

D. of Pride 561

Chapter 561 561- Dissension

So what are the Draining Mercury Vines? The item as the name suggests, were silver coloured vines that dug themselves deep inside the ground when sown. It was as big as one's palm and repeatedly changed shapes because of its volatility.

The draining mercury vines hide and multiply themselves inside the ground and only surfaces to drain their prey of all their energy.

When the vines surface from the ground, they are much bigger and can easily restrain a full grown adult. Another thing about the draining mercury vines was that they are not any ordinary inanimate item, but an item with intelligence.

It behaved so much like an actual living being that it could easily be mistaken for a plant monster when in fact it was just an item.

A single stalk of mercury vine can multiply itself up to ten thousand times, so one can imagine the number of vines hiding inside these grasslands when Simon had drawn a couple thousand of them at once from the [Ga?????]. They had multiplied themselves into an unimaginable number.

Apart from that, the Draining Mercury Vines wasn't a very high ranking item, it was graded as a [D] rank item by the [Analysis]. Though it was a little rare as could be seen how Simon had managed to pull this item after such a long time.

In any case, it was because of the emergence of these vines that appeared out of the ground at the time when the adventurers least expected it, that they were able to pull this trick so smoothly.

"Haha, that may not be the case. If it was just the draining mercury vines alone, it wouldn't have been able to stop the adventurers. After all, this item other than having a strong absorption and binding effect, was completely useless in combat. Even a level 200 person can slice the vines and get out of the restraining".

Simon knew the item more than anyone thus he could tell that without the other traps the draining mercury vines wouldn't have been able to achieve its game turning effect.

Everybody in the hall was happy with the praises they received from Simon, their eyes went back to observing the adventurers. It had already been a day since the teams arrived on the 34th floor and dived inside the pit, they were almost out of energy and were on their last leg.

Similarly, the monsters that he had spawned for this occasion were cut down to almost one tenth of their initial number. The situation looked positive for Simon's side when... the primary teams finally caught up.

BANG... a loud dull sound rang out from the passageway where the entrance leading to this place was and something flew out from there. It landed heavily on the ground and raised a cloud of dust.

When the dust settled, everybody was shocked to see that it was the door that stopped them from exiting this place. What was shocking was that the door did not budge even after the full brunt of their attacks yet it now lay in front of them broken and bent out of shape.

"Everyone... I'm sorry that I couldn't make it in time".

Inside the space where the tertiary team of the mage guild was, a voice that brought tears to the faces of these girls, sounded out. All eyes immediately gathered on the person that was standing on top of the door.

"Guild master!!!" Tiana and the other girls cried out, one could hear the immeasurable relief and cry for assistance from their voices.

The alluring figure holding a staff looked at the few remaining people surviving from her guild, a complex emotion surged within those eyes. From the condition and the state this place was in, she didn't have to think much to understand as to what had occurred here.

The golden staff in her hand inlaid with multitudes of core stones, shined and the next second there was an enormous explosion ensued out, big enough to engulf all of the remaining monsters immediately.

BOOOOMMM... all sounds were immediately drowned by that sound of the explosion and the place was illuminated by its light.

The figure did not turn around to see what had happened of the monsters and slowly walked towards her guild members.

The girls from the mage guild finally sighed a breath of relief, their exhaustion made them fall on the ground. Those who were not from the mage guild looked at the explosion with wide gaping mouths of shock.

When the alluring figure arrived in front of them, Tiana, Anna, Hallie and a few others couldn't hold themselves back and immediately jumped into the embrace of that figure.

The figure that could instantly charm others with her mature beauty was none other than the guild master of the mage guild, Karina Lowell. She patted the heads of the trembling girls around her and looked at the members of her guild with loving eyes.

"Ugh, the state of this place is quite horrible. It looks like we are very late" many other people walked out of the passageway, and each and every one of them had a very strong presence. They were the primary team of the mage guild and a few other people from the other guilds.

With the appearance of these people, the matter here was resolved. Tiana felt like a heavy burden was lifted from her shoulders. She looked at the ground, unable to match the gaze of her guild master.

"Guild leader I'm sorry... I couldn't keep the members of my guild safe. I have failed you."

Karina observed the downtrodden girl, and slowly stroked her head. She knew the girl very well, she would do her best in everything that she did. The fact that she couldn't save some of her guild members could only mean that she too was at her limits.

"We will talk about it after we go back to the surface" Karina did not speak much, she turned around and addressed the people behind her.

"Clean up this mess, tend to the injured. Search every nook and cranny of this place, find if there are any other survivors".

"Yes, guild master" these people dutifully nodded their heads and dispersed into every direction of this place to search.

Similar scenes were happening inside the other places too. The main unit comprising of the primary teams of all the twenty guilds was here.

"Master shouldn't we do something? We were so close to wiping them all?" Alice commented in frustration. The traps and the monsters that they had so meticulously planned were about to kill these adventurers when those people arrived.

"There is no need, rather we have achieved our objective by killing so many of the members of their younger generation. Even if they save them now, it wouldn't affect our final plan" Simon calmly explained.

The mysterious ruins was installed to deal a blow to the morale of the various guilds and at the same time see the effectiveness of the various traps and the newly mutated monsters. In that aspect, it could be said that they have achieved their objective.

With so many of their younger generations dead, the guilds were sure to have chaos arising among them. The fragile link that was holding them as a unit would sooner or later collapse with the small chinks that was created by Simon.

Now all they needed to do was wait and observe as to how they moved. The various other traps on the other floors are ready to slowly chip away at their remaining numbers and fan the flames. Once this fragile link connecting them was broken, it would be all too easy to pick them one by one.

