**Chapter Eighteen**

**Ferris School Tournament: Day Seven**

The dragon team, a team comprising of nine unique dragon users, was another one of the teams that Dead Eye had set his sights on the second that the tournament had begun. Eric had started to see why. He, Kaida and Evony were watching the Dragon team’s first fight in the tournament and, unsurprisingly, they were dominating their opposition. A team consisting of seven mech users, an extremely powerful, and dangerous, Pyromancer and a defensive mage.

The Dragon team were easily able to work together, almost seamlessly so, and took down the mech users within the first few minutes, combining their powers to trump their opponent’s. The Pyromancer managed to take down one of the dragons, but their leader stepped in and finished the Pyromancer off in a single strike. The defensive mage was swarmed soon afterwards.

 “Huh, they’re pretty good,” Kaida mused.

“Dead Eye did say that they were,” Eric replied. “I guess his intuition was spot on.”

Evony whistled. “Damn son, how powerful are these guys?”

“If they’re strong enough to worry Dead Eye, then they’re very powerful.”

“Hey, Evony, did you learn anything from watching the fight?” Kaida inquired. “I mean, Eric and I only just got here. You’ve been here from the beginning.”

“Hmm, I learnt a little, I suppose,” Evony replied, unsure of herself and being careful with her words.

“What did you find out?” Eric politely asked.

“Well, I’ve been able to figure out which Dragons work with which, and what their powers are, but…”

“But?” Kaida repeated.

“I get the feeling that they’re holding back.”

“What makes you think that?”

“Honestly, it’s just my gut telling me that they’re holding their fire as best they can.”

“Makes sense,” Eric said. “After all, revealing your strongest weapon at the start of the tournament would give all your future opponents time to prepare for it.”

“So, they are holding back?” Kaida asked.

“It’s very likely,” Evony continued. “Anyway, we’ve kinda gone off on a tangent, so I’ll just report my findings, boss.”

“Please don’t call me boss,” Eric grumbled.

“As we already knew, there are nine dragon users in this team and, unfortunately for us, their either at their full potential or almost there. To put it into terms you and the rest of the team would understand, it would be like fighting eight regular Kaida’s and one super Kaida.

“The eight male dragon users have a real grab bag of powers at their disposal. There’s a Fire Dragon, a Lightning Dragon, a Thunder Dragon, an Aqua Dragon, an Earth Dragon, an Ice Dragon, a Magma Dragon and a Woodland Dragon.”

“I didn’t know there could be such variants to dragons,” Eric admitted.

“It’s not that uncommon,” Kaida interjected.

“Back on track, each of those dragons is specialised even further into a specific role within the team. The Earth and Woodland dragons act as their supporting units, meaning that they provide them cover and manipulate the battlefield to give their team the advantage. The Lightning and Aqua dragons are their main offensive team. Aqua drenches the area with his powers, then Lightning zaps it and bam! Mass extermination.”

“Okay, sounds pretty lethal so far,” Eric mumbled.

“Oh, it gets worse, trust me,” Evony said. “The Fire and Ice dragon duo acts as the long range attackers for the team. They stay far, far away from the main fighting and launch powerful attacks at unsuspecting targets. From what I’ve seen so far, they are very, very good at taking people down in a single strike.”

“You were right, it did get worse,” Kaida mused with a faint smile on her lips.

“Oh, I’m not even done yet. Thunder and Magma are the biggest concerns of the male dragons.”

“How so?” Kaida inquired.

“Basically, they’re strong in both offense and defence.”

“Super,” Eric muttered.

Kaida and Evony giggled together and, once they had calmed down, Evony continued. “Then, there’s the team’s all powerful leader who is the most powerful of them all: Axisam.”

“Ah, that’s Axisam?” Kaida screamed in surprise.

“Is she a big deal then?” Eric cautiously asked, hoping that he didn’t appear stupid to the girls.

“Eric, have you ever heard of Drakhan Armour?” Kaida questioned.

“Um, no, sorry.”

“Drakhan Armour is the final form of the most powerful of Dragon users. When the user becomes one with the dragon’s soul, a powerful suit of armour like Dragon Scale Armour is materialised. The suit not only enhances the user’s physical abilities, but it also amplifies its magic and allows the dragon’s magic to flow through their blood. Essentially, once you put on the armour, you become stronger than superhuman, as you are both Dragon and Human.”

“So, it’s like God Armour?” Eric asked.

“Hmm, not quite,” Evony added. “Drakhan Armour is strong, there’s no doubt about it, but, unlike God Armours, it does not continue to evolve. Once it is awakened, there is no increase or decrease in its power.”

“That’s still impressive, though,” Eric argued. “So, how many people have Drakhan Armours?”

“In recorded history, there has been thirty seven, making her the thirty eighth recorded Drakhan Armour users,” Kaida replied.

“Wait, what do you mean ‘in recorded history’?”

“No one knows for sure how many people have achieved this power because not everyone announces it,” Kaida sadly said. “Axisam is the thirty eighth person in recorded history to have confirmed her Drakhan Armour, but she might not be the only one in our lifetime with such a gift.”

“So, as we are right now, could she beat Azrael and me in a fight?” Eric queried.

