

## **Destiny 971**

Chapter 971 Grimrace Entering The Stage!

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Virtual World

Atlas World, Frozen Kingdom.

Inside the Frozen Palace, the competition between the retainers of Shin and Dracula was still ongoing. And at this point, Blackie managed to defeat her second opponent after a long struggle.

In this round, her opponent didn't dare to underestimate her after seeing her bloodline awakening, especially when she defeated Earl Cray with much ease in the latter state of their fight.

Her opponent vampire was also an earl just like the previous one but their abilities were somewhat different.

At the start of the battle, her opponent immediately initiated a blood transformation, summoning a blood armor that covered his entire body. And when Shin saw that, he immediately understood that the opponent was a knight-related class vampire.

The battle was already at its peak right at the beginning of the battle. Both sides showcased their powers and combat abilities, benefiting their current realm and level.

After watching their battle, Shin finally understood how strong a peak Tier 3 Ascended Beings could be. Their powers greatly surpassed the previous tier by a great margin. The gap was so large that the two tiers couldn't be compared with each other.

Even though Blackie had the advantage in terms of speed, she still struggled in the battle since the defense of the opposing side was difficult to crack.

It was not only the defensive capacities of the armor but also the fighting style of the vampire which focused on a defensive stance. This greatly countered Blackie's fighting style just like her previous opponent, but in a different matter.

If Earl Cray's techniques covered a large area that could limit the space Blackie could use, then this opponent focused on a solid defense which made her feel helpless.

Fortunately, her growth in battle was not inferior to Shin who was a Battle Genius. She constantly learned in battle, making her opponent feel that they were being hunted by their natural predictor.

Blackie repeatedly attack and retreated her opponent, throwing a powerful attack every time she got near the latter.

At first, her repeated actions seemed to be the usual strategy of hit-and-run. But upon closer inspection, one would notice that she repeatedly struck at the same spot whenever she landed a blow.

And when her opponent thought that her attacks were ineffective, Blackie threw an attack with all of her strength, breakthrough the spot that she repeatedly struck. Due to her constant assault, the defenses in that area gradually weakened and gave her enough opening to land a critical blow.

Before her razor-sharp claws could even strike the chest of her opponent and crushed the heart underneath it, the vampire was suddenly teleported out of the arena, signifying the result of the battle.

The vampire naturally couldn't accept it and wanted to jump back into the arena to fight again. Unfortunately, he knew that it was impossible given that it was Draco who pulled him out.

At the same time, one of the vampires at the side of the battle arena was staring at him sharply, making him tremble.

Their king might be merciful to them, his subjects, but this particular vampire who had a much higher noble status than him was completely different. If anyone of them showed any disrespect to their king, then this vampire would not hesitate to cut them, regardless of the consequences.

In the end, the vampire earl could only lower his head and accept the result of the battle.

From the other side of the arena, the short event didn't escape Shin's eyes. He narrowed his eyes as he looked at the particular vampire that seemed to have the highest noble status among his opponents.

A single glance at that vampire was enough for Shin to understand that he was the strongest among them.

"He must be at least a Duke Rank Vampire," muttered Shin solemnly as he continued to stare at that vampire.

Not long after, he turned his attention back to Blackie and saw that she was already at her limit. Fighting two consecutive battles with high intensity naturally exhausted her. Even if she managed to awaken her bloodline and become very powerful, it was impossible for her to face the rest of the vampires from the opposing side.

With a helpless sigh, Shin waved his hand and unsummoned her, not letting her continue the next rounds. He also took a quick glance at her new stats, which were completely different from before.

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Spirit Name: Blackie

Status: Reaper's Retainer – Darkness

Race: Elemental Spirit

Bloodline: Abysmal Penumbra Spirit

Purity: Monarch

Transformation: Abysmal Monarch

Tier: 3

Level: 300

Ability Status: Temporarily Sealed

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Most of her stats were somewhat different compared to what he remembered. Though, there was still the sealed status due to him being much weaker than them. Fortunately, their level would always be double his current level with their tiers corresponding with it.

"Not bad," muttered Shin after reading through the information panel. Though, he was somewhat disappointed that she didn't retain the level that she had during the battle, which was the peak of her current tier.

He could only shrug his shoulders and accept it since there was nothing that he could do about it. If he wanted them to be stronger, then he could only grind more levels, so that they could reach their peak form.

After that, he immediately summoned his next contender. Since his side was currently the winner, he had to send his retainer first before the opposing side.

"Shadow Reaper!"

Summoning Grimrace, Shin couldn't help but feel a little strange. This particular elemental spirit was supposedly an Abomination Shadow Spirit, but after absorbing the curse that was cast on him by the elder of the Corrupted Cult, this problematic spirit evolved alongside Vladimir.

No matter how he thought about it, he felt that the current reaper's title of Grimrace was somewhat inappropriate.

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Spirit Name: Grimrace

Status: Reaper's Retainer – Shadow/ Psychic

Race: Elemental Spirit (Abomination)

Bloodline: Eldritch Psychic Spirit

Purity: Supreme

Transformation: Yaksha Transformation

Tier: 3 – Peak (Temporary Adjusted)

Level: 499 (Temporary Adjusted)

Ability Status: Partially lifted

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Looking at the current status window of Grimrace, Shin couldn't help but feel satisfied. This was how Blackie's stats were supposed to be. Unfortunately, it was a temporary boost from the system.

Swoosh!

Right after Grimrace appeared, Shin couldn't help but look at the elemental spirit intensely. It was because his abomination of an elemental was resembling a human appearance. He was more human-like compared to Shin who had encountered him. Though his attire was somewhat odd.

Grimrace was currently wearing a dark green butler's outfit with a white ruffle collar that was usually seen worn by clowns.

Both of his hands were covered by clean white gloves while A cylindrical gentleman's hat was sitting on top of his head with a color similar to his outfit.

Other than the outfit that Shin found odd, Grimrace seemed to look more like a human being. Even his face was somewhat handsome by human standards.

Lifting Grimrace's head, Shin saw a black tear tattoo under his eyes.

Aside from Grimrace current appearance, Shin also found that the attitude that the elemental spirit was showing him was completely different from what he remembered.

The violent and aggressive attitude seemed to have disappeared.

"What are your orders, my liege? Do you want me to dispose of those mosquitos for you?"

Or so he thought.

Those words sounded respectful given the tone that Grimrace had. But Shin could tell that this guy was only suppressing the excitement in his heart. His trembling body was proof that he was itching to stand at the center of the battle arena.

With a twitching mouth, Shin gestured to Grimrace to step into the arena. "Do whatever you want."

It didn't take long for Shin to regret saying those words.

Right after Grimrace stepped on the arena and stood at the center of it, he quickly said to the opposing side. "Send all of your remaining representatives together. I don't like wasting too much time squashing mosquitos."

Boom!

Powerful auras immediately exploded right after Grimrace said those words. Not only were the six vampire retainers standing at the other side of the arena enraged, but even the other vampires watching the competition also wanted to jump to the elemental spirit and rip him apart.

The Duke Rank Vampire was also glaring at Grimrace coldly, suppressing himself from walking forward without his king's permission.

He might want to step on the arena and cut the head of this particular elemental spirit who showed great disrespect in front of their king. But he couldn't make his move without his king saying a word.

Seeing the duke vampire, Grimrace seemed to remember something and suddenly added. "Oh! Yeah! Our house mosquito wants to face that huge mosquito personally, so I will be sparing him to let that guy take care of it later."

Hearing Grimrace repeatedly calling them 'mosquitoes', all of the vampires couldn't hold any longer and showed a violent reaction.

Boom!

But before they could even make their moves, the duke vampire suddenly released his aura, suppressing all of them with it. He was the one who was most enraged at the moment but he kept restraining himself since their king was giving them a warning look.

After that, Dracula looked at Grimrace with great interest. He knew that Shin had quite a number of special elemental spirits. He could even feel that a few of them were as powerful as him at their peaks.

One of them was currently gravely injured, making them unable to showcase their real powers. The others were currently in the process of evolution while one was in the middle of regaining its strengths.

Unfortunately, their real powers were currently being suppressed by the rules of the world, not letting them achieve their peak forms.

"Interesting~!" muttered Dracula while looking at Grimrace before responding. "I will grant your wish and send three of my Marquesses. But it will look like we are bullying you, so I will be suppressing their strengths and match your level to make it fair."

Grimrace was about to say something but he immediately shut up his mouth when he received the voice transmission from Shin.

In the end, he silently nodded his head.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Right after he agreed, three vampires suddenly appeared in front of him while wearing cold gazes. From the looked of it, they couldn't wait to rip this arrogant elemental spirit into shreds.

Completely unfazed, Grimrace looked at them and grinned widely. "I hope you will give me an entertaining show."

Chapter 972 Grimrace's Might

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Despite seeing the aggressive looks that the three vampire marquesses, Grimrace remained completely unfazed. He seemed to be unbothered by them despite the heavy pressure that they were emitting.

And as if it was still not enough, he put his hand in front of his mouth and started yawning after seeing the three fully enraged vampires still hadn't made their moves. "Why are you three still standing there? Make your moves already! I am in a good mood right now, so I will give you a handicap."

The faces of the three immediately turned darker when they heard those words and quickly entered their respective transformation.

Their eyes turned crimson while blood-colored armor covered their bodies as crystalline weapons materialized in their hands.

One of them was carrying a pair of crescent sabers, the other had his hands with crystalline claws, and the third vampire marquess was wielding a crimson rapier.

And right after undergoing their transformation, the three simultaneously charged at Grimrace who was currently not paying any attention to them.

Boom!

Not long after, their attacks landed on Grimrace creating a thick cloud of dust that signified the powerful force behind those attacks.

But despite the three sensing their attacks landing on something, they couldn't help but wear deep frown on their faces as they knew they didn't manage to hit their target.

When the cloud of dust settled, everyone saw Grimrace was still wearing the arrogant look that he was wearing, completely unharmed. As for the weapons of his opponents, they seemed to hit an invisible wall, preventing them from advancing any further.

