the group immediately received a system notification.

Ding!

System: You've discovered a mysterious ruin!

System: An ominous power seems to be engulfing this place, please proceed with caution!

Shin slightly knitted his eyebrows when he saw the notification before instructing the others. "Maintain the formation and keep your senses sharp at all times."

After that, he started advancing forward while cutting the vines in front of them to clear a path. And after a few minutes of wandering in the ruins, they discovered that the place seemed to be a church or a temple previously.

"This is pretty much a temple wherever I look. Especially with the presence of these things," commented Owen as he observed the statues around them.

Shin also removed some of the vines stacked on the collapsed walls to see the murals drawn on them. The paintings on those walls were already hard to recognize due to how blurry they were. But since Shin had some background in arts, he was able to roughly guess the image that they previously had.

From his perspective, he could vaguely see an image of a particular civilization that seemed to be worshipping its god. But since he was not exactly sure how to picture the image of that god inside his mind, he couldn't properly guess the religion of that civilization.

But at the very least, this particular mural was already giving Shin a hint for what this place was. "A church in the middle of a forest? This is really strange. Unless-..."

Shin was in the middle of his thoughts when the corner of his eyes caught a glimpse of something. He followed his instincts and walked towards another wall that was on the verge of collapse.

He then carefully removed the vines wrapped around it and saw a familiar symbol drawn on it. "This-..."

It was the same symbol that they saw on the towering wall of ice at the border of the Sky Deceiving Valley and the very same emblem engraved on the token that S.Tigris had.

"Whether this place is a temple or a church, it is really strange for it to be in the middle of a secluded area such as this region. And it is even odder if this is a part of that mysterious civilization. After all, their main territory is supposedly on the other side of that stupid wall made of ice."

These thoughts were running inside Shin's head when he suddenly realized something. "Wait! If that civilization is on the other side of the wall and it was sealed by a messenger of God ages ago, then how come one of its temples is here?"

He then turned his head towards the symbol on the wall before muttering to himself. "Unless this symbol does not belong to that civilization."

Then different thoughts started running inside Shin's head alongside the events that they had experienced earlier. After that, he remembered particular information from the update of their main quest.

– "The outcome of the war remained unclear due to the God of Winter sending one of his messengers."
–

Remembering that information, Shin realized that their suspicion about this particular symbol was wrong – it didn't belong to that mysterious civilization at all! Instead, it was more like the symbol that the races under the God of Winter used!

After that, Shin also remembered the details of this current quest. "Chief Choi said that they were sent by the Righteous Council to monitor the state of that towering wall of ice."

"If my guess is right, then the church that proposed that task is the church that is serving the God of Winter! No wonder those knights suddenly disappeared one by one. They will probably become the target of the surviving members of the particular civilization!" he said with a twitching face before turning his gaze on his surroundings once again.

"This also explains why this place is ruined. Chief Choi is probably hiding something from us about something and it is most likely the truth about this place."

Shin now had an assumption but still lacked the evidence. And that should be the next course of action that they needed to take. "The God of Winter and the mysterious Kingdom. Alongside the connection between these two, I also need to know how the survivors of that kingdom manage to appear outside that wall of ice."

"Did they somehow escape from that side or are they on this side from the very start?" he was thinking about this when he suddenly heard a shout from the other members of the group.

"Hey, Akailu! What's wrong!?"

Shin quickly turned around and looked behind him to see what happened. Then he saw Akailu kneeling on the ground while holding the back of his head.

Swoosh!

He quickly regrouped with them and asked. "What happened?"

Hearing his words, the others quickly shook their heads in unison as they also did not know what really happened.

On the ground, Akailu was still kneeling on one knee without removing his hand on the back of his head. There was blood flowing on it earlier which was why Cloe cast a heal on him to cure the wound and recover his HP.

At the same time, Cloe was also keeping an eye on the health bars of each member of the group as a form of habit. After all, one of the main jobs of the healer was to make sure that every member of the team was healthy.

What she saw earlier was the sudden drop of Akailu's health bar and almost reaching zero. If not because of his passive awakening skill, 'Soul Link', then he most probably died already.

Thanks to that skill, any kind of fatal damage that could take his life would be transferred to one of his summoned monsters. But surprisingly, the damage that he received was so strong that it almost one-shotted him and his monster.

