

Second World #Chapter 1861. The Battle Raged On - Read Second World Chapter 1861. The Battle Raged On

Chapter 1861. The Battle Raged On

At Chris' secret garden, Jack and the others watched the events that transpired from the projection inside the lake pavilion. The arrival of the divine factions injected a new fighting spirit into the defenders. They now fought the demons vigorously.

Grace heaved a sigh of relief. "Thank goodness they came," she said.

"Do they have to cut it so close? Why didn't they just be on standby at the walls like everyone else?" Paytowin complained.

"The divine factions have their pride. They are not on anyone's beck-and-call list," Wilted explained. "I bet they only started moving after getting the wind that the battle had started."

"We should just be grateful they come at all," Jeanny said.

"You are welcome," Chris responded.

The others gave him side eyes with annoyed expressions. The dude acted like it was all his accomplishment. Even though it was indeed so, seeing him sit there and relax every day while everyone was putting in the effort made them feel like slapping him on the head.

"They are still greatly outnumbered, though," Four Winds said. He didn't sound as optimistic as the others.

His comment brought the others' excitement down a notch. They reassessed the scene from the projection.

The scene showed the situation at Hydrurond's Northern defense line. Though the Council of Virtus and the Cult of Phobos brought many capable combatants, they were still greatly outnumbered. There was no shortage of powerful demons in the main army Beelzebub brought, so they only balanced the scale by a little.

Beelzebub himself was terrifying. Even being ganged up on by so many eternal-grade combatants, he was still not at a disadvantage. He even started producing stronger and bigger bugs from his body but in fewer numbers. These bugs caused the others to be unable to focus on Beelzebub.

The defenders might seem like they were pushing back, but their fiery zeal couldn't last forever. Realization gradually set in, and they could see that they were still in the

shitshow. They were pushed back again until the defensive walls. The difference now was that they could better defend with the aid of those divine factions.

"You are not wrong," Chris responded to Four Winds' remark. "The divine factions might be strong, but the underworld forces are no pushover. They also have more numbers."

Chris changed the image to show the scene at Hydrurond's Southern defense line. It was pretty much the same. The Council of Elpo boasted the strongest natives in the upperworld, but Satan and the force he brought boasted the strongest natives from the underworld. The situation at this front progressed similarly to the Northern front.

Under Linda's constraint, the defenders remained fighting on the defensive walls. They lost fewer people and killed more demons because of that, but they still found the demons outnumbering them.

The reason they lost fewer people could also be attributed to the rune tree from the mobile fortress. The rune tree was more than two months old now. Its healing AOE roughly covered the size of a town. This allowed its AOE to cover almost the entire battlefield, including Eoranth who had lost a considerable amount of HP.

Eoranth continued to battle Satan with the aid of Honuren and some of his eternal-grade warriors. They couldn't deal meaningful damage to Satan, but they kept Satan away from the walls. Otherwise, Satan could use his Soul and Chaos chain reaction to slay a huge portion of defenders on the walls. The rune tree wouldn't be able to do anything against that since most would die in one hit. Most likely only eternal-grade combatants or mythical grades with levels above 90 could survive.

Those who watched the projection were back to their grim expressions.

Badass suddenly appeared nearby. "Hey, everyone! This is surprising. I didn't expect you all to pass the test faster than me... Hm? Did someone die?"

Badass traced everyone's line of sight and saw the image in the projection. His face became serious, then.

"They should be able to hold on, right?" Jack asked.

"As long as they knew when to retreat, they should," John answered.

"I'm going back to train," Jack uttered. He turned and walked away.

"I will do the same," Jeanny said.

"Me too," Grace said.

Leavemealone and Red Death went with them without a word.

The others followed one by one. Only Badass remained there, clueless. "Where did everybody go?" He asked.

Chris gave Badass a pity look. He stood and told Badass, "Come. Follow me."

*

While The players at Chris' secret garden resumed their training to level up, the battle in Hydrurond continued to rage.

At the Southern defense line, Satan didn't feel threatened by the opponents he faced, but he was still annoyed they stopped him from advancing.

"You, irritating flies! You think I won't use my skill because there are only a few of you?" He roared. The skin on his body changed color. One half was silver, and the other half was dark purple.

"Shit! He is using it!" Tip exclaimed.

Linda hurriedly sent a message to Eoranth. She could do it using the war table, the same as Jack using his King Badge. Eoranth had been briefed earlier when he arrived. He knew of Satan's ultimate skill. During the fight, he had also sent a mind transmission to Honuren informing him about this. Honuren did the same to his comrades who fought with him.

Hence, they immediately took action once Satan exhibited the telltale sign.

All of them used their skills. Some used defensive skills. Some used movement skills to get away. Eoranth, Honuren, and a few other spellcasters cast spells.

"Dieee...!!" Satan yelled. He didn't even care that his demon army was nearby. The huge sphere of silver and dark purple filled the battlefield. The sphere almost reached the walls. Many of the demons were engulfed by it.

When the sphere was gone, the ground was filled with many demon corpses. Even the defenders were shocked that Satan killed so many of his allies without hesitation. Among the demons swallowed by the sphere, only a few of the strongest ones were still alive, but their HP was very low.

As for the ones who fought Satan, they were all powerful combatants and had prepared defensive measures. But even so, several still died. A few who used movement skills failed to flee the area and were killed. Honuren had cast an area defense spell. His spell successfully kept him and four of his allies safe. His allies lost almost half of their HP. Honuren lost a quarter. As for Eoranth, he was nowhere to be seen.

"Sataannn...! Eat this...!!!"

They heard a roaring voice from high above. They looked up and saw Eoranth up there. Rivers of light were flowing into his mouth. Rings filled with runic symbols appeared as his mouth unleashed a massive beam of light.

Eoranth used a newly learned spell to move up there. The spell was Extreme Teleportation. This variant gave a much farther range compared to normal Teleportation. It allowed him to escape the blast radius of the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction. He then prepared his Annihilating Soul Beam when Satan was still unaware of his whereabouts.

The thick beam rushed down at an incredible speed. Satan stared at the incoming beam with scorn. He put his two arms above him. A ring of silver and dark purple appeared. This ring was decorated with scores of runic symbols.

Eoranth's beam slammed into the ring. The ring stopped the beam, but the force pushed Satan downward. His knees slightly buckled. The ground below him cracked and sank. The massive soul energy from the beam poured in all directions since it was unable to pierce through the runic ring.

This energy washed over the demons in the surroundings. Those demons had just survived Satan's ultimate skill. This outpouring of soul energy washed away whatever little HP they had left.

When Eoranth's ultimate skill ended, Satan was still standing. Cracks were seen in the runic ring protecting him, but it was still intact. None of the energy from the Annihilating Soul Beam hit Satan.

Eoranth was having trouble believing the scene. This was his strongest attack. It was still unable to pierce through Satan's defense.

Satan looked at the cracks on the runic ring above him. He no longer had a mocking expression.

"Hmph! Not bad, dragon," Satan said while thrusting his arm at Eoranth. A spell formation formed.

Eoranth felt an invisible force grab him. He was pulled violently toward Satan. While Eoranth learned Extreme Teleportation, Satan had Extreme Telekinesis. This allowed Satan's telekinesis to affect a target from a very long distance.

"Raarrgghhh...!!!" Eoranth used all his strength to resist the pull. His velocity slowed, but he was still heading toward Satan.

A gigantic flaming hand materialized near him. This flaming hand clenched into a fist before slamming into Eoranth's body. While Eoranth was incapacitated by telekinesis, this flaming fist punched him repeatedly.

A torrent of giant silver sabers came assailing Satan. This forced Satan's hold on his Telekinesis to weaken. Eoranth broke free and destroyed the flaming fist with a swing of his tail.

Satan turned his attention to the one who sent the silver sabers. It was Honuren. He and the others were casting spells.

"Harharhar. Come at me any way you like," Satan laughed.

Chapter 1862. Tactical Retreats

The battle at the two fronts raged on. Both sides suffered losses. The losses on the underworld forces were greater since the defenders had advantages on the defensive structures and siege weapons. However, these defensive structures and siege weapons were decreasing as time passed. On the other hand, the underworld forces seemed unending.

After two days since Beelzebub arrived, Ragorth at the North defensive line called for a retreat. If he persisted in fighting, they would lose too many troops. Without troops, the remaining defensive lines would be useless.

The Council of Virtus originally expressed a strong objection to this decision. They refused to retreat and wished to continue fighting. Luckily, Megan talked them out of it.

Mihos and Pallas had learned to respect outworlders after their experience with Jack and Paytowin. Hence, they didn't dismiss Megan's words. This allowed her to make them see reason. A planned retreat was not a defeat. It did not taint their courage.

The whole army started to make their tactical retreat. They had rehearsed the move before, so it was not the defenseless retreat where they were opened to attacks. As they slowly made the retreat, a few members of the Runecraft Society were doing something on the ground.

What they did was deactivate the rune diagrams sealing the hidden traps, caltrops, and war fires previously set up on their retreat path. They used a special deactivation skill where the rune diagrams dissipated with time, allowing the retreating army to safely pass before those traps became active.

The demons continued to chase after the retreating army, unaware that they had stepped on the traps that were about to come to life.

Once the rune diagrams completely dissipated, the demons found their advance halted. The caltrops stopped a great number of them since they were all activated at almost the same time. The traps did the same. Multiple elemental energies assailed and incapacitated the demons. Lots of fiery explosions occurred. The flames from the war

fires turned a large area into a sea of fire. It was as if a massive fire wall had suddenly appeared, cutting the underworld forces from the retreating army.

The demons who had passed through the trap area looked back in consternation. They were at the front, so they had already passed the area when the traps activated, but they were not many.