This expedition team was only scary if they acted together, individually; their strength isn't enough to threaten the dungeon. Once the opportunity arrives, the dungeon will snap its fangs and swallow them whole.

This was only just the beginning, Simon was going to make the best use of this opportunity. "Be sure to provide me with more DP" Simon muttered in a voice that only he could hear.

34th floor, near the stairs leading to the next floor. Numerous camps were set out to tend to the injured and fatigued adventurers of the tertiary teams. After the primary unit arrived, they cleared the places of all monsters and traps and rescued the exhausted adventurers back up.

In one of the biggest camps, an emergency meeting was currently taking place. The attendant of this meeting was of course the various guild masters but there were many different and young faces participating in this meeting this time.

"Clam down Layton, let us hear their account first" Brutus who was made the expedition leader for times like this, tried to calm a middle aged man with tanned skin and sea blue hair.

"How can I calm down? the tertiary team of my guild was wiped out inside that place, the geniuses of my guild all died there".

Layton snarled, spit was coming out of his mouth. The man's entire face was flushed with anger and his eyes were reddened from the loss. Layton Streak was the guild leader of the Six River's Streak.

Brutus tried to calm this man down but to know no effect, the man had lost his entire team of geniuses there. He knew how big of a loss losing a genius was after all his guild too had lost many of them inside the mysterious ruins. In fact, every single guild here had lost a significant number of geniuses there.

"W-what about my guild? You said that they never appeared at the chamber where the seven doors was. Then doesn't that mean that there is a possibility that they...?" the guild leader of the Baskerville guild Manuel Baskerville asked in an expectant voice.

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When the primary teams reached the mysterious ruins after learning everything from the adventurers left on the surface, it was already very late. Many teams that had dived inside were wiped out, they managed to rescue only a handful few teams from inside those spaces.

Out of the many guilds that had lost their entire team down there, Baskerville guild was one of them.

"We are not sure, Baskerville guild had a fallout with the phantom light team and went on their own way. I do not know if they had survived or not, but I can say with certainty that they didn't dive inside those seven doors" Marcus Sarge answered.

There were a few cuts and bandages on his body. The young faces attending this meeting were none other than the people who had survived the incident themselves.

From their mouths, the various guild leaders learned how the teams were lured into a trap where there was no turning back from and how monsters poured out of those magic circles like an unending horde.

The more they heard, the more unbelievable the story started to get. The adventurers who had survived the incident didn't keep anything hidden and revealed everything that they saw and experienced.

Descriptions of monsters that they have never heard of before, unknown traps with mysterious effects and a sense of desperation. The guild leaders were shocked by everything that they heard.

That place was truly a hellish trap created to kill people. Had they arrived any late, none of the people would have survived.

After hearing the side of the story from the people that were involved, the various guild leader couldn't hold themselves back from arguing with each other. Except for the top five guilds, almost all of the big guilds had lost their entire teams.

Their arguments started becoming more and more spiteful and one thing led to another before the entire meeting turned into one big vocal fight.

The chinks in the link were starting to show, these various guilds already had much too much prejudice against each other and the situation today only made it obvious. They couldn't trust each other.

The meeting no longer had any resemblance to its name, Brutus could only sigh. Forget about the other guilds, his own guild had suffered such a heavy loss. If not because the quality of gears and the training the members of his guilds had to go through was extremely tough, many people would have died from his guild too.

The injuries on his son Marcus were evidence of how gruesome the battle there was.

Out of the seven doors, they could only rescue people from four of them, the remaining three doors no longer had any adventurers alive. All they found was a mountain of corpses and blood littered floor.

Given what they saw and no clues as to what had transpired behind those other three doors, the guild leaders were naturally uncertain as to how to take all of this. Their suspicions went towards the other teams and guilds.

The grey haired man was silently observing the situation from his seat. He did butt in nor did he step in to settle the situation. All he did was listen to the accounts of the story of the people who were there and closed his eyes to muse something in his head.

"Hmm... Those mysterious ruins were obviously a trap, a meticulously laid out one at that. Those monsters aren't much of a threat to the secondary teams of any of the guilds much less their primary teams".

"The reason why the monsters were able to corner them to such an extent was because the ones facing them were the tertiary teams of the guilds. If that was the case, then were the mysterious ruins set up to counter the tertiary teams in mind? If so then what was the demon's goal behind doing all of this?".

Just as that question popped in his mind, the answer arrived to him.

"Of course the geniuses. The tertiary teams... although it was the weakest unit of any guild, it also held the most number of newbies and budding geniuses of a guild. Dealing a blow there would be tantamount to breaking the legs of a guild. What could he be after?".

The arguments inside the tent was starting to get heated when a few subordinates entered the tent and brought a couple of things for inspection back from the ruins.

"Are these all?" the grey haired man asked the subordinate who nodded his head saying these were all they could find inside that place.

"Good, leave it behind, you can go" he waved his hand and those people immediately left. After that he used his aura to pressure the people inside the tent into silence.

"Is there a point in arguing amongst each other? Instead of that wouldn't it be better for us to understand what are we dealing with first?" the eyes behind that mask, glared at everyone.

Nobody dared to match that gaze, they all became silent and suppressed their discontent inside. Seeing that the tent was silent now, the grey haired man turned his attention to the things that were brought out the ruins.

The first thing that he observed was the monster carcasses.

"They somewhat look like the Direwolves and the Anemodactyl but their size and colour are way different. Not to mention, I have never heard of any direwolves being able to breathe fire" the grey haired man analysed.

"Huh? Even Sir doesn't know what kind of monsters they are?" the curious guild leaders were amazed.