Naturally, the group immediately became vigilant while looking sharply at their surroundings. But despite them scanning their surroundings with all they got, they still couldn't find the assailant.

"Tsk! That really hurts! Getting hit at the back of your head is really not a pleasant feeling," said Akailu in a joking manner after recovering himself.

"Did you get hit by a player or a monster? Or perhaps by an NPC?" asked Shin with one breath while staying vigilant.

"Unfortunately, I am not sure either. I didn't get any kind of notification that someone attacked me. All I know is I almost dropped to the ground after getting hit," replied Akailu while wearing a bitter look on his face.

Hearing that, Shin couldn't help but knit his brow quite deeply while imagining the possible scenario inside his head.

Unknown to the group, the culprit was actually right beside them. And it seemingly enjoyed the panicked look that they currently had.

Chapter 707 Statues? Here We Go Again

...

Shin and the group raised their guard to the highest level while sharply looking at their surroundings. But despite their efforts, they still couldn't find the location of their enemies.

"Luck, how about your undead monsters? They don't find anything?" asked Shin to Chaotic Luck since he knew that he was keeping the formation of his undeads all the time.

p Chaotic Luck shook his head bitterly as he was sure that his summoned undead didn't find anything. "No, big brother. They didn't see anything. I am pretty sure that no one breached the formation without us knowing."

"Strange," commented Cloe as she also started to knit her eyebrows deeply.

Shin thought for a moment before instructing the others. "Ithilien, use your 'Magic Eyes' to see if there is something that is filled with any kind of energy. Luck, try to also look for anything that has some heat waves through your 'Flame Vision.'"

Magic Eyes was an ocular skill that was unique to Elven Archers. Unlike the 'Owl's Eyes' and 'Eagle Eyes' that most of the marksmen used to see their target from a long distance, this particular skill was detecting the wielder's target through their magic signature.

Within the game, any living things or special items had their magic signature, the wielder of these eyes was able to locate anything within a specific range as long as it was emitting some mana.

On the other hand, the 'Flame Vision' skill that Chaotic Luck had was similar to the thermal imaging that most of the military used. It was a particular technique of using the heat given off by certain objects to produce an image of it or even locate it.

Walls and anything that might block one's eyesight was useless in front of these two ocular skills. Even if their target was skilled at suppressing their Mana, the 'Flame Vision' were able to see them through the heat that they were emitting. And if the target was able to suppress the heat of their bodies to trick their opponents, they still couldn't hide the magic signature that they were using to change the temperature of their bodies.

On top of these two skills, Shin was also using his 'True Sight' skill while sweeping his gaze at their surroundings. He might not be able to see through the things that were blocking his sight, but his eyes were still able to see through any kind of disguise.

With the foolproof plan that Shin had, it was impossible for their enemy to hide from them. At least, that was what he was thinking until they failed to locate anything within the vicinity.

'Still nothing? Does the attack come from a distance then?' thought Shin as the frown that he was wearing further deepened.

As if he was able to read what was running inside Shin's head, Akailu immediately said. "It is impossible to be attacked from afar. I am pretty sure that I got hit by a blunt weapon or something similar."

"Then where did it come from?" asked Shin unconsciously. He was about to say something more when he suddenly felt an ominous feeling coming from behind him.

He quickly turned around while also unsheathing his sword. But to his surprise, he found nothing but a stone statue of a knight holding a sword pointing to the ground. He frowned quite deeply as the ominous feeling that he sensed suddenly disappeared as if it never existed.

Seeing his actions, the others couldn't help but turn their heads at him while also knitting their eyebrows.

"What's wrong?" asked Cloe while also turning around, trying to see where Shin was looking. But just like the latter, she also didn't see anything aside from the same statue.

"A statue? Why do I feel that I already know what is going to happen?" muttered Shin to himself after seeing the statue.

He stared intensely at it for a moment while trying to suppress the twitching of his mouth. After all, he already experienced a couple of unpleasant encounters with these things, so it was better to be ready for anything than getting caught off-guard at the most unexpected time.

To make sure that there was nothing strange on the statue, Shin swung the [Yamato] on it, planning to cut it down.

Ding!

But to his surprise, his sword couldn't cut the statue nor leave a mark on it. "What?"