The defenders were ready. They took advantage of the demons' surprise and sent burst attacks to take out as many of these demons. With their number greatly reduced, the remaining demons didn't dare to continue the pursuit. The defenders now broke into a quick run to put a safe distance between them and the underworld forces.

Ragorth used the Army Haste Magic Scroll to increase the army's whole speed. He gained this magic scroll from the Scroll Masters.

Beelzebub was behind the demons ensnared by the traps. He didn't have the habit of fighting at the frontline. He mostly sent his bugs to do that. He was now gazing at the sea of fire caused by the war fires and the defenders who were quickly disappearing on the horizon.

He didn't show any expression. He cast a spell. The ground where the flames were still burning started to toss around. Some demons were trapped there, but he didn't care. There were plenty of demons behind him. The earthquake from his spells destroyed all the caltrops and the traps, as well as the trapped demons. The field before him was soon cleared.

He gestured for the demons to continue marching. Their speed was neither fast nor slow.

*

Hydruond's Southern defense line fared better compared to its Northern counterpart. Mostly because of Linda's management of the troops. The rate by which the defensive structures and siege weapons were lost was slower. Thus, it was on the third day after Satan arrived before they started retreating. This retreat was also because Satan displayed another of his ultimate powers.

Eoranth's HP had slowly recovered due to the rune tree. With Honuren and his aides, he could pull back a little to recover when things got dangerous. Thus, the battle between them could seemingly proceed endlessly.

This was just an illusion, though. A few members of the Council of Elpo who aided him and Honuren got killed either due to carelessness or when Satan caught them by surprise. Satan had some explosive skills that dealt tremendous burst damage. Even the rune tree became ineffective due to this.

One such skill took Eoranth by surprise. He even almost lost his life. This was what prompted Linda to issue the retreat order.

It happened when Eoranth's HP had recovered back to seventy percent. He charged forward again to engage Satan in direct combat.

Satan's fiery hammer was already reformed. He was swinging the hammer around. Each swing produced a flaming wave that hit the surrounding area. When he saw Eoranth charging over, he threw the hammer in his hand. The flaming hammer spun in the air.

Eoranth spun his body. His tail slapped the flaming hammer away, but then he saw Satan's body change color to half-silver and half-dark-purple.

"Defend!" Eoranth exclaimed.

They were ready. Wilted had informed John that the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction had a cooldown of three days. Everyone near Satan took defensive and evasive moves. Eoranth cast his Extreme Teleportation again. He refrained from using this spell until Satan used the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction. He disappeared and reappeared far away, near the defensive walls.

By then, Satan was already bringing his hand together. The two energy cores of soul and chaos crashed into each other.

"Harharhar. Do you think I am using the same move again? Indeed, I cannot use this skill before because this skill shares the same cooldown as the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction, but this one has a different effect!"

Once he stopped speaking, the two merged orbs in his hands exploded. But unlike before, the explosion didn't create a huge sphere. It instead formed a long column. A column of intertwining silver and dark purple. This column headed toward Eoranth.

This move was not Satan's default skill, so Wilted was not aware of this. This skill was technically Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction, but Satan modified the skill using mana manipulation to such an extent that it became a completely different skill. He focused the skill's destructive power on a single direction. Instead of causing a huge explosion, the energy was shaped into a concentrated column.

Satan called this modified skill the Soul and Chaos Extinguishing Cannon. This skill could hit a target at an extreme distance.

Eoranth was taken aback by this. He put his two arms before him. His wings also came forward and covered him. A giant illusory silver shield materialized. A rune shield filled with runic symbols also appeared behind this soul shield. The rune shield strengthened the soul shield.

The Soul and Chaos Extinguishing Cannon slammed into Eoranth's Soul Shield. The shield flared brightly. Eoranth focused his concentration. He used mana defense to support his soul shield. Despite that, cracks appeared at an alarming rate on the soul shield's surface. The runic shield supporting it from behind was dimming.

Finally, the runic shield fizzled out, and the soul shield gave in. The silver and dark purple energy slammed into Eoranth. Eoranth's wings disintegrated, leaving only their skeletal bones. His huge body was thrown back from the impact and crashed into the walls. The walls crumbled as the overspilled energy from the extinguishing cannon hit. The defenders who happened to be there were killed instantly.

Eoranth was sent flying a huge distance while the energy column continued to wash over him. He only stopped after the energy column weakened around two kilometers from the point of impact. After that, he was still tumbling on the ground due to the powerful momentum.

He didn't get up after he stopped tumbling, which worried everyone. He was too far for anyone to see his HP bar.

Linda didn't wait to find out. She immediately issued the retreat command.

Their tactical retreat plan was the same as the one at the North defense line. The difference was that Satan charged over to pursue the retreating army, unlike Beelzebub who remained at the back. Honuren and the strongest natives from the Council of Elpo swarmed at him to hinder him. Arlcard also helped. They did not worry about Satan's Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction since he just used a skill that shared its cooldown.

Their advantage here was the rune tree, which allowed them to be a little reckless, but a few still lost their lives.

The mobile fortress fired a barrage using its siege weapons as they retreated.

Once they passed the area with the hidden traps, Linda used the Army Haste Magic Scroll. The one she used here was not given by the Scroll Masters but was the few leftover scrolls she gained from World Maker.

When they passed where Eoranth was lying, the dragon rose. His HP was below ten percent. If he didn't use the multiple defenses as he did, he would have died from Satan's attack. Everyone heaved a relief seeing him getting up. Tip hurriedly activated the rune tree's active ability to instantly restore thirty percent of Eoranth's HP. Eoranth couldn't fly due to his damaged wings. He retreated with the others by walking.

Honuren and the others continued to hinder Satan while slowly retreating to prevent him from laying waste to the army.

When Satan saw his army was blocked behind him, he stopped. Honuren and the others quickly flew away to join the retreating army.

Satan could continue and chase the defenders by himself, but there was no telling if the enemies prepared more traps. Not that he was afraid, but it was not wise to head out alone. He stood his ground and gazed at the retreating army.

"Hmph... They are simply postponing the inevitable," he grunted.

Chapter 1863. The Situation on the Other Fronts 1

The underworld forces that headed to Aurebor hit the defensive fronts on the second day after the battle in Hydrurond started.

It was Aurebor's Southern defense line that was hit first. The situation was the same as in Hydrurond. The defenders faced the underworld's vanguard army first.

Unlike the battles in Hydrurond, the divine factions didn't come during the middle of the battle. They were present before the battle started. They joined the defenders around the same time the Council of Elpo and the Council of Virtus arrived on Hydrurond's battlefields. Most likely these divine factions moved at the same time after the first contact between the upperworld and underworld forces.

At the Southern defense line, the Verremor army was bolstered by Pride's faction, the Council of Hybris. The members of this divine faction wore white robes that covered most of their bodies, including their faces. When they moved, glistening black armor was spotted under their robes.

The Council of Hybris was second only to the Council of Elpo, so most members had high levels and grades. This faction had two leaders, who were the only members of this faction with their faces revealed. One was an elf by the name of Petunia. The other was an orc called Balrd. Both were level 95 eternal grades.

Following the Council of Hybris was a gargantuan bird with long iridescent tail feathers. This was the faction's guardian, the Radiant Peafowl. While the tail feathers showed various colors that were constantly changing, its body, wings, and head were blanketed by shining white luminance. This luminance made the peafowl seem as if it was made of light. Its face was unperceivable behind this luminance.

The radiant peafowl was a level 97 eternal grade.

With the aid from the divine faction from the get-go, Verremor's army didn't encounter much trouble from the underworld's vanguard army. Things only got rough when the main underworld forces arrived. The demon army attacking this side was led by Asmodeus.

The devil's chimerical body advanced without giving the defensive walls any mind. One of its three heads, which had a man's face, showed a condescending expression while the demons ahead fought ferociously against the defenders.

Spell formations formed one after another on each of his three heads. His spells mostly had AOE, and they all packed a punch. He continued to walk forward slowly while casting spells non-stop. This brought him close to the defensive walls.

His human head cast a defensive spell that conjured an illusory wall that blocked the ranged attacks coming at him. But since he was close to the wall, he was within reach of the melee players as well. Most of the strongest combatants from the Council of Hybris came at him. His human face smirked when it saw these incoming opponents.

Balrd was among those who rushed to Asmodeus. He carried with him a spiked club that swirled with golden light. While the other faction members took most of Asmodeus' attention, he slipped to the devil's side. But when he swung his spiked club, he found that his target was gone.

Balrd at first thought Asmodeus had cast Teleportation, but then he saw the devil was not that far away. Asmodeus only made a jump to dodge the attack. When he was about to lunge over, he saw Asmodeus' bird forelegs kicked at the ground. The devil shot back at him with incredible speed. Asmodeus' dragon hindlegs kicked him before he had the chance to assume a defensive posture.

He was sent crashing to the ground a great distance away.

Asmodeus' bird forelegs then swung at high speed, hitting Baldr's faction members. All the while, his three heads never stopped casting spells. His serpent tail didn't stay idle. It spewed out lightning bolts. These lightning bolts were not spells. They were standard attacks. They didn't have a cooldown.

Asmodeus aimed these lightning bolts at Petunia, who had been attacking him from a distance. Petunia used a mini-gunbow in one hand while her other hand held a magic wand. Asmodeus' lightning bolts caused her difficulties in casting spells. She could only retaliate using her gunbow, which shot dark-infused bolts.

The combatants of the Council of Hybris were dumbstruck by Asmodeus' prowess. They thought at first the devil was a typical spellcaster. Yes, he could cast many spells at the same time, but they thought that was his only forte. They thought if they could swarm him, they could disrupt his spellcasting like any other spellcasters. They didn't expect Asmodeus to be that fast. The devil had been moving at a slow pace all this time. It turned out he was as formidable as a typical melee combatant.

