

Destiny 861

Chapter 861 Friends Or Foes?

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Grr!

Lycan pinned down Lupus in place as Shin, Faker, and Zero dealt as much damage as they could. Each of their attacks was swift and accurate, focusing only on a single thing and that was to take down the werewolf the fastest way possible.

The rest of the group was already retreated towards the woods to hide, and Arthur, Leonard, and Lawless were assigned to protect them.

The group could also see the gigantic silhouettes of the monsters that were heading toward this location. Leonard, as someone who stayed in a kingdom ruled by Beastmen, could instantly identify those monsters. And each of those monsters was strong enough to make him grimace.

Arthur, on the other hand, could sense some familiar presence among those monsters. He quickly raised his head towards the sky and immediately spotted the huge silhouettes of flying monsters in there.

Fortunately, those monsters were just bird-type beasts and not the wyvern that they saw earlier. Or else, they were going to be in much deeper trouble than they were already in.

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Going back to where Shin and the other two were located.

It pained Lycan to see his master, and brother, act this way. The former great general of a majestic army was now nothing but a beast. He completely lost his sanity and was only surviving according to his instincts.

At the same time, he could also see the souls of his former comrades lingering around Lupus. They were clearly clinging to him as he chose to carry their burden on his back.

This sight made Lycan hate himself even more. This was supposedly his burden. It was supposedly his job since he was the one who survived all of those ordeals.

But from the looked of it, he was still saved by Lupus just like how he was saved from starvation during their first meeting.

He could still remember the winter cold weather of that time. He was left alone on the snowy mountain and waiting for his death when a young man picked him up from being half-buried in the snow.

He was given a name, food, and a home. Things that he had never experienced since he was just a mere beast. He might have developed a certain level of intelligence during that time but he was still nothing but an inferior being, just a wolf.

Everything that happened in past flashed through Lycan's eyes as he looked at Lupus who was struggling to fight for his life.

This might be painful for him, but Lycan had no choice but to end his suffering right now.

Grr!

Lupus pounced at Lycan aggressively after pushing Shin, Zero, and Faker away from him. The wolf general looked at him with a lonely gaze before accepting the attack.

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A huge chunk of his health disappeared as Lupus' fangs dug deep into his neck. But despite that being the case, Lycan seemed to be not affected by it and quickly countered the attack.

He curved his body and dragged Lupus with a powerful spin before returning the bite. The exposed neck of the werewolf was bitten, causing its Health Bar to drop to the 3% mark.

Seeing that, the trio of Shin, Zero, and Faker wanted to jump in and land the killing blow. But right after that thought entered their minds, they suddenly found that they were unable to move their bodies.

They were not sure if it was intended by the system, or if it was because of the heavy aura of the approaching monsters heading their way. But they could at least tell that they were not in danger.

The three watched Lycan dug his teeth deeper into Lupus' neck, erasing its last bit of Health Points.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Boom!

At that very moment, a consecutive loud explosion could be heard as different kinds of monsters of humongous sizes started to land on the snowy field one after another.

A lion with snow-white furs and mane, a huge mammoth with a long and deadly tusk, a giant troll with blue skin and carrying a huge block of ice as its weapon, a half-human and half-bird creature, and a black panther with blue eyes and paws blazing with blue flames.

These were the first batch of monsters that arrived at the scene. All of them were carrying a deadly and dangerous aura that made the trio unable to move.

This was a total crisis. And there were a lot more monsters heading to this place with a much stronger aura.

Shin now understood that this might be a setup for the system since all of these monsters arrived almost at the same time when Lupus had died. Regardless, he didn't have much time to dwell on those thoughts since they currently had an important matter at hand.

The three of them quickly used their respective debuff skills to free themselves from the pressure of those monsters. Then they quickly headed towards Lycan who was still staring at Lupus.

"Hey! I know it is quite rude to interrupt you with your mourning, but this is not the right time to keep standing in there," shouted Shin, trying to wake Lycan from his daze state.

They didn't receive any kind of notification from the system, so Shin thought that this state of the quest was still not over. 'Maybe we still need to help Lycan escape this place while carrying his master's corpse?'

Faker and Zero picked up all of the loot that was dropped on the ground as they wait for Shin's orders.

In the meantime, Lycan finally recovered himself and swept his gaze at the surroundings. Not long after, he replied to Shin. "Don't worry, young man. These guys may be strong but they also have a very strong ego. They are most probably in this place to see if there is a new ruler born on this land."

"But now that their old rivals also appeared at the same time, an immediate battle is bound to happen. Though, most of it is just ongoing to be a friendly battle."

Hearing those words, Shin finally confirmed his initial analysis. But when he heard the latter part, he couldn't help but become confused. 'Friendly battle?'

He then asked out of curiosity. "Are some of these guys also from the army that you used to be part of?"

Lycan shook his head and answered. "No, these monsters are the original inhabitants of this place. They are the residents of this land aside from the Dragon Worshipers."

Shin slightly nodded his head when he heard that. He also took note that Lycan addressed the people of this land as Dragon Worshipers and not as the so-called spawns of the darkness, or what they knew as Vampires.

'I almost forget that this is Arthur's Empire Quest, so this should be mostly related to dragons,' thought Shin as he remembered the scene that he saw earlier.

On the other hand, Lycan flung Lupus onto his back, completely ignoring the appearance of the other monsters. He treated them as if they did not exist.

Seeing his actions, the trio couldn't help but become surprised at how bold he was. The three could even see the other monsters looking in their direction.

Then they saw the black panther walk towards them, making the trio wear stiff expressions on their face.

But they immediately became stunned at what happened next.

"It looks like you are finally free from your burden," the black panther started talking. It was actually talking to Lycan.

"I still have a few things to do before I can fully free myself," responded Lycan with a calm tone. And after a brief moment, he turned in a certain direction and continued. "I will fulfill my promise and help you get your revenge on that wicked God."

Shin and the other two were currently wearing weird looks on their faces as they couldn't keep up with the sudden development. And before they could even process all of that information inside their heads, another unexpected situation happened.

Void rifts started to appear in the sky, making those monsters turn their heads at them.

"I look like they noticed the change of the 'flow' and visit us at a much earlier date," muttered the black panther before turning to Lycan. "We will buy you some time by redirecting their attention to us."

"I hope that you will be successful at waking up that 'lord' this time," he added before turning his head back at the void rifts in the sky.

Shin was still trying to process the course of events but Lycan didn't give him enough time. "Let's go, young man. We still have a lot to discuss."

Lycan didn't wait for Shin to respond as he quickly sprinted towards the forest a few distances away.

Shin looked at the wolf for a couple of moments before coming back to his senses. Putting the pieces together, he could at least tell that Lycan and these beasts were on friendly terms.

He then chased after Lycan alongside Faker and Zero. "Let's go!"

The three of them temporarily set aside their doubts as they chased after the wolf. Zero, who felt a familiar presence earlier, still couldn't shake off the unease that he was feeling, so he whispered a few words to Faker.

Faker slightly raised his eyebrow when he heard those words before slightly nodding his head. He was not sure what exactly it was but it would not hurt if he took a look at it.

After that, he controlled his breathing before disappearing into the veil of the fog and snow.

Chapter 862 The Crime Of A King And The Shame Of A God (Part 1)

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Shin was currently in deep thought as he ran deeper into the woods with Lycan's lead. The barrier that was preventing them from going further was already gone, so they could now continue exploring the area.

They were also running away from the previous location, so he sent a message to the other group, telling them to meet up at a new location. He also attached the coordinates to the message.

As they continued to go deeper into the woods, Lycan noticed that Shin contemplating something. "Don't think too much about it, young man. This place may be called a cursed land from the outside. But in truth, it is just an old kingdom that falls from the trickery of that wicked god."

Shin immediately took note of the hidden information in those words, so he continued to inquire. "Are all of the monsters here the same as the ones that we meet earlier?"

Lycan seemed to scoff at Shin when he heard those words and quickly answered. "Don't get fooled, young man."

"There may be a lot of enlightened beasts on this land but not all of them are as friendly as those guys, especially when you put the corrupted ones into consideration."

Shin slightly nodded his head and reorganized the information. 'So, the monsters in this place are divided into two to three factions.'

'The friendly beasts like the ones that we just encountered earlier. Those guys are most likely going to be the NPCs of this area. After all, it is hard to believe that there are other people living in this area.'

'Then there are the hostile beasts. Based on what Lycan had said, they are also intelligent beasts and equally powerful as Lycan or those previous beasts. And if we put them on the same system as NPC Cities, then these beasts are going to be the 'rebel' and 'bandit' groups of this place. They can also be considered as the Dark Cities where red-name players are staying.'

'Then there are also some corrupted monsters present in this place. It is the same corruption as the Corrupted Churches have, or is it more like a curse?'

After that, Shin turned to Lycan once again and asked. "Then what about the wicked god that you are talking about? I also hear that you said something about it to that black panther earlier."

The wolf was silent for a moment before replying. "She is not a god, but a divine being that is full of trickery and wickedness. She is only being called a 'god' because she managed to seize one of the empty thrones that have been vacated by the fallen gods."

Shin's pupils seemed to shrink when heard those remarks. He had a pending quest that was related to gods. And the strange book in his possession was said to be a fragment of a god's power.

