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Chapter 1951:. Summon Reinforcements

The muscular human with the goatee beside John dissolved into nothingness. That muscular human was not a summon but an offensive skill from his Fallen Apostle's Summoning Wand. This offensive skill was called Power Djinn's Smash. It dealt high physical damage with a powerful knockback force.

John learned about Beelzebub's personality from Wilted. He knew Beelzebub was a cunning devil. He didn't know how, but he knew Beelzebub would eventually think of a way to break through Trinity's Field Prison. That's why he had Trinity prepare a second Field Prison rune diagram at a nearby spot. The direction he sent Beelzebub using the Power Djinn's Smash was that spot.

Trinity immediately activated that second Field Prison rune diagram once Beelzebub fell into it.

"Hahaha!" John laughed. "Do you think someone as intelligent as I will not have a backup plan? I've already expected your move, villain! Do not think you can escape my grasp! Hahaha...!!"

"Can you please not laugh like that?" Jet called. "You sound more like a villain than him!"

Beelzebub looked at John with an ugly face. How did he not sense this person?

John used Teleportation to move into position when Beelzebub was breaking out of the Field Prison. Beelzebub had been so excited his ploy worked that he did not notice John was no longer beside Trinity. As for the reason why he couldn't sense John's presence, it was because John had also learned mana concealment.

Similar to Master, John had a good learning curve in terms of mana manipulation, even if he didn't practice martial arts. His improvement allowed him to do mana concealment, though not yet at Jack's level. If he didn't perform any attack, no one could sense his mana.

John teleported above Beelzebub because that was where he expected the devil would flee. He planted the seed when he mocked Beelzebub earlier about not flying when he could. Aside from baiting the devil so he could predict Beelzebub's fleeing direction, it was also to make it easier for him to send Beelzebub to the second Field Prison. Whacking a target to a particular spot was easier done from above compared to if he did it on ground level.

Beelzebub's scowl became uglier when he saw John's condescending expression. He couldn't believe he was tricked to such an extent.

"You piece of sh*t! I will kill you!! Do you know who I am?! I will get out, and I will tear you to pieces!!"

Beelzebub roared as he stabbed the wall of light frantically using his six legs. He also bumped his body into the wall. His cool demeanor was no more. He was like a frantic beast trying to break out of its cage.

John's grin became wider. He didn't taunt the devil without purpose. He knew the best way to deal with a cunning enemy was by rattling them. Without calmness, the mind could not work properly. Any decision made with such a mind most likely possessed a great margin of error.

Beelzebub reacted the way John expected. As someone who sat atop the food chain and always looked down on everything, being fooled twice was too much to bear. Beelzebub's attempt to break out became more violent with every second.

Trinity pumped her mana as best as she could. She drank an energy potion again. John might have riled Beelzebub and made him lose his mind, but the devil's violent craze had instead strained her even more than before.

The Pit Fiend was tossed when Beelzebub was slammed by the Power Djinn's Smash. It was now getting back up to help its master, but the Hieracosphynx snatched it and threw it far away. The Hieracosphynx's HP was still low but no longer critical. Purple Mist cast Supreme Heal to recover its HP. It continued attacking the Pit Fiend, so it couldn't save Beelzebub. After healing the Hieracosphynx, Purple Mist went away. She went to Fierce Flame and cast Keeper of Immortality's level 70 spell, Revive. The spell resurrected Fierce Flame with full health. An additional effect of this spell was the resurrected ally became invulnerable for five seconds after returning to life. This spell had a cooldown of three hours.

Fierce Flame resumed her long-range assaults on Beelzebub. John and Jet joined her, and so did the Brave Lion. The Brave Lion came back to life after dying. Its resurrection was not due to Purple Mist but Beast Conqueror's level 60 skill, Pet's Second Wind.

Jet used this skill on the Brave Lion when it was held by Telekinesis. This skill healed the pet's HP, but Jet's purpose in using the skill was for its second effect. If the pet suffered a fatal attack in the next hour after this skill was used, it came back to life with 30% HP.

Giant Steve remained near Trinity, protecting her. He was accompanied by Purple Mist's lesser angel and John's elite summons.

The Mighty Ape and the Mutated Saurian continued to battle Beelzebub's three eternal-grade demon insects. These two lords had higher levels than the three. Additionally, they were stronger than average monsters of the same level and grade. Hence, even if the enemies were one number more than them, they were still winning.

The demon mantis had lost three out of its six bladed limbs. That happened after those limbs were frozen by the Mutated Saurian's ice breath. The Mighty Ape then grabbed those frozen limbs and tore them apart. The demon mantis received tremendous damage from those wounds.

The Mutated Saurian might not be as fast and agile as the Mighty Ape, but it was very strong and had a high defense. Even the heavy crustacean demon was staggered every time the Mutated Saurian used a body slam against it. The Mutated Saurian's tail swipe could send any of the three demons flying. It could also unleash an icy aura that slowed nearby opponents, so its lack of speed was not that much of a disadvantage.

Everyone maintained the rhythm. They reduced Beelzebub's HP little by little. Among the six devils, Beelzebub and Mammon had the least HP. In Mammon's case, it was because he had the lowest level. As for Beelzebub, it was because he was more of a spellcaster type. He never truly felt the need to have a high HP, until now.

Beelzebub continued to strike the wall of light imprisoning him with fury. All the while, he birthed demonic flies and roaches. These demon insects came out of him nonstop.

John didn't mind. These masses of flies and roaches were all weak insects. Their number was troubling but not dangerous. The more Beelzebub summoned his insects from the underworld, the more MP he spent. If he ran out of MP, he wouldn't be able to use any skills.

Most of the demonic flies and roaches went toward Trinity. The others chased after John. The summoned insects had a telepathic connection with Beelzebub, so they instinctively went after the ones Beelzebub wanted to vanquish the most. John kited them as he flew around the place.

The Celestial Moth came over to Trinity's side. It had taken care of most of the early batch of summoned insects. With its AOE standard ranged attacks, it was the most suitable to slay the weak demon insects en masse. Steve and John's summons formed an impassable perimeter around Trinity and let the Celestial Moth take care of the offense.

Jet and the Brave Lion fought off the flies and roaches while continuing to send attacks at Beelzebub. Together with Fierce Flame, they ground the devil's HP.

When Beelzebub's HP fell below half, they heard an explosion in the distance. They turned and saw a part of the cliff forming the entrance to Ukher-mur Valley had broken off. The battle on that side had become fiercer. They saw some demons break through

the blockade. Ragorth's team had joined the players to stop the demons there, but it seemed they were not enough.

"Ah... That's why I want to block the demon army further inside the valley, so it is harder for them to break out," John lamented.

"What should we do?" Steve sent John a message.

"We keep doing what we are doing," John answered.

"But... I'm not sure we can stop those demons from getting to Trinity when they arrive."

"Don't worry. I've also summoned reinforcements. They will take care of those demons heading this way."

When Steve was about to ask what reinforcements John meant, a voice greeted them from

above.

"Heya! Need some help?"

Steve looked up and saw Paytowin in his Alpha Techno Suit.

"Let me give you a hand," Paytowin said. He used the Delta Station.

The large station appeared with Trinity at the center. All the demon insects in the surroundings were stunned. The guns on the stations fired at these immobilized insects. With the Delta Station, the demon insects had an even harder time getting to Trinity. John left the Celestial Moth to cover Trinity while asking everyone else to attack Beelzebub, including

Steve.

Since they were making a push, Steve supported everyone using Eternal Guardian's level 80

skill, Guardian Domain. The skill provided all allies within the domain a boost in defense, resistance, and damage reduction. These allies were also immune to status effects and movement restrictions. This domain lasted ten minutes.

With the defensive boost, everyone ignored the demon insects hitting them and focused on attacking Beelzebub. Paytowin also joined them by firing using his gun from the sky.

Steve was still wondering about the group of demons coming from the valley. He looked over and was surprised to find those demons were halted by two people he knew, Joe and

Blackhole.

Chapter 1952:.. Running Out of MP

Joe and Blackhole were exceptional at dealing with a large number of enemies. Their spells were mostly AOE offensive types. The demons that managed to breach through the chokepoint at the valley's entrance had to suffer their bombardments.

The two worked together with the monsters John summoned earlier using Call Monster Horde. These monsters had routed the demons accompanying Beelzebub earlier. They now engaged the demons coming from the valley.

Joe used Spectral Squad and covered more ground. Most of the demons were defeated by Joe, Blackhole, and the monsters before reaching the place where Beelzebub was trapped. Those who arrived were too few and low on health to break through the Delta Station to get to Trinity. Hence, the situation continued as it was.

The rate by which they reduced Beelzebub's HP increased with the help of Paytowin and John's elite summons.

"Is the Omega Battle Mech or the Mothership Sigma not available?" John asked Paytowin. "No," Paytowin answered. "I used them not long ago when we defeated Leviathan."

Hearing that, Beelzebub stopped his frenzy. 'Defeat Leviathan? How preposterous. But... Can it be true?'

Beelzebub couldn't decide whether to believe the words of that outworlder or not. Maybe the outworlder was saying it just to unnerve him. However, looking at how things were going. His defeat could be real, even if Leviathan's one was a lie.

He couldn't let this go on! He focused on the telepathic connection with his insects. He placed several of his insects all over his army so he could maintain control. He had been calling them to instruct the army to come to him. That's why the demons in the valley fought tooth and nail to breach the chokepoint. He was now extending the call. He had sent some battalions all over the area. He was calling them all back now.

