

## **Destiny 961**

Chapter 961 Dragon's Challenge (Part 2): Discovering A Secondary Combat Class

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Boom!

Grand Marshal Draco was immediately covered by a huge cloud of smoke right after he was hit by the blazing dragon that fell from the sky.

But despite that being the case, Arthur was still wearing a solemn expression on his face as he could tell that his opponent managed to block it in the time given that the latter's health bar didn't drop in the slightest.

Swoosh!

Then Arthur saw the grand marshal clear the could of smoke with a strong flap of his wings before charging toward the sky.

Arthur slightly knitted his brow before adjusting his position in the air. And quickly after that, he dived down toward his opponent, accelerating his speed with a powerful flap of his wings.

Boom!

The two quickly collided as they held their weapons against each other, sending a powerful ripple in the air. And after a brief pause, they quickly exchange blows, swinging the greatsword and spear against each other which created a series of explosions.

Being the one at disadvantage in terms of stats, Arthur had no choice but to make use of his mobility during the exchange. He was usually someone who loved to fight his opponent head-on, but since it was impossible to overpower his opponent in terms of strength, he had to fight where his advantage was.

Utilizing his mobility while using the high-level spear techniques from his arsenal, he was able to fight the grand marshal on equal footing.

Such a battle was also beneficial to him since he was able to hone his spearmanship and promote it to a higher level by using it in an aerial battle.

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Arthur was fully focused on the fight when he suddenly sensed a strange energy coming from his opponent. It was very vague but his senses were able to pick it up with ease.

He was also somewhat familiar with that energy since it was similar to the signals that he learned from his previous training under Nathan's supervision. It was a certain technique to use one's mental power and aura to communicate with other people.

"Is it a voice transmission?" thought Arthur in confusion before focusing his senses on that particular energy.

A moment later, Arthur was finally able to pick up the message that the grand marshal was trying to send to him after applying the technique that Nathan had taught him before.

"Elder, is that you?" asked Arthur after receiving the vague voice transmission.

It didn't take long before the grand marshal replied to him. "Impressive! You manage to use it on a single try, and even achieve it during a battle! Your talent sure is excellent."

"What happened, Elder? Can you take back your body from this berserk power?" asked Arthur as he continued to exchange blows against the cursed knight in front of him.

"It is my fault. I briefly let my guard down when I am trying to pass my knowledge about Dragon Aura to you," said the grand marshal with a bitter tone before adding. "It may be because I've gotten rusty after not being able to fight for a long time."

"The cursed within me already transform into the Power of Calamity. It took over my body in that brief moment during our exchange. I am only protecting the tiny bit of my consciousness with my Mental Power."

"You can take it as our roles being swapped. The Power of Calamity is now the owner of my body while it is trying to suppress my remaining consciousness to get total control over the body while I am the one who is fighting to snatch it back and take over the control."

Arthur nodded his head as he already understood what was going on earlier. After all, the system already informed them earlier about the situation.

But this time, he couldn't help but be overjoyed since there might be a way to take back the body of the grand marshal, significantly increasing the possibility of them clearing the quest.

"Is there anything that I can do to help you, Elder?" asked Arthur, suppressing the excitement that he had in his heart.

Unfortunately, the reply that he got was not a positive one. "I am sad to say this but there is nothing we can do at the moment. The Power of the Calamity is already rooted within my body for a long time – it is no longer possible to separate it from me."

"Unless you completely destroyed the vessel, it is impossible to get rid of that Power of Calamity within me."

The expression on Arthur's face immediately grimace when he heard those words before asking dejectedly. "What do you want me to do now, Elder?"

"There is not much time left, so let me get straight to the point. I want you to help me pass down my legacy to future generations," said Grand Marshal Draco straightforwardly.

He didn't wait for Arthur to give a reply yet and quickly continued. "If only it is possible, I wanted to pass it to you directly. But since you are already a Dragonkin, a Transcendent Race, there is no point in taking this path that I've made. You already have your own."

"This Ascended Class that I've made is called Dragon Rider. As the name that it implies, it is a class that uses a dragon as their mount, a companion, who will reinforce someone in battle."

"For normal people, it is impossible for them to use the powers of the dragons due to the limitations of their race. But this class helps them to surpass their limits by living and training alongside their dragon companions."

"Unlike Dragon Slayers and Dragon Knights who could wield the powers of the dragons due to their bloodlines, ordinary people would not be able to achieve the same level of power."

"And since humans can't wield it, I think of a way to incorporate those powers by closely observing the movements of a dragon. And after a careful study, I've created a Dragon Arts that solely belongs to me and this particular path."

"This path had three stages before they reached the Ascended Class."

"The first stage is 'Dragon Taming'. It is the way for ordinary people to get acquainted with dragons and befriend them."

"Dragon Taming does not necessarily mean that you have to forcefully subdue them. But it is a way to build up a friendly relationship with the dragons, especially with the young ones."

"As for the second stage, it is called 'Dragon Training'. It is a process in which someone will train alongside their chosen companion dragons. And by training alongside each other, you will be able to familiarize yourself with the Dragon Aura that the dragons have."

"And by exposing yourself to the Dragon Aura for a very long time, you will be able to gain the ability to partially control it and eventually make that power your own."

"Meanwhile, the third and final stage is called the 'Dragon Riding'. In this stage, you and your companion dragon will be able to fight alongside each other as if the two of you were one entity. It is also known as being one with your dragon."

"After training with each other for a long time, you and your companion dragon will naturally be able to understand what is in each other's minds without voicing them out. It is the same as establishing a link between each other or an unwritten contract."

"Starting from there, the Dragon Riding Arts and other techniques that I've created will show their real strength."

Arthur got his interest piqued when he heard about the Dragon Rider Class, especially the part about Dragon Riding Arts. "That sounds interesting, Elder. I wonder if I can also learn that Dragon Riding Arts of yours."

He naturally knew that the grand marshal was intending to pass the Dragon Riding Arts to him given the current setting of the game. And if he was right, then this was a part of the rewards that he was supposed to get in this Empire Quest.

He might not be a Dragon Rider, but as a Dragonkin and someone who had a dragon pet, this set of skills would definitely be helpful to him in the future. Especially when flying mounts became more accessible to everyone.

"Naturally! You may not be able to walk on the path that I've created, but learning my skills and techniques is definitely possible," answered the grand marshal positively.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Bang!

Arthur couldn't reply immediately because the cursed knight in front of him started attacking him in frenzy. It was as if the cursed knight noticed him taking with the consciousness of the grand marshal.

After fending off the attacks from the cursed knight, Arthur finally asked. "That's good to hear, Elder. What do you want me to do?"

Knowing the urgency of the current situation, Grand Marshal Draco immediately instructed. "Release your current form and summon your dragon companion. I am going to directly teach you the Dragon Riding Arts."

Hearing those words, Arthur couldn't help but become a little suspicious. He suspiciously thought that it might be a trick of the 'Power of Calamity' to suppress him.

After all, no matter how powerful the current opponent that he had, it was only using its raw strength to fight him blindly. It lacked any technique or strategy which was why he was able to hold his ground.

If he suddenly released his 'Dual Elemental Spirit Fusion', he would immediately lose his footing due to the overwhelming difference in stats.

Arthur was silent for a long time as he was trying to see if it was really a trap. The grand marshal also didn't send him any voice transmission, seemingly trying to test him.

There was also no additional notification from the system, informing him about the current situation, which made him even more suspicious.

But at the same time, the allure of the Dragon Riding Arts was something that he couldn't ignore. Arthur really wanted to learn it since it was related to dragons and somewhat sounded cool.

As a dragon fanatic, he really wanted to learn this particular art.

Gritting his teeth, Arthur steeled his resolve and made his decision. "F\*ck it! Worst, I will just use my final trump card and summon Archon if it is really a trap."

After that, he launched a powerful attack at his opponent and quickly retreated, creating a large gap between the two of them, before releasing his 'Elemental Dragon Fusion' and summoning his golden dragon pet.

And the moment when he mounted the back of the neck of the dragon, the system notifications finally sounded to his ears.

\*Ding!\*

System: You have met the conditions to unlock a secondary combat class.

System: A Secondary Combat Class has been generated – the overlord of the sky, Dragon Cavalier.

System: Please pass the test with a satisfactory score to fully unlock the class. (Current test score: B-)

Seeing the notifications laid in front of his eyes, Arthur couldn't help but grin widely before muttering. "I finally have my own Secondary Combat Class! Damn, Shin! You are not the only one!"

Chapter 962 Secrets Of The World (Part 1)

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While Arthur and the rest of the group were fighting Grand Marshal Draco, Shin arrived at the staircase that led toward the majestic castle at the end of the Frozen City.

The walls on each side of the stairs seemed to be frozen by magic. The ice that covered those walls was so smooth that it made them look like a pair of mirrors facing each other.

Shin looked at the enormous half-open gate where the staircase led before climbing. Just like when he arrived in this place, no one appeared to stop him or obstruct his path.

But despite that being the case, he didn't let his guard down even for a moment and continued to be on high alert.

But to his surprise, there was really no danger in the surroundings even up until he reached the top of the staircase and stood in front of the metal gate.

Behind that gate was a long corridor surrounded by dark shadows cast by the tall pillars that it had. Those shadows were giving Shin a heavy feeling as he could feel hostile gazes locked on him from them.

Shin couldn't clearly pinpoint the exact locations of those gazes due to the dark aura shrouding them, making him wary of entering the corridor.

While he was hesitating, he suddenly heard a voice filled with authority coming from the deep place of the corridor.

"It is fine. No one will be able to touch as long as he did not permit it."

The voice seemingly tried to put his mind at ease but from Shin's perspective, it was also indicating that the owners of those hostile gazes would not hesitate to attack him as long as the owner of that voice willed it.