Not only was Asmodeus a fearsome spellcaster and melee combatant, but his serpent tail also made him a ranged attacker. This made him a hybrid of spellcaster, melee, and

ranged combatant. An all-around jack-of-all-trades. His fighting style was as chimerical as his body.

While the divine faction members were in a quandary about how to deal with Asmodeus, a torrent of different elemental powers washed over the devil from above. From the damage numbers popping up above Asmodeus, they learned that this devil was also a durable tank.

Asmodeus' sheep head looked up and identified his attacker. It was the Radiant Peafowl. Its iridescent tail feathers could release destructive energy of the five elements. Lightning, fire, ice, wind, and earth. It was one of the few beings of this world that possessed more than three elements. Another similar being was Fear's Primordial Hydra.

Furthermore, the Radiant Peafowl outshone the Primordial Hydra in terms of element quantity. This was because while its tails possessed five elements, melee attacks dished out by its main body contained the light element. With such varied elements, few opponents could resist its attacks. However, Asmodeus was no normal opponent. The devil had innate resistance against all elements.

Asmodeus cast a spell that gave him lightning wings. The wings spread and crackled as they flapped. Those who happened to touch them were electrocuted. His huge body shot up at high speed.

The radiant peafowl didn't expect Asmodeus' long-distance traveling speed to also be that fast. Asmodeus was before it already while its feather tails were glowing and preparing another attack.

Asmodeus made a forward roll once he arrived. His draconic hindlegs kicked the radiant peafowl so hard it shot straight down to the ground. The ground the radiant peafowl slammed into formed into a crater. He then cast three spells of devastating power at the peafowl. One of the spells inflicted chaos-element damage. After he was done, he remained floating up there with a mocking grin on his human face. Even though the Radiant Peafowl was the same grade and level as him, he never saw it as a worthy opponent.

All the members of the Council of Hybris felt great rage welling up from inside them. They all had great pride. To be looked down on like this was something they couldn't take. Even when the opponent was superior to them, they fought to the best of their abilities. Their pride demanded that. Even so, they couldn't do anything to give Asmodeus a sense of threat.

After a hard struggle for three days, the defenders were forced to retreat. Most of their battle structures were in ruin. Their siege weapons were destroyed. Insisting to defend this place would be folly.

The radiant peafowl possessed two other trump cards which it used during this three-day battle. The first was when its HP fell below 50%. The white luminance that covered its body turned pitch black. The element of its melee engagements changed to the dark element. In this manner, the radiant peafowl could be said to possess all the elements except for soul and chaos.

At the same time, its ultimate attack also became available. This ultimate attack was called Compound Element Rupture. It discharged the destructive energies of the seven elements into a small localized area. With the aid of Balrd and Petunia, the radiant peafowl managed to land this attack on Asmodeus.

Anything within the struck area underwent tremendous pressure. Even Asmodeus had trouble escaping. But still, the damage he suffered wasn't as severe as the defenders hoped. Asmodeus' tanking ability was more formidable than they first thought.

Quetzalcoatl, who was fighting on another side, came to assist them in battling Asmodeus. Like Eoranth and Syndrillis, he came to this battlefield on his own. Not from summon, so he had no time limit here. But even with his help, they still couldn't threaten Asmodeus.

Balrd, Petunia, and the radiant peafowl survived the three-day battle, but they still lost a considerable number of their faction members. The members of the Council of Hybris had a similar trait to the Council of Virtus. They preferred to fight alone and were unwilling to retreat. Their haughtiness was even worse. This caused them unnecessary deaths even when they had many strong members.

The defender's retreat plan was the same as the one used by the defenders in Hydrurond. Everything was prepared beforehand. Thanks to their pride, the Council of Hybris retreated the last. This let many of the defenders survive.

After the underworld forces were stopped by the hidden traps, Asmodeus didn't charge ahead to pursue the retreating enemies. He just stood and watched. His human face displayed a condescending expression toward the retreating army. The same expression he displayed when he arrived three days earlier.

Chapter 1864. The Situation on the Other Fronts 2

The Aurebor's Northern defense line was hit half a day after its Southern counterpart. The devil who led the underworld forces on this side was Mammon. Mammon was a devil similar to Satan. He preferred direct engagement. He fought on the front line while his two shadow wolves wreaked havoc by his side.

Thanks to Jack's gold coins, Nova managed to raise a decent army. Even though many of them were still low levels, they were all determined to defend their home.

This Aurebor army was supported by two divine factions, the Council of Charites and the Devotee of Passion. They were league factions who worshipped the Goddess of Joy and the Goddess of Love.

Too bad the Council of Charites had been splintered by the incident with Euphosine. Their condition was even worse than the Council of Virtus. They lost two of their three leaders. Now, only Talia remained. The remaining members were only one-third compared to when the faction was still intact. After Jack built Joy's Recreational Hub, they recruited some members, including outworlders, but they were still far from the glory of their former selves.

Fortunately, Love's faction was here to lend support. The members of the Devotee of Passion were all deeply passionate individuals. Their ardors boosted everyone's enthusiasm, causing morale to rise even against fearsome enemies like the demons. Most of their members were also potent spellcasters, with more than half being decent healers. This helped the soldiers survive a long fight.

The Devotee of Passion brought their guardian, unlike the Council of Charites who lost theirs a long time ago. Their faction guardian, the Soul Swan, was another gigantic avian like the Radiant Peafowl. It healed those in the vicinity simply with its presence, similar to the effect of Grace's legendary set armor. The Soul Swan's passive healing ability even covered a much longer range than Grace's armor.

Even though the Soul Swan didn't possess explosive power, all its attacks contained soul damage. So, all the enemies suffered from its attacks received full damage.

This defensive line was also supported by one of Themisphere's two mobile fortresses. The mana cannons and other siege weapons on the fortress gave the army additional firepower.

With Jack's approval, Nova was inside this mobile fortress. Inside the mobile fortress, she was safe to command her troops using a war table.

Many spellcasters and ranged players of Wicked Witches were stationed on the battlements of this mobile fortress, allowing them to carry their attacks safely. One of them was Selena. She cast her mega spell, Ring of Hellfire, under the protection of the mobile fortress' shield.

Compared to the other fronts, Aurebor's Northern defense line was the one that lasted the longest. They were only forced to retreat after five days since the battle started. This pissed Mammon off.

Mammon was hindered by the strongest members of the Devotee of Passion throughout these five days. Although he killed a score of them, it was not as many as he desired. This divine faction's recovery abilities were above the norm. It allowed them to survive even when a devil was gunning for them.

*

The battlefield on Palgrost was the latest to happen. The Northern front was hit three days after the Hydrurond's fronts. The battle here started around the time Linda signaled a retreat at Hydrurond's Southern front.

This Northern front was hit by the underworld forces led by Belphegor. The fat devil stomped over the battlefield using his huge body. His icy aura and infernal ice breath froze most of those who dared to come near him.

He also had nine icy orbs circling him. These icy orbs could turn into large ice weapons, similar to Jack's glowing orbs when he was using the War God Manifestation. With these ice weapons assaulting enemies around him, he didn't need to move much. He just watched lazily as the enemies around him died.

The Sangrod army defended this front. Horatio commanded his army with his two relic marshalls, Vanessa Armand and Ezekiel Fanchon. Their country guardian, Jygorth, flew here to support them after leaving Broidireg's burial place.

Out of the other countries still commanded by native sovereigns, Sangrod was the one that still had most of his army intact. Hence, this front had sufficient soldiers manning it. Even so, the underworld forces still outnumbered them.

Like the other fronts, they were helped by a divine faction. The divine faction that came here was one worshipping one of the bad Gods, the Cult of Lytta. This league faction's members devoted their lives to the Goddess of Wrath. Their warriors all wore crimson armor and scarlet robes.

They were fierce warriors, and every member could cast spells. Their skills and spells were all offense-oriented. They fought with unnatural desires to obliterate their enemies. So fierce were they in their offense that they didn't care if they hit their allies. They just threw AOE skills and spells without consideration.

This angered the Sangrod soldiers, but Horatio held them back. It would be a disaster if they fought among themselves when the enemies already had an upper hand. The best he could do was command Darius, who was operating the war table, to steer their army away from the members of this divine faction. They let the Cult of Lytta fight by themselves. The cult didn't seem to care. They preferred it that way.

This cult brought their faction guardian with them, the Montu Spider. It was the giant crimson spider Red Death saw when she was in Wrath's lair. The Montu Spider was a level 96 eternal grade. It shot crimson webs that entangled many demons, leaving them powerless. The bound demons received continuous dark-element damage from the webs.

The Montu Spider had a hypnotic ability. It could mind-control an enemy lower level than it, as long as it was not a mythical or eternal grade. Yet, it could only mind-control one enemy at a time, similar to the beholders.

Its eight legs ended with sharp pikes that dealt fire damage. It could also cast spells. Some of its spells were chaos-element.

Seven leaders led the Cult of Lytta's members. These seven leaders were the seven maids Red Death saw serving the Goddess of Wrath in her lair. Their appearance on this battlefield was different from when Red Death saw them. In Wrath's lair, they wore scanty clothes that revealed their bodies. Here, crimson armor covered their bodies. Everyone could still see their alluring curves behind the armor, though.

The seven maids were from seven different races. The leader of the seven was the one from the draconian race. She went by the name Likokira. She was a level 95 eternal grade. The other six maids were mythical grades. Their levels ranged from level 90 to 95.

The Montu Spider and the seven maids tackled Belphegor. Despite the Montu Spider being on the same level as Belphegor, it was still evident from the first contact that Belphegor was significantly stronger.

