

## D. Diver 231

Chapter 231

"... They're rumored to be Blue Ogres."

Arie turns to me.

"Maybe they'll put up a good fight for ya. Huh?"

I nod slowly while thinking about what these new monsters could really be like. The Director didn't feel it necessary to mention them, confident that we'd clear it without a problem on our way to Solara, so I'll just have to wait and see.

Before I can even look up to respond, Arie continues.

"Oh right- how was the dungeon break out here in the mountains? Seems like you cleared it pretty quickly, I never asked you how it went."

Catching me a bit off guard with this question, I look up to the sky before answering.

"The Dunegon break I cleared was so quick because... well-"

I stop myself from continuing for a moment.

There's no reason to lie to my team here, but it may be for their own good.

I've faced a floor boss on the 20th floor of a perfectly stable labyrinth and had to use every dirty trick in my book to beat it. I believe in my team, but there are some things I just know are impossible right now.

It's best that they don't get involved with my future dealings involving that Arch Demon.

I gulp.

"It- was nothing really, I didn't even get any drops. The strongest monster in there was as about as powerful as the Salamander Boss we faced yesterday. Someone must have marked that thing wrong, I'm... not sure what all the fuss was about."

There's a pause from my teammates for a moment. Abby finally cuts through the silence.

"Well, I don't care if you don't want to spill the details. As long as the break is cleared that's all that really matters. We'll just have to keep moving forward."

I give her a firm nod, then turn away and grip the reins of my camel tighter.

She lets out a sigh, poking Arie in the back.

"Blue Orges? I read about a potential monster type like this in the Association advanced quest text a few months back. They were described to use strong energy shielding and possess strength and defense buffs."

Maria responds.

"So what? They're just super strong Ogres? What's the big deal about these things?"

Abby shrugs, then smirks.

"I believe on occasion they drop very rare crafting items. There aren't any of these Dungeons in the Vice region, the only mention of it I've seen in the files has been extraction missions to this exact mountain range every time there is a surge."

I turn my head back to her, now interested.

"Really? Just here? And what kind of crafting items? Like element stones? Or-"

Abby clicks her tongue.

"Ahh, it was a while ago when I read all of these details. Plus, they send extraction teams out to a lot of dungeons, it may not be that special.... I don't believe they wield any elemental magic. We'll just have to fight them and see what they actually drop. This is the extent of my knowledge."

On that note, we continue to venture off into the desert switching the topic of conversation to what's for dinner instead of the life-threatening battles ahead.

The further we travel forward, the more spread out the mountains all begin to be. The tight rocky mountain range is now a wide-open desert plain with mountains becoming much further apart and valleys that dip much deeper than before.

The earthy sand beneath our feet gets denser with stones and green shrubbery. The occasional small desert tree pops up and the hint of water nearby seems more and more real.

Although we're stocked up on more than enough water for our travels, its always nice to have a more lively ecosystem around.

We head further north for over 6 hours at a very steady pace.

Intermittently, I activate my enemy detection and inspect skills to see if anyone is tracking us from the town we left in shambles.

After a few hours, a few parties of level 250-300 hunters are sent out but they don't make it very far into the mountains before turning back. It seems they're just making sure we're gone rather than trying to catch us.

I'm sure they know what happened with the missing 4 guards up on the hill by now. The one guard in the village that saw my face while disgusted as Issac may have even conjured up some wacky story by now too.

If anything, it may seem like they were double-crossed...

Whatever works. I'm just glad we've left.

Out of habit, I continue to check our surroundings in a few-kilometer radius every 20 minutes or so, just in case any stragglers or oddities pop up.

As the sun begins to set, an oddly high level pops up about 3km ahead of us on the mountain trail.

I use Appraisal and Inspect.

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[Lv. 440]

Active Items:

Blue Ogre's Armor Set [+1400 Defense]

Blue Ogre's Club [+1250 Strength]

Active Skills:

Body Hardening

Extreme Strength

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The orange rays of sunlight are beginning to disappear over the horizon behind the rising and falling mountains off in the distance.

No one has said a word for at least an hour now... We've all gotten used to the footsteps of our rides and are just now enjoying the cool air that's started to fill the valley.

But... there's a Boss Level monster up ahead. Our moment of peace needs to be interrupted.

I let out a sigh and speak up in a low tone.

"Sorry to ruin the mood, but we have company up ahead."

Everyone begins to perk up, and I turn to Arie.

"You were right, looks like we made it to the Blue Ogre Dungeon by nightfall."

The Archer sits up straight, taking his bow out of the item box around his waist and looks forward with a focused stare moving his eyes left and right before responding.

"How far out? I can't see a thing."

I point straight ahead.

"At this rate, 20 to 30 minutes until we face the first one. It's level 440. An Ogre outside the Dungeon is higher than some of the bosses we've faced so far this trip."

My blank stare forward twists into the sliver of an excited grin.

"Their mana output is off the charts."

Maria chimes in.

"Oh yeah? Just 20 minutes? Is it really that strong? What's it look like?"

I chuckle.

"I don't know everything. We'll just have to go face it and find out. I don't sense any others in the area, or even a portal nearby, so this may just be a lone stray. It's a good start though."

Abby takes out her map and looks it up and down in the remaining sunlight.

"Yep, checks out. Considering our pace, we should be nearby the portal within an hour or so."

We continue forward, now more on guard.

Everything around us is silent.

As we get closer I continue steering us in the right direction. The mana this beast we're approaching only gets stronger in my mind's eye with every minute that passes.

It feels dense and cool. Certain high level creatures give off emotions with their mana auras. This one seems to be in a very calm state.

We twist and turn through open plains and narrow valleys until we're less than 500 meters away...

Still, there's no sound. All of my skills show that it's just standing in one place. The monster isn't moving at all.

Before we know it, the final turn is made and we see it right in front of our eyes.

A 5-meter-tall beast with pale blue skin. Its overgrown teeth stick out of its mouth like white tusks.

Leaning against its massive wooden mana-imbued club, the monster stands facing a massive red rock wall swinging its body back and forth slowly biding its time.

The curved rock wall stretches out to make a circular flat area about 100 meters wide. There are small piles of rock scattered about, and partial areas of rock wall that dip lower than others letting in more of the final rays of the sun.

There's a slight shimmer of silver armor on the beast's arms and legs reflecting light from its armor. This gives my teammates a clear visual of the Ogre.

Activating my All-Seeing Eye from a distance... its power is incredible. There's mana shielding activated around its whole body already. Thin, dense, and bright white, a strong shield of energy swirls around every millimeter of this beast. There isn't a single weak point.

I'm certain it hasn't sensed our presence, but for some reason, it's already prepared for battle.

I speak up in a hushed tone while putting a hand in the air to stop my teammates from saying a word or moving forward.

"It hasn't noticed us yet, let's take it out before it does."

We tie up the camels on a small nearby tree with thick twisting branches.

The sun is almost completely set now. It's cool and dark in the desert, but a tiny golden-orange hint of sun lights up our battlefield threatening to flicker out any minute now.

The four of us split up, planning to surround the monster.

Maria takes the right side while both Abby and Arie take the left.

I take out my sword, activate stealth, and run straight ahead.

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Activating stealth and gripping my sword, I run straight toward the light blue monster that's less than 200 meters away now.

My teammates have spread out on both sides of the circular sandy battlefield. High red stone walls surround the makeshift desert arena.

Fragments of golden sunlight glimmer off my fellow hunter's weapons as they charge forward. I watch the swaying monster before glowing blue and white with an ominous, slightly confusing aura. It stares straight ahead at the red rocky wall with its back facing me.

Each step closer I take, the cool and collected mana radiating off the beast invades my perception skill. At under 100 meters away, I can finally hear the ground shift under its feet as it moves back and forth.

Still, the monster hasn't noticed us at all.

Its shielding feels much different than anything I've faced before. Not strength wise though, that's not what perplexes me.

Usually, the shielding around monsters is thin and solid, like a skin-tight body suit fractions of a millimeter above their body's surface.

This monster's aura twists and swirls around, protruding multiple centimeters outwards on some portions of its body. Even so, there isn't a single area that I can detect a weakness.

The swirling energy makes for a much greater volume of shielding, but the amount of MP stored in it is incredibly high... Astronomically high actually. To put a rough estimate on it, over 50k MP is somehow swirling around this beast's body. This makes the density on par with the thinner shielding of other monsters I've faced at its equivalent level.

It is odd, but this is not the most important detail for me. I'm almost positive I can take its head off in a single blow, I'm more curious about how my teammates will fair against it. This will be a solid test monster what the trials ahead. I'll let each of them land a hit before I go in for the kill.

I watch the 3 of them veer in from my left and right side, beginning to glow with their respective skills.

We're less than 30 meters away now and the monster hasn't changed its movement patterns at all...

It really hasn't noticed us.

Arie's bow glows bright white while Maria and Abby glow blue and green with their weapons at the ready.

The archer is the first to release his shot.