Seeing that, Shin quickly told the others to get away from the statue before infusing his mana on the [Yamato]. And when the others finally distanced themselves, he suddenly swung the katana on the statue once again, seemingly planning to destroy it.

Bang!

A cloud of smoke was immediately created right after his attack landed on the statue. But just like what happened earlier. He didn't even leave a scratch on the surface of that statue despite how strong his attack was.

"Hey, why are you suddenly attacking a statue? Don't tell me you think this thing is the one that attacks Akailu earlier," said Owen with a frown while staying vigilant to his surroundings.

"There is no magic within that statue nor any hint of mana emitting from its body," said Ithilien from the side as she looked at the statue with her 'Magic Eyes'.

"It is also not emitting any heat. I think it is just an ordinary statue," added Chaotic Luck while also using his 'Flame Vision' on the said statue.

Hearing them, Shin slightly nodded his head before saying. "Well, that is also what I thought at first since even my 'True Sight' didn't find anything strange from it."

"But don't you also find it strange that this is the only statue that has no vines wrapped around it since earlier? Moreover, it is also so sturdy to the point where it can withstand my attacks," he added without removing his gaze from that statue.

Realizing what Shin was trying to say, the group also started looking at the statue with a serious look on their faces.

But while they were in the middle of observing the statue, Cloe suddenly felt a murderous gaze locked on her. She then quickly spun around and immediately turned to the direction where the gaze was coming from.

But just like Shin, she also didn't find anyone behind her. Instead, she saw another statue of a knight who was holding a morning star weapon.

*(a club with a heavy spiked head that was attached to the handle by a chain)

Aside from that, she also discovered that this particular statue was unlike the rest since there were also no vines wrapped around it.

Naturally, the others also noticed her actions and quickly turned their attention towards the statue in front of her.

Seeing that, Shin quickly swept his gaze on their surroundings and saw a few more statues similar to the ones near them. They also had different types of weapons on them, not even repeating a single one.

"So, that is what is happening, huh?" muttered Shin before telling the others to gather around. "Owen, go face towards the four-o'clock direction! Akailu, seven o'clock. The rest position ourselves behind us!"

"So, what are you planning now?" asked Owen while holding his shield in front of him while holding the glaive with his other hand and resting it on his shoulder.

"I am not sure what are the conditions to make those statues move, but I am pretty sure that we need to keep an eye on them to prevent them from moving," answered Shin while staying vigilant to their surroundings.

"From the three instances earlier, no one is looking at the directions of those statues when they attack Akailu and show their hostility to me and Cloe. So, if my guess is right, these stupid stone people are only going to attack if we are not looking at them," he added after making sure that everyone was facing in the right direction.

In the meantime, Ithilien knitted her eyebrows before asking. "But how are we going to fight them?"

"Yeah, we already saw earlier that even your attacks are not effective against them," commented Akailu while ordering his summoned monsters to circle around them.

Shin was silent for a couple of moments before answering. "I am not sure either. But if my guess is right, then we can only damage them when they are trying to attack us."

"They are most likely invulnerable in their current state, so if we follow the rules of the game, then they are going to be vulnerable once they are in their attack mode or something."

Hearing this explanation, the others immediately nodded their heads as they found it reasonable. But the main problem remained the same, 'how were they going to attack those statues?'

"I've got a plan that I want to try but I need you to trust me in this one," said Shin with full confidence.

For some unknown reason, the other members of the group felt an ominous feeling coming after hearing his words.

"Why do I feel that I will not like this plan of yours?" said Owen with a bitter smile.

Aside from Cloe who fully trusted Shin at everything, the other members of the group couldn't help but nod their heads at Owen's words.

Unfortunately, Shin ignored the remark and continued. "I will count to three and all of you are going to close your eyes. And please unsummon your monsters, Akailu. They are considered as living beings, so I think they can't be present in the field."

Shin didn't even wait for them to say anything and immediately started counting.

"One!"

"Two!"

"Three!"

Swoosh!

Chapter 708 Battle Arrangements

...

"One."

"Two."

"Three!"

Right after Shin the other members of the group simultaneously closed their eyes aside from Shin. And just like what he was expecting, none of the statues made a move yet as they were able to sense that he still had his eyes open.