This person who was from the mainland and from that organisation was the most knowledgeable one among them. If even he doesn't know what these monsters were, then wouldn't it mean that...

"New species?!!" Karina spoke out the words in everybody's heart.

There was no other explanation. The fact that they were unable to recognise the species of the monster meant that it was a new species. However, what surprised these people inside the tent the most was that these new species were found in a low ranking dungeon.

Normally, for a low ranking dungeon, it was already known to many adventurers as to what kinds of monsters to expect when diving inside such dungeons. Since it was easy to conquer and numerous adventurers tackle the low ranking dungeons, Adventurer Association made many records pertaining to the monsters that are usually seen in those dungeons.

These records were available to all adventurers and were a part of an individual's curriculum and training that the adventurer association provided to a newbie adventurer before issuing their licence.

Guild leaders like them have been diving inside many middle and low ranking dungeons and have a vast variety of experience. Yet they have never seen a monster like that. New species although it was just two words, the meaning it signified was much higher than that.

An appearance of a new species meant that the monster was a complete unknown. Since there are no records about it, they didn't know its behavioural or its attack pattern. They didn't know its potential, power or class and whether it could become a threat or not.

What made a new species so frightening was the unknown factor. Compared to fighting a monster who was a complete unknown it was much safer to fight a monster that they know all about.

Fighting a new species involves risk of injury and even casualty. As could be seen by how terribly the tertiary teams of the various guilds had lost. It was because they were fighting with the factor of unknown involved that they had lost.

The same could be said for the traps, the charcoal remains of a tree, the fallen petals of a four leaf clover and a silvery grey liquid. Each and every object that was brought out of those mysterious ruins was filled with mystery.

"We cannot certain yet that they are new species. Although I have dived inside quite a few middle ranked dungeons, I am a human after all. What I know is also limited, perhaps these species are recorded in some text and we are just unaware of it".

"Nonetheless, as it stands we are all unaware of what these monsters are and what they are called. One cannot use [Analysis] on a corpse after all. Therefore we must be careful when proceeding forward".

The grey haired man reminded everyone. While musing internally 'if you die to these pathetic monsters, it would be a huge waste of my time'.

Since no one was able to hear the grey haired man's inner thoughts, they all nodded their heads at his words. After that, he asked a few more questions to Marcus, Hallie, Gallio and the others who survived.

Most of these questions were related to these unknown monsters and traps. The meeting proceeded without anyone butting in and after a while, it was adjourned.

"Expedition leader, tell everyone to take breaks in turns. We will rest here for half a day before proceeding forward" with those words from the grey haired man, everybody stood up from their seats and left.

Marcus followed his father out. They were just about to enter their tent when someone appeared behind them.

"A moment please... young master of the Savannah beast guild". Marcus turned towards the speaker of the voice only to find that it was none other than the guild master of the Baskerville guild, Manuel Baskerville.

"Guild master of the Baskerville guild, why are you here?" Brutus stepped forward and asked. He was cautious as to what the other party's intention was to follow them like this back to their tent.

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"Guild leader of the savannah Beast guild... please be at ease, I didn't come here with any evil motive. I just want to learn more about what young master Marcus meant by what he said back in the meeting".

Manuel Baskerville raised his hand to show that he meant no harm.

"What Marcus said back in the meeting?" Although Brutus had a warlike temperament and was extremely wild, he was no fool. He could more or less guess why the guild master of Baskerville guild was here for.

Seeing that Brutus didn't bar him from saying anything, Manuel shifted his attention to Marcus.

"Back during the meeting, you said something about my son having a fallout with the phantom light guild. Can you please tell me about that in more detail?"

Marcus finally understood why the guild master of the Baskerville guild was here. He wanted to know more about what had happened to his son and the tertiary team of his guild that had seemingly disappeared.

If one dies in a dungeon, their body gets absorbed inside it. The dungeon is like a living entity, the rate of decomposition is a hundred times faster than the outside world. That is to say, if a body is left as it is, it would slowly break down and disappear, becoming the nourishment of the dungeon.

By the time, the primary teams arrived at the mysterious ruins, it was already too late. Only a handful of bodies could be recovered from that mysterious ruins. Out of the four thousand people that dived inside the pit, only about one eighth of them managed to come out alive.

Some were retrieved as a cold lifeless corpse while the rest had disappeared, absorbed by the dungeon and became its nourishment.

The guild that Manuel was the leader of, couldn't even find a single corpse of any of their members that had dived inside. Given this fact, it was only natural that Manuel wanted more details about what had happened back there. After all, amongst the geniuses that had disappeared there, was also his son.

Marcus looked at his father who nodded after contemplating for a while. Thus Marcus recited the entire story from the beginning.

It was not a topic that he liked talking about much as it was a devastating defeat for them and he had lost quite a lot of brothers in there. However, the man in front of him was very desperate to know what had happened of his son, thus Marcus had no choice but to recount everything once again.

The 34th floor, the pit, the mysterious ruins and the seven doors. How they were led to believe that they can tackle it and how it had gone all downfall from there.

Manuel paid more attention when the part came when the tertiary teams started falling apart after discovering the mysterious ruins. The phantom light guild's taunts and the criticisms that were directed towards the Baskerville guild.

The Phantom Light guild and the Baskerville Guild were two big guilds from the southern region of the kingdom, their members knew each other very well and had often met during quests. Because of that, the two guilds decided to work together and send their tertiary teams as one unit to compete with the others.

Who would have thought that their alliance would end up falling apart like that? the two guilds went their separate ways right before exploring the mysterious ruins.