A thin white spirit arrow glides towards the back side of the light blue Ogre's head timing the trajectory of the slowly swaying movements.

It... actually didn't notice....

The arrow pierces the outer layer of swirling mana shielding with ease. Then, everything changes.

On impact, the shielding begins to waver and ripple. I even see the white and blue edgy react with the sensation of a miniature splash. It pushes out a shock wave of light blue mana followed by an impressive explosion of light.

For the fraction of a second that we're blinded, I feel the odd wave of energy pass through me. Then hear a ferocious roar.

It doesn't hurt... but it's a very familiar sensation. One that I haven't felt in quite a while.

It feels like my All-See Eye. The wave of dense mana expands outwards in a dome shape, surrounding the entire arena for 50 meters in all directions with a light blue tint.

This monster is using some kind of mana-pulsing ability for a makeshift perception skill.

I grin through a clenched jaw and keep running forward, now charging my sword up and watching Maria and Abby both release their attacks.

Two green crescents of energy come out of Abby's daggers while a royal blue shimmering light comes from Maria's sword.

The Orge is mid-turn as it's hit at point-blank range with these three attacks.

There's another loud bang and flash of white, blue, and green light as another dome-like shock wave is forced through all of us.

I run forward to make my move.

The shelling around the monster is still vibrating and rippling from its last barrage. It seems all 3 of my teammate's attacks made it through, but this monster recovers its footing quickly.

I see a chunk of flesh missing in the back of its head from Arie's arrow, and multiple gash wounds in its torso from the mages.

Not bad, but not good enough. It would take another 5 or so attacks from each of them to take this monster out. Those were cheap shots too, totally unguarded.

The monster is in full battle mode now, but its level of shielding hasn't changed at all. It seems its always on full blast.

The Blue Ogre begins to raise its heavy club as I run forward still using my stealth ability. I watch its eyes dart back and forth quickly, then lock onto my exact location.

The massive monster lifts its club to block even before I release my attack...

I charge up 1500 MP and let a dense wave of fire fly straight for its neck.

Even with this odd perception ability, it's a bit too slow, the black crescent of mana glides just half a meter over the rising club and approaches its unguarded neck.

On impact with its shielding, instead of gliding straight through, it ripples like water sending out another shock wave.

I hear a sharp and concise buzz as the blade moves all the way through its body.

As it comes out the other side, I hear a familiar ringing in my inner ear.

[Level Up]

"Instant Kill."

Just like that, it's dead.

All four of us land to the ground and the dust settles. We're left in the silence of night and the sun finally falls below the horizon like it was waiting for us to finish.

That wasn't a hard fight, but there are a lot of unanswered questions I'd like to figure out once we enter the real break.

What's with that thick shielding, and the shock waves...?

Maybe I'll have an easier time examining it once I face more. This was just the first one outside the dungeon, it's better to kill the first few quickly to make sure they don't have any more hidden moves or special lethal abilities.

In mid-thought, the corpse of the massive Blue Ogre falls backward with a thud and its head rolls to my feet.

Maria is the first to shout out, staring to me.

"I didn't know that thing was so strong! Let me face one alone next round! Will ya?"

I place my sword into my storage and cross my arms.

"As a team, they'll be no problem. Solo, they will be tougher, but worth it for the levels and data we can collect. I'm really curious about these beasts, to be honest. I'd like to see each of you fight one."

Arie nods and butts in.

"Yeah that monster took a direct hit the other back of the head from me and survived. I'd like to watch them in action to find a weak spot too."

Abby powers down her skills.

"Yeah, but we should face them in the dungeon. The more of these we can actually get item drops from the better. Those rare crafting items I read about, the Association paid multiple gold for every one of them. They must be really valuable. I'd... like to see what exactly they are."

I nod.

"Me too.... So let's conserve our energy for the real fights in the break. We'll avoid any that are lurking in the mountains. There aren't any villages out here to protect, so it doesn't really matter if they roam free. All of them will dissolve once we take out the Boss."

There's a unanimous agreement, and we leave the dead Ogre corpse to rot out in the desert. It'll also dissolve instantly once the break is taken care of, so there's no point in lugging it around if we don't have to.

The 4 of us get back on our camels and continue into the night.

I keep a small flame ignited to light up the night as we move forward and Arie points a half-charged arrow to light up the path before him as well. The stars are beginning to shine from the black sky and the moon lets off a low white glow, but extra light is more comfortable for our travels right now.

I expand my All-Seeing Eye out to a much greater range to find exactly what we're looking for.

The further into this portion of mountains we travel, the more common these Blue Ogres become. They are rather spread out though, over the next few kilometers only half a dozen of them show up. Each one of them is level 435-445. So, either these are all mutants or this break is much higher level than any of us first expected it to be.

Every mob we pass is calmly minding their own business in the cool night, swaying back and forth while emanating an odd blue glow.

About 45 more minutes of quick-paced riding passes, and we successfully weave our way through a portion of mountains to avoid every monster.

Using my perception and enemy detection skills, I locate the final mountain we've been looking for. Pointing forward with a flaming hand, I speak up.

"The dungeon is less than a kilometer ahead now, it's just up this last mountain path. We have a clear shot, there's no monsters in sight... It may sound too good to be true, but we've made it to the break."

## Chapter 233

We venture up the nearest mountain, following the large mana reading focused on a single area I'm picking up on my perception skill.

All of the enemy Blue Ogres that we pass don't seem to care much for us at all. They don't turn our way when we get nearby and hardly make a sound.

My first guess is it's night. Possibly, they're sensitive to the changes in light, so they become inactive when it's dark out. Then again, there's no difference between night and day in a dungeon, so this theory doesn't add up.

It must have something to do with its peculiar shielding, but we'll have to enter the break and see for ourselves.

After a final 20-minute trek up this rocky mountainside with the dim light of black flames and a white arrow to guide our way we finally make it.

Up on a flat sandy rock ledge, a violently spinning crimson-red portal spews mana out in all directions. The low-pitched hum can be heard from about 100 meters away and the vibrations it's sending through the air can be felt from almost 3 times that distance.

It's similar to the salamander break that Maria and I faced in the cave system. The break is spitting out dungeon mass from within it. Light blue energy flickers out and dissolves into the open air escaping the blood-red portal.

We tie our camels to a nearby tree and I leave food by their feet in case we're gone for too long.

The 4 of us walk toward the portal and draw our weapons. I take off the red cloak and switch it with my armor set from my item storage. I'm not sure what we'll face in this break.

I'm sure I can handle it, but there's no reason to take any unnecessary chances.

Moments later after a short walk, we all jump through.

After being teleported into this new break the bright white light of transfer magic fades. When I open my eyes everything is tinted light blue...

There are small shrubs and light green trees on the rising and falling high rocky walls, and curving natural pathways, mountains, and valleys are all made of incredibly light-colored stone.

The trickling sound of water fills my ears and I see a gentle waterfall on my left side. The rock color underneath the crystal clear water is so light, it may even be white. I can't tell for sure with this odd blue tint skewing my vision.

There's a deep canyon off to my right side and tall mountains straight ahead. They're all made of the same white rock, like all the pigment has been sucked out of it.



The humming noise from the portal we jumped through hasn't gone away. It feels like everything in this dungeon is slightly vibrating.

The mana density in the air is astronomically high, but It doesn't seem threatening at all. I'm getting the same cool and calm feeling from the surrounding mana particle in the air as I do when passing the Ogres outside.

We all stare at our surrounding for a few seconds.

Then, we're interrupted by a loud roar and stomping sounds approaching from a nearby downward-facing slope on our right side.

I activate enemy detection and inspect to pick up a level 441 and level 440 enemy coming towards us less than 300 meters away.

Arie turns to me.

"Looks like they're a little more lively in here."

I point my sword down into a canyon of white stone, then see the outlines of two Blue Ogres coming straight at us.

"Yeah, that was fast. Two of them, about the same level as the one we faced outside. Who wants to fight them first?"

Abby and Maria both light up with magic, but the green-haired earth wielder speaks up.

"We'll handle these two. Only step in if absolutely necessary. Our fight will be a good gauge for their actual power."

I nod.

"I was thinking the same thing."

Maria and Abby run forward, down the wide sloping canyon towards the two 5-meter-tall monsters approaching.

Arie and I follow close behind.

I activate my All-Seeing Eye and curiously watch the battle commence.

Both of the Blue Ogres carry large wooden clubs covered in mana shielding just like the previous one did. They're identical in appearance, but their shielding is much different...

Instead of being completely contained to a few-centimeter barrier like the monster outside, the white and blue energy that surrounds these Ogres extends outwards a few meters.

My eyes dart back and forth at both of the creatures as they come closer and closer, trying to figure out what exactly is so unique about them.

The mages let off 3 high-powered attacks. Two green blades from Abby's daggers head toward the Ogre to my left, while one ice-imbued crescent heads straight at the Ogre to my right.

The blue-tinted light around us wavers slightly as the mana attacks slice through it.