After confirming that they couldn't fool these statues with such a simple trick, Shin also started closing his eyes while also maximizing the effects of this 'Sensing Circle'. And with his enhanced senses provided with that skill, he was able to perceive any kind of movements within the affected area of the territorial skill.

Swoosh!

Then the statues immediately made their moves the moment he closed his eyes. The knight nearest to them swung its sword in a horizontal manner, trying to sweep all of them with a single strike.

On the other hand, the knight with a morning star quickly swung its weapon a couple of times before sending the spiked ball at them.

And that was not the end, Shin also sensed that a few more statues made their moves and tried to attack them from a distance. But only the ones with the means of attacking them from afar. The other statues with melee weapons remained unmoved and just stared at the group.

After gathering enough information that they could use, Shin quickly cast a dome-shaped barrier around the group to protect them from the incoming attacks.

'Slayer Skill: (Modified) Eclipse Pulse'

Ding!

Cling! Cling!

Ding!

The attacks of those statues were quite strong as they were able to push Shin's barrier on the verge of collapse. The cracks on the surface of the barrier were slowly spreading and starting to affect the sturdiness that the barrier had.

Fortunately, Shin was fast enough to respond and quickly snapped with his fingers and made the barrier explode.

'Slayer Skill: (Modified) Eclipse Counter'

Boom!

With the explosion of the barrier, a powerful shockwave was sent in every direction. At the same time, strong magical energy was accompanying the shockwave to further enhance its strength and amplify its power.

Bang!

But surprisingly, Shin sensed that his counterattack didn't affect the statues even for a bit despite how strong the force behind his attack was.

"Are they immune to magic?" muttered Shin before telling the others to open their eyes so that they could start preparing.

After sharing his thoughts about the statues with the group, Shin then started making some arrangements. "I think we really need to fight them with our eyes closed."

He was about to say something but he immediately swallowed back the words that he was about to say and quickly turned to Chaotic Luck.

He organized his thoughts for a couple of moments before saying. "I want to try something again, so I think we need to close our eyes again."

"Again?" said the others simultaneously, showing a clear sign of complaint.

Shin ignored the tone that they had and immediately continued. "This time, I want Chaotic Luck to use his shared vision with a couple of his undead monsters to observe the battle through them."

"I am not sure if this is going to be effective but I think it is worth a try since undead monsters are not considered as a living thing," he added with a smirking tone.

Hearing those words, the others couldn't help but nod their heads before going back to a formation.

Shin looked at them for another time before giving some instruction. "Owen, I need you to cast your Iron Wall skill to block everything from your side while I will handle the rest. Keep your mind and ears sharp."

"Yeah, yeah. I know it already. You don't have to repeat it again," said Owen while waving his hand at Shin.

After that, Shin counted up to three once again before they closed their eyes. And just like what he thought, the statues immediately attacked them right after they did that.

"Now!" shouted Shin to Owen and quickly positioned himself in front of the spiked head of the morning star before swinging his sword at it.

Clang!

With a powerful swing, he redirected the trajectory of the spiked head towards the other knight statue with a sword and was currently in the middle of swinging it to Akailu.

But given that the spiked head was heading in its direction, the knight statue had no other choice but to abandon the idea of attacking the Beastmaster and block the incoming attack instead.

Cling!

After that, Shin quickly jumped in another direction and deflected a magic arrow instead. And while he was busy with the things on his side, Owen was currently enduring the attacks that were thrown at him.

Those heavy pounding and powerful strikes really pushed him backward despite the protection of his 'Iron Wall' skill provided. Fortunately, his current equipment was top-notch which was why he was able to endure all of them without a problem.

In the meantime, Chaotic Luck couldn't help but be dumbfounded due to what he was currently witnessing.

Forget about Owen since all he needed to do was to cast a skill and stand in his place while blocking the attacks of those statues from his side. But it was a completely different matter when it came to Shin.

It was already amazing how Shin was able to perceive his surroundings quite clearly while also responding to the attacks that the statues threw at them pretty accurately. It was as if closing his eyes didn't affect his battle prowess at it. His current ability seemed to have no difference compared to how he fought normally.

The battle continued a few more moments before Shin asked them to open their eyes. And the moment they did that, all of the statues went back to their original places in an instant, acting as if not thing happened.

After that, Shin turned to Chaotic Luck and immediately asked. "What are your thoughts? Do you think that you can fight them that way?"

