

D. of Pride 311

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ROOOAARR...

Bell roared, his eyes turned a striking purple along with his skill and the markings on his body pulsed with a devastating power.

Feeling the disturbance in the mana he created just by his sheer presence, finally, there was some reaction in the hollow eyes of subject number 2777. An eerie glow flashed in its empty sockets and its body moved slightly even without being given any orders.

BANG... stomping his feet on the ground, Bell flew like a cannonball and punched one of the golems with all of his strength.

CRACK...the mythrill exterior of the golem that was said to be even harder than Blackgold, shattered from the force of his punch and for the first time in a while, the heavy body of the golem was sent airborne.

He stretched his hands on top of his head and easily stopped the smashing foot of the other golem. At this moment, Bell felt a rush of unimaginable power fuelling his body and he felt like he could do anything he wanted.

Dark smoke started being released out of his body and quickly spread around his surrounding. The mythrill foot of the golem started losing all colour when that dark smoke spread all over it and before long it got completely corroded.

By applying just a little strength to his hand, Bell was able to easily shatter it. After losing its footing, the golem crashed onto the ground. The restorative ability of the golem which allowed it to rebuild its body again and again, failed to do as such this time making one of the golems partly useless.

The deputy head had an ugly expression on his face, the power that subject number 3093 erupted out with, astonished even him. In any other case, he would have jumped from his seat in delight seeing this scene however, right now the timing could only be said as worse.

The beast that test subject number 3093 had assimilated with, was kept strictly under a special room in their facility since the time it was first built. It was not per se unused up until now, but because the beast was too powerful when it was alive and its remnant will still remained, it almost rejected every host resulting in them going out of control and a violent death later.

There were more than hundreds of test subjects that ended up becoming casualties and deemed impossible to use by the other researchers. It was only because of the insistence of the cardinal that he decided to use it again after more than 50 years.

He who had expected another rejection from the beast and the host and surgery falling apart, was stunned to find a steady incorporation of the cells of two different races and instead of taking over, the two different blood swiftly agglomerated to become something entirely new.

The discovery was something completely new to them and after that no matter how new transplantation they made on the test subject that was now the host of the beast, the remnant will never rejected nor did it act up.

And finally, the result of their research and test, was standing in front of them. Although the boy had changed a lot, he still retained his human appearance and even managed to forge the beast marking on his body which was the first step of acquiring a [Beast Inheritance] an ancient skill that had shaken the world during the Second Apex War.

"If nothing is done, he will cause enormous mayhem to my facility which would be difficult to recover from" the deputy head cursed and mentally initiated his command.

Immediately, a never before seen flicker started flashing deep within the monstrosity's eyes and its six powerful legs started charging towards Bell.

After pushing back the two golems the boy fixed his gaze on those researchers but the enormous frame of test subject number 2777 covered his vision. The hollow eyes of the being was fixed on him and with a ramming charge of hundred bulls, it came stomping down.

The monstrosity, whose mass and height was more than four times his, could easily squash him underneath those bulky lizard-like feet. But that is only if he stood still, the being true to its frame, was no doubt extremely slow.

By the time the foot came smashing towards Bell, he had already disappeared from the place and appeared on top of its large scaly tail. Dark smoke released out of his hands and swiftly spread from the point of contact to the entire tail.

Just when it seemed that the scene with the golem earlier would repeat once again, the greenish scales all over the being's body started shining and absorbed the dark smoke. The corrosive effect of the dark smoke failed to achieve the same result and instead became the nourishment for the entity.

The monstrosity started becoming more active and even its movement which should be under total control of the deputy head started becoming a little bizarre. It was as if clashing with Bell was somehow stimulating its sleeping will.

"Not good" the deputy head narrowed his eyes, how could he who was controlling the subject number 2777 not feel its resistance?

The fear of the other researchers was finally coming true, the being was starting to get out of control once again. It was already a failed subject to begin with; however, due to its incredible sturdiness and resilience, some of the senior researchers at that time thought that it would be a waste to simply discard it and hence thought of a way of controlling it.

But the technique proved inefficient and the subject got out of control and eventually destroyed a portion of their facility. In a way, waking up subject number 2777 was kind of a double-edged sword guaranteed to also hurt the user.

All of the researchers looked at the deputy head with pale faces, from his anguished expression, they could tell that the monster was revolting. If that really were to happen, they couldn't imagine what would happen to this facility.

Bell dodged left and right making the beast incredibly annoyed, it opened its mouth wide and munch down on him but its speed was simply far too less. Meanwhile, Glenn was busy holding back the two golems one of which was partially damaged by Bell.

If it was before, he would have a tough time dealing with two at once but since one wasn't able to recover its lost foot, it became easier for Glenn to hold them down.

Though fighting them was annoying for him since he didn't have any attacks that could deal permanent damage to them. From the corner of his eyes, he spotted Chloe and Alice frantically searching for the exit point which should be somewhere in this place.

At this moment, the situation turned even more chaotic as Bell who was confronting the monstrosity, got caught in the hold of its tail. He who was getting used to his newfound powers and body, failed to allocate his strength properly and ended up tripping.

The monstrosity which was hot on his tail, didn't miss this moment and immediately caught him with its tail which was more agile than its body.

GRRAAOORRR... the monster growled and an emerald glow emitted out of its body. Bell who was engulfed by this light and the deputy head who was controlling it, screamed miserably, blood continuously seeping out from their nose and mouth.

"I-It's using [Essence Absorb] again to try and devour subject number 3093...pfttt.. urgh" a mouthful of blood was spat out of his mouth and his control on the monster was getting fainter and fainter.

"Bell?!" Glenn tried to help his friend when he saw he was in trouble but was stopped by the rampaging energy the sickly emerald light was releasing.

The monstrous body of the subject number 2777 started inflating and becoming bigger and bigger until it became a towering presence more than twenty meters in size. Its hideous looks became even more gruesome as a secondary pair of head started forming beside his neck.

After the second head formed, it quickly opened its mouth revealing sets of sharp incisive teeth and sucked all the air out of the room like a terrifying typhoon.

"Not good it's going for a breath attack... custodian golem stop it" the deputy head commanded urgently and the two golems immediately changed target to the abomination.

Nevertheless, they were a step too late. A huge greenish-black sphere of energy more than five meters in diameter, formed and was spat out.

The power packed within that sphere was so terrifying that space was torn apart wherever it travelled and the mana around the room became unstable.

BANG... BANG.. the two golems that tried to stop the attack, were blown away and carried along by the sphere. The mythril exterior known for its toughness was as fragile as a paper in front of the greenish spherical attack and cracked immediately on contact.

The custodian golems only being able to stop the powerful attack for a few couple of seconds before falling apart.

The monstrosity after absorbing Bell's power, became even more powerful. The previous attack after reducing the golems into pieces, crashed onto the frozen wall that was the crypt for all of the failed test subjects.

BOOOM... CRACK... in front of the horrified eyes of the deputy head and the researchers, the wall of frost started cracking up little by little. The thing that they feared the most, finally occurred.

The Assembly room which stored all of the failed test subjects that they have experimented on and kept here for future reference, fell apart in front of their eyes. However, the look in the eyes of the deputy head was not that of suffering a loss but instead fear.

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At a glance, the assembly room seemed to be the most important room out of all the ones inside the facility, though that statement is not false, it was also not true. The whole place was built in a way so that the assembly room was situated at the bottom end and kept isolated from the rest of the facility.

It was not only the most important place, but also the most dangerous place. The thousands of test subjects that have been kept inside the frozen wall for hundreds of years, were not actually dead.

Since each of them had been transplanted with precious materials that were too good to throw away, they brought over a powerful ice mage to create this advanced spell [Frozen Coffin] to keep all of them in a state of suspended death.

Never in the history of their entire facility, did such a massive blunder where the spell was destroyed ever occur. Therefore even the deputy head who was the senior-most and had the most experience of working here, knew nothing about what would happen next.

Though he did not know, he was not an idiot to not understand what this entailed. That attack earlier from the subject number 2777 had truly broken the backbone of their facility and there was no way they can recover from it.

Forget about recovering, it would be a miracle if they could even save their life. With his knees giving out, the deputy head fell on his buttocks and started laughing maniacally looking at the ceiling.

Why wouldn't he? After all, their worst nightmare was finally coming true.

SHATTER... SHATTER... sounds of ice blocks shattering into tiny fragments, repeatedly rang out in the background with the being encased within it breaking out.

The reason behind them being called failures is because, they the host have been completely taken over by the beast they have integrated with making them no different than a mindless monster. Their rationality has completely dissipated and the only thing they excelled at was killing.

KIIIIIEERRRKKKK... a heavy unsettling aura spread around the room with hundreds of beasts growling at once, their eyes bloodthirsty and enraged.

"D-Deputy head what do we do now... Deputy Head?!" the researcher tried calling out to the senior-most official only to find that the old man had gone senile.

KYAAA...

Glenn who was nervously watching all of this unfold, hurriedly turned his head after hearing that cry. His eyes landed upon the two girls who were currently being chased by fully transformed beasts with bizarre appearances.