"Hm..." John noticed the change in Beelzebub's expression.

He flew to the devil's face and hovered above while looking down. He called, "Hey, bug-face!"

Jet looked at John with a weird face. "Shouldn't it be goat-face?" He uttered.

"Do you give up?" John asked. "If you do, unsummon all your bugs. Call your army to stop fighting, and I will let you live. If you don't, you will join your three brothers who we have slain."

Beelzebub answered by spitting an acid jet at John. John was ready. He dodged and flew behind Beelzebub while returning fire using his wand.

"Haha! You missed me!" John taunted. He continued to fly around Beelzebub, throwing both ranged attacks and verbal assaults.

Beelzebub, who had calmed a little, felt the fury inside him rising again. Never before had anyone talked like this to him. He had always been feared and respected in the underworld, mostly feared. He could not accept the audacity of this outworlder, tricking him into this situation and now mocking him.

Beelzebub again bumped his body into the wall of light in anger. He wanted to tear this disrespectful outworlder apart. Demonic flies and roaches, which had stopped coming out of him, came out again. He also cast multiple spells that chased after a target. His target was, of course, John. John cunningly moved away when that happened. He used either Steve or his summons to block those spells.

"What the hell is he doing?" Jet asked.

"Don't know. But if he is making himself a target, I say let him," Steve answered. He didn't mind John hiding behind him. His role was a tank, after all. With John drawing Beelzebub's aggression, there was less pressure on Trinity.

"Gotta give it to him to know how to annoy others," Jet remarked.

After a while, they heard rumbles from the distance. They looked around and saw dust clouds heading toward them.

"Uh-oh... I think those are the splintered armies he sent away earlier," Steve said.

"Keep at it! He is almost out!" John exclaimed.

If those armies reached them, most likely Beelzebub was saved. John couldn't let that happen.

He sent instructions to his most powerful summons to use their ace-in-the-hole.

The Mighty Ape burst into flames. All its crimson fur literally turned into fire. It became a burning ape.

"Grooaarrrr...!!" The burning Mighty Ape did chest beatings again before it charged forward.

The demon mantis, the eyeball demon, and the crustacean demon were low on health after the prolonged fight with the two lords. The demon mantis had it the worst. It was close to death. It was caught by surprise when the burning ape came before it. The Mighty Ape was much faster than before.

A flaming punch landed on the demon mantis' head. It was still reeling with dizziness when it found itself getting lifted in the air. The ape's left hand was on its neck while the right grabbed its lower abdomen.

The Mighty Ape pulled. A damage number came up above the demon mantis. A second damage number followed soon after. When the third damage number appeared, the demon mantis' HP reached zero. Its body was torn in two.

The Mighty Ape threw the two torn parts into the other two demon insects. The torn parts of the demon mantis slammed into its comrades before they turned into dust. The mighty ape then charged toward the eyeball spider. After a couple of fiery punches, it threw the spider into the crustacean demon before taking on the two together.

As for the Mutated Saurian, it left the opponents and let the Mighty Ape deal with them. It moved toward Beelzebub. While walking, the crystal plates on its back hummed with energy. They also glowed. The glow brightened every second. Mana started to gather in its mouth.

Beelzebub noticed the incoming saurian. He could sense the saurian was preparing a devastating attack. He hurriedly prepared a spell.

The glow on the Mutated Saurian reached its zenith. The accumulated mana in its mouth exploded with an impressive discharge of ice energy. This energy formed into a beam that rushed toward Beelzebub. Rings filled with runic symbols accompanied the beam as it charged forward.

This was the Mutated Saurian's ultimate attack, the Annihilating Ice Beam.

Beelzebub cast his spell when the beam was unleashed. A tall and thick wall made of earth rose from the ground. The Annihilating Ice Beam crashed into this Infernal Earth Wall.

The wall held for a while, but it was slowly frozen. Once the wall was fully frozen, it started to crack. The Annihilating Ice Beam continued to pour onto the wall. The wall finally shattered with a bang. The dense ice beam proceeded forward.

Beelzebub was surprised his Infernal Earth Wall failed to stop the beam. He quickly turned to one side. His carapaces on that side shifted and stacked atop each other, forming a shield. The ice beam crashed into this carapace shield.

The same thing happened. The carapace shield was slowly frozen. It then shattered. The Annihilating Ice Beam died down then. Beelzebub received damage, but not as high as he

should have.

Both the Mighty Ape's Flame Incarnation and the Mutated Saurian's Annihilating Ice Beam were only usable once in a battle. Furthermore, using these skills reduced their duration by half an hour. John decided to go all out to take out Beelzebub before the demon armies arrived. Unfortunately, the Annihilating Ice Beam failed to score enough damage, but the attack was not wasted.

The side where Beelzebub was hit by the Annihilating Ice Beam was naked. The devil's skin was unprotected by the carapaces. His defense on that side had dropped significantly.

"Attack that unarmored spot!" John commanded.

Everyone focused their attacks on that spot. Attacks hitting that spot dealt higher damage. Beelzebub had to keep turning around to avoid the enemies from utilizing that weakness, but it was futile. The enemies surrounded him. He could only turn at the same place. No matter where he turned, there were enemies.

The Mutated Saurian proceeded forward and went into a melee exchange with Beelzebub. This caused the devil even more difficulty in avoiding the other enemies from hitting his weak

spot.

"I will help you, my lord!"

A large drill composed of darkness slammed into the Mutated Saurian and bore into its body.

It was the Hellish Black Drill. The Mutated Saurian uttered a painful roar. The icy scales on its body were torn, and blue blood poured out. The Hellish Black Drill possessed an extremely high chance of wounding. Even the saurian's high defense failed to prevent a wound from

happening.

The one who cast the Hellish Black Drill was the Pit Fiend. It had triumphed over the Hieracosphynx. The Hieracosphinx had low HP, to begin with, so it couldn't last long against the Pit Fiend. However, the Pit Fiend also suffered. Its HP was less than one-third.

When it was about to cast another spell, it was taken aback by something occurring on the Mutated Saurian's body. The wound on the saurian's body regenerated at an incredible pace. In just a few seconds, the saurian's body was as good as new. The Saurian had the Instant

Regeneration ability.

The Mutated Saurian glared at the Pit Fiend. It then rushed toward the demon. The Pit Fiend panicked. Its spellcasting faltered. It failed to complete any spell when the Mutated Saurian clamped its powerful jaw over the much smaller Pit Fiend. While chomping at the Pit Fiend, it slammed the poor demon into the ground repeatedly, causing a series of damage.

The others continued attacking Beelzebub with fervor. They suddenly heard a yell from Trinity.

"Guys! I'm running out of MP...!"

Chapter 1953:. Only Two Left

"What?! Haven't you prepared enough energy potion?" John yelled back.

"I have prepared a good number of every type of energy potion," Trinity replied. "They are all still under cooldown. My MP depletes faster than it can regenerate!"

"Shit!" John cursed. While Beelzebub's frenziness made him reckless, it also increased the strain on the Field Prison rune diagram. Trinity's mana manipulation might be strong enough to enhance it, but its fuel came from her MP. Once her MP ran out, the rune diagram would return to normal strength.

"Throw everything you have at him!" John commanded.

"Do you think we have not?!" Jet complained.

Jet's entire body was covered in silver. Not just him. His pet, the Brave Lion, also turned silver. This was Beast Conqueror's level 90 skill, the Ultimate Bond. It was a buff skill. All their stats were improved. While this skill was active, Jet and Brave Lion's life force was shared. Like Reaver's Soul Link, their HP remained at the same percentage.

"I'm out!" They heard Trinity's yell.

The wall of light encircling Beelzebub became much dimmer in intensity. Seeing that, Beelzebub didn't waste the chance. His legs stabbed into the wall of light imprisoning him, then he heaved. The wall of light was torn. The rune diagram under him fizzled out.

"Hahaha! Do you think you can imprison the Great Beelzebub?!" The devil spread his wings again and floated up. "All of you will pay for your audaciousness!"

Spell formation formed before Beelzebub. However, when it was only halfway, it fizzled out of existence.

"What...?!" Beelzebub was taken aback by this.

"Hahaha!" John laughed. "It seems that you have also run out of mana."

Beelzebub was shocked at the statement. He realized then. The bugs had stopped coming out of him. He immediately checked his MP bar. It was indeed almost depleted. It was not enough to cast the spell he intended to cast just now.

He gritted his teeth. He couldn't believe he was pushed into such a condition. This was the first time such a situation happened. A strange feeling arose within him. A feeling that he did not understand. It was the same feeling experienced by Leviathan when he decided to bolt. Fear.

This strange feeling urged Beelzebub to do the same thing. His transparent wings flapped, and his body shot up into the sky.

"You won't escape!" John exclaimed and flew chasing the devil.

He gave the command to his three lords. The Celestial Moth went and picked up John. Its flight speed was better than a wings tool. The Mighty Ape still had the Flame Incarnation. The flames on its back extended and formed two large wings. As for the Mutated Saurian, two pieces of the crystal plates on its back enlarged until they became two crystal wings. By this time, the eyeball spider, the crustacean demon, and the pit fiend had been defeated. They shot into the sky, chasing the devil.

Jet rode his Brave Lion, which also possessed better flight speed than a wings tool. Paytowin's Alpha Techno Suit also had a good flight speed. The three joined the chase.