The Montu Spider tumbled back when its bladed legs clashed with Belphegor's arms. The seven maids cast spells and sent ranged attacks from a safe distance while moving at high speed around the devil.

Belphegor stopped advancing. He sat on the ground, which sunk due to the weight of his heavy body. He let his ice aura and the nine flying ice weapons assail his opponents. He himself just looked at them lazily.

The Montu Spider shot its crimson web. Belphegor used his arms to block the fast-spraying web. The sticky web wrapped around his arms. The Montu Spider had a tug contest with Belphegor via the web, effectively locking the devil's arms. Belphegor didn't seem to care, though.

The flying ice weapons chased after the seven maids, but the maids were fast, especially Likokira. When Jygorth came to join the fight against Belphegor, Likokira used the distraction to slip through the ice weapons using her crimson wings and shot Belphegor using her flaming bow.

Belphegor's lazy face showed a slightly irritated expression. He then burped. Following the burp, Belphegor's upper body bloated. The swelling moved from his chest to his neck, then to his mouth. His mouth stretched wide as a fleshy ball popped out of it. This fleshy ball landed hard on the ground, cracking it. It then broke. A demon with an appearance similar to Belphegor came out of the ball.

This miniature Belphegor grabbed one of the ice weapons and used it to cut the crimson web binding Belphegor's arms. With the ice weapon, it rushed toward the Montu Spider and started clashing with it.

Belphegor didn't stop there. The swelling repeated, and he produced two more fleshy balls. Another two mini-Belphegors hatched from the balls. They also grabbed the ice weapons and chased after the flying maids and Jygorth.

Belphegor continued sitting on the ground while lazily watching the battle ensuing around him. One little detail the defenders didn't notice was that after Belphegor spewed out the three fleshy balls, his bulging belly was slightly deflated.

The battle on this front lasted five days before the defenders retreated. Not because of the competency of the defenders, but because Belphegor didn't truly show much enthusiasm in breaching the defenses. He mostly sat back and let the demon army do the job.

When the pursuing demons were stopped by the traps, Belphegor again sat and waited until the traps were exhausted and the army could move again. Then only did he resume his march sluggishly.

Chapter 1865. The Situation on the Other Fronts 3

The underworld forces hit Palgrost's Southern defensive front one day after its Northern front. Leviathan's vast body loomed over the marching demon hordes. The sight of this colossal devil was unmissable. Even when the defenders were fighting the demon's vanguard troops, their attention was quickly drawn to the huge devil coursing through the sky.

However, before Leviathan came near the defensive walls, he was blocked by another being not smaller in size. This being was a colossal whale with a pair of feathered wings. The wings were too small for its huge body, though. They were more likely just decorations. What truly carried the whale in the sky was the large amount of water floating around the whale. The whale was cruising off this water as it moved.

This whale was Harmony Keepers' guardian, the Caelum Whale. It was level 96 eternal grade.

The water around the Caelum Whale was an ability similar to Gumeru's Dual-world Domain, except this was the whale's natural ability. It had no cooldown or duration. Water would continue to generate around the Caelum Whale without it needing to exert any effort.

Jack had encountered this whale before, even if he didn't realize it. When he was diving into the sinkhole in the lake at the Village of Peace to get the material for his pet armor, he saw this whale, or more accurately, he saw the whale's eye.

Riding atop the Caelum Whale was Meratis, the chief of the Village of Peace. She was, however, not the seemingly frail old woman Jack and the others met when they visited the village. The current Meratis wore a lavish green robe and carried a long staff with winds constantly swirling around it. Her countenance didn't show her usual calmness, but a gritty determination of one who prepared to die to defend her belief.

Next to her was a hairy humanoid creature with a dog's face. This dogman was Sharpsnout, Whitebeard's friend, whom Jack and the others had also met in the Village of Peace. Except they only saw him as a normal German Shepherd. If a dog that talked could be considered normal, that was. Sharpsnout in this form was a level 80 eternal grade. He also wore medium armor and carried a long spear.

On the ground, many villagers from the Village of Peace were fighting alongside Palgrost and Themisphere soldiers. When they first came, President Thelgrun was confounded seeing so many animals arriving with the villagers. Not to mention, all of them were weak. He didn't chase them away, though. Despite being weak, they were members of a divine faction. Furthermore, they brought a good supply of Grace of Tranquility potions.

Only after the battle started that the defenders see the real power of Harmony Keepers' members. All the animals transformed into their true forms, similar to what Whitebeard did. As for the villagers, it was their equipment that transformed. Their levels and grades also increased exponentially after those transformations.

Thelgrun, who was using the war table inside Themisphere's mobile fortress, was grateful he didn't treat these divine faction members rudely when they arrived.

With the cooperation between the Themisphere army, the Palgrost army, and the Harmony Keepers, they had no problem defending against the underworld's vanguard army. However, their worry soon returned when they saw the arrival of the underworld's main army led by Leviathan.

As the demon army stormed forward, Leviathan came face to face with the Caelum Whale. Despite the whale being similar in size, Leviathan didn't put it in his eyes. He proceeded forward as if he didn't see the huge whale blocking his path.

When the two behemoths came close to one another, the Caelum Whale made the first move. The water around it became violent. The water charged toward Leviathan while making big splashes.

Tons of water moving at that speed could topple any ship, but all it did was stop Leviathan. The devil was still annoyed for getting stopped, though. He tried controlling the water that splashed at him without any success. He might be able to manipulate natural water, but the water generated by Caelum Whale was not natural. The water only obeyed Caelum Whale's command.

Pissed off by his failure, he opened his mouth wide and started sucking all the water. This went on for some time. Water kept on materializing on Caelum Whale's side. It was then devoured by Leviathan. No matter how much water Leviathan swallowed, it didn't bother him. His belly was like a bottomless abyss.

The Caelum Whale couldn't continue like this. Despite it seemingly making no effort when generating the water, this act consumed its MP. It would be a problem if it ran out of MP and could no longer generate water to cruise through the sky.

It swam forward. Spell formation started forming on its head. At the same time, Meratis also started casting a spell when Leviathan came into range.

While still casting, the huge body of the Caelum Whale slammed into Leviathan. This interrupted Leviathan's devouring process. Caelum Whale's spell formation was completed and it conjured four giant tentacles made of water. The tentacles entangled Leviathan's body.

Meratis also completed her spell. A massive tornado pillar shot forward and crashed into Leviathan. Sharpsnout jumped forward. Wings from a wing tool spread on his back. His spear emitted a thick light as he rushed at Leviathan's head.

Leviathan roared. An explosion of violent wind erupted from his body. These violent winds produced uncountable wind blades that cut everything around him. The tentacles were cut to pieces. Sharpsnout had no choice but to cancel his offense and flew away as he used his spear to deflect the wind blades that assailed him.

Leviathan returned a body slam into Caelum Whale's body. The whale bounced violently from the impact. From that one impact, it was clear who was stronger.

Leviathan pushed on for the offense by taking a bite using his enormous mouth. The Caelum Whale's body was covered by thick protective plates like Leviathan, but not on the same level. The plate armor on Caelum Whale cracked after a single bite. Meratis cast spells to force Leviathan to back away, but the devil didn't let go of his bite. Damage number continued to appear above the whale as the cracks on its armor continued to expand.

Leviathan only let go of his bite after a thick yellow fume slammed into his head. He turned to the attacker while the Caelum Whale put a distance.

The yellow fume was Tiemezzys' divine earth breath. He was fighting on the other side. He came over after seeing Leviathan. He knew they would need to work together to stop Leviathan's advance. If this devil reached the defensive walls, he could easily destroy them simply by dropping his body on them.

Tiemezzys used his Divine Stone Gaze when Leviathan stared at him. However, Leviathan was unfazed by this skill. Leviathan's huge mouth formed what looked like a

weird sneer when Tiemezzys showed his consternation. Tiemezzys didn't expect any being could resist his eye skill.

In retaliation, a condensed jet of water shot out of Leviathan's mouth. This was not his skill. This was Caelum Whale's water which he swallowed earlier. After processing the water inside his body, he purged Caelum Whale's influence from the water. It could now manipulate this water.

Even though it was not a skill, the jet of water still produced high damage when it hit Tiemezzys. Leviathan then released all the water he had swallowed. This massive water slammed into his four attackers and pushed them back. He then laughed at them.

Tiemezzys was furious, but Meratis stopped him from being reckless. Meratis started giving commands that allowed the four of them to cooperate better.

However, even with the four working together, they could hardly stop Leviathan. Other powerful combatants had to come and help. They lost a considerable number of these combatants in the process. Some were sucked into Leviathan's belly and died because they couldn't escape. Meratis asked all melee combatants not to approach Leviathan after that incident, including Sharpsnout. The loyal dogman was unwilling to leave Meratis, but he complied after Meratis commanded him sternly. He went and fought the other demons.

The melee roles were burdened on Tiemezzys and Caelum Whale. They were too massive to be swallowed by Leviathan. The others supported them by using ranged attacks. Their HP went down rapidly because they suffered from Leviathan's focused attention. Thankfully, many members of Harmony Keepers were excellent healers. They managed to keep the two alive until the defenders retreated three days later.

When the pursuing demons were stopped by the traps, Leviathan continued flying forward. He didn't care even if he was alone. Tiemezzys, Meratis, and the Caelum Whale ended up having to fight him nonstop during the retreat. More ranged combatants who could fly joined the struggle. This alleviated the pressure from the three and helped heal the three's HP.

Leviathan only stopped one day after the defenders retreated. He stayed in the sky and looked at the retreating defenders with contempt. A distance away, he saw rows of defensive structures similar to the ones his army had destroyed earlier. There were even some small forts along the defensive walls here. He understood then the defenders would make another stand here.