It had been a long time since he heard about it. He even tried to inquire about some details about it from Solus, but aside from basic information, he didn't gain anything noteworthy. It looked like he still needed to build up more affinity with her before he could get more information from her.

Hearing about a piece of information about gods, Shin couldn't help but ask further. "A god but not a god? It is a little confusing, but I get the gist of it."

Lycan seemed to nod his head and continued. "That god is a little special as she had a lot of names given to her by a lot of civilizations. Some call her the Goddess of Ice and Snow, the others address her as the God of Winter, sometimes she is called the Queen of the Frozen Throne, or the Ruler of The Northern Sea, and many more."

The wolf paused for a brief moment before continuing with a solemn tone. "But to us who know about her real identity and true nature, she is nothing but an evil being that manages to ascend to the divine realm through wicked means, and we call her the Wicked One."

"You've been calling her a wicked god and evil being for quite some time now, but can you explain to us why is that?" asked Shin as he failed to suppress his curiosity.

Lycan halted his steps and turned to Shin. "I can't tell you all of the reasons since I only discovered a few of them when we are fighting the fallen Dragon Worshipers in this place."

"But at the very least, I can share with you our discoveries during that time."

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"I didn't know how those old scholars recorded the events here on the historical records. But I can at least guess that some of them are forged since that is how the wicked one manipulates things."

"One of the instances is during the reign of the first king of the Saint Heaven Kingdom. At that time, the kingdom is way poorer than most of its neighboring kingdoms."

"The strongest Kingdom on these lands is this place, the Draconian Kingdom. Though, based on the travelers that accidentally stumble upon this place, we learned that it is now known as the Frozen Kingdom."

"But because of the Wicked One, this mighty kingdom suddenly fell."

"During that time, the Saint Heaven Kingdom doesn't have a god that it worships. But all of a sudden, a certain church is built at the center of the Kingdom, and they call it the Temple of Winter."

"They worship the God of Winter and that god is occasionally giving the Pope of that church an oracle, which helps the kingdom survive the disasters that they are going to face."

"Because of the repeated success of those oracles, the first king of the Saint Heaven Kingdom become a loyal believer of the Church of Winter."

"The god gives him an oracle and the king faithfully follows all of them."

"Ordering an army to subdue the so-called evil forces. Then slaughtering the towns and villages that are said to be the home of witches and dark mages. And a lot of things that are recorded in the history books."

"We don't know if any of that is real or not. After all, we are not a resident of this kingdom. All of the things that we know are from recorded history."

"Then one day, another oracle was given to the King. It is saying that the Draconian Kingdom is preparing for war."

"The king is alarmed and immediately sends his scouts to confirm the oracle. And when he heard that the Draconians are indeed getting ready for war, he quickly sends an envoy to discuss building a diplomatic relationship between the two countries."

"The king is aware that his forces are not strong enough to protect themselves from such a powerful kingdom as the Draconian Kingdom, so instead of making an enemy out of them, he decides to engage in a friendly relationship between them."

"The Saint Heaven Kingdom may be weaker during that time, but they are rich in a lot of unique resources."

"The Draconian Kingdom is not lacking in any kind of resources but one of the resources that the Saint Heaven Kingdom provide is greatly beneficial to the Draconians, which is why they agree to build a healthy relationship with them."

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"Then one day, the first king of the Saint Heaven Kingdom, King Cassius I, was invited to attend a bouquet hosted by King Grey, the king of the Draconian Kingdom."

"King Cassius I, complied and showed his willingness to attend, especially when it was mentioned in the letter that the bouquet was the highlight of the Festival for Dragons, it was a special event for the Dragon Worshippers to meet a real dragon."

"King Cassius I only became a believer of the Church of Winter, so he was also curious about the culture and religion of the neighboring kingdom."

"But during that event, King Cassius I witnessed the real power of a Dragon and how its worshippers could be. The king became afraid of their powers and started to fear them."

"But aside from the fear that he was feeling, he also started to covet their powers. He started to have an ambition of also wielding such powers."

"And that was the time that the God of Winter is waiting for. She gave an oracle that caused a huge disaster."

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Lycan suddenly stopped talking when he reached that point, making Shin click his tongue. They were about to reach the most important part, so he couldn't help but feel a little annoyed.

'This is exactly how a reader feels whenever an author ends the chapter with a cliffhanger,' he commented inside his head as if he wanted to stab Lycan right now.

But he could do that since they suddenly encountered an unexpected variable. A winged person was standing in front of them, blocking their path.

Based on its attire which looked like an elegant robe from ancient times and the snow-white wings on its back, Shin could instantly tell what kind of creature it was.

An Angel!

'Why is an angel in this place? Based on the current settings of the game, it is still too early for a powerful being like this to appear as a 'monster',' thought Shin with a confused look.

He even used his True Sight Skill to take a look at its information panel. But aside from the bunch of question marks that greeted him, the only information that he could get was its race, which was called 'Seraphim'.

'This is not a monster, but an NPC,' concluded Shin.

Then that angel looked at Lycan and spoke. "I did not expect that you are going to survive after such a long time. I can't deny that I am quite impressed."

The wolf glared at the angel before responding. "You are saying that after sealing this place and stopping the time for us with the Frozen Wall of Divinity."

Hearing that, Shin immediately identified who was this particular NPC. 'He must be the envoy of the Winter Goddess that build that towering wall of ice!'

Realizing that, Shin couldn't help but look at the angel full of cautiousness as he was fully aware of how powerful this particular seraph was.

Chapter 863 The Crime Of A King And The Shame Of A God (Part 2)

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On the other side of the forest, Arthur was leading the rest of the group as they head over the coordinates that Shin had sent earlier.

He seemed to be a little distracted as he was leading the group, which caught Leonard's attention. "What is it? Is there something bothering you?"

Arthur quickly shook his head and replied. "It is nothing much. I am just thinking that something didn't add up."

"So, what is it?" asked Leonard once again.

Arthur was silent for a moment before continuing. "Do you remember I said that the Dragon Worshippers are an ancient religion? And they were wiped out by the Winter Goddess long ago?"

"But based on the information that we have right now, the setting when the background of our quest occurred is during the Repelling Era, which doesn't add up with what I know!"

"Why are there still Dragon Worshippers if they are already been wiped out? And what are they doing in this place if they are supposedly following the will of a dragon? They should be staying near the Dragon Sanctuary instead!"

Leonard couldn't help but shake his head after hearing those words. Arthur's obsession with dragons was really something.

He then turned to the dragon fanatic and spoke. "Yeah, yeah! There must be a reason. The original resident of this place, which also happens to be Dragon Worshipers, must be the surviving descendants of the first generation."

"That is the most logical assessment that I can make," he added as he patted Arthur's shoulders.

Arthur nodded his head. "Yeah, that is most likely the reason. Yet they are still wiped out by another God related to winter, ice, and snow, which is too much of a coincidence."

"Maybe that god is the same as the one that you already know," commented Leonard nonchalantly, which also triggered something inside Arthur's head.

"If that is the case, then whatever god is a mortal enemy of the Dragons," said Arthur as he squinted his eyes.

On the other side of the forests.

As Shin was looking cautiously at the seraph that suddenly appeared in front of them. Lycan was slowly putting down Lupus on the ground while calling Zero over. "Please, take care of Master for a moment."

Zero quickly appeared beside Lupus and grabbed the massive werewolf before heading over to Shin.

Shin slightly nodded his head and asked. "Is brother Faker not done yet?"

Zero quickly apologized when he heard that. "I am sorry for sending him there. He is the person who is fitted the most for that job. He still has more strength than us despite using the Reality Manifestation for an extended period of time."

"It is fine. If you think that it is a variable that can affect our quest, then it is the right call to send brother Faker over there. He is also the fastest member of our group," said Shin as he shook his head.

After that, he turned back to Lycan and the seraph and waited for them to continue their conversation. For a powerful NPC like a seraph to appear in this place, Shin could at least guess that this was supposedly a part of the quest.

'There are too much of variables on this quest. The first is the Saint Heaven Kingdom and its first king. Then its relationship with the God of Winter and the Dragon Worshippers.'

'After that was the disaster that occurred during the Repelling Era. The contract between a Great Demon Lord and the descendant of King Grey, who is also the first Vampire.'

'Then that war between the Vampires and the armies from the Divine Empire. And the sudden betrayal, which also led to the two forces teaming up with each other fighting the seraphs of the God of Winter.'

Shin listed out all of the things that he wanted to know inside his head. He already got the answers on a few of them after listening to Lycan earlier, which also coincided with their initial assessment.

He only had a few things that he wanted to get clarified, so he stood silently on his spot and observed from the sideline.

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Lycan was glaring sharply at the seraph in front of them and said with a threatening growl. "I did not expect you to descend on the world, Michael."

The seraph, who was addressed by Lycan as Michael, stared at the wolf with a calm expression before replying. "I noticed that some cracks appeared on the Hourglass of Contract, so I just want to personally check what just happen."

"It seems like you are still a loyal dog of that wicked god after losing the master that you are originally serving," sneered Lycan, which caught Shin's interest.

"How long are you going to let yourselves get controlled by such a fake god?" he added with a mixed tone of pity and sarcasm.

Michael didn't immediately reply as he silently observed Lycan. And after a few moments of silence, he suddenly opened his mouth. "Lycan, you are an enlightened and sacred beast that has the qualification to become a high-ranking transcendent being."