I whisper under my breath, watching the air react with their attacks.

"It... really slices through it...?"

I tighten my gaze, watching the energy slashes collide with the outer layer of shielding on their intended targets only to be struck with an even more confusing sight.

The monsters don't even try to block the incoming strikes with their clubs, they just let them hit, point blank in the chest.

Instead of sending out a pulsing shockwave like expected, the shielding around these monsters compresses towards the Ogre's bodies as the attacks get closer. They're compressing inwards at the same rate as the incoming mana blades.

I can't believe my eyes at first. It seems like an incredibly intricate technique.

The humming twang of mana fills the air and a bright white light flashes. To my teammates, it's unknown what really happened, but I saw the whole thing and mutter to myself with a smirk.

"I need to learn how to do that..."

My eyes stay locked on the beautiful sight in front of me.

The closer the slashes got to their flesh, the denser these creatures made their mana shielding. Using the minimum amount of energy necessary to whittle down the incoming blows to the maximum amount they could.

Some of the attacks still made its way through, but hardly enough to amount to any real damage.

The mana residue and white light of a reaction clear to reveal barely noticeable slashes across each of the Orge's torsos. At this rate, it'd take 40 slashes to do any fatal damage.

The Ogres don't slow down for a moment, swinging their clubs at Abby and Maria as they jump out of the way wide-eyed, but already charging up more attacks.

Maria calls out to Abby.

"We'll go full power again, as many times as it takes!"

Arie and I jump backward and let the two of them handle it.

Their attacks don't do much damage, but it's as clear as day the two mages have nearly double the speed and agility of these meatheads.

Another flash of light blinds us and I hear the grunts of now partially annoyed Ogres sporting a new scar across their chests.

Maria and Abby both drink an MP potion and weave around the attacking beasts to release another attack.

I track all of their movements from a distance with Arie by my side.

Every time attacks are thrown at these monsters, they prepare their shielding as the attacks come at them from multiple meters out.

It's like the blue-tinted energy all around us is part of their mana supplies. It's much denser around them, but the air is definitely directly connected to their shielding.

"How...?"

I don't see any hidden abilities or special skills on their appraised status, so it must be some kind of mana control technique that I'm not aware of just yet.

Both Abby and Maria are letting out very powerful attacks, using MP potions every 2 or so strikes. It's no wonder these monsters were rumored to be so powerful. Arie was right.

The girls keep weaving in and out of the monsters releasing attacks and the Ogres get increasingly agitated. Blood begins to drip from their wounds and their movements get slower and slower making it easier for vital point hits.

The battle is over in less than 3 minutes. It takes 9 MP potions each, so I'm not sure how profitable money-wise this hunting session will be, but the level-ups will be very good. At this rate, all of us will reach level 440 before we clear the dungeon.

It may take a lot of wasted MP potions to do so, but it will be worth it.

As I'm thinking this, Abby and Maria both send out a final blow on the mutilated creatures. The Ogres both fall to the ground with loud thuds and I hear Maria shout out.

"I gained two levels?? Alright!"

Abby spins her daggers around, then checks her status nodding.

"Me too, Not bad."

She puts both daggers into her item box then starts glowing bright green and places both of her open palms on her upper chest.

Abby closes her eyes, then glows bright white and green, exerting hundreds of MP in an instant.

This looks like her restore skill. I don't remember her ever getting hit during this battle, so I'm unsure why she's healing.

I turn to Arie, then back to the girls, and shrug.

We walk over as the corpses begin to dissolve.

The moment we make it to the group, I hear the sound of something very light hitting the stone. Two small white gems giving off blue energy fall onto the ground at Maria and Abby's feet.

Those... aren't mana crystals...

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Two gems no more than 3 centimeters wide fall to the floor where the massive Blue Ogres were defeated.

They're both pale white, semi-transparent, with a glossy finish, and radiate with light blue energy just like the mana shielding from the monsters that were just killed.

Instantly I activate Appraisal to see what these odd-looking gems are.

"I've never seen anything like this..."

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Blue Ogre's Essence [Shard]

### Blue Ogre's Essence [Shard]

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I look closer and activate my All-Seeing Eye. The [i] icon shows up next to each shard on their appraisal text.

I open the new information tab as all my teammates stand around the two crystals not daring to touch them just yet.

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### Blue Ogre's Essence [Shard]

Info: A shard of the Blue Ogre's essence. Excess mana from a Blue Ogre Dungeon has been contained in crystal form.

Class: C+

Type: Consumable

Durability[MP Output]: 50.2k/50.2k

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### Blue Ogre's Essence [Shard]

Info: A shard of the Blue Ogre's essence. Excess mana from a Blue Ogre Dungeon has been contained in crystal form.

Class: C+

Type: Consumable

Durability[MP Output]: 49.7k/49.7k

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My eyes dart over the text that hovers above the two small white crystals, then I read every line out for my teammates to hear as well.

Abby gulps, then picks one of the shards up in the air, keeping the glossy white gem at eye level.

"So they're mana-based consumables. Basically, overpowered and uncontrollable MP potions. So, 50k MP means they're 20 times stronger than a C-Class mana potion."

She smirks, then turns to Maria. The blond-haired hunter lifts the other white gem and stares down at it in her open palm.

I speak up.

"So... we can potentially use them for mana control training."

Arie comes over with his arms crossed.

"That's exactly what I was thinking. If it takes Abby and Maria under 10 potions each to farm these gems, that's a 2 times MP profit multiplier. It'll most likely take me less, and Jay, near 0 I'd assume. If we stock up, we could have enough for months worth of training after this mission."

Maria's eyes widen as she continues to look down at the white gem.

"But... 50 thousand MP... Won't that be painful...Or dangerous? The recovery time for using that much mana so quickly would take days, no, maybe weeks!"

I nod slowly but don't say a word yet.

Maria is right.

These shards must work similarly to the strengthening fragments I've harvested from Titans. Although, by the sound of it, these shards are much less intense.

A strengthening fragment allows the user to release as much MP as possible from an endless void of energy. In my experience, the more it's used, the more it releases until an unknown timer finishes.

Without an incredibly high mana tolerance, strengthening fragments can easily be fatal for the wrong user.

I have a feeling these shards work in a similar fashion, but cap out at around 50k MP.

Before I get a chance to voice my point, Abby does in my place, making eye contact with each of us, then looking back down at the shard.

"I'll try one."

Arie and Maria look at her with surprised expressions, I keep a blank face while trying to figure out why she'd say such a thing. Abby continues to talk while rubbing the small white gem between her thumb and index finger.

"50 thousand MP will be a lot, but I can handle it. I have my restore skill if anything goes wrong."

Maria replies.

"Are you sure that's a good idea? We should focus on collecting more shards before we do any tests, and more importantly, clear this break while we're all at full strength! You could put yourself out of commission for a long time by exerting mana like that. Didn't your elite guide teach you about these things last week?"

Abby nods slowly.

"Yeah, I learned a lot. Especially about my newly upgraded legendary restore skill."

None of us answer as the green-haired woman looks down at the small white crystal in her palm with a grin.

The light trickle of water fills my ears from the small streams behind us, and the low buzzing sensation of the blue-tinted mana all around us still flows through me. Other than that, all I'm focused on is my heart beating slowly while watching Abby raise the small white gem to her eye level.

She speaks up again.

"On average, I'm able to comfortably consume about 100k worth of MP per day in training. I can push myself to use closer to 200k, but the fatigue that follows after passing the 100k mark is very detrimental to the days that follow."

Maria turns to her.

"H-Hey, but we used up over 15k in that Ogre battle alone, and probably close to 50k each in the Griffin dungeon earlier today. If you use that now you'll already be nearing your upper limit. Will you be able to keep fighting today? Or tomorrow? Are you thinking straight??"

She nods.

"I'll be fine. Trust me. If this works, we're all getting a lot more powerful than we could have ever imagined."

Then right in front of all of us without a hint of hesitation, the green-haired healer throws the small white gem into her mouth and swallows it whole.

I immediately re-activate my All-Seeing Eye.

Abby isn't stupid, she definitely has some kind of plan here, but I'm not sure what it is...

Maria, Arie, and I all quickly jump back as the gem disappears from sight.

Almost immediately, my perception skill begins to pick up increased mana output. In the center of Abby's chest, a bright white glow starts to leak out excess MP just like a strengthening fragment would.

It's happening much slower, and the mana looks pure white instead of the black swirling abyss of unstable energy I'm used to seeing with consumables.

Over the next 10 seconds, the white glow in her chest grows to take over her whole midsection and starts creeping down her arms.

Abby is just standing upright with her eyes closed, breathing heavily, and holding a very stable stance.

More and more mana is radiating outwards. After 10 more seconds pass, the outline of her full body is completely white. It's blinding to the naked eye.

Instead of staying completely contained, mana particles start leaving in the same slow and controlled fashion. The white energy around the healer begins to fade and is completely gone after another 10 seconds pass.