He snickered. 'What a pointless thing to do,' he thought to himself.

Chapter 1866. Form Manipulation

The defenders in each country continued with the same method. They gave the demons a fierce fight supported by defensive structures, traps, and siege weapons. When those supports were almost exhausted, they made a tactical retreat.

This way, they cut down the demons' number while they kept their losses to the minimum. However, after retreating several times, the underworld forces still appeared as overwhelming as when the defenders first laid eyes on them. These demons didn't seem to decrease.

A lot of the prepared defensive lines had been destroyed. This included some of the country's forts, which the defenders utilized for their defensive stands. In the end, they still had to retreat and let these forts crumble.

Several cities close to the border had become wastelands. The demons didn't let the settlements go. Luckily, the inhabitants had been evacuated. They evacuated to the Eastern part of the three countries as the defenders held the demons' march. But judging by how the war was proceeding, they might need to brave the borders and run to the Eastern countries like Themisphere and Verremor.

After almost one month since the underworld forces crossed into Hydrurond's territory, they almost covered half the country. They were nearing the capital, Messephyria, which still had visible scars from previous wars. The defenders were halting the demons' advance not far from this capital, but it wouldn't be long before they had to retreat again.

Aldryth issued the command to evacuate the capital. She was unwilling, but she had no choice. She also issued a nationwide evacuation order. The remaining land in Hydrurond would turn into battlefields. The non-combat league factions continued to busy themselves constructing defensive lines along the remaining half of the country.

Hydrurond's commoners crossed the border into Themisphere. Luckily, they had the support from the Trade Association. This league faction had many large trading caravans with enchantments that warded most monsters. They also knew the safest paths to take when crossing the border. Hence, Aldryth didn't need to spare her troops to guard these commoners during the evacuation.

The situation in Palgrost and Aurebor was roughly the same. Palgrost's commoners started evacuating towards Sangrod, while Aurebor's commoners moved toward Verremor. All the while, they continued to train new soldiers to send to the battlefield to replace the ones who died.

Everyone's morale was low. They felt like they were only delaying the inevitable. When the demons reached the Eastern countries, where would they flee then?

Despite the low morale, no soldiers fled. This was because they knew there was no point in fleeing. They would still die if the defenders lost. There was nowhere to run to.

Chris let Jack and Four Winds use his Anywhere Portal to return to their respective capitals. The two returned to use their monarch powers to perform another round of heavy recruitment. They also sent the previous month's recruits to the frontlines. The ancient champions who died and returned to life in the Ancient Beacon Tower followed these recruits back to the battlefield.

After doing the recruitment, they contacted Chris via the trial discs, and Chris teleported them back to his secret garden. They then resumed their training.

*

It had been two months since the players arrived at Chris' secret garden. Jack was currently inside Chris' training dungeon. He was in supreme dragon form. He was the only player here. Chris' training portal sent everyone to different dungeons for solo training to maximize the exp gain.

Jack watched the incoming wave of goblin knights. Their number was alarming. He was as if a single person facing an army. Each of the goblin knights was level 94. Their grades ranged from special elites to mythical grades. But even against such an army, there was no worry on his face. On his left hand was the War God's Shield.

The goblin knights threw the javelins in their hands. The massive number of javelins covered the sky as they flew in an arc toward Jack. The mass of javelins covered a large area. There was no place to flee unless Jack used Teleportation.

But Jack didn't cast the spell. He put his War God's Shield to his front. Although the War God's Shield was larger than Magic Shield, it was still not large enough to cover his entire body. Before the javelins arrived, his War God's Shield suddenly expanded. The javelins struck the golden shield but were unable to penetrate it.

"You are getting better at manipulating the skill's form," Peniel said.

While Jack trained here to increase his levels, he also practiced the next phase of mana manipulation.

The first or the beginner phase of mana manipulation was controlling the skills' movements. This was mostly done to range skills. By influencing the skill's trajectory, the user could move the skill differently than it normally would. This ability helped the skills to become more accurate, or in certain cases, intentionally missing the target.

The second phase of mana manipulation was empowering the skills, making them inflict higher damage than they normally would. In the case of defensive skills like the War God's Shield, the ability made the shield sturdier to withstand more punishments.

The third and seemingly final phase was modifying the skills' form. This was foreign to regular mana manipulation practitioners. Even Domon wasn't aware of this phase. This phase was not an ability that was attainable in the real world.

Jack came to know about this phase because he had experienced it when he was in the mana awakening state. During that state, he could manipulate all his skills at will. He couldn't do it again when he was back to normal. But through these two months of training, he had slowly practiced and tried to do what he did during the mana awakening state. He was thrilled when he found out he could, but he needed a lot of practice, and the results were also limited.

This ability to modify a skill's form was also the one Satan used to modify his Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction into a seemingly different skill, the Soul and Chaos Extinguishing Cannon.

"It is a far cry from when I was in the mana awakening state," Jack said. "The shield becomes weaker. If I don't empower it using mana manipulation, it won't be able to perfectly block these javelins."

"That mana awakening was abnormal, to begin with. You can't expect to get the same result," Peniel said.

While the War God's Shield became large and could cover his whole body, it also weakened. The originally thick War God's Shield became thinner in its enlarged form. What happened here was similar to the Law of Conservation of Mass. The mass of an element at the beginning of a reaction would have an equal mass at the end of the reaction. In other words, the mass of the War God's Shield remained the same when it was enlarged. Thus, it became weaker.

As opposed to the time when Jack was in the mana awakening state, his magic shield was enlarged way beyond its natural size. Even then, its power was not only not weakened, it was much more powerful than normal. This meant he could break the natural rules while he was under mana awakening.

"I feel like I have only brushed the surface when I first used mana awakening," Jack said. "I felt it better when I entered that state the second time. Unfortunately, I was in a civilian's office. I couldn't do any tests. I think if I can enter mana awakening again, I can win against Azzarilth all by myself, even if I'm still on the same level as when I fought her."

"You can think about it later. Those goblins have arrived," Peniel informed.

"I know," Jack said. He activated the War God Manifestation.

A brilliant golden glow covered his body. The golden glow on his two claws lengthened outward, making them look like two very long swords. This glow suddenly retracted until

it was the same length as his normal sword. In exchange, the glow became so dense that his claws appeared as if they were holding two shining swords.

What he did was the opposite of what he did to the War God's Shield. Instead of enlarging, he shrunk the energy from the War God Manifestation that powered his weapons. He no longer had the extra reach. But in exchange, the power became focused.

He swung his shining swords at the first goblin knights that arrived. His swords moved in perfect arcs. They accurately sliced where the goblins' necks were. After his swords passed those necks, the heads detached, and the goblins' HP zeroed in an instant.

Jack's slash just now was a normal attack. It was not even done using a martial art. The focused power within his swords had become so dense that they could cause wounds even from standard attacks.

Jack's swords continued to dance. He was now using his Formless Flowing Sword Style. With his advanced Sword's Heart, each of his slashes hit the goblins' fatal parts. He killed one goblin with one slash. The massive goblin troops fell one by one when he went past them.

The ten golden orbs in the aureole on his back didn't stay idle. They flew out and turned into ten swords. They then shrunk into dagger-size, but their golden shine became brighter as they did. These ten golden daggers flew around him. They pierced the goblins' weak points and killed them with one hit.

Chapter 1867. Pinnacle Skills

The same as when Jack first learned the beginning phase and the empowering phase, he needed to practice the skills to be able to manipulate their forms.

At his current stage, he could empower his skills using mana manipulation even if that skill was a new skill he first used. That was how advanced his mana manipulation was already. However, to modify a skill's form, he was not that good yet.

He could only modify a limited number of skills he had practiced throughout these two months. The War God Manifestation and most of the skills from the God of Courage's Divine Armor were the ones he practiced the most.

Aside from those skills, he also learned to modify many of his basic skills as they were the easiest to modify. Like the War God's Shield, he could enlarge his Magic Shield or shrink it to better block a focused attack.

He could modify his Electric Bolts and turn them into as thin as needles. When he did that, his Electric Bolts gained powerful penetrative effects, allowing them to ignore the target's defense.

He learned to transform his ice bullet into a sharp cone and made it spin as it flew. This basically turned the spell into an ice drill. It dealt higher damage and caused the target's defense to lower.

His Wind Slash was modified into chakram shapes. With the wind energies revolving in circles, they hit the targets multiple times, like cutting saws. This caused the target rapid damage, as opposed to the one-time damage under the skill's normal condition.

He also practiced this form manipulation on his stronger elite skills. But the stronger the skills, the harder it was to modify them. He didn't have the time to practice all those skills. He was lucky enough that he could practice while increasing his levels. If not for his Hundred Synchronous Thoughts, he wouldn't have been able to do both at the same time.

Exp points continued to stream into Jack as he killed more and more goblin knights. What made Chris' training dungeon special were several factors.

The first factor was the spawned monsters always had their levels adjusted to the same level as the player. In this way, the player would never face a monster lower level than them. Thus, the leveling pace was maintained.

The second factor was the number of spawned monsters adjusted to the speed they were killed. The faster Jack killed the monsters, the more monsters would spawn. This went on indefinitely until the system detected the killing getting slowed, which meant the player was having difficulty. The system would then reduce the number of spawned monsters. This allowed the player to get the maximum efficiency based on their killing rate. The goblin knight army was the result of Jack killing the goblins at an incredible rate for a long time.

The third factor was the monsters would always be low-HP types but granted decent exp points.