"It is just a pity that your refuse to undergo an ascension ritual and choose to stay in this mortal realm," he added.

Hearing his tone, Shin couldn't help but felt a little strange. He thought that Michael was neither sneering nor mocking Lycan. He felt like the seraphim genuinely pitying the wolf.

"Don't try to persuade me again. I rather stay in this 'lowly' realm than associate myself with the hypocrites of that place," refuted Lycan sharply.

"Aside from the ancient and original gods, I will not serve any of those newly ascended gods. Especially the wicked god that you are serving right now." continued the wolf as he remained vigilant.

"You keep on calling our god wicked, yet she is only doing her best to save this pitiful world from those greedy Gods and Demon Lords," said Michael in a heavy tone. It was clear that he was starting to get offended by Lycan's remarks.

Hearing that, Lycan started throwing a much sharper remark. "Hah! Protect this world? You are calling her greed protection? Don't make me laugh!"

"If not for her using her divine powers to interfere during the Warring Era and wiping out the Dragon Worshipers, then they should be one of the races who manages to emerge victorious during that time."

"But she couldn't accept the fact that their religion is not worshiping a god but just a race of a Transcendent Being, which is said to be weaker than those Divine Beings residing in the Divine Realm!"

"She refused to acknowledge their beliefs and tried to prove them wrong by sending her envoys to fight them. But she did not expect the Dragons to be that powerful, especially their King, the first Divine Dragon."

"Her direct envoy, who was wielding her powers and acting as her representative in this realm, had lost miserably and she suffered great humiliation."

"Afraid that the other gods would learn about it, she sacrificed a portion of her divine authority to trick the law of causality and personally descended on this Mortal Realm."

"She killed the Divine Dragon King and wiped out the Dragon Worshipers to erase that humiliation. She couldn't kill the other dragons since she would be exposed to the law of causality, so she used another divine intervention to wipe out that event from the historical records."

"Unfortunately for her, there was still a lot of them who managed to survive on continued their lineage on this land. They might not know the truth but they were somewhat aware that their believers were at risk because of the appearance of a certain dragon."

"That Dragon seemed to know the truth about that incident. But it couldn't carelessly reveal it because the God of Winter will immediately notice."

"Instead, that Dragon decided to create a series of sacred tomes that carried the history of the Dragon Worshippers and their relationship with the God of Winter."

"Then the other Dragons broke free from the false information that the God of Winter had created and learned the truth. Even though it was still not whole, they were at least aware that she was a mortal enemy of their race."

"But they couldn't do anything about her or get back at her believers since she pulled all of them towards a higher realm!"

"In the end, the Dragons chose to set aside their rage for the time being and continued their lives. But it didn't mean that they forget about it, they were just bidding their time and waiting for the right opportunity to get their revenge."

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Shin who was listening attentively from the side finally put the pieces together. He immediately got the whole picture of the real background of this Empire Quest and why it was given to Arthur.

He could also guess what happened in the next course of events. 'The God of Winter most probably discovered the surviving Dragon Worshippers.'

'She was afraid that her humiliating defeat against a lower being to get out so she slowly orchestrated a meticulous plan to eradicate them.'

'She then treated the first king of the Saint Heaven Kingdom as a pawn and manipulated them through those so-called oracles.'

Now he became more interested in how the Dragon Worshippers lost despite having a powerful bloodline and a mighty force.

The Saint Heaven Kingdom at that time was one of the weakest countries, so it was impossible for them to win against such a powerful nation. Shin could initially guess that the God of Winter played another trick behind the scenes.

Setting that aside, Shin was also interested in another matter. And that was how the Lycan and the Divine Empire learned about that event if the God of Winter erased everything from the historical records.

Arthur was someone who was obsessed with dragons. And after being together for such a long time, Shin also learned quite a few things about dragons from him.

With that knowledge, he knew that the dragons were prideful beings, they would never bow down to anyone or tell anything that could cause them humiliation.

Since Lycan and the army from the Divine Empire teamed up with the vampires to fight against the seraphs of the God of Winter, he could only guess that they learned the truth in this place.

"This development was becoming more and more interesting," muttered Shin with a smirking tone.

Chapter 864 Divine Authority?

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Michael didn't acknowledge nor deny what Lycan had stated about the god that he was serving. But that silence already gave Shin an answer, it was no different from the seraph telling them that everything that the wolf had said was true.

It was pretty rare for a seraph to stay unmoved after hearing a repeated insult about the god that he was serving. Shin found it strange which made him a little suspicious of this particular servant of a god.

Then he heard Michael say. "The contract has now ended, so there is no need for me to keep you alive, isn't it?"

Then the air in their surrounding suddenly became heavy, making Shin and Zero have a hard time breathing. And at the same time, the sword of light that Michael was holding suddenly released a blinding light alongside heavy pressure that forced the two to kneel on the ground.

'How strong is this guy?' said Shin inside his head. He already knew that this particular NPC was powerful, but he still didn't expect that it was to this degree.

But not long after, an equally strong power was released from both Shin and Zero's bodies. One of them had brilliant light similar to the sun while the other was emitting a golden light carrying a sacred aura.

Then two silhouettes appeared behind the two, further catching the attention of Michael and Lycan. And when those silhouettes turned into a clear image, the two higher beings couldn't help but become shocked.

Solus, who was a fallen god, floated in the air as she was looking the Michael with an arrogant gaze. She was carrying an elegant and majestic aura, that excluded a strong pressure that warded off the one that seraph had.

With her presence, the surrounding Fire Elemental Mana gathered around, melting the snow within the vicinity.

Her blazing hair danced along the wind as she was staring haughtily at Michael as if she was treating him as someone who was standing in a lower ranking than her.

In the meantime, a man donning majestic armor fitted for a king was also hovering in the air behind Zero. He had his hands resting on a holy sword that was pointing toward the ground.

He had a gaze that seemed to be looking down at everything as the aura that he was emitting was not weaker than Solus.

He also blocked the pressure that was crushing Zero earlier. He felt that the seraph was trying to challenge his authority, so he slightly gripped the bottom of the hilt of his sword while continuing to look at Michael with a scornful gaze.

Lycan and Michael couldn't hide their surprise after seeing the two figures floating behind Shin and Zero.

The Seraph had his gaze locked on Solus since he was getting pressured by her aura that was unique to Divine Beings.

As a messenger of a god, he was very familiar with all of the Divine Beings living in the Divine Realm. And from what he could see, this particular entity in front of him had a power that was equal to those gods that he had encountered.

He could also feel the restrictions that she currently had, which limit the power that she could emit. But the pressure that her aura had was more than enough to make him wary of her.

On other hand, Lycan was staring at the man hovering behind Zero. His gaze was mixed with shock and disbelief. It seemed like he recognized that person.

"King Arthur Pendragon!" muttered Lycan with a surprised yet quiet voice.

Hearing that, Shin couldn't help but turned to Zero and looked at the man hovering behind the swordsman.

He was aware that the latter also had a powerful Elemental Spirit since his Reaper's Retainers that he had already told him about them earlier, but he was not expecting Zero to have a previous king and the former leader of the knights of the round table as his Sword Servant.

Then he suddenly remembered the historical note that he read from the piece of Excalibur that he handed over to Zero previously. 'They must be connected to his Hidden Class.'

It was also at that time that Michael finally realized that these two young men were not simple. He was purposely ignoring them earlier since he knew that they were much weaker than him. In his eyes, no one could threaten him right now aside from Lycan.

But now that he took a clear look at them, he could now see that they were actually Transcendent Beings. They might be a little weaker right now, but it would not be the same in the future.

'If they are Transcendent Beings, then these two powerful entities are their Elemental Spirit Companions,' thought Michael as he observed the two a little more.

After that, he turned back to Lycan and laugh. "This is really interesting! I am not expecting to encounter something like this."

Strangely enough, he suddenly spread his wings and floated in the air while looking at them. From the looked of it, he seemed to lost his interest to fight and was planning to leave.

"It looks like there are going to be some changes in the plan. I will retreat for now and personally report this to our god," he said as he looked at Shin and Zero while also closely paying attention to the Elemental Spirit Companions of the two.

He didn't even wait for Lycan to reply as his body suddenly turned into a streak of light that pierced through the sky. And now long after, a few more lights suddenly appeared and chased after him.

Seeing that the seraph finally left, both Solus and King Arthur turned back into specks of light that circled around their respective owners.

Lycan stared at them for a few more moments before silently shaking his head. And after that, he said to them. "Call your friends over. Now that those guys are finally gone, we no longer need to hide from them."

Shin slightly nodded his head before sending a new message to the rest of the group, informing them of their current situation.

On the other side of the forest, Faker surveyed the area that Zero had indicated earlier. The swordsman was suspecting that someone managed to sneak into this place, which could potentially affect their mission.

He found a few trails on the snowy ground and the trees in the vicinity after he arrived at that place. But he couldn't help but knit his brow when he discovered them.

The trails that he had found were very vague and seemingly cleared by the person who left them. If not for Faker being a trained assassin, then he would most likely miss them.

"This guy is pretty skilled," he couldn't help but give a positive remark after observing the vicinity. But it didn't mean that he was not going to pursue that person.

Faker tried to track that mysterious player down. But he immediately discovered that he was underestimating the other party.

He completely lost track of the opposing side. Not only that, but he also noticed that he was being led by that person to shake him off.