Just half a minute, and it's already over. She didn't even let out a single attack. The mana just flowed right through her body.

Abby falls to her knees, sweating and breathing heavier than I've ever seen her before.

Her skin looks pale and her MP remaining is nearly non-existent to my perception skill.

Maria runs over with a wavering tone in her voice.

"A-Abby, why? Why'd you do this?"

The green-haired hunter reaches into her item box with a shaky hand to pull out an MP potion while slowly standing to her feet.

Before Maria can reach her, she's already drinking the potion and using her restore skill just like after the battle against the Ogres.

Green and white lights flash, outlining her body with mana for a split second once again.

Once the energy fades she looks as good as new. Still covered in sweat, but her breathing is normal and her skin is back to its tan healthy coloring.

I blink a few times, then realize what she just did. My eyes go wide as Abby speaks.

"My restore skill is able to erase the effects of mana fatigue. As long as we have MP to continue training, I believe I can heal us indefinitely."

Maria stops in place just a few meters in front of Abby.

"That's... great... But you could have told us that first!"

Arie lets out a laugh.

"I was wondering what kind of upgrade that skill got. Legendary upgrades are no joke, I would know."

Maria pouts as I walk over, mumbling something under her breath.

"I wish I had a legendary skill..."

Arie continues.

"It looks like we have another secret to keep between the 4 of us."

I make it over to the group after this line and we all nod in unison. I reply.

"This also means we have a lot more farming to do before we clear this break. We've stumbled into a gold mine, and we're not going to waste this opportunity for a minute."

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"... We've stumbled into a gold mine, and we're not going to waste this opportunity for a minute."

We really have.

After witnessing Abby restore her exhaustion in a matter of seconds with her new legendary skill, I can't help but feel obligated to continue training as soon as possible.

This whole mission to the dark continent has been interesting so far, but I haven't made any real progress.

This ability to restore mana fatigue indefinitely sounds like a dream come true. My past training in the Titan's domain was very useful but takes a toll on my sanity, and wears my body out a lot. If I can do the same action quickly and efficiently outside the Dungeon, this could lead to a very intense power-up in the near future.

Not just for me, this is an opportunity for my entire team to get much stronger.

It's not definite just yet, we'll need to do more testing to confirm its limits. Either way, there's potential for all of us to become multiple times stronger than we already are in just a matter of hours.

Maria looks down at the glowing white shard in her hand as light blue energy seeps from it, then lifts her gaze to meet Abby's.

"I'll try it too. I can handle 50k MP, I'll just need a full restore immediately afterward."

Abby nods and grins.

"Let's do this."

I turn to Arie and we both shrug while jumping backward again, letting her give it a shot.

Maria nervously tosses the white gem into her mouth and swallows it whole in a quick and concise movement. Then, widens her stance and braces for the reaction to take place.

The four of us are silent for a full 2 seconds, staring at the blond-haired mage with her eyes shut. Finally, the bright white light from the shard appears in her chest just like before.

Just under 30 seconds go by as the light expands to cover her entire body. Then, the bright white mana disperses out into the open dungeon air.

Maria falls to the ground covered in sweat, with pale skin, and breathing heavily just like Abby did before.

She has a thin smile across her face as she catches herself from hitting the ground with an open palm.

The green-haired healer runs over, placing both hands on Maria's back and activating her restore skill.

Another flash of green and white light appears, fading quickly to reveal both of the girls standing upright and giggling to each other less than a second later.

Maria is completely healed.

After a sigh of relief, I whisper under my breath.

"Incredible...."

Abby stretches her arms and speaks directly to Maria.

"So how do you feel?"

Maria looks down at her hands, then back up at all of us before replying.

"It's like I've slept a full night after a good day of training. I'm... fully healed... and if anything feel even stronger."

I nod slowly, confirming to myself that the mana output of the shards does in fact move through the user's body adding to their overall mana control capabilities.

Arie speaks up.

"Alright. So what are we waiting for? We need to go farm as many of these beast's as possible. At this rate, we could get a year's worth of mana control training done in just a few hours!"

I nod in agreement.

"If we split up and head in opposite directions, we can cover more ground. Eventually, I'll be able to teleport us to each new target so we can spawn-kill these Ogres."

Abby replies, taking out her daggers and twirling them around her fingers.



"I say we forget about sleeping tonight, this whole mission is on a time crunch. We need to get to Solara in under 2 days, so we need to make every hour count."

Arie looks up at the light blue-tinted sky, thinking to himself for a moment.

"From here, the capital is still over 18 hours away if I remember correctly. We have time, we'll just need to take turns resting on the way over... It'll be close, but this will be worth it."

I smirk, taking my sword out and letting a small black flame flicker on the tip of it.

"Perfect, let's get to work."

Without wasting any more time, I activate my enemy detection skill and locate 6 Ogres between 900m, and 1300m away deeper into the canyon.

Turning to my left, I sense another 3 wandering up on a nearby portion of the mountain we passed earlier about 1500m away. Up the rocky ledge covered in streams of crystal clear water, I sense an opponent much different than the rest.

Actually, the more I search, the more peculiar readings pop up on my radar further into the dungeon.

I turn back to the canyon and point my sword down the wide stone trail.

"There are 6 more, at similar levels all within about a kilometer straight ahead. You take those out, and I'll take care of a few up on the mountain."

I turn to point at the towering white and green peak, then continue.

"I'll get it done quickly and meet down there once you've finished those monsters off. By then, I'll have some teleport points set up for my skill to make farming a lot faster."

It's the perfect plan.

Everyone agrees and we immediately part ways.

I activate my wind magic and start air-stepping into the sky towards the 3 Blue Ogres up on the mountaintop while my teammates turn to face their fights down below.

Less than 10 minutes pass as I fly through the light shrubbery and jagged rock walls to make my way up the mountainside.

Before I know it, a large natural pool of shallow water appears in my vision below as I float carefree through the cool dungeon air. There's a flat portion of a mountainside that opens up to a nature-dense clearing, including a crystal-clear pond.

Two 5-meter-tall Blue Ogres carrying heavy clubs just happen to be standing in the middle of this beautiful sight. Both of them stare at me with bright blue glowing eyes, ankle-deep in the still water.

Everything changes the moment I air-step into range.

Splashing water around them and grunting aggressively while keeping their eyes locked on me, the two monsters begin to mindlessly run toward me.

Dense mana shielding leaks off of both of them, swirling blue and white patterns of energy trail the beasts as one makes its way in front of the other.

I begin to make my ascent while charging my sword and inspecting them both.

[Lv. 442]

[Lv. 439]

With a 1500 MP strike at the ready, I release it just before landing on the ground with a thud. It glides forward in silence and hits the first Ogres at point-blank range in the chest.

The swirling shielding around it wavers and reacts, but there's nothing it can do.

The slightest buzz can be heard as the densest part of its defenses scrapes the outer layer of my energy blade, but does little to slow it down.

Without any clear visual resistance, the black blade of flames slices both Ogres in half in an instant.

Loud splashes and thuds follow as their bodies fall into the shallow pond, staining the water bright red.

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

I let out a sigh, then slowly walk over to the two dissolving bodies, igniting my lower body with flames to evaporate the water around my feet before every step.

"Well, that was easy..."

I find two identical white gems and use Appraisal before placing them in the item box around my waist.

---

Blue Ogre's Essence [Shard]

Blue Ogre's Essence [Shard]

---

They're both 50k MP shards, but these two base-level mobs aren't the reason for coming all the way up here in such a hurry.

I turn further up the rocky mountainside while activating my Inspect, Appraisal, and Enemy Detection Skills.

---

[450m]

[Lv. 478]

Active Items:

Blue Ogre's Armor Set [+1800 Defense]

Blue Ogre's Axe [+1550 Strength]

Active Skills:

Body Hardening

## Extreme Strength

---

The mutant up ahead is what I came to see.

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---

[450m]

[Lv. 478]

Active Items:

Blue Ogre's Armor Set [+1800 Defense]

Blue Ogre's Axe [+1550 Strength]

Active Skills:

Body Hardening

Extreme Strength

---

The mutant up ahead is what I came to see.

Activating my All-Seeing Eye, the mana radiating off this new monster is almost double that of the ones that were just defeated.

I air-step faster and faster up the mountainside, whizzing past small trees, and pools of water, clearing rock faces in a matter of seconds.

I accelerate upwards, even faster through the thick mana-dense air until reaching another clearing, now over halfway up the entire mountain.

The creature I'm searching for is already in mid-sprint, running at me with a glistening silver axe between both of its hands and thick armor to match it. This Ogre seems to be almost exactly the same size as the previous ones I faced but with a few major differences.

Firstly, it's color. The blue skin covering the mutant's body is incredibly dark, from a distance, it almost looks black.

The mana swirling around its body is much brighter white and using my perception skill, I can tell the shielding that's layering this monster is on a level magnitudes above the base mobs.

Its shining metallic axe reflects the blue glow from its eyes while running at me on a flat section of the mountain trail.