"Ah, when I say clash, I only meant it as a verbal argument. In any case, after that I didn't see Bastille even until the end. The Baskerville guild too didn't arrive at the chamber" Marcus recounted.

"I see thank you for the information young master of the savannah beast guild" the guild leader of the Baskerville guild thanked Marcus and promptly turned around to leave. The man's steps were urgent and faster when they left.

"What was all that about?" Marcus was a little confused as to why the guild master of the Baskerville was in such a hurry to leave right after hearing the story.

"It doesn't concern our guild, you don't need to brood over it, Marcus. Let's go inside, the guild members of our savannah beast guild will assemble here in a few hours. Tell them all you know about the monsters, their skills and weaknesses. We cannot afford to make the same mistake again. Everybody in our guild needs to know what we are up against".

Brutus slipped into the tent not bothering about the other party. "Right" his son Marcus nodded and also entered the tent.

Time passed by swiftly and soon half a day was over. On the orders of the grey haired man, the members of the twenty guilds assembled near the middle of the 34th floor where the stairs to the next floor was.

Led by their own guild masters, these people stood organisedly and in formation. In the front was the primary teams of each guild fully decked out in their armours and gears. Behind them stood the secondary team ready to aid the primary teams at any moment.

The tertiary teams were left back at the camp to guard the supplies and the wounded. They had already done their part by carving a way to this floor so they were given a rest. Besides that, the tertiary team comprised of mostly weak and newbie adventurers would only be a dead weight from this point on.

Thus it was decided that they would be better if they stayed here. Plus a lot of them still needed time to heal from the injuries they sustained.

"It looks like everybody has assembled" The grey haired man who stood at the forefront of the primary teams along with the guild masters, commented. His eyes looked at the primary unit of this expedition army as he nodded his head.

The primary unit comprising of the primary teams of the top twenty guilds of the kingdom, was decked out in the best gears and armours out of everyone, even their levels and aura were different than all the others. They were no doubt the cream of the crop, the best of the best you can find in the entire kingdom of Ellesmere. Although comparing them with the adventurers from the mainland would be a little too much, they were still satisfactory.

The primary unit comprised of around 4,000 people, about 200 people from each guild. It was led by expedition leader Brutus Sarge and the various guild leaders were there to support him.

The secondary unit was led by Karina and the vice guild masters of the various guilds. Their objective was to stay a floor behind and back the primary team.

"Alright, expedition leader Brutus I leave leading the unit to you. I will be in the backlines providing assistance" the grey haired man didn't wait for anyone, after leaving his words behind, he disappeared into the crowd.

Even with the perception of these guild leaders, they had difficulty spotting him.

"Tch, so he intends to just work us like slaves huh" a brawny man with tanned skin and sea blue hair spat in a low voice. He was Layton Streak, the guild master of the Six River's Streak.

After losing his entire tertiary team in the mysterious ruins, he was in quite a sour mood. It was not only him, tension could be seen on the faces of quite a few guild leaders.

Half a day wasn't enough to make them forget about the massive losses their guild had suffered. If not because of the reward that was promised to them, they would have already fallen out.

Brutus looked at these people and sighed. It was a hassle to lead them; however, he had to do it since he couldn't leave the fate of his guild in the hands of some other people.

"Everyone ready your weapons, we are about to dive deeper inside the dungeon. Let's conquer it once and for all to see"...

SHIINGG... Brutus unsheathed his sword and raised it high up. His thundering voice rang out across the space, raising the spirits of everyone around him.

[Roar of Courage] the various guild leader who felt their blood boil from that shout, immediately recognised the skill that was used. One of the rare skills of the class [Chief Beast Garder]. The skill allows you to instantly manipulate and raise the spirits of your streak.

With Brutus' roar, the primary and the secondary unit all followed his command and started marching organisedly. The top twenty guilds were finally starting to move.

The Blaze wolves and the pyrodactyl was just the beginning, the deeper floor had many more mutated monsters waiting for them. The traps were more trickier and the floors were filled with unknowns.

Up until the 34th floor, they have been able to rely on the transmission orb to navigate the floors. This allowed them to clear the floors faster since they already knew the way. However, from the 34th floor onwards it was a brand new territory that wasn't recorded in the transmission orb.

They had to clear each and every path and search the whole floor to find the entrance to the next floor. Their speed was bound to be a lot slower than before; nonetheless, with the primary unit leading the charge, it was just a matter of time until they reached the next floor.

The mutated monsters may be something that these people had never encountered before; however, in front of their experience and level, they were no different than cannon fodder.

Just like that, the expedition army descended one floor after the other. Facing the unknown, the traps and attacks of the monsters would sometime catch them off guard and there would be some injuries.

However, it was only just minor wounds and nothing too serious. It was quickly healed by downing a potion or two.

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Before diving inside the dungeon, the expedition army made sure to buy every potion available in the elixir shops in the capital and in Mountmend. Hence they had a large stock of it.

So no matter how lethal or trickier the traps got, as long as they weren't too seriously injured, any wounds could be healed. The most the traps and the monsters could achieve was slow down the march of the primary unit by a minute amount.

Floor 36th, a vast valley filled with loess. It was the territory of pterodactyls, the next evolution of Anemodactyls. They were as fast and powerful as the mutated Pyrodactyls. The pterodactyls were predators that hunted from the skies. Their eyes can easily look far into the distance and the claws were sharp enough to even threaten these adventurers who were all above level 450.

What made them problematic was their speed and the height at which they fly. The 36th floor unlike the other floors, had quite a high ceiling. This allowed the pterodactyls who were a natural born predator of the sky to use the advantage of their wide wings and fly very high.