Chaotic Luck thought a couple of moments before nodding his head and saying with full confidence. "I think there shouldn't be a problem. I can just act as controlling my undead monsters remotely from a distance."

That was more than enough of a reply for Shin and quickly turned his head toward Owen and Akailu. And understanding the meaning of his gaze, the two quickly respond.

"If it is just protecting, then I also have no problem doing it. I can just treat it as one of my special training for my special talent," said Owen smirkingly as he tried to flaunt his 'Extreme Sense' talent.

Unfortunately, no one was interested in it anymore. After all, Shin still bested him in their last battle, so it was pretty obvious which one was better.

"I may not be able to show my best without summoning my monsters or without fusing with them, but I can at least help in defense given my passive skills," said Akailu, on the other hand.

"I'm sure Cloe will not have any problems at healing with her eyes closed," said Shin before turning his head to their team's priest while asking. "Am I right?"

Cloe giggles a little before responding. "You are complimenting me too much but it is indeed a piece of a cake."

The corner of Shin's mouth twitched a little when he heard those words before saying to himself. 'I don't know if she is acting humble or not.'

Then it was Ithilien's turn to receive her task. "Since Ithilien can't assist us with her archery this time, we need her to focus on casting her spells instead."

Shin paused for a moment to have a quick look at his surroundings before continuing. "Given the current environment that we are in, I think it is the best opportunity for you to showcase the abilities that you receive after defeating that Corrupted Elderwood."

*(He is referring to the monster that Ithilien and Charlotte fought during their first music video)

Hearing that, Ithilien found it reasonable and immediately agreed with him. She then tried to check the available skill set that she could use before nodding her head.

"Elves have a Racial Trait that influences your magical senses, right?" asked Shin for clarification.

Ithilien nodded her head once again and immediately added. "I think I will be able to sense any kind of movements within the 5-meter radius around me, but it will consume a lot of mana maintaining it, so I can't use it for a long time."

"It is fine. All you need to do is to restrict the movements of the statues and assist Owen and Akailu at holding the defensive line," said Shin pointing to Chaotic Luck. "The two of us will do all of the hard work this time anyway."

Hearing those additional words, Chaotic Luck felt like he wanted to cry while cursing Shin inside. 'Why does it always have to be me?'

And immediately after receiving the respective task from Shin, the group immediately assumed a battle formation and got ready for the battle.

Chapter 709 Striking Gold?

...

The moment the group closed their eyes, an intense battle immediately broke out. Since Owen and Akailu only needed to focus on defending, their job was much easier compared to the others.

Well, Ithilien had the easiest job since she needed to keep using the vines around the to restrict the movements of the statues that entered her detection range. Moreover, the surroundings were favorable for her so her job became much easier.

Cloe just needed to cast her heals and buffs from time to time, so also didn't have much problem. Aside from the fact that she needed to keep her senses sharp to be able to pinpoint the location of her teammates to cast a timely and accurate heal, her job was pretty easy too. At least for her.

On the other hand, Shin and Chaotic Luck were the ones who were the busiest. The former was able to keep up with the attacks of the statues without a problem despite his eyes being closed. After all, this kind of battle was much easier compared to the hell-like experience during his special training with Professor Plum and Grandmaster Benn.

In the meantime, Chaotic Luck was having a hard time trying to keep up with Shin. Fortunately, he was quite familiar with controlling his summoned undeads remotely where he could share a vision with them. So, this kind of battle with his eyes closed was not a problem.

Moreover, he already experienced what hell felt like after being tortured by Arthur and Leonard during their sparring sessions, so the pressure that he was getting from these monsters was nothing in comparison. This might be one of the rare times where he would thank those two for beating him into a pulp when sparring with them.

The battle continued for a few moments before Shin realized the properties of the strange statues. The statues with melee weapons were immune to any kind of attacks from a player but they were vulnerable to the attacks that came from the other statues.

On the other hand, the statues that were attacking from a distance were vulnerable to the attacks that were coming from the players.

Shin already tried to test it a couple of times already and proved it earlier by throwing some random attacks at them.

"Luck, do you think you can handle these sides on your own?" said Shin while dodging the magic arrows that were thrown at him.