At this point, Shin sensed the agitation of his Elemental Spirit Companions, especially Vladimir and Grimrace who seemed to be urging him to enter the corridor already.

This might not be much of help but it was good news for Shin since it was the same as telling him that they would be able to help him when the situation called for it.

Bracing himself, Shin took a step forward, trying to test the waters. And when he saw that nothing happened, he took another step and continued to walk on after seeing that those hostile gazes didn't do anything to him aside from glaring at him sharply.

He felt more relaxed when he confirmed that the owner of those gazes couldn't do anything to him. And not long after, he arrived in front of tightly closed mental doors.

Stopping right in front of it, Shin couldn't help but wear a solemn expression as he could feel a large number of powerful individuals waiting on the other side of those doors despite them being fully closed.

Clank!

With a loud metallic sound, Shin cautiously pushed the metal doors with each of his hands. And right after he opened them, a huge wave of pressuring energy immediately greeted him, making him groan painfully.

Boom!

"Urgh!"

Shin strengthened his knees and legs to prevent them from falling due to the heavy pressure that was pressing upon him.

Shin couldn't even take another step forward or raise his head due to that pressure. "What the heck?"

\*Ding!\*

Then he suddenly heard the familiar sound of the system giving him a notification.

System: Due to a large number of pressures cast upon you, your mind was starting to get affected.

System: Initiating Willpower Check!

System: Pass!

System: Initiating Willpower Check!

System: Pass!

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The series of notifications were telling him that his willpower was being tested due to his current situation. He already heard about this situation before and it only happened when he encountered an existence that far exceed his current strength or a large horde of powerful monsters.

Forcefully raising his head, he couldn't help but curse his luck as he discovered that both cases could be applied to his current situation.

In front of him, he saw rows upon rows of people kneeling on both sides of a red carpet leading to a throne. Each of those people was as strong as a King Class Monster with some bordering Emperor Class, especially six people kneeling at the bottom of the stairs below the throne.

Based on the visible aura that was being emitted by their bodies, Shin could tell that those six people were most likely as strong as Lycan, Caelum, and Nel, if not stronger.

Sweeping his gaze, Shin couldn't help but become stunned at the scene in front of him. It was a throne room filled with high-leveled NPCs, or if they were really NPCs. At least, that was what he saw from his perspective.

But later, he suddenly discovered that these people were actually the vampires that they were looking for since the time they arrived in this place.

"That means, the owners of those gazes were also vampires and supposed to be the weaker ones at that," muttered Shin with a weird gaze as he remembered his experience walking through the long corridor earlier.

And from what he could see, each owner of those gazes was at least a peak Overlord Rank Monster bordering King Class.

"Vampires sure live up to their reputation," he added in a heavy tone.

He didn't even dare to take a step forward after seeing the scene inside the throne room. He was afraid that he would be devoured by these vampires despite the reassurance of the voice earlier.

Speaking of it, Shin turned his gaze towards the throne situated at the other end of the room, on the top of the stairs, and saw a person sitting on it haughtily.

It was a person wearing a set of luxurious clothes that the royal families usually wore with the only difference being that these ones were completely black. It was matched with a cape that had a slightly longer collar compared to normal ones.

Looking closely, Shin could also see that the skin of that particular person was relatively paler compared to the rest of the others in the room. His crimson-pupil eyes were extremely cold and filled with authority, seemingly looking down at everything around him.

Shin was suspecting that this person was the so-called Vampire Primogenitor, the person who formed a contract with a Great Demon King in exchange for powers that could grant him revenge.

Strangely, Shin also found some resemblance of this particular vampire with Vladimir who was clearly a Mutated Blood Spirit before his evolution. He was suspecting that there might be some connection between the two.

Vladimir seemed to sense his thoughts and started showing some violent reactions, trying to voice out his displeasure. He might not be able to communicate with them currently, but he could imagine the words that the Elemental Spirit was trying to say.

– "How can this awesome and amazing spirit can be compared to such lowly beings?" –

Shin couldn't help but chuckle as he could clearly hear those words inside his head, making him relax despite the current situation.

While he was lost in his thoughts, Dracula, currently observing Shin from the throne, narrowed his eyes slightly after seeing the latter laugh.

He then started smiling widely at the scene as he found Shin's actions rather interesting given that he was currently surrounded by such powerful beings that could crush him anytime.

"You finally arrive. This king is about to die of boredom due to your slow progress," said Dracula, snapping Shin back to reality.

He didn't wait for Shin to reply as he quickly continued. "I know that you may have the idea of what is going on given that the 'Will of the World' have informed you."

Hearing those words, Shin couldn't help but knit his brow, especially on the part where Dracula mentioned the 'Will of the World'.

'Is he talking about the system? How come an NPC-turned-Monster knows about it?' thought Shin to himself, completely confused.

Seemingly able to read what was inside Shin's head, Dracula immediately explained. "It is natural for this king to know the secrets of this world. After all, I am one of the strongest 'Enlightened Beings' of the world and closest to gaining a 'Divinity'."

"Enlightened Beings? Are they different from Enlightened Beast?" Shin couldn't help but ask.

He was already aware of Divinity since the name itself indicated what it was. As for Enlightened Beast, it was a beast with awakened powers and gained an intelligence comparable to humans or even better, Lycan was the best example of this.

Dracula felt like laughing when he heard those words. He looked at Shin with mocking eyes before saying. "If you are talking about that little wolf, then he is indeed an Enlightened Being, but not every Enlightened Beast is like him. He just happens to be the special case."

"Then what are you talking about? What are their differences?" Shin blurted out, making it sound a little rude.

And right after he said those words, all of the vampires simultaneously cast their gazes on him, making the pressure pressing upon his body become heavier.

The six vampires kneeling below the stairs of the throne even released their powerful auras, fully unrestrained, almost crushing in the process.

"How dare you speak senselessly in the presence of our lord?" said one of the vampires sharply while glaring at Shin, fully ready to rip him into shreds.

But before he could do anything, Dracula suddenly opened his mouth followed by a much stronger pressure that pressed upon everyone aside from Shin. "Silence!"

Boom!

Then the silence instantly filled the throne room, signifying the authority and power of Dracula.

Seeing that scene, the corner of Shin's mouth couldn't help but twitch while cursing the system inside his head. 'And the system wants us to defeat this monster? Maybe our helpers are not too shabby either.'

After suppressing everyone, Dracula continued. "I will forgive your ignorance since you are just a small cub who is about to enter the real world."

"Let me enlighten you about some of the secrets of this world. You will not be punished by the 'Will of the World' after hearing this since you will naturally learn about those secrets after your next awakening."

He then paused for a moment before continuing. "But first, let me talk about the requirements of becoming a 'Divine Being' and the qualification to enter the 'Lands of Gods'."

Chapter 963 Secrets Of The World (Part 2)

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'Requirements to become a Divine Being? Why does the system letting me know about it when I am not even at my Tier 3 Promotion yet?' thought Shin to himself as he was fully confused at why Dracula was giving this information to him.

'Based on what I know, I suspected that is at least a Tier 4,' he was thinking about this when he immediately shook his head and denied it. 'No, they are most likely Tier 5 or higher level of existence.'

Given that he had met Lycan and the others who he suspected to be at least Tier 4, he could deduce that the Divine Beings were at least a tier higher than them.

'But why is the system telling me about this matter already?' Shin was thinking deeply about it when he suddenly realized the reason.

He took a look at his inventory space and looked at the particular book sitting in its corner. 'Based on what Hanzo and Solus had said, this book was a fragment of a god's power, so I am suspecting that it is most likely the reason why I am getting this important information way ahead of the others.'

While Shin was lost in his thoughts, Dracula opened his mouth once again. "Divine Beings are said to be to the peak of all existence and are forced to ascend to the higher plane to escape the rejecting powers of the world."

"They are so powerful that they can destroy the lower plane. And because of that, the 'Will of the World', the Heavenly Principles, needs repels them to maintain the balance and order of the world."

"Whenever a Divine Being is born in the lower plane, they will immediately ascend to the higher plane because they will be crushed by the Heavenly Principles if they not."

Taking advantage of the pause from Dracula, Shin quickly asked. "Are these Divine Beings the Gods overseeing the lower plane?"

"Heh!"

Shin saw the Vampire Primogenitor scoff at his words once again but didn't ridicule him. Instead, he patiently answered. "Gods are Gods, they are an existence that far surpasses our imagination."

"Most people think that way, but they are actually slightly different. Though, it is not much. Even though Gods are Divine Beings, not all Divine Beings are Gods."

"Divine Beings are Beings who managed to transcend their mortal limitations and gain a wisdom that can uncover the secrets of the world before creating their own 'Divinity'."

"Meanwhile, Gods are Divine Beings who nurture their 'Divinity' to extreme limits and transform it into a 'Divine Authority', a Divine Power that can affect the laws of causality of the world."

"This 'Divine Authority' is very unique. It differs from one to another, which is why the so-called Gods have different powers that correspond to their powers."

When Shin heard those words, the system suddenly gave him a series of notifications.

\*Ding!\*

System: You have learned one of the Secrets of the World!

System: You learned the relationship between Divine Beings, Gods, Divinity, and Divine Authority!

System: You are the first player to discover this secret, and your Fame increases greatly.

\*Ding!\*

System: Congratulations! You've gained the special unique title – The Seeker of Truth!

\*Ding!\*

System: Due to the current restrictions, the Title's full effect will be temporarily sealed.

System: It will be fully unlocked once you've passed your Tier 3 Promotion Quest and walked the path of Divinity.

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Shin slightly knitted his brow when he read the contents of the notifications and couldn't help but become interested in the topic, even more.

Dracula purposely paused to let Shin digest all of the information that he received inside his head. And when the Vampire Primogenitor waited enough, he finally continued. "Now that you know about the existence far above us, how about we talk about how to achieve the same powers as them?"