“As you are now, she’d crush you into the ground,” Evony bluntly replied. “Then again, if you put the time and effort into your training, then you’d be able to slice and dice her real easy.”

“Ah, I was most curious to find out the strength of the Diablo Armour in its current state,” A calm and calculating voice said.

The three of them turned around and found a boy standing behind them, standing proudly and high above their heads. He had a soft yet dark skin colour, black hair that had been combed and styled to make it appear as sophisticated as possible and pale blue eyes. The boy was dressed in a smart white shirt, the top button of which was undone and the bottom of it was untucked from his black trousers, a gold pendant with a jewelled skull sat around his neck, rubies in its eye sockets.

From his first glance, Eric had no idea what to think of the person that was standing before him. He was proud, sophisticated, well-mannered and considerate about his appearance however, the manner that he was dressed made him seem like a spoilt rich brat. Not to mention the expensive shampoo that flowed from his body; it was a rich and posh scent that very few had ever smelt before.

 “Um, who are you?” Kaida asked.

“Oh, excuse my poor manners,” The boy said. He bowed and raised his head slightly, allowing his eyes to stare into theirs. “I am the God Armour user, Osiris. Nice to meet you, Diablo.”

“I prefer Eric, if you don’t mind,” Eric replied. “What’s your real name?”

“My real name, huh?” He stood up straight, straightening his back and he hummed softly to himself for a few moments. Then, “Hmm, I would prefer not to say at the current time, if you do not mind,” He said.

“So, you want me to call you-?”

“Osiris, Lord Diablo.”

“Firstly, stop calling me Diablo. Secondly, Lord?”

Osiris chuckled and stood up straight. “I guess I took my little joke too far, I am most sorry,”

“It’s fine, just…don’t do it again,” Eric requested. “Was there something you wanted to talk to me about, Osiris?”

“Nothing in particular. I was just wondering if you remember the man I sent to recruit you to my team.”

“Your man?” Eric repeated.

“Short, about five feet off the ground. Brown hair, scruffy looking. Caucasian male.” Osiris described, but Eric’s face was still blank.

“Sorry, but a lot of people were-”

Osiris softly smiled and nodded his head in silently understanding. “I understand. Perhaps I was too hopeful that you would return my offer amongst such an ocean of invitations. Most naturally of course, and I am sure that you will agree, the right place for a God is with his fellow Gods.”

“Wait, you’re-?”

“Yes.” He smiled and bowed once more. “I am Osiris, leader of the God team.” He stood back up and smiled. “A pleasure to meet you, Eric Agrim.”

“Wait, you’re the kid with the Osiris God Armour?” Evony asked.

“That I am, hence why I introduced myself in the manner that I have.”

“So, did you just come here to let your presence be known?”

“How should I say this, I wonder? Perhaps, it was more that Fate and my free Time that brought me away from Void’s doorstep and to yours.”

“Um, what the hell does that mean?” Evony hissed.

Osiris smiled slyly and bowed once more. “Until our fight, Eric Agrim.”

He departed swiftly yet courteously.

“What the hell was he on about at the end?” Evony spat.

Eric pondered his words again in his head and, once realising what he meant, he smiled.

“What is it?” Kaida quizzed.

“He just told us the names of some of his comrades,” Eric explained.

“Why would he do that?”

“Because he knows he’s got the advantage. We haven’t seen him in action, but he’s seen us in action. So, to even the odds, he decided to give us a small insight into what we’ll be facing.”

“Talk about an idiot,” Evony said. “If he has the advantage, why would he give it up so easily?”

“Who knows, Evony? Who knows?”

***One week later…***

**Team Diablo Tournament Roster**

1st Fight - God Team

Battlefield - Forest

Modifiers - None

Number of Participants - 18 (9 from Team Diablo, 9 from God Team)

Victory Requirement - Defeat other team

*Good luck everyone in the 1st round of the tournament.*

*Have fun,*

*Head Mistress Kasmine.*

It was a gorgeous forest that lay before Eric and his friends. Tall trees with blooming leaves decorated the land for miles around, handfuls of orange and yellow leaves fell from them and decorated the path before them. Flowers of all colours and sizes were spread out across the grassy plain, small and delicate animals danced across the forest floor, searching for food, water or shelter. A herd of deer ran past; a unicorn was sipping from a small pond a little way ahead of Eric and his team.

“When Teeq said this was a forest, I didn’t expect it to be like this,” Azrael admitted.

”He is the greatest master of technology that the Guardians have ever seen,” Kaida said.

“Still though, this is amazing.” Azrael bent down, resting one knee in the grass, and picked up a brown, crinkled leaf. “I can’t believe that he put this much effort into even the smallest of details.”

 “Why isn’t this guy out curing cancer or something?” Evony mused.

“Eric, what’s the game plan?” Jasmine demanded. “Last time we only had to worry about Ace so we could all team up against him, however, this time, their team is the exact same size as ours.”

Ajax raised an eyebrow and asked, “You’re not thinking of trying to take on these guys one on one, are you?”

“No, that would be suicide,” Eric replied.

“So, what’s the plan?” Azrael asked.