Willing his body to move, he hurriedly ran towards them and engaged with any beasts that tried to attack them. Perhaps because he was getting used to his new body more and more or maybe because he still retained his rationality, he was able to easily overwhelm them.

Nonetheless, when more and more started breaking out of their ice encasement and joining the fray, even he was hard-pressed to block them all.

The abomination watched all of this without any emotions, its eyes only moving occasionally. The hundreds of beasts made a huge black tidal wave that could swallow everything and dropped the temperature of the room to the pits of hell.

"Arrrgghhh... save me...save me custodians golems" the researchers that were the first target of these beasts, squealed like a dying pig about to be butchered. Their colleagues that were near them, tried to run away from this room only to be targeted first.

Their wails of help echoed across the room; however, no matter how many times they cried, the custodian golems that have been shattered completely needed a long time to restore themselves.

Some tried to shut the door only to find that beasts were pouring in from everywhere. Nowhere was safe, even the test subjects that were kept in the capsule room and other sections of the facility, at this moment broke out of their encasement.

The scene was a complete pandemonium with blood and guts spraying everywhere. It was as if this was the very same picture from hell. Cries of agony echoed everywhere as these people in hazmat suits saw the blue wall of ice that caged the monsters that they themselves had created, crack apart.

ROOARR... with lightning running rampant around him, Glenn created a huge imitation of himself with magic and brought its arms down towards the beasts trying to pincer the two girls.

BOOOM... his attack immediately blew them away.

"Are you two alright?" he asked shielding them behind him.

"Y-yeah" the girls replied struggling to keep their voices from trembling. Glenn nodded his head, he observed his surroundings and to his amazement found that most of the beasts were attacking those white suit men and only a few came their way.

It was weird that none of them tried to attack the abomination as if they already had a tacit agreement not to mess with it. What was more peculiar was that even the beasts attacking him were only trying to hurt the ones behind him and not himself.

Glenn came to an understanding, these beasts who were previously human like them, still retained some of the anger and frustration from the past. They weren't hostile towards him and the abomination who were similar to them in nature. Glenn did know if this was a good or bad thing.

"We found the exit, that thing over there is the only oddity out of all the things placed here" Alice said pointing at a weird piece of construct that looked like a big cylinder placed horizontally.

He looked at the thing for a while, unsure whether the thing was really what they thought. It was all good if their guess was right but the problem lay in the place it was at. The huge cylindrical object which they thought was the exit out of here, was near the area where the abomination was standing.

"What do we do, that thing is standing over there" Alice asked fearfully.

Glenn glanced at the cylindrical construct behind it and Bell who was being constricted by its tail. No matter what they had to engage the abomination to free their friend.

"I'll distract it and save Bell, you two use this moment to figure out how to use that thing" He said closing his eyes and trying to feel that vast power deep within him. When he opened his eyes again, a vast field of electricity radiated out of his body that repelled any beasts near him.

After setting his eyes on the abomination, he charged towards it with the momentum of a giant charging bull.

Doombringer Faun an ancient beast race that was said to have mowed down battlefields with their powers and every time they stomped onto the ground, the very landmass would tremble. Their power was so great that many races feared and worshipped them.

It is said that they are distantly related to the continental storms, the Giants.

Glenn's body which was only three meters big, started growing bigger and bigger until he was 1/3rd the size of the abomination.

The abomination who seemed disinterested in everything around it, spotted Glenn charging at him. Its hollow eyes disregarded his presence and flailed its tail as if squatting a fly.

BANG... even when charging with his full power, Glenn was still overpowered by a half-assed attack by the abomination. His body felt numb from the clash and blood leaked out from his mouth but the surprising thing was he endured it all and grabbed hold of the tail.

The abomination tried to flail its tail left and right trying to throw him off nonetheless, he didn't let it go and hanged on. His hands which had transformed into claws of a beast, pierced into the gap between its scales and muscles, finally incurring a violent scream from the abomination.

It instinctively loosened its tail and Bell who was constricted by it, fell down. Glenn immediately caught his friend and tossed him towards the two girls and then immediately ran in a direction opposite them.

Now that the abomination had its eyes on him, there was no way his friends would be safe if he stayed near them. Thus, the best option would be to lead it away from them.

"Glenn!!" Chloe tried to call him but he had already run too far for her voice to reach him.

"That idiot...kuh.. he is trying to save us all by himself" Bell who had come to his senses after being defeated by the abomination said. His body was heavy and he felt like all his strength was drained from him. He tried to stand up but his knees would always give up midway.

"Your body is too tired, you need to rest. We found the exit, we just need to activate it and escape" Chloe reprimanded the boy for his recklessness.

Bell smiled bitterly, escaping here was easier said than done, even if Glenn diverted the attention of that abomination, there was still hundreds or even thousands of fully and partially transformed beasts.

After they are done preying on those people in the white suits, they would be next.

BOOMMM... a resounding boom echoed across the room, Glenn was blasted away by one of the attacks from the abomination and crashed onto the floor face first. When he picked himself up from the debris, he saw one of the white suit men sprawled on the floor laughing maniacally.

There was no way he wouldn't know the man who was the big shot who ordered the others around here. Perhaps because he was in his line of sight or simply because he felt something, but the old man shifted his gaze to him.

The next moment, the old man started laughing in a fit "Hehehaha... run as far as you can, struggle as much as you want, there is no escaping this place".

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"You think this old one does not know what you all are up to? Hehe, it is funny but at the same time understandable that you all would think of that. Has it never occurred to you that if there really was an exit, why would we be stuck here and not escape?"

The deputy head kept on talking about things that gave him a bad premonition and as if to prove it right, he heard Chloe and Alice's anxious voice.

"It's not activating, the gate pass is not working".

The deputy head arched his chin and looked at the ceiling "The facility is a forbidden place to begin with, its existence is something that only a few individuals in the Empyrean Empire are aware of. There is no way those old stuck up people would ever allow the true colours of this facility to surface up".

"One could only imagine the consequences of releasing these failed test subjects into the outside world. That is why, there is no exit to this place. The only way out is through the permission of Cardinal Royce who runs this place and activating both the transponder warp gate here and at the endpoint".

Glenn had a distraught face when he heard that, the final hope that he clung on to escape from here, was ruthlessly blown into bits by this revelation. There was indeed an exit here; however, it was multilateral. That is, it needed two sides to activate together to create an exit.

"Bell... stop you will kill yourself" he heard the two girls shout his name and saw that his friend whose body that was already battered and tired, halting the advance of the beasts coming after the two behind him.

Although it pained him, with a heavy heart and red eyes he roared at them to get away "Run all of you, there is no exit here".

The scene was hellish, the situation looked for these children who were caught up in the cruel plays of fate. As the scene played on in front of their eyes, Simon and the others knit their brows. They who were witnessing the hisotria, felt like they were inside the facility at that moment and it was very difficult for them to take it all.

There was no way any of them weren't affected after seeing and witnessing all of this with their own eyes. After the children knew that they couldn't exit from here, they tried to make their way to the entrance of the assembly room only to find hordes of beasts that have already finished preying on the researchers, waiting for them.

Huff... huff...

"STTOOOOPP..." Denzel roared unsheathing his rapier, the navy hat that always sat on top of his head, was blown away by the aura he released. He who couldn't take this anymore, decided to act up and rescue the ones in front of him that were in desperate need of help.

In his brashness and impatience, he forgot that he was inside the [Historia]. Even if he jumped in front of the children to fight off the horde, there was no way he would be able to do anything as these all were just a recollection, a memory of the past.

It would have been fine if it was just that, but according to Luicne if one fails to recognise the past from the present allowing oneself to immerse in these memories, they would be forever be caught in the time rift without being able to get away.

The boy who was just about to rush into the forefront, was stopped by Simon who appeared in front of him and blocked his path.

"Step aside, what are you doing?" Denzel barked without caring to mind his words.

"That is what I should ask you? Have you lost your mind, everything in front of you is all just a illusion. Did you get swayed by it so much that you can't differentiate between reality and illusion?"

Simon said unable to keep his composure. He did not know if individual actions would affect their overall progress of the trial but he sure as hell didn't want to try it out.

"Are you saying that all of this is made-up, do you have any proof? What if this is actually happening... can you take the responsibility for all their lives?" The boy retorted shouting back, his sword looked hesitant a little but he was unwilling to unsheathe it back.

"You little..." Simon who for some reason felt like he was not acting like his usual self flared up and was just about to forcibly hold him down when Lucine interjected.

"Both of you need to calm down, you may not realise it but we all have been affected by the magic. Close your eyes and block your senses if you can't take the scene, the trial is all about testing your mental fortitude and check your limits. I know it is hard but we all can't just break down here".

Her voice like a tranquil and cool lake, dissipated the heavy and dreary sensation that they have been feeling in their heart.

Denzel buckled his rapier back to its sheath and Simon felt his mind instantly clear up. Now that he was back to himself, he could tell that previously he was not acting like himself and have been unknowingly caught up in the effects of the [Historia].