"There are very few ways to reach that stage and almost all of them are impossible to achieve for most people. But it doesn't mean that it is completely hopeless, over there years, there are a few special individuals who manage to achieve such a feat and even pass them down to future generations."

"After improving the methods and solidifying them through thorough research, a stable path is created. And that is where the qualifications that I've just said earlier are needed."

He then paused for a moment and looked at Shin's eyes, seemingly observing the latter's reaction, before continuing. "The first is becoming an Ascended Being, surpassing the restrictions of mortal limits and gaining the acknowledgment of the world."

"In simpler terms, becoming strong and reaching the peak of all existence in the lower plane and accumulating great achievements that very few people have achieved."

"That is what becoming an Ascended Being means, gaining absolute strength and being respected by everyone."

Pausing for another time, he took a deep sigh before continuing. "The other qualification is to become an Enlightened Being."

"If to become an Ascended Being is gaining absolute strength and being acknowledged by the world, then to achieve the heights of an Enlightened Being, one needs to gain a wisdom that can uncover all of the secrets of the world."

"Becoming an Ascended Being is easy since all you have to do is to train dependently and walk the path that is prepared for you. Although talent can be affected by it, it is just an additional factor that boosts one's chances of being one."

"On the other hand, achieving enlightenment and becoming an Enlightened Being is very difficult. And it also differs from person to person, so there is no real method that anyone can use to achieve it."

"Many experts are stuck in this stage when they are trying to reach the greater heights of cultivation and power."

"But if they manage to become enlightened, the benefits are very rewarding. Not only they will be receiving an unrivaled power, but they will also uncover everything in the world. They will also feel the existence of the Heavenly Principles that are protecting the order of the world."

"Though, they will also get noticed by it, which is a natural thing since they are only half-step away from being a Divine Being when it happens."

"That is how a normal someone can become a Divine Being," He paused for another them and intensified his gaze at Shin. His eyes were filled with a mixture of different emotions such as envy, contempt, and reverence. "But there is always an exemption in everything."

"Take the Transcendent Beings for example, they can easily ascend to the higher plane as long as they trained and build up their strength until they reach the ideal level for the ascension."

"They are not restricted by the rules of the world since their very existence is blessed by the Heavenly Principles itself."

"How unfair, don't you think?" asked Dracula as he stared at Shin with squinting eyes.

Shin felt that any answer was going to be the wrong one when he sensed a deep emotion from those words. Following his instincts, he remained silent and did not say anything.

Seeing that Shin was not willing to give an answer, Dracula continued. "Aside from those methods, someone can also become a Divine Being if they collected the scattered fragments of the fallen gods and fuse the together, turning them back to their original form."

"If successful, one can even gain an insight about the 'Divine Authority' of that fallen god which will be helpful for them when they tried to reach the Realm of the Gods."

"But unless you have a death wish, that method is not recommended. Those 'New Gods' sitting comfortably in their thrones are too afraid of the 'Ancient Gods', so they are closely monitoring the existence of those 'fragments'."

"If a fragment is discovered, the followers of those greedy gods will immediately seize it and present them to their respective god."

Reaching this point, Dracula looked at Shin with meaningful eyes before asking. "You don't happen to have a fragment in, right?"

Shin flinched a little when he heard those words. He was extremely nervous, thinking that he might have been exposed. But thinking deeply into it, he knew that it was impossible for the other side that he had a fragment in him.

After all, he never took out that black book since he got it, so there was no possibility for anyone to learn about its existence. Even Arthur and the others close to him didn't know about it, much less someone who never saw him before.

Shin kept his head lowered, not letting Dracula see his face. Though, he also thought that it would be useless given the strength of the latter.

After the pause, the Vampire Primogenitor continued. "Once someone reached both of the peaks of Ascended and Enlightened Beings, they will become 'Sovereign Beings', a stage step away from becoming a 'Divine Being'."

"In this stage, one can fully sense the existence of the Heavenly Principles. Even though they can't communicate with it, they knew that it was closely observing them and keeping them in check."

He then smiled deeply and added. "Draco and I are in this stage. Even that little pup, Lycan is pretty close to reaching this stage."

"If not for my contract with that Great Demon King, then I have already ascended to the higher realm a long time ago. It is truly a pity," he continued with a sorrowful tone.

"Draco is also in a similar state. If not for him suppressing the curse of the Wicked One for a very long time, making his strength regress greatly, then he should have become a Divine Being too."

After taking another momentary pause, Dracula continued. "This is the reason why I can tell that the 'Will of the World' is communicating with you. The presence of the Heavenly Principles shrouds you and your friends entirely."

"It is the same for the spawns that were sent by that Great Demon King I have a contract with."

"This is also the reason why we are able to tell that you are not from this world despite us being sealed in this land for a long time and unaware of what is happening on the other side of that 'Divine Wall'."

"You, Otherworldly Beings, are very special that even the Heavenly Principles is looking over you as if you are its children."

Hearing those words, Shin finally understood the meaning of the words that Dracula had said earlier. This also gave him a big hint about the future events that were about to come.

And from what he could tell, it was going to be a big one. It would be a big patch that would change the flow of the game entirely.

Chapter 964 A Simple Competition Between Retainers

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The entire throne room immediately turned silent right after Dracula stopped talking. He didn't even open his mouth for a long time after telling Shin what he wanted to say.

Shin was also thrown into an awkward situation since he didn't know how to proceed now. He didn't even know how to proceed with the topic, much less with the quest.

He was expecting to have an intense battle when he went to this place, but who would have thought that he was going to have a casual chat with the final boss instead?

Being able to read what was inside Shin's head once again, Dracula smiled and finally spoke. "I know that you are thinking, but it is not time yet. You may be eager to end this now, but the fruit is not ripe yet to be harvested."

He then turned his gaze towards the six vampires kneeling in front of the bottom step of the stairs before continuing. "How about this? To not waste your time coming here, let's have a little competition."

"Let your retainers fight mine for a little entertainment, what do you think?" he asked while flashing a mysterious smile.

Shin couldn't help but be wary of Dracula as he felt that there was something more hidden behind those words. He couldn't put his finger on it, but he was sure that there was a deeper meaning in that suggestion.

And while he was contemplating, the notification that he was expecting since earlier finally arrived.

\*Ding!\*

System: The Bloody Ghost Quest has been updated!

System: Due to a large number of vampires present in your surroundings, your Reaper's Retainer, Noblesse Crimson Spirit Vladimir becomes very agitated.

He is eager the challenge all of the powerful vampires in the vicinity, especially the strongest ones, to prove himself.

He wants to prove that he is the real 'Child' of the Blood Element!

System: Related Quest has been detected.

System: The Vampire Primogenitor Dracula is suggesting a simple competition between your Reaper's Retainers and his personal retainers while waiting for the new curse he cast upon the Frozen Kingdom to fully bloom.

Accepting the challenge will increase your achievement in the Empire and World Quests that were currently in progress.

System: Would you like to accept? 'Yes' or 'No'?

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Seeing the new series of notifications, Shin couldn't help but raise his brows as he got another clue about their ongoing quests.

'What is this new 'curse'?' thought Shin before sweeping his gaze at the vampires gathered within the throne room.

Then he recalled all of the details of the quests alongside the other information that they had gathered since they had started.

Thinking about something, he couldn't help but raise his head and look at Dracula with a weird gaze. 'Don't tell me he is planning to take advantage of it to free his people with that so-called curse.'

Seeing the expression that Shin was currently wearing, Dracula knew that Shin might have caught on to the plan that he was planning to do.

He spent quite a long time formulating this plan alongside Draco since the time that they were caught in the schemes of the Wicked One. This was also a part of the contract that he had with Draco during that time, to which the latter had agreed after careful consideration.

Draco would consume all of the curses cast upon the Frozen Kingdom alongside their army, weakening the power of the Wicked One shrouding the whole region. He would carry all of the burdens in exchange for his freeing the souls of his subordinates as well as the other armies.

For it to work, they needed someone to defeat the other armies and free them from the curse, so that Grand Marshal Draco could fully absorb everything.

And when the grand marshal had absorbed everything, Dracula would exhaust all of his remaining powers to cast another curse on the land, but in reverse. This curse would not harm the Frozen Kingdom itself but the other curse cast upon it, instead.

They were using a strategy of fighting fire with fire, or poison against poison. And with it, the power of the curse from the Wicked One would further weaken, giving them the chance to finally free the souls of the people bound in this place due to it.

Doing it would require a lot of power, but given that Dracula was one of the Sovereign Beings within the game, he would be able to achieve such a feat as long as Draco successfully weakened the said curse.

Though, they also would not be able to achieve it if Shin and the others didn't defeat the other armies and let Grand Marshal Draco absorb cast upon those people.

...

Seeing the smile that Dracula had, Shin knew that he was right about his theory. This also made the events that they experienced clearer to him.

'He is waiting for his curse to fully bloom and further weaken the other curse cast by the Wicked One. But why can't they just lift the curse directly?' thought Shin confusedly but quickly understood the reason why.

He remembered the Seraphim that suddenly appeared right after Lycan free himself from losing his mind.

'It is because there are still people from the higher plane who are keeping an eye on them,' muttered Shin in understanding.

'If Dracula and Draco carelessly lifted the curse with their strengths, the Wicked One would immediately sense it and might even send her army to this plane to slaughter everyone once again before casting another curse probably. It will make all of the careful preparations that they have made meaningless,' he thought as he remembered the scene in the dream that he got during their battle against the wolf army.

But at the same time, he was thinking that shouldn't be that simple to cast another curse. After all, no matter how powerful the Wicked One was, she was nothing in front of the Heavenly Principles. If she continuously meddled with the affairs within the lower plane, she would definitely suffer heavy consequences.