Not to mention when they dived from that height, they were a force to reckon with. That was not all, the pterodactyls were pack hunters, so when they hunted they did it in groups.

The 36th floor was filled with numerous colonies of pterodactyls and their numbers far surpassed the primary unit.

To make matters even worse, the trap that was set on this floor was quicksand. So if you are only looking up at the sky, you were up for a surprise that lay underneath.

Of course, the primary unit suffered some injuries when they first entered the floor, but there were no casualties. These people even if they got caught off guard, they weren't ordinary people, they were the best of the best adventurers from the kingdom of Ellesmere.

If a teammate of theirs was in a pinch, the group around him would make sure to cover him until he recovers. With time, the adventurers got used to the attack patterns of the pterodactyl and the situation transitioned with them taking the initiative now.

A small number of adventurers who could use the [Mana Wings] took to the skies and cleared the space for others. Since they were flying, they didn't have to worry about the quicksand and they stopped the monster's dive from the sky.

It took around four hours for the primary unit to explore the entire floor and find the entrance to the next floor.

The 37th floor was similar to the 36th floor in that both were canyons and housed the colonies of pterodactyls. However, the 37th floor was bigger and had more powerful monsters. The entrance to the next floor was also located in a tricky place that was difficult to find.

While the adventurers suffered fewer injuries and casualties this time, they took more than five hours to find the entrance to the next floor simply because of the sheer number and size of the monsters.

After resting for an additional hour, the expedition army proceeded with the exploration.

The 38th floor and the 39th floor took eight and ten hours respectively to explore. The floors were big and the monsters there were troublesome. The Moth Spiders and the Fire Spitting Worm may not be as powerful as the pterodactyls, but they were a difficult opponent on their own.

On these floors, the expedition army had to heavily rely on the antidotes and medicines that cured poison. The moth spiders and the fire spitting worms, were all poisonous monsters and coupled with the fact that the air contained poison gas too, it was not an ideal exploration for the primary unit.

They had to clear the air with wind magic, take potions to nullify the effects of the poison and fight the monsters with some caution. Because of this, the march of the adventurers had slowed down to a crawl.

The poison resistance skill was an unusually rare skill and you would only find a small number of assassins and warriors in possessions of said skill. Thus it could be said that the floors were troublesome even if they weren't filled with powerful monsters.

Nevertheless, the primary force comprising of the elites still did not suffer any casualties. Though they did have to replace a few with the ones on the secondary unit because of how badly they were poisoned.

After some tedious hours of exploration, the expedition army found the entrance to the 40th floor.

Two days, counting the time since they left the 34th floor, it took them around two days to reach the 40th floor. Of course, since there was no concept of time inside a dungeon, they had to rely on their own sense of time.

The expedition force climbed down the stairs and arrived on the 40th floor. A vast jungle with towering trees, lay in front of them. The visibility here was very low because of the all encompassing dense mist shrouding the place with a layer of mystery and danger.

An eerie silence covered the place and it felt like anyone who entered the mist, would just disappear without a trace. A challenge lay in front of the expedition force.

After all four thousand people gathered at the entrance, they charged inside the mist.

Brutus who was leading the group, stopped in his tracks after exploring for a while. He turned towards the man donned in the finest assassin gears and asked—

"Cassius, what do you think? Are there any traps around?"

Cassius Grey, the guild leader of the Assassin's Guild and also the ranger of this unit. His extreme sensory skills which have been polished to their limits, was indispensable during situations like this. That is why even Brutus felt it prudent to ask his advice.

"Other than the mist that obstructs ordinary navigation skills, there are no other traps in the vicinity that I can see off. But that is just on the surface, we cannot let our guard down".

Cassius said, he gestured with his hands and the members of his guild immediately used some items to illuminate their surroundings. A small bamboo container was thrown in the air which burst apart to release a piercing green light.

Immediately, the fog within a few meters surrounding was dispersed. But it was only temporary, the dispersed mist started moving once again and returned back to its place. Nevertheless, the objective was achieved. T

The reason behind using that bamboo container called the flare flash was to disperse the mist around them and ascertain their position.

"It's as I thought, we are moving in circles. This is the work of a monster that is born in the mist" Cassius stated coming to a realisation.

"Monster born in the mist? Could it be the Epsiloths? But aren't they monsters that could only be found in the deeper region of the ghastly winding forest? What are they doing here" the guild leaders asked.

"I don't know, but don't fall asleep or you will die" Cassius cautioned. The Epsiloths were small tree dwelling creatures that looked like sloths. They were harmless creatures and do not have any offensive abilities.

But make no mistake, these cute looking monsters were able to survive in the western region of the ghastly winding without having any offensive abilities because of their racial trait.

The Epsiloths have a special defensive ability that protected them from the other predators. It was the special pheromone that they released from their yawn. The mist around them was just an ordinary trap yet it was able to fool the senses of even the guild masters and the elites from the top guilds of the kingdom.

There could be only one reason for that, and that was the doing of the Epsiloths.

One of the reasons why the ghastly winding forest was so dangerous was because of the existence of monsters like them, whose abilities lie in deranging one's mind. The Epsiloths were creatures that had the ability to tamper with one's mind, the yawn that they release have a powerful hypnotising effect.

The reason why Eplisolths are called the creatures of the mist is because they can only be found inhabiting places with a high density of mist. Without the protection of the mist that hides their bodies and carries their pheromone, they are pretty much defenceless and any monster can hunt them.

This floor which was filled with a dense amount of mist, was the most ideal habitat for them. What these guild masters didn't know was that the master of this dungeon, once had to go through a lot of trouble because of these creatures.