“We don’t know how powerful these guys are, nor do we know what their weaknesses are,” Eric explained. “The best solution would be for us to break up into teams and split up into the forest. I and Azrael will charge straight at the enemy. Kiara, Kaida, Ajax and Elthia will move up on the right. Jasmine, Evony and Laila will go up on the left side. Kaida, you lead your squad and Jasmine will lead hers.”

“Understood,” Laila said.

“Can I ask something?” Evony asked and Eric nodded. “Why are we splitting up?”

“Because that’s what we need to do in order to not kill one another,” He replied. Evony raised an eyebrow in doubt and Eric continued. “My God armour and Azrael’s are designed to destroy everything and anything in their path, including allies. I believe that the enemy’s God armours will also have similar issues, meaning that they cannot be closely grouped together.”

“Depending on the Gods, they might have similar powers to our own,” Azrael added.

“Meaning that they will have to employ the same strategy in order to survive,” Kiara added. A smile dawned on her face. “Ah, I understand now. You think they’ll either be by themselves or in small groups, don’t you?”

“Yes, that’s what I’m hoping for,” Eric admitted.

“And, if that doesn’t work out?” Evony chirped.

“Then we all try to link up back at the lake at the centre of the map.”

“Do we know any of their armours?” Laila inquired.

“We know that they have Osiris with their leader and, possibly, Fate, Time and Void as well.”

“If that’s true, then they might be able to distort time or predict what will happen in the future,” Kaida interjected. “Meaning-”

“If we don’t take Fate and Time out as soon as the match begins, we will be at a disadvantage,” Jasmine hissed. She clicked her teeth and then cried, “Alright, my team will go search for Fate and Time. You guys will just have to deal with the rest of them.”

“Okay, we’ll leave it up to you, Jasmine. Kaida, your team will stay on the sides of my team, keeping an eye out for any exceptionally powerful God armours that need to be taken out.”

“Okay,” Kaida responded.

“Alright, everyone knows their roles?” Eric asked. They all nodded.

*Five.*

*Four.*

*Three.*

*Two.*

*One.*

*Begin!*

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Laila was the first to engage the enemy.

Before she knew what was happening, wooden branches and vines had swarmed around her, sealing her in an arena made of wood. Then, a large muscular man dropped from the sky towards her. Laila dropped into her own shadow to avoid the attack, the muscular man instead destroyed the ground where she had once been standing, leaving a broken crater engraved into the grass.

Laila appeared in a tree’s shadow across from him, her knife in her hand, and the man charged at her, his fist raised. Laila dropped beneath the attack, dug her blade into his skin and ripped open his muscle. The man grunted and threw his other fist at Laila; however, Laila disappeared into his own shadow and appeared behind him, slicing across his lower back. The muscular man hissed through gritted teeth and slammed his feet into the ground, cracking it and causing Laila to lose her balance. The man pivoted and launched his fists at her once more, but Laila blocked the blow with her blade, causing his knuckles to grind against it. The blast, though, sent Laila flying through the air and into the wooden barricade.

She cursed under her breath, landed on her feet and swallowed whatever blood was in her mouth. She glared at the muscular man as he stood there, beckoning her towards him, his arm and back gushing blood out by the litre. The man was not wearing any clothing, say for a thin piece of cloth that covered his private parts; his entire body was ripped with impressive muscles, causing his veins to twitch with each movement, no matter how tiny they may be. He had blackened eyes fuelled by anger, fear and raw power.

Laila dropped into her shadow and appeared before the man. The man chucked a right hook at Laila, however the petit girl slid beneath his legs, stabbing the entirety of her blade into his left calf and she ripped it wide open. The man growled furiously and swung his fist under his legs. Laila couldn’t dislodge her blade in time, so she simply vanished into her own shadow and appeared five metres behind him. The man tried to pursue her, but he collapsed onto one knee, his left leg paralysed with pain and pouring blood out at a tremendous rate.

“Hah, you’re strong, Laila,” The man mused. He ripped the blade out of his leg, biting his lip, and hid it in his curled fist. “But, I imagine that you aren’t much good without your blade.”

“A fair observation,” Laila replied. “However, you cannot launch an attack with those wounds. Thus, this fight has become a stalemate.”

The man grunted. “It nearly has, Laila. Nearly.” His blood vessels pumped a fresh batch of blood through his body and, in a few moments, his wounds sealed themselves completely; he had fully healed himself. “That’s the beauty of the Ogmios armour. Practically speaking, it is nowhere near the strongest but, it’s healing effect is one of a kind.”

“I see. The armour is designed so that the user has to go on the offensive, providing raw power and a healing ability but no defence at all.”

“Indeed. Sorry Laila, but it’s my win.”

He ran at her, his leg’s impairment removed, and he drew his fist behind his head. Once close enough, he launched his attack however, at the same time, Laila launched her counter. She threw her left hand in front of her, dragging a thin shadow with it, and it cut through Ogmios’ flesh, severing his hand from the rest of his arm. The fist dropped onto the ground and its fingers uncurled, revealing Laila’s blade which she hurriedly retrieved.

She then stabbed the blade into Ogmios’s left wrist, stabbing the blade through muscle, skin and bone, before running along his arm with the blade, tearing it wide open. Ogmios was screaming madly in agony, his mind blank from the immense pain that had just suddenly spawned in his arm. He tried to grab at Laila with his right hand, stopping himself after realising that he no longer had a way of fighting her. Laila swept her blade across his throat, cutting all of the blood vessels in the front of his neck, and blood sprayed over her.