Giant Steve, Purple Mist, and Fierce Flame chased using their wings tools. Of the three, Fierce Flame had the highest dexterity, so she was the fastest. Even so, she had a hard time keeping up with the others. Thanks to her long range, she could still shoot at Beelzebub, but the devil was getting further by the second.

Trinity Dawn stayed on the ground. Without MP, she couldn't do anything even if she joined the chase.

Beelzebub glanced back and saw these enemies chasing him. He still couldn't believe what was happening. He, the great devil, had to flee from this bunch of outworlders. If this news spread, how could he face his peers and subjects?

This humiliation caused him great anger. He wanted very much to turn back and tear all those outworlders apart, but good sense restrained him. There would be a time for revenge. He just had to reach his army.

He looked forward. It was not long now. Once he got to his army, they could protect him while demon healers healed him, and he rested to recover his MP.

While he was having that thought, he sensed an attack approaching fast. He barely dodged the attack when a very large beam covered everything in front of him. He had no choice but to stop. While he did that, a second beam struck him.

The first beam was Paytowin's Gamma Ray Cannon. The second beam was his Particle Core Cannon. These two attacks of Paytowin had the longest range out of everyone, except for Fierce Flame's Arrow of God, but her skill was still on cooldown.

Then, a third beam hit. The damage Beelzebub suffered from the third beam was less than the second one, but he felt his body becoming slow. This was because the third beam came from the Mutated Saurian's ice breath.

Due to those interferences, the others caught up to the devil.

"There is no escape, devil. Accept your fate!" John exclaimed.

Beelzebub's HP was already critical. He looked at his army. They were so close. He could see some fast demons flying toward him.

"Raarrhhh...! I will not meet my end today!" He shouted and charged toward the incoming demons.

Something slammed into him from above. It was the Mighty Ape. The ape used one hand to cling to his carapace, and the other hand punched repeatedly onto his back. Then, something heavy bumped into him, stopping his advance. It was the Mutated Saurian. The Saurian large jaw bit one of his six legs and refused to let go.

While he was halted, he saw the Celestial Monarch, Paytowin, Jet, and the Brave Lion fly ahead to stop the incoming demons. Seeing that was as if blowing out the fire of his last hope. His fear turned into despair. This drove him into a frenzy of rage again.

His body shook greatly while his legs stabbed uncontrollably at the two lords. He couldn't cast any spell, so this was the best he could do.

His frenzy successfully threw the two lords off his body. Once he was free, he charged at John. His fury rendered him blind. That fury made him see only one target, John. The culprit who threw him into the current situation.

John just looked at the incoming devil with a wicked smile. When the devil was about to strike him, he uttered, "Steve."

John then vanished. Replacing him was Giant Steve, whose shield now clanged with Beelzebub's incoming legs.

What had happened was Giant Steve using the Eternal Guardian's level 50 skill, Replace Save. The skill let Steve mark an ally. He could transfer places with this ally. The transfer could be done consciously or automatically when the marked ally received a fatal hit. If the transfer was triggered, the skill would start a one-hour cooldown.

Steve used Share Damage on Trinity but marked the Replace Save on John. This was because those two were Beelzebub's primary targets.

Beelzebub looked back and saw John was far away, where Steve used to be. Being denied to even vent out his frustration on John, his mind went into a mental breakdown.

"You, piece of sh*t! How dare you! Do you know the punishment I will bestow upon you? F*ck you! I'm going to devour you raw! I will chew you until you are nothing but a-"

His rambling stopped when his HP reached zero. His large body fell toward the ground. His body turned into dust before it reached the ground. Several loots replaced his disintegrated body and resumed their way to the ground.

John sent his two lords to help Jet and the others. He flew down to take the loots.

With Beelzebub's defeat, the demon army he commanded lost morale and became weaker. The defenders in the valley found their enemies much easier to deal with. As for the splintered demon battalions rushing over to save Beelzebub, they stopped in their tracks. They just

stood there and were at a loss about what to do.

Fierce Flame and Giant Steve also went to help Jet and the others. Purple Mist landed beside

John.

"We were lucky to pull that off," Purple Mist said.

"Luck had nothing to do with it, my lady. It was all because of me," John replied.

"You should learn a bit modesty, you know."

"I don't see the need to."

"Whatever. What loots do we get?"

"I am browsing them. I will give you if you need any."

Purple Mist was vexed hearing that. She knew she should have gotten to the loots first before

John.

"You are an a*shole, you know that?" Purple Mist said.

"I know," John replied. "Don't worry. I am a fair a*shole. I will share these loots with you all."

We worked together to defeat Beelzebub, after all."

"I will hold you to your words," Purple Mist said. "Do we know the situation of the other fronts?"

"Not including Lucifer, there are only two devils left," John answered.

Chapter 1954:. Mysterious

"Which one?" Purple Mist asked.

"Satan and Mammon," John answered.

"Mammon?" Purple Mist didn't expect Mammon to be among the devils they had yet to defeat. This devil was supposed to have the lowest level.

"I know. I'm also surprised. Turns out this so-called weakest devil might be the hardest one to kill, but I already have a plan. I will take some of the players here and head over there. The rest of you stay here and wipe out the remaining demons. Wilted said the debuff on the demon army after losing their leading devil would last only a few days. We need to defeat as many demons as possible within that time frame before marching into Liguritudum. I will leave you in charge of the players here. Work with Ragorth to secure our victory."

"Very well," Purple Mist said before asking, "What about Satan? Jack is alone there, isn't he? Shouldn't some of us go there to help him?"

"No need to worry about him. He is the least of us who needs help. If it makes you feel any better, one of us from the other front is already heading his way. If he still hasn't finished Satan by the time we deal with Mammon, I will bring some of us to go help him. I will be disappointed, though."

"You are truly his good friend," Purple Mist said.

"I know," John replied.

"I was being sarcastic," Purple Mist said while rolling her eyes.

"I will pretend I didn't hear that. Good luck wiping out the underworld force here. Do not disappoint me."

"We will wipe out the demons here, but we are not doing it for you, prick," Purple Mist stated.

"I will also pretend I didn't hear that. I'm off now," John said. He sent messages to several people to come to him.

At the Aurebor Northen Front, Jeanny and the others were still fighting Mammon. However, they were not fighting the devil in his original form. The one they were fighting at this moment was a Yeti warrior.

Every time they depleted Mammon's HP, the devil entered the black mist state. They tried to drain the black mist's HP as fast as possible. However, the black mist moved and possessed one of them before they could complete the process.

This black mist state was Mammon's Infernal Soul Rebirth, a special skill accessible only to him. This skill was triggered every time he died. Only by depleting his HP during this state could he truly die.

At least, that was the original programming. It turned out that when this game world became real, Mammon's understanding of mana manipulation grew. He learned Form Manipulation, like Satan did. Hence, he was able to manipulate his skill to function differently from the original programming.

After gaining an understanding of form manipulation, he focused his training on this Infernal Soul Rebirth. His training allowed him to move around while in the black mist state. Since he had no body, he could even enter another being and possess them, providing they were weaker than him, which was most of the combatants here.

This repeat of possessions and defeating the possessed beings had been going on for two and a half days. Jeanny and the others didn't know how to end this cycle. What was worse was the time in which the black mist remained inert was shortened every time

they defeated Mammon. It was as if Mammon was getting used to his possession ability and could move in a shorter time after he entered the black mist state.

It was indeed the case. Before this, Mammon could only train mentally. Not many could deplete Mammon's HP, after all. Now that he put it into practice, he was getting more skillful. Jeanny and the others had been trying to increase their damage output, but Mammon beat their pace. The last time Mammon used Infernal Soul Rebirth, he only needed a bit above one minute before he moved and possessed another being. They couldn't deplete his HP within such a short time.

One small thing they were grateful for was that Mammon didn't have his full power while in the possession state. He couldn't even use his own skills. When he was possessing the Soul Swan, all he could use was the Soul Swan's skills and spells. The Soul Swan was stronger than its normal self under his influence, but not too much. So, they were able to defeat the Soul Swan more easily than when they were battling Mammon.

The bad thing was, that the Soul Swan died after they depleted its HP. Mammon returned to his black mist state. In this way, they lost an ally without winning the battle. After that, they lost several more allies due to the possession, including Leda, the leader of the Devotee of Passion, and Vodyan of the Frogman. Talia from the Council of Charites also died, but luckily, a healer with the resurrection spell was nearby, so she was saved.

One thing they learned after the multiple possessions was that Mammon could only possess natives. Every time he entered the black mist state, Jeanny and Spring Crown were always the closest. Yet, he never possessed them. Hence, they concluded Mammon's ability did not work on outworlders.

After learning that, Jeanny told their allied natives to move away once Mammon entered the black mist state. The rate at which they reduced Mammon's HP slowed, but it was better than letting the devil possess another native ally.

Unfortunately, the plan didn't go as expected. Mammon did not possess another of their ally. Instead, he possessed one of his demon subordinates. The defenders were forming a perimeter around Mammon, but it was impossible to block all the demons. Some slipped through. These were the ones Mammon possessed when he couldn't find an enemy native nearby. The demons gladly sacrificed themselves for their lord, even when getting possessed spelled their doom.

The cycle continued. During the last time Mammon was in the black mist state, one of the strongest Yeti warriors got reckless. He decided to barge in and use his strongest skill on the black mist to increase the rate at which the black mist's HP fell. Sadly, he overestimated his ability. He got possessed.

"Watch out!" Jeanny warned when the possessed Yeti swung its huge arm. That swing conjured a cold and violent wind.