The fourth and final factor was the time in this dungeon was two times faster than in the outside world. This effectively gave the players using this dungeon twice the leveling speed of a normal training dungeon. Combined with the three earlier factors, the leveling speed increased even further.

With Jack's killing speed, this training dungeon was perfect for him. Even if he had three classes, his leveling speed was not slow compared to the others who used the same training dungeon.

All three of his classes were currently level 94. He received new skills on all three when he reached level 90.

His Void Sword Saint gave him a new skill called Void-tearing Slash.

*

Void-tearing Slash, level 1/20 (Active skill, melee, requires sword)

Rips the fabric of space, dealing 1000% chaos damage to everything within the ripped space. Ignores the target's defense.

Ripped space produces a strong pulling power. Those who cannot escape the area receive 100% chaos damage each second. The ripped space lasts for 10 seconds.

Those who are sucked into the void receive instant-kill effects.

Those who survive receive void marks. Any damage they receive is increased by 10%, and their stats are reduced by 5% until the battle ends.

Those who survive cannot be healed or resurrected for 5 minutes.

Cooldown: 3 hours

Stamina: 400

*

When he used the skill. His sword ripped open a large tear. The tear didn't only exist where his sword slashed but extended to almost twenty meters long. The tear was three meters wide. What was behind this tear was a chaotic space filled with turbulent energies.

All the goblin knights within the area received large chaos damage. The armor they wore was useless against the chaotic energy generated by the tear. A strong sucking force pulled all the goblin knights in the vicinity into the tear. Those who fell into the tear turned into dust. Only rare elites and mythical grades were able to resist the pull.

The mythical grades managed to force themselves away from the tear, but soft dark clouds clung onto their bodies. These were the void marks.

Rare elites could resist the pull, but they couldn't move away. They ended up hanging just beyond the tear in stasis. This opened them up to Jack's follow-up attack. Jack cast Electric bolts. Instead of turning these bolts into tiny needles, he shaped them into balls. These electric bolts didn't have penetrative ability and dealt lower damage, but they possessed knockback power.

The electric balls knocked into the rare elites and threw them into the tear. They turned into dust, the same as those who preceded them.

As for his Time Sage, he gained a new spell called Time Stop when he reached level 90.

*

Time Stop, level 1/20 (Active spell)

Stop the flow of time.

Duration: 1 second

Cooldown: 6 hours

Mana: 500

*

The spell was an eight-rune spell. Even though the duration was only one second, everything stopped when he cast the spell. Everything, except for him and Peniel. The two of them were the only ones moving in the whole world.

When he combined this spell with Superior Acceleration, he had enough time to dish out some serious damage in that one second when everything stopped.

His Beast Monarch also gave him a new skill when he was level 90. It was the last skill from this class. Only pinnacle special classes gave another skill past level 90. The final skill of Beast Monarch was Monarch Form.

*

Monarch form, level 1/20 (Passive skill)

Beast form lasts indefinitely and no longer has a cooldown.

+100% defense and additional +10% HP during beast form.

*

He had been using this skill constantly in this training dungeon. Without any duration or cooldown, he could remain in supreme dragon form for as long as he wished.

He also got used to his new special class, the Void Sword Saint, within these two months. Most of its skills had short cooldowns, so he could use them rather often.

His void slash could hit any target as long as they were within the skill's range. Even if the target was protected by another monster, it didn't matter. The void slash hit directly

at the target spot. It couldn't be blocked. It could only be dodged. But to dodge, one needed to have very good mana sense and extremely fast reflexes. These goblin knights didn't have either, even the mythical grades. Hence, Jack always used this skill on the goblin knights who tried to retreat to recover their HP.

His Void Walk let him be like a ghost who teleported instantly around the battlefield. He could teleport five times with the max-level Void Walk. Every time he did, he caused space instability at the place where he appeared. This stunned the enemy. Even for the mythical-grade goblin knights who had the natural ability to resist stun, they still entered an imbalanced state. Jack was free to hit them at this time.

The Void Walk's cooldown was only two minutes. He moved around the battlefield with this skill, causing havoc wherever he appeared.

His Void Defense stopped almost every attack, even AOE spells. The reason was his max-level Void Defense lasted thirty seconds. Most powerful AOE blasts happened instantly, while ones with a duration rarely lasted half a minute. With Void Defense, the spell would fail to reach him. Even when the spell detonated right next to him, the skill would make it as if the blast was trying to reach him for half a minute long. If the spell didn't last more than half a minute, it would expire before the effect hit him.

Void Cage was similar to the Void-tearing Slash where it ripped the fabric of space. It didn't cause instant-kill effects on those who were sucked into the chaotic space. However, its AOE was much larger than Void-tearing Slash. Additionally, after comparing the two skills, Jack knew the pulling force of Void Cage was stronger. The mythical-grade goblin knights who could escape the Void-tearing Slash were unable to do so when they were trapped by Void Cage. He surmised only eternal grades with the same level as he could do so.

Chapter 1868. Mana Purifier

While Jack was doing his best slaying the goblin knights in droves, his nemesis was relaxing in his guild headquarters.

Master did not need to do anything. He was only waiting for time. He had just finished fusing with one of the two remaining divine treasures. The only one left was the Ice God Sphere. He only needed to wait for another month, and he would finally attain his goal.

All that he ever dreamed of was finally within reach. The only thing standing between him and his dream was time. He was a patient person, but this one month felt like it was too long. He felt restless. Aside from being patient, he was also rational. He didn't expect himself to become this nervous when everything was within grasp. This was unlike him.

He was now standing atop the balcony of the tallest tower in his guild headquarters. He was gazing at the Eastern horizon. His face didn't show any expression, but many thoughts ran inside his mind.

His train of thought was interrupted when he heard a voice from behind him.

"You called?" Sizhad Ruust asked.

"How is the advance of the underworld forces?" Master asked without turning back.

"They are halfway through Hydrurond, Aurebor, and Palgrost," Sizhad reported. Since his guild was under Master's leadership, his guild members were not treated as hostiles by the underworld forces. They were able to roam the area the underworld had conquered. Sizhad had tasked his members to track the demons' progress. Thus, he had precise information.

"The defenders are doing better than I expected," Master remarked.

"The demons advanced the furthest in Hydrurond. They are more than halfway in already. The capital of that country has been deserted. Maybe in one or two more weeks, the demons should have taken that entire country."

Master was silent after hearing the report.

Sizhad was about to ask if Master still needed anything from him when Master turned to him. "I have a task for your guild members," Master said.

"A task?" Sizhad was under the impression that all they needed to do was wait. Nothing could get to them with the underworld forces at large. Their enemies were too busy defending against the underworld forces to cause them any trouble.

"Mistress is right about one thing. If the underworld forces win, there is nothing left for us to conquer," Master said.

"Are you suggesting... We stab the underworld forces in the back?" Sizhad asked.

"It's not yet time for that. Not until I attain divinity," Master said. "But we can do something to slow them down, prolonging their conflict with our enemies."

"I thought we only need to wait one more month?" Sizhad asked.

"Many things can happen in a month. The corrupted mana had covered further than the demons' advance. The defenders may give up due to their constant losses. If their defense crumbles, the demons will speed up their march. I don't want to spend too much time rebuilding the world I rule."

"So... How do you suggest we slow the demons without antagonizing them?" Sizhad asked.

Master took out something that looked like a raw jewel and offered it to Sizhad. Sizhad accepted the jewel. He used his Inspect and learned the jewel's name was Mana Purifier.

"This thing can purify mana in a large area. This is a special weapon designed as a combat tool when the underworld forces invade. It only drops from monster kills after the main underworld portal is activated, and the drop rate is extremely low. It will also only drop from high-level monsters. In the original design of the game, some players might still afford to go monster-grinding even when the underworld forces invaded. They didn't have that luxury here. All the high-level players are required to fight the demon army."

"So, how do you get this one?" Sizhad asked. He hadn't seen Master leave the headquarters since the main underworld portal was opened.

"I already got this Mana Purifier long before the demons entered this upperworld," Master answered. "There was one certain method to get this item before the main underworld portal opened. I took it the first chance I got. This is another contingency I keep in case I need to go up against the underworld forces."

"You said this is a combat tool. How effective is it if we only use one?" Sizhad asked.

"I not only have one," Master said. He took out twenty more similar jewels.

Sizhad didn't ask how Master got all these Mana Purifiers. He knew about the divine treasures' abilities and knew Master had fused with the Book of Creation. They were not short on mana cores. Copying this Mana Purifier was not a problem.

"Spread your members to the three countries where the battles take place. Have them use these Mana Purifiers behind the underworld's main armies," Master said. "With the corrupted mana gone, the demons coming out of the underworld portal will have difficulty reinforcing the main armies. With their reinforcement halted, their aggression will weaken. This will also slow the corrupted mana spread. The corrupted mana will refill the purified areas before resuming their spread to the rest of the world."

Sizhad nodded.

"Make sure your members are not seen by the demons when they use these Mana Purifiers," Master warned. "If they do, they will no longer be considered friendlies by the demons. If that happens, the demons will come and ask for blood. I will have to throw your guild out then."

Sizhad frowned. Master was giving them a task with such a great risk? If they were caught, they would be the ones who got burned.

Master understood Sizhad's expression. "If your members are as expertly as you claim, this task shouldn't be a problem. Don't worry. I will make sure you are greatly rewarded once this world is mine."

Sizhad grunted. It wasn't like he had a choice to begin with. His and his members' future were entirely relying on Master by this point. He stored the Mana Purifiers and turned away. He walked past Mistress who was standing near the door. The two simply exchanged glances without saying anything.

Mistress walked to Master after Sizhad left.

"Did you find it?" Master asked.

Mistress replied by taking out two items that looked like strange compasses.