Pausing his thoughts, Shin was suddenly reminded of the vampires within the throne room. He was wondering what would happen to them once the group cleared their quest. 'Are they going to be another special race? What about the Dragon Worshippers? Are they going to be an additional religion?'

Shin continued to have more questions inside his head. It seemed like the more answers he got, the more question he received.

Forgetting about them for the time being, Shin turned to Dracula once again before giving his reply, finally. "That sounds interesting. How are we going to proceed with it... Your Majesty?"

Shin hesitated for a moment whether he was going to add the last words to what he just said, but after sensing the sharp glares directed at him after making Dracula wait for his answer, he decided to address the latter respectfully.

Dracula seemed to not mind it as he quickly snapped his fingers and thought about something. "Since it is a contest, the winner naturally has to receive a reward!"

"But since you are a guest of our kingdom, I will not ask anything if I win. But if your retainers somehow emerge victorious, I will naturally give you a suitable reward."

"What do you think about it? It sounds good, does it?" he added while wearing an expression that was full of interest.

On the other hand, Shin couldn't help but suppress the twitching in his mouth after hearing those words. 'Guest? No matter how I look at it, I can't call ourselves a guest of your kingdom.'

Since the time they arrived, Shin and the others didn't have to do anything but fight and kill everyone who are blocking their path. If he described themselves, then they more like invaders than being a guest.

Regardless of his thoughts, Shin didn't dare to voice them out since he could already imagine his outcome the moment when he did. He would immediately rip into shreds by these vampires right after those words left his mouth.

All he could only nod his head silently and agreed with Dracula 'wholeheartedly'.

Seeing that Shin agreed to him, Dracula quickly clapped his hands and ordered his 'people'. "Alright! What are you guys waiting for? Quickly prepare the stage so that our esteemed guest will not wait for long."

Shin didn't know if Dracula was doing it on purpose, but it seemed like he was agitating his retainers deliberately and making them hate Shin more.

With a twitching corner of his mouth, Shin could only stand on the side and helplessly watch the vampires preparing the area while shooting daggers at him with their sharp eyes. If looks could kill, then they had murdered Shin a thousand times already.

Fortunately, he was not the one who would be fighting this time. It was his Elemental Spirits. He at least could feel at ease when he thought about that.

He could only pray in his heart for Vladimir to teach these vampires a lesson. Though, he also couldn't help but feel a little strange when he thought how unreliable this particular Elemental Spirit was, most of the time.

"Let's just hope that everything will be alright."

#### Chapter 965 A Simple Competition Between Retainers (Part 2)

...

Shin stood silently on the side of the throne room and watched the powerful vampires present busying themselves on building a huge area at the center of the room with strange tiles.

The throne room was pretty huge that immediately turned into a battle colosseum right after the arena at the center was built.

In the meantime, aside from the six vampires kneeling at the bottom of the throne steps, the rest of the vampires suddenly turned into bats and hang themselves at the ceiling of the room, making the room even more spacious.

Seeing that everything was ready, Dracula gestured to Shin to walk over and patiently explained the rules for this so-called simple competition. "Since it is for entertainment, let's not put the lives of our retainers on the line. After all, it will be a pity if we lose such good people that can be helpful in the future."

"The rules are simple, we are going to send our retainers on the stage and let them fight until one of them surrenders or is knocked out of it."

"The winner will continue to stand on the stage until the last retainer of the opposing side loses. It is pretty simple right?"

Shin nodded his head as he didn't find anything wrong with the rules. The only problem that he had right now was that he needed to send his Elemental Spirits into the battle, but based on the reactions that they were giving him, he could at least use three of them at most, namely Vladimir, Grimrace, and Blackie.

Those three were the only ones who were showing the stronger reactions which meant that they could only be the ones who would receive temporary boosts from the system.

Based on numbers alone, he would be at a great advantage. That sounded a little unfair, but Shin knew that the system would not give him a task that was impossible to complete.

Looking at the Vampires from the opposing side, Shin could tell that each of them was very strong. He couldn't see any information about them even if he was using his True Sight Skill. Aside from their levels, he couldn't see anything else, not even their names.

But even that was not good news for him. Each of those vampires was at least level 400, which was definitely not something good.

Fortunately, the quest that he got from Vladimir was a good one. But even with that, he was not planning to send this Elemental Spirit first.

To test the waters, he was intending to send Blackie to be the vanguard. And right after he made his decision, notifications from the system were sent to him.

\*Ding!\*

System: The Bloody Ghost Quest is not being initiated!

System: Based on the quest settings, you will only be able to add two additional helpers based on the compatibility of the elements that they have.

System: Please send your first contender!

...

Reading the string of notifications, Shin waved his hand and summoned Blackie, sending her to step into the arena.

All of his Elemental Spirits were special, even Blackie and Whitie who were transformed from being pets. But compared to the rest, the two of them were slightly inferior. The other five all had unique and extraordinary backgrounds.

Seeing Blackie walk toward the arena, the six vampires standing from the opposing side couldn't help but feel disappointed.

They seemed to have the same thought in mind as they focused their gaze on the crimson speck of light circling around Shin. Given their familiarity with blood elemental mana, they could tell that that particular elemental spirit was somewhat similar to them.

Dracula was wearing an amused look as he had the same thought as his retainers. But seeing that Shin was not willing to send the main contender yet, he could only wait for it patiently.

And when he saw that his retainers were not taking the initiative to walk forward, he could only wave his hand and called out a name. "Earl Cray, you will be going first."

There seemed to be an unsatisfied groan from the six vampires before one of them walked forward. "Understood, your majesty."

As a typical noble vampire, Earl Cray was wearing luxurious clothes, signifying his status. He also had a handsome feature, benefitting from it.

He casually steps into the arena as if he was not putting Blackie into his eyes. As one of the noble vampires, who received direct blood from Dracula, he was very haughty and confident with his abilities.

If it was put on the player's terms, he was as strong as a peak Ascended Being with an Ascended Class. He might not be an Enlightened One yet, but he was very close to achieving it. As long as he followed

the arrangements that his king prepared for him, then he would surely reach a breakthrough after all of this was over.

...

Right after Earl Cray stepped on the arena, Shin couldn't help but wear a dark expression on his face. It was because he immediately received the information from the system regarding the noble vampire.

He was now worried about Blackie. He was not sure if she would be able to fight a Level 400 humanoid monster comparable to a peak Ascended Being.

But he later discovered that his worry was unfounded. It was because the system enhanced the stats that Blackie had, matching the current predicament. Though her abilities might be slightly weaker than her opponent, she would not be hopeless during this battle.

There was no referee who would oversee this battle as Dracula's presence would be enough to oversee the fairness in it. He also seemed to be strangely reliable in Shin's eyes, even though he didn't want to admit it.

After a brief moment of a staredown, Blackie and Earl Cray made their moves almost at the same time.

Blackie suddenly disappeared from her spot before reappearing behind her opponent within an instant. She then swung her claws at the back of Earl Cray as black flame covered them.

Swoosh!

Her decisive attack was so fast that the other vampires spectating from the sidelines couldn't help but raise their brows. They had to admit that they underestimated her, especially her speed.

But other than that, nothing else bothered them. They even had the confident look on their faces, indicating that they had enough confidence for Earl Cray.

Swoosh!

It was at that moment when Blackie's claws hit the back of her opponent, ripping a huge chunk of flesh in the process.

But despite that being the case, Blackie was currently wearing a deep frown as she noticed something odd. And while she was thinking about what it was, Earl Cray's body suddenly turned into a pool of blood that fell on the ground.

Following that, Blackie suddenly sensed an immense threat coming from that pool of blood. She quickly jumped away from it right after her feet touched the ground, trying to distance herself as far as possible.

Unfortunately, it was already too late as blood spikes suddenly grew from that pool of blood and shot outward, covering every direction.

But before those blood spikes could even touch her body, Blackie suddenly executed a strange foot technique that made her figure sway left and right, dodging each of the pointed spikes with a very small margin.

Seeing her movements, Shin couldn't help but knit his brow deeply as he found her foot technique somewhat familiar. There were some variations present in it, but he was sure that it was one of his foot techniques.

"Don't tell me she learned it from watching me?" muttered Shin while looking at Blackie with a weird gaze.

And as if answering his question, he saw Blackie execute another set of foot techniques that was very similar to his.

...

At the center of the arena, Blackie skillfully dodged the blood spikes that continuously shot up from the ground. And as she was avoiding them, her foot technique showed some signs of improvement, giving Shin a clear view of it.

During that time, Earl Cray suddenly materialized a few distances behind Blackie while pointing forward with his index finger.

A moment later, a blood pool suddenly spread from his feet and spread forward and rapidly moved towards Blackie.

Sensing the danger coming from behind, Blackie adjusted her foot technique, making her body blur continuously. And after a few seconds, her figure suddenly spitted into two, then into four, and into eight, producing multiple copies of herself.

"That is my Ghost Evanescent!" When Shin saw that, he was now sure that Blackie was copying his foot techniques and using them now in battle.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The blood pool heading over to Blackie suddenly shot blood spikes at her while continuing to move forward.

But despite their insane speed and great numbers, none of them found their target as they only hit the afterimages that Blackie had left behind.

A few moments later, she suddenly appeared near Earl Cray with an expressionless face. And quickly after that, she swung her claws forward, sending an energy wave at the latter.

The dark wave was so fast that it swept through her target within an instant. But unfortunately, the same thing happened again as Earl Cray's body turned into a pool of blood for another time as it was split into halves.

...

In the meantime, Shin ignored the exchanges that happened as he focused his gaze on Blackie, especially her foot technique. Now that he confirmed his suspicion, he couldn't help but re-evaluate Blackie's potential.

"She may be much better than what I think."

Chapter 966 Elemental Spirit Awakening (Part 1)

...