The three vampire marquesses stood motionless on their spots while their arms were trembling intensely as they were trying their hardest to push their weapons forward.

Unfortunately for them, no matter how hard they tried, it was still not enough to break through the invisible wall right in front of Grimrace.

On the other hand, Grimrace picked on his ear with his pinky finger while tilting his head to the side, looking at the three as if they were clowns. "What are you three doing? Playing stop and go or something?"

The faces of the three immediately turned ugly when they heard those words. But despite how scary the auras that they were emitting, Grimrace looked at them calmly.

After that, this troublesome elemental spirit smirked at the three, seemingly proving them even more before putting his pinky finger in front of his mouth and blowing the wax that he picked.

Hu!

Boom!

His simple actions from him caused a massive reaction. A powerful gust of wind suddenly swept the three vampire marquesses, dragging them away like leaves swept by storm.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The three vampires quickly flipped in the air and adjusted their center of gravity in the air before forcing themselves to fall to the ground.

But despite all of that, they still failed to completely nullify all of the force pushing them, making them slide onto the ground and draw a long trail on it. Fortunately, they managed to stop at the edge of the arena when all of the force was exhausted.

At the same time, they raised their heads and looked at Grimrace who remained standing on his spot and didn't bother to make it even though they would easily win this battle by slightly pushing the three out of the arena.

Earlier, they were blinded by their rage and failed to notice the strength of their opponent. They momentarily forgot that their opponent was supposedly not as simple as it seemed to be given the outcome of the previous battle.

This time, they had to look at Grimrace in a different light and take him more seriously.

Seeing that shift of emotions in the eyes of his opponents, Grimrace suddenly grinned and sneered.  
"Heh! Looks like you finally get it, huh?"

"I am completely different compared to that black cat that just fought earlier. I've been awakened for quite some time now, so I have more understanding of my abilities than her," he added with a smug look.

He then took a brief pause and put his hands in his pockets and stood still with full confidence. "Come! Make give your all this time as I will also not hold back."

With heavy expressions on their faces, the three vampire marquesses slowly stood up and started walking toward the center of the arena.

"I am Marquess Clayman. Show me if you really are that mighty to wear such a sharp tongue," said the vampire with sharp claws.

"Marquess Roman," introduced the vampire with a pair of crescent sabers while wearing a completely serious look on his face.

In the meantime, the third vampire marquess, the one carrying a blood rapier didn't immediately introduce himself as he continued to glare at Grimrace sharply.

After a few moments of silence, he finally opened his mouth and said his name. "Marquess Valdez."

He then pointed his rapier forward and said. "Now, tell us your name, abomination."

Grimrace was silent for a moment as he stared at the three. And after hearing how Marquess Valdez had addressed him, he couldn't help but scoff. "Abomination, you say? Let me show you how this abomination will crush you."

"Remember my name as it will be your worst nightmare! Grimrace!" he said as shadow elemental mana gathered behind him before turning into a huge group of daggers.

With a thought, those daggers suddenly flew straight to the three with a speed that was impossible to be caught by the naked eye.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Whoosh!

Marquess Roman quickly dashed forward and positioned himself in front of the two before brandishing his sabers multiple times, sending a series of sanguine waves that collided with the volley of daggers.

Boom! Boom!

Consecutive explosions immediately followed right after the collision of both sides, creating a massive cloud of smoke that blocked the line of sight of both sides.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

But despite the quick response of the vampire marquess, there were still a lot of shadow daggers that managed to breach through his attacks and continue moving forward.

Cling! Clang! Cling!

Seeing what happened, Marquess Roman quickly sharpened his senses and started swinging his sabers in a much faster matter, deflecting each of the incoming daggers.

None of the daggers managed to touch him but he continued to swing his sabers as the barrage of attacks didn't show any sign of stopping. They seemed to be an inexhaustible rain of daggers from the sky, pouring down at him.

In the meantime, both Marquesses Clayman and Valdez circled around the volley of daggers and charged at Grimrace, planking him from different angles.

Understanding what they were planning, the elemental spirit gave them a mysterious grin before taking out one of his hands from his pocket and waving it in the air in a casual manner.

With that gesture, the shadow underneath his feet suddenly extended and split into two before heading toward the incoming opponents.

Seeing the strangeness of that extending shadow, the two vampire marquesses didn't dare to face it head-on and decided to avoid it.

Unfortunately, the moving shadow on the ground seemed to have a mind of its own as it suddenly accelerated and chased after them. And when it was about to reach the two, shadow vines suddenly shot out from it and flew at them, trying to wrap around their bodies.

The two quickly dodged and nimbly avoided the vines, not letting them touch their bodies. Their instincts were telling them that the outcome was not going to be to their liking if those vines caught them.

Marquess Valdez had a pretty good foot technique as he skillfully dodged the shadow vines while continuously advancing toward Grimrace.

On the other hand, Marquess Clayman seemed to be struggling a little despite his specialization in movement techniques. It seemed like the shadow vines were able to read his mind and would always be one step ahead of him.

Seeing that, Grimrace quickly changed his strategy and focused the shadow vines on catching Marquess Clayman.

Swoosh!

The expression on Marquess Clayman's face quickly turned dark when he saw that the moving shadow chasing after him suddenly grew in size alongside the increasing number of shadow vines coming out from it.

With that, Marquess Clayman focused on dodging instead of advancing forward. He was planning to let Marquess Valdez take care of Grimrace since the shadow vines on that side were pulled back by their opponent and focused on him.

Marquess Valdez was able to understand his intention and quickly increased his speed, turning himself into a flying silhouette that headed to his opponent.

It only took him an instant to arrive near Grimrace since there was nothing blocking his path. And when he was almost upon the latter, he quickly stabbed his blood rapier forward, targeting their opponent's head.

His speed was so fast that a flash of light suddenly appeared during the entire process.

But despite that being the case, Grimrace still maintained his carefree and confident look while facing such an attack.

Bang!

And just like earlier, an invisible wall blocked the tip of the saber right before it reached him. And despite the powerful force behind that charge, Grimrace remained unscratched due to that wall.

Grimrace turned his head to the side and looked at Marquess Valdez grinningly. "You still haven't learned your lesson, have you?"

After that, he made a snap with his fingers which sent a silent ripple in the air.

Nothing happened at first besides everyone suddenly turning silent after his snap, but immediately after that, a powerful force suddenly pushed Marquess Valdez away, sending him flying just like what happened earlier.

In the meantime, Shin stared blankly at the scene, not knowing how to react. His mouth was left agape as he was not expecting this to happen. "What the heck? This nutjob is actually this strong?!"

#### Chapter 973 Grimrace's Crafty Fighting Methods

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Grimrace continued to stand leisurely at the center of the battle arena and didn't bother to take advantage of the opening that he created.

It was as if he was waiting for the opposing side to reveal their real battle capabilities. Even if he knew that these three vampire marquesses were taking him seriously, he still couldn't see them looking at him on equal footing.

He felt that they would not be willing to show their true colors unless he continued to embarrass them.

Thinking about it, Grimrace slightly tilted his head to the side before making a decision. He turned at Marquess Roman, who just broke through the barrage of shadow daggers, before finally moving forward. "Let's start with this mosquito number one."

Right after those words left his mouth, his body suddenly flickered before slowly fading away.

Swoosh!

When Marquess Roman saw that, a sudden chill ran through his spine, telling him the danger that was about to come.

Without any hint of hesitation, he quickly turned around and swung his saber behind him, not caring if there was an enemy in that place or not.

Clang!

Fortunately, there was indeed someone in there. But his decisive attack was still blocked by an invisible wall before it could even hit his opponent.

"Nice reaction. Unfortunately, it is still not quick enough," said Grimrace before swinging his other hand where a shadow dagger was just materialized.

Swoosh!

Marquess Roman had an ugly expression on his face when he saw those actions from his opponent before hopping backward, trying to get away from Grimrace as fast as possible.

And due to his decisive actions, he managed to barely dodge the dagger that was trying to swipe through his waist. But immediately after that, the expression on his face immediately became even ugly.

It was because he noticed that there was a huge shadow waiting on the spot where he was about to land. And before he could even do anything about it, shadow vines suddenly flew out from the ground and wrapped around his body, locking him in place and preventing him from doing anything.

It was at that moment that he saw Grimrace holding a sword made of shadow before cleaving down at him.

Swoosh!

But before the shadow sword fell on him, other marquesses were already upon them and saved him from such a predicament.

Clang!

Marquess Valdez stretched his arm and extended the rapier that he was holding, blocking the descending shadow sword and preventing it from moving forward. He put a lot of strength into his arms to make sure that he would not be overpowered by their opponent.

In the meantime, Marquess Clayman appeared behind Grimrace and swung his claws on the exposed back of their opponent. His claws released a blinding sanguine glow, indicating the large amount of blood elemental powers infused with them.

Puff!

His attack was definitely a strong one, unfortunately, it didn't land on his target as Grimrace suddenly transformed into black smoke right before he was hit.

"So~! Predictable~!" said a voice coming from a distance away from the three.

And when they turned their heads toward that location, they saw Grimrace slowly lowering his hand while looking at them mockingly.

"Kneel!" muttered the elemental spirit which was quickly followed by a powerful explosion of pressure.

Boom!

At the center of all of it, the three vampire marquesses found themselves trapped by a heavy pressure coming from the sky. It was as if a weighty hand was pressing on their bodies and seemed to be forcing them to lower their heads and kneel.

Crack! Crack!

Cracks started to appear on the ground where they were standing. But instead of spiderweb cracks that could usually be seen in this kind of situation, a huge handprint was formed with the three vampire marquess at the center of the palm.

Grimrace was clearly using his psychic powers to press on the opposing side, seemingly trying to crush them with it.

Realizing that their opponent was trying to humiliate them right in front of their king and the rest of their kin, the three marquesses immediately became enraged.

Losing in this battle might be humiliating, but it was still better than letting their king see them being forced by their opponent to kneel.