If not for Lucine's presence and her timely interjection, who knew what might have happened. After seeing the boy close his eyes and turn away, did Simon back down.

The rest of the [Historia], was a tragic scene to say no less. Fortunately, it did not show them the whole scene and ended right at the crucial juncture where the children were surrounded.

A bright light encompassed Sion, Lucine, Denzel and before they knew it, they were back to the present timeline. The room unlike in the [Historia], was entirely dark and an unnerving atmosphere shrouded the room.

A window immediately appeared in front of the three of them.

[Make your Decision... Time Remaining- 1:29 sec].

At this moment, Simon realised some unknown force was restricting his movement and until the countdown ends, he couldn't move. He looked at the window telling them to make their decision and the countdown.

The [Historia] has ended, therefore it's time for them to face the true trial. Just as the countdown hit zero, the force binding them in place disappeared. It was also at this moment that Simon was alerted of multiple; No numerous hostile presences around them.

There was no need to question who these presences belonged to as they had seen the scene through the [Historia] themselves.

When the mechanism illuminating the room activated, the state of this place came into their view. Gross, that was the exact word that could describe the scene that lay in front of them. Dozens of dried of corpses littered the room and a putrid smell that had yet to dissipate lingered everywhere.

Hundreds of beasts that were lying dormant inside the room, woke up to the foreign presence and immediately bared their fangs. Simon finally realised what the decision the trial asked him to make earlier was.

"Indeed, it's a difficult decision to make after you have seen that [Historia]. Does that mean that whatever choice we make affects whether we pass or fail the trial?" he muttered observing the beasts surrounding him from every corner.

These beasts were not just any ordinary monsters, but pitiful children who were experimented and subjected upon in this very place. To slay them who have lost all of their sanity or not was the decision that they had to make.

GRRRRRR...

A crimson beast with the appearance of a hyena, pounced upon Denzel who currently had a dispirited look in his eyes.

Although he was absent-minded, it did not mean that he let his guard down. His years of training and his diligently built instincts acted up the moment the beast pounced on him. With a swift sidestep, Denzel dodged the attack from the beast but the next second when he pointed his rapier at it, his sword trembled for some reason.

Simon couldn't blame him for hesitating to attack the beast especially when he knew they were once children just like him. Simon conjured a flame spear and fired it towards the beast impaling and incinerating it.

These beasts who have survived for thousands of years in this closed up environment, have become extremely weak and even their levels have regressed. It was extremely easy for Simon to penetrate their weakened defences with his intermediate tier magic.

Individually, each of these monsters were all above level 400 but due to being confined, their status bar showed they were in a weakened state. Taking out his twin blades, he dispatched any beasts that came attacking him and swiftly reduced their numbers.

Although Simon did not know if this was the correct answer, it was no doubt the only way to proceed with the trial. Plus when he put himself in the shoes of these test subjects he felt like releasing them from this long nightmare was the right thing to do.

He did not feel any elation or excitement from finishing them nor did the notification of him levelling up evoke any pleasure. Simon swiftly and efficiently ended them in one strike so that they did not suffer any more pain.

Denzel who was still hesitating over his actions, saw Simon make his decision. He who was still uneasy over his actions and the latter who had made up his mind. Even though they had experienced the same thing, the same trial, the other party was able to move on while he was stuck.

Denzel tightly clenched his rapier and stepped forward. With every slash from his sword, a beast would fall.

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He too followed Simon's example and finished them without making them suffer any more pain. By the time an hour had passed, corpses of best partially and fully transformed, lined up the floor. The two of them had successfully finished all of the beasts that were in this room.

"That's weird, why isn't the abomination here? According to my evaluation, there shouldn't have been anyone among those children that was its match. After all, it was only a step away from reaching level 700".

Lucine mumbled looking all around the dilapidated room. She was looking out for any possible traps when from the corner of her eyes she saw Simon bringing the corpses of all the beasts and burying them in one corner of the room.

Lucine was astonished, even though he could just leave them lying around, he still decided to give them a proper burial. She was finally aware of why that thing had chosen him as one of the potential inheritor.

Every action taken during this trial affected the overall result thus Simon's actions was bound to be noted.

After he was finished giving them a burial, a teleportation circle appeared beneath each of their feet and swiftly teleported them to a different place. Simon opened his eyes to find himself in a closed space at the end of which was a rusty double door.

Two other teleportation circles flashed and Lucine and Denzel appeared beside him. The fact that they were teleported here could only mean that they had passed the third trial; however, there was no excitement on their faces.

DING... a window notifying them of their successful clearance of the third trial, appeared in front of them.

[Congratulation on passing the third trial, you may enter the treasure room].

Finally, they were rewarded for their efforts up until now. The room with the rusty door in front of them, was the treasure room.

Simon tried pushing the doors but to his surprise, no matter how much strength he applied, the doors did not open. Funnily enough, when he injected some of his mana into the doors, it opened as easily as if it were wooden doors.

The moment the three of them stepped inside, the numerous torches lining up the wall, lighted up illuminating the room. The brilliant shine of various kinds of ores, coins and artefacts covered their line of sight.

At a glance, the room was full of different kinds of armours, scrolls, books, mana crystals, artefacts and coins of varying grades. If a common man saw this kind of treasure in front of them, they would have already gone crazy.

The value of all of this treasure if it was brought to the auction or market, was unimaginable.

"Hnnn~" Lucine made a nasal voice and pointed her index finger to beckon something. Immediately, that item floated up from the heaps of treasure and flew towards her.

Catching the item in her hand, she stated "This is the Return Transit Rock, I only want this item, the two of you can share the rest among you".

Simon saw the black hexagonal rock in her hand and nodded his head. He did not argue with her for having the first pick since he could see a few more of them lying on the floor.

Her disinterest towards these treasures was also understandable, with the background and realm she was in, these treasures might as well be as good as stones to her.

"Since Mister has done most of the work, how about he takes his picks first" Denzel said modestly. It was not like he was not interested in the treasure but because when he compared his achievement with the two others, he felt it was a little lacking.

Simon had practically solved most of the riddles in their trials and lead them till here while the beautiful big sister translated all of the ancient writings for them. He on the other hand helped occasionally a few times.

Denzel who was brought up in a strict environment by his master, knew when to act modestly and when to press for more.

Simon did not reject their goodwill, he used analysis on the various items. He wasn't greedy, he only wanted those items that might be useful for him in the future and left the rest for the boy.

Scrounging for treasure amidst this heap with his gaze, Simon finally noticed something that piqued his interest. It was a bracelet shining with a gentle sea-green light. Other than its unique build, the bracelet didn't look that extraordinary with a glance but Simon who read the description of the item thanks to his [Analysis] knew better.

Stone Guard Bracelet- Temporarily grants the user immunity to Tremor Magic, the intermediate tier of Earth magic. Duration- 10 minutes, cool down- 27 Hours.

Immunity was different than resistance, the former provided absolute negation of damage from the said element while the latter only made you able to take less damage from it.

Simon had resistance to fire but it did not mean that he was completely unaffected by the element of fire and only had a partial protection from it. If a high-level person used a strong novice tier fire magic, they would be able to hurt him only that damage would be very minimal.

The stone guard bracelet was an item that could very well break the stalemate and prove extremely helpful during times of need. Although he did not know if there would be a time when he would be able to put it to use, having something of a trump card was never a bad thing.

Simon unceremoniously picked the bracelet and equipped it on his right hand. He then glossed over various artifacts, ores and mana crystals before hoarding a portion of them in his space ring.

While he was glossing over the treasures, he also found some useful items such as Grimoires, Transit Rocks and a few [C] tier armours. Grimoires were extremely rare items that granted a particular skill to the user of the item.

Unlike the Skill Crystal, which allows one to store and use a skill or magic, Grimoires permanently bestows a person that particular ability or skill. Because of this, they are extremely rare and highly sought out after.

Most of the skills in those Grimoires were unsuitable for him or were something that he already had. For example, one of the Grimore bestowed a skill called [Heavy Shield Bash] a higher tier skill of [Shield Bash] that a warrior class used.

Since the skill had class restrictions, it was unsuitable for Simon who had never used a shield before. Just like the other various items and artifacts, Grimoires too have their own grade. They are divided in categories based on their colours.

Starting from bronze, they go as high as platinum or even diamond. Most of the Grimoires here were silver with a sparse few golden in the mix.

After filling his space ring with coins of varying grades, Simon was satisfied with his loot and kept the rest for the boy. Even with him filling up his space ring, there was so much treasure remaining that it could baffle anyone.

"This is the largest share out of all three of us. Are you sure about giving it all to me mister?" Denzel asked seeing that he got the largest portion of the treasure. Since he knew his achievements weren't up to par with them, he was hesitant to take all of it.

Simon shrugged his shoulders and indicated that he was fine with it, he got the treasure that he wanted and honestly their value was much more higher than the coins strewn here. plus he got his [Ga??????] option with him thus artefacts, armours and weapons had no allure to him.

The same went for ores and mana crystals, his dungeon would soon be able to spawn them.