"It has been a while since I've been played like this," muttered Faker with a tone that seemingly mocked himself.

Well, he couldn't blame himself since he was really tired right now. The battle earlier really exhausted him, almost emptying all of the energy that he had.

He might have the strength to fight properly right now, but tracking someone in such a state was going to be hard even for him.

Given that, he decided to stop his pursuit and regroup with the others. As a trained assassin as himself, he knew that the opposing side had a clear advantage in this kind of situation.

He might be skilled, but he would only exhaust himself even further if he continued pursuing this mysterious player.

He would need to constantly monitor his surroundings to avoid getting ambushed. This would also burn his concentration even more.

A single slip on his concentration would lead to his demise since he was going to leave himself vulnerable during that time. And such a small window was more than enough for the opposing party to strike.

After calculating all of the risks, Faker concluded that it was not favorable for him to continue.

While Faker was retreating deeper into the woods, the mysterious player that he was trying to track slightly revealed himself from the curtain of darkness.

He watched Faker leave with cold eyes before pursing his lips. "The Death God sure is hard to deal with. I am thinking that I can use this opportunity to take him down. After all, he already exhausted himself to such a degree."

"Tsk! But I don't expect that it is going to be that hard. I can't find a single opening to launch an ambush," he clicked his tongue and shook his head.

"I guess I have no choice but to continue bidding my time," he muttered as he step back at the darkness created by the dense trees.

Chapter 865 A History Built Through Greed And Tragedy

...

The entire expedition team gathered at the spot that the location that had been indicated by Lycan. And when they arrived, Shin quickly explained the situation to them once again, so that they could further understand the nature of their Empire Quest.

After that, they helped Lycan bury his master, Lupus Steel. They waited patiently for the wolf to finish bidding his farewell, before listening to his continued narrations about the background of their quest.

...

"King Cassius I was a greedy man. The God of Winter clearly saw that and used that desire to manipulate the king."

"When the relationship between the Saint Heaven Kingdom and the Draconian Kingdom became deeper as time went by. The former was even being protected by the Draconians whenever the neighboring countries tried to launch an invasion."

"Then one day, the big betrayal happened. It was when King Grey invited his 'friend', King Cassius I, to witness one of the most important events of the Draconian Kingdom, the Bloodline Ascension Ritual."

"Draconians were not as simple as ordinary worshippers since they received a blessing from the Dragons, some of them even carried the blood of dragons. And with that ritual, those individuals would awaken their bloodline powers and become much stronger than they already been."

"This is another important event for the Draconians of that time. But it didn't restrict them from inviting other people to spectate. They were confident that the dragon overseeing the ritual would be able to handle any kind of trouble that could occur."

Hearing this part, Arthur couldn't help but clicked his tongue as he gave his remark. "Dragon Worshippers follow the teaching of the dragons, so it is natural for them to be too confident in everything they do."

Even someone like him could instantly guess what happened next, and it was immediately confirmed by Lycan's next words.

"The first king of Saint Heaven Kingdom agreed to the invitation without any hesitation. He even suggested bringing his family with him at that time."

"King Grey didn't find any problem with it, so he agreed with it."

"And since the Royal Family is heading to the Draconian Kingdom, they brought the King's army on the pretext of 'protecting' them."

Reaching this point, everyone in the group couldn't help but close their eyes as they could already imagine what happened next.

"The Blood Ascension Ritual proceeded as scheduled, but during the most critical time, King Cassius I suddenly appeared at the altar and pushed King Grey away from it. And because of that, he was the one who received the blessing of the Dragon instead."

"But it didn't just end there. The Guardian Dragon of the Draconian Kingdom was not someone who would miss such a threat during the ritual, so should be able to sense that someone was coming before it could happen."

"But for it not to do anything and failed the upcoming disaster was definitely something strange. It just died right after it gave its blessing to King Cassius I."

"Confused at what was happening, King Grey couldn't respond in time to prevent the disaster from happening. It was the same for the other Dragon Worshipers who were present at that time."

"King Cassius I, on the other hand, gained the authority of a dragon. And with that authority, he suppressed the powers of the Dragon Worshipers while ordering his army to slaughter them all."

"King Cassius I wanted to bury everything by annihilating the Draconians. At the same time, he wanted to strengthen his family's bloodline by nurturing it with the corpse of the guardian dragon."

"They then ate the meat of that dragon for years while also bathing themselves in the dragon's blood. That was how the first royal family of the Saint Heaven Kingdom become powerful."

Lycan paused for a brief moment to inhale deeply before continuing. "King Cassius I tried his hardest to hide the truth by killing all of the witnesses. He even eliminated the soldiers that he had brought during that time one after another. As for his family, he erased a portion of their memory with his dragon authority."

"Starting from that point, he fabricated a 'story' of how he gained the powers of the dragons and what 'happened' to the Draconian Kingdom."

"He manipulated the history which led to the Draconians being forgotten."

Arthur couldn't help but wear a deep frown when he learned how the Saint Heaven Kingdom rose in power. He even started to consider the royal family as his enemies. With that kind of background, it was impossible for the Dragons to be on friendly terms with them.

But while he was contemplating about that, Lycan suddenly turned to him and spoke. "It is still too early to consider the entire Royal Family as an enemy of the Dragons."

"Because there was a single member of the Royal Family who managed to uncover the truth. I am not sure who was that person but he was the reason how we learned about this forgotten history."

"We followed the traces that he left which led us to the things that we didn't know. That person's name was not recorded in the books and records that he left behind. But based on what was written on them, we learned that he was treated as the traitor of the royal family and kicked out of the palace."

"But he knew that it was not going to end there, so he brought his whole family and went in hiding. It was the wisest choice that he could get since he knew that he couldn't beat the current King Cassius I."

"But despite all of the odds being against him, his desire to save the whole Royal Family and the entire Saint Heaven Kingdom under the reign of such a wicked king didn't change."

"Because of this, he created a mercenary identity so that he could roam freely around the kingdom while gathering some information. And after a few years of his journey and he built a pretty solid reputation."

Faker as an assassin and with his instincts immediately guess what happened while Shin came up with the same conclusion and voices out those thoughts. "He then slowly revealed the truth about the misdeeds of King Cassius I by spreading them as a 'rumor'."

Lycan nodded his head and continued. "He then started a coup to de-throne King Cassius I. And with the help of the powerful companions that he had, they successfully kicked out that wicked king from his throne and executed him while also revealing the truth to the world."

"Did he forget about the involvement of the God of Winter, or he is clueless about them from the very beginning?" asked Shin all of a sudden.

Lycan laughed bitterly before continuing. "Of course, he was aware of that fact but he didn't blatantly voice it out. After all, he knew his limit. He was aware that he couldn't oppose a god."

"Instead, he refused to sit on the throne and become the new king while choosing the pure yet talented third prize at that time."

"Naturally, there were some officials who disagree with him and rejected his choice. But that person already predicted it and quickly offered a proposition."

"And his proposal was inviting multiple religions to take root at the Saint Heaven Kingdom and let the Third Price swear an oath with their respective gods in exchange for them overseeing their Kingdom."

"Hah!" Shin couldn't help but laugh after hearing that and started to admire that unnamed person.

"That is pretty clever! He dodged the eyes of the God of Winter by refusing the throne while also inviting the other gods to set their attention on this place."

"With them having a close watch on the Saint Heaven Kingdom, the God of Winter will not pull any kind of funny business."

"In the meantime, the opposition couldn't reject his suggestion since the strength and influence of those churches would help the whole kingdom grow. It is too much of a good choice for them to refuse."

Lycan nodded his head and agreed. "Inviting the other churches was a tough task to achieve. But since that person had a pretty good reputation, he managed to persuade their friends to help him."

"He had a lot of connections, and the churches would never refuse such an opportunity since they could spread the teaching of their respective gods."

"It didn't take that long for the envoys of different churches to arrive at the Saint Heaven Kingdom and started the discussion about them building a branch of their respective church in the Kingdom."

"After that, that mysterious member of the Royal Family suddenly disappeared and never came back again."

The group now understood how the current Saint Heaven Kingdom was built. How they became a neutral kingdom and why there were a lot of churches rooted in it.

And while they were thinking about it, Lycan suddenly added. "But alongside his disappearance, the records about that man started to disappear as time went by. And after a few more years, everything about him was erased in the history books as if he never had existed."

"Tsk! It must be that God of Winter again. She really didn't want her humiliation to be known to everyone," commented Arthur with full disgust.

On the other hand, Shin seemed to be thinking about something else before asking. "Wait! A few things don't add up!"

"If everything about that man is erased in the history books, then how do you learn about all of this? On top of that, you should have no idea about the real identity of the Vampires of this land if that is the case!"

Lycan smiled at Shin after his on-point remark. He then nodded his head and answered. "Of course, there is no way for us to learn about it. We even don't know the real nature of the God of Winter when we arrived in this land."

"We all came here with a single purpose, and that was to eradicate all of the so-called spawns of evil demons that were spreading chaos in here."

"But all of it suddenly changed when the Grand Marshal and his companion met yet another mysterious individual similar to that 'missing' person."

Chapter 866 Variables To Consider

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Shin and the others waited patiently for Lycan to continue the story.

"We are suspicious of that mysterious person at first since he had a lot of deception. He couldn't see through his intention at all."