Using the immense rage boiling within them, the three vampire marquesses immediately released all of their powers and let them explode.

Boom!

Due to the sudden outburst of their powers, the pressure that was pressing at them immediately disappeared, completely freeing themselves.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

After that, they quickly separated and started charging at their opponent from three different directions. They were not letting Grimrace do everything he wanted this time.

Seeing the aggressive charges coming from three different directions, Grimrace immediately grinned widely, instead of getting anxious. He even revealed an excited smile he saw the thick sanguine auras that were surrounding the bodies of his opponents.

Instead of making any preparations while waiting for them to arrive, Grimrace fearless chose to face them head-on. He extended his arms wide before clenching his hands and moving them close to each other, doing pulling motions.

Immediately after that, the three marquesses suddenly became confused as they felt that their bodies suddenly became light, increasing their charging speed greatly.

Raising their heads and looking at their opponent, they saw the crazy Elemental was giving them a hideous grin.

They immediately sensed that there was something off with that time, but they still chose to continue and flew straight to him while brandishing their weapons, simultaneously throwing a powerful attack.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Whoosh!

But right before they reached their targets, they suddenly saw the shadow underneath Grimrace's feet suddenly expand and covered a huge area before shooting thick and sharp spikes forward, greeting them.

Due to their speed and powerful momentum, it was already impossible to stop themselves from moving forward. All they could do was continue heading over and faced those barrage of shadow spikes head-on.

Moreover, they were confident that their attacks were more than enough to overpower those shadow spikes and crush them in the process.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Simultaneous explosions immediately followed right after the collision. And just like how the three predicted it, they were able to completely brute force their way through the blockade of shadow spikes blocking their paths and continued charging toward Grimrace.

From the looked of it, they would be able to reach him after a couple of seconds. But right before they reached him, something unexpected suddenly happened.

Grimrace, who seemed to be hugging the air due to his previous actions, suddenly stood up straight and spread his hands and arms wide while looking at the ceiling of the throne room.

Looking closely at the expression on his face, he seemed to be wearing a relieved look. It was as if he was a skilled conductor who was very satisfied with the performance of the entire orchestra.

It was already too late when the three vampire marquesses noticed that there was something wrong.

Right after they crushed the shadow spikes through their charge, the small and sharp pieces that came from the collision scattered around and filled the air surrounding before hovering for a brief moment.

And when Grimrace did his final gesture, those sharp and gravel-like pieces suddenly turned at the three vampire marquesses and started assaulting them from every direction.

They managed to react at the sudden chance, but they were still a step too late since there were already a lot of pieces that managed to pierce through their armor and stabbed into their bodies before they were able to establish their defenses.

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Watching from the side of the battle area, Shin still couldn't believe that Grimrace suddenly became this strong after his previous awakening.

Grimrace's battle techniques were now completely different from what he could remember. During their first encounter, this troublesome elemental spirit was fighting like an assassin. His methods and tricks at that time were also very hard to deal with, giving Shin, Hanzo, and Vladimir a lot of trouble.

Even though the main reason for their disadvantage was due to the gap in stats and their poor coordination, it still proved that Grimrace was a tough guy to defeat.

Due to that, Shin continued to let Grimrace fight that way in his preceding battles and let the elemental spirit act as an assassin.

Contrary to it, the current display that Grimrace was showing him was somewhat different. His fighting style was still full of tricks and schemes, but instead of being filled with pure assassination techniques, it was now a hybrid of two styles, a caster, and an assassin.

Grimrace was fighting like a crafty psychic and a scheming assassin.

Such a style in battle piqued Shin's interest and gave him inspiration, especially the way how Grimrace use telekinesis and fussed it with an unusual style of battle. "So, this is one of the ways how to use psychic powers, huh? Interesting~!"

Inside his head, he started putting himself in Grimrace's shoes and visualized how to fight with such a method. And when he did it, a door seemed to open itself and showed him a new world, giving him a further understanding of Mentalism Techniques.

Chapter 974 Setting Everything In Motion

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Grimrace watched the scene of his opponent falling into his trap with great satisfaction while giving them a mocking smile.

Seeing that expression on his face, the three vampire marquesses couldn't help but become even more enraged. The already boiling blood within their bodies boiled more violently, flaring up their emotions more.

Boom!

After that, they underwent another transformation. Their rank was a level higher than the two vampire earls who fought Blackie earlier, so they supposedly be stronger than those two.

Their real strength might be being suppressed by Dracula to make the battle fair Grimrace, who challenged to fight the three of them altogether.

They might not have their peak forms, but they could still use the next level of their blood transformation and show Grimrace what he was looking for.

Boom!

An outburst of power quickly exploded when the three vampire marquesses simultaneously underwent their second blood transformation.

Marquess Roman donned a blood armor with glowing runes swimming on its surface as a knight's helm suddenly formed and completely covered his head.

At the same time, the crimson blade of his sabers turned deeper in color, making its appearance more threatening.

On the other side, Marquess Clayman turned into a hideous-looking monster. His crimson eyes turned colder, releasing a dangerous glint from time to time.

His hair grew longer and reached the back of his knee. It swayed in a misbehaving matter alongside the airflow surrounding them.

His torso was covered by sanguine flames that were violently swaying left and right. There were also some flames coming through the joints of his claws, making an illusion of his hands were burning violently and spreading toward his arms.

In the meantime, Marquess Valdez grew a pair of crimson wings behind him while his sanguine armor became filled with golden runes engraved on it, releasing a dim glow rhythmically.

The crimson rapier on his hand was releasing sanguine flames, making it leave a blazing trail in the air whenever he moved it.

Seeing that his opponents were now taking him seriously, Grimrace licked his lips while looking at them excitedly. "Finally!"

After that, he also underwent his own transformation.

### 'Elemental Spirit Transformation: Yaksha Transformation'

Grimrace's body suddenly emitted a black smoke as his eyes turned crimson as a black glow continuously flowed at the corner of his eyes.

There was not much of a change in his appearance, but the suffocating pressure that was coming from his body was so heavy that it could even affect the three vampire marquesses a few distances away from him despite their current forms.

At the same time, a large group of shadow daggers appeared behind Grimrace and hovered in the air while a pair of daggers with fancy designs appeared on his hands, emitting a dense shadow elemental power.

Seeing his transformation, the three vampire marquesses finally understood that their current opponent really had the strength to back up his words.

They were wearing a heavy expression on their faces while glaring at Grimrace before making their respective moves.

Bang!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The three charged forward, launching themselves towards Grimrace.

It only took an instant for Marquess Valdez to arrive right in front of the elemental spirit, thrusting his rapier forward and heading straight to the latter's chest.

Cling!

But before the tip of the rapier could even reach its target, it was immediately deflected to the side by a shadow dagger, changing its course.

And right after deflecting it, Grimrace quickly swung his dagger straight at the throat of Marquess Valdez.

Grimrace movements were quick and decisive which was completely different from how he fought earlier. And due to how smoothly it was executed, the vampire marquess was caught a little off-guard.

Fortunately, the crimson wings behind Marquess Valdez gave him additional mobility, helping him to get away from that predicament. He propelled himself backward with a simple flapped of those wings, making him dodge the sweeping daggers directed at his throat.

Coordinating with Marquess Valdez, Marquess Roman quickly stepped forward and brandished his sabers at Grimrace, who was currently in an awkward position due to missing his previous attack.

Swoosh!

Cling! Cling!

Unfortunately, just like earlier, an invisible wall blocked his sabers and prevented them from touching Grimrace's body.

Seeing that happened, Marquess Roman quickly retreated away, fully aware of what was going to happen next if he continued to linger in that position.

Taking over, Marquess Clayman suddenly appeared behind Grimrace, currently ducking forward and in the middle of swinging his blazing claws toward their opponent.

Swoosh!

His timing was perfect as it didn't give Grimrace the time to set his psychic wall in time. But it didn't mean that he would leave himself vulnerable as shadow vines suddenly shot out from the ground and wrapped themselves around the vampire marquess' body.

Marquess Clayman managed to rip some of the shadow vines wrapped around him but he still failed to regain his freedom from the rest, making it hard for him to move.

Taking advantage of that situation, Grimrace quickly swung his daggers multiple times, trying to deal as much damage as he could at the vampire marques.

Shing! Shing! Shing!

Cling! Cling! Cling!

But before he could even land a clean hit on Marquess Clayman, Marquess Valdez immediately stepped in and stabbed his rapier repeatedly, creating a series of flashes in the air and blocking the attack from Grimrace.

Seeing that, Grimrace took a quick step back before snapping his fingers and letting the shadow daggers hovering behind him pour down at the two.

Swoosh!

This time, Marquess Valdez quickly held his rapier in front of him in a vertical manner, infusing his blood elemental powers into it. And with a powerful horizontal swipe, a sanguine energy wave was suddenly released and swept through the shadowing daggers raining down at them.

These quick exchanges continued as Grimrace showcased why an Elemental Spirit was chosen by the Transcendent Races to be their partner in battle.

Despite being besieged by three powerful opponents from different angles, he was still able to hold his ground without showing any kind of weakness.

Even if the three vampire marquesses had the advantage in numbers, they still couldn't suppress Grimrace. They couldn't even find an opening that they could use to take over the battle.

Since the start of the battle, they were unable to snatch the tempo from Grimrace's hands. He was the one who was dictating the flow of the battle since the very beginning. Even with the help of the second transformation, they still couldn't find a window to take it away from him.

The state of the battle became even harder for them when Grimrace underwent his 'Yaksha Transformation'. Not only his magical powers increased greatly, but even his speed and strength escalated to another level, surpassing the three vampire marquesses in different areas.

The shadow daggers, shadow vines, and psychic powers were already giving the three a lot of trouble, but when his speed and attack power increased drastically, his threat level already reached the state where defeating him became hopeless for his opponents.

The crafty methods that he had increased while the hidden schemes behind each of his attacks became even more troublesome to deal with.