"In that case I will not hesitate" Denzel did not stand on ceremony and swiftly hoarded the treasury clean. After the treasure room was emptied out by them, a teleportation circle started shining at the edge of the room. If they stepped on the circle, they would be led to the fourth trial.

"I think I would like to use the Transit Stone and exit the trial here. I have been gone for so long that my companions might be worried for me" Denzel voiced his wish to end the trial here. His mind was a little tired especially after the third trial.

Simon contemplated if they should proceed with the trial with just the two of them before looking at Lucine and asking her opinion.

"It's fine isn't it... we all have return stones with us so we can come back here any time we want. There is no harm to end the trial here".

Simon felt she was right, the trial ground was not going anywhere and since they have the return stone, they can come back here anytime. Although a part of him was curious as to who built this trial and for what reason, he could just solve it at a later time.

Currently, he had much more pressing issues on his hands, the disciple that he and Adalinda were searching for, was right next to him. He had to bring her back to the capital before the little girl goes crazy.

Simon did not know how long it had passed in the outside world since they entered the trials grounds but to his estimation, it would have already been more than two days.

There was no guarantee what might have happened to the capital while he was gone. He must hurry and bring Luince back to her Master.

"Alright, then let us all end the trial here" Simon declared before taking out a black hexagonal rock from his space ring.

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"How do we use it?" Simon asked holding the transit rock.

"It's simple; you just need to shatter it. But remember, the spatial laws in these rocks are unstable so you might not be transported to the exact place from where you came in" Lucine said breaking the Transit rock in her hand.

A black halo engulfed her body and in the blink of an eye, the space around her distorted. The phenomenon was the same as space magic, just in this case the same was achieved with the medium of transit rocks.

"Mister... we shall meet again" the boy said before breaking his own transit crystals.

Simon followed suit, a black halo enveloped his body and his vision was swept away. He felt his body becoming weightless and a sense of incongruity hit him and before he knew it, he was on top of a vast mountain range.

The place he was on, was not far away from the capital and he could sense a large amount of presence gathering at a spot few distances away.

Simon observed his surroundings, there were no signs of Lucine or Denzel being near, it was as she said, the transit rocks really did throw them in different places. Nonetheless, now that they were out of the trials grounds, they were bound to meet in the capital.

Which meant that Lucine won't be able to run away from her master anymore. Laughing gloatingly at her predicament for a while, Simon ran towards the entrance to the city as per his memories. After a while of meandering around, he finally spotted the gate around which a line-up of wagons were waiting to get entry.

The capital city was truly bustling and with the tournament approaching nearer it was bound to be even more jam-packed.

Simon descended the mountain and joined the queue of people trying to get in. Perhaps because the security was tight with them checking each and every individual and their possession, the line was taking a long to move forward.

As Simon was waiting, from the corner of his eyes he spotted a man and a woman wearing gaudy clothes approach the soldier at the gate from the other side of the queue. What astonished him even more was that the soldier let those people in after checking something that the man handed him.

"Tch, those people just because they have some connection in the capital, they can cut the line as they wish. Goddamn... if only I had some connections like them, I wouldn't have to wait here for more than five hours" A cranky middle-aged man with shoddy clothes lining up in front of him, complained.

Simon who heard his words, was stunned, they had to wait here for so long? Seeing the queue not move even an inch, he became a little impatient. He did not want to spend hours of his time just to get in.

As he thought about what to do, suddenly an idea struck him. Simon jumped to the other side of the rope much to the surprise of those near him and slowly walked towards the soldier near the gate.

When the cranky man saw the actions of Simon, he couldn't but sneer in derision. Did he think that just anyone was allowed in? From the clothes of the other party, he could see that it was made of ordinary materials which made him think that the other party was just plainly stupid.

However, when he saw the soldier let that guy in after checking something he handed, the cranky man couldn't help but become stupefied.

"Hehe" Simon laughed, tossing a badge in his hand.

"It was a good thing that I had this with me. That woman said that it would perfectly work as an entry pass" the thing on his hand was none other than the Serene Palace Merchant Guild VIP pass that Cynthia had given him.

He just showed the badge to the gatekeeper and he immediately became humble and allowed him, thanks to that he didn't have to toil his way in through the crowd.

"Now then I have to find my way back to the Inn but first let's eat something" sniffing the delicious smell of foods wafting from the various carts across the streets, stimulated his hunger.

Also with the treasure he got in the trial and the black gold coins that Cynthia had given him in return for his elixirs, he could eat as much as he want without worrying about it running out.

Simon tried the food from each stall and gave them a rating mentally based on his preference. Why did he do that? Because the connoisseur within him wanted to do so.

Due to the constant influx of people coming to the capital, the business around the stalls was booming. Decoratives were placed everywhere and the mood around the city was festive. It also went to show how much importance the people of this kingdom gave to the upcoming tournament.

No matter which stall or which corner of the city he went to, everybody was talking about the 'Battle of the Finest', the coliseum that was about to open in five days.

After having his fill, he walked back towards his inn. He wanted to know how the little girl was doing during the time he was absent and thus brought some snacks along with him. Also, he didn't forget to ask the stall owner the direction to his inn which was why he didn't lose his way this time.

Opening the door of the inn, he was greeted by the friendly staff. Just as he climbed the stairs and reached the third floor, he felt a shadow loom over his head. Arching his head up, he saw a petite yet delicate figure of a girl with twin tails standing in front of him.

She wore a brilliant golden dress that matched with the colour of her eyes. Who else could this doll-like girl be other than Adalinda? At this moment, she was staring menacingly at him.

Sniff...sniff...

"Hnn~ it seems someone really did have fun in these past few days while I was busy searching everywhere for my disciple. The foods and everything around here must be really good for you to not come back for more than three days no?" She flashed him a smile which had thorns hidden within it.

"Eh?! Three days..." Simon's voice went up a notch involuntarily. Although he had guessed quite a time must have passed in the outside world, he didn't think that it would be this long.

Three days... no wonder Adalinda seemed angry at him who disappeared for this period of time without telling her anything.

"Haa... are you acting now? Did you really think if you act shocked, I would believe whatever excuse you make?"

Adalinda greeted her teeth. She hurriedly turned around before her eyes glistened with tears.

"Hmph, do you have any idea... how hard it was to search the place all alone... also..also... how hungry I was for these past three days".

Hearing her rant, Simon finally realised why she was so angry. Though a part of the reason was because she couldn't find her disciple, but a major part of it stemmed from not being able to eat anything for these past few days.

Without him who was her free credit card, she couldn't eat or buy anything since she disdained keeping such triviality with her.

Simon made a smug face and stretched his hand holding the bag full of snacks and food.

Sniffing the aroma of the food, Adalinda immediately turned towards him and grabbed the bag without any shame. She looked at his smug face and asked in an annoyed tone.

"What? Do you think I will just forgive you because of a bag of food?".

The smile on Simon's face deepened "Nope, I know a bag of food isn't enough but what if I tell you that your other worry that has been bugging you will soon be solved".

Hearing his words and his assertive tone, Adalinda locked her brows and tilted her head in confusion.

"Huh? What are you talking about? Did you hit your head somewhere?". She was just about to make fun of Simon when suddenly her eyes went wide and her whole body trembled.

She was not mistaken, the lingering aura around Simon that she just felt was definitely... her disciple's. Earlier because her attention was on the food in his hands, she failed to recognise it but now that her head was clear, she could definitely feel it.

"You met her?!" she asked to confirm her guess only to get an affirmative nod.

Seeing Adalinda stand astounded in place, Simon couldn't help but relish in this rare moment which might hardly occur again. He thought about giving her the details of meeting with her disciple, when suddenly a strong force engulfed and levitated his body.

At that moment, Simon felt like he was unable to move an inch as if a gigantic mountain the height of which he couldn't fathom, pressing down on his body.

"Calm... down.. you are letting your aura out" he hurriedly reminded her; fortunately, no one was involved in the aftermath of her aura. Simon did not want what happened in the adventurer's Association back at Mountmend to repeat itself in the capital again.

After entering the room, Simon told her all of the details starting from how he met her and their adventure to some mysterious trial ground.

It took quite a while for Adalinda to calm down, she reacted extremely intensely when he told her about the trial grounds that they suddenly found themselves teleported to and the trials they had to go through.

Taking a deep breath, she deeply observed Simon before giving him a piece of advice "On account that you gave me a pleasant news about my disciple, I'll tell you this. Never mention what you told me to anyone".

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"You might not realise the gravity of the place that you have been to but those that do, won't leave you alone when they get to know about this. That is why you must tread with care, do not share this information carelessly".

The weight of her words and her tone, told him that the place they were teleported to, was anything but ordinary. Simon nodded his head and made a mental note to research more about these forbidden grounds.

After devouring all of the food that he had brought her, Adalinda got out of the room saying that she would lay down some array to capture her disciple.

The room immediately became silent after she left, Simon plopped down on his bed. Although he was not physically exhausted, he was mentally drained. Advanced tier Chronos magic- [Historia] was not just some illusion, it makes you feel the exact same emotions the characters in the memory are going through and make it seem like you are living in it.