The wind swept Freddie, who tried to approach. Within the wind was the element of ice and darkness. The ice was the Yeti's original element, while the darkness came from Mammon. The wind was boosted by Mammon's power. It was more powerful than when the Yeti warrior performed the skill.

"This is endless! Jeanny, we can't go on like this!" David exclaimed. He could see the allied soldiers around them were getting thinner. It was just a matter of time before they got swarmed by the demons. His five hundred celestial soldiers were currently helping those soldiers. He always used this skill whenever it was off cooldown. He doubted the army could last another cycle of his skill's cooldown.

"Thank you for pointing out the obvious," Spring Crown said in response to David.

"F*ck you! Aren't you called the number one gamer? Do something!" David shot back.

"I am a gamer, not a hacker," Spring Crown said. "That devil is a hacker. No way the game gave him such an unfair skill?"

"It is indeed so. Wilted confirmed Mammon should not have such a possession ability," Jeanny said. "Don't worry. We have reinforcements coming."

"What can more reinforcements do? At most, it will only prolong this situation. I am tired as

hell by now," Spring Crown complained.

"Less complaining, more attacking!" David reprimanded.

"Bloody hell! You are the one who complained first!" Spring Crown talked back.

"Jeanny, who is this reinforcement that is coming?" Freddie asked. He was back again. He had

a healing spirit clinging to him. The damage from the yeti's blow had mostly recovered by

now.

"It's John. He said he is bringing some of our friends," Jeanny answered.

"Does he know about our situation?" Spring Crown asked.

"He does. I've filled him in. He said he has a plan," Jeanny answered.

"What plan?"

"He didn't tell."

"F*ck that guy. I don't like it when he goes all mysterious like that," Spring Crown cursed.

"Despite his unpleasant character, he has been reliable. We just have to trust him," Jeanny

said.

"What unpleasant character? I can't believe you people talk like that about me behind my back!"

They turned and saw John approaching. Chris teleported him right inside the defenders' perimeter, so he didn't need to fight through all the demons to get to where Jeanny and the

others were.

"She is already generous for calling you unpleasant," Spring Crown said to John. "If it is me, I would have called you unsavory, vile, degenerate, loathsome, and contemptible snake." "Now, you are just insulting me to my face. But I am a saintly man, as my name suggests, so I

forgive you," John said.

Jeanny noticed some of John's summons fighting among the army. She asked, "Since when did

you arrive?"

"Some time ago. I need to do some preparations," John answered. "I'm ready now. All you

need to do is take down that big lump of fur."

"What will you do when he enters his black mist state?" Spring Crown asked.

"That's a secret," John answered with a mischievous grin. "Like you said, I love it when I'm

being mysterious."

Chapter 1955: Trapping the Immortal Devil

They did not know what John was planning, but they still had to defeat the possessed Yeti anyway. So, they continued their assaults. Their pace picked up. They had been slowing down due to low spirits because of the never-ending cycles. Although John didn't tell them his plan, the fact that they knew there was a plan in motion raised their spirit. Hence, they attacked more passionately.

"I'm going to kick that mysterious a*shole's ass if his plan fails," Spring Crown uttered in the middle of his attacks.

"I second that!" David exclaimed.

"I'm still here, you know," John said. He also joined in on the attacks but mostly sent ranged attacks. His regular summons were aiding the army. As for his pinnacle class' summons, they were still on cooldown. Like Paytowin, the skills of his pinnacle class possessed long cooldowns.

"Haha, more outworlders? Call more. You are about to run out of troops," Mammon mocked. He noticed John but didn't think of the outworlder as someone to be worried about.

Mammon laughed as he charged at Spring Crown and Jeanny. A dark aura enveloped him. Ice covered his two arms. The ice formed spiked gloves. These spiked gloves increased the damage he inflicted. He flailed his two arms around at the two outworlders.

Jeanny and Spring Crown expertly dodged the blows and counterattacks using their long spears. The yeti warrior had great strength. Boosted by Mammon, it almost rivaled Mammon's original strength, but it was slow. Although the Yeti was large, it was not as gigantic as Mammon's original body. Hence, Jeanny and Spring Crown could easily read Mammon's movements and use their martial moves to expertly land attacks without getting

hit.

Mammon didn't seem concerned. He didn't even bother using defensive moves. He focused on the offense. When he died, he could just possess another native. He was certain he would outlast these outworlders.

When his HP neared zero, he started surveying his surroundings. As expected, the enemy natives started to pull back. It didn't matter. Plenty of demons were around. The enemies were attacking these demons, but no way they could kill them all in time. Furthermore, additional demons kept approaching.

His eyes noticed a demon. It was an archdemon. Although this archdemon was only a level 88 mythical, its HP was still around ninety percent. It fought the enemies using an axe, which meant it was a melee combatant. Mammon could use the spells of a

possessed being, but he preferred to fight melee. Hence, compared to the other nearby demons, this archdemon was the most ideal for his next possession.

Mammon's HP dropped to zero when Jeanny performed her Seven Spears Assaulting Heaven and stabbed the yeti's chest. Mammon was laughing as he died. The black mist emerged again from the yeti's body.

"What now?!" Jeanny asked John.

"Continue attacking, of course," John answered.

Jeanny was peeved about how little information John let out, but she had no choice but to follow through. She activated Hundred Spears and stabbed the black mist repeatedly. The others followed her lead. While they were attacking, they received a message from John.

'Once Mammon possessed his next prey, go to these coordinates,' the message said.

"Huh?" All of them were confused when they saw the coordinates. "But these coordinates are..."

"Don't ask. Just follow," John told them.

They decided to just believe in him. They continued attacking. When around one minute passed, the black mist started moving. It shot toward the archdemon he had targeted. That archdemon was still floating at the same position. It was fighting an outworlder.

"Go!" John exclaimed. He took the lead. The wings from his wings tool spread as he took to the sky. Jeanny and Spring Crown unsummoned their spirit weapons and followed after him. Mammon, who had just possessed the archdemon, looked at Jeanny and the others. He expected them to come rushing at him as they always did. Instead, he saw those outworlders fly up high into the sky. They were still gaining altitude while he watched.

"Are they fleeing?" He wondered. Some demons were battling in the sky, but not many. If they wanted to flee, the sky was indeed a good option. He watched the outworlders go past the altitude where the fliers were fighting, but they continued to rise.

Mammon considered chasing after them. He felt a built-up anger toward those outworlders after they killed him again and again. Not to mention, he still desired to avenge his son's death on Spring Crown. However, he decided it was not wise to do so with this possessed body. The archdemon was not even an eternal grade. It would have been better if he completed his Infernal Soul Rebirth and returned to his original body before chasing those outworlders.

So, he stopped looking at those fleeing outworlders. However, as he looked back down, he found there was another high-level outworlder down there, right below him. This outworlder was in the middle of executing a skill. A huge mechanical cannon materialized next to this outworlder. This cannon was aimed straight at him.

"What..."

Mammon didn't have the chance to voice out his surprise because the cannon was already firing.

The outworlder below Mammon was Paytowin. The cannon he conjured was the Gamma Ray Cannon. The blast from this cannon could push back an absurdly titanic devil such as Leviathan. Against a much smaller and weaker target, the archdemon didn't stand a chance to resist the knockback force.

Mammon lost all balance as he tumbled inside the rushing force of the beam. He was swept high up into the sky. He even overtook Jeanny's team, who had flown up earlier.

"What the...!" David was startled when the wide beam shot past them.

"Don't stop! Hurry! We must arrive before the other demons realize what we are doing and come chasing!" John called.

"Arrive...?"

"What are we doing exactly?"

Everyone was confused, but then they noticed someone up there in the direction they were heading. The place was also where the beam of Paytowin's Gamma Ray Cannon finally

stopped.

Mammon was disoriented when he finally regained control. The archdemon lost a great deal of HP for getting blasted by the beam, but it was still alive. After his mind cleared a bit, Mammon looked around. He was surprised to find himself way up in the sky. He then noticed Jeanny and the others. They were heading toward him.

It took him a few seconds before it finally dawned on him. These outworlders wanted him to enter the Infernal Soul Rebirth while far away from any natives, including his demon subordinates. That's why they blasted him way up here in the sky.

He was not going to let them. They needed some time to defeat him and deplete his rebirth's HP. He would not give them the time. He immediately flew to the side, away from Jeanny and the others. At the same time, he sent a mental command for available demon fliers to come up

here to his aid.

It was embarrassing for a devil like him to flee like this. He swore he would repay this shame many times over. As he flew, he noticed another outworlder nearby. This outworlder just floated there. The outworlder showed no sign of attacking him or barring his way.

He ignored this outworlder and continued flying away.

"He is getting away!" David exclaimed with worry.

"Many demons are flying this way!" Freddie told the others. He was glancing back.

"John! What should we do?" Jeanny turned to John with an urgent expression, but she froze when she saw that John was grinning.

Instead of answering Jeanny, John shouted at Joe, who was floating up there, "Joe, it should

be off by now, right!"

"Four more seconds!" Joe shouted back. He stared at the archdemon, who was moving away.

He cast Spectral Doors.

An oval blue portal appeared right in front of Mammon, who was flying at top speed. Mammon was startled seeing this portal and was too fast to stop. He shot into the oval portal and appeared right next to the outworlder he passed by earlier.

"What?! How...?"

Mammon was still at a loss when suddenly, a blue light erupted from the nearby outworlder.

This blue light washed over him and traveled outward.

Aside from John, Jeanny and the others were also startled by the blue light rushing at them.