The girl jumped off of the gigantic man and landed perfectly in a crouched position, her arm, blade and body dyed red. Ogmios fell onto his knees, unable to muster enough strength to stand on his own two feet, and Laila stabbed her blade into his eyeball, piercing his brain. A second later, Ogmios disappeared.

*God Team, eight players remaining.*

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Jasmine rolled to the side, narrowly avoiding Damona’s branches. She fired her machine guns at the God, but a green shield appeared before her, blocking all of the bullets before they could impact. Jasmine clicked her teeth and took cover behind a nearby tree, reloading her weapons as quickly as she could. Evony loosed an explosive arrow at Damona’s back, but the shield appeared to defend her once more.

The two Gods who the girls were fighting, Damona and Grannus, worked perfectly with one another. Their teamwork and coordination was flawless. Damona was a petite girl dressed in a casual blue shirt and navy jeans, a long wooden sword with a blade two metres long in her hand. Grannus was donned in a long brown cloak, hiding the majority of his body say for his face, with no visible weapon on his person.

Jasmine jumped out from behind her cover, unleashing a hail of bullets upon Damona, however Grannus’s seemingly invincible green shield appeared to block her attempts once more. Evony ran around the pair, firing arrow after arrow, but Grannus simply moved his shield in time with her movements, deflecting her arrows. Jasmine took that chance and struck. She fired all of her remaining bullets at the vulnerable Damona, but she raised a barricade made of branches to defend herself.

Evony stopped running around the pair and whipped out another arrow, knocking it against her bow. She loosed it at the pair but, before it could even get close to impact them, it exploded into a bright ball of light, destroying their vision.

“Shit!” Damona screamed.

Evony took out a second arrow and fired it up into the air; the arrow flew high up into the sky, then it curved back and started its descent towards the ground. Just as it turned, dozens of small bombs were released from the arrow’s head, creating a small minefield over the pair. Grannus fell onto his back, raising his shield above his body to protect it. Damona, still blinded from Evony’s flare, staggered around on the field, resting against her sword to steady herself.

“Damona!” Grannus cried.

He leapt onto his feet, pushed the girl onto her back and raised the shield above her body. The arrow and bombs landed, blowing the ground and the God to pieces. Once the dust settled, Damona was left alive, unscathed from Evony’s attack; Grannus, however, was dead.

*God Team, seven players remaining.*

Damona stood up, not bothering to brush the dirt and dust off of her body, and she planted her sword firmly into the ground. It glowed and the ground around her began to shift. Branches, some as thick as a cannon and some as tall as a tree, emerged from the ground and they wrapped themselves around Damona’s body, completely covering her from head to toe. The branches shifted, adjusting themselves to Damona’s body and a suit of armour made entirely out of magical branches was left on her, violent green eyes glared maliciously from the helmet.

“Huh, wasn’t expecting that,” Evony mused.

Damona roared and hundreds of vines shot out from the ground, charging at impossible speeds. Jasmine wasn’t fast enough to dodge this time; a vine stabbed through her chest, tearing her spine in half and shattering her ribs. She turned into glass shortly afterwards.

*Team Diablo, eight players remaining.*

Evony had barely moved out of the way, weaving her way carefully through the vines. She fired two explosive arrows at Damona which burst into flames against her armour; they did not, however, break it. She bit her lip and stopped running. Evony knocked three arrows against her bow, aimed up towards the sky and fired them. They curved back around in perfect unison and hundreds of mines dropped towards the battlefield.

Damona, though, was able to prepare this time. She stabbed her sword into a new piece of the ground and the branches weaved around her over and over, encasing her in a solid sphere. The explosives smacked into the wood and it shattered, pieces of burning kindling went flying in all directions. The air calmed and the branches slumped lifelessly onto the ground, burnt to a crisp and dead. Damona, surprisingly, was still standing, panting heavily.

“So, that looks like it did some damage,” Evony noted.

Damona spat at Evony and ran at her, her sword drawn back behind her. She swiped at Evony’s chest, but she dodged beneath it, kicking Damona in the shin. Before the God could recover, she kicked her in the stomach, sending her stumbling backwards. Laila appeared in Damona’s shadow, stabbing her knife against the wooden armour, but it uselessly bounced back.

Laila retreated into Evony’s shadow and the two girls stood side by side, ready to face the God together. Damona steadied herself, her body physically drained, and she was wheezing. Damona threw her arm towards the two girls, an army of branches flew at them which they were easily able to avoid. Laila jumped out of the God’s shadow and sliced several times at her back, barely scratching at the armour.

Evony drew two explosive arrows and launched them at Damona, encasing her in an inferno. The flames dispersed, but Damona was still alive and moving, if barely.

“I guess maintaining that form takes up a lot of power, doesn’t it?” Evony asked, understanding the limitations of Damona’s armour. “I wonder how much more you can take before you break.”

Laila and Evony relentlessly continued their assault. Damona cut at Laila, but the girl was always fast enough to drop into the shadows. She tried to charge Evony, but the girl simply retreated to another location and kept loosing arrows as she moved. Knowing that there was no way that she would remain alive at the end of the fight regardless of which side won, Damona decided to make a drastic decision.