Unable to simply sit still, Simon opened his status window and blankly stared at it. This journey to the forbidden trial grounds, turned out to be quite fruitful. His level increased by a total of ten and he got his hands on quite a few treasures.

Leaving aside the incredibly useful Stone Guard Bracelet, the Mythril ores and Grade [2] Mana Crystals were also quite the treasures. Mythril ores were used to make weapons and artifacts whereas a Mana Crystal is the purest and condensed form of mystical energy that when absorbed, allows one to increase their level.

The Mana crystals trees in his dungeon were at the stage where it only produced grade [1] of these crystals. In comparison to that, the grade [2] was a little bigger and more heavier.

A vast plain lay beyond the city of Mountmend marking the end of the territory of humans and the start of the Demon Continent. A huge forest could be seen between the boundaries of the two territories, line-up of wagons and people wearing different kinds of garbs came in and out of it.

The forest which was known to every kingdom and empire around the north-western region of the continent as the most dangerous land, was at this time flooded by humans.

Adventurers and merchants entered the forest, their destination, the newly emerged dungeon that was the talk of the town.

On the eastern region of the Ghastly winding Forest was a tall tower more than fifty meters in height. It stood tall and imposing and has long since become the landmark around this place.

A small town was set up around the tower with people busily entering and exiting the towers. Various shops and establishments were buying the different goods and items, the adventurers brought from the dungeon.

Around one of these shops, a group of men were currently in a heated discussion.

"Are you telling me that there are no potions available?" A man with a fiery temper, shouted at the clerk inside the shop.

"We are extremely sorry customer, all the potions have been bought this morning. We currently do not have any on stock" the clerk replied bowing his head in apology.

The shop sold elixirs and potions to those adventurers seeking to dive inside, it was a common knowledge to refill your stock of potions and other various items before entering a dungeon.

A potion was something that was an absolute must to have for an adventurer, not being able to get it would make it difficult for them to enter it after all, not every team had a light mage [Healer].

"What do you mean all the potions were bought? Are you fucking with me... ye punk?" the man with the fiery temper was about to grab the clerk with his collar when his teammates hurriedly stopped him.

"Stop it Bolan, it's not his fault. Every elixir shop is out of potion it seems... he is not lying". Bolan after being called out by his teammates, calmed down a little, but his face still showed how irritated he was.

Spitting on the ground, he asked "The fuck do you mean?".

His teammate sighed before pointing at a group of adventurers camping not far from the dungeon. From the insignia on their clothes and armours, all of them seemed to be from the same guild. Even the quality of each of their gears was so high that Bolan had to widen his eyes in surprise.

Seeing the look in his eyes, Bolan's teammate smiled "They are the subsidiary attack team".

"What?!" the moment he heard those words, he couldn't help but shout out loud. Those people whose gears and even the individual strength were greater than his, were not the main attack team of a guild?

What kind of stupid concept was that? A group of that level was enough to clear multiple floors in a single day and come out without a single casualty. To be the subsidiary attack team... Bolan did not know what to think anymore.

A guild especially a moderately big one, divides its members into multiple teams so that they do not crowd the dungeon and create conflict with other guilds. A guild usually has its best members in its

main attack team and other subsidiary teams are there to raid and aid the main attack team when necessary.

The Main attack team also shows how powerful the guild was and is responsible for maintaining its reputation and image. Usually, when a guild decides to do a big raid, the subsidiary teams are positioned as a backup and clear the upper floors so that the main attack team can conserve their energy and explore the lower floors.

A subsidiary attack team like the one in front of Bolan, could only be maintained by a top guild. Suddenly the realisation struck him and he asked his teammate that was more informed than him "Which guild do they belong to?".

His teammate looked at him as if he was some country bumpkin unaware of the custom and knowledge around here.

"Huh? what kind of question is that? Of course they are from the Burning Arrows Guild. They are also the reason why all of the potions around here are sold out".

Bolan looked slack-jawed, he thought that the insignia looked familiar but never could he have guessed that they were from the number one guild of Mountmend.

'A Big guild like the Blinding Arrow Guild... no wonder they were able to keep a team like this as a subsidiary attack team' he thought internally. To become a member of a big guild, one needs to be a talented adventurer or have accomplices that could allow you to get into one.

There are also many perks of joining one, such as large income, higher degree of safety during exploration and recognition that comes with joining an already well-reputed guild. Basically, joining a guild is like joining a big family which protects the safety of its members and interests and becomes a big shield for them.

For Bolan and his teammates who belonged to the lowest hierarchy of adventurers if there was any, could never hope to get into one. They who usually make a small team to dive inside the dungeon, usually loiter around the upper floors and kill those beasts that give them a handful sum of money.

"Why did they buy all of the potions around here? it couldn't be because they want to stop the other guilds from exploring right?" Bolan asked.

"I don't know but seeing that they have assembled the entirety of their members, I believe they want to unlock new floors or... conquer the dungeon".

Floor 10...

A crowd of adventurers consisting of more than thirty members divided into groups of three, tread forward. Whenever they stepped a squelching sound would come out and their feet would always sink in.

Floor 10 was a vast mud land filled with swamps and quicksands making it extremely difficult and slow to proceed forward.

Whoosh... sounds of wind being blown away rang out and three figures with a pair of illusory wings behind them could be seen flying forward. On the lead was a man with frizzy red hair that reached till his shoulders and wearing an armour that shined with a black gold radiance.

On his left was a woman whose outfit tightly accentuated her body and gave her a beautiful yet heroic look. Held tightly in her left hand was a staff which had two moderately big core stones imbued in the middle.

The last person was a man wearing clergy robes and holding a mallet. The man with the frizzy red hair stretched his hand and the group immediately came to a halt mid-air.

"What's wrong Blake?" the woman who seemed to be the mage asked.

Blake observed the swamp below him and narrowed his eyes "Enemies down below, their numbers in the hundreds. They are currently assembling in a spot... this is our chance to take them out before they pincer us from all directions".

"Frida, prepare a big spell while I distract them. Kody ready a light shield just in case any of them slips away from my skill".

Right after giving orders, Blake rushed towards the swamp and hovered just a few meters above it. Frida immediately started conjuring a spell, her lips chanting continuously. Mana like a flood, poured out of her and quickly took the form of fire.

The space around her started heating up from the incredible temperature and her surrounding became a glaring crimson.

Blake who was standing still on top of the swamp, smiled at this moment when he felt multiple presences swiftly approaching him from the bottom.

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SPLASH... something rushed out of the water and approached Blake with an insane speed. When he laid his eyes upon the entity, he saw that it was a fish-shaped monster more than hundred centimetres big that looked like a piranha.

Its rows of teeth were so incisive that, it could give chills to anyone looking at it. However, Blake simply shifted his body a little and dodged the attack effortlessly.

"Pirodiles huh... but the numbers do not count up, there must be other monsters too" As he was contemplating something, from behind another splash sounded out and a being much more bigger than Pirodiles jumped out of it to tackle him.

Blake nonchalantly stretched his hands backwards and performed a slashing motion. The space ring in his hands lit up and just when the monster was a few inches away from him, it was split into two by the great sword.

"I see... Lizardmen and pirodiles, no wonder the subsidiary team took some time previously to clear this floor".

After cleaving the lizardman into two, he glanced at the huge number of black shadows that was swiftly approaching him from the bottom of the swamp and smiled.

SPLASH...SPLASH... by the time he could even count their numbers, he was surrounded by Lizardmen and pirodies.

"Good come at me all of you... [Berserker's Howl]" Blake brandished his sword and used his class-specific skill that taunts his enemy and diverts their aggression towards him.

A hoarse howl that reverberated across the entire swamp made the Pirodiles and the Lizardmen angry. They focused all their attention on him as if he was their arch enemy.

Seeing the skill taking effect, Blake nodded satisfyingly. The skill would only make them keep focusing on him for a little more than two minutes; however, that was more than enough for Frida to let out a big explosion.

Due to the enemies being low levelled, the effects of the skill on them was quite strong thus they jumped on quite aggressively. With reddened eyes, the Pirodiles and Lizardmen charged at him intending to rip him apart with their sharp teeth and claws.

Blake agilely dodged all of their charges, multiple enemies would fall wherever he swept his greatsword. From his motion to his relaxed appearance he made it so simple as if he wasn't actually surrounded by enemies and rather was out on a stroll.

Numerous Lizardmen and pirodiles tried to jump him together to no avail, like a slippery loach he would always manage to find a weak spot and get out of their reach.

Blake sensed numerous presences approach the swamp, without turning around, he knew that his team was already here. The swamp was full of monsters and was the natural habitat of lizardmen and pirodiles. Therefore unless they cleared the swamp clear of them, treading on it would be extremely foolish.

Blake brandished his sword and counted the time needed for the large area attack from Frida to complete.

"I guess I have no choice, I'll get a little bit serious now..." right after his words sounded out, his black gold armour started becoming a bright crimson and the area around him became fiery hot.