"He just appeared in front of us all of a sudden and claimed that he knew about the truth of our war. He said that we are just being used by the God of Winter to hide her crimes."

"Of course, we didn't have a way to tell if he was telling us the truth. And it also didn't change the fact that the spawns of evils on this land were creating chaos in every place that they went through, so we didn't have a reason to stop the war."

"But that person said that the residents of this place are only being controlled by a Demon Lord and he had a way to help them break away from it."

"The Grand Mashal was still not convinced and intended to reject that person's intention. But all of a sudden, our minds were suddenly sucked into an illusion where we witnessed all of the past events that I had told you."

Reaching this point, Zero suddenly pointed out. "But you can't be sure that everything you've seen is true."

This time, Shin suddenly opened his mouth. "But it is a different case if they have an adult dragon on their side since it can see through all kinds of illusions."

Hearing that a real dragon was involved, Arthur couldn't help but become more interested in the topic.

'If there is a dragon in the army, then there is a high chance that it is buried here somewhere,' the expression on his face couldn't hide his thoughts, which made the others able to read what was running inside his mind.

Shin ignored Arthur and turned to Lycan, silently waiting for the enlightened wolf to respond. And just like what he had expected, the latter smiled at him and confirmed what he just said. "That is right, the companion of the Grand Marshal is an adult dragon."

"That guy even had a reputation in the ranks of Dragon Sanctuary of that time and was known as the Glacial King. Unfortunately, he was de-thorned after his defeat to the Ice Dragon from the main nest of the sanctuary."

At this point, Arthur failed to hide his excitement. He didn't care if that dragon lost to someone or not, what was important to him was the news that there was indeed a dragon buried somewhere in this land.

He was familiar with dragons, so he knew the span of their abilities and how they were going to react to certain situations. 'If it was really a Glacial Dragon, then it could only do two things.'

'One of them was sealing itself inside the Thousand Sealing Ice since it could stay alive even thousands of years past without losing much of its powers.'

'The other way was sealing its heart and core to preserve its powers even if it died. After all, Dragons were close to nature. And this kind of environment of extreme coldness was perfect for it to achieve it.'

'Well, it is favorable for me either way. I can get another Dragon Partner if it is the former or I can further strengthen the powers of my Ocean Dragon if it is the latter.'

'Tsk! Tsk! My luck is really on the roll today,' Arthur started closing his eyes as he could already imagine how powerful he could be if he found where the Glacial Dragon was buried.

Shin couldn't help but sigh helplessly when he saw Arthur fall into a dream world. He then quickly reminded the dragon fanatic about their main purpose for coming to this place. "Hey! If ever you have forgotten, we are currently doing YOUR Empire Quest."

He even emphasized that was the initiator of this quest.

Arthur rolled his eyes at Shin when he heard those words and replied. "Tsk! Yeah, yeah. I still haven't forgotten about that."

That was what he said on the outside, but he was having a different thought inside as he took another look at the system notification that he got earlier.

'I can't wait for this quest to reach its final stage!' he thought alongside an evil laugh inside his head.

Shin shook his head with a bitter smile before turning back to Lycan. He tried to get more information from the wolf, but he couldn't get any helpful information anymore.

Aside from the things they already knew, all the things that he got were something that he could already guess.

The system already gave them all of the backgrounds that they needed, so they no longer needed to blindly proceed on this quest.

Moreover, they already got the notification that they needed which signaled them to continue exploring the area.

Their main target was still the Frozen City that they saw previously, and they already got a detailed map from Lycan, so there was also no need to wander in the area without knowing the main road.

But despite that being the case, they still needed to explore the map for two reasons.

The first one was to familiarize themselves with this place. This map was definitely going to be unlocked once they cleared the Empire Quest, so it was necessary for them to fully explore it to have an advantage over the other guilds and other organizations that would advance on this place when it happened.

As for the other reason, it was a request from Lycan. He asked the group to also take down the other armies and free their souls from being bound by the curse that was cast upon them by the God of Winter.

Naturally, it was going to initiate a sub-quest and would have a separate reward from the Empire Quest that they currently had, so there was no reason for the group to not accept it.

Lycan also indicated on the map where those armies could possibly be, so the group would not need to waste their time looking for them.

Shin and the others thought that Lycan would accompany them. But to their disappointment, the wolf told them that he would like to stay on the burial grounds of his master and the soldiers of their army. He wanted to stay with them for a little bit longer before moving on.

But he gave the group a special talisman that could allow him to sense their location at all times. He promised that he was going to save them if ever they encounter a dangerous situation that they couldn't escape.

Shin thought that it was another setup from the system, and a hit at the same time. This could only mean that they were definitely going to encounter that kind of situation.

Aside from that, he also thought about the armies that they were going to face and the possible characteristics that they should have.

Based on the scenes that he saw earlier, there should be three more armies that they needed to face. Moreover, Lycan also told them the respective names of those armies, so he could treat those names as additional clues.

The first one should be Sky Griffin Army, then the King Ghost Army, and the Dragon Knight Army after that – Shin thought that the Great Blue Wolf Army was a little stronger than the first two armies, so he was not much troubled by them.

If ever, they might be a little trickier to deal with because of their unique characteristic, especially the King Ghost Army since. Shin could already imagine what kind of monsters were they going to face when he heard their name.

'If they were also undead monsters, then there is a high chance they are going to be specters. And they are most likely assassins based on the appearance that they have.'

'Tsk! That is going to be a pain in the *ss,' he couldn't help but shake his head after realizing how troublesome they could be.

Then he was reminded of the heavy cavalry that the Sky Griffin Army and further shook his head. 'Then those guys are most likely be Death Knights or a bunch of Dullahan, maybe even both.'

He started to grimace at the fact that the next battles were also not going to be easy. But that was not the end since the one that gave him the most headache was the Dragon Knight Army.

Facing an army of inferior 'Arthur' was definitely going to be an unpleasant experience.

Shin tried so hard to figure out what kind of undead could they possibly be, but he couldn't think of anything. They could be skeleton warriors or might as well zombies.

But they were supposedly the strongest army among the four armies, so Shin thought that it was not going to be that simple. They could even face a zombie dragon in the worst-case scenario since that army was led by the Grand Marshal who was also the partner of the Glacial Dragon.

He was even reminded of his battle against Immortal since he faced a real Zombie Dragon at that time.

Fortunately, he could at least summon the Eclipse Dragon if that happened since it would definitely trigger the activation of that copied skill. But he was also not sure that the strength of the dragon was going to be the same as before.

He was not like Arthur would take that information positively. He was also the group's leading figure, so he needed to consider all possible scenarios they could face.

He was just hoping that Arthur would find a way to solve that situation if it really happened. After all, this guy was a dragon fanatic for a reason.

After reorganizing his thoughts, Shin discussed their next course of action with the rest of the group. They then took a rest to recover their peak forms before proceeding to the quest.

But Shin was not done yet, there was still another issue that they needed to take care of. He walked over to Faker and Zero to discuss the hidden variable that could affect their quest later.

Chapter 867 A Former Member Of Pandemonium Troupe

...

"It must be Diablo," said Zero with a confident tone, making Shin and Faker turned to him with a slight frown.

For Zero to have that kind of tone when naming the mysterious enemy that was hiding in the dark, it must mean that he was very familiar with that person.

Zero knew what they were thinking and quickly answered. "As you already know, I am investigating the Pandemonium Descendants and especially paying close attention to each member of their strongest group, the Pandemonium Troupe."

"I can't say that I am very familiar with each of them since they are skilled at hiding their tracks. But it doesn't mean that my investigation was a failure."

"I managed to infiltrate one of their bases and happen to witness the meeting of their higher-ups. And from the information that I've gotten from that time, the Pandemonium Descendants are composed of 3 major groups, the Elders, the Penumbras, and the Troupe Members."

"The Elders are the ones pulling the strings behind the whole organization. I don't know how strong they but based on what I've seen, they should be at least as strong as the elders of Powerhouse Guilds."

"On the other hand, the Penumbrae are the least powerful among the three. Instead, their skills lay in infiltration and gathering information. My guess is they are spies within those top guilds. And with how accurate their reports are, they most likely climb all the way to the high-ranking officials of each guild."

"They have spies everywhere, both in Righteous Factions and the Corrupted Cult. And even though they are leaning more toward the latter, it seems like they are not on good terms with each other."

Hearing that Shin suddenly commented. "They must be related to Demonic Churches. With their Demonification Skill, it is highly possible for it to be the case. That also explains why they are in favor of the Corrupted Cult but also not fond of them."

"Demonic Churches think that they stand higher than the Corrupted Cult," said Faker, giving out his remarks.

Zero slightly nodded his head before continuing. "As for the Pandemonium Troupes, they are an independent group that is composed of the most skilled players of their organization."

"There are a total of thirteen members of their troupe, the 7 Devils of the mortal sins and the 6 Demon Contractors. They are mostly operating separately as a group of Sweepers are working under each of them."

"They rarely gathered together unless there is a big operation that needs all of them to be present."

Shin and Faker were already aware of the Pandemonium Troupe, so they were no longer surprised about it. Aside from it having more detailed information, most of it was already known to most of the Top-rank Players.

Instead, Shin was more interested in something else. It was to know who was this 'Diablo' that Zero was talking about earlier, and what was his relationship to the Pandemonium Descendants.