She stopped swinging at Laila and drove her sword as deep as she could into the ground, leaving only the hilt above the dirt, and yelled as loudly as she could. Thousands of branches jumped out of the ground, zooming wildly all over the place. Laila returned to the shadows, appearing behind a tree outside of the branches’ attack range; Evony was not able to avoid them. Six branches cut through her flesh, two in her arms, three in her chest and one in her head; her body shattered into glass.

*Team Diablo, seven players remaining.*

Damona’s strength left her and the branches rescinded, returning to the ground where she had raised them from. She fell face first onto the ground, blood pouring out of her body and flooding the space that her armour left. She turned into glass.

*God Team, six players remaining.*

Laila had nearly collapsed after escaping Damona’s final, suicidal attack. Her body felt heavy, a large bruise had formed on her hip and several cuts had been made along the back of her thighs, tiny amounts of blood dripping from her skin. Even though she had been able to avoid the majority of Damona’s attacks, she had still been hit by some of them, leaving her body battered and broken. More so when she had pushed herself to teleport to a shadow over fifty metres away. It drained her energy quickly when she used her powers normally; this single teleport had almost made her pass out.

She, however, continued to move forward, no matter how difficult it was. She used the trees to support her weight and she slowly moved through the forest towards the lake.

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Ajax, Elthia and Kiara had been walking at a steady pace for quite some time. After each announcement, they had spoken to one another, but, for the last ten minutes, they had said nothing to each other; instead, dedicating their attention to the forest and any potential threats that could emerge.

Lazarus and Void had been observing them for quite some time, assessing the situation and their opponent’s strengths. Void was a boy of small stature, just above five feet, with thick auburn hair and grey eyes, a plain black cloak sat over his body, making up the entirety of his God armour. Lazarus, on the other hand, was of average height and his entire body was made up of a silver liquid, granting him his powers. Not only could the armour shift into whatever he wanted, it was also regenerative; put simply, no matter how much his body was attacked, it would do no damage. The attacks would simply pass through his body, doing no harm.

“They don’t appear to be hiding anything,” Void whispered, glancing to the boy standing beside him.

Due to his partner’s unusual armour, he could not speak while in his God armour. That was its one and only weakness, especially in a team fight.

“Let’s go,” Void ordered.

Lazarus was the first one to strike. A thin metal scimitar sliced at Ajax’s neck, narrowly missing the boy as he jumped backwards out of the way. Lazarus, however, did not let the boy recover. He launched a series of strikes, cutting, stabbing and chopping at the mech constantly. Ajax managed to deflect his attacks long enough to thrust his spear into Lazarus’s chest. It went through his skin like it was a silver liquid, piercing all the way through out of his back.

Lazarus leapt onto Ajax’s chest, his feet transformed into metal spikes, and they shoved their way through Ajax’s chest, tearing his lungs wide open. Ajax couldn’t even scream at the immense pain that he had felt in that moment. He fell with a thud onto the ground, blood flowing unhindered out of his body, and then he shattered into pieces.

*Team Diablo, six players remaining.*

Kiara and Elthia hadn’t even been able to help in the fight. Void had created a black hole behind the girls, making them fight with all of their strength to not get sucked into it. Kiara had dug her nails deep into the ground, channelling her magic into them to make them act as an anchor. Elthia was holding onto a nearby tree with her feeble muscles, fear and desperation giving her strength. He increased its strength and Elthia was pulled into it. Void collapsed the black hole on her and she died.

*Team Diablo, five players remaining.*

Kiara immediately took off into the forest once the black hole was gone, catching Void off guard. He opened one behind her, but she was outside of its reach. She ran for all she was worth as far into the forest as she could, occasionally shooting black balls back towards the two Gods. She stopped, resting her shoulders against a tree, her breathing laboured. After using as much magic as she had and running so quickly for so long, her body was beyond exhausted. It took all that she had just to keep her eyelids at bay.

“Who the hell was that metal man?” Kiara hissed through her fangs. She slid down the tree, resting her bottom onto the soft grass. She took deep breaths in and out, using these few moments to relax and regain her strength.

Her attention, though, was soon drawn to the large pillar of smoke rising from the centre of the forest.

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The forest fire was thick.

Kaida could barely breathe, let alone keep her eyes open enough to see. The temperature of it was at a level that made even the tiniest of sparks lethal to anyone that they touched. Kaida raised her dragon around her, using it to keep the flames around her at bay and it relieved a lot of the pressure the fire put on her. She could breathe, for starters, and she could see the blackened remains of the wildlife that had once lived in this part of the forest. The lake had been dried out, leaving a gigantic hole of mud in the centre of the map. In the centre of the inferno stood a single figure, draped in steel armour shaped in the form of a succubus.

Kaida didn’t need to be told that this person was responsible for the blazing storm that had swept over a quarter of the forest in a few minutes.

“Oh, I’m surprised that you were able to reach me,” The figure said, its voice feminine and calm. “I suppose that you’re a Pyromancer, yes? Hmm, no matter.”