The three vampire marquesses tried to use their combined magical powers to suppress Grimrace, but since they were not proficient in that area, all of their efforts were completely in vain.

Moreover, Grimrace's Shadow Elemental Power reinforced by his Psychic Powers greatly suppressed the three vampire marquesses in every aspect.

Even if the intensity of the battle was reaching its peak, anyone could tell that the result was already been decided.

Grimrace might be a nutjob, but unfortunately for the opposing side, he had the strength to back it up.

The vampires spectating the battle were gritting their teeth as they watched the three marquesses get suppressed by a single opponent, completely upset. Worst, it was someone who insulted them in their king's presence.

Even the vampire duke who was watching them from the side couldn't help but squint his eyes and clench his fists, unable to do anything.

On the other hand, their king, the Vampire Primogenitor Dracula seemed to be completely unbothered by the result. He was even wearing a mysterious grin the entire time he was watching the battle.

It was disappointing to see his subjects lost to a mere Elemental Spirit, but his blow was more than enough to arouse the sleeping fighting spirit that they had in their hearts.

They had been trapped in this place for a very long time already, so he was sure that their hunger for battle was long forgotten. They might even forget how to fight properly after being sealed in their coffin beds.

He wanted to take advantage of this current situation to awaken the sleeping fighting spirit that they had. And from what he could see, it looked like he succeeded.

All he had to do was to wait for them to hone it again and reached the ideal state that he wanted.

After he lifted the curse cast upon the Frozen Kingdom and break the contract that he had with the Great Demon King, they would finally reclaim their freedom.

Even though they could no longer able to go back to what they used to be and continued to become the monster that they were now, they would be able to completely sever their connection with the Great Demon King.

As for the lineage of the Dragon Worshippers, it was going to be inherited by citizens that he sealed under the city alongside the guardian dragon, so he was not entirely worried.

After recalling the plans that they had prepared, Dracula turned to the vampire duke standing below the throne steps and smiled. He could see the burning fighting spirit that the latter had.

"What is left now is to let it explode and continue to burn," he muttered with a mystifying tone.

Chapter 975 The True Monarch Of Blood (Part 1)

...

The battle continued to intensify as Grimrace was besieged by the three vampire marquesses. He might have a lot of tricks under his sleeves but after fighting him for such a long time, his opponents tended to become more familiar with his fighting style.

They were still having a hard time dealing with Grimrace's shadow elemental powers and psychic powers, especially the power of his telekinesis.

But at the very least, they were getting used to his tricks which was making it easier for them to avoid falling into his traps again.

They were slowly getting the upper hand in this battle. But despite that being the case, they still couldn't shake off the feeling of anxiousness deep in their hearts. It was as if a great disaster was going to fall on them if they didn't end this battle as soon as possible.

They increased pressure on Grimrace by throwing more powerful and coordinated attacks at him. But no matter how hard they tried, they still couldn't push Grimrace into a corner where they could finish him off.

And during the entire process, they found that the advantage that they were getting not only stopped increasing but also seemed to get away from their grasp.

Sensing the silent change in the flow of the battle, the three started distancing themselves away from Grimrace and chose to throw the skills that they could use in the distance.

The three vampire marquesses maintained a considerable distance away from each other while taking turns attacking Grimrace. They didn't want to get caught in a trap set up by their opponent. Leaving one

of them away from the other two would give them a free person that could save the two if something went in their favor.

This move from them made the flow of the battle at a much slower pace, giving Grimrace enough breathing space while fighting the three of them.

When the three vampire marquesses realized that it might be the reason why Grimrace was trying to keep a hold on his footing. He was trying to create a space between them and himself to set up more of his traps.

Thinking about that, the three vampire marquesses quickly adjusted their plan and launched an even more aggressive series of attacks. But at the same time, they also didn't dare to let their guard down, constantly keeping an eye on any kind of traps that might try catching them off-guard.

They practically paid more attention to the shadows under their feet as well as the one below Grimrace since they were well aware of his Shadow Elemental Powers.

"Idiots!" muttered Grimrace mockingly, sending a sudden chill on his opponent's backs right after they heard it.

They quickly tried to distance themselves away from Grimrace at that moment, but it was already too late for them to escape as he was done with all of the preparations that he needed for the final performance.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

He threw three shadow daggers toward the vampire marquesses, targeting the shadows under them. And when they saw that, they did their respective means to get away from it, avoiding the daggers to hit their shadows.

They didn't know what it was or what it could do, but they knew that they couldn't let those daggers touch their shadows, or else, something terrible was going to happen.

Shu! Shu! Shu!

Ta-ta!

The three vampire marquesses avoided the daggers that were trying to pin down their shadows in place. And when their feet landed on the ground and saw that nothing happened, they couldn't help but sigh in relief.

"As I said you are all idiots," but at that very moment, they heard Grimrace's mocking voice once again, pulling them back to their senses.

They looked confusedly at Grimrace when they saw that there was nothing strange going on. But when they saw him point at the ground and let them sweep their gaze at the surroundings, they realized that the entire area was filled with shadow daggers.

Those daggers were the ones that they either avoided or deflected during the early exchanges. At first look, there was nothing wrong with them, but upon closer inspection, they realized that the shadow daggers were actually forming a huge magic circle.

As for the three shadow daggers that Grimrace had thrown just now, they were the final pieces needed to complete the entire formation.

Realizing that it was the reason why they were getting anxious during the entire battle, the vampire marquesses wanted to fly up in the air, trying to get away from it.

Unfortunately, it was already too late as they had fallen deep into the formation and it was impossible for them to escape.

Boom!

Then a powerful pressure suddenly descended from above and pressed on the three vampire marquesses, preventing them from moving.

Now that Grimrace had locked them in place, all he needed to do was to pull out his final card and wrap up everything.

Spreading his hands wide, a large group of shadow daggers suddenly materialized behind him. Each of the daggers was carrying a pure elemental power, signifying the might that they had.

The shadow daggers pointed at the three vampire marquesses, who were glaring sharply at him. Enjoying the current expression that they had, Grimrace gave them a mocking grin before waving his hands leisurely, sending the shadow daggers at them with an unimaginable speed.

'Elemental Spirit Skill (Shadow): Shadow Carnival'

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The shadow daggers flew straight to the three vampire marquesses, targeting all of the weak points that were now fully exposed due to their unable to move.

Boom!

"That's enough!" But before those daggers could even reach their targets, Dracula's words suddenly rang in the now silent throne room followed by an invisible force that descended into the arena.

Due to that pressure, the shadow daggers stopped an inch away from the bodies of the three vampire marquesses.

There was even a tip of a dagger right in front of Marquesses Valdez's cornea, very close to touching it.

Seeing that he lost his control over his shadow daggers and the formation that he had set up, Grimrace clicked his tongue, fully unsatisfied. "Tsk!"

And with a quick snap of his fingers, all of the shadow daggers floating in the air and stabbed on the ground simultaneously disappeared, signifying the end of this round.

Wearing an unsatisfied expression on his face, he turned at Dracula who was sitting haughtily on the throne before casting his gaze at the vampire duke standing below the throne steps.

Seeing the overwhelming fighting spirit coming from the vampire duke, Grimerace couldn't help but have the urge to fight him. He still hadn't gotten his fill even after fighting the three vampire marquesses. He was looking for more action.

But that thought only lasted for a moment before he fully erased it inside his head. He already agreed to let Vladimir take care of it, so he could no longer continue the challenge.

The reward that he was going to get from Vladimir after the battle was much more alluring in his eyes than experiencing a battle against such a powerful individual.

Thinking about that, Grimerace shook his head and looked at the vampire duke, who was glaring at him sharply, one last time before turning around and taking the initiative to go back to Shin's side.

He transformed into a black speck of light and floated toward Shin and circled around his body.

Shin was slightly taken aback at his actions as he didn't expect that the nutjob would take the initiative to return. "Is this crazy guy finally maturing?"

After observing Grimrace a little, Shin turned his attention back to the opposing side and saw that the vampire duke was already making his way toward the arena.

They already had no other contenders to send, so it was already obvious who was next person that would fight.

Observing the actions of the vampire duke, Shin could feel how powerful this particular vampire was. Unlike the other vampire nobles who fought earlier, this vampire carried the bearing of an expert who went through countless battles.

Based on the demeanor that the other party was carrying, Shin could tell that the next battle was going to be a very intense one. "This guy is probably at the level of a royal knight or higher when it came to combat experience."

Shin also didn't have to continue this so-called competition since they basically won it already. There was no need to send Vladimir and look for trouble.

But after realizing that Dracula might have another reason behind it, Shin wanted to continue. Moreover, he no longer had anything to lose in this battle.

Even if Vladimir managed to win or suddenly lose, they already won the entire competition, so it would not hurt if he let the blood elemental spirit have his part in it.

Thinking about it, Shin turned to the current information panel that Vladimir had, without the stat augmentation from the system.

---

Spirit Name: Vladimir

Status: Reaper's Retainer – Crimson

Race: Elemental Spirit

Bloodline: Noblesse Crimson Spirit (Blood)

Purity: Monarch

Transformation: Blood Sovereign

Ability Status: Temporarily Sealed

Tier: 3

Level: 300

---

With the previous awakening, the strength that Vladimir had should be on the same level as Grimrace. And if Shin summoned him now, he would temporarily reach the peak of tier 3 and had his abilities to be partially lifted.

His stats should also be roughly the same as Grimrace's. Or it might even be on a slightly higher scale due to the condition of the 'Blood Ghost Quest'.

Since they basically won five battles in a row, the boosts that Vladimir had gotten should be very huge, so his current stats should be a little higher than the limit of tier 3.

With that, Shin finally summoned Vladimir and let him walk toward the battle arena. Little did he know, something unexpected happened right after the elemental spirit revealed himself.

Chapter 976 The True Monarch Of Blood (Part 2)

.....

Boom!

Right after Vladimir appeared, all of the Blood Elemental Mana gathered around him as if it was worshipping him. There seemed to be a powerful suction force pulling all of the mana toward his direction.