A few of the pirodiles tried to bite him from behind only to find their bodies ignited the next second. The monster feeling the heat in the air, started backing out but because they were taunted by the skill [Berserker's Howl], they couldn't back far away.

"The swamp is the problem huh... hmph once Frida's magic is complete there will be no more water to save you". Blake said charging towards the hordes of pirodiles and Lizardmen popping their heads out from the surface of the swamp.

His armour which had turned completely turned crimson, radiated an intense amount of heat. The heat was so powerful that the water around him was starting to boil.

On top of being extremely sturdy, it had the effect of stopping the advance of the enemy. Lizardmen and pirodiles died in droves in front of him, no matter where they tried to jump him from.

Their claws and fangs were completely useless against him and his crimson armour burned them every time they approached close to him. Although they were not his opponents, their numbers were in the hundreds, probably more than five hundred and he alone would take a long time to finish all of them.

At this moment, a smile crept up to his face and his head turned around to look up. It was true it would take a long time if he a warrior was to battle all of them; however, to finish off a bunch of enemies in a short period of time, there was someone more qualified in this field in his party.

Looking above, he saw a gigantic flaming meteor take shape the size of which easily crossed more than thirty meters. It radiated an intense amount of heat that caused the surrounding air to distort and mana to become unstable.

A feeling of devastation and dread assaulted one's heart whenever one looked at it. The lizardmen and pirodiles clearly sensing the changes in the mana, glanced at the flaming meteor that threatened to destroy this place and immediately went into a panic.

Due to their state of mind being disturbed, some of them managed to escape the grasps of his taunts, their next target was obviously Frida the caster of the magic.

A few of the priodiles huddled together and dived deep inside the swamp, they then shot towards the stationary mage that was high up in the sky like a dart. The way the lots of them moved, was a beautiful sight to see at a glance; however, knowing that these were bloodthirsty pirodiles, made it a lot less pleasing and more alarming.

Dozens of pirodiles shot towards Frida, their incisive set of teeth were on full display. Just as they were a few inches away from sinking their teeth on her glossy skin, a thin transparent membrane like a shield appeared in front of her body and stopped the advances of the pirodiles.

The monsters bounced off the shield unable to get any close to her. Frida smiled and winked towards Kody who was dutifully standing with a mallet beside her. The transparent membrane like shield earlier was a skill of his that he uses for defence.

"Alright let's rock this place, my magic is about to be complete," Frida said waving her staff towards the huge meteor in front of them.

She glanced at Blake and knew that his skill that was taunting them for so long, was about to disappear. The moment it does, it was her job to finish off all of the monsters now that they were all clustered together.

If they were to fight these monsters inside the swamp, there was no way of telling how long it would take them to clear the floor nor was it possible to tell that they can do so without suffering any injuries.

For the sake of their exploration, she has to finish off them with one powerful strike.

TREMBLE... the air trembled from just the slightest movement of the meteor.

Six seconds...

A droplet of sweat trickled down her face, her cherry lips chanted the last syllables of her magic "Amalgamation Magic...Flame Earth Mastery- [Falling Meteor]".

One second...

The moment the effects of the [Berserker's Howl] ended and the monsters finally regained their senses, the destructive meteor that has been hanging in the sky for so long, started descending.

RUMBLE... the air screamed and the space trembled as the meteor slowly started to gain momentum.

Blake who was at the surface of the pond and inside the area of impact, felt the terrifying pressure pressing down on him. Even if it was him, he did not have the confidence to take it head-on and still be in unharmed.

With his job to distract the monsters long enough for Frida to cast her spell accomplished, he flapped the illusory wings behind him and swiftly got out of the range of the attack.

The thirty or so adventurers gathered near the swamp looked at the embodiment of destruction falling down. Their eyes widened in surprise and fear as they braced for impact.

The lizardmen and Pirodlies sensing the danger, obviously tried to hide beneath the swamp; however, this choice of theirs was useless since the meteor had enough firepower to completely evaporate the swamp and change the topography of this place.

Their only option out of this was to disrupt the magic from completing, now though it was already too late.

BOOOOOOMMM...

The meteor dyed the whole floor with its crimson hue, the swamp reflecting the scene like a mirror. The moment the meteor collided with the swamp, a loud noise of a huge amount of water being displaced echoed out followed by clouds of vapour rising as high as the ceiling.

The swamp was easily evaporated along with the organisms hiding inside it, nothing remained in front of the might of the amalgamation magic [Falling Meteor]. A magic that could be said to be above the levels of the intermediate tier and approaching close to the advance tier.

TREMBLE... the land trembled and cracks appeared from the bottom of the swamp. The vision was dyed white and the shockwave bringing along a scalding heat, hit everyone.

Fortunately, these adventurers had plenty of time to prepare and erect shields that covered all of them. When they removed their shields to see what happened to the swamp, they were shocked to see a huge crater taking the place of the swamp.

The ground for a few hundred meters was dyed red from the heat and released clouds of smoke from the moisture that remained underneath. That was the power of one of their three leaders, the strongest mage in their guild, Frida the [Hellbringer].

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They heard consecutive sounds of flapping and their three leaders landed in front of them. Blake, the guild master of the Burning Arrow Guild, Kody the radiant healer and the aforementioned Frida the [Hellbringer].

Together, the three of them were the cornerstone of this guild and as long as they remained, their Burning Arrow's guild would be the top guild in the city of Mountmend.

Blake whose armour had returned to its usual golden black colour, flumped himself down on top of a nearby rock and observed his teammates. The journey from top floor to here, was moderately an easy one with the subsidiary team clearing most of the monsters for them.

Starting from the ninth floor was when the difficulty went up by a notch; nevertheless, it was still not a problem for his guild whose average level was above level 200.

'Floor fourteenth huh' Blake inwardly thought. The fourteenth floor was the highest floor that they had explored up until now and was also the latest floor that had been discovered by anyone yet.

"Chuck was right, this dungeon is indeed not a [E] rank" Blake muttered feeling the density of mana in the air which was so dense and the quickly restoring dungeon. These were all signs that the dungeon was already a [D] rank and was swiftly on its way to evolve up a rank.

His dozens of years of adventuring told him that. At this moment he heard approaching footsteps and saw Frida walking towards him.

"What are you pondering about so much Blake" Resting herself beside him, she asked.

"It's just that it's hard to believe a newly emerged dungeon could evolve so fast," Blake said shaking his head.

Frida rested her chin on her hands and made a brooding face.

"You are right, it hasn't even been a year and the dungeon seems already ready to go up another rank. I had once explored a [C] tier dungeon before I joined this guild and I can tell you honestly that I see more and more similarities between the two".

"I see... what do you think Kody" Blake asked turning towards Kody who had approached them at an unknown time.

The person with the clergy robe mused for a while looking at the distant entrance to the next floor.

"This dungeon is an anomaly for sure... isn't that why the Branch director asked you to investigate it personally. Though, in my opinion, you made the right choice by accepting the request. A dungeon like this which deviates from all the norm, might become a disaster that threatens our city in the future if we don't explore and understand about its limit right now".

Blake nodded, the words of the healer was right, it was not only about the demon noble that was the master of this place, they needed to understand what rank he was and the potential of the dungeon increasing up a tier.

All of these factors played a huge role because the difficulty of the dungeon is closely related to its rank. The Adventurer's association needs to know about the rank of the dungeon and its future potential to evolve so that it could grade the dungeon as high, intermediate or low.

If they mess up with their judgement and evaluate a dungeon poorly, the negligence would cause the death of thousands of adventurers.

It was not something unusual to see adventurers disappearing inside the dungeon without surfacing ever again. Most often than not it happens because they underestimate the difficulty of the dungeon, especially the floors.

This event had repeated so often in history that many times adventurers have blamed the Association for evaluating the dungeon wrongly. Because of this, the Adventurer's association makes a detailed evaluation of all the dungeons and grades them accordingly.

"Alright after we reach the fourteenth floor, let us move very prudently. We do not know how many floors this dungeon has, if we approach too close to the core, there is also the possibility of us encountering the master of this place".

"In the case that they are a Demon Earl, our only hope is to run" Blake stood up and hurriedly roared out orders.

He then looked at Frida before asking "What are the updates on the Subsidiary Attack team?".

"They are currently resting in the tower town, do you want me to call them down?" Frida said.

Nodding his head, Blake commanded, "Tell them to camp here so that they can immediately respond to our aid".

Although he did not say it loud, he knew that the association was using them as disposables. After a while, the subsidiary team came to the twelfth floor just in time to see the main attack team proceed forward to the next floor.

With the three leaders personally taking charge of the exploration this time, the progress they made was smoother than they expected. T

he fourteenth floor which was a vast wasteland spanning for dozens of kilometres seemed empty at a glance with no presence of monsters found anywhere. But make no mistake, the monsters here are aerial predators and fly so fast that it is difficult for a low levelled person to see them.

The members of the blinding Arrow's guild were experienced and well-trained individuals, though they made some mistakes that led to one or two of them getting injured, they swiftly mended their errors, ceasing from committing any more blunders.