Master grinned while accepting the compasses. "Good! This should bring our timetable forward." He uttered.

He stored the compasses and returned to his thoughts while gazing at the horizon. Mistress remained there to see if Master had any further instructions. After a long silence, she decided to leave and let Master enjoy his solitude.

*

Jack and Four Winds returned to their respective capitals for the second time using Chris' Anywhere Portal. They repeated the heavy recruiting and organized the previous month's recruits to march toward the front line. After that, they used Chris' discs to teleport back to Chris' secret garden.

By then, most of the twenty-three had passed the trials as well. Purple Mist returned as the Keeper of Immortality, Blackhole was Ruler of Elementals, Freddie became World Warden, Nameless' class was now God's Champion, and Fierce Flame had become Deadeye Ace.

Only three people remained, who were still working through their trials. Those three were Giant Steve, Handsome Joe, and Will Corner.

Those who had succeeded in their trials were at first worried that those three had failed, but Chris assured them the three were still inside their trial spaces. When some expressed skepticism, Chris showed them the three using the image projection in his lake pavilion. Everyone could see the three were still in struggle.

Jet remarked that it was fortunate that all twenty-three trials were still available and weren't snatched by some random players. Chris reacted by telling him he should have more faith in his design. Jet responded by giving him the middle finger.

John went around to record the five new arrivals' special class abilities and skills. He had done so with Jack and the others who had passed the trials earlier. Chris had mentioned that the devils were not opponents they could defeat alone even after they obtained the special classes, so he needed to study their abilities to know how best they could cooperate.

Jack asked Chris to show him the situation on the front line while John was interviewing the five.

"What's the point of keeping on looking at the same thing? You might as well go back to train so you can level up faster," Chris said. "That being said, I'm impressed by how fast you level up. Even using my training dungeons, your level-up speed is nuts, especially since you have three classes. With your three classes being level 94, you may already face the devil."

"You think so?" Jack asked.

Chris shrugged. "I said face, not win. If you want to win, you will need to fight one devil with the help of many others. Don't expect to do it solo."

Jack nodded. "If you don't mind," Jack said.

Chris sighed and activated his spy machine. The projection came up and showed them the scene at the front line. Things didn't look great. Everyone was looking glum. Their number had decreased after the repeated battles. The six countries continued to send recruits to reinforce the troops, especially Themisphere and Verremor, but the rate at which they lost troops had become worrying. While the underworld forces continued to strike them with a number that seemed to never decrease, even when they killed more demons than the troops they lost.

Luckily, the six defensive lines received reinforcements not just from the main countries. Many native adventurers joined the war, but the biggest unexpected reinforcements came from the minor races.

The catfolk came to aid Hydrurond Southern Front. The eaglefolk came to Hydrurond Northern Front.

The merfolk came ashore and helped the defense on Palgrost's Southern Front. Merfolks without amphibian skills also came, but they rode flying sharks that allowed them to move around the battlefield.

The Frogmen fled their islands after Liguritudum was overrun by the demons. They then swam to Northern Aurebor and aided the defense there.

Three other minor races yet to be encountered by players made themselves known. They were the nagas, the yetis, and the centaurs.

The nagas were lizard-like sea creatures. Their lair was under the inner sea between Liguritudum and Palgrost. Their hidden lair was spared when the demons crossed the sea, but they knew it was only a matter of time before the demons came to them. So, they too went ashore and aided Palgrost Northern Front.

The yetis were thick-fur giants who lived in the Northern part of the Sylvan region, where the land was always covered by ice. They joined the Frogmen and aided Aurebor Northern Front.

The centaurs were a hidden minor race that dwelled inside the Dorwyn region. They came to aid Aurebor Southern Front.

Despite the many reinforcements, the demons continued to push the defenders. They were forced to retreat repeatedly after several days of fighting.

Jack could see the despair from the defender's expressions. They were losing hope with each passing day. He turned without a word and headed to the training cave.

On the way, he changed his exp points distribution setting.

"You no longer want to increase your Beast Monarch's level?" Peniel asked after seeing what Jack did.

"Beast Monarch no longer gives me new skills, while the other two classes still have one more skill," Jack answered. "I want to get them to level 99 as fast as possible."

Chapter 1869. Crumbling Defense

Aside from Jack, the others also watched the image projection that showed the scenes from the front line. Their expressions were serious after seeing the situation. There was no time to waste. One by one, they went in the same direction as Jack. They wanted to resume training inside Chris' special training cave. Jeanny guided the five new arrivals to let them know how to use the training cave.

The only one left inside the pavilion was Chris and John. Chris kept on turning to John. He wanted to change the projection but was unsure if John wanted to continue watching the current scene.

"Mister Creator, I have two questions," John asked.

"Just call me Chris is fine," Chris said.

"Sure. Mister Creator, my first question is about the divine factions. I notice that almost every divine faction has a powerful guardian except for Joy's, Hope's, and Greed's faction. I know Greed has eliminated his faction, so no confusion there. The Council of Charites had an internal conflict. Their guardian might have died or left. No big question there, as well. But the Council of Elpo is pretty much still intact. The only one who perished was their God, Hope. Surely, the strongest divine faction should have a guardian. Why is it not fighting with the rest of its faction members?"

"The guardian of the Council of Elpo is rather special," Chris answered. "It can be said to be the strongest being in the upperworld. It is maybe the only one able to battle Satan on equal ground."

"Really? Then why..."

"Because it has an immense pride. The only one it submits to is Hope. With hope gone, I guess it decided to stop being bound in a faction and left to relish its freedom."

"Bloody hell. Why do you have to give the strongest being of the upperworld such a troublesome personality? Might as well let it be Pride's guardian instead of Hope's. So, will it come to our aid on its own accord?" John asked.

Chris shrugged. "After this world turns into reality, many of its inhabitants behave rather unexpectedly. I can't predict what any of them will do anymore."

"Tch...! How troublesome," John said.

"What's your second question?" Chris asked.

"It's about our confrontation with Master," John replied. "I prefer we stop Master before he attains divinity, but let's say we end up facing the God-version of him. We use your Council of Twenty-four to strip his divinity for a duration, and let's say we successfully kill him. What use is that? He has the Immortal Soul. He will just revive somewhere else. He will return to being a God again when we search for him. Are we going to continue playing cat-and-mouse with him?"

"Don't worry about that?" Chris said.

"Oh, I do worry about it. If you don't want me to worry about it, you have to enlighten me."

"Very well, then. When you people get into a confrontation with Master, I will also take action."

"What action?" John asked.

"I have a tool that can cause a world enchantment for a duration. When this enchantment is active, no revive ability will work. Everyone who dies during the enchantment will die a wilderness death, even those who die inside the safe zones. There will be no exception. Whether the immortal soul, the amulet of Rebirth, the Paladin's rebirth skill, the resurrection spell, or anything that brings someone back to life. All of them won't work. So, if you kill Master during this time, he will lose everything."

"... So do we."

Chris grinned. "That makes it more exciting, doesn't it?"

"People say I'm annoying. I now learn the true meaning of, 'outside of sky there is sky, outside of people there are people.' I admit you beat me in being an aggravating son of a b*tch."

"Why, thank you," Chris said.

"Heh. You're welcome," John replied and left to use the training dungeon.

*

At the front line, the battles continued to rage. After the multiple battles, the defenders' number was now half compared to when they first engaged the demon hordes. Despite having support from defensive structures, siege weapons, recovery potions, and war tools provided by the league factions, the defenders continued to lose troops. The reinforcements sent from the six countries were not enough to keep up with the losses.

As for the underworld forces, they were still as massive as when they first crossed the border. The demons who fell were quickly replaced by the next wave coming from the main underworld portal. It was as if the demon hordes never decreased in number. This further demoralized the defenders.

On the defensive line at Northern Palgrost, Sangrod's once big army had been reduced to a sad number. They were fewer than one million and their morale was very low. The player communities had also undergone a great cull. Many players had fallen back to level 1 and could no longer provide any assistance.

The defensive line they were fighting at was now close to the edge of Palgrost. Once this defensive line broke, they had to cross the border region and retreat to Sangrod. They would then resume their defense there. Horatio preferred the battlefield not to reach Sangrod but it didn't seem like there was a choice.

Horatio was fighting with his troops. With the enemies outnumbering them, he couldn't afford not to. Darius was fighting alongside him. The war table had been destroyed

during earlier battles. Darius almost lost his life along with the war table, but Horatio managed to pull him away to safety.

William of Wellington and the other experts of Saint Edge fought nearby. Saint Jonathan didn't lead his guild here because he was watching over Linda at the Hydrurond's front. Saint Edge was in charge of protecting Horatio along with the emperor's native royal guards. Currently, they were having trouble doing their job because a lot of demons had penetrated deep into their line.

"Ahh...!" A woman's scream was heard.

"Diana!!" William yelled. He saw Diana fall to the ground. Diana was Saint Jonathan's daughter, so she was pretty much the princess of the guild. Her HP was critical. A large demon insect was about to impale her with its long sharp foreleg.

"Miss!" Radiant Phoebe was nearby. She quickly grabbed and pulled Diana when the demon insect stabbed its leg. She pushed Diana away while casting Soothing Light on her. Phoebe then rammed her body into the demon insect, keeping it from going after Diana.

William and Phoebe might have saved Diana, but they didn't notice a high demon was casting a spell nearby. A large gravity well formed around Phoebe. She was unable to move. Dark-element damage continued to assail her while she was trapped in the gravity well.

The high demon cast another spell, Hellish Explosion. Phoebe was not in good shape to begin with. The Hellish Explosion took out her HP. She had already used Paladin's Rebirth earlier, so she stayed dead.

With the obstacle gone, the demon insect rushed forward. It was going after its earlier prey, Diana.