For each step he took, an invisible force quickly followed alongside the gentle flow of the crimson mana surrounding him.

At the same time, there was powerful pressure coming from him. It had no effect on Shin, but all of the vampires witnessing the scene, aside from Dracula and the vampire duke, had the urge to kneel down and worship him.

This was a completely different case compared to what Grimrace had done earlier since he was using his psychic powers to force the opposing side to kneel. This time, vampires felt a powerful bloodline suppression. It was a scene where they encountered a creature who was naturally on a higher standing than them.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Some of the vampires who had weaker willpower fell from the ceiling and landed on the ground and went back to their humanoid form, completely powerless in front of such pressure.

Seeing that, the vampire duke couldn't help but look warily at Vladimir. He knew that this elemental spirit was on a completely different scale compared to the first two spirits that fought earlier.

He knew that he couldn't afford to let his guard down even for a brief moment, or else, he would lose in an instant without knowing what happened.

In the meantime, Dracula would take off his gaze away from Vladimir. Given his current level, he naturally knew that there was an elemental spirit related to blood element among Shin's retainers.

He also knew that the elemental spirit was somewhat related to his kin. And after seeing Vladimir, he knew that he was right.

Observing Vladimir closely, Dracula knew that he was not a naturally born elemental spirit. He became what he was now due to multiple reasons, and one of them was a demonic curse.

Dracula didn't know Vladimir's background, but based on the demeanor that the latter had, he knew that this particular elemental spirit was from a noble bloodline when he was still a human and very pure at that.

"This is going to be very interesting," muttered Dracula before turning his gaze to the vampire duke. "I can't ask for a more fitting opponent given the current state of Duke Bellion."

...

Meanwhile, Shin couldn't help but look weirdly at Vladimir. He knew that this guy would reach a very high level by receiving the temporary boost from the system, but he was not expecting that it would reach this high.

Shin could tell that the current Vladimir couldn't be compared to his previous state. Not even the strength that he had when fighting Hanzo was not on this level. The aura suppression might not be affecting him, but he could tell that it was overwhelmingly strong given the other vampires' reactions.

Even the noble ones who just fought earlier were showing some signs of kneeling for Vladimir. If not for their powerful strength, then they would be in the same state as the vampires who were already kneeling away from the battle arena, not even daring to raise their heads.

What was even more surprising was the fact that Vladimir was not saying anything. Given his previous experiences, this conceited elemental spirit should already be flaunting how awesome and amazing he was.

But since the time he was summoned, Vladimir did not only say anything, but he also walked silently toward the battle arena.

Shin didn't have high hopes of Vladimir maturing, especially when he saw how Grimrace acted just previously. But contrary to what he was expecting, the elemental spirit didn't do any foolish even until he reached the center of the battle arena.

Sensing something odd, Shin squinted his eyes and observed Vladimir very closely.

...

At the center of the battle arena, Duke Bellion waited patiently for Vladimir. And when the latter finally stood a few meters across him, the vampire duke finally bowed and introduced himself. "Duke Bellion, the sword of the Draconian Kingdom."

Vladimir gave the vampire duke a cold look before introducing himself. "Vladimir von Ataraxia, seventh prince of Ataraxia Empire."

Hearing those words, Shin couldn't help but raised his eyebrows as this was the first time that he heard Vladimir say his full name.

Dracula, on the other hand, was surprised at what he just heard. He knew that Vladimir's background shouldn't be simple but he was not expecting that the elemental spirit was from one of the strongest empires during the Warring and Repelling Eras.

...

After introducing each other, the two contenders took out their respective weapons and held them straight in front of their chests.

Duke Bellion was holding a broad sword with a lion's head at the bottom of the hilt and a steel guard that resembled a pair of eagle wings.

Vladimir materialized an exquisite rapier using the blood-elemental mana surrounding him. It had a complicated and beautiful guard that covered his fingers. Its thin blade was like crystalline blood in deep crimson color.

After holding their respective weapons vertically in front of them, the two gave each other a respectful bow before simultaneously disappearing from their previous locations.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

They reappeared after an instant, standing a meter away from each other and posturing their respective attacks.

Vladimir thrust his sword forward, silently targeting the chest of his opponent. His speed was so fast that it even exceeded Blackie who specialized in that area.

Swoosh!

Seeing that he was a step too late, Duke Bellion quickly adjusted his position and changed the trajectory of his attack, deciding to block the incoming thrust from his opponent.

Cling!

Duke Bellion was able to redirect the course of his opponent's rapier by moving his broadsword in a circular manner.

After that, he quickly used the momentum from his previous action to throw a powerful slash at Vladimir, who was now in an awkward position after missing the previous strike.

Swoosh!

Executing a fancy footwork, Vladimir was able to quickly change his position and dodged the incoming strike before quickly counterattacking with a much quicker and more powerful stab of his rapier.

His hand seemed to disappear as a sanguine flash blinded his opponent for a moment.

Clang!

But despite how fast his attack was, Duke Bellion was still able to retract his sword and used its surface to block the tip of the incoming rapier.

Bang!

When the two swords clashed, the shockwave produced by the collision forced Duke Bellion and Vladimir to retreat. It even constantly spread outward and swept through the entire throne hall, creating a violent ripple bouncing at the walls of the hall.

The two forced themselves to stabilize their footing before staring at each other with serious looks on their faces. That brief exchange gave them an idea of how strong each other was.

After that, Vladimir quickly moved, launching himself forward once again. And when he arrived in front of his opponent, he quickly stabbed out with his rapier.

The blade suddenly vanished from Duke Bellion's vision, preventing him from seeing the trajectory of the strike.

The expression on Duke Bellion's face didn't change as he instantly moved his head horizontally to the right. At the instant he moved, a crimson beam flashed beside his cheek, leaving a slight wound on it.

If the vampire duke had been any slower, he was a high chance that his head would have been penetrated by the rapier, leaving a bloody hole.

Not giving Duke Bellion any time to recover, Vladimir gracefully followed with another strike, stabbing out his rapier again and again. The rapier and his figure were unbelievably fast. His actions left a series of sanguine flashes in the air.

Even the vampires, who were now able to raise their heads and watch the fight, couldn't help but wear a solemn expression on their faces. They knew that they would be dead if they were hit even with a single strike from those flashes.

Clang! Clang!

Cling! Cling!

The clashing sounds of the blades and the impacts of the shockwaves constantly echoed in the throne room. Vladimir's terrifying rapier had been blocked by Duke Bellion. Aside from the first strike, none of the preceding attacks managed to leave a scratch on him.

Given the vampire duke's vastly experienced in battle, he was able to completely grasp the timing of his opponent's attack right after witnessing the first strike.

It was impossible to block such a series of fast attacks with judgment alone. So, Duke Bellion was relying on his sharp senses and properly honed reflexes to respond to each of his opponent's moves.

Vladimir quickly understood that it would be impossible to rely on his speed to overwhelm his opponent, so he quickly took a different approach.

He started mixing some faints on his attacks, making it hard for his opponent to read his attacks. He even adjusted the timing of his stabs, using an ever-changing tempo of his attacks to confuse the vampire duke.

He was forcing Duke Bellion to commit a mistake. Just a single mistake was more than enough. Even if it was just a millisecond slower, it would be enough to deal a fatal blow.

Unfortunately, an expert like Duke Bellion had a lot of experience during his time being a knight in an army. He already experienced walking on a thin rope separating life and death multiple times, so his split-second judgment was entirely accurate.

Even if he was being suppressed by the barrage of attacks from his opponent, he was constantly looking for an opportunity to counterattack. And when he made his move, it would instantly change the flow of the battle.

The melee exchanged between the two continued, constantly increasing the intensity with every second.

No one dared to move their eyes away from the two as they knew that this exchange would have a huge impact on the rest of the fight.

Chapter 977 The True Monarch Of Blood (Part 3)

...

Bang!

Cling! Cling! Cling!

The exchange between Duke Bellion and Vladimir continued to intensify as time passed. And alongside the rapidly growing intensity, the sword techniques that the two were using continuously evolved into high-ranking swordsmanship.

Shin, who had seen quite a number of sword techniques, couldn't help but become amazed at the two. He even put himself in the shows of the two, trying to see what he could do if they were facing their sword techniques.

He later realized that he would be having a hard time facing them even if he used his Yin-Yang Swordsmanship.

As the battle progressed, Shin noticed that Duke Bellion was slowly getting the upper hand. He was gradually familiarized with the ever-changing tempo of his opponent's attacks. His counterattacks were also getting on point, targeting the small gap between Vladimir's series of attacks.

Shin knew that the flow of the battle was about to change. And the two who would be stirring it would be Duke Bellion.

Swoosh!

Right after that thought entered his mind, he saw Bellion take a quick step to the side, dodging another stab from his opponent before raising his broadsword and swinging it at Vladimir.

Swoosh!

The series of movements were executed in a fast and smooth manner, making it look like a natural movement from Duke Bellion's side.

The broadsword traveled in the air extremely fast, leaving a trail of light on its path as it headed toward its opponent.

Puchi!

The moment the broadsword descended, it instantly cleaved Vladimir, not giving the elemental spirit the time to dodge.

But despite seeing that, the expression on Duke Bellion's face turned to a deep frown. He knew that his sword could cleave anyone in halves, but what he felt with this particular strike was a little odd.

There was a hint of resistance during the cleaving of his sword, but it the soft a smooth like slashing inside a pool of water.

As if confirming his suspicion, the 'Vladimir' in front of Duke Bellion suddenly turned into a pool of blood that fell on the ground.

After that, another pool of blood suddenly appeared behind the vampire duke before shooting up in the air and turning into a humanoid figure before materializing into Vladimir.

Before Duke Bellion could even respond, Vladimir quickly thrust his rapier forward, targeting the exposed back of his opponent.

Duke Bellion didn't have the time to move and dodge or turn around and block the incoming strike, leaving him with no choice but to let it land on him.