Corpses of Anemodactyl littered the ground as more and more of them dropped onto the floor dead. While it is true that their opponent was extremely fast in mid-air and knew mid-range attacks like [Wind Slash] and [Wind Claws], they who were used to their patterns, could shoot them with their skills as they approached near.

Unlike their enemy, they were capable of coordination and teamwork which made handling them all the more easier. These adventurers looked up and saw their three leaders who were capable of flight, easily slaying multiple Anemodactyl at once.

They made it so easy that for a second these adventurers thought that they weren't fighting a bunch of level 130-150 monsters but some low-level weaklings. The Blinding's Arrow guild was a top tier guild around these parts and with them bringing their finest members, they stomped one floor after the other.

Fifteenth floor, Sixteenth floor, they slowly cleared one floor after the other. Although the monsters there were a problem, thanks to having a large number of healing potions and the subsidiary attack team aiding them from time to time, the team suffered no casualties.

For this exploration, the Burning Arrow Guild had spent a large sum of money on acquiring weapons, elixirs, armours and various other things. By the time they arrived on the nineteenth floor, two days had already passed.

As the group descended onto the nineteenth floor, they observed that the floor was extremely peaceful with luminescent trees, grass and various odd flowers dotting the place.

Since they were an experienced team of adventurers, they did not let their guard down but even after a while of searching the place, they did not sense any presence of monsters on this floor.

"Let's take a break here. The gate to the next floor is open, recover your expended strength and stamina before we move forward. However, don't let your guard down. Although there are no presence of monsters on this floor, we do not know that it is a 'Safe Floor' yet" Blake commanded after surveying the floor.

Safe floor is a term that the adventurer use when naming a particular floor of the dungeon which spawns no monsters making it an ideal place for adventurers like them to rest and recover from their fatigue.

Inside the dungeon where they had to be constantly on guard and fight monsters to clear a way, rest was a luxury thus the adventurers took a break every now and then. The group found an open plain and sat down to recover their strength; nevertheless, they did not disband and sat accordingly in a way that left very few to no openings.

"I can't believe a safe floor exists in this dungeon. Isn't it only a low ranking one?" a group of adventurers seated at the centre of the formation discussed.

"Yeah, you are right. According to the adventurer's association, only dungeon intermediate tier or above should have a Safe Floor" They argued.

While they were right in saying that, what they didn't know was that adventurers' association based their evaluation on the fact that low tier dungeons which did not have many floors and are more prone to being conquered by the adventurers do not have a need to create a Safe Floor.

Whereas, High and Intermediate tier dungeons which have numerous floors, strong monsters and are more hard to conquer, have Safe Floors to keep the morale of the adventurers from breaking down.

Of course, the dungeon Laplace that Simon made, deviated from every common knowledge and the pre-established notions of the adventurer's association.

"What are you all babbling about, didn't you hear the guild master say that we are still not sure this place is a Safe Floor?" an adventurer whose class seems to be a mage, walked towards them and said.

As he approached them, there were many murmurs from everyone. The man who had approached them was after all a powerful mage second only to Firda one of their three leaders. His mighty spells had destroyed many Stormwolves and Battle Bears on the previous floors.

"Hmph, there is no way a low ranking dungeon could have a Safe Floor. In my opinion, we are very close to the dungeon core and there are no more monsters strong enough to hold out against us. If we keep mounting the pressure, we might be the first guild in Mountmend to conquer a dungeon. Do you know what that means?"

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His rosy words immediately uplifted the spirits of the adventurers and they couldn't help but imagine such a scenario. a future where they conquered the dungeon.

What the man said wasn't false, they had yet to meet a strong monster on any of the floors and if everything favoured them, they could really try their luck on conquering the dungeon.

At this moment, the fear of the Dungeon Master being a powerful Demon Noble, was out of their mind. In their opinion, they were a powerful bunch of people capable of defeating hundreds of Stormwolves and Battle Bears easily. What does a single Demon Noble amount to?

"Sigh... these people are getting drunk on their recent success, aren't you going to stop them?" Frida said looking at her teammates who were getting needlessly excited.

Blake shook his head and refused to comment. These people obviously haven't encountered a demon Noble nor have they seen their powers so it was no surprise that they were saying all that.

Although he wanted to burst their bubbles, he felt like this level of enthusiasm and passion was needed to tackle the upcoming floors plus, even if they encountered the Demon Noble, they still had that thing with them.

At this moment, Kody accompanied by a few guildmates, walked towards them after coming back from their patrol.

"What do you think?" Blake asked narrowing his eyes.

Kody nodded his head and replied, "I believe this is a Safe Floor".

Frida had an incredulous look in her eyes "Even your [Trail of Light] Skill didn't pick up the presence of any monsters around?".

The Skill [Trail of Light] that Frida was talking about, was a class-specific skill of Priests, a rare class just like the Sage, adept in Light Magic. The skill detects the presence of any monsters or possible tracks they left behind in a particular place.

If even the Trail of Light skill was unable to detect the presence of monsters here, it could only mean that this place really was a safe Floor.

Blake closed his eyes and took a deep breath after a while, he stood up and commanded his team to get ready to march forward. Their goal, the twentieth floor in front of them.

In a place surrounded by speckles of light and gentle mist, sat an ethereal beauty. Her crystal blue hair was as beautiful as ice gently flowing down her shoulders and her creamy face which was reflected on the pond in front of her, was beautiful beyond belief.

At this moment, Irene who was staring at a window in front of her, blinked her eyelids and turned around to gaze at the beautiful crystal trees shining with a multi-coloured light.

Amidst the thick foliage of the trees, was a figure who had just currently woken up from its slumber.

NEEEEIIGGHH... it gave a coarse roar and reared its front legs. Power overflowed from its body, its three pairs of dark baleful eyes could give nightmares to anyone gazing into them. The being's powerful legs carried it towards Irene and it bowed its head in front of her.

Irene softly caressed its fiery mane while looking at the window. At this moment, the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse nudged Irene and told her about its intention.

"You want to go there? Hmm~ Alright, it's time we show them, who are getting carried away with their success, the true terrors of this dungeon. Remember, do not kill them, just scare them away"...

The Burning Arrows Guild after resting on the nineteenth floor for a while, started arching towards the twentieth floor. As the group assembled in front of the twentieth floor, they opened their eyes wide in shock at the scene that lay in front of them.

As far as their eyes could see, was a place filled with tall trees and grass that came all the way to their waists. Presence of monsters could be felt all around the place but more importantly, the thing that bothered them was that the density of mana around here was palpable.

The twentieth floor of the dungeon Laplace was a vast forest with all kinds of monsters present. They made their own ecosystem here and have established a food chain. The cycle of Death-Rebirth continued all day here.

However, at this moment the forest that was usually filled with the cries and howl of monsters, was unusually silent to the point where it felt odd.

While an ordinary person would not be able to feel it, how could these adventurers who had loads of experience, miss it? The moment they arrived on this floor, a heavy and dreary feeling enveloped their bodies and a sense of foreboding assaulted their hearts.

Droplets of sweat trickled down their faces and they were having difficulty moving forward.

"Give strength to my companions and dispel all evils [Brave Heart]" a white light radiated out from the mallet in Kody's hand and like a dome, encircled all the members within it. Immediately, they felt the sinister feeling overwhelming them disappear.

The priest turned towards Blake by his side and said "There are signs of dark magic being used here".

The man who was the guild master of the Burning Arrow Guild nodded his head, he did not question his companion's words since he knew that Kody as a Light magic user was much more sensitive to dark magic than anyone else here.

"Can you pinpoint the location from where it is being released?" Frida asked furrowing her brows.

Kody shook his head in consternation, the whole floor was currently being affected by it, there is no way of knowing where it was coming from.

"Do you think it's the master of this dungeon personally making his move?" Frida remarked while tightly holding onto her staff.

The dungeon was a low tier one so they should be approaching closer to the dungeon core, it wouldn't be surprising if the Demon Noble decided to act personally. the density of man being heavy here was evidence enough.

Blake had a serious expression on his face, it was up to him to decide whether they should move forward or retreat. With how contrast the twentieth floor seemed compared to the previous floors, there was no denying that they were about to face a difficult enemy.

To go or not go?... Blake had the option to end the exploration here and go back to the surface, even if the Adventurer's association pressed them for an answer, he could always create some excuse.

However, retreating was not like him, especially when all of their members had excess energy and were in almost perfect condition to proceed forward. Thus he made up his mind, raising his hands he gave orders for his team to proceed forward albeit extremely carefully.

Now that they were already there, they should experience the power of the dungeon themselves, it would be not too late to retreat after analysing the power of their opponent.

His confidence stemmed from his teammates and his defence he took so much pride in. Even if it was a Demon Earl, Blake believed that he would be able to last a few exchanges before going down.

The members of the Burning arrows guild marched forward but felt something was amiss when even after a while, they weren't being attacked. Typically, monsters would immediately attack them the moment felt their presence and would not hesitate to charge towards them.

However, the scene in front of them broke all their common sense and at the same time gave them an ominous feeling. These adventurers who were high on alert as they proceeded forward, halted their steps when they saw their leader stretch his hands towards the broad sword on his back.