The girl spawned a large Phoenix, a bird made of fire, behind her and it swooped at Kaida. Kaida couldn’t risk sending her dragon at it; otherwise, she would lose her only protection against the intense inferno that raged around her. Defenceless, Kaida swiped her dragon wings across her front; the phoenix cracked against it, breaking through the wings with ease.

Kaida was sent back, her dragon vanished, and the intense heat found its way back to her body. The gigantic bird of fire shrieked, its wings fully expanded, and it sliced its talons at Kaida. She scurried to the side, the talons scraped her back and she screamed. The bird breathed fire towards her, setting her delicate flesh on fire. The flames spread at an unbelievable rate, encasing the girl from head to toe in flames. The fire burnt brightly and then glass shards erupted from the centre of the pillar.

*Team Diablo, four players remaining.*

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Before they had even realised it, Osiris had unleashed his attack. A lightning bolt soared into Azrael’s chest, cracking against the metal and sending the boy flying through the air. The bolt then bounced over to Eric, smashing into his chest and catapulting him backwards. Eric managed to steady himself, barely able to land on his feet, whereas Azrael crashed through a tree.

“At last, we face one another on the battlefield,” Osiris called to them.

He jumped from the tree branch that he had been perched on and landed perfectly on the soft grass. Osiris’s God armour was decorated in polished solid gold, gleaming brightly in the sun. An eagle helmet covered his face and in his right hand rested a golden staff which had an Ankh on the top.

“So, that’s your God armour, eh?” Azrael questioned as he stood back up. “It’s pretty impressive.”

“Flattery will not help you,” Osiris replied coolly.

He twirled his staff around the top of his head and then thrust it forward, unleashing another lightning bolt at Eric. Eric tried to dodge, but he was too slow to avoid the attack. Once more, the bolt bounced off of the first impact and flew at the other. Azrael ducked beneath it, narrowly avoiding the blow.

Eric leapt through the air towards Osiris, his above wrist blade deployed and pointed at the boy’s heart. Just before he made contact, Eric felt his body lock-up; he couldn’t move, no matter how much effort or force he put into it. Osiris chuckled slightly and stepped to one side; Eric became free and he crashed hard into the ground, sending a shockwave echoing through the nearby land.

“What the hell was that?” Eric shouted.

Azrael chopped at Osiris, but the rival God blocked it with his staff and then countered it with a blow to his stomach. Eric felt the punch of Osiris’s blow in his stomach and he winced.

*So, that’s his trick,* Eric screamed in his head. *That staff has the ability to attack multiple people with a single strike.*

Azrael deflected Osiris’s blow and sliced at his feet; Osiris, however, flipped over it and landed to the side of Azrael. He then bashed Azrael around the back of the head and the boy flew forwards; he destroyed several trees before his momentum ran out. Eric fired a black blast of energy at Osiris, but it stopped mid-air. Osiris took one step backwards, the energy was released and it was sent hurtling through the forest.

“Honestly, have you not figured this out yet?” Osiris taunted.

“Oh, I’ve figured out all of your little tricks,” Eric yelled back. “Your staff can hit multiple people at once and you’ve got two of your friends nearby to help you.”

Osiris grunted. “Well deduced. This.” He leant his staff towards Eric. “Is my God Weapon. I see that you have not yet unlocked yours, whereas your friend has to an extent at least.”

*Damn, so he know,* Eric cursed.

Eric charged at Osiris, both his blades deployed, and he lunged at the God. Osiris swerved to the side, dodging Eric’s attack, and then kicked the boy in the lower part of his spine. Eric stumbled forward, his armour able to take Osiris’s attack, and he slashed relentlessly at Osiris. Osiris was on the defensive and they both knew it; if he wasn’t dodging Eric’s attacks, he was deflecting them.

Azrael ran at Osiris from behind, his axe wound back behind him, and he chopped at Osiris’s lower back. Just before the blade made contact, his body froze and he couldn’t move.

“What the-?” He cried.

Osiris back flipped over Azrael and then smashed his staff into the boy’s back just as he was released from his prison. Azrael flew into Eric and the two boys ended up on the floor. Osiris twirled his staff around his body and fired a focused bolt of lightning at the boys before they could recover. The two howled madly in pain.

*God Team, five members remaining.*

“What?” Osiris blurted out.

In that single moment, as soon as he had lost his focus, he had cost himself the fight against Eric and Azrael. Eric stabbed his blades at Osiris’s chest; the God managed to narrowly avoid the full blades yet they pierced his armour, not his skin. Osiris recovered and swung at Eric, but the boy slid beneath the blow, and then fired a black blast of energy at the God. Osiris crossed his arms over his body as the blast hit, sending him twenty metres back. The God landed in a crouched position, his arms badly bruised and worn after taking a blow as powerful as that.

“Who died?” He mumbled.

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Kala, the Goddess of Fate, ran for all she was worth through the forest, nearly falling over a dozen times and, each time, barely able to stay on her own two feet. Laila was right behind her and getting closer with every second that passed. The assassin behind her was naturally fast but, when mixed with her teleportation powers, she was unbelievably fast.

Kala threw her arms out to the sides, her bracelets on her wrists jingling madly as the crystals collided with one another, and the trees either side glowed pink. She snapped her fingers and the trees toppled over, landing behind her as she passed. Laila, though, had good enough reflexes to avoid every single attack Kala launched. Her power was rather unique; she could move things to a point in the future that they would eventually reach. For instance, with the trees, she had sped up their life span dramatically so that they would fall over well before their time. Essentially, she could age things to the point that she wanted, including humans.