But he naturally not going to let the rapier hit his bare back that easily. He, instead, enter his blood transformation form and formed a sanguine armor that covered his entire body. He even went straight to his second transformation to make sure that his defense would be able to endure the incoming attack.

Boom!

His overwhelming aura quickly exploded right after he entered his transformation, sending a strong ripple in the air that stirred the entire throne hall.

Clang!

It was at that moment when the tip of Vladimir's rapier landed on the back of his opponent. But aside from creating metallic sparks and resounding sounds in the air, nothing special happened.

Quickly after that, Duke Bellion turned around and swung his now crimson-bladed broadsword without any hesitation.

His movements were quick and decisive just like earlier, but before he could even land his strike, Vladimir was already retreating away and was currently undergoing his own transformation formation.

'Elemental Spirit Transformation (Blood): Blood Sovereign'

During his transformation, the surrounding blood elemental mana gathered toward Vladimir once again, seemingly stealing the energy that was supposedly supporting Duke Bellion.

At the same time, a pair of blood wings materialized on Vladimir's back. There were also a series of magic runes glowing on the surface of those wings, pulsing in a rhythmical manner.

His rapier also became even more exquisite as the design that it had become much fancier, especially its hilt and the guard that it had.

Alongside those changes, the steel-like claws on his left hand became much sturdier and sharper. There was also a sanguine glow on them, showcasing the deadliness that they had.

Aside from that, there was also a golden crown shining above his head, making his current appearance even more majestic.

The aura that was coming from Vladimir showed its suppression effects against the vampires once again, especially when the crown on his head appeared.

The urge to kneel down and worship Vladimir appeared once again. And this time, it was a much stronger bloodline suppression that even Duke Bellion showed some signs of being affected by it.

Even though it only lasted for a moment since the vampire duke was able to quickly fought it, such a suppression made Duke Bellion become warier at Vladimir.

Vladimir seemed to have a languid expression on his face contrary to the majestic aura that he was releasing. But at the same time, there was a threatening feeling being emitted by his body despite him not doing anything.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Right after fighting the bloodline suppression coming from Vladimir, Duke Bellion quickly changed the trajectory of his sword before sending a series of sanguine waves forward, not waiting for his opponent to complete their transformation.

Seeing the incoming waves crisscrossing against each other, Vladimir wore a mocking expression and muttered. "Daring to use the power of the blood in front of me? Foolish!"

At that, he raised his hand in front of him, seemingly trying to catch the incoming sanguine waves. And when those waves were about to reach him, a crimson vortex suddenly appeared in front of his hand and sucked the sanguine waves in it.

But during that time, Duke Bellion already launched himself forward, seemingly expecting that his attack would not have any effect on Vladimir.

He was already right in front of his opponent and currently in the middle of brandishing his broadsword forward. There was also a brilliant sanguine glow surrounding his sword, shrouding it with a thick aura blade.

Swoosh!

The space seemed to have been split by the broadsword of the vampire duke.

Shing!

In response, Vladimir flipped his left hand where the crimson vortex was, letting it float above his palm. He then closed his hand and clasped the crimson vortex, holding firmly into it before opening his hand once again.

Boom!

Quickly after that, a powerful explosion suddenly occurred, creating a series of crimson distortions in the air. It seemed to have cast a crimson net in the air with the thin crisscrossing lines around Vladimir.

Bang!

And when the descending broadsword of Duke Bellion collided against those crimson lines in the air, it immediately faced a series of powerful resistance that prevented him from moving his sword further.

Taking advantage of that situation, Vladimir quickly stabbed with his rapier, creating a blinding flash due to how fast it was.

Duke Bellion decisively abandoned his broadsword at that moment and backpedaled, distancing himself away from his opponent as fast as he could.

Vladimir quickly chased after him, not willing to let go of the opportunity that he finally grasped. But when he was moving forward, he suddenly noticed a strange movement from the broadsword hanging in the air.

He saw a thin thread made of blood wrapped around the hilt of the sword. And with a slight tug from Duke Bellion, the broadsword was suddenly pulled and drew an arc in the air while heading toward the back of his opponent's head.

Vladimir quickly halted his advantage at that moment and swiftly turned around, swinging his rapier at the incoming broadsword and deflecting it during the process.

Clang!

Right after Duke Bellion caught his broadsword, he was about to kick the ground and charge forward once again when he suddenly saw a group of sharp weapons floating behind Vladimir.

There were a variety of bladed weapons made of blood pointing forward, daring the vampire duke to charge ahead and face them.

'Elemental Spirit Skill (Blood): Weapons of Blood'

Seeing that Duke Bellion suddenly stopped his tracks and stayed rooted on his spot, Vladimir quickly waved him and sent the weapons made of blood forward.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Seeing the incoming barrage of blood weapons, Duke Bellion quickly shrouded himself with a thick blood elemental mana before swinging his broadsword left and right, trying to defend himself against those materialized weapons.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A series of explosions immediately followed every time Duke Bellion brandished his sword against the blood weapons heading towards him. And despite the seemingly endless rain of weapons, the vampire duke remained calm and collected, responding to each of them without any panic on his face.

He knew that it would be a foolish choice to use blood elemental powers against Vladimir given the high affinity that the latter had shown. His only option was to rely on his swordsmanship and rich combat experience to deal with his current opponent.

Hu~!

Thinking about it, Duke Bellion took a deep breath to regulate his breathing before circulating his inner mana. He also emptied his mind and solely focused on the battle, erasing all of the useless thoughts inside it.

The moment he did that, the air surrounding him instantly changed, creating a heavy pressure that spread through the entire hall.

Shin, who was closely paying attention to the battle, immediately sensed the change of atmosphere surrounding the vampire duke. It was giving him heavy pressure that he could only sense from top experts like Nathan Springfield and Elias Stuart from the real world.

A solemn expression immediately surfaced on Shin's face, fully understanding that this was going to be a difficult battle even for the currently Vladimir.

#### Chapter 978 The True Monarch Of Blood (Part 4)

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Vladimir also noticed the change of air surrounding Duke Bellion and quickly initiated another attack. He increased the number of blood weapons surrounding him before sending them all forward.

Duke Bellion stared at the incoming group of blood weapons raining down at him before moving his sword in response.

The movement of his sword seemed to be slow as anyone could see its tracks. But at the same time, all of the spectators felt that the time seemed to have slowed down with the vampire duke being the only one who was capable of moving normally.

They could also see the overlapping afterimages of the sword as Duke Bellion swung it at the blood weapons pouring down at him.

Shin couldn't help but raise his brows when he saw that scene as he was somewhat familiar with it. That illusion made by Duke Bellion's movements was the product of his highly trained and disciplined swordsmanship alongside his incredible speed.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Duke Bellion was able to block each of the blood weapons heading his way with a series of basic sword movements, not letting a single of them to even scratch his body.

Swoosh!

Vladimir seemed to be expecting that to happen as he immediately turned into a stream of blood that traveled on the ground before arriving behind his opponent and swinging his claw down.

A sanguine glow shrouded the long and steel-like claw as he swung it down, leaving a beautiful trail in the air.

Clang!

Unfortunately, Duke Bellion was able to turn around quickly and brandish his broadsword during the process, borrowing the momentum of his spin to strengthen the force behind his counterattack.

Swoosh!

Bang!

Vladimir was pushed back by the strong impact. But he ignored the stain that he got from that collision before quickly charging back again while thrusting his rapier forward.

A quiet humming sound came from his rapier while releasing a sanguine light. And after a couple of seconds, a crimson vortex surrounded the blade of the rapier as it continued moving forward.

'Elemental Spirit Skill (Blood): Talon of Blood'

Taking a deep breath, Duke Bellion stared calmly at the incoming attack before positioning his broadsword horizontally in front of his chest, using the surface of his sword to block the incoming rapier.

At the same time, he covered the broadsword with a thick Sword Qi, reinforcing the defensive capabilities that the sword had.

Bang!

This time, it was Duke Bellion's turn to be pushed back by his opponent, forcing him to slide back and draw a long trail on the ground of the battle arena.

After nullifying all of the residual force that he got from impact, Duke Bellion quickly stabilized his footing, planning to initiate an attack. But right after he raised his head, he saw Vladimir floating in the air with a sanguine flame enfolding his left hand.

A moment later, Vladimir swung his claws once again, sending out the accumulated powers gathered on his left hand.

Five crescent waves with a sanguine light were immediately formed right after he executed those actions. Those sanguine waves rapidly grew in size as they headed toward Duke Bellion at an extreme speed.

There was a series of eerie wails coming from the sanguine waves as if there were different kinds of ghosts and spirits being punished within those waves.

'Elemental Spirit Skill (Blood): Claws of Asura'

Swoosh!

Duke Bellion continued to wear a calm expression on his face as he stared at the descending sanguine waves.

Taking a deep breath, he took a step back before placing his broadsword in front of his chest. Then the air surrounding him suddenly rushed toward his direction as if it was being sucked by something.

A moment later, a thick layer of Sword Qi suddenly enfolded his broadsword, making it release a gentle yet intensified glow.

Quickly after that, Duke Bellion took a step forward while swinging the broadsword horizontally, drawing a beautiful arc in the air.

At the same time, a blinding light was suddenly released from the tip of his sword and created a huge crescent wave that headed toward the claw-like sanguine waves.

Swoosh!

'Draconian Swordsmanship: Breath of Nature'

Roar!

There seemed to be a subtle roar coming from the crescent wave sent by the vampire duke, countering the wails of the ghosts and spirits of the sanguine waves.

Boom!

A massive explosion quickly followed right after the collision of the opposing powers. A huge cloud of smoke was also created, blocking the line of sight of both sides and preventing them from seeing what each other was doing.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Swoosh!

But not long after, a series of holes suddenly appeared in the cloud of smoke as a barrage of weapons made of blood flew past it and rained down toward the vampire duke.