I glide down to the ground and grip my sword.

The white stone and green shrubbery beneath its feet fly off to the sides, uprooting small trees and causing craters to be left behind after every step. Thin wisps of blue magic residue are left in its tracks.

The air pressure around me shifts and I burst into flames activating all of my buffs and creating a thin pink layer of mana shielding around my body and sword, realizing that this opponent is definitely a class above the rest.

I haven't even let out a strike yet, but I don't think a single hit will be all it takes to defeat the Mutant before me.

Both my feet hit the hard rocky surface and I start ruining at the approaching monster with a grin plastered across my face.

There are less than 30 meters between us, and all I can see or think about is the fight that's about to take place.

It lets out a roar, swinging its axe downward while swirling blue and white magic flows from its arms to cover the silver blade.

I do the same, shifting some of my bright pink MP to cover my sword while jumping up, and swinging my blade. I charge the center with 1500 MP worth of dark black flames.

Both of our weapons stop in mid-air, less than a meter away from each other as the dense blue and pink layers of mana collide.

An ear-shattering twang is released that echoes all the way down the mountainside, sending a light purple shockwave through my body, and the Ogre's.

Fractions of a second later, there's a bright white flash of light and I feel my sword make contact with the monster's axe.

I let out a loud laugh then grit my teeth as the monster roars back at me.

My eyes meet its stone-cold gaze. I feel my muscles straining to hold my sword steady.

Digging deeper, activating my plunderer skill, I use the blue mana all around me to charge up more of my own. More and more black fire leaks from my blade, it starts to cover the axe that I push against. Air-stepping forward for more force, clenching my jaw, and pushing the massive metal axe backward one millimeter at a time, victory is right before my eyes.

As I begin to get the upper hand, the Blue Ogre starts to glow with a gold tint and pushes its axe back down toward me. I'm losing ground all of a sudden because of its extreme strength skill.

Our level gap isn't that large... This monster must have some insanely high natural strength stats.

At this revelation I jump back, air-stepping up into the air to take in the sight before me. The monster carries through, thrusting the massive axe into the ground below where I previously stood.

Rock breaks and fragments of light blue aura fly around the scene leaving residue on everything it touches. Almost immediately, the monster turns back toward me to show off its white overgrown fangs and keeps its gaze laser-focused upwards, waiting for me to fall.

I nod slowly.

"Not bad..."

It was a pretty strong clash and felt good to actually be countered by a monster for once. Unfortunately, I'll still have to wait a bit longer for a fight that really pushes my limits.

It may be strong, but the Mosnter's speed and agility are horribly low.

"Dungeon Walker."

Using its own plundered mana, I concentrate nearly my full MP bart into a concise attack. Channeling all of my energy into the tip of my sword, then teleport down to the back side of the Ogre to thrust my sword deep into the gap in its armor right above the neck.

There's an explosion of white and blue light, followed by red and black flames erupting from the beast's body that finishes with an agonizing roar.

As the monster turns in anger, swinging its axe around to swat me away, but I teleport out of its range to drink an MP potion and wait for the fiery debris to clear.

As it does, I see a furious flaming Ogre with blood gushing down its armored body with blue eyes glowing brighter and brighter.

It mimics the style of mana control I just used on it, moving the swirling energy around its legs, torso, and arms into its axe.

This leaves its body exposed, but creates a weapon of mass destruction...

I can hear the loud buzz of dense energy coming my way and estimate that there's over 70k MP being wielded carelessly in its blade. The rest swirls around its body in weak spirals.

With crimson liquid draining from its neck at an alarming rate, the Ogre makes an effort to take me out without wasting any more time. I respect its attempt, but it's going to need to be a bit more intelligent to pull a feat like this off.

"Dungeon Walker."

I blip behind the charging monster and let over 2000 MP worth of mana-imbued flames into the back of the bleeding monster's already injured point to finish it off once and for all.

Fire, flesh, and swirling magic fill the air as I teleport backward again to get clear of the impact zone.

A final cry from the mutant can be heard until it's snuffed out and interrupted by the ringing sound in my ears.

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

I grin, deactivating my skills while barely watching the massive cloud of debris settle to the dungeon floor.

All of my strength buffs and two nearly full power strikes to take it out. If this monster was any smarter, it probably would have taken a lot more...

I walk over as the pieces of scattered flesh disappear from the white rock, small pools of blood-stained water, and lush green plants. Then, right in front of me, less than 10 meters away another white gem sits on the dungeon floor.

It feels just like the other two shards I collected from the Ogres on the mountainside opening below, but it's almost twice the weight. It glows brighter white and the blue magic that seeps from it is much darker.

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Blue Ogre's Essence [Shard]

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Blue Ogre's Essence [Shard]

Info: A shard of the Blue Ogre's essence. Excess mana from a Blue Ogre Dungeon has been contained in crystal form.

Class: B-

Type: Consumable

Durability[MP Output]: 99.4k/99.4k

---

I expected as much, but it's still surprising to see such an increase in the MP output in a single crystal.

This one is getting on borderline dangerous levels, and may not be safe for consumption just yet...

I throw it into my item storage for safekeeping though, it could possibly be used for some kind of crafting recipe in the future. That's what Abby's intel from the Association said before we got here.

It could have just been a cover-up in the report to keep anyone snooping from coming out here, but I'd like to check with an experienced crafter to make sure.

I shrug, then turn back to the canyon down below me. Activating my enemy detection skill, I can see that my teammates are just about to meet their targets.

"I have a bit more time... Perfect."

Air-stepping away, I make my way up to the top of the mountain to set more valid teleport points for my Dungeon Walker skill to travel.

Over the next 15 minutes, I take out 2 more sets of base-level Blue Ogres while making my way down the other side of the mountain, collecting their 4 shards and placing them in my item box.

The new exp I gain from these new fights brings me up to level 432. With 6 shards ready for consumption, and 1 mutant's shard in my storage, I teleport back to the edge of the canyon to start flying down the smooth sloping path.

My teammates are waiting for me down below and their enemies have all been defeated.

We have less than two days to make it to the capital. It's time to make the most of our time left. This farming session is about to get serious.

Chapter 237

I run down the canyon's stone path using wind magic to accelerate my movements. High white stone walls fly by on my sides and the reading on my enemy detection skill of my teammates nearby gets closer and closer.

Soon, I see the 3 of them waiting beneath a small stone overhang on a very flat section of rocky ground. Each of the holds two glowing crystals in their open palms.

I wave while making my way over, then take the 6 base level gems from my item box as well.

Arie is the first to speak as I glide to a halt.

"Anything interesting out there?"

I shake my head, handing each of them a shard, to make it even for all of us to have 3.

"One mutant, but it wasn't an issue. I have its shard saved in my storage... its a bit more powerful than the others.

Then I pause.

"Well, it may be an issue. If any of you want to be able to face one of those, I think you'll need to consume at least..."

I look up at the sky doing a few calculations.

"Well, you'll have to each consume at least 300 of these shards."

Arie nods, replying almost immediately without a shred of doubt.

"That's what I was thinking as well. If they're much more powerful than these base levels, I'd have to agree. 300 shards equals about 15 million MP. If I consume that much, my control will nearly double."

Abby speaks up.

"If I take in 15 million more MP, I'll be over 3 times as powerful the I am now..."

Maria chimes in last.

"Same! 3 times for me too."

I nod slowly, thinking to myself about my past training sessions in the Titans domain. On my last trial, I gained over 25 million MP, bringing my own controlled accumulated MP to around 50 million.

For me to add 15 million, it would be a nice boost... but not a 2-3x addition like my teammates. There must be a way to get more....

I speak up.

"Well, let's see how much we can handle. One shard at a time until we know for sure there's no side effects. Plus we have to see if Abby can actually use her skill indefinitely. There has to be a limit. Right...?"

We all nod in agreement, then look down at the glowing white gems in our hands, I turn to the archer.

"Well, I think it's our turn. How about it?"

He smirks, placing two gems in an item box and tossing the other in his mouth without hesitating for a second.

After a gulp, he responds while taking a step back.

"I was thinking exactly the same thing."

Maria and Abby jump backward as I laugh, throwing two of my gems into my item box and swallowing one whole while stepping away from all 3 of them as well.

"Now, let's see what these can really do."

A few seconds pass, then a warm feeling starts to form in my chest. A white glow grows in its place and begins to shine brighter and brighter. It's not nearly as erratic and violent as a strengthening fragment.

I was expecting much worse.

All of the mana from this tiny gem is filling my chest with smooth and controlled pure light. It begins to flow into my shoulder and down my arms like trickles of water. The slow drip of mana falls down my legs as well.

Over 10 seconds pass and the flowing mana grows more and more until the slow drips turn into fast-moving streams of steady magic coursing through my veins.

My entire body lights up, making a bright white silhouette in the blue-tinted dungeon.

I can feel every individual particle of the warm magic flowing through me, mixing with my own dormant MP supplies, and now beginning to drift out of my body at a constant rate.