Aside from that, he was also quite curious about how Zero managed to infiltrate the base of such a mysterious organization within the game. "For you to 'stumble' upon such an important meeting, I can't say that it is only an accidental encounter."

Zero smiled bitterly as he could see how sharp Shin was when it came to these kinds of situations. Given that, he immediately answered. "The truth is I am led to that place by that guy, Diablo."

Those words made Shin and Faker frown on their brows but didn't voice out their thoughts. They just waited patiently and let Zero continue.

"I am tracking him during that time since he tried to assassinate me when I am facing a group of Sweepers of one of the members of the troupe."

"As you already know, the Sweepers' job is to hunt down the top-rank players of the game to delay their progress as much as possible."

"For him to be present at that time, made me suspect that he was a member of the troupe. But after I exchanged some blows with him alongside the interrogation that Seven had on the captured Sweepers, we learned that he was actually a former member of the Pandemonium Descendants."

"From the information that we gathered about that guy, he first joined the organization when he heard that they are building a special group that will continue the legacy the 'Irregulars' left."

"The 'Irregulars' is a legendary Adventurer Team that conquered all of the virtual games before. Diablo is treating them as his role model, so when he witnesses the battle prowess that the Pandemonium Troupe has become entranced with them and joins their group."

"But he later finds out that their purpose is completely different to the ideals that the Irregulars have, so he has a fallout with them and leaves the organization for good."

"Naturally, the Pandemonium Descendants will not let him roam around freely, especially when he has a lot of information about them. They send some of their sweepers to go after him, which made him be on a constant run."

"And when he learned that I am tracking him down because of his connection with the mysterious organization, he purposely lured me in and led me to one of their bases at the exact time when the important meeting was taking place."

Shin still felt that there was something that didn't add up. "You have too much information about that guy. I can't be sure that you only get it from a simple interrogation on one of the Sweepers."

"What are you trying to hide here?" asked Shin sharply as he looked at Zero with squinting eyes.

Zero smiled bitterly as he found that he couldn't hide anything from Shin. He sighed for a brief moment and answered. "There is this special information merchant on evil faction. He can provide you any kind of information about anyone as long as the request is only about a single person and not targeting an entire organization."

"That guy is very skilled at gathering information, but it seems like he is under a system contract with all of the giant organizations within the evil faction, which prevents him from providing any kind of information about them."

"I have also signed a system contract with him, so I can't tell you any more information about him other than this," he added after a brief hesitation.

"Interesting," muttered Shin before asking once again. "And you are sure that this guy, Diablo, is on our tail because?"

Zero didn't plan to hide anything anymore, so he replied truthfully. "I already cast a sword mark on a few highly skilled players within the Evil Function, so I can sense their presence whenever they are near my location."

"And out of all the marked players that I have, Diablo is the only person that fits the description that Faker has given us."

After that Shin fell into deep thought and muttered to himself. 'A highly skilled assassin that can give even brother Faker some trouble, huh? And he should be moving alone right now.'

'We can definitely get something out of this one if we play our cards right,' he added to his thoughts before turning to Faker. "Brother Faker, can I trouble you to keep an eye on this guy during our exploration?"

"We still don't know how he managed to arrive here and what is his purpose for coming, so we need to be extra careful. After all, we all know that an assassin is very hard to deal with when they are in the dark."

"Moreover, we also don't know if he is really alone or has some teammates accompanying him, please put keep that in mind."

Hearing the task given to him, Faker just slightly nodded his head and didn't say anything about it.

After that, Shin turned to Zero and added. "And please assist him since you have your mark on that person."

Zero also nodded without question since it was a natural thing to do. And after getting the response from him, Shin quickly turned around and headed to where the rest of the group was located. "I will tell the others about this so that they can be aware of our situation."

In the meantime, while Shin and the group accompanying him at the Frozen Kingdom were still exploring the area, Shiella was currently suffering an immense headache inside her office.

Right after she arrived at the Hand of Midas Trading Firm, she was immediately greeted by a barrage of problems that kept coming her way.

Everything was still going fine earlier before she logged out of the game, so she couldn't understand why this was happening right now.

It didn't take long for her to realize the main source of her problem, aside from her little brothers, of course.

After browsing through the reports that were submitted to her, she immediately noticed that someone was trying to sabotage their operations. Not only they targeted the supply routes that they had, but those people were also trying to rob a couple of their branches located in the fallen towns.

They didn't suffer any kind of damage but it was still enough to hinder their plans. Whoever those people were, their main target was to delay the supply crates that they were sent to the affected towns, villages, and minor cities from the previous invasion.

"These bastards are definitely trying to slow down the recovery of the Saint Heaven Kingdom," muttered Shiella as she looked coldly at the map in front of her.

She marked the routes and towns that were attacked by the opposing side before studying them. And after a few moments, she successfully learned the pattern of their ambushes.

But despite that being the case, she still looked a little unsatisfied.

She then turned her attention to the isolated region on the map where the Corrupted Cult was trying to build its temporary base.

After that, she opened her friend list and started contacting a few people. And when she was done with it, her lips then formed a huge grin before muttering with an evil tone. "Since you dared to bother me, then let me give you the takes of your own medicine."

Chapter 868 A Shadow Dancer, Diablo (Part 1)

...

Diablo was one of the founding members of the Pandemonium Troupe. He was a powerful Maverick Player of the assassin class. His speed alone could make him climb all the way to the top of the leaderboards. And adding his first-class assassination skills, he was confident that he could match even the top-ranking players of the game.

Even within the mysterious organization of Pandemonium Descendants, he could be ranked as one of their strongest members.

He was a young player who was confident that he could take on a top Godlike Player on his own. This made the elders of the Pandemonium Descendants hold him in high regard.

He joined that organization because he found out that they had some connections with the legendary adventurer team of the Virtual World, the Irregulars.

The Irregulars created a lot of impossible feats during their time. They didn't not only do it on a game or two, but they repeatedly dominated all of the virtual games that they had joined. This made them the absolute idol and role model of every player.

But the group suddenly disappeared after a brief message in the online forums that they were going to retire from playing games. Then their legendary battle clips and the other amazing videos related to them started to disappear one after another.

This made the other players forget about them. They became nothing but a myth in the eyes of the next generation of players. Aside from the players who were regarded as the gods of the game, the name 'Irregulars' was treated as exaggerated rumors.

But it was different for Diablo because his father lived in the same generation as those Irregulars. He grew up watching the recorded videos of the Irregulars that his father had saved.

This made him hate the current system of virtual games. The so-called rankings were nothing but based on the popularity of the players. The same for the Titles that the players gained. In his eyes, those titles were nothing but an overestimation of those players' strengths.

Compared to the 'real' rankers of the previous generation, these so-called Godlike Players and Titled Rankers were just big fish on a small pond.

Well, Diablo had to admit that some of those players really deserved their titles, especially the ones who used to be called Monster Class Players during the launch of «True Era» online. This was the reason why he was too cautious when facing Faker.

During the early stages of «Destiny's Fate», Diablo was very ahead of the majority of players which made him too confident of his skills.

It was until he met a certain player that beat him one-sidedly. He was overpowered in every area which made him feel defeated and powerless.

But that person also recognized his talent and invited him to join the group that the guy was trying to create.

Diablo didn't want to join them but he immediately changed his mind after he witnessed their strength. They had an overwhelming power that could make them stand on an equal footing with the famous Godlike Players of the game.

They the strength and power but they remained hidden in the eyes of the public. Diablo even saw their achievements as the same as his role models.

He also learned that the leader of the group had some connection with the Irregulars of the previous generation. That person's class and fighting style were the same as one of the members of Irregulars. Even the set of skills and combat techniques that that guy had was very similar to that particular member.

Diablo even became more certain that the leader of the group had some connections with the Irregulars because that person was very familiar with each member of that legendary adventurer team.

He didn't know how skilled his father was when playing virtual games, but he was sure that his old man was an expert when it came to gathering information. He even saw a lot of profiles of different top-rank players in his father's office.

Diablo had an access to information about the Irregulars that was not known to the public and since the leader of the Pandemonium Descendants had that kind of information could only mean two things.

First, the leader might also know a person like his father, an expert informant. And the other reason was that he knew a member of Irregulars personally.

Diablo was leaning more toward the latter since the leader knew more detailed information than his father had.

This was the reason why he joined the organization and even became a founding member of the Pandemonium Troupe. He believed that the leader was going to rebuild the legacy that the Irregulars had left.

But it didn't take long for him to have fallout on the group. It was because their ideals were completely different from what the Irregulars wanted.

Their group was formed only because they want to explore the virtual world together. They wanted to enjoy their journey and the excitement of their adventures.

On the other hand, the Pandemonium Descendants wanted something different. Even though they inherited the ideal of having 'strength and power' to become free and control their fate, their ultimate goal was to dominate everyone.

The organization wanted to conquer the entire world within the game, especially when it started to have a huge impact on the younger generation. He was even being used to achieve that goal. He just chose to ignore it at first since he became close with the Leader

Unfortunately, he couldn't take it anymore when the organization started to take advantage of the weak and ruin the game experience of innocent people to achieve their goal.

It was still fine to hinder the progress of the top players, but robbing the good experience that the ordinary players had was already beyond his belief.

He started playing this game with the goal of enjoying it and experiencing the thrill of adventure just like what he had seen in the recorded videos when he was younger. But it looked like he would not be able to achieve it if he continued to stay in this organization.