This time Duke Bellion was not planning to passively defend himself. He didn't want to keep blocking each of those blood weapons. Instead, he swung his broadsword multiple times in the air, sending a barrage of sword waves toward the incoming raid of blood weapons.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A series of explosions immediately followed as the two sides continuously clashed against each other.

None of them managed to get the upper hand on this exchange as both of them were practically showcasing the large pool of mana that they had.

During this deadlock, a dangerous glint suddenly appeared in the eyes of Duke Bellion as he managed to catch a gap between the hail of blood weapons. It might be small but it was more than enough for him to break through.

Bang!

Kicking the ground, Duke Bellion propelled himself to the air, flying with an insane speed and breaking through the blood weapons hailing from behind the cloud of smoke.

Swoosh!

During his flight, the vampire duke spun his body in the air, drilling a huge hole in the cloud smoke before clearing it entirely with a strong gale of wind that spread outward.

He then held his broadsword with both of his hands before guiding it into a powerful slash as he borrowed the momentum that he gathered from his spinning action.

'Draconian Swordsmanship: Sundering the Nature'

Roar!

Another subtle roar came out from the sword of Duke Bellion as it drew a spiraling trail of light in the air, which later turned into a serpent dragon that was opening its mouth wide forward.

In the meantime, Vladimir, who was still hovering in the air, was already expecting the sudden countermove from his opponent since he purposely left the small gap between his blood weapons earlier.

When Duke Bellion broke through the cloud of smoke earlier and cleared it during the process, Vladimir was already holding his rapier in front of his chest vertically as a large amount of blood elemental mana gathered on its blade, dyeing it with an even deeper sanguine color.

'Elemental Spirit Skill (Blood): Opening the Gates of Hell'

Swinging his rapier down, he drew a vertical line in the air that seemed to have split the space. And as if it was indeed the opening of the gates of hell, the eerie and ghostly wails of the evil spirits quickly followed after the appearance of the crimson line in the air.

Boom!

A much stronger explosion occurred due to this collision as it sent a powerful shockwave that spread in every direction, shaking the entire throne room.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Duke Bellion was sent flying toward the ground right after the collision. He quickly flipped multiple times in the air, negating the impact that he got, before his feet landed on the ground.

Boom!

And the moment when his feet touched the battle arena, a huge crater was immediately created as he transferred the rest of the force that he failed to nullify. The cracks on the ground quickly spread until they covered the entire arena.

In the meantime, Vladimir was propelled higher in the air by the strong shockwave. After flipping a couple of times, he spread his crimson wings wide, stopping his body from hitting the ceiling of the throne room.

He suspended in the air as he stared at the vampire duke, who was currently standing at the center of the cracked battle arena.

The was a brief moment of staredown before the two launched themselves toward each other almost at the same time.

Bang!

Swoosh!

Duke Bellion kicked the ground, further destroying the already broken battle arena. He launched himself toward the air while covering his entire body with his sharp Sword Qi.

Vladimir, on the other hand, strongly flapped his crimson wings to propel himself down. A sanguine glow shrouded his entire being, enhancing both his offensive and defensive capabilities.

Bang!

Cling! Cling! Cling!

Clang! Clang!

A series of flashes quickly followed as the two sides clashed in the air multiple times. They relied on their respective skills and techniques in their exchanges.

Duke Bellion used his 'Draconian Swordsmanship' and displayed the might that the real Dragon Worshippers were supposed to have. It was a refined and discipline swordsmanship that even Shin had admired.

Meanwhile, Vladimir was also displaying amazing swordsmanship. It was an exquisite swordsmanship that seemed to be used by ancient noble houses within the game. It might not have the dangerous air shrouding the 'Draconian Swordsmanship', but it carried a unique style and had its own charm in battle.

Duke Bellion and Vladimir mixed some of their powerful skills with their respective swords techniques while attacking each other. For every collision that they were making, the entire throne hall shook. It was as if they were planning to destroy the whole place with every clash.

This continued for a few more moments until both sides decided that it was finally the time to end everything with a final move.

Chapter 979 The True Monarch Of Blood (Part 5)

...

Bang!

Right after separating from his opponent, Vladimir spread his wings wide to stop himself from moving further up in the air. Hovering in the air, he stared coldly at his opponent before gathering the surrounding Blood Elemental Mana once again.

This time, the rate of absorption that he was showing was much stronger than the previous skills that he used just earlier. It only took a couple of moments before the Blood Elemental Mana in the surrounding was exhausted.

But despite that being the case, Vladimir didn't stop and continued to absorb more of the surrounding mana like a hungry beast that was starving for years.

Due to his actions, the blood elemental mana stored in the bodies of the surrounding vampires started to react. It even broke free from their control and started leaking out from their cores.

Seeing that, the vampires started to panic, not knowing what to do. They tried to re-gathered those blood elemental mana leaking out from them, but it was already out of their control, and continue to head over to Vladimir.

There was a visible stream of sanguine lights coming out from the bodies of the vampires and flowing through the air, heading towards the elemental spirit hovering in the air.

Shin could not help but stared blankly at the sight in front of him, especially when he saw the flow of sanguine mana in the air. He knew that Vladimir had gotten strong after his previous awakening, but he was not expecting that it was actually this strong.

It was pretty normal for Vladimir to suppress these vampires since his bloodline powers were superior to theirs. It didn't matter if they were Overlord Rank or King Class Monsters, the suppression that they would receive was still the same.

Aside from Dracula, who was clearly out of Vladimir's league, and Duke Bellion, who had enough strength to ward off the influence of his opponent on his mana core, the rest of the vampires present in the throne hall were completely affected by the suppression aura.

In the air, a huge crimson sphere appeared above Vladimir as he raised his rapier underneath it. The Blood Elemental Mana continued to gather as the crimson sphere steadily grew bigger.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

At the same time, a subtle clanking sound silently rang within the throne room. It was a sound that could only be heard by Dracula. He was very familiar with that clanking sound since he had broken it multiple times already.

"The 'chains of restriction'!" muttered Dracula while wearing a deep frown as he focused his gaze on Vladimir.

A mysterious light came out from his eyes, giving him the ability to see something that couldn't be seen by a mortal's sight.

From his perspective, he could see the crimson chains wrapped around Vladimir. It was the so-called restrictions that the world had cast on the mortal's body, limiting their potential.

Anyone who could break free from those chains would receive a huge boost in their powers. It would make them a step away from reaching the peak of the lower plane.

Elemental Spirits belonged to a special race that didn't need to become an Ascended Being to reach the peak of the world since they could become a partner of Transcendent Beings through contracts, giving them an additional path that could lead them to reach the higher plane.

But it didn't mean that they would be exempted from the rules of the world. They would still be restricted by the rules just like all of the beings within the lower plane.

Forming a contract with a Transcendent Being would guarantee them to be a Divine Being in the future, but it also restricted their strengths, at the same time. It needed to be proportional to the current strength of their contractor, limiting the power that they could have.

Having that in mind, Dracula couldn't help but stare intensely at Vladimir, who was currently wrapped in invisible chains.

The fact that the 'chains of restriction' was summoned by an elemental spirit could only mean a single thing – Vladimir was showing signs of being able to break free from the restrictions of the world as well as the limitations set by the contract that he had with Shin.

"This turns out to be more interesting than I am expecting," muttered the Vampire Primogenitor with a mystifying smile on his face.

...

In the meantime, Duke Bellion, for the very first time since the start of the battle, was finally wearing a very solemn expression on his face.

He knew from his vast combat experience that this particular attack from Vladimir was way stronger than a normal Elemental Spirit should have.

Having the idea of how strong the incoming attack was, Duke Bellion that he also needed to give his all for this final move. Not only for him to win this battle, but also in respect for his opponent who was currently pouring everything for this final exchange.

Taking a deep breath, He held his broadsword with his hand before positioning it in front of him vertically. And quickly after that, he gathered all of his Sword Qi and channeled it toward the sword, making it release a brilliant light.

His broadsword then suddenly glowed with sacred light, contrary to the evil aura that his cursed body was emitting. Then his Sword Qi and the sacred light fused together.

It reinforced the blade of his broadsword, increasing its toughness as well as the sharpness of its edges.

At the same time, the air surrounding him moved toward his body, forming a powerful vortex that sucked every mana in the vicinity. It might not be affecting the spectating vampires but the suction force that he was showing was definitely not inferior to Vladimir's.

Hmm!

There was a silent humming sound coming from the sword of the vampire duke when the accumulation of powers reached its peak. It was as if it was informing its wielder that it was already prepared to unleash the powers that it had gathered.

There seemed to be a void in the space around Duke Bellion, forming an extra layer on his body and sword.

Raising his head, Duke Bellion swung his sword in the air above him, sending out all of the accumulated powers that he had gathered.

Swoosh!

'Draconian Swordsmanship: Final Movement – Immortal Culling'

A huge sword wave was released right after his slash which moved in a spiraling motion before turning it into a huge dragon with a wide-opened mouth.

Roar!

It was only at this moment that a powerful suppressive aura was released. It was coming from the huge dragon formed by the sword wave that Duke Bellion had released. The suppression not only affect the surrounding vampires, but it also made Shin groan painfully due to how strong it was.

He was supposedly protected by the auras of his Elemental Spirits, but this suppressive aura managed to break through it and started pressing on him.

Raising his head, he stared intensely at the soaring dragon before turning his gaze to Vladimir who was still wearing a cold look on his face.

The elemental spirit waited for a couple of seconds before swinging his rapier down in a very gentle manner. And quickly following those actions, a huge crimson sphere over his head started descending toward the incoming dragon with a momentum that was as strong as a falling meteor.

Swoosh!

'Ultimate Spirit Skill (Blood): Blood Sphere of Destruction'

It was the same skill that Shin had seen during the battle between Hanzo and Vladimir during his class promotion quest. It was also the final skill that the latter elemental spirit had used at that time.

But compared to what he had witnessed during that battle, this particular skill was much stronger and many tiers above. It was a clear indication that Vladimir was much stronger compared to their first encounter.

Boom!