It feels like I'm using my mana manipulation skill to create shielding. Instead of holding it like a barrier, it just flies off to be free.

An odd sensation to say the least.

Not painful at all, but the wasted MP just flowing out into the open dungeon is an uncomfortable sensation. Usually, when exerting this much mana, there's a purpose behind it. Now, I'm being forced to use mana for the sake of using it...

After just under 30 seconds pass, I can tell the process is coming to an end.

My body feels like it's being sucked dry of energy, every last drop of pure white mana is flowing out into the open dungeon air until the MP bar hits 0.

To avoid the lightheaded, unmotivating feeling of having an empty MP bar, I activate plunderer and begin taking in energy from the swirling dense air around us.

I haven't tried this method of MP restoration in a dungeon for a while, but the dense mana-filled air around me makes it feel like just the right time.

It works.

Slowly and inefficiently, but it works.

My plunderer skill brings in about 100 MP over the next few seconds as I steady my stance and let my eyes adjust back to the atmosphere around me.



To my left, Arie is kneeling on the floor breathing heavily. Abby runs over to start healing him with Restore.

A bright green and white light fills half my vision as I peer down at my empty hands still a bit flustered.

It sure feels like I just used 50k MP...

My body tingles a bit, and the sensation of mana overuse fatigue is beginning to set in. This is how I feel when I release too many MP-imbued attacks in a row too quickly. The after-effects are just like a strengthening fragment, but a bit less extreme.

A quick self-regeneration would heal me up almost all the way up back to full, letting me continue my training. I'm able to handle nearly a million MP in a single day if I really push the limits, but that's not the point of all this.

This is about Abby's power. It could help me surpass my limits.

I nod firmly at the ground, then raise my head to meet the green-haired healer's gaze as she begins to walk over to me.

Arie stands up, looking refreshed, while taking an MP potion out of his item box and drinking it before coming to watch.

Abby speaks up.

"Looks like you're able to handle the shards a bit more efficiently than the rest of us."

She comes around my back and places both hands firmly on my shoulders.

I begin to feel another warm sensation.

This time, the energy entering my body feels like it belongs to me. It's much different than the shard from a moment ago that felt like a foreign mana source leaving.

Abby's green and white mana is welcoming and cozy, seeping into my entire body and becoming one with the skin, bones, and muscles. Seconds later, the light stops and I let out a refreshing gasp, opening my eyes wide.

"I'm... completely healed..."

I move my arms around, and hop around not sensing any sign of fatigue or minor pain.. none remains.

With a grin ear to ear, I turn to meet Abby's green eyes and speak.

"There's really no downside for you to use this skill? We can just heal over and over again as long as we have the MP?"

She shrugs.

"So far, that seems to be the case. You 3 are the only one that knows about this. I only unlocked this legendary grade rank recently."

She pauses, looking around at the others, then back to me.

"Other than the few minor tests I did alone with some MP potions in the capitals training rooms last week, I don't have any other data. Whatever we figure out today is all new to me too."

Maria jumps in, disregarding our conversation and grabbing Abby's hand.

"Our turn, let's go!"

Arie joins in, taking out his other two gems and lifting them in the air.

"Let's take turns and consume these as fast as possible."

He turns to me.

"Then, we'll have to farm a lot more."

On that note, Maria and Abby both start their next shard consumption processes. Just 30 seconds later, Arie and I go for it again.

A few minute pass and each of us has grown a little stronger just from a few flashes of light. Abby heals each of us with ease, and there's no sign of fatigue on her end or ours.

This is going to work.

I activate my enemy detection skill, and begin searching the dungeon for more Ogres within my teleportation range.

I've cast a wide net all the way around the largest mountain in the dungeon, it's a perfect place for new monsters to respawn and wander in from the surrounding land.

The twisting tunnels and paths of the canyon we're in are filled with new monsters as well. I can sense 4 more nearby and another 6 deep in the mountains.

We hash out a plan and all take out our weapons, preparing to fight.

They all grab a hold of me and we begin.

"Dungeon Walker."

Over the next 3 hours, we blip back and forth from the canyon below, to high up in the mountains, and even back to the waterfall-covered region near the dungeon's start point.

I leave each of them with opponents they're able to handle, and come back once they've collected the shard to teleport them to another.

In my downtime, while waiting for my teammates to kill their targets, I explore the dungeon further to keep expanding my teleportation range.

There are incredible rivers and valleys of crystal clear water, enormous waterfalls, and hidden alcoves. Everything is tinted light blue by the dungeon's magic.

The longer we fight, the denser and darker the blue tint becomes. It's only just slightly, but there's a difference. I can't tell if we're just heading deeper into the dungeon and it's a natural phenomenon, or if the excess mana released by us farming is changing the environment.

We fight 188 Ogres in total, and surprisingly, I only find 2 more mutants. They both drop larger shards, but no other new gear just yet.

The base mobs, on the other hand, drop 3 large clubs. A 2% drop rate is low, but the item has a 1250+ strength buff. It's one of the highest I've ever seen, so it must go for an excellent price. Abby holds onto the gear for now.

I make it to level 445, and my teammates share a similar success. Each of us consumes over 2.3 million mana and we're refreshed, good as new by Abby's skill.

This is more than double the output I've ever consumed in a single day, and it feels like I'm just waking on a freshly healed body after every [Restore].

At this rate, we'll be able to hit our goal of 15 million each within 24 hours. It'll give us just enough time to make it to Solara.

Assuming all goes as planned...

## Chapter 238

The 4 of us stand in a small circle after consuming our last batch of Ogre Shards, concluding the first 3 hours of our training session.

Over 2.3 million MP each has been consumed, and I feel more energized and ready to battle than when we started.

Abby's skill has always been a bit odd to me. It says [Restore] rather than [Heal] like many of the other healers. It may be a unique skill.

Maria hops around, glowing bright blue after we've all fully rested.

"I feel incredible guys! This is more mana than I've ever consumed! It's like months of training in a couple hours!"

Arie chimes in.

"You're right. I can already feel a difference. If we keep improving at this rate, we'll be able to take the Ogres out even faster every hour."

Abby is the last to talk, but she has a worried look on her face.

"How... many MP potions do each of you have left? At the rate I'm using mine, I won't be able to continue healing you all and fight Ogres much longer. Possibly 3 more hours at most."

Maria stops hopping up and down, matching the healer's concerned look, then starts shuffling through her item box.

"I-I've run through about half my supply already too. I only have to use half as much to defeat an Ogre now, but it still won't last more than 6 hours."

I nod, considering the fact that the association loaded me up with 1 million MP worth of potions last week. They must have given my teammates a similar amount.

Arie crosses his arms, speaking up.

"I have plenty, my skill didn't need an upgrade, so the director never handed me one of those fancy crystals. I was just given extra MP potions to go along with my training."

He takes the item box off of his waist and pours out an absurd amount of small glass corked bottles with glowing pink liquid inside them.

"Take as much as you need. Although, by the time the sunrises tomorrow I don't think MP potions will be much of a problem. We may be able to defeat these monsters in a single hit."

My supplies are getting lower, but it's nothing to worry about. Having potions is not a necessity for me. Even if they hit zero it wouldn't be a problem. Plundering MP from my opponent is always an option.

Abby and Maria need these more than me.

The two of them restock their supplies while I continue to think to myself, widening my perception skill's range.

I can't quite put my finger on it, but something feels different.... There's more mana in the air, but I can't tell how much for certain.

We're closer to the boss room, and the blue tint around us is almost identical to before, so it's very hard to put a number on it.

I shrug, then speak up to my team as they talk amongst themselves, solving their MP potion problem without me.

"Ready for another run?"

After a nod of agreement from everyone, we're off to continue our farming.

I keep expanding my teleport range little by little, moving closer to the back of the dungeon.

I can sense the boss room portal way off in the distance, slowly swirling behind us as we hunt, but it doesn't feel much different than the actual dungeon air. If anything, the Ogres that I'm fighting give off more MP radiation than the portal.

Every 15-30 minutes, we all meet together for a quick shard consumption and [Restore] session, then I blip each party member off so we can get back to work.

Over the next 3 hours, we manage to take out a total of 256 more Ogres.

The further in we travel, the more often groups of 3 or even 4 begin to pop up. I take out 5 mutants, levels 475-480 on my own, not wanting my teammates to get involved with this level of creature just yet.

Overall, I make it to level 451 myself, and everyone gains 3.2 million MP in control progress. This is a significant increase from our last session.

Once this 3-hour period comes to an end we all take a break near a calm pool of water on top of a smaller mountain behind the first towering peak from earlier.

Abby and Maira update us with their potion count, then we consume the last of the Ogre shards before Abby heals us.

All 4 of us can sense the pressure of an invisible clock ticking away.

On top of that, we're powering up so fast that the only thing on our minds is getting back out there to farm more....

Even so, one thing that won't stop itching at the back of my mind is the increasing levels of mana in the air.