"Eh!? Why?" asked Chaotic Luck unconsciously before saying. Ordering his undead monsters to stop the statues that were attacking them. And after his giant blazing undeads blocked the weapons of those statues, he quickly responded with Shin's question. "I am not sure what you are planning, big brother. But I think I can only hold these guys for a couple of minutes at most."

"That is more than enough since I trust Owen to cover for you. And I need to down those ranged statues to take away their annoying supports," said Shin before charging ahead without consulting the others.

"D*mn! Look at this guy going on his own once again," cursed Owen before responding with Shin's movements to fill in the gap that was left behind.

Chaotic Luck did the same and quickly adjusted the position of his summoned undeads, moving them to have a different formation where the larger undeads positioned in front of them while the smaller ones surrounded other statues and hindered their movements constantly.

In the meantime, Shin rushed towards the nearest statue that was holding a bow. And with the help of his insane speed and complex maneuvers, the statue was unable to stop him from getting near and got sliced in multiple pieces by him.

"So, these guys were the fragile ones," muttered Shin after eliminating the statue. He was about to proceed to his next target when he suddenly noticed that he was currently surrounded by all sides. The other statues that were not moving from their spots earlier were now finally making their moves.

"Now I see. So, they can only move within a certain area. Maybe only limited to a few meters away from their respective platforms?" he said after perceiving his surroundings with his sensing circle.

He then did a couple of dodging maneuvers to avoid the attacks that were being thrown at them. And from time to time, he was also redirecting the attacks of the statues towards the other statues before clearing a path towards the ones that had ranged weapons.

Despite being alone and not seeing his surroundings, it looked like Shin was not affected by the current circumstances that he was in. He was currently fighting like he usually did.

Seeing that through the eyes of his undead, Chaotic Luck couldn't help but become amazed at Shin no matter how many times he looked at him.

"Big Brother is sure amazing! To think that he is fighting normally despite not seeing his opponent. I wonder how good his other senses are at being able to do that," he commented after seeing Shin fight.

On the other hand, Owen quickly said his own comment and silenced the Solaris Lich. "How about you focus on your own job? Don't slack off and dump the hardest job on us!"

Hearing that, the corner of Chaotic Luck's mouth suddenly twitched before cursing inside his head. 'I am the one who has the hardest job among us.'

"And what is amazing with being able to fight properly with his eyes closed? We are practically doing it!" added Owen after a brief moment of pause.

"Hah! If you are jealous of his talent, then all you have to do is admit it. Don't try to fool yourself and drag us with you," said Akailu while keeping his senses sharp to feel his surroundings and be on guard against any unexpected attack that Chaotic Luck might miss.

Owen quickly snarled at the Beastmaster when he heard those words. "What are you saying I am jealous of? And what I am saying is the truth!"

"Just you wait until I'm done with my class conversion quest and I will show you what I mean," he added with full confidence.

...

The battle continued for a few more moments until the group was able to become accustomed to fighting the statues with their eyes closed. And due to that, the battle became much easier for them and they were able to hold their ground with ease.

But not long after, each member of the group discovered something that they did not expect. They noticed that their battle capabilities were slowly improving.

"What the heck? Is it just me or are we really getting stronger the more statues we kill?" asked Owen after a long time of silence.

"If you are talking about the sharpening of your battle senses, then I can say that you are not alone," said Akailu, unable to hold himself any longer.

Ithilien also nodded her head and quickly agreed with them. "My magical senses also improved for quite a few levels. I can even cast my Nature Elemental Skills without any problem."

Aside from Shin and Cloe who experienced a little improvement on them, every member of the group noticed a huge improvement in their respective skills and battle styles. Especially Chaotic Luck who was controlling his summoned undeads from the very beginning.

His control over his undeads became much smoother compared to how he used to be. He was also not bothered by the constant shifting of the shared vision that he was doing during the battle.

Before, he was only able to do it after a few moments of channeling. Moreover, he was only able to share a vision with a single undead until it died or after he was not with another channeling.

But at this point in time, he was able to constantly change the target of the shared vision instantly and without encountering any kind of problem. He was also not feeling any dizzy every time he changed the undead for that ability.

On top of these, he also became more familiar with the movements of his undeads after a couple of experiments where he tried to put himself in their shoes during the battle.

Not long after, an unexpected notification arrived and informed him about the new skills that he just learned.