Seeing that, William rushed over to save her. Diana had died several times. She could no longer afford another Amulet of Rebirth. Jonathan had asked her not to join the war, but she was stubborn. She insisted to help with the war. Jonathan had no choice but to ask William to take care of her. William didn't want to let Jonathan down. She cast Healing Spirit after coming close to Diana.

The other Saint Edge's members also rushed over when they saw their princess in danger. They struck the demon insect and the spell-casting high demon to prevent the two from targeting Diana.

What they didn't expect was this was all a ruse. One of the more intelligent demon commanders had learned how dedicated the Saint Edge players in protecting Diana. He had the demons target Diana precisely to draw the players out. As expected, the other

Saint Edge members went to save her. Their action caused a huge gap to open within the circle protecting Horatio.

The demon commander sent his signal then. His true target was Horatio.

A company of lower demons and hellhounds charged at Horatio. Seeing that, Darius and the native royal guards hurriedly engaged the demons and prevented them from reaching Horatio.

When they engaged these lower demons and hellhounds, a huge daemon wielding a flaming axe broke the barricades and charged from the opposite side. This took everyone by surprise.

Horatio cast Magic Wall just as the daemon arrived, but it was not strong enough. The magic wall was shattered by one swing from the daemon's flaming axe. Horatio was sent crashing into the ground when the flaming axe hit him.

The demon commander also charged behind the daemon and cast a spell that conjured black tentacles from the ground around Horatio. These tentacles entangled the vampire emperor and prevented the royal guards from rescuing Horatio. While that happened, the daemon lifted his flaming axe again to hit Horatio another time.

Before the axe hit, a powerful explosion occurred. This explosion threw the daemon away. The black tentacles binding Horatio were also destroyed. Horatio was floating in the air with black flames covering him. These black flames formed the aspect of a demon.

Horatio had used an ability from the Book of the Damned, the Devil Possession. He had no choice but to use it to save his life.

Not far away, Belphegor was sitting on the ground while his four little clones fought Wrath's maids. His lazy eyes suddenly enlarged with a lively glint. He looked at the enemy's command base.

"Hm... Seems like I will have to move for a bit," He grumbled.

Chapter 1870. Belphegor Advances

Since Horatio had already used the book, he decided to go all the way. He used Daemon Hell Gate before following up with Demonic Contract.

The emerged daemon received a great boost from the Demonic Contract. The nearby defenders also received the same boost, allowing them to fight off the tide of demons. With this boost, they overpowered the demons that tried to make a jump on Horatio. The daemon with the flaming axe clashed with the daemon Horatio summoned. Even the demon commander who devised the trap was forced to retreat.

What they weren't aware of was Belphegor was looking in their direction from outside the defensive walls. He stood still while his mini clones and floating ice weapons dealt with Wrath's maids.

Jygorth and the Montu spider were forced to battle other demons. The defender's number had reduced to a point where they couldn't have many combatants fighting Belphegor. Only Wrath's maids were still on that task, and they were one person short.

Out of the seven maids, one died in the previous battle. The remaining six were infested with rage after losing one of their sisters. Their power received a boost. But at the same time, they learned they couldn't continue to fight with such recklessness. Belphegor was not an opponent they could win just from a boost. The worst thing was, the devil didn't even seem serious about fighting them yet.

Wrath's maids adopted a more reserved method. They now only aimed to keep Belphegor at bay. They no longer fought intending to defeat him.

Currently, they were wary because Belphegor had stood up. Something the devil rarely did except when he marched, and Belphegor only marched after the obstacles were gone.

Currently, they were wary because Belphegor had stood up. Something the devil rarely did except when he marched, and Belphegor only marched after the obstacles were gone.

He burped. His chest bulged. This bulging flowed upward to his neck.

Wrath's maids were already used to this scene. This was what happened when Belphegor created his mini clones. He always did that at the beginning of the battle.

As expected, a fleshy ball was vomited out. Belphegor's mouth enlarged unnaturally to allow the large size ball to exit. What was unexpected was Belphegor burping again after that. The same process repeated.

This continued until five fleshy balls were on the ground. These balls turned into mini-Belphegor. Now, there were nine of them in total. Each holding the ice weapons formed from Belphegor's nine icy orbs.

Wrath's maids looked at the nine with wariness. The enemies now outnumbered them. Another issue that took their attention was Belphegor's appearance. His large belly was completely gone. He looked like an oversized fat demon less than a minute ago. Now, he was as skinny as a starving person who hadn't eaten for a month.

One other detail the others didn't notice was his eyes. They were no longer glazed with the laziness he was associated with. They were lively.

All of a sudden, another transformation happened to his body. All the deflated muscles of his body suddenly bulged. He turned from a skinny devil a second ago into one with the muscular body of a world-ranked bodybuilder.

He made a wide grin before vanishing.

If not for the trails of ice he left behind, everyone would have thought he had used a teleporting skill. But in fact, he just moved extremely fast. He dashed in a straight line towards the defensive walls. The extreme contrast of his speed was so startling that Wrath's maids failed to react in time. Belphegor was already far away from them by the time they realized what was going on.

The ice trail created by his dash broke into clusters of icicles that stabbed outward and damaged everyone he passed. This ice trail didn't just form behind him. The icy energy rushed forward and formed an ice path ahead of him. The ice energy knocked everyone away from the path and created a slippery ground. Belphegor's feet stopped running. He glided along this ice path. His speed increased even more. No one was able to stop him.

His ice energy shot forward and hit the wall. The part that was hit was instantly frozen. Many defenders on the wall, who had low ice resistance, were also frozen.

"Hahaha!" Belphegor laughed as he neared the wall. His charging speed didn't slow. His fist gave out a sinister silver glow. It also enlarged into unnatural proportions. His fist was now bigger than his head. He punched this oversized glowing fist into the frozen wall when he arrived.

*

Behind the defensive walls, Horatio and his guards were still fighting the demons who had breached through some of the gaps in the wall. More and more demons rushed to their side. The guards were having difficulties fighting all these demons despite the boost.

"What is happening here? Why do they attack this place with such frenzy?" Happy Felix asked. He positioned himself near Diana and used his tower shield to protect her.

"Maybe they have finally decided to go after the emperor," William answered. They had rearranged their formation and returned to Horatio's side, bringing Diana along with them.

"Stand fast! We should be able to hold for one more day before making another retreat!" Horatio exclaimed. They were running short of lines to retreat to. The battle would have to resume on Sangrod's soil if they retreated. He preferred them to last for as long as possible here.

The other nearby defenders saw the change in the demons' movements. They also went toward Horatio so that the emperor didn't get overwhelmed. The battle became densely packed on that side.

They were suddenly startled by the sound of a huge explosion. When they turned to the sound, they saw a new gap in the defensive wall. Belphegor stood there.

"What...?!" Everyone fighting behind the walls was shocked. How did the devil get so close without any alarm? Did no one stop his approach?

The one most shocked was Horatio. This was because Belphegor's eyes were staring directly at him. He was unable to look away. The two eyes were like magnets. They shone an eerie blue glow as icy mists flowed out.

"Your Majesty!" Darius called out in alarm.

His panic was because Horatio's body was covered by a thin layer of ice, and this ice was getting thicker by the second. Belphegor had used an eye skill, Infernal Freezing Gaze. This skill not only froze Horatio's body but also slowed his mind. In Horatio's vision, everything suddenly moved in fast motion while he could not move.

One of the nearby priests cast Cure on Horatio, but the spell was useless. Belphegor's eye skill was too powerful for Cure to nullify.

William cast Advanced Cure, a non-standard elite spell learnable by those who branched from the Healer class. His spell produced a better effect. Horatio's mind was cleared. He could think properly again, but the ice layer was still covering his body. It just stopped getting thicker. He could move again albeit very slow.

"Protect his majesty...!" Darius shouted.

Everyone hurriedly crowded around Horatio while those near the crumbled wall rushed to engage Belphegor to stop him from advancing. Belphegor took a squatting stance as multiple ranged attacks headed toward him. He then jumped.

His jump brought him hundreds of meters into the air in the blink of an eye. Up there, he spread his arms. Rings of ice materialized on his two sides. These ice rings then shot downward. They were spinning like oversized chakrams. They didn't fly in a straight line. They flew in zig-zag patterns, which made their trajectories hard to follow.

The defenders cast defensive spells to block these ice chakrams, but the ice chakrams easily sliced through the spells and the casters.

Felix used Sentinel's Impenetrable Wall. His shield image was cut in half by an ice chakram. When the ice chakram hit his tower shield, he was thrown by the impact. He crashed into Diana behind him, and the two flew a distance away.

Horatio, who still had difficulty moving, suddenly found the people around him gone. They were either killed by the ice chakrams or were sent flying from the impact.

A loud crash was heard behind him as a huge shadow covered him. He looked back and saw Belphegor towering over him.

He was speechless. He knew the devil was terrifying, but seeing people battling the devil from far away was completely different from seeing one directly before him. The pressure he felt caused him difficulty in breathing.

"You have something not meant for you," Belphegor uttered.

Horatio didn't need to guess what the devil was referring to. His hand was still clutching the Book of the Damned tightly. Under the suffocating pressure, he couldn't think. He just acted. He drew power from the book and started to draw spell formation.

Before the spell formation was completed, Belphegor's hand shot down with incredible speed. All of a sudden, Horatio was already in Belphegor's grip. The devil's hand had turned into an ice claw without anyone noticing. Horatio, who was in the ice claw's clutch, was encased in an ice block in a matter of seconds.

Belphegor then squeezed. The ice block shattered. Pieces of ice encasing Horatio's body parts fell to the ground. The Book of the Damned dropped among these ice debris.