A massive explosion immediately followed right after the collision of the two opposing powers. It first sent a powerful air ripple that spread in every direction, sweeping everyone away. Then it was followed by a much stronger shockwave that was threatening to destroy everything.

"Sh\*t! This is bad!" cursed Shin as he finally snapped out of his daze. He was too occupied with watching the final exchange that he almost forgot that he might get swept away from the explosion.

Based on the power behind those two attacks, the aftermath that their collision could cause would definitely be a devastating one. He would not be surprised if it even swept away the whole castle and also destroyed half of the Frozen City.

Fortunately, there was an absolute existence present in this place.

Thinking about Dracula, Shin relaxed his tensed muscles and sighed in relief. With such a powerful existence around, it was useless to have such a pointless worry.

Swoosh!

And indeed, Dracula didn't disappoint Shin as he quite made his move right before the explosion destroy everything.

With a casual wave of his hands, a powerful force suddenly spread in every direction before wrapping itself around the spreading explosion, completely containing it.

Then Dracula swiftly extended his hand forward and slowly closed them as if he was grabbing something in the air.

Following his actions, the violent force within the contained explosion was slowly compressed. It was a gigantic sphere at first but it immediately became a glowing orb after a couple of moments before turning into a small marble within a few more seconds.

Pop!

Then a silent popping sound could be heard as thin smoke appeared in the air alongside the disappearance of the glowing marble.

There was a long silence after it before Shin smiled bitterly and muttered to himself. "D\*mn! Just how strong is this monster?"

Chapter 980 May Not Be As Simple As It Seems

...

Cough!

Right after Dracula compressed the powerful explosion caused by the colliding powers of Duke Bellion and Vladimir, the vampire duke finally lost strength in his legs and fell to his knees.

He supported his weight by stabbing his broadsword on the broken floor of the battle arena and holding into it.

He vomited some black blood as his undead-like body finally failed to withstand the sacred powers that he originally sealed within his body. He broke that seal earlier so that he could use his Sword Qi in the battle after knowing that his Blood Elemental Mana would not have any effects against his opponent.

The damage that his body had received was a grievous one. It was lethal enough for him to lose his life. After all, he forcefully wielded a sacred power while carrying a cursed vessel. These two conflicting powers did not only greatly damage his body, but also thoroughly broke his core.

This might be the end of his light, but he didn't regret it even for a bit. It would be an honor for him to die battling one of the famous princes of the Ataraxia Empire.

But before he could even have delusions about his final moments and dramatic death, a gentle power suddenly dropped on his body, healing his wounds and reconstructing his broken vessel.

Dracula had healed him and fixed his dying body.

It was not Duke Bellion was not expecting it to have, he just felt tired at that moment – so tired that he wanted to rest.

Everything that he did during his time serving Dracula when they were still Draconian fighting against their fate, during the time when they became a vampire trying to achieve revenge, and during the time they were forced to stay in this place without dying – all of it flashed through his eyes, making him feel all of the accumulated fatigued within his body.

Alongside his healing body, his courage, his will, and his loyalty to his king simultaneously returned, regaining his previous composure.

After that, he stood up and looked at Vladimir, who seemed to be completely fine despite overexerting himself during their final exchange.

Duke Bellion might be able to see it, but as someone who already overcame that particular stage, he could feel that Vladimir was able to summon the chains of restrictions when executing that Ultimate Skill.

He then stood up straight, held his broadsword, and placed it in front of his chest, before giving Vladimir a knight's bow unique to the Draconians.

In this battle, he was not the Vampire Duke Bellion, but the 'Duke Bellion' who was the sword of the Draconian Kingdom.

This battle clearly won by Vladimir, so he deserved to get the highest honor of a knight.

Seeing what Duke Bellion was doing, the vampires who finally freed themselves from the influence of Vladimir's suppression aura, started standing up and did the same bow as the duke. They were honoring Vladimir's victory and acknowledging him as a real knight.

Vladimir, who loved to flaunt how awesome and amazing he was, only swept his gaze at them before turning his attention to Dracula sitting on the throne.

If possible, he wanted to fight this particular vampire too. But unfortunately, he knew that it was impossible with his current strength and abilities, so he gave up the idea and went back to Shin's side.

While he turned himself into a speck of light that was heading over to Shin, a gentle power silently moved toward him and wrapped around his body.

Vladimir suddenly went cautious when he felt that foreign power trying to wrap around his body. But after noticing that it didn't have any ill intention, he quickly let his guard down and disregarded any form of resistance.

No one managed to see what happened due to how quick and short it was.

On the other hand, Shin, who was supposedly paying attention, was currently attracted to the series of notifications that the system had sent him.

\*Ding!\*

System: Congratulations on clearing the quest 'Bloody Ghost'!

System: Due to you scoring a perfect score, you will receive a bountiful reward!

System: Your Crimson Reaper, Vladimir will now be undergoing drastic growth and entering a slumbering phase.

He will be absorbing all of the blood-related abilities and techniques of all of the vampire opponents that fought during the quest.

Slumbering Time: 30 Days (In-game Time)

\*Ding!\*

System: Due to the related quests that are linked to your Elemental Spirit Quest, the additional reward will be added at the end of the ongoing main quest. Your rewards will either increase or decrease depending on the result of the main quest.

\*Ding!\*

System: Congratulations on winning the contest between retainers! As promised, Dracula, the Vampire Primogenitor, will grant you a bountiful reward!

\*Ding!\*

System: Your Main Quest has been triggered! Your quest score will drastically increase!

...

As Shin read through the string of notifications from the system, Dracula, for the first time Shin arrived in the Frozen Castle, finally stood up, causing a series of reactions to all of the vampires.

Right after Dracula stood from the throne, all of the vampires present in the Throne Hall quickly knelt down and lowered their heads.

The sound of the vampires simultaneously kneeling finally snapped Shin out of his thoughts and raised his head. He was about to kneel too when a gentle power suddenly prevented him from doing it and raising him up.

It was at that moment when he heard Dracula say. "There is no need for it. You are not one of my subjects nor a believer of our church, after all."

After that, Dracula crossed his hands behind him before saying. "Since your retainers won, I will give you the rewards that I promised."

"But since we are not from the same race or church, I can't give you the best rewards. But you can tell me what you want and I will look into it if I have it."

Pausing for a moment, he suddenly continued. "You can ask me anything – a skill, a special technique, a secret method, or a martial manual. There are also all kinds of special and rare materials, or even magical items, artifacts, weapons, or anything else – we have everything in our treasury."

Shin raised his eyebrows when he heard the things that Dracula had listed. And when he thought a little deeper into it, there were two things that piqued his interest – rare materials and martial manuals.

There was a rare material that Shin really wanted to get his hands on, meteorites. It was a special ore that he needed to upgrade his [Yamato] into Obsidian Rank, in accordance with the special quest that he received ages ago. And it was the only material he lacked to complete everything that was needed for that quest.

But since Arthur said before they start this Empire Quest that he knew a place where to find meteorites, so Shin was not in a rush to ask for them.

What really caught his attention were the martial manuals that Dracula was talking about. It was not because he wanted to ask for them and learn whatever they contained, but he was more interested in what they signified.

Due to them discovering the existence of the Reality Manifestation, Shin knew that the value of the skills would drop drastically. It was not because they were going to be significant, it was due to them not going to lose in priority.

With the Martial Art Skills and Mentalism Techniques that the players could summon during their respective Reality Manifestation, they could use the skills that they had from their arsenal as a base to re-create their skills within the game.

In this case, the combat and movement techniques that the players learned inside the game would be more significant. Not only they would be used based on their fighting style, but they would also serve as an additional set of techniques during battle.

Based on this, the rarity of the skills would lose most of their purpose, but not entirely. After all, there were some high-ranking skills that were still difficult to execute. Those skills could serve as the foundation of the more complex skills and techniques that the players could not execute in the real world.

At the same time, Shin was thinking that the skills would be more beneficial to the players who could not use the Reality Manifestation, though he was suspecting that they would be the minority within the game since most of the players were either Martial Artists or Mentalists in the real world.

Thinking about that, Shin couldn't help but recall his encounter and battle with Diablo. He first felt that the guy was using something similar to Reality Manifestation, but the more he thought about it, the more he became sure that it was not the case.

He felt that Diablo was relying more on the in-game mechanics instead of his martial prowess from the real world. It was somewhat different from what he was doing, which was the complete opposite.

Shin decided to ask Diablo about that special state when he got the chance.

The skill books might be more beneficial to the players like Diablo in the future. Shin still didn't know.

As for the martial manuals that Dracula had mentioned, Shin couldn't help but relate them to the 'martial manuals' that he knew from the real world. And if that was really the case, then the attention that the game would get from the real world would increase drastically.

Martial Manuals, as its name suggested, were manuals containing a set of Martial Arts and Martial Disciplines.

The Ancient Sects, the newly established schools, the military forces, the Martial Arts and Mentalism Families, and other organizations in the real had their own set of martial manuals that could only be taught to their members.

It became the symbol of that particular organization as well as its pride and secrets.

If the martial manuals that Dracula was talking about were really similar to what Shin knew, then the secret of this 'world' within the game was much deeper than anyone could think.

After recalling the set of sword techniques that Duke Bellion had showcased during the previous battle, Shin became more convinced that it was more likely the case.

Shin frowned his brow more deeply while muttering to himself. "Just what is the history of this game? Why is it created? And are the events and the people here really artificially created?"

A series of questions suddenly flashed through Shin's head as he became more and more intrigued about the game. And due to that, he was tempted to ask for a martial manual to be his reward.

But after contemplating it for a few moments, Shin shook his head and said to himself. "That's not it. I will get more clues about it if I just continue playing the game. Sooner or later, I will uncover the truth hidden behind this game."

After calming his mind and collecting his thoughts, Shin raised his head and finally responded to Dracula. "I know that this may sound rude, your majesty. But can I exchange that reward with a favor instead?"

He might want to confirm his suspicions right now, but he currently had his main priority inside the game. And that was what he was currently choosing right now.