Ding!

System: Congratulations! You've learned a new set of skills, the 'Undead Possession', 'Undead Rite', and 'Undead Sacrament'.

Hearing the notifications that he received, Chaotic Luck couldn't help but voice out his excitement. "Big Brother! I think we found a gold mine this time!" while informing the others about the skills that the system had given him.

The others also nodded their heads with his remark, fully agreeing with what he just said.

In the meantime, Shin suddenly smirked and quickly commented. "What do you mean by 'you think'?"

"We really strike gold this time!" he added with a smirking tone before distancing himself away from the statues that were fighting him.

He then paused for a moment and started grinning from ear to ear before giving out a new set of instructions. "Alright, change of plans. We are not going to kill these statues urgently at this point in time."

"Instead, we are going to let them live a little longer and milk everything that we can squeeze out of them," he added as the grin that he was wearing under his mask suddenly turned crueler.

Chapter 710 A Piece Of 'Excalibur'

...

Bang!

Shin destroyed the final statue after a long battle. The group decided to finally destroy all of the statues after knowing that they could no longer improve themselves with them. And just like what he was expecting, he received a system notification about conquering the place as the leader of the party.

Ding!

System: Congratulations! You have conquered one of the 'Five Penance Training Grounds'!

System: As the first party to clear this training ground, you and your group will receive a hefty sum of rewards!

Ding!

System: You received the blueprint of the Five Penance Training Ground (Eyesight).

System: An ongoing quest related to the Five Penance Training Ground has been detected! Please finish your quest first before receiving the rest of the rewards.

System: The remaining rewards will be distributed once you clear your quest.

...

Shin immediately smiled when he saw the first pair of notifications. Especially when he realized that there might be four more training grounds like this one.

But not long after, that bright smile on his face immediately turned bitter after reading the next pair of system notifications.

"So, that is how it is! Tsk! Tsk! I am overcomplicating things a little too much. It turns out that this quest is actually that simple," muttered Shin to himself with a bitter tone.

After that, he immediately opened the information panel of their current quest and looked at the locations that were indicated on it. And just like what he was expecting, there were a total of five spots including this place that they were currently in.

"Five? Now I understand. That Chief Choi, or whatever his real name is, is trying to test us if we are worthy to be the new protectors of that small village," said Shin as he continued to contemplate on himself. "As for the investigation of the missing knights, we might encounter more clues along the way."

Seeing him being lost in his own world once again, the other members of the group couldn't help shaking their heads while also wearing a bitter smile.

"Look at him talking to himself again. Do we really look unreliable to him? Why does he always like to make plans by himself?" said Owen while knitting his eyebrows.

"It is obviously one of his habits," commented Akailu before checking the information of the new skill that he just learned. "Bestial Insight, and Monstrous Strengthening, not a bad pair to add in my arsenal."

Chaotic Luck was doing them the same as he was the one who reaped the most reward on this particular training ground. "To think that we can get that many benefits here? This place sure is amazing."

"Too bad, it looks like it is just a one-time use only," commented Ithilien from the side before asking Cloe. "Are we not going to invite the others? This is a rare opportunity, so isn't it better to share it with everyone?"

"Don't worry about that, they also have their own quest on their side and will surely get a similar reward after clearing that dungeon," replied Cloe confidently.

She paused for a moment and smiled. "And are you sure that this place is one-time use only? It is a training ground for a reason, so I am sure that there is definitely a way to restore them."

After that, she turned to Shin and pointed to him with her chin before saying. "Look, that guy doesn't look too disappointed."

Hearing that, the others quickly turned their heads at Shin and saw that he was walking towards a particular statue that looked like an ordinary one compared to the ones that they fought earlier.

He first cut the vines wrapped around that statue and cleared the moss on its surface to reveal its appearance.

That statue seemed to be a knight swordsman given the equipment that it had on its body, especially with that unique sword that it was holding. And with the noticeable emblem that it was wearing on the left chest of its armor, it was pretty obvious that it had a high ranking in the army.

After Shin cleaned the surface of the statue and cleared the vines and wild grasses on its surroundings, another notification suddenly rang in his ears.

Ding!

System: You have discovered one of the statues of the Legendary Knights of the Repelling Era!

System: Would you like to make a contact?