Against God armours it was useless but, against humans and most superhumans, it was extremely effective. If she could turn around and manage to focus her powers on Laila, then she could probably end the fight; but, Laila was too quick to fall for something like that.

Desperate, Kala attempted it.

She skidded to a stop, turned on her heel one hundred and eighty degrees and moved her hands in front of her body, covering all the trees around her in pink energy. She snapped her fingers and the trees collapsed over incredibly quickly. Laila ducked into one of their shadows and remained there until the trees stopped falling over. She then appeared in a shadow five metres in front of Kala and the girl snapped her attention to her.

Laila dove into the shadow and then appeared behind Kala, stabbing her through her spine, into her stomach and out the other side of her body. Kala let out a pathetic whimper as the reality of the situation hit her, blood trickled from her lip and it poured from her stomach. Laila swiftly removed her blade and then sliced all of the blood vessels along the girl’s neck wide open. Within a matter of seconds, Kala had shattered into glass.

*God Team, four players remaining.*

“Two more down,” Laila softly said, her body exhausted, and she leant against a tree for support. She took deep breaths in and out before steeling her nerves and renewing her determination. “Not yet.”

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Osiris had expected Chronous and Kala to fall in battle; however he had not expected them to be taken out so easily and within such quick succession. The only member of Eric’s team who was capable of doing a feat like that was Laila, as the gap between Kala and Chronous was too great for anyone else to cover quick enough to finish them both off.

Eric was relentlessly attacking Osiris, chasing him as he continued to retreat further and further back into the forest. Azrael was running along parallel to their left, making sure that he kept up and he waited for his chance to strike. Osiris was on the defensive and they all knew it. He stopped running away, skidding to a stop, and blocked Eric’s fist with his staff. Osiris then swung his staff in a vicious flurry of blows over and over across Eric’s body, smashing his staff hard against the armour. He then cracked his staff against Eric’s chest and sent the boy flying backwards through the trees.

Azrael charged at Osiris and the two clashed. They both swung their weapons as fast as their bodies were able, the speed and power behind every swing on another level to superhuman. Osiris bashed Azrael’s axe to the side and then kicked the boy in the stomach, causing him to lurch his body forward. Osiris then followed up with a powerful jab with the end of his staff, breaking a piece of Azrael’s armour beneath the weight of his attack.

Azrael coughed blood and collapsed onto his knees. Just as Osiris swung for the fatal blow, Laila emerged from his shadow and stabbed at the back of his neck. Osiris’s reflexes had saved his life, if only barely. He bent his body down, causing her knife to narrowly miss the nape of his neck, and then rolled over Azrael’s back. He thrust his staff at Azrael and the lightning cracked against the boy, before darting towards Laila.

Laila dove into her shadow and appeared a few metres away, the lightning followed her and it slammed against her shoulder. She winced as the pain burnt her nerves, but, after everything she had already been through in this battle, she wasn’t going to stop fighting because of a little bit of pain. She teleported around the God’s feet, slicing at his legs and stabbing at his torso, desperately trying to find a weak point in his armour. The blade pierced his thigh and Osiris grunted.

Laila attempted to remove the blade; however, it was firmly lodged within the boy’s flesh. Osiris spun his staff into Laila’s face, cracking her skull and the girl shattered into glass.

*Team Diablo, three players remaining.*

“Bastard!” Eric screeched as he ran at Osiris.

He drew his fist back and swung it, but he was ripped backwards by a powerful force. Eric slammed against the ground and it broke beneath the pressure; he looked over his shoulder and saw a small black hole pulling him towards it.

“It’s no use, Diablo,” Void taunted giddily. “Not even you can escape a black hole.”

“Eric,” Azrael groaned.

Lazarus moved behind Azrael, his hands transformed into a gigantic claymore, and he removed his head in a single, clean strike.

*Team Diablo, two players remaining.*

“Azrael!” Eric screamed.

Osiris bit on his lower lip as he removed Laila’s blade from his flesh, the pain, despite being reduced, was still awful to experience. He tossed the dagger to one side and glanced at the wound, blood pouring steadily from it.

It was in that moment when Osiris had relaxed that Kiara struck.

She emerged from the nearby bushes, her vampire claws wound back, and she sliced along the God’s back. The claws breeched his armour and split open his skin. Osiris yelled out and, in anger, blindly swung at her. She easily avoided the attacks and launched a handful of black bolts at the God, stunning him and sending him skidding backwards ten metres. Kiara had, obviously, drawn the attention of Lazarus and Void, causing the former to charge her position; Void, however, was unable to move or else Eric would be free.

Lazarus’s arms transformed into curved swords and he sliced repeatedly at Kiara, his speed was on par with hers. She managed to keep ahead of the attacks, narrowly avoiding death multiple times, before she back flipped into a nearby tree. She clung to the branch and Lazarus jumped after her. She pushed her palms together and a solid beam of black energy smacked into the God, knocking him out of the air and turning him into a puddle of silver.