They had never seen the activation of Joe's Spectral Plane, after all.

The blue light finally stopped expanding. Those touched by the light were sent to the alternate plane.

Mammon looked at his surroundings with uncertain feelings. Similar to Leviathan, he could sense that he was in another dimension. There was no way out.

"You...!" Mammon turned to Joe with glaring fury. This dimension was this outworlder's doing. He swung the axe in his hand.

Joe didn't engage Mammon directly. A spectral door appeared behind him, and he went into

it. He came out behind Mammon and shot using ranged attacks.

Mammon sensed Joe had gotten behind him. He turned but soon sensed many opponents coming into his mana sense's range.

Jeanny and the others surrounded the devil.

"Let's see how you fare without anyone to possess," Jeanny said.

Chapter 1956:. Defeating a Punching Bag

Only seven beings were inside this spectral plane. They were Jeanny, Spring Crown, Freddie, David, John, Joe, and the devil himself, Mammon. Two additional beings appeared when Jeanny and Spring Crown resummoned their spirit weapons.

"Okay, folks. We don't have much time. Only ten minutes," John stated. "Let's get this over with. Chop-chop! We have five minutes to slay him, then five minutes to take out his HP during his Infernal Soul Rebirth. I expect everyone to stop fooling around and give it your all."

The others glanced at him with irritated expressions. This dude indeed helped them greatly by trapping the devil in this plane, but couldn't he choose better words when speaking? The most angered by John's speech was Mammon. What did this outworlder take him for? A common wilderness monster to be slain? He wanted to tear this outworlder to pieces!

Yet, he quickly comprehended that his situation was less than ideal. He was not in his true body. He couldn't unleash his true power. The best he could do was survive these ten minutes. "Attacckkk...!" Jeanny gave the go command. She activated Dragonflight and zoomed forward at high speed.

Most of the combatants here had their skills or spells still on cooldown. When John informed Jeanny that he would be coming to help, he asked Jeanny to tell the others to save their big skills, but it hadn't been that long ago. Only a few had them available. Spring Crown used Devilize. Jeanny and David used Demonize Weapon.

Mammon fought them using the axe in his hands, but he soon realized something was off. "This... This archdemon is not a melee combatant!" He exclaimed in surprise. Not only was the archdemon he possessed weaker than a typical melee combatant, but it also didn't have any melee skills. The battle skills this archdemon had were all spells. This archdemon was a spellcaster!

"Hehe."

He heard a chuckle and turned to the person. It was John. The outworlder was giving him a wicked grin.

"You... This is your doing?" Mammon asked.

"Hehe, blame yourself for always picking the best," John replied.

"How did you do it?!"

"You can keep wondering about it," John answered while firing his Repeating Mana Bullet. Six rapid mana bullets shot at Mammon.

What John used to trick Mammon was the Mind Control ability of his Staff of Mind Breaker. After arriving on the battlefield, he went around the battlefield looking for a candidate to control. He chose a spellcasting demon of the highest level and grade he could mind control. After defeating Beelzebub, his level increased to 98, so he could control a level 88 mythical demon.

After mind-controlling the archdemon, he swapped the magic staff it was wielding for a battle axe. This was to fool Mammon into thinking he was targeting a melee combatant. He then secretly informed the nearby allies to leave this archdemon alone while having another ally fake a battle with it. That's how it still had such high HP compared to the other demons. Mammon was not aware of this. He knew John intentionally did not tell him to rattle him, but he couldn't help but keep wondering about it like John told him to. He realized something as his mind thought back about the time he started possessing this archdemon.

The outworlder he saw fighting this archdemon before he possessed it was the same outworlder who shot him from below. It turned out the outworlder had moved away once he possessed the archdemon. That outworlder then took a position to send him up into the sky, where the other outworlders were waiting.

Mammon gritted his teeth. He couldn't believe he got played like this. The turmoil in his mind, paired with his inefficiency as a spellcaster, made him an easy target for his enemies. His HP dropped rapidly.

Even before it was five minutes, his HP had fallen to zero. Black Mists burst out of the defeated archdemon as Mammon entered the Infernal Soul Rebirth.

"This is the moment of truth! Throw everything you have at him!" John exclaimed.

The offensive skills from Freddie and David's Fallen Apostle's weapons were ready, so they used them.

Freddie's Fallen Apostle's Curved Stick conjured the wrath of nature. Wind, lightning, and earth churned where the black mist was. A group of giant bees, seemingly immune to the elements, swarmed around the black mist and dealt physical damage.

The offensive skill of David's Fallen Apostle's Rifle was the Mega Buster Shot. It fired a bullet in the form of a speeding meteor. Upon impact, it caused a large explosion that engulfed a large area.

Everyone used whatever skills were available. Jeanny didn't have many big skills available since she already used most of them earlier. She compensated by using martial arts powered by mana manipulation. She performed the Seven Spears Assaulting Heaven repeatedly. Freddie also joined in the assault. He got in close and used his martial arts while firing his standard ranged attacks from point-blank range. His attacks didn't deal much damage, but it was better than nothing. No one needed healing at this time, anyway.

John activated his bloodline power, the Sea Deity Arms. He also got in close and personal. He shot standard ranged attacks while his watery tentacles slapped the black mist.

When his team slayed Beelzebub earlier, he took all the loot. One of these loots was a legendary robe for a summoner. The robe was called the Infernal Ruler Robe. John was wearing this robe in this battle. He used the robe's active skill, which summoned an eternal-grade Archfiend following his level.

The archfiend announced its arrival by firing a breath attack at the black mist. The breath contained a combination of dark and chaos elements. While Mammon had high resistance against the dark element, the chaos element was another matter.

After the breath attack, the archfiend's body burst with black and dark purple aura. It charged forward and engaged the black mist in melee.

"Hey, can Mammon possess your summon?" David asked.

"A summon is not a native," John answered.

"He is right," Spring Crown agreed. "I have seen several summons roaming around Mammon during his Infernal Soul Rebirth, including our spirit weapons, but he never possessed them."

"There's a possibility it was because he chose not to, not because he couldn't," David argued. "Don't worry. My Monster Overlord class is special. No one can take control of my summon," John assured them.

"It's going to be close!" Spring Crown warned.

He made a rough calculation on their attacking pace. The first time Mammon used the Infernal Soul Rebirth, they needed four minutes to deplete the black mist's HP. But at that time, they were all using Devilize and Demonize Weapon. They also had the Soul Swan, Leda, and several others aiding the attacks. This time, they were just six. Nine, if counting the archfiend and the spirit weapons. Furthermore, not all of them could use big skills.

After hearing Spring Crown's statement, everyone tried to increase their attacking pace. It was easier said than done. Jeanny's arms were getting numb because of repeatedly using her

spear arts. She slowed down instead.

After some time, the black mist started moving.

"Shit! It can still move without someone to possess?" David complained.

Mammon couldn't possess anyone, but it didn't mean he would just stay in one place and let himself be a punching bag. He moved so it was harder for the enemies to hit him. It was difficult, though. His movement wasn't the Infernal Soul Rebirth's natural ability. It happened because of his form manipulation. Every movement required great effort and concentration. Hence, he stopped for a period before he could move again.

To limit Mammon's movement, everyone positioned themselves according to John's instructions. Although Mammon was without a physical body, he still acted like he had one. The black mist couldn't phase through an object. If someone was in the way, it couldn't move

past.

"How are we doing? Number one gamer?" John asked.

"Uh... Close... But I'm not hopeful..." Spring Crown answered.

"I guess I can't save this item," John said. He took out a small plate. It was a Recall Plate. He

always kept a pair in case of an emergency.

He used the plate, and Paytowin appeared next to him.

Paytowin didn't ask any questions. He just started shooting. He was prepared. John had given

him the other half of the recall plate earlier and asked him to be ready. The recall plate could pierce through a barrier erected by a divine being like Greed. It could also pass through the barrier between planes.

With the addition of Paytowin, their damage output went up a bit. This let them achieve their target just ten seconds before the Infernal Soul Rebirth completed its five minutes duration.

An inhuman roar sounded from the black mist. It echoed throughout the spectral plane. The black mist trembled heavily before dispersing. The loot that dropped from Mammon floated where he was. There was no gravity in the spectral plane, so the loot didn't fall.

Everyone heaved a relieved sigh, except for John, who uttered, "What a letdown, to take so much effort just to defeat a punching bag. It is truly hard to find reliable minions nowadays." Everyone had the urge to throw a skill or spell at him.

Chapter 1957:. Level 99

When John was about to go and pick up Mammon's loot, David came in his path. David blocked him while Jeanny went and collected the loot.

John gave David a friendly tap and said, "Good boy."

When David gave him an angry stare, John said, "The boy I meant is boyfriend, not the boy as when one calls a dog."

Spring Crown came and said to David, "You do realize his act of explaining is the real insult, don't you?"

"Stop messing around. The war is not over," Jeanny said. She had stored all of Mammon's loot. She asked John, "What's our next step?"

"Only Satan is left," John said. "That said, we still need to defeat the underworld force here. So, most of you will stay here and help our army achieve that."

Joe's Spectral Plane had ended. They were now back in the normal plane. They looked down at the battling armies. The demons lost morale and received debuff after losing Mammon. They became passive. Even so, the proportion between the underworld force and the defenders was glaring. Out of the five fronts where the devils had been defeated, this front was in the worst situation. The defenders were almost routed. Their number was less than one-tenth of the underworld force.

"Even if all of us stay, that will still be hard to achieve," David remarked.