Blackie confused her opponent with the afterimages produced by the 'Ghost Evanescence' movement technique. She also dodged the blood spikes shooting out from the ground continuously which were now covering almost the entire arena.

On the other hand, Earl Cray seemed to maintain a leisurely look on his face. It was as if he was still not taking Blackie seriously despite her gradually improving movement technique as the battle progressed.

Blackie still hadn't landed a clean hit at her opponent as the vampire earl was able to escape from her time and time again by turning himself into a pool of blood whenever she caught up at him.

She finally showed a slight change from her expressionless face by frowning her brow. She might not be saying anything, but Shin could tell what she was thinking.

She needed to increase her speed more, much faster than her opponent couldn't respond to her sneak attack and transform himself into a pool of blood.

Thinking about that, Blackie decrease the number of afterimages that she was producing so that she could focus on her speed when trying to catch her opponent. And when she saw that it was still not enough, she continued to decrease the number of her afterimages until there were only two of them.

The two copies of herself became more realistic as she was chasing after her opponent. There seemed to be no difference between them and her real body.

On top of that, those two copies of herself were also dodging the blood spikes that tried to attack them, making it hard for Earl Cray to find the real body.

In the meantime, Shin suddenly came to slight enlightenment when he saw Blackie use his foot technique at this level. "Interesting!"

At the same time, he also realized that it was Blackie's potential really exceeded his expectation. "It looks like I also need to put attention to my Elemental Spirits. They may give me more surprises in the future.

...

Going back into the battle, Earl Cray started to feel the pressure from the restless assault from Blackie, making him wear a serious look on his face.

As time went by, he found it more and more difficult to fend off the attacks coming from Blackie. Not only her speed was gradually increasing, but the angles and directions where those attacks were coming from were also getting trickier, making it hard to predict.

The realistic illusions that she made were also making it hard for the vampire earl to read her movements.

Seeing that it was not looking good for him, he finally decided to take this fight seriously.

He turned himself into a pool of blood that sipped into the ground before appearing away from his previous spot. And right after he materialized himself, he quickly raised both of his hands in the air before waving them down, summoning a barrage of blood spikes that started shooting out from the ground, coving the entire arena.

Since he couldn't find the real body of his opponent, he decided to attack in every direction. It would not matter if he couldn't find his opponent, he would just shoot at the whole area. He didn't believe that he would not able to land a hit this time.

Sharp crystalline branches suddenly grew from that ground and covered the whole area, creating a cage made of crisscrossing blood spikes.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

In the meantime, Blackie used her mobility to dodge each of the sharp spikes trying to hit her, executing a series of complex maneuvers to prevent them from touching her body.

But since she was too focused on dodging, she failed to maintain the copies of herself, making their forms collapse and disappeared.

But aside from that, the battle between them remained to be in a deadlock, not having either of them to be at a clear advantage.

...

Watching from the sidelines, Shin knew that the real battle was just about to start. It was the same for the vampires who were spectating the battle.

And they didn't wait that long before the two contenders fighting at the center of the battle arena to show their real powers.

A black smoke shrouded Blackie's body before turning into a black flame which also became a send of armor. Her claws, on the other hand, were covered with a set of shadowy flames which made them look very wicked and threatening.

Then a pair of black bat wings grew from her back while the tattoo at the center of her forehead started to release a dim and cold light, that seemed to be able to freeze the hearts of her opponents.

'Elemental Spirit Transformation: Abyssal Monarch'

Meanwhile, Earl Cray suddenly opened his mouth, revealing his sharp fangs. His eyes turned crimson and made them look bloodthirsty while his nails grew longer and sharper.

A hot stream was released from his mouth and the expression on his face turned hideous and terrifying.

After his transformation, he locked his gaze on Blackie before releasing a deafening roar, summoning a huge number of crystalline spikes from the ground, that grew like sharp branches of the trees.

Seeing that, Blackie flapped her wings lightly and propelled herself forward, ignoring the crystalline blood spikes that were coming at her like a flood.

She swung her claws repeatedly, sending a series of claw waves at the incoming crystalline blood spikes and obliterating them in the process.

But no matter how powerful her attacks, it was not enough to properly clear a path that she could use to head over her opponent. In the end, she was forced to dodge the crystalline blood spikes repeatedly.

But she didn't give up and summoned a clone of herself that had similar fighting power to the original body.

She worked together with her clone to create a path that was leading toward her opponent while using a variety of movement techniques and claw strikes in the process.

While Blackie was busy fending off the attacks that were coming from every direction, Earl Cray summoned a field of blood that covered the entire arena, supplementing himself with an unlimited source of power to produce more blood spikes.

'Personalized Blood Field: Blood Spike Prison'

It was a blood field that continuously produced blood spikes that were crisscrossing against each other. They created a cage that trapped his opponent inside while he was waiting for them to die.

Shin couldn't help but wear a solemn expression on his face as he watched the space that Blackie could use gradually grow smaller as time went by. And if this battle continued to be this way, then she would lose without being able to land a clear hit on her opponent.

At the same time, he was thinking of a solution to how he was going to escape if he was in her situation. Naturally, he limited his set of skills similar to Blackie. Aside from his movement and assassination techniques, he would not use anything if he was in her place.

Those blood spikes might look rather simple and ordinary but he could tell that avoiding them was not going to be easy. Aside from the unpredictability of their attack patterns, he also had to consider their speed.

Those spikes were also shooting more spikes from their bodies, creating a crisscrossing branch. From the distance, this blood prison looked like a crystalline forest field with sharp thorns and spikes.

Avoiding their sharp points and edges was already hard enough. But if he added the slowly decreasing space that he could use, the options that Shin could use were also gradually getting smaller.

On top of that, those crystalline spikes were also pretty sturdy.

Now that Shin thought about it, it seemed like the fighting style of this particular vampire was the bane of assassination type of fighting style.

Shin thought that Dracula picked his representative randomly but it looked like the latter already saw through what type of Elemental Spirit Blackie was and chose the most suitable opponent that could counter her.

Thinking about that, he couldn't help but look at the Vampire Primogenitor. And the moment when his eyes landed on the latter, he saw that the vampire king was looking back at him with an amused expression.

The corner of Shin's mouth suddenly twitched when he was that. 'He may look like he doesn't care about this 'little' competition, but he actually too prideful to suffer a defeat.'

'As expected of a king, I guess,' he added before turning his attention back to the battle.

He saw Blackie was slowly getting cornered by the blood spikes and was already out of options on how she was going to escape her predicament.

But despite that being the case, Shin remained calm. This battle still hadn't reached the stage that it could be considered a clash between two powerful existences.

He still vividly remembered the battle between Hanzo and Vladimir during one of his previous quests. And from his estimate, their strength during that time should at least be comparable to Ascended Beings.

If his guess was right, then there was still something to see in this battle. It was also an opportunity for him to get a glimpse of how powerful Blackie could be at her peak form.

Chapter 967 Elemental Spirit Awakening (Part 2)

...

While watching the battle from the sidelines, Shin noticed some changes in Blackie's movements when she was about to get cornered by the cage-like blood spikes surrounding her.

It was hard to notice it at first, but after looking closely into it, Shin discovered that Blackie's footwork and attack pattern were getting more refined as the battle progressed.

She stopped attacking recklessly to destroy the incoming blood spikes that were trying to harm her. She was no longer sending a barrage of energy waves to destroy those spikes and instead focused on strengthening her claws with her powers.

After that, she started attacking the stems of the blood spears, shattering them from there and slowing down their growth by a considerable margin.

With it, she was able to conserve more of her energy and was able to move freely even with a limited amount of space. And by continuously fighting this way, she seemed to get a sudden enlightenment during the battle.

Boom!

Then a sudden burst of aura exploded from Blackie's body, warding off the incoming blood spikes momentarily. And in the very next moment, she suddenly transformed into a blurry silhouette that broke away from the cage that was trapping her.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

She flashed through the entire arena, flying everywhere, and destroying the blood spikes in the process.

Boom!

And with a powerful landing, a strong shockwave swept through the area, clearing the remaining spikes.

When the dust settle, Shin and the other vampire finally saw a clear view of Blackie. And her current appearance was somewhat different from what she had during her previous transformation.

She was still wearing the seductive set of armor that she had earlier. But it was now more refined and had a more detailed design on it. It was the same for her claws which now had a purple flame on their tips.

Her bat-like wings became slender but also looked sturdier. A shadowy flare was flickering through those wings before dissipating in the air.

There was also a small ember of fire at the center of her forehead while a glowing crown flowed over her head.

Blackie ignored the gazes focused on her as she quickly flapped her wings, propelling herself toward the air where her opponent was currently standing.

Seeing her sudden burst of speed that was much faster than before, Earl Cray finally snapped out of his daze and quickly raised his arms in front of him, blocking the incoming attack.

Bang!

But despite being prepared for it, the vampire earl was still flung in the air by that attack, surprising him greatly.

Blackie's current attack was much stronger than what she had earlier.

Earl Cray immediately learned his lesson and did not dare to underestimate his opponent. He gathered his blood elemental powers and formed a spiky armor through it. At the same time, a pair of crystalline sticks filled with crimson spikes appeared in his hands.

Swoosh!

It was at that moment that he heard the whistling sound of the wind coming from behind. Without any hint of his hesitation, the vampire earl turned around and swung his crystalline stick at the incoming enemy.

Bang!

Blackie's sneak attack failed but she didn't stop. She disappeared from her current location and reappeared on the other side of the vampire early before launching another attack.

Earl Cray was not idle either as he quickly turned to her and swung his weapon decisively, creating another explosion due to the powerful collision.

After that, the two of them transformed into a pair of streaks of lights that traveled through the air and on the ground of the battle arena while clashing against each other.