That is why, Simon went through all the trouble to go to the western region of the forest and bring them here a few days prior before the top twenty guilds arrived. He wanted to share this experience he had in the western region of the ghastly winding forest, with these guests of his.

And it had paid off, these adventurers who could be considered a powerhouse in the outside world, were held off and slowed down because of this ability.

"If it's the Epsiloths, this makes things a little troublesome. We do not have any elixirs that can counter this effect. Plus I believe the Epsiloths aren't the only danger here, we must be extra careful when exploring this floor".

Brutus suggested looking around the trees for any signs of Eplisloths. However, how could it be so easy to find them? A creature with no offensive ability, would always hide itself in the most safest place.

The other guild leaders nodded their heads and cautioned their guilds behind them. The expedition team proceeded with caution. But unfortunately, their exploration speed had reduced to a snail's pace.

Chapter 565 565- Dissension (5)

At this rate, it would take them days just to explore this floor. Finally, one of the guild leaders couldn't take this and spoke out —

"Expedition leader Brutus, we cannot go on like this. The effects of the Epsiloths will start having more influence the more we are exposed to its pheromone. If we do not hunt them fast, some of the weak levelled ones will not be able to resist it for long".

The one to speak was unexpectedly Manuel Baskerville, the guild leader of the Baskerville Guild. The man usually didn't take the initiative to provide his opinion yet today he was so proactive. Nevertheless, what he said, was entirely true.

The other guild leaders were also thinking the same. Their current pace was just too slow. It seemed like the leaders would descend into a discussion when the grey haired man wearing a mask, walked out from among the crowd.

"What the guild leader of Baskerville guild said is true, we need to hunt the Epsiloths fast. We won't be able to achieve that if we walk round and round. On top of that the mist is covering our vision, there is no way to know how big the floor is. We cannot waste time by walking in a large group like this".

Everybody fell silent when the grey haired man spoke.

"So what does Sir suggest?" Brutus asked.

"Well.. when we encounter something like this that plays with your mind in intermediate tier dungeons, we prioritise eliminating the cause before anything. It is the basic of the basic. In this case, the cause are the Epsiloths, they are creatures that hide themselves on top of a tree".

"Unless we approach a few meters around them, we won't be able to know which tree they are hiding in. So how about we do this, we will divide ourselves in ten teams with two guilds in each team working together to find the epsiloths and prioritising eliminating them". The guild leaders contemplated the suggestion in their heads.

The grey haired man was from that organisation so he clearly had more experience dealing in intermediate tier dungeons where a situation like this is nothing uncommon. The suggestion he gave also perfectly provided them with a solution.

They cannot use the same tactic they had been using on the other floors, different floors needed different tactics to tackle. Since they have to prioritise eliminating the Epsiloths in the fastest time possible, they cannot proceed to move collectively.

Dividing up into ten teams with two guilds working together in each team sounded appropriate. This way not only will they be able to move faster, one guild could also help the other in times of need.

Even if the situation between them was a little tense due to the incident that happened two days ago on the 34th floor, they weren't youngsters filled with vigour. Most of them could see the big picture and work together with the reward in mind.

Human wants were after all unlimited, the allure of the promised reward was so that even though the guilds had some distrust among each other, they were willing to join hands.

The guild leaders nodded their heads, the suggestion was accepted. The expedition force divided themselves into ten teams, with guilds that were the most familiar with each other working together.

Soon they all left in different directions to carry out their mission, eliminating the Episloths. At that moment nobody was able to see the grin on the guild leader of the Baskerville Guild as he left with the phantom light guild and disappeared into the mist.

"Master... the adventurers have split up. The Epsiloths won't be able to hold them down for long" Annette commented observing the situation.

The 40th floor was meant to slow the progress of the adventurers down and the Epsiloths were the best way to do it. However, now that the expedition force has divided themselves up, it wouldn't be long before they hunt the Epsiloths and get out of the mist. Once out, there was no other trap to stop them.

"Haha... you are wrong Annette, I set the 40th floor with the intention to split them up".

Simon laughed, he was looking at the windows in front of him with calm eyes. Everything that had occurred until now, was within his expectation. The adventurers behaved just like he wanted them to, it was as if they were a trapped mice in a maze.

They moved according to the way he wanted them to. His years of experience as a senior game developer, was coming into use to him at this moment. By putting the adventurers in the position of a player, he could somewhat predict their next move.

Based on their conduct and thinking patterns, he could even alter their response to the one that favoured him the best. The reason why he hadn't set any traps other than the mist and Epsiloths on the 40th floor was because Simon had no need to.

The most deadliest trap on the 40th floor wasn't the Epsiloths but the adventurers themselves.

"It is not so easy to remove a bud of suspicion when it grows into one's heart. These adventurers have forgotten one thing, distrust can sometimes lead to a situation far worse than one can imagine if it is not resolved immediately".

Simon who had lived a life of both human and demon can peer through the adventurer's heart. His deep philosophical words evoked various kinds of response from his subordinates.

"You say that at this rate the Epsiloths will be hunted too soon and the floor doesn't have anything to stop them? Well, wait and watch as how these adventurers turn against each other. It's about time I take the wind out of their sails".

The master of the dungeon observed the scene with a wicked smile.

Somewhere on the 40th floor, a group of around four hundred people comprising of two guilds marched forward. A dense amount of mist surrounded them and made visibility very low. Nevertheless, by using various sensory skills and marking their surrounding they were able to somewhat navigate around this place and avoid walking round and round.

"There is one Epsiloth up on that tree past those bushes" A group of assassins tasked with leading the group, reported.