"Only Paytowin and Jeanny will come with me to help Jack. The rest of you stay here," John said. "Don't worry. Even when outnumbered like that, I believe we can still win. The debuff the demons are under is not your run-of-the-mill curse. I will also leave a summon to help this place."

"A summon?" David asked.

"He is level 99 now," Spring Crown said.

"So are you," John returned.

"Hehe." The two grinned at one another.

"So am I!" Paytowin proclaimed.

John and Spring Crown didn't show any reaction to Paytowin's statement. They didn't even turn to him.

"Ugh..." Paytowin wanted to knock the two on the head.

Jeanny tapped Paytowin's shoulder and said to him, "Congratulations. I'm one level left to catch up."

Jeanny's level increased to 98 after defeating Mammon. As for Spring Crown, he was level 98 before fighting Mammon. He reached the highest level after this win. John and Paytowin were level 97 when they left Chris' Secret Garden. They gained one level after defeating Beelzebub. They gained another level again here.

"Any of you receive a title for being the first to get to level 99?" John asked.

Spring Crown and Paytowin shook their head.

"What a letdown," John remarked.

"Why are you so confident we are the first? Maybe someone else has already gotten the title," Paytowin said.

"Don't make a stupid statement. Do you know how impossible that sounds?" John rebuked. He then pointed his Fallen Apostle's wand to the army below and started casting. "Let's see what a level 99 summon looks like."

The spell formation he was forming this time was even more complex than the ones that summoned the Western and Southern Lords. The others floated there and waited for him to complete his spell because they were also curious about a level 99 summon.

"By the way, we are going to help Jack face Satan. Shouldn't you save this spell to use against Satan?" Paytowin asked John.

"The army here needs it more," John answered. "You also use yours. We will figure out another way to fight Satan."

John finally completed his spell after forming nine runes.

The space directly below them started distorting. Patchy fog appeared all over the distorted space, followed by occasional streaks of lightning. While the players above were fascinated by the phenomenon, they were startled by a roar that caused their souls to tremble. The roar even caused the defenders and demons who fought below to look up.

A pair of scaly claws thrust out of the distorted space. These two claws gripped the edges of the distorted space and started pulling them apart. Following the pull, the distorted space started to tear. From this tear, a dragon's head with a long neck pierced out.

"Oh... Your top summon is a dragon," Paytowin remarked.

Right after he finished speaking, a second dragon head came out, then a third.

"Uh... Three dragons?" Paytowin asked.

As the three dragon heads came out, they noticed the three heads had necks ending at the same body. It was a dragon with three heads. It had silver scales with streaks of purple. Once it was out, its three heads uttered another roar. The roar this time shook even the space. The nearby players couldn't stop their bodies from shaking.

The three-headed dragon was the Northern Lord, the Atomic Hydra. Once it finished roaring, its three heads opened their jaws and unleashed their breath attacks on the demons below.

The breath that came out of the left head was a bright silver. It contained the soul element. The breath from the right head was a dark purple beam containing the chaos element. As for the center head, it unleashed thick lightning. The three beams slammed into the ground below and obliterated a lot of weak demons. Higher-level demons lost a great deal of HP. The breath attacks lasted quite some time. Those who remained showered by the beam received continuous damage every second. It was almost twenty seconds before the breath attacks stopped.

The Atomic Hydra flapped its large wings and shot down like a rocket. It landed where the underworld army was the thickest. It wasn't afraid of being ganged up on. The ground caved in from its speedy landing. Radiation fog radiated out in a ring shape. Everything touched by this ring received damage and random afflictions.

It then started rampaging among the demons. It was a level 99 eternal grade. Aside from a devil, no demons could contest its strength.

Paytowin punched his left fist into his right palm. He exclaimed, "Okay, I'm pumped! I'm going to show off mine as well!"

He flew down until he was not that far from the defenders below. He then used his level 99 skill, the Infinity System.

The air around him turned blurry. Holographic images started appearing before they formed into objects. These objects were mechs the size of medium-sized monsters. There were a thousand of such mechs. These mechs flew using the jet boosters on their backs. They attacked from a range by shooting rapid-energy bullets from the guns in their left hands. Their right hands were equipped with large chainsaws. These chainsaws emitted flames when the teeth started rolling.

What was special about these mechs was if any of them were destroyed within the first half hour since the Infinity System was activated, a new one would appear to replace the destroyed one. In other words, the number of the mechs would always be one thousand in the first half hour, no matter how many mechs were destroyed. Additionally, these mechs had no duration. They remained in combat until they were destroyed or until the combat ended.

This was not the extent of the Infinity System. It had a secondary effect. All allies within a large vicinity of Paytowin received a tech suit. That's why Paytowin approached the defenders before activating his skill.

These tech suits had their HP bar. The enemies needed to destroy the tech suit before the wearer could receive damage. If the tech suits were not destroyed, they lasted the entire battle.

Spring Crown didn't want to get left behind. He similarly approached the defenders before using his level 99 skill. His skill was called the Dominion of Weapon God.

Like Paytowin's skill, the Dominion of Weapon God affected a large area and possessed two effects. The first effect granted all allies' weapons within the affected area a 30% boost to their weapon's base damage value. As for the enemies, their weapons received a 30% reduction in their base damage value. These buff and debuff lasted one hour.

The second effect of the Dominion of Weapon God was it summoned spirit weapons from all the weapons within its area of effect, including the enemies' weapons. These spirit weapons attacked everyone considered hostile by Spring Crown. These spirit weapons lasted the entire battle or until they were destroyed.

"Does anyone think it is a coincidence those three have level 99 skills suitable for fighting an army?" Joe asked.

"As long as it is in our favor, I don't mind coincidences," David said.

"All right. Jeanny, Paytowin, let's go!" John called. Neither his summon nor Paytowin's skill needed them to be here to stay in effect. "We will leave the battle here to the rest of you. Do

not let me down!"

"Go to hell," David said to John.

David gave Jeanny a farewell hug before rushing down to join the battle. Joe went with him.

John sent his archfiend with them. Spring Crown already joined the battle after activating the

Dominion of Weapon God.

John, Jeanny, and Paytowin gave the battling armies below another look. The situation didn't look that bad compared to before. It looked promising even. So long as there was no outside interference, the defenders below should be able to defeat the demon army. They then used Chris' trial discs and teleported away from there.

Chapter 1958: The End of the Duel

Thundering explosions occurred repeatedly at the place where Satan and Jack were dueling. They had been at it for two and a half days now. Even after fighting for so long, the victor was still undecided.

In Satan's case, he was unmistakably stronger than Jack. If both sides didn't use any buff, he would also be slightly faster than Jack. Jack's HP was not high, considering he was an outworlder. In theory, it shouldn't take long for Satan to defeat Jack. Yet, it was not so. The reason was that the time he successfully landed an attack on Jack was scarce. Jack also had many means to recover his HP after getting nailed by those rare hits. Hence, why he couldn't defeat Jack after such a long battle.

As for Jack, he could only attack when his buff was available and when Satan was not using the Soul and Chaos Peak Flames. In other situations, all he could afford was to focus on evasion and stay alive. During that time, Satan utilized his high self-recovery using Flame Meditation or simply staying put. Hence, Satan's HP kept going up and down without ever going below forty percent.

Such a protracted battle would have frustrated most. Yet, these two seemed to be enjoying the battle instead.

No need to mention Satan, considering his battle lust and how rarely he got into a real fight. As for Jack, he had always enjoyed such a battle. Big boss battles were the pinnacle of any RPG game. He lived for this kind of shit. He enjoyed it so much that he asked Eoranth to bugger off when the dragon came barging into the fight.

Eoranth retreated due to his wounds, but he returned one day ago. He wasted no time but searched for Satan after arriving on the battlefield. He was at first surprised he couldn't find Satan until he noticed an explosion occurring some distance away. Then only he discovered Satan's whereabouts. He was surprised when he saw Jack was fighting the devil alone.

He immediately charged over to help, giving the devil a body blow before following up with a breath attack. He called for Jack to continue the assault together, only to receive a scolding from Jack.

Jack apologized to Satan for the interference. He told the devil he would not attack until Satan recovered the lost HP from Eoranth. Eoranth could only gape at the scene.

Satan told Jack he didn't mind if Jack attacked him with Eoranth, but Jack refused the offer. Jack explained the situation to Eoranth and told him to go help the army instead. Eoranth was having trouble processing the request. This was a life-and-death struggle to determine the fate of the upperworld. How could Jack treat this as if it was a game?

Eoranth was disappointed but had to obey due to his bond as Themisphere's country guardian. He grumbled as he flew away to aid the army.

As for the battle between Honuren's and Dajja's groups, they had moved away and rejoined the main army. While fighting Honuren's group, the demons Dajja brought prioritized assaulting the defensive structures. After one day of fighting, Dajja considered they had caused enough damage to the enemy's backline. Even if the enemy returned to utilize the defensive structures, there were not many they could utilize.

Dajja himself didn't rejoin the main army with the rest of his demons. He used a spell and vanished from the fight.

When Dajja's group retreated to the main army, so did Tetsuo and Honuren's group. Tetsuo knew about Jack's intention of dueling Satan. He could understand. He respected the duel and avoided interfering. Honuren thought about aiding Jack, but Tetsuo told him about Jack's intention. Like Eoranth, he was displeased by Jack's act. However, seeing Jack survive a duel with Satan for so long when he needed Eoranth to do so, a sense of admiration rose in his heart. He decided to respect Jack's decision.