There was also a barrage of powerful skills that could be seen from time to time, coming from the two, creating a much stronger explosion of powers.

...

Shin didn't dare to blink even for an instant as he discovered something strange about Blackie. And after watching for a long time, he realized how wrong he was about her.

The performance that she was currently showing him was at least on a level comparable to what he saw from Vladimir and Hanzo's battle before. It might be because of her current level where she temporarily lifted the restrictions caused by his insufficient power.

At the same time, he also discovered that Blackie looked like a blank paper filled with nothing but could absorb everything that was written on it.

She was like a talented child that could learn everything from watching what the others were doing.

Right now, she was currently combining the foot techniques that she had learned from him and fusing them into her system. She was combining the fighting style that she learned with the instincts that she had in her blood.

From Shin's perspective, Blackie seemed to be evolving continuously all throughout the battle, as if she was currently under an awakening. She was not planning to stop and rapidly approaching her peak form.

Seeing all of that, Shin couldn't help but take a sneak peek at Dracula who happened to be looking back at him. The Vampire King gave him a mysterious smile as if there was a hidden meaning behind it.

Shin was confused at first, but he immediately understood what was the meaning behind that smile. 'Could this be the real reason why he proposed this contest?'

'It is impossible, right?' He couldn't believe it, but the more he thought about it, the more convinced he became.

At the same time, Shin also became even more confused about what was going on. 'But what is the reason? Why he wants to promote my elemental spirit?'

Thinking more deeply into it, since the time they entered this kingdom, they gain a lot of benefits than losses. It was, even more, noticeable during their battle against the Fallen Dragon Knight Army.

It was as if they were being taught by their teachers, seemingly hoping they to grow stronger at a much faster rate and achieve great things after.

Shin's thoughts halted in there as he suddenly remembered the Training Grounds that they discovered in the Sky Deceiving Valley. Thinking about it, it seemed like the 'training session' started from there if he disregard their encounter with the Corrupted Cult.

'What do they want us to do?' asked Shin silent before looking at Dracula once again.

He was sure that these powerful beings want them to do something, but he couldn't figure out what exactly it was. At most, he was thinking that it was related to the so-called 'Devil Ancestor' that was mentioned by the system earlier.

'Is that Devil Ancestor so strong that these powerful guys are making preparations way ahead of time?' thought Shin while wearing a deep frown.

He was thinking that it might be because Dracula and Draco knew that they couldn't do anything about it since they were about to die.

This was what Shin had suspected, at the very least. But he still couldn't shake off the nagging feeling that there was something more into it. And the more he thought about it, the more uneasy he got.

He couldn't ignore his instincts since it was never been wrong before.

He couldn't come up with a conclusion for the time being since he was still lacking some important information. Maybe the other clues were from Draco, and Arthur and the rest of the group already learned about it.

Unfortunately, he couldn't contact them for now due to the powerful formation enveloping the whole city.

Realizing that he couldn't get the answers that he wanted yet, Shin temporarily set it aside for now and thought about it again later.

Given that, he turned his attention back to the ongoing battle and saw that it was already about to end.

In the air, both Blackie and her opponent paused for a moment and faced each other. And as if they had a tacit understanding, the two of them simultaneously made their respective moves.

Blackie spread the wings behind her widely, suspending herself in the air. And after a brief pause, her body started flickering before splitting into multiple copies of herself, surrounding her opponent from every direction.

She also didn't wait for a bit longer as the wings of every copy of herself and her main body flapped simultaneously, launching herself toward her opponents.

All of the Blackie surrounding Earl Cray turned into blurry silhouettes that were heading at him while leaving a purple blazing trail in the air.

'Elemental Spirit Skill (Darkness): Doom Verdict'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

In the meantime, Earl Cray curled his body in the air while gathering all of the remaining blood elemental powers within him.

And when Blackie was almost upon him alongside the realistic illusion of herself, Early Cray suddenly stretched his arms and legs out and straightened his body while releasing all of the accumulated powers.

Boom!

Alongside that, blood spikes suddenly came out from his body and shot in every direction, piercing everything that came in contact with it.

It covered a large area in the air, making it impossible for Blackie to get near him, especially with that almost impenetrable defense.

Boom!

But all of a sudden, a flash of black lightning suddenly struck down from the ceiling of the throne room, right above the spiked barrier that Earl Cray had summoned.

The black lightning obliterated that spiked barrier and struck down straight at Earl Cray who was supposedly hiding within it.

Boom!

In the next moment, at the center of the arena, Blackie was revealed. And on the spot beside her, Earl Cray was currently lying on the ground, unconscious.

Then a system notification rang in Shin's ears, telling the result of the first battle.

## Chapter 968 Re-Emergence Of The Immortal Project

...

Shin stared at Blackie who emerged victorious in the battle before turning his eyes to the notification that he got from the system.

\*Ding!\*

System: Elemental Spirit Companion/Pet had awakened her Monarch Bloodline Powers and was promoted into an Abysmal Penumbra Spirit.

It was just a simple notification but it was already enough for Shin. It meant a lot for him since it would not only boost his battle prowess but would also increase the number of cards that he could use for different kinds of situations.

Based on the rules of this competition, he could let Blackie continue for the next round. He was also curious about how far she could go with her current awakening.

But at the same time, there seemed to be nothing more to see into it after watching the previous round. If ever, the next round would let her more accustomed to her newly found strength.

Thinking about that, Shin didn't summon Blackie back and let her continue. After all, she already had lessened the number of disadvantages that they had, so if she managed to win another round, then their chances of winning this competition would increase drastically.

While he was making his decision, the next opponent from the other side was already climbing up on the battle area.

"Let's wait and see what is going to happen next," muttered Shin as he sneaked a peek at Dracula, trying to see if the latter still had some plans for him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Soaring Continent, Eastern Sea Region, Ace City.

While things inside the game were getting more and more chaotic, the situation in the real was also starting to get a little complicated.

Nathan was sitting inside a luxurious room of a hotel under the Springfield Family. In front of him was a number of files, forming a tall pile of them. They were reports about the incident that just happened last night where police officers died in a horrifying way.

Based on the reports, those officers were from a special force built to pursue high-profile criminals. They seemed to be investigating a certain case related to the criminal that they were pursuing.

The clues led them to the location somewhere in the woods where the last night incident occurred. But before they could even reach the designated location, they encountered a powerful expert that led to their demise.

When the police and military were forced to head over to the location indicated by the reports. But when they arrived there, the whole place had already been completely devastated and fully destroyed.

They would not be able to launch a proper investigation in that place due to its state. But based on the destroyed machinery and apparatuses left behind in the scene, it seemed to be a large laboratory.

Aside from that, the case related to the said criminal seemed to be about the mysterious disappearance of some talented young people.

Reading that particular part of the report, Nathan couldn't help but frown deeply. The previous incident that happened in the Main Region was also related to laboratories that were experimenting on some young people.

No matter how he thought about it, it seemed like the two incidents were somewhat related to each other. The timing was also perfectly aligned with each other.

If his suspicions were right, then the laboratories here in Eastern Sea Region also had some relationship with the powerful Shadow Alliance and the reemerging Hextech Laboratory.

Nathan couldn't help but feel unease when he thought about it. "It seems like those underworld organizations are getting more and more proactive recently. It feels like they are plotting something big."

Creasing his brow even further, he thought about another large organization and muttered. "But, on the other hand, the Black Serpent Mafia, who is supposedly the most proactive among all of them, seemed to be the ones who are not making any large movements."

From the reports that their spies had sent, the Black Serpent Mafia seemed to make a deal with the Shadow Alliance. There were even some rumors circulating in the underworld that they had become a part of the latter after the military and elder's court foiled the Shadow Alliance's plans in the Main Region.

They had almost crippled the forces of the Shadow Alliance in the Soaring Continent. At least, that was what Nathan was thinking, but after learning what was happening in the Eastern Sea Region, it seemed like the operation of the organization was much larger than what they had expected.

Fortunately, the military forces stationed in the Eastern Sea Region managed to sniff it already and were able to start doing countermeasures.

But, at the same time, the opposing side was also able to move a step ahead of them and started vacating their facilities before the military could catch up to them.

Nathan found it a pity since the military forces in this place were not able to wipe out all of the laboratories hidden within the Eastern Sea Region.

Well, they were not as lucky as the forces in the Main Region where the opposing side committed the grave mistake of abducting a friend of a particular monster which led to their demise.

Aside from this particular case, there was also another matter that was bothering Nathan. It was the familiar aura that he sensed from the place where the last night incident took place.

He couldn't put his finger on it, but he was really not getting a good feeling about it. He could feel that a huge incident would happen if he ignored it.

Unfortunately, he also didn't have any evidence that he could present to warn the military forces of the Eastern Sea Region.

In the end, he could only investigate the matter by himself. But he also needed to be careful not to provoke the higher-ups of the Military Forces of this region. After all, it was his area of jurisdiction.

While he was thinking about how he was going to investigate, a call suddenly interrupted his thoughts. And when he saw the name of the caller, he couldn't help but raise his eyebrows.

After a brief moment of thinking, he answered the call. "General Kingsman, I don't expect that you are going to take the initiative to call me."

The person on the other side of the call didn't bother to exchange greetings and quickly get straight to the point. "I will not beat around the bush, Commander Nathan. I know that you are showing an interest in the case that we have. I call to hear your thoughts about it."

Nathan smirked when he heard those words and asked back, instead of answering. "And what about it? It is not like you are going to let me partake in the investigation."

He trailed his words for a brief moment before continuing. "Unless you are planning to take advantage of my curiosity and let me take the matter in my hand while you are waiting to rip all of the benefits."

General Kingsman remained silent and refused to acknowledge or deny those words.

Seeing the latter's reaction, Nathan sneered for a moment before continuing. "I know that you want to use my forces to investigate to avoid all of the unnecessary sacrifices from your side."