The forest felt extremely creepy with the ominous silence, there was no one talking and only the infrequent gulps of the adventurers rang out.

RUSTLE... suddenly, there was the rustling of grass and the noise of something approaching them.

"Get ready to engage" the moment their leader shouted that, all the adventurers hurriedly raised their weapons and strained their eyes in the direction they could hear the noise coming from.

THUK...THUK...THUK...

The cold noise of something stepping on the ground came as the entity appeared in front of numerous pairs of eyes from amidst the thick foliage. The moment it appeared the sinister aura around the surrounding became even more stronger.

The entity in front of them looked so menacing and demonic that multiple people started trembling on the spot. Its three pair of eyes that was as dark as the night, observed them and its body that was writhed in fire, gave it a unique look.

"W-what is that thing?" one of the adventurers asked the one beside him. However, just like him, his comrade too did not know what they were looking at.

When something incomprehensible is presented before humans, it is almost instinctual for them to start questioning and whispering about the absurdity in front of them and in some cases, even deny it.

Nobody knew what the being with three pairs of powerful legs, wide draconic wings and donning a battle armour was? The same went for the three leaders, they were looking at the thing with wide-open eyes.

The stare-down lasted for a while only to be broken by someone falling down on his buttocks. The adventurer that fell down had wide disbelieving eyes and a terrified face with which it was gazing at the entity.

"Level 568... how is that possible?" his mumbling was heard by everyone present.

All the adventurers revealed a shocked expression, those that had [Analysis], hurriedly used their skill only to stand stunned the next second.

Disaster Class, there was no other way to label the being in front of them.

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Adventurer's association classifies a monster according to the threat level it represents to the humanity and gives them an appropriate class. If the monsters they have met up until now were only around normal and strong, then the being in front of them whose level surpassed 500, fell in the disaster class.

A class that could bring disaster to a large number of humans, towns, or a large city. There weren't even that many high-level adventurers in their kingdom and those that were could only be seen near the capital.

A disaster class being could only be subjugated by those adventurers, even their guild master who was the highest level among them, was only around level 360.

The moment when the race and the level of the entity in front of them was revealed, the morale of these adventurers immediately faltered and they couldn't but cower in front of the enemy.

Right when they were about to lose all will to fight, was when a shout that reinvigorated their spirits reverberated in their ears.

"Do not waver, do not let your resolve die down. Even if the enemy is stronger than us, they are only but one. As long as we remember our training and experience, we won't be defeated".

After roaring out everything he had in his mind, Blake for the first time took out a long shield from his space ring and wielded his broad sword with one hand. Just like earlier, his armour and even his shield started glowing a glaring red, raising the temperature around.

"I don't know what skill that thing is using but it is definitely Dark magic. Kody, wake those idiots up. Frida get ready to back me up with a big one, I don't know how long I can stop that thing. If worse comes to worst, I leave the judgement of using that thing to you".

Right after saying that, he raised his shield and charged towards the entity in front of him. The glaring hot shield was right about to make contact with it when the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse reared its two pairs of powerful forelegs and thumped onto the shield.

BANG...

Blake felt a powerful force hit his shield and nearly lost all sensation in his arm. His body skidded back a few meters and only came to a stop when he used his sword to dig into the ground and kill the momentum.

Blake took hurried breaths and observed his shield which now had four hoof prints imprinted on it. From that clash alone, he clearly felt the difference between them.

The entity after sending him flying, did not move from its place and simply observed them with its ominous six eyes.

Kody who had finished chanting a light magic spell that dispelled all kinds of Mental dark magic, cast a small healing magic at him. Feeling the sensation of his left arm return to him, Blake was just about to rush it once again when he saw multiple warriors from his guild encircle the entity.

Their years of exploring and working together, allowed them to coordinate seamlessly together and read each other's patterns. Various fire magic formed in the air above as the mages in the backlines, casted their spell.

It was not like they did not have mages who had mastery over other attributes; however, since their prioritised fire magicians, they had more of them. Dozens of [Flame Spears], [Fireballs], [Fire Bullets], [Wind Blasts], [Earth Spikes] shot towards the immobile Bloodthorn demonic warhorse leaving it with no place to dodge.

The warriors encircling it, hurriedly backed away and saw the entity being engulfed in the aftermath of the magic.

BOOOOMM... a huge explosion that rocked this part of the forest for dozens of meters, spread out tearing down all the trees and grasses on the way. The adventurers rejoiced after seeing all the magic hitting the entity squarely, even if it was above level 500 and labelled as a disaster class, it must have felt it.

Flames engulfed their vision and burned the entity within. Blake, Frida and Kody who had the highest levels among the group, wore apprehensive faces as they gazed at the scene of explosion. They could tell that the entity had deliberately chosen to take on their attacks instead of dodging.

Even if it was just novice tier magic, there were more than dozens of them. Was the entity that confident of its defence? Even the three of them had no idea, this was the first time they had seen something like it and had no way of knowing what it specialised on.

They could only hope the attack from earlier would give them some clue.

The fire that was raging out, suddenly flickered and dispersed into tiny embers before being snuffed out. The Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse who had been engulfed in a barrage of attacks, slowly walked out in front of multiple stunned gazes.

Even after taking on all of those attacks, it's body didn't have a tiny scratch.

"T-That's impossible" the mages in the backlines had wide disbelieving seeing their attack do no damage.

Blake walked towards Frida and gave her a meaningful glance, he then next led the warriors into encircling the entity in the middle like a net.

Surrounded by all front, the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse gave these people a derisive glance. Thick black smoke started emitting out of his body painting everything black. The black haze like a deadly poison, corroded everything and anything until they were tiny particles.

Seeing a black haze spread out of its body, the guild master of the burning arrow guild hurriedly gave the warriors the order to back away. His instincts that had been polished through years of efforts and battles, was ringing alarm bells at this moment.

And as if to prove him right, the black haze like a plague corroded everything and anything that it touched until not even their remains were left behind.

A white light that brought along a soothing and cleansing effect collided with the black haze and pushed it back swiftly nonetheless, it was unable to dissipate all of it.

Kody who was chanting one spell after another, suddenly felt his heart tighten when he saw the gaze of the entity land on him. Cursing inwardly, he was just about to retreat to the backlines when suddenly the remaining haze turned into an arrow and shot towards him.

Everything happened so fast that before anyone could get the chance to interfere, the black arrow was already upon him. Unable to dodge it, Kody gritted his teeth and took out a pendant from his clothes.

The moment the black arrow approached a few inches near him, a transparent membrane-like shield encased his body and protected him from the incoming attack. He sighed in relief when he saw the attack bounce off but the next second, his eyes widened to their limits to see tiny cracks appear on the shield.

The pendant on his hand was a [B] rank artefact that upon activation created a shield of light that had the ability to block all kinds of attacks. Even if it was Frida, she would have a lot of trouble conjuring up an attack that could actually break his shield.

Nevertheless, even a casual attack from the entity in front of him, was enough to nearly break his shield. Kody felt a cold wind brush past his body thinking what would happen to him had he not used the artefact.

He swiftly fell back to the backlines and chanted one healing spell after another.

With Blake and the warriors keeping the entity busy, Kody providing support, the responsibility of leading the mages and the others fell on Frida. Seeing them blankly staring at their enemy without casting any spell, she had the urge to smash them with her staff.

"What are you idiots doing standing there in a daze? You comrades and friends in the vanguard are fighting with their life on line. You all on the other hand had your will to fight broken after casting a single spell. Are you still the members of the Burning Arrow Guild?".

Her fiery words woke the mages up from their daze and they felt their spirits lifting once again. So what if their attacks was unable to scratch their enemy? They could just keep bombarding it with their spells, over time the entity is sure to feel it.

Frida smiled satisfyingly after bolstering their morale, she then cleared her mind and focused on chanting her own spell. As the highest level mage of this guild, she had the most damaging power. Her rare class [Pyro Mage] allowed her powerful mastery over fire attribute of mana leading her to her nickname the Hellbringer.

As she raised her staff, thick volumes of flames started materialising and coagulating together becoming a one huge flaming ball. The power behind her attack was so great that the surrounding air visibly distorted.

The intense heat from her magic made all those mages behind her who were confident of their fire magic lower their head in despondence.

BOOM...BOOMM...BOOMM... one magic after another bombarded the Bloodthorn demonic warhorse nevertheless, none of it managed to do anything. The constant attack and encirclement was starting to annoy it and so it opened its mouth and neighed.

NEEEIIGHH...an ominous and coarse roar that could give goosebumps to anyone listening to it, echoed out. The roar was so loud and powerful that adventurers in the front had to cover their ears.

BANG...BANG...BANG... what followed after the roar was a series of multiple muffled explosions. . When Blake and the other looked behind them, they were stunned to find multiple mages falling onto the ground coughing out a mouthful of blood.

The magic that they have been conjuring, was suddenly disturbed by that roar leading to it self-destructing. The backlash from the mana going haywire, caused them to suffer internal injuries.