"Are you sure you don't need help?" Satan asked.

Jack was panting. Fighting Satan was more taxing than he expected. Even his gamer body felt tired by now, not to mention his mental fatigue. Even so, he replied with a grin.

"Why did you ask? Do you need one?"

"Hehe, you are fun," Satan said.

"Thanks," Jack replied. He glanced at the battling armies in the distance. His dragon eyes allowed him to see that far.

The two armies were still battling fiercely, but it looked like the defenders were at a slight advantage. The boost from War God Blessing and War Rally had ended, but the defenders slew many demons during the boost. This allowed them to bring the enemy down to a manageable number. With Linda's tactical maneuver and the passive healing from the Rune Tree, the defenders could maintain the momentum and keep their advantage.

The guilds also summoned their guild armies recently. Only a few guilds still possessed enough guild soldiers by now. Most had their guild armies wiped out after multiple battles. They didn't have enough time and resources to rebuild the guild army with the war still going on. Only Everlasting Heavenly Legends maintained their recruitment and training pace for having stockpiled sufficient resources. John tasked the low-level members to continue working for resources instead of joining the war.

With the guild armies, the war scale tipped further in the defenders' favor. It was the underworld force that was struggling.

When Jack glanced at the army, Satan did, too. He couldn't believe the upperworld force he looked down on could push his army to such an extent.

"Impressive, Storm Wind," Satan said while gazing in the battling armies' direction.

"Thanks. I have good soldiers," Jack said.

"I was praising you in person," Satan said. "I've fought that army these past few months. Though I admit it was better than I expected, it is currently a different beast. The difference between now and then is your presence."

"You give me too much credit."

"Perhaps. Even so, this makes things easier. If you are the catalyst, taking you out will make your army fall in efficiency. We only need to eliminate you."

"Are you sure that is as easy as you said? You have been trying to do that this past two... Wait, did you say we?"

While Jack was processing Satan's words, he sensed a change in his immediate surroundings. A large sphere encapsulated both he and Satan. His mana sense told him that he wouldn't be able to pass through the wall of this sphere, even if he used Teleportation.

Satan charged over then. Jack immediately flew away to dodge. His buff skills were still on cooldown. He was currently in evasion mode. However, he soon found his back bumped into the sphere's wall. He needed an open space for evasion mode. If he was restricted inside this sphere, his movements were limited.

"Ugh! This sphere is not yours! Someone is interfering with our duel!" Jack exclaimed.

Jack saw it then. A large eyeball demon showed itself not far away. That eyeball demon was Dajja, who hid after leaving the defensive walls. It turned out he had been secretly monitoring Satan and Jack from a distance. It took action by casting Space Lock after receiving a telepathic

signal from Satan.

"Hehe. I told you I can be devilish, didn't I? It's your fault for being naïve to trust a devil."

Satan charged over again. Jack used Wind Dash to dodge. Upon finishing all three dashes from the Wind Dash, Satan vanished with a burst of flame.

"What...?" Jack couldn't sense Satan anywhere within this locked sphere. Even if this sphere was cast by Satan's ally, Satan shouldn't be able to exit the sphere as well.

Jack then sensed a strong spike of mana behind him. He quickly turned while summoning War God's Shield. Satan's flaming fist slammed into the golden shield and shattered it. Jack shot down and bumped into the sphere's floor.

"Ugh!" The War God's Shield saved him, but he still lost a considerable amount of HP. Peniel

quickly used Fast Heal.

"You... You can conceal your mana as well?" Jack asked in surprise.

"Not as good as you, though. You can still sense me when I attack," Satan replied.

"I'm disappointed. You still have hidden cards but resort to such a lowly tactic."

"Hehe. I am Satan. What do you expect?" Satan chuckled.

Jack sighed. "I was expecting to keep dueling until you use your skill, which is only available when your HP reaches thirty percent. I guess you are not as principled as I wish you to be." "Oh? You know about that skill of mine?" Satan asked with a surprised expression.

"I do. I know it is your ultimate trump card," Jack answered. He knew about it from Wilted.

"You are a funny man. If I use that, you will die in seconds. In all my existence, I've only ever used it once when Lord Lucifer asked me to spar with him for entertainment."

Chapter 1959:. Hidden Lackeys

"Let's see how you dodge this," Satan said. His body changed color into half silver and half dark purple. He was about to use either the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction or the Soul and Chaos Extinguishing Cannon.

Jack thought it was the former. With this sphere enclosing him, there was no place to flee. The explosive energy would cover everything inside this sphere.

Satan grinned and said, "You have used Ghost Form and the strange skill that distorts the space not long ago. You don't have anything else that can save you from this."

"Don't think you know all my moves! I still have skills that I have not shown!" Jack exclaimed.

"Big talk!" Satan bellowed and unleashed his Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction.

"Peniel, Invulnerability!" Jack exclaimed.

*

Outside the locking sphere, Dajja stayed and observed. Although he helped by casting Space Lock, Satan told him to stay away. Satan believed he could finish Jack swiftly as long as he limited Jack's movement. So, there was no need for Dajja to do anything further.

Little did he know, someone else was observing the duel as well. This person immediately moved after seeing Jack getting trapped by the Space Lock. Dajja didn't notice this person despite his incredible eyesight because this person was in the opposite direction from where he was.

This person shot toward the sphere that was trapping Jack and Satan. On her back were silvery-green wings. She arrived just as Satan unleashed his Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction. She was worried when he sensed the terrifying mana behind the

sphere. The sphere seemed to be in a struggle to contain the blast. Not deterred, she slammed her long mace into the sphere's wall. The sphere shattered in one hit.

"Grace!" Jack called after seeing the one who came to his rescue. Peniel had already bestowed Jack with invulnerability, so he was fine even when the destructive energies of the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction showered him.

Grace had arrived some time ago. She messaged Jack when she did. Jack told her to help the army and let him fight Satan alone. Grace respected Jack's decision but didn't want to leave him alone. After seeing that the army was not in trouble, she sneaked to where the duel was taking place and silently observed while staying hidden.

Dajja was also hiding at the time. He and Grace coincidentally hid in opposite directions from the dueling ground. Hence, they weren't aware of one another.

Grace destroyed Dajja's Space Lock using the Angelic Penalize. This skill caused one to be unable to use skills or cast spells if the strike hit a combatant. But if it hit an existing spell, it could cancel the spell.

Satan's Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction burst out when the Space Lock was shattered. Its destructive energy washed over Grace, but she was fine. She activated Disciplinary Fortitude before striking the sphere. She was immune to all elemental damage, even soul and chaos. It was Dajja who was startled when the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction burst out. He was confident of his Space Lock, so he didn't keep a safe distance. He was within the blast radius. He only had the time to erect a magic shield when the blast hit him.

The Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction lingered for a while. Everyone received damage if they didn't leave its area of coverage. However, its area was too vast. It was unlikely anyone could flee before the skill ended.

Satan couldn't see anything because everything was covered by the silver and dark purple light. Before his skill ended, something flew at high speed toward him. Something that he couldn't sense. He didn't have enough time to react because it was already too close when it came out of the silver and dark purple light before him.

He saw at the last moment that it was Jack. Jack crashed into him with a Flame Strike. He reeled from the impact.

"Grahh... You truly have something else in store," Satan growled.

He was about to strike back when he sensed someone else coming at him from his flank. A flaming buckler formed in his hand. He swung it at this newcomer. The buckler blocked and sent the newcomer flying away at the same time. He saw then it was another outworlder, a female.

'How did these two survive my Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction...?' He wondered.

Jack didn't give him the time to ponder. Jack came before him again. They were both out of big skills, so they were now battling only using their base abilities.

"So, you also hid a lackey," Satan said as his flaming buckler transformed into a cleaver.

"Don't lump me in with you who play dirty," Jack said as he dodged the cleaver. He sent a Nine Yin Phantom Sword while dodging. "She is a friend, and she is here out of her own accord!"

The Nine Yin Phantom Sword stabbed into Satan's eye. Without seeing, he couldn't tell where Jack was since Jack was using mana concealment. He then felt a strong impact in his lower jaw. Jack gave Satan an uppercut using Flame Strike. Satan backstepped a few times from the blow. If both sides had no buff, Satan's attributes would be much higher than Jack's. However, Jack was fast, and he was small. It was harder for Satan to hit Jack than for Jack to hit the devil. Jack also had mana concealment, which increased the difficulty much further. As long as Jack was careful, the advantage was his.

Grace came at Satan again from behind. Grace didn't have the advantage of mana concealment, so her ambush was useless. Still, she caused Satan to divide his attention, further reducing the pressure on Jack. Her Seraphic Possession was still on cooldown from her battle with Belphegor, but her Angelic Possession was available. She activated that skill.

Satan's flaming weapon split into dual curved swords. He swung these swords at his two adversaries. At the same time, he cast a fast spell. A fire ring radiated out of him. The flames hit his two opponents.

Grace had high defenses, so her survivability didn't lose to Jack. She was not in danger. She used Divine Aura, healing herself and Jack. The skill also improved their stats and recoveries. With Grace around, Peniel could take a breather. Jack could also afford to be more aggressive, keeping Satan on his toes so he couldn't utilize his self-recovery.

When the two seemed to be winning, Jack sensed something. His mana sense was broader than what a normal person possessed. He cast Wind Jet and zoomed to where Grace was. He grabbed Grace, and they moved away just before a black hole appeared.

Jack used War God's Stare. The golden rays struck something invisible, which turned visible after getting hit. It was the eyeball demon, Dajja.