"After what happened last night, I know that you are going to be careful with your moves, especially now that you discovered that a Domain Realm Expert is involved. You are even afraid that there is an even more powerful accomplice hiding in the dark."

"To avoid all of the unnecessary trouble, you want to use me, one of the top experts in the world, to test the waters."

"I must admit, it is a quite wise plan that you have. But it is also quite bold of you if that is really the case. It may even backfire on you, given my personality."

At this moment, General Kingsman finally opened his mouth and spoke. "I am not that bold to use such an important and powerful person, such as yourself. I am just planning to propose working together."

"I know that you read all of the reports, so I can assume that you also have a certain understanding of what is going on. As well as a suspect in mind."

Nathan knew what the latter was trying to say and immediately nodded. "You are right about that. It is somehow related to the incident that happen to the Main Region."

"But the difference is we handle our situation pretty well and clean up everything without sacrificing much of our forces."

Hearing those words, the corner of General Kingsman's mouth couldn't help but twitch. 'You only manage to pull it off because you manage to get the assistance of the Elder's Court.'

But despite the thoughts that he had, he didn't dare to voice them out since he knew that he was not Nathan's match. Instead, he quickly asked. "So, what are your thoughts?"

Nathan didn't answer and instead asked. "You are right about me being curious about this matter. But I can do my investigations without your help or your forces. I can also do it without provoking your superiors."

Trailing his words once again, he asked. "So, I wonder what you can offer in exchange for cooperating with me?"

"I am hoping that it is good enough to pique my interest, or else, you can forget about it," he added with a smirking tone.

General Kingsman gritted his teeth as he hesitated. And after an internal struggle, he finally said. "An Energy Ore Mine. We are going to handle the ownership of an Energy Ore Mine to you in exchange for your help."

"It is a top-quality mine that can help you improve the manufacturing of your military weapons and help you in your researchers," he added, afraid that it would not be enough for Nathan.

Nathan smiled mysteriously before saying. "Let's hear about the details first. Let me see if the 'compensation' is enough for me to take the risk."

"After all, you are desperate enough to hand us a mine in exchange for our help. This can only mean that you discovered something that you can't handle and require my strength to handle it," he added, being able to see through the intention of the other side.

Chapter 969: The Revival of Hextech Laboratory

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General Kingsman was silent for a moment before opening his mouth. "As you already know, we are suspecting that the incidents that happened previously are somewhat related to the re-emergence of the Hextech Laboratory."

"And based on the fact that they are targeting some young talented individuals, they are most likely trying to restore the 'Project Genius' that have been banned by the World Government before."

"You should know what kind of immoral acts the Hextch Laboratory back then. They are not only sacrificing young people, but they are also using those young talents as lab rats."

Nathan understood very well how evil the 'Project Genius' was. As someone who personally participated in the raid, he witnessed what happened to the young people with his own eyes. What General Kingsman had said was an understatement, what he had witnessed in there was much more horrifying.

Nathan silently listened to General Kingsman before asking. "Do you have enough evidence to prove their connection?"

General Kingsman didn't reply immediately as he hesitated. But he gritted his teeth and continued, regardless. "I must admit. We still don't have enough evidence for that."

"But... We have a lead where we can get that evidence," pausing for a moment the general sent a confidential file before continuing. "As you can see, our people are pursuing a high-profile criminal before the incident happened."

"That criminal is the 'Berserker', the person responsible for the 'Bloody New Year Massacre'. We have been pursuing this for a long time. And recently, when my men are investigating, they discover that the Berserker is meeting up with a certain doctor."

"This so-called doctor seems to be your average doctor, on the surface and on paper, at the very least."

"But when we try to look deeper into his profile, we discover something strange. The records of that doctor are very clean, so clean that you will not suspect anything, which is very suspicious."

"The records say that he is an orphan. His parents die during a huge accident that occurred in the Dark Continent, the 'Flight 005 Fall'. It is an accident where a huge military air carrier falls at the center of a city, leading to a huge calamity."

"It is a huge incident, investigating it is very easy. But that is also how far we can get. It later leads us to a dead end. We can no longer get farther from there."

Nathan seemed to have gotten impatient and cut the general off. "I get it, already. Just go straight to the point and tell me what is the connection between this so-called doctor and the 'Berserker'."

General Kingsman nodded his head and continued. "Since we can't get anything from the doctor, we choose to focus our attention back on the Berserker. And that is when we realize the real identity of that doctor."

"Due to a careless mistake on the Berserker's side, we discover is a part of an organization in the underworld, the Dark Hall, one of the Major Factions of the Shadow Alliance."

"Following the lead that we have, he finally narrowed down the possible people that can fit the doctor's profile. And it is not long when we discover that he is most likely the 'Coffin Maker', the Shadow Assassin blacklisted by the World Government, also a core member of the Dark Hall."

Pausing for a moment, the general cleared his throat before continuing. "Here is the interesting part. Based on the file reports that we receive from the World Government, Coffin Maker is the one responsible for the 'Flight 005 Fall' incident, alongside a few accomplices."

"And at that time, it is reported that few of the victims of that incident are researchers from some prestigious researcher centers under the World Government's jurisdiction."

Hearing those words, Nathan finally caught on and said solemnly. "So, you are telling me that those researchers are most likely alive and are now working with the Dark Hall, whether they are being forced or join that side willingly."

General Kingsman didn't admit nor deny it. But instead said. "We are still investigating this matter. But since the previous movements of the Berserker and the Coffin Maker are very worrying, we lack the manpower to do it."

Nathan thought for a moment as he understood what the other side wanted him to do. Given his abilities, it would not be a problem for him, but there was still the nagging feeling that was telling him they had missed something.

"Taking care of Berserker and Coffin Maker will not be a problem. But it seems like you are still missing something," he said, voicing out his doubts.

"Based on the energy residuals left in the scene, I am quite sure that it is not Berserker's doing, nor Coffin Maker who is clearly an assassin," he added.

General Kingsman nodded his head before replying. "You are right about that. This is the reason why we are very careful in this matter."

Nathan cut the general's words once again and spoke. "Moreover, you are still not telling me how is this case related to Hextech Laboratory."

"Those 'missing' researchers may be somewhat related. But it can also mean that the Dark Hall is just making their own research and experiments, just like the rest of the Shadow Alliance."

"As for the mysterious disappearance of the young talented individuals, it can be a whole other case. A third party may be using the presence that the Berserk and Coffin Maker as a distraction."

General Kingsman nodded his head and agreed. "We are also aware of that possibility and not ignoring it."

He then paused for a moment before continuing with a solemn tone. "But the real reason that we are focusing on the connection with the Hextech Laboratory is that we receive a tip telling us about the revival of that evil organization."

"It is a very suspicious tip but we receive some evidence of sightings of Doctor Frankenstein, the founder of that very organization," he added before Nathan could even say anything. He also sent another set of files to prove his words.

"We already verified the authenticity of the evidence and all of them are true. We even cross-check it with the organizations operating in the places where he is sighted, and all of them said that they are also looking for him."

Read through the files thoroughly with a heavy expression on his face before asking. "If it is true that Doctor Frankenstein really reappears, then this matter should be handed to the Elder's Court immediately."

"It is something that we can't handle alone, even with our strength. Even I am not confident to face such an old monster," he added, admitting that he was not a match for the legendary doctor who achieved an unrivaled power through immoral researchers.

In Nathan's perspective, only old monsters like his father or Professor Plum were the only ones who could face such a powerful individual as well as Grandmaster Benn and the other old monsters with the Elder's Court.

"You think we haven't thought about it?" said General Kingsman skeptically.

After that, the expression on his face suddenly turned solemn before continuing with a heavy tone. "But from the tip that we received, it says that we can't trust the Elder's Court with this. It says that there is a traitor among the elders and we can't trust them until the traitor is found."

Nathan's face suddenly turned cold before giving a warning. "You better be careful at your words, General Kingsman. Accusing the elders without enough evidence is a grave mistake."

"I am not that stupid. Of course, I am aware of the consequences. That is why we are not making our move until everything is proven," replied the general with a bitter tone.

He then looked at Nathan with complete seriousness before continuing. "Which is why we decided to share this information with you. Not only do you have a powerful backer, but you also have the strength to protect yourself if something went wrong."

After pausing for a moment, the general continued. "I am not sure about this but it seems like the other side already caught on our suspicion. We are no longer safe if we continue to investigate further."

Nathan couldn't help but laugh when he heard those words. "So, you are just handing me the job since it is too dangerous for you to continue. You truly live up to your name, cowardly general."

The corner of General Kingsman's mouth twitched when he heard those words but didn't dare to refute them. Moreover, it was true that he was known to be an overly cautious general in the Military Circle. But Nathan's words were too excessive to describe his nature.

After that, he continued. "Anyways, we are entrusting you with the matter regarding Berserker and Coffin Maker as well as the organization behind them. Don't worry about using your forces as we will give full authority in it as well as access to the Eastern Sea Region without breaking the jurisdiction agreement."

Nathan thought for a moment before asking. "Then what you are going to do?"

General Kingsman quickly answered. "We are going to focus our forces on investigating the mysterious disappearance of the young talented individuals and see if we can get any leads that will connect with the Hextech Laboratory."

He then paused for another time before adding. "We are also planning to post a request mission in the Top Military School and Magic Ace University for the special operation."

"Of course, it is a special mission that requires strict criteria. After all, looking for the young masters and misses of the great families and other organizations are too high-profiled, which will make the opposing side too suspicious, so students with such backgrounds are automatically disqualified."

Nathan's interest was suddenly piqued and asked curiously. "Can you tell me what are the criteria for this request mission?"

"I am quite interested in it. I may even recommend some capable individuals if you want."