Shin hesitated for a moment when he heard those notifications. First, the identity of who was the person on the statue was hidden while the second reason was the meaning of the second notification.

Regardless, he still hit the 'yes' button to which the System immediately responded, and bombarded Shin's ears.

Ding!

System: Initiating a contact!

System: The system discovered that you already got your legacies.

System: Your legacies are clashing with the Legacy of the Knights of the Round Table.

System: Making contact with the legacy failed!

Ding!

System: The Legacy was turning into a fragment of the 'Excalibur'.

The series of system notifications took Shin completely off-guard as he was not expecting that it was going to be like this.

But that was not the end.

As if the system didn't want Shin to take a rest, the statue in front of him suddenly collapses and immediately turns into dust.

He then saw a piece of glowing metal floating in front of him before resting on top of his extended hand. And right after that piece of metal came in contact with his hand, another series of notifications rang on his ears.

Ding!

System: Due to your existing Legacies within your body, you will not be able to wield the power of the 'Excalibur'.

Ding!

System: The presence of the 'Excalibur' was sensed by the wielders of the holy swords!

System: The holder of the largest part of the 'Excalibur' will now be looking for you.

The corner of Shin's mouth suddenly twitched when he heard those notifications as he could feel that the trouble was coming his way just by looking at the basic hints that the system had given him.

"Wielders of the holy swords, huh? I wonder if they are a player or an NPC," he muttered to himself before adding after a brief moment of pause. "Especially that person who is said to have the largest part of the 'Excalibur'."

Then Cloe hopped her way beside him before asking. "So, what did you discover this time?"

Shin looked at her and briefed her with the notifications that she got before finally showing the blueprint they got from the system.

"This is pretty good! And given that there are four more training grounds similar to this place, then we are most likely going to get a similar blueprint like this one," said Cloe after seeing the details from Shin.

But not long after, she suddenly pursed her lips before saying. "But it is going to be a waste for us after Arthur and the others are done training with it. It is going to be more profitable if we sell it to big organizations like the Powerhouse Guilds of the game."

"But at the same time, we are going to strengthen the forces of our rivals if we do that. How about we let Big Sister Shiella deal with it?" she added after careful thinking.

Hearing that, Shin quickly shook his head before saying. "Nah, she will definitely haggle the price with me until I give it to her for free. That is not going to happen!"

"Anyway, I already have a plan on what to do with these things once we are done with this quest and collecting the other blueprints," he added before patting her head and turning to the others.

"Are you guys done familiarizing yourself with your new skills? If so, then let's head over to the next location so that we can finish up this quest as soon as possible," said Shin as he walked towards them alongside Cloe.

"Hey! Are you even human? We just finished that fight and yet you want to immediately proceed to the next one? Can you at least let us rest a little before moving?" complained Owen with a single breath before taking a seat on the ground.

The others didn't say any but it was pretty obvious that they were agreeing with him since they were repeatedly nodding their heads at his words.

Seeing that, Cloe giggled a little when she saw their actions before convincing Shin to take a little rest for the others.

Being pestered by him, Shin had no other choice but to sigh helplessly before agreeing with them.
"Alright, alright! You guys win! We are going to rest for the time being to recover your peak state."

After that, he looked for a spot where he could sit before opening a virtual screen to browse at the online forums to see what was happening in the ongoing war between the HeadHunter Guild and the Wing's Alliance.

In the meantime, somewhere in the high-leveled maps of the Atlas World, a hooded player was currently sitting on the top of monster corpses piled together.

He was currently staring at the system notification that he received just now. "Another holder? I wonder how large the piece that this person currently has."

He then opened his virtual map to look at the location of the new piece of Excalibur. "Saint Heaven Kingdom? I wonder why this place has always been lively."

After that, he slightly turned his head to the side to look over his shoulder before shouting. "Hey, Seven! Wrap everything quickly! We have our new destination."

Hearing that, the swordsman below the mountain of monster corpses suddenly grimaced before cursing quietly. "Again? Is he a monster? Why is not getting tired?"

"Where are we going this time?" asked Seven with a dejected tone.

"Saint Heaven Kingdom!" said the player on top of the mountain corpse before standing up.

"That place again? That is on the complete opposite side of the world map! Do we really need to go there?" complained Seven cursedly before organizing the loots that were on the ground as fast as he could.