Dajja's HP bar was half empty. He suffered enormous damage when he was hit by Satan's Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction, but he managed to flee the area using a skill,

Space Warp. It was a skill similar to the Teleportation spell. This skill let him teleport a further distance than Teleportation. It also didn't need a casting time but had a longer cooldown time.

After surviving the Soul and Chaos Chain Reaction, Dajja used Optic Veil to turn invisible before approaching to ambush the enemies.

"I'll deal with him," Grace said.

Dajja was a level 99 eternal grade. Though not as strong as the other devils despite having a higher level, he was the most powerful among demons. Even so, Grace was not to be underestimated. After defeating Belphegor, Grace's level had increased. She was now level 99

as well.

"Don't get cocky, outworlder," Dajja said after hearing Grace's remark.

His huge eyeball glowed. A distortion of space occurred right in front of him. All of a sudden, a large group of fifty demons appeared there.

Despite being the most powerful demon, Dajja didn't like to get his hands dirty. He preferred

to let others do the job. He had a magic clone spell, which he used before casting Space Lock. He sent this clone to the battling armies. He had an eye skill called the Spatial Transference Gaze. This skill teleported objects inside a limited area within his field of view.

His field of view included his original eye and the clone's eye. Hence, he could transfer the demons from the battlefield to this place.

"Get her," Dajja commanded the demons he had just summoned.

"You should be the ones who shouldn't be cocky, demon!" Grace returned. She pointed her mace into the sky, which turned bright.

A melodious hymn was heard from above. This hymn was soothing at first, but it quickly turned threatening in a heartbeat. With the change of the tune, the sky darkened. Everyone stopped fighting and observed this unusual phenomenon.

Without warning, an earsplitting gong boomed. Following the deafening sound, the dark sky split. A well of bright light pierced down from heaven. Millions of shooting stars swam within this well of light. The place this well of light shone on was where Jack and Satan were.

Chapter 1960: All Good Things Must Come to An End

This well of light shining from heaven was Grace's level 99 skill, the Divine Penance. It was an AOE offensive skill that dealt light and soul element damage. The best thing about this skill was it only affected the enemies. So, even though Jack and Grace were also bathed by the light, they were unharmed.

When the well of light fell on the demons, they found their bodies becoming extremely heavy. They had difficulty moving. As they struggled to move, the shooting stars came to them. When those shooting stars arrived, they discovered they were not shooting stars. These shooting stars were hungry spirits composed of light. Their faces expressed extreme hunger. Their mouths opened wide as they attempted to devour the souls of those trapped by this light.

Damage number over damage number kept popping up on these demons as the spirits crashed into them.

Even Satan was not unscathed. He stood still as Flame Meditation burned his body to counter the damage he suffered. All the while, runic symbols flared all over his skin, reducing the damage he received.

Dajja's eye flared with ominous light. An orb of darkness shrouded his round body. What Dajja used was the Dark Space Defense. This skill was the weaker version of Jack's Void Defense. It distorted the space around Dajja. But instead of creating an unlimited space, it buffered the space around Dajja with condensed air, softening all the attacks before they hit him. The damage he suffered was greatly reduced.

The demons Dajja had summoned also used any protective skills or spells they possessed, but theirs were not as effective as Satan and Dajja. After the well of light ended, only four demons survived aside from Satan and Dajja. These four demons' HP was below one-third.

The Divine Penance had lasting effects even after the skill ended. Every enemy hit by this skill suffered several debuffs. They received a reduction in their defenses, resistance, max HP, and max stamina or MP. Every time they used a skill or cast a spell, their stamina and MP consumption were increased. These debuffs lasted the entire battle but were not stackable.

"I see you are not the only exceptional outworlder around," Satan said to Jack.

"I never said I was," Jack replied.

"You are about to learn there are even more of us, devil!" A voice thundered as a piercing light shot from behind Satan.

Satan sensed the attack. He shifted his upper body, and the piercing light went past without hitting him. He looked back and saw three new outworlders, two male and one female. The female was wielding a spear. The piercing light came from her.

"John, Jeanny, George!" Jack called.

"You are the last devil, Satan," John announced. "All your brothers had been slain."

Satan scowled upon hearing that. Unlike Lucifer, he couldn't sense the life force of the other devils. His scowl soon turned into a condescending sneer.

"What a lump of bull," he said. "If you are trying to demoralize me, you should make a more believable claim, outworlder."

John sneered back. "Well, I want to tell you to go ahead to the other fronts to learn the truth for yourself, but unfortunately, you won't be leaving this place alive."

"Harharhar," Satan laughed. "While I find Storm Wind funny. You, on the other hand, are just plain annoying."

"I can't believe I agree with Satan," Jack muttered.

Satan did not doubt that John was bluffing. Because if the other devils had fallen as John claimed, Lord Lucifer would have shown himself. Yet, he didn't. That's how Satan believed John was simply trying to demoralize him.

"Enough talk. Time to die, devil!" John exclaimed. He pointed at Satan and yelled, "Attack!!"

Jeanny and Paytowin, who were beside him, glanced at him with irritation. Why did this guy act like they were his minions?

They still advanced. They came here to defeat Satan, after all.

"I will help you, my Lord," Dajja said. He was about to advance but found Grace before him.

"Like I said, I will be your opponent," Grace exclaimed.

Dajja turned to the four surviving demons and repeated his order, "Get her!!"

However, before the four could move, a large blade came flying at high speed. The frontmost demon got cut by this large blade. It was forced back after receiving damage.

The large blade transformed into an automaton with swords for limbs and more swords on its back. This automaton was Spark, who Jack called over after Satan ended the duel by telling Dajja to aid him.

Jack called only Spark. He ordered Therras to remain with the army, helping them fight the underworld force. Without Elevate Beast, Therras was only a mythical grade. Even if Therras had much higher HP compared to regular mythical monsters, the fight with Satan was still too dangerous for it.

Jack gave the same command to his royal agents. After all, John and the others had arrived. He had enough reinforcements. His royal agents could come with the army once they defeated the underworld forces, but Jack hoped to defeat Satan before that happened.

Spark took it upon itself to face the four low-health demons. It used its third skill, which was a buff. The ten bladed wings on its back extended. Sharp blade auras came out of the wings' tips. This skill made Spark look like it was wielding ten long scythes from its back. The blade auras from the five wings on its right were silver, while the five on its left were dark purple.

These ten long scythes slashed using the sword art of Formless Flowing Sword Style. Due to the length of these scythes, Spark had a very wide reach. Its slashes hit all four demons at the same time. The four demons were overwhelmed by the complexity and ferocity of Spark's

slashes.

Jack left the four demons to Spark and Dajja to Grace. He flew toward Satan, who was already engaging Jeanny, Paytowin, John, and John's avatar incarnation.

"Hey, is your Strength of Hope available?" Jack received a message from John.

"No. Its cooldown is still around two more hours. My War God's Manifestation will be

available soon, though," Jack answered.

"I don't care about your War God's Manifestation. Don't use your Strength of Hope when it becomes available."

"Huh? Why...? Oh! Do you want to use Hope's Light?" Jack asked.

"Yes. Satan's defense increases as his HP falls. Hope's Light might be our shot at overcoming that defense," John answered.

Satan saw Jack's approach. His weapon changed into a glaive. He then spun at high speed. His spinning conjured a fiery hurricane. The hurricane repelled all his melee opponents, including Jack, who just arrived. The hurricane also blocked all the ranged attacks sent by Paytowin and

John.

Unfortunately, John and the others also ran out of big skills because they had just gone all out to defeat Mammon not long ago.

"What did I say? We should have saved our level 99 skills," Paytowin complained to John.

"Look at Satan," John said. "Jack brought him to half HP all by himself. With us helping him, do you still worry we can't defeat Satan? Stop whining and focus on the fight!"

With the others aiding Jack, Satan could no longer take a breather to utilize his self-recovery ability. His HP went down steadily.

When War God's Manifestation became available, Jack's body exploded with golden light. He used Form Manipulation and gathered all the light onto one hand, forming a giant golden sword. He then slashed that golden sword using One-word Slash. Satan's flaming weapon was cut in two, and he was forced a couple of steps back.

"Give it up, devil!" Jack exclaimed. "Your Soul and Chaos Peak Flames, Ring of Defense, and Flame Rage are all still on cooldown. You won't win!"

"Hehe," Satan chuckled. "I must say. This is the first time I have been pushed into such a situation. I must applaud you, outworlders. Especially you, Storm Wind. I never expected to experience such an exhilarating battle when I undertook this conquest of the upperworld. For this, I want to express my gratitude. However, all good things must come to an end."

Jack noticed Satan's HP then. It had hit the thirty percent mark. "Be careful, everyone!" He

exclaimed.

Satan's body burst with intense fire. The ground beneath him was instantly scorched. The flames radiated out and forced everyone to take a step back. The halo above Satan spun at high speed and enlarged. The halo then moved from Satan's head to his back. It attached itself there, becoming a flaming aureole.

The fire that was burning Satan stopped raging, but it didn't douse. It solidified and became a

second skin. It was as if Satan had a thin layer of fire covering his entire body. His eight horns grew. They became much longer and larger. They became more like antlers, and their lengths were half his body height. They were also burning, which made them look like giant torches. Despite all the transformations, it was his aura that caused everyone to become very tense. "How... How long is the duration of his form?" Jeanny asked.

Jack answered, "... Once he gets into this form. He stays this way until the battle ends."