Diablo left the organization with a heavy heart since he had mistaken them to have the same goal as him.

But since he knew too much information about the Pandemonium Troupe, he became one of their targets. They started to hunt him down with an intention of making him quit the game.

This issue could easily be resolved if he restarted from the very beginning. But he was not willing to throw away his progress and reset the game. He already gained a lot since he first started the game. He even had a special race and a hidden class, so starting again was not worth it.

He also didn't join any kind of organization since he didn't want to be tied down in a single place nor wanted to be ordered around by some higher-ups. He would rather be alone and act as a lone wolf than become a lackey once again.

Diablo couldn't help but reminisce about the past experiences he had. Those times when he could explore the game freely and without being hunted.

All of it was ruined when he met the Leader of the Pandemonium Troupe, and he couldn't help but wear a lonely expression when he thought about that.

...

"I heard that the Pandemonium Descendants will launch a large-scale operation once the Frozen Wall of Divinity falls."

"From what that money-grabbing merchant has said, one of the Empire Quests that the Troupe has is going to be triggered if the wall falls. I need to do everything I can to stop that from happening."

"If my suspicion is right, then it is most likely related to the 'gate' quest that I previously have," muttered Diablo as he continued to trail Shin and the others from the shadows.

During their exploration, Diablo couldn't hide his amazement at the group. But at the same time, he also kind of expected it to happen since their team composition was really strong.

Among them were the Monster Class Players «True Era» Online, Dragon God Siegfried, Sword God Zero, War God Simba, God Slayer Lawless, and Death God Faker. These players stood at the very top of the ladder which made him acknowledge them despite his standards being as high as the Irregulars.

Then there was the Elemental Goddess Charlotte, who was still trying to recover her previous form during the time of «True Era» Online, and the Gentle Goddess Arielle, who he suspected to be the rumored 'Witch of the Eternal Light' of that game.

"The Empyrean Talons Adventurer and the former members of the now disbanded Dark Hero Adventurer Team, the strength that they are going to achieve when working together can already rival the top organizations of this game, no wonder the Pandemonium Descendants are keeping an eye on them."

Diablo was reviewing the profile of each member of the group when the watch that he was wearing started to flicker with dim light.

He frowned his brow and turned in a certain direction. "Looks like that annoying group catch up on me once again. Tsk! This is going to be a little troublesome."

Chapter 869 A Shadow Dancer, Diablo (Part 2)

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Swoosh! Swoosh!

A group of hooded individuals arrived at the Frozen Kingdom through a special magic circle. From the patterns and rune arrangement that the magic circle had, it was a teleportation channel made by Demonic Churches, especially with the symbols that were unique to their organization.

It was a small group composed of seven members. But despite their small number, no one would dare to face them head-on due to the dangerous aura that they were releasing.

The man standing at the forefront of the group swept his gaze at the surroundings before turning to the others. "Don't get distracted and focus on our mission. Our main job is to locate the traitor of the organization and retreat as soon as possible."

Hearing that, one of the members behind him seemed to become disappointed and muttered with an unwilling tone. "Why do we have to retreat when we can just take down the target on our own? I doubt that he is as strong as the current Sinful Devils."

"After all, he left the organization a long time ago, so he shouldn't have a lot of resources to groom his strength. He shouldn't be as powerful as them since he is lagging behind them."

The leader of the group threw a sharp glare at that member and said with a sharp tone. "This is why you can't raise your rank despite your skills. You are always underestimating your targets."

After that, he swept his gaze at the rest of the group and continued. "Remember this, no matter how insignificant our target is, we are going to use all of our strength to take them down."

"We are going to do anything to clear up the path for our leaders. That is our job, the Sweepers."

He paused for a moment as he remembered something before adding. "What's more, our current target is a former member of the Troupe, so we can't underestimate his strength even if he left the organization for a long time."

"And given that he is close to our Great Leader previously, we can assume that his skills are not ordinary," he added with a warning tone.

"Roger, Squad Leader!" responded every member of the group.

He was about to turn around and lead the group to go deeper into the frozen land when he suddenly felt an extreme sense of death.

"Careful!"

He shouted as fast and as loud as he could so that the rest could respond in time. But unfortunately, the members of his squad were a little too slow compared to him, so they failed to move their bodies at the right moment.

Sha! Sha!

The heads of the two members of their group were severed from their bodies and flew in the air.

Everything happened a little too fast, which was why the group to were caught completely off-guard.

Fortunately, their squad leader was already making his move so that he could save the remaining members of his group.

He pounced in the middle of their formation when a mysterious man suddenly appeared. The headless bodies of the two members of their group were still standing in front of that man, creating a natural barrier that blocked the leader's path.

"Drin, Squad Leader of the 1st unit Sweepers under the Greed Devil. Have a strong sense of responsibility and a very cautious nature. Skilled at tracking a designated target and well-versed at gathering information."

"Threat level, average. Combat Skills, average," the mysterious man muttered a series of information after seeing the squad leader as if he was reading the latter's profile.

After that, he quickly kicked the headless bodies in front of him and sent them flying toward the opponent pouncing at him.

He then disappeared from his current location and appeared behind another member of the group who was still in the middle of processing the scene in front of him.

And just like his previous victims, he cleanly cut the head of this target with a single stroke of his stiletto.

It was only at that time that the remaining members of the group broke out of their daze. They quickly jumped away from their assailant while also pulling out their respective weapons at the same time.

Thud!

And when the bodies of their fallen colleagues fell on the ground, the group already formed a new formation, surrounding the mysterious person.

It was also at that time when they could have a clear look at him.

That guy was wearing a set of armor made of leather and light metal. The falling snowflakes were covering his grey cloak, making him less noticeable despite him standing in a snowy field.

His right hand was holding a stiletto with a pitch-black blade. Blood was dripping down from it, indicating that it just took the lives of their comrades. The left hand of that person, on the other hand, was holding a dagger with a curved blade in a reverse grip manner.

The group couldn't help but shudder when they saw the cold eyes of that person sweeping through them. His hair was slightly covering those eyes but the group could get a glimpse of them every time the wind blows.

Those eyes had black sclera while his pupils were dyed in gold, such cold and inhuman eyes could send chills down the bodies of those who ever tried to look at them.

Drin, the leader of the group, had a dark expression on his face as he was not expecting that their target would come after them right off the bat. "Diablo, the former second-in-command of the Pandemonium Troupe."

"I heard that you lost your demonic powers when you left the organization, but it doesn't seem the case," he muttered as he recalled the profile of Diablo that he got from the headquarters.

Diablo immediately understood what Drin was trying to say, so he immediately replied with a casual tone. "Oh! Are you talking about these 'Demon Eyes'?"

"It is true that I've lost all of my previous skills alongside my profession in exchange for leaving the organization. But it doesn't mean that I can't reclaim them back after my departure."

He then paused for a moment and looked sharply at Drin. "As one of the top sweepers of the organization, I am sure that you are aware of the difference in our strengths. This makes me wonder why you chose this job despite knowing that fact?"

Diablo was closely watching Drin, so he was able to immediately noticed the slight change in the latter's expression the moment he asked that question.

It was more than enough for him to know what was going on. "Heh! I guess those guys are busy preparing for the large-scale expansion quest."

Drin suddenly felt a dangerous feeling right after hearing those words. He then started to recall all of the series of events happening on their side, this included the matter of tracking down Diablo.

The Great Leader put a lot of importance on tracking Diablo, saying that the guy would definitely do something to sabotage their plans. This was the reason why the best Sweepers of the organization were coming after him.

It was fine not to catch him since achieving that feat was nigh impossible unless they send at least two of the Pandemonium Troupe members. This was the reason why the higher-ups were contented on just monitoring his movements.

But that didn't mean their job became easier. Diablo was a very skilled assassin, and even if he lost his previous class after leaving the organization, he still managed to get his hands on a special race and another hidden class based on the reports that they received.

With the abilities of that hidden class, he should have no problem shaking off his pursuers as long as they were not a troupe member. He could even dispose of them if he wanted to.

Drin was trying to recall the series of events when he suddenly thought that there was something strange going on. "If that is the case, then it is really strange why we keep on catching up with him in the previous pursuits. Taking another look at it, it is because of the well-hidden trails that he left behind-..."

His pupils suddenly shrunk when he realized that they were actually being led by Diablo. Then a sudden chill ran through his spine when he remembered the conversations and reports that they had these past few days. "He is purposely letting us catch up on him to get updated information about the movements of the organization!"

Seeing that Drin finally caught up on his scheme, Diablo couldn't help but shook his head and sigh in disappointment. "This is why it is troublesome to deal with the sharp people, they realize what is going on as soon as they notice something strange."

Drin looked at Diablo in disbelief and stated. "That is impossible! How can you know our movements if we are having a secret meeting? We are also sending private messages most of the time!"

"We are even securing the perimeter all the time!" he couldn't believe what was going on.

Diablo smiled bitterly before replying. "Lip Reading is an ancient and outdated skill, especially with the current technologies that we have. But it always came in handy on certain occasions."

He paused for a moment and looked at the rest of the group with a mocking face before continuing. "As for you, securing the perimeter, do you guys honestly believe that such a lousy defense will stop me from infiltrating?"

"Don't make me laugh! I used to be the second-in-command for a reason!"

As he said those words, Drip quickly shouted at the other members of the group to launch a simultaneous attack. "Go!"