"Alright, take it out" A person dressed in high quality light leather armour, commented. He had short brown hair tied into a ponytail, a frowning face, and dark circles around his eyes.

Various gears like stilettos, daggers and pouches hung on his waist belt. He looked to be around 40 years old yet his poise was as sharp as a sword. The man was none other than Donte Goodman, the guild leader of the phantom light guild.

With a few words of his, the group behind him moved and immediately took out that Epsiloth that was hidden in that tree.

KREE... a low cry sounded out and an ash white creature that looked like sloth, dropped on the ground.

"Jeez, these creatures are really a pain in the ass. They have zero offensive ability but their yawn causes such a hypnotic effect. We have already killed quite a few of them so the effect of the fog should start to dissipate a little. I wonder how the other teams are doing? Hmm?! Oi... Manuel, are you listening to me?"

Donte turned to his side and asked the man who stood equal to him. They were both guild masters of the two biggest guilds of the southern region of the kingdom hence their position was more or less the same.

"Huh? Yeah, I was listening" Manuel replied absentmindedly.

"Really? You look like you have been out of sorts since two days ago. Listen man, it was no one's fault, that incident was something that no one could have predicted. You can't let that weigh you down forever, you need to forget about it".

Donte patted Manuel's shoulder and consoled. The latter brushed his hand and started laughing all of a sudden.

"Hahaha... forget about it? Heh, it's so much easy for you to say. Your son didn't die in the mysterious ruins after all. Kuh, by the time, I came it was already too late, I couldn't even retrieve the dead body of my son. How could a person who hasn't lost anything understand me".

Manuel clutched his chest, his voice started going higher and higher at the end of his sentence.

"Listen man, I understand your feelings, we all have lost so much in that place" Donte tried to calmly resolve the situation but it was already too late.

The bud of suspicions within the guild leader of Baskerville guild had bloomed into a full born fire of hatred that wouldn't die down so easily.

Manuel who had continued to look down up until this moment finally lifted his head and gazed at Donte who immediately frowned his brows feeling the killing intent directed at him.

"Hey man calm down. There is no point delving in the past. What has occurred has occurred, you cannot go back in time and change it. You need to give a proper burial to your son and let it go".

"That's right, a burial will be necessary but it won't be for my son alone, your entire guild will be accompanying him" the moment his words fell, Manuel brought out his gauntlets and pounced towards Donte intending to slash his neck.

CLANG... a metallic noise rang out and the mist in the few meters area around them was blown away. A dagger had at some unknown point appeared in Donte's hand and stopped the blades of the gauntlet from digging into his neck.

"What are you doing?" Donte's voice was no longer as calm as before, it even had an added depth of anger in it.

"What am I doing? Something that I should have done a long time ago".

Chapter 566 566- Unease

"[Furious Will]" Manuel activated his augmentation skill, increasing his strength and agility. He turned his body around and threw a kick.

BAM... the kick connected with Donte's abdomen and sent him crashing into a tree.

"W-What's going on?" the commotion of the fight immediately alerted the group as all eyes focused on the two leaders.

"Dammit... Manuel, have you lost your mind?" Donte was absolutely furious now. This has gone beyond what he could endure.

"I have been thinking... since the moment we left the tent. Why is it that your disciple survived and my son ended up dying inside those mysterious ruins when they were in the same team? It's not like their strength is much far apart. I did my investigation and after thinking for so long I can only think of one possibility. Your disciple killed my son".

Manuel didn't stop his attack there, after sending Donte away with a kick, he followed up with mana imbued sword slashes.

SHIING... the sword slash cut the mist and the trees around cleanly before disappearing into the mist. Though the person it was meant to target easily dodged it.

[Shadow Emergence] the shadow underneath Manuel moved and Donte appeared behind him.

[Twin Slash] two daggers danced in Donte's hands and a skilful attack that utilised the blind area of one's opponent, their back to dish out an attack. The attack connected and sent Manuel forward.

"Snap out of it will ya? Do you even know what you are doing?" Donte spat in anger. The action of Manuel reflected his guild, if he didn't stop soon their two guilds would get entangled.

"Hahaha... I know what I'm doing, my mind cannot be any more clear. Donte your guild too have suffered losses inside those ruins; however, it was nothing as serious as mine where the entire team was wiped out".

"But you did lose a lot of geniuses. I was thinking why you weren't that affected, why is that you are staying silent? Until I realised that you do not care in the first place. Your guild has two worthy successors so it doesn't hurt you much if one of them dies in the dungeon. isn't that so Donte?".

"What foolish things are you saying? Have you gone insane?" Donte's eyes opened wide when he saw the bluish aura surrounding Manuel like armour.

[Mana Armour], using a powerful technique such as this, the man was completely serious.

"Guild leader.. we are coming to help" the members from the Phantom Light Guild immediately jumped into action, they were just about to interfere when..

"You fools look around you" Donte shouted.

These members turned only to realise that the adventurers of the Baskerville guild who had been travelling with them all this time were suddenly eying them with a different light. Each of the members of the Baskerville guild had drawn their weapons, some blood had already been drawn.

The members of the phantom light guild had already suffered some casualties. This caused the small sparks flying in the air between the two guilds, to turn into a blazing fire. There was no turning back now.

"You bastard do you realise what you have done?" Donte's face turned ugly. Seven of their members had died, these members were just ordinary members but a part of the primary team with great potential and strength. Losing them was like stabbing the guild itself.

Some bloodlust finally leaked out of Donte.

"Kehehe... yeah, that's the look I wanted to see. That's what I have been waiting for but this much pain isn't enough to make you realise how I'm currently feeling. Perhaps you will understand once you lose your entire team".