We are moving closer to the boss room, and the mana density is much noticeably different now. Even when we're sitting alone, just the 4 of us off by a pond, it feels like an Ogre is lurking nearby at all times.

The density isn't very even, it's starting to surge through us in wisps of blue and white shimmering clouds.

There was nothing like this at all when I first entered the dungeon. I'm keeping a close eye on it, but even if it gets out of hand there's not much I can do.

We all continue to venture off further into this odd break.

Another 3 hours of farming pass and we've nearly made it to the back edge of this pocket world.

The swirling drifting sea of magic that fills the air continues to grow thicker the more we hunt. The denser waves of magic are almost becoming more common than the areas of dungeon air without it.

We defeat 307 Ogres this round, plus 11 additional mutants. This is roughly 3.8 million MP each added to our control totals.

Arie asks to fight one of the mutants in the middle of this session, so I bring him to one.

The furious Mutant Ogre that he faces tears up the mountainside for over 200 meters in all directions with a supercharged axe. It sends shockwaves through the rock and makes the air around us waver and bend as it absorbs portions of the swirling clouds to add to its shielding.

Even so, the total amount of mana surrounding its body decreases with every large attack it mindlessly throws.

Recently when I fought mutants, I wouldn't let them use their mana-imbued weapons much at all. Arie is fast enough to dodge and time his attacks to hit the monster's weak point from a distance.

It gives me the chance to study them for once. With just 8 arrows to the vitals, the Mutant Blue Ogre is slain.

A curious thing I noticed when scanning the essence shard after it's dropped, the small white gem only has about 85k MP inside of it.

My only explanation for this would be the extra energy being exerted from its use of the axe when fully charged lowers the total MP stored in its shielding. Mana crystals never worked like this in the past. Even if a monster completely ran out of MP, it would drop the same-sized mana crystal.

These aren't mana crystals, so the comparison clearly isn't perfectly accurate.

After this brawl, and a few of my own run-ins with mutants I'm at level 456. Arie is level 447. Abby and Maria are both level 445.

We take another small break on top of a final small mountain. The boss room portal is off in the distance, less than 2 kilometers away now.

After a brief food and water break, followed by a quick report of MP potion supplies we begin our 4th farming run.

I'm getting closer and closer to the back of the dungeon, and the air is almost completely filled with the dense waves of mana. In the open air, it feels like I'm standing less than 20 meters away from an Ogre.

The humming sound of mana fills my ears. The sensation makes it feel like I'm back in that white-walled prison of the Titan's domain.

The blue tint is getting so thick, that the visibility in the mountain is being affected. It's hard to see more than 200 meters away. Everything is covered with light blue fog.

On the bright side, with so much more readily available mana in the air, my plunderer skill allows me to absorb more and more. I don't even need to be near a monster to recharge my MP bar, I can do it out in the open air of the dungeon.

We continue to grow stronger, taking out 389 Blue Ogres in total this run. That raised each of our consumption by almost 4.9 million more MP.

In addition to this, 25 mutants appear. Abby and Maria face one together this round and manage to defeat it with a similar difficulty to the regular Blue Ogre they faced before this training session started.

We've grown a lot.

After 3 hours are up, we near our end goal. In total, each of us has consumed just under 15 million MP.

It's been about 12 hours since we entered this dungeon, and nearly 24 hours since any of us last slept.

The boss room portal is less than 500 meters away. It's hidden deep behind the thick blue fog, but I can feel it slowly swirling awaiting our arrival.

Now it's time for us to decide whether we face the Boss and continue our journey to Solara, or keep pushing on with our training for a little longer.

Chapter 239

I stare off into the thick blue fog ahead of me as we take our break after finishing the 4th 3-hour farming session.

My teammates are all waiting around nearby, eating food and getting ready for what's to come next.

I can feel the boss room portal nearby, but there isn't much point in venturing any closer to it right now. We'll take that step once it's time to leave.

In that last run, I hit level 460. The improvement in my mana control isn't as drastic as my teammates, but it has become noticeable. A mutant Ogre can be taken out in just 1 hit if I concentrate.

After stretching my arms and letting out a long yawn, I turn to my teammates.

"So how are we feeling? Up for more or-"

I'm cut off by a white glow that appears beside Abby in a pile of food, water, and loot.

It's her transmission tablet.

The small silver tablet is vibrating against the hard rock she sits on and creates an annoying buzz.

Abby looks down at the silver contraption while picking it up, then looks back at me.

"I have a feeling our decision is about to be made for us..."

It shakes in her hand, and the white glow gets brighter and brighter. All 4 corner crystals begin to blink and shine until she answers the call.

"Hello? Director? It's Abby, what's with the urgent news?"

There's a long pause.

I take a step closer to listen. Maria and Aire start to walk in closer as well.

Then, a woman's voice comes out of the metal box.

"Brutus is out for the time being, I'll be the one updating you from now on."

The smooth familiar voice of the blond-haired assistant with the lie-detector skill comes out of the small silver magic item moments later.

I clench my fist at the sound of her voice. Whatever she's calling about, it can't be good...

She continues.

"You're all needed at the Solara Labyrinth in exactly 18 hours. We've organized a raid in the morning with all able C-Class hunters or higher hunters in the area."

Abby replies with a stern tone.

"A raid? So there's more people here than just us and those two scouts? Who else are we working with? Our last run-in with locals dissent exactly go smoothly."

Another pause follows, then the woman's voice projects from the small silver box again.

"Indeed. There was word of a small mixup in DryRock, but it shouldn't be an issue. We've arranged to temporarily work with the Solaran Government, they'll be sending out some of their top-rated hunters to join us on the raid."

I nod hesitantly, thinking to myself.

If they couldn't handle it themselves by now, I'm not sure just how effective these Solaran top hunters will really be. Also... I'm finding it increasingly hard to believe they're just going to let go of the damages done in DryRock.

Even if it was their fault to begin with, they will most definitely push the blame on us...

The female assistant continues.

"The support teams may not be able to help with the final boss fight, but help in numbers will be very effective on the lower floors."

There's another long, awkward pause before she continues.

"The Director has put a lot of faith in the 4 of you. Please, make it to the Section 4 capital before daybreak tomorrow. There will be a squad waiting to greet you in the lobby of the Tower of Dreams. I hope you'll be able to find it."

Arie smirks, then replies.

"I know exactly where the Tower of Dreams is. Right beside the Tower of Strength and behind the Tower of Light."

She replies.

"Excellent. We've left a re-stock of MP and HP potions for you if necessary, so don't feel like you need to save any up for the mission. Use whatever is necessary to take out the 5th dungeon break swiftly and be on your way."

There's a click and the transmission tablet stops glowing completely.

All four crystals go dark and the assistant's voice stops coming through.

I look around at my teammates, to see they're all very visually tired. I think the confirmation that we need to be leaving soon set us all off.

My eyes are threatening to shut during breaks and my reaction time during battle is most definitely slowing.

There's still an immense power gap between the Ogres in the dungeon and myself, so it's not much of a problem, but facing a mutant boss in this state would still be risky.

Maria speaks up to all of us.

"Do we really have to leave? We could get so much stronger here if we just stayed a little longer. It feels like a waste to abandon this dungeon just because the Association says so."

Arie replies after a long yawn.

"I agree, but we need to get to Solara by daybreak. By the urgency of these calls, it seems like need all the help they can get. Even if we leave right now and travel at full speed, 18 hours is a tight deadline."

Abby begins to speak but bites her lower lip and stares at the floor.

We're all thinking the same thing...

We want to get stronger, but there's a lot on the line here.

I have a plan, but it includes asking Ember for help. So to keep my teammates out of it, they'll have to be left in the dark a little bit.

It's for the better.

"I have an idea... but It won't make much sense. We can make it to Solara on time and farm the dungeon to its full potential.

Abby looks up.

"W-What do you mean? What is it?"

I step closer, scratching my chin.

"Well, the three of you could start heading over now and I'll farm this dungeon for another half a day. I can bring the remaining shards to Solara before the morning. I have a way to make it there quickly and quietly, but I can't bring anyone else along."



The green-haired healer looks at me with a confused, yet curious stare. Then, Maria chimes in without any hesitation.

"That sounds like a good plan to me! If Jay says he can do it, then Jay can do it."

Arie speaks next.

"I know you can travel fast with that wind ability, but do you know the way? Even with a map, the desert isn't always easy to navigate."

I reply with a shrug.

"Just... travel north right?"

He lets out a laugh.

"I- mean I guess so, there is a border up north, so you can't really overshoot the capital. You'll just have to walk along the abyss until you find the city."

He looks up in the blue-tinted dungeon sky, then uncrosses his arms, putting them on his waist then turning back to me.

"Yeah, I guess you can't miss it. I trust you'll find your way. You always do."

The archer and Maria both look at Abby, waiting for her response. She tightens her lips and lets out a sigh.

"If you're positive you can farm a considerable amount of shards and still make it back to us in time, then sure. It works for me too. I am... looking forward to getting some sleep. So I'm not exactly upset about this arrangement."