Then, the tree she was sat on was engulfed in a tornado of flames. Xantico cackled at the sight as the fire licked higher and higher into the sky, Kiara’s glass shards burst out from within it and she grinned beneath her helmet.

*Team Diablo, one player remaining.*

A black aura burst from Eric’s body, surrounding the boy and the area around him; the black hole that had once held him in place dissipated.

“Void, what are you doing?” Osiris demanded.

“I-I didn’t collapse it!” Void yelled back, fear caused his voice to tremble.

The aura dispersed and Eric was standing in the centre of it, his body glowed a deep shade of crimson and his armour’s appearance had changed; the Diablo armour had evolved. The colour of it was a much darker shade of red, spikes dotted all over his body along his joints, and a few patches of black splattered in various, decorative places. Large red wings spanned from his body which were engulfed in an ebony fire.

Osiris had, at that moment, wanted to smile; however, he couldn’t bring himself to do it, knowing that it had spelled the end for his team.

“Lich was right,” Eric mumbled. “Combat experience is nothing compared to personal loss, even when that loss happens in a virtual world.”

“Shit! Hi-His power increased!” Void stuttered, backing away and nearly falling over in the process. “H-How? How?”

Osiris gently exhaled, his various wounds that he had sustained were beginning to take their toll, and he leant against his staff.

“It would appear that killing his friends like that pissed him off,” He mused.

Xantico clicked her teeth and hissed violently. “He’s not taking victory from us that easily!”

She pushed her palms towards Eric and a straight blast of fire was sent at the boy, covering him from head to toe in bright flames. Xantico did not let up, even when the fire began to spread to the nearby trees around the boy, setting even more of the forest on fire. She ceased her flames and they naturally passed beside Eric; he hadn’t even been scratched from her intense attack.

Xantico threw her arms out and her Phoenix appeared. It cried out and slammed into Eric’s chest, breaking apart upon impact without damaging him even in the slightest. Eric flexed his right hand and red lightning crackled from his palm, summoning a weapon into his hand. It was a long, red bladed staff with a red stone at the bottom of it; crimson bolts of electricity danced along it.

His wings beat against the air and he flew towards Xantico, planting his blade firmly into her chest and the girl threw up blood. She fell onto her bottom and Eric removed the blade from her heart, unleashing a spray of blood.

“I-Im-Imp,” Xantico croaked before she shattered into glass.

 *God Team, three players remaining.*

Lazarus zoomed over to Eric and launched dozens of attacks against his head and chest. Eric didn’t even bother dodging his attacks. Instead, he simply waited and then sliced Lazarus in half from crotch to skull. Lazarus turned into a puddle of metal liquid and it soaked into the ground.

*God Team, two players remaining.*

Void could not fathom the sight that had just unfolded before him; Xantico and Lazarus, both seemingly unstoppable, had both been taken down so easily by Eric and his Diablo armour.

“What the hell?” Void shouted at the top of his voice, his aura spiking in power. “How could you kill Lazarus when his weapon his immortality?”

Void pushed both of his palms out at the boy, conjuring a large black hole behind him; Eric was dragged along the ground, but he was able to dig his finger deep enough into the ground to steady himself. He glared at Void and the God merely waved back at him in a mocking manner.

“What’s wrong, Diablo?” Void called out, nearly giggling. “Can’t you move? That’s too bad.”

Eric beat his wings twice and he came face to face with Void; he chopped off the God’s head and it tumbled to one side before he turned into glass.

*God Team, one player remaining.*

Osiris chuckled lightly, barely able to stay standing up. “Impressive, as expected of the armour that killed the Christian God. Still though, I never would have expected your God weapon to have such power; I assume you know what it is, yes?”

“Of course,” Eric said back. He spun the staff into both of his hands and pointed the blade towards Osiris. “The Staff of Oblivion, the God Killer; any and all God armour’s weapons are negated when I cut them with this blade.”

Osiris smiled. “Well, if you would be so kind.”

Eric walked over to Osiris and cut him in half, turning the God into glass.

*God Team, no players remaining.*

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Osiris popped open his can of coke and let out a long, exhausted sigh. He rested against the railing before him, his thoughts distracted by the peaceful evening look of Ferris. During this time of year, barely anyone was outside in the early evening; most people were gathered inside, watching the tournament and the highlights from the day’s various matches. Osiris had seen the moment when Eric’s armoured had morphed and when he had cut down both Osiris and three of his teammates in the space of a minute many times.

“It looks as if they will not forget that moment,” He mumbled with a forced smile.

“Hey, Osiris,” Someone called to him from behind.

He looked over his shoulder and saw Eric standing a few metres behind him.

“Hello, Eric,” He called back. “Where are the rest of your team?”

“Watching the highlights from the other matches.” He walked up beside the God and leant by his side against the railing. “Where are your guys?”

“Hmm, I am not sure, if I am honest.”

“Oh, I see.”

A few seconds passed of silence.

“Did you need me for something?” Osiris finally asked.

“Oh, I wanted to apologise about today,” Eric replied.

The God raised an eyebrow. “Apologise? For what? Winning?”

“I guess,” Eric chuckled.

“You are a strange one, are you not?” Osiris smiled, stepping back from the railing. “There is nothing to be sorry for: you won, we lost; that is all.”

He patted Eric on the shoulder and left.