While they were charging ahead, their appearance transformed into a demon that was releasing evil and wicked aura.

Diablo slightly squinted his eyes when he saw that scene but remained to be calm. After that, he took a light step forward, making his figure flicker a little.

Swoosh!

He then appeared behind the group, maintaining his previous stance as if he teleported. He didn't bother to turn around as he walked ahead and spoke. "Please tell this to my old friend. If he wants to catch me, then he needs to come personally or at least send Wrath or Pride."

"Aside from them, the rest are just a bunch of trash. None of them can face me, especially since my new class is a Shadow Dancer."

As his words faded alongside the wind, the headless bodies of the sweepers fell on the ground with a soft and silent sound.

Drin's consciousness still hadn't disappeared despite his head flying in the air, so he could still hear the words that Diablo had said.

Thud!

Then that head fell on the ground facing the direction where he could see the fading silhouette of Diablo. It was at that moment that he realized how strong a founding member of the Pandemonium Troupe was.

"A Shadow Dancer."

He could only mutter those words as his field of vision suddenly turned dark.

Chapter 870 A Brewing Storm

...

On the outskirts of the Saint Heaven Kingdom, bordering the Frozen Kingdom, the Hydra Guild was currently having a meeting with the Corrupted Cult members.

Immortal, who was representing the latter side, sat silently in his seat. Aside from him, the representatives of the Hydra Guild and Blood Carnival were also sitting around the table.

Cobra, who was the representative of the Hydra Guild, was currently glaring at Immortal. And when he finally couldn't suppress his anger anymore, he suddenly slammed his hand on the table and shouted. "How is the Corrupted Cult going to compensate us now, Immortal?"

"We help you in a condition that you guys will guarantee that our businesses are not going to be affected by your sudden invasion!"

"Because of what happened, a lot of our businesses are not only suffering, but we are also burning a lot of profit to recover most of them!"

Unlike him, the Blood Elf sitting right across his seat seemed not to be bothered at all. He was the representative of the Blood Carnival, and since their guild was a Dark Guild housing red-named players, the current state of the Saint Heaven Kingdom was somewhat favorable for them.

Chaos was their best friend since it was a perfect time for their members to do everything they wanted without being captured by the NPC Guards.

Of course, large cities were still out of the question, but the towns and villages that suffered a huge hit on the previous event were Heaven for Dark Players like them.

Bang!

Cobra slammed his hand on the table for another time and glared at Immortal threateningly. "You better have a good offer this time, or else, your plans may fall apart before they are fully built."

It was at this moment when the Blood Elf finally opened his mouth. "Hey, hey! Talk it easy, Cobra. Nothing will come out good in this meeting if we are going to let our emotions get over us."

Shing!

Hearing those words, Cobra quickly pulled out his dagger and pointed it toward the Blood Elf. "Stop with this façade, Mad Dog! We both know that you are enjoying this situation better than anyone else."

"The other high-ranking members of your guild are pulled out from this kingdom the moment you arrived. Do you honestly believe that we don't know what it means?"

He then stabbed his dagger into the table and added. "That can only mean a single thing, you guys are planning to lay your hands on our goods!"

The Blood Elf, Mad Dog, picked up the greatsword leaning on the edge of the table beside him and looked at Cobra straight in the eyes. "And what if that is that is the case? The Saint Heaven Kingdom is not your turf in the first place, so we don't give a damn!"

Bang!

A fight was about to break out between the two but a powerful pressure suddenly suppressed their auras, making them regain their sense.

"That should be enough. We are here to discuss our next course of action and not to fight among ourselves," said Immortal in a calm tone before turning to Cobra. "As for the compensation, the main headquarter is already making negotiations on with your guild to compensate your losses."

'The headquarters? That means, these lunatics are really trying to destroy this whole kingdom,' thought Cobra as he read between the lines of what Immortal had said.

'It looks like we really need to give up on this place and cut out losses as minimum as he can,' he added with a deep frown.

Regardless of his thoughts, he was still not willing to just give up everything without having assurance from the Corrupted Cult. "But how can you be sure that everything is going according to your plans?"

Immortal shrugged his shoulders and answered with a confident tone. "Because it is already impossible to save this dying kingdom."

Cobra was still confused and asked. "What do you mean by that?"

Then Immortal quickly responded. "It is a system setting. Because of the sins that the ancestors of this kingdom have committed, divine wrath is destined to fall on them."

"Regardless of what they are doing, the Saint Heaven Kingdom is already doomed," he added while wearing a huge grin.

"But the other sides are the Emyrean Talons and the new party that God Slayer had created. On top of that, the reports that we just received said that Zero and his right-hand man are even helping them," said Cobra with a doubtful tone.

"You should know what they can do better than anyone since you already faced them more than once. And you end up being defeated on those occasions."

Hearing that, Immortal couldn't help but laugh out loud. "Are you telling me that a group of players can stand against the will of a God in this world?"

"Don't make me laugh, all of us on the Corrupted Cult personally experience the power of a God within this game. No one can oppose them on the current stage of the game as their divine authority is absolute!"

"Unless those guys have someone with the same level of authority on their side, they are bound to fail this quest miserably."

He paused for a moment as he reached that point before continuing. "And you are right that I've lost to them multiple times, but it is also because I suffer a series of defeats on their hands that I know how strong exactly they are."

"They don't have enough power to clear that quest. And it is a terrible mistake for them to attempt clearing it at the current state of the game."

"We are only planning to purposely fail that quest in the first place since it is unclear from the very beginning. But since they volunteered to sacrifice themselves for it, we are more than happy to give them the 'honor' of failing it."

"After the end of this operation, the virtual world will witness the fall of the rising star, Empyrean Talons, and the returning stars, God Slayer and Death God. And alongside them is the sudden disappearance of the current brightest star of the game, Zero."

Immortal couldn't hide his excitement when he thought about that. 'What if I lost to them? In the end, I will still get the last laugh. The winner is not always the strongest, but it is whoever remained standing in the very end.'

Hearing the confident words from Immortal, Cobra couldn't help but fall in deep thought. He was still not sure where this Lich God got his confidence but since he was so sure about the outcome of this operation, he had no choice but to acknowledge it.

Moreover, the Corrupted Cult was currently negotiating compensation with the Headquarters of the Hydra Guild, so they had nothing to lose even if either side succeed.

As usual, Mad Dog, as a representative of the Blood Carnival, had no interest in it. Their guild would still continue to operate regardless of the outcome. Though, he was leaning more toward the success of the Corrupted Cult since the more chaotic the kingdom became, the more favorable for them.

This was the main reason why they agreed to work with them, a Dark Guild like theirs had more freedom if the Kingdom was in chaos.

Immortal then started to discuss the main point of this meeting. "Now, how about we proceed to our main issue here?"

"The top guilds who are in control of the resource maps in the Kingdom are greatly weakened, especially the Wing's Alliance who just suffered a defeat under the hands of the HeadHunter Guild."

"We can expect that they will not immediately recover since the internal conflict with their Headquarters is slowly growing. I heard that the factions of the Grand Elder are starting to show their fangs. Because of that, the Alliance Leader is forced to make his move."

"Given that, we can take the Wing's Alliance out of the picture for the time being."

Cobra pursed his lips and immediately stated. "But the HeadHunter Guild is starting to gain some influence due to their previous victory. And Cruelty also started to become more popular because of his stupid speech."

Mad Dog slightly nodded his head and added. "This leaves us with the Dragon Pavilion, Tyrant Guild, Hand of Midas, and the Assassin Union. These powerhouses are the only ones that we need to be wary of aside from the HeadHunter Guild."

He then turned to Immortal and asked. "Do you think we have enough power to deal with them altogether?"

Bang!

Cobra slammed his hand on the table once again and commented. "Why are you grouping the HeadHunter Guild with them? We all know that the other guilds don't have a good relationship with the other four regardless of the positive responses that they are currently getting."

"The Hydra Guild will deal with the Dragon Pavilion as usual while your Blood Carnival will take care of the Tyrant Guild, then the other two organizations will be left to the hands of the Corrupted Cult! That simple!"

Immortal was silent for a moment before speaking. "Mad Dog has a point. There is clear evidence that the HeadHunter Guild is receiving some hidden support during the previous war."

"We still don't know who exactly is it but our main suspect is the Hand of Midas Guild since they are the only ones who are capable of changing the tide of that war in this Kingdom."

"Given this, we can't overlook the possibility of them working together," he then paused for a moment and turned at the two before continuing. "Our hands are full, so we don't have enough people to keep them in check."

"Moreover there are also some variables that we are not expecting to appear. Just like the sudden appearances of the Frost Goddess Snow White and the previous rank one player Khing which clearly catch us off-guard."

Mad Dog and Cobra suddenly squinted their eyes as they could tell what Immortal was trying to say. And just like they had thought, the Lich God was really planning to invite another party to join them.

"This is why we are planning to hire some people to take care of those annoying variables," said Immortal as a group of players entered the tent, catching the attention of the two.

The two couldn't help but become surprised when he saw the faces of those players. They then turned to each other before quickly turning back to Immortal and slowly nodding their heads.

They both knew that the success rate of their plan would be boosted by a large margin with the help of these people.

Seeing their reactions, Immortal nodded his head in satisfaction and continued. "Then how about we proceed and further polish our plans?"