She shows me an exhausted grin, then walks over and throws a hand on my shoulder.

"Take us back when you're ready."

Although Abby's power heals MP and HP instantly, also negating any mana fatigue, there seems to be one thing it can't restore.

Natural sleep.

Maria grabs onto my other shoulder.

"I'm ready when you are too, I'm looking forward to taking a long rest too."

Arie rolls his eyes and walks over, placing one hand on my right arm.

"Looks like I'm taking the first waking shift to make sure we're on course. I'll sleep eventually."

Both Maria and Abby laugh as I teleport us back to the dungeon start point to find the exit portal.

The moment we make it back, we're all caught off guard by the landscape.... It's completely covered in thick blue magical fog just like where we left.

It's almost impossible to see further than 100 meters away.

Apparently, my predictions from earlier were correct. The mana in the air wasn't just getting denser because we traveled further into the dungeon, the entire break's atmosphere is changing.

I whisper under my breath.

"I knew it... we don't have much time to farm this break either way."

The 4 of us step out, back into the open desert, and I see the red portal swirling much more violently than it was before.

More and more blue dungeon mass is being spewed from the edges of the rings and dissolving into the open air. An audible hum of mana can be heard from the outside matching the hum of mana that could be heard from within.

The break has gotten considerably worse since we entered...

The sun is rising, and the hint of day's heat is starting to creep over the horizon. The sandy ground beneath our feet is still cool from the night, but it won't be for long.

My team gets situated on their camels, and I wave them off, swearing I'll meet them before they even make it to Solara.

Arie takes both of the reigns, leading the camels as I watch both Abby and Maria drift off to sleep before they even leave my field of view.

I watch them head off into the open desert, then turn back to the blood-red Dungeon portal behind me.

I re-enter the Blue Ogre break, then open my item storage to let Ember stretch his wings.

"Welcome back, we have some work to do."

Chapter 240

"Welcome back, we have some work to do."

The black-scaled dragon comes flying out of my swirling white spatial magic portal, immediately opening his telepathic link with me.

"Good to see you again master, what a mana-rich dungeon... where could this be?"

A toothy grin forms across Ember's face as he begins to flap his wings to hover higher up in the sky. The majestic creature begins to glow a light red tint, showing that his plunderer skill has been activated. He absorbs a few thousand MP from the air, then continues to speak.

"This is very pure as well- and our level. We're nearing my next rank up faster than expected. I'm pleased with this progress."

I nod, struggling to keep my eyes from closing. The fact that I'll soon get a moment to rest is making me more and more tired by the second. Sleep is within sight.

I chuckle, then respond.

"We have grown a bit, and I'm exulted from fighting. I'd like for you to farm in this dungeon while I rest. It's not very large, so I trust you'll be able to cover the landscape rather quickly."

Ember lifts his head, then replies.

"This is a Rank 3 Dungeon. You're aware of this right? These are very rare to be spawned outside of a labyrinth. Truthfully, a waste of mana."

I raise an eyebrow, then shake my head. Realizing sleep will have to wait a little longer.

"A... Rank 3 Dungeon? A waste of mana? What do you mean by all of this exactly?"

Ember stops glowing red and glides down to the floor.

"Well... I guess humans would call a Rank 3 Dungeon a B-Class Dungeon. It just means the boss monster is over level 500. This indicates that it has ranked up."

There's a moment of silence, and the buzzing swirling mana around us feels like it just grows louder.

I reply.

"Alright, so it'll just be a lot stronger?"

Ember pauses.

"Something like that. Usually, the Rank 3 upgrade is a very noticeable one. An additional hidden ability or skill is awarded to all monsters that hit rank 3. In addition to that, it's very common for Rank 3 monsters to wield some level of Tier 2 mana control."

My eyes open wide with curiosity.

"Tier 2?"

The black dragon nods.

"The ability to absorb mana from the surrounding dungeon and wield it as their own."

He looks up at the thick blue fog-covered sky.

I join in for a moment, trying to picture what Tier 2 mana control would look like. Is that what these Ogres have been doing in the dungeon? Using some advanced form of mana control to wield the mana in the air?

If so, It doesn't seem like they're very good at it...

The Blue Ogres just leave large amounts of mana resting all around their body, not consuming it at a very fast rate at all. Even the mutants need work. Maybe the boss will be different, but I'm not too impressed just yet.

I shrug, then reply.

"We'll face that challenge when it comes. For now, I really need to get some rest. We'll be facing the real body of that Arch Demon soon. Right...?"

Ember turns his head from the sky back down to me very quickly with a look of concern.

"You're not ready."

I tighten my gaze.

"You were excited to face it back in that other dungeon, why not now? And how did you even know it was a demon in the first place?"

Ember looks back up at the sky, then starts to glow light red again.

"Monsters have a distinct scent, or mana signature, especially demons and their cores. That's why it's easy to confuse a demon with a human that has absorbed its core. Arch Demons give off their

own special mana signature that only dungeon monsters can sense, that's why I knew it was near. It seemed to be in a very weakened state when we came across it, so I thought we may have caught a lucky break."

I nod as Ember continues.

"They're known for being extremely Intelligent beings. It figures that it'd just be leading you to it. This is an elaborate trap, I'm sure you're well aware."

I reply.

"The moment I saw it was a body double I realized something was up. Trap or not, I want that skill and I want its core... How powerful could the real body even be?"

Ember looks back at me, showing me his deep crimson-red eyes.

"More powerful than anything you can comprehend. That floor boss you defeated last week does not even compare. We need to rank up before facing it at full power, no questions."

I gulp, but the corners of my lips curl into a smile.

"Well, that's why we're here."

Ember nods.

"I could tell as much. It seems the monsters here must drop large amounts of compact MP. Are you looking to collect them as you sleep? Where are your teammates and what's the rush?"

"Wel...."

I air-step up to hop on Ember's back.

"I'll tell you the whole story."

We begin to fly up the dungeon's closest mountain peak while I fill Ember in on all the details of the Association's time crunch and the new revelation about Abby's [Restore] skill.

Ember takes in all this information and understands exactly what he has to do. Collect as many Shards as possible while I sleep.

The more he can farm, the better chances we have of being strong enough to face the labyrinth's final Arch Demon boss.

I create shelter in a mountainside, covering the outsides in dense earth magic, making sure to leave small holes for air and dungeon light. I lay out all my old sleeping supplies in my item storage, making the hard rocky ground much more comfortable.

The moment I close my eyes, I fall asleep.

Time passes as I drift off.

I'm not exactly sure how much time... but when my eyes finally open, all I can see is the color blue. A loud, horribly annoying buzz fills my ears, then it's all interrupted by a more familiar ringing.

[Level Up]

Rubbing my eyes, my status opens to show I've grown to level 481 in my sleep.

"21 more levels..."

I was expecting to gain a few, but this is a lot.

Immediately, I open up the shelter I've built using earth magic, but the blue veil covering my eyes doesn't go away.

It's all pure mana, and it's very thick. Visibility before I went to sleep was over 100 meters, now it's less than 1.

I use my All-Seeing Eye and let it stretch out to the far edges of the dungeon until I find Ember happily burning through Blue Ogre's in a deep valley.

Using my enemy detection skill and Inspect, I can see that they're all mutants. There isn't a single base-level mob in sight.

I open top my telepathic link and call out into the blue void.

"Ember, can you hear me?"

Immediately I sense the dragon stop his battle against half a dozen mutants and fly up into the sky before responding.

"Yes, Master. How was your sleep?"

I use Dungeon Walker to teleport nearby, then air-step up towards the flaming dragon in the sky before responding.

"Good. How long was I out...? and what's going on here? I can't see a thing!"

Ember chuckles slowly as I land on his back. Then he flaps his wings, taking us to the closest mountain peak nearby.

"You've been out for just over 9 hours. I've farmed just over 500 of these monsters. They're quite strong. Our level has increased a lot, the only downside is this dungeon is filling up with excess mana very quickly.

I reply.

"Yes... very quickly."

What was only a foggy mist before, makes it hard to see my hands right in front of my face."

Ember continues.

"I would have absorbed it, but then fewer monsters would have spawned. So I decided to let this Rank 3 Dungeon run its course, the boss room will be much more rewarding that way. I assumed you would want a good fight."

We arrive near the top of a high peak, and I can see a bright white glow coming from below. I begin to answer but stop mid-sentence while mesmerized by the sight before me.

The closer we get, the brighter it becomes until we hit the rocky ground with a loud thud. The source of this bright white light reveals itself to me, leaving my mouth wide open.

It's the pile of Blue Ogre Shards Ember has farmed all this time. The amount of them isn't what leaves me in shock. Ember told me he farmed just over 500 already.

I jump off his back and plunge a hand into the piles of gems, scanning all of them, then turn my head in the direction of the presumably grinning dragon.

"These are all from mutants... every last one of them. This break is completely out of control!"

Ember replies in a cheerful, satisfied tone.

"Indeed, it is."