General Kingsman looked at Nathan weirdly as he could feel that the latter seemed to be plotting something. Regardless, he still answered. "Well, the criteria are quite strict but also very simple..."

#### Chapter 970 The Truth Behind The Project Genius

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Professor Henry was reading a particular file sent to him by the investigation unit that he personally built. It was a special group that was responsible for secretly making investigations on the matters that he assigned.

After reading the entire report, he couldn't help but frown deeply. "So, they are finally making their move."

At that time, Benedict entered the room and put a couple of apparatuses on the shelf. And when he saw the worry on the professor's face, he couldn't help but ask. "Is there something troubling you, Professor?"

Professor Henry looked at Benedict for a moment before smiling bitterly. And after a few moments of silence, he suddenly asked. "Little Benedict, have you heard about the recent case concerning young talents?"

Benedict thought for a moment before replying. "About the mysterious disappearance of young talented people, Professor? Yes, Sir. I've heard about it from my elder sister."

"What do you think about it?" asked the professor.

Benedict didn't immediately reply as he thought about it deeply. A moment later, he finally answered. "I think this is a very serious matter. From what I've heard, those young people who disappeared are the most talented individuals from the other schools."

"Those schools may be inferior compared to our Magic Ace University, but they still have a pretty high standard. Ordinary students may not be able to get admitted to those schools if they are not up to it."

"And since the target of whoever is behind this case are those talented individuals, there is most likely a huge conspiracy going on."

He paused for a moment as he recalled something before continuing. "Perhaps, the incident of 'Project Genius' is happening once again. If that is really the case, then this is a very serious problem."

Professor Henry gave the young man an approving smile before asking. "How much do you know about the 'Project Genius'?"

Benedict gave the professor a confused look before replying. "From what I know, it is a project meant to create artificial talents for normal people or Martial Artists and Mentalists with average talents."

"It is supposedly a noble project, but it is later discovered that the researchers behind it are actually doing immoral acts in the dark. They are also secretly creating super soldiers using the bodies of the young and talented men that they have captured."

"It is at that moment when the real organization responsible for the project is actually the Hextech Laboratory, an evil organization doing immoral and inhumane research in the dark."

Professor Henry nodded his head before commenting. "You are very much informed. You even have very detailed information about it even if it is a confidential case."

"But you have forgotten about something important," he added before taking a brief pause. "The super soldiers produced on that project are mindless people specifically built for mass destruction."

"Their genes may be from the young people that have been captured during that time to inherit their talents, but the model used for the bodies of those super soldiers are actually from Doctor Frankenstein."

He took another pause when he reached this point before asking. "Do you know what that means?"

The expression on Benedict's face immediately turned serious when he heard those words. He clearly understood what the professor was trying to say.

Doctor Frankenstein was a devil who committed countless immoral acts by experimenting on people. It was said that it was for him to create a perfect vessel that could both hold Martial Arts and Mentalism in perfect harmony.

Even if he managed to achieve it in the end, the lives that were lost in exchange were significantly huge. It was said that the sacrifices paid for the success of his research were equivalent to the lives of the people living within a huge city.

This was one of the main reasons why he was being hunted by the World Government.

If the super soldiers that were created during Project Genuis were indeed modeled based on Doctor Frankenstein's body that could hold both Martial Arts and Mentalism, then the threat that they had was really huge.

Such super soldiers were perfect weapons for destruction.

While Benedict was currently lost in his thoughts, Professor Henry suddenly opened his mouth and added. "Actually, those are only a few of the reasons why Project Genuis is terminated."

"There is actually another reason why the World Government is scared of the success of the project, especially when they learned who is really behind it," he added with a mystifying tone.

Benedict looked at the professor with a confused expression, not sure what the latter wanted to say. And after a moment of silence, he suddenly asked. "What do you mean by that, Professor?"

Professor Henry stroked his beard for a moment before answering. "As the name implied, Project Genius is supposedly a project to create a 'Genius'. An artificial genius – a perfect genius without a flaw."

He stopped talking when he reached the point as if he was hesitating. He then raised his head and looked at the ceiling before closing his eyes. He seemed to be trying to remember something from the past.

Benedict waited patiently as he knew that Professor Henry was going to tell him something important.

After a long silence, Professor Henry finally opened his mouth. "Long before the World Research Center is founded, when I am still an average and young researcher, there is a bright scientist who was very famous around the world."

"He is Doctor Victor Singed, my teacher," he added after a momentary pause.

Then he continued. "He is usually a noble person who is dedicating his research to the advancement of humanity. All of his projects contributed to almost everything that we have now."

"But one day, when a mysterious person visited him, my teacher suddenly changed. He started doing some odd research that is very hard to understand. He was even hiding some things behind the backs of his co-workers."

"He hid those researchers even from me, who is the student that is always on his side. It was as if he was afraid that the research that he is doing will be discovered by someone else."

Benedict was quite confused why Professor Henry was telling him this story but he still listened attentively as he knew that there must be a meaning behind it.

"Later, I learned that he is actually creating an artificial life. It is not your typical creation of life that required a fertilization of a baby."

"Up until now, I still haven't fully understood how the teacher managed to do it, but he indeed succeeds in the end."

"I can still vividly remember how happy my teacher was when he succeeded. Even if I don't fully understand what he is thinking at that time, I am also happy for him."

"But what surprised me during that time is the words that he said. He said that he successfully created a perfect human."

"Not only that, from what I remember, he called the artificial baby the 'Perfect Vessel'. I don't know what exactly it means during that time, but I somewhat have a rough idea."

Pausing for a moment, Professor Henry took a deep breath before continuing. "Then, somehow, the World Government seemed to discover the success of my teacher's research and want to get their hands on that baby."

"But later, when they are planning to seize the 'Perfect Vessel' for themselves, they discovered that the entire laboratory is destroyed and all of the data regarding the research are deleted completely. As for my teacher, he is found dead on the site."

"I am not present during that time since I am doing another project alongside my friends. I only receive the news when we are about to head back after our research," he added with a bitter tone.

"I don't know if what the reports said is true and I also can't trust the World Government given that I am familiar with how they handle things."

"In truth, I am actually suspecting that the World Government killed my teacher and steal all of his hard work. I become sure about this suspicion of mine because of what happened next – all of the colleagues of my teacher and other co-workers are found dead in their research laboratories while all of the data that they have are found stolen."

"I only managed to survive since I am just an ordinary apprentice. Moreover, my friends are always with me in those times, afraid that something is going to happen to me."

"Aside from me, there is also a couple of scientists and researchers who managed to survive and go in hiding."

Reaching this point, Professor Henry released a bitter sigh before continuing. "Later, one of the head scientists leading that laboratory gathered everyone and built an organization."

Hearing this part, Benedict came to a realization and blurted out. "And that is the Hextech Laboratory of today."

Professor Henry smiled at him and nodded his head. "Doctor Frankenstein is one of the heads of the laboratory where my teacher is working. And when they learned the real reason why their colleagues died, they became enraged and started fighting World Government."

"But since they knew that they will not be able to oppose such a powerful organization as the World Government, they started using their research as their weapon, which make the latter wary of them. Especially when Doctor Frankenstein showcased his powers."

"Even though I don't agree with the path that they choose for revenge, I can't blame them completely since I fully understand where are they coming from."

Benedict then remembered something and carefully asked. "But, Professor, if you are the student of Doctor Victor, then why is the Hextech Laboratory not looking for you?"

Hearing that, Professor Henry flashed a lonely smile before answering. "Because they all thought that I have already died. Aside from my teacher, they also found another person in the destroyed laboratory with the same physique and appearance as me. They all thought that it was me."

"Eh! How can that be?" asked Benedict in confusion.

The professor shook his head and answered. "I also don't know. But I am guessing that my teacher already foresees what is going to happen to him and makes some preparations."

"In truth, he is actually the one who send me to accompany my friends to help them. When I realize what happened, it is already too late."

Then Benedict asked once again. "But isn't it impossible for the colleagues of your teacher not to recognize who you are? Especially that you are currently a famous person, Professor."

Professor Henry naturally knew what Benedict was trying to say before answering. "Naturally, I am not stupid enough not to think about that. I've taken a miracle elixir that made me alter my appearance completely."

"Though, we paid quite a heavy price just to get our hands on that elixir," he added as the lonely smile that he had become more noticeable.

But that smile only lasted for an instant before he regained his usual composure. He then continued. "As for the so-called 'Project Genius', it is to recreate the 'Perfect Vessel' that my teacher had created during that time."

"In a sense, you can say that Doctor Frankenstein used his body to become the prototype of that vessel. The results just happen to be more successful than what he is expecting, which leads to what he is right now," he added.

Benedict finally understood the series of events. But at the same time, he was also quite confused. Due to that, he turned back to the professor and asked. "But, Professor, isn't this matter too important? Why are you telling it to me?"

Hearing that, Professor Henry gave Benedict a gentle smile before answering. "Out of all of my students, you are the one who resembles me the most, so I see myself in you."

"As for the reason why I choose you to share this secret, just take it as me entrusting it to you. Hold into it and remember everything that I've said as well as everything that I've taught you."

He then paused for a moment and took a deep breath before continuing. "Based on the course of the events, something big is about to happen. And I may even be forced to participate in it in the future."

"Are you in danger, Professor?" asked Benedict in a hurry, showing his worry.

Professor Henry gave him another gentle smile. "Foolish child, I am always been in danger due to the researchers that I am overseeing."

"What I am doing right now is just a contingency plan if everything goes wrong. We may not even have to use it. Besides, we still have plenty of time to prepare, more than a year or two at the very least."

"As for the other reason I am sharing it with you, you will naturally understand it when the time is right," he added with a mystifying tone.

After that, he waved his hand at Benedict, telling the young man that he could leave. He no longer wanted to answer any questions or share anything.