Manuel's eyes were no longer looking clearly, they were masked with some twisted emotions that had completely taken over his mind.

Donte did not reply, the situation was already gone beyond the point where it can be resolved by talking. If there was anything left now, that was to fight. He couldn't just allow this madman to do as he likes.

Donte took a deep breath, mana started pouring out of his body and covered him in a layer of armour just like Manuel. However, in his case, it was much more sleek and suited for agile movements.

"All members of the phantom light guild listen up, the Baskerville guild is no longer our ally. You are free to engage them in combat, do not allow them to kill you. Boone, Hassel contact the other teams, tell them that the Baskerville has gone insane".

Donte handed out one order after another. The two people named Donte and Hassel who were called out, immediately took out their transmission conch. However, when they tried to send a message it failed.

"What?! We are unable to send a message" his subordinates reported in panic.

Dante turned his eyes towards Manuel who smiling in a silly way. There was no need to even ask, the Baskerville guild had done something to jam the transmission.

"You!!"...

"Donte how long have we known each other, do you think I would do something without any preparation?" Manuel spread his hand, and took out a huge horn made of ivory from his space ring.

At that moment, a subordinate from the Baskerville guild ran up to him and reported "Guild master all preparation for the song of demise have been completed, the members are in formation".

"Good, now all that is left is for me to play the horn" Manuel laughed, his hands caressing the horn.

"That is... Horn of Voranius. You even brought the treasure of your guild out?" Donte's eyes trembled when they observed the ancient looking thing that was on Manuel's hand.

"EVERYONE COVER YOUR EARS, DO NOT GROUP TOGETHER" Donte hurriedly shouted; however, before his voice could reach them, the horn was blown a deep basso profundo sound rang out across the land.

The sound was so loud that it could be heard from any part of the floor.

"What's going on, what is that sound?" many teams who were busily hunting the Epsiloths, stopped their action the moment they heard the sound.

In one part of the floor, the members of the Savannah beast guild who were teamed up with the mage guild, stopped at a place to take some rest when the horn was blown. The leaders of the two guilds who had years of experience under their belt, turned their heads towards the direction of the sound, their eyes displaying their inner shock.

"That sound..." Brutus murmured.

"It should be from the Baskerville Guild's Horn of Voranius" the one to answer him was Florence, the vice guild master of the mage guild. Since Karina was leading the secondary unit, Florence was tasked with leading the primary team.

Hearing her words, Brutus recalled something that had happened on the 34th floor two days near their tent. The conversation that the guild master of the Baskerville guild had with his son.

Brutus hurriedly stood up and said, "Let's go, I have a bad feeling about this".

The mist was completely cleared for hundreds of meters of area, and the place it hid, the jungle could be clearly seen.

The 40th floor was a vast lush green jungle that spanned more than fifty kilometres. However, at this moment, a part of the jungle was no longer lush green as all the leaves had fallen off from the trees and the small plants and bushes were scattered apart.

Bodies of adventurers belonging to the phantom light guild could be seen fallen messily on the ground with their eyes rolled back inside their heads. Their bodies twitched irregularly showing that they were still alive.

The Horn of Voranius was used, and only the people remaining standing, were the people from the Baskerville guild who erected an unusual formation around them.

"Huff... Huff... the song of demise takes a lot out of the user. Dammit, my mana pool is almost empty and I'm momentarily unable to move my body" A trace of blood leaked out from his ears.

The Horn of Voranius was a double edged sword, it might be powerful but it even hurts its user.

"You bastard!!" Suddenly, a shadow appeared behind Manuel like a ghost. That figure was none other than Donte whose entire body was injured and covered in blood from taking the full brunt of the song from up close.

The moment he appeared, he slashed forward with his dagger which was glowing with a devastating light. Clearly, Donte had superimposed multiple skills on top of each other. Not only that...

"Ability Conferment- [Greater Slash], [Greater Damage], [Blood Fester]... [Single Strike Death]".

Multiple abilities were also conferred on the sword. Ability Conferment is a rare ancient skill that allows one to bestow abilities to their attacks. That is to say, the [Single Strike Death] attack that Donte dished out, was not only powered by his multiple augmenting skills, but it was also bestowed multiple abilities that made the attack even more deadly.

Manuel was unable to move as a result of the backlash from using the song of demise.

"Guild master... be careful" Just when the attack was about to connect with him, he felt a fierce blow from the side that pushed him away from the trajectory of the attack.

The vice guild master of his guild, after sensing the danger had rushed towards him at full speed and pushed him away from the danger. However, in doing so it was him who was in the trajectory of the attack.

CHIII... blood sprayed, the attack [Single Strike Death] which Donte dished out with the intention of killing Manuel, easily bisected the vice guild master of the Baskerville guild in half as his body limply fell on the ground in pieces.

Chapter 567 567- Unease (2)

"Jack" Manuel called out, after rolling on the ground a few times from the force of the push, he was finally able to stop himself only to see his comrade for years dying in the hands of his enemy.

"Dammit," Manuel cursed and immediately got up from the ground. He put the Horn of Voranius back inside his space ring and faced Donte.

"I should have guessed that you wouldn't go down so easily Donte. It was my failure that caused Jack's death. If I hadn't lowered my guard at that time, this wouldn't have happened. But all is fine... they all were prepared to put their life in the line for this plan. With that said, Donte you made a huge mistake by not killing me. You will not get a second chance like this again".

Manuel spat in frustration and took out his [B] tier long sword. Mana poured out of his body and quickly covered him in a layer of mana armour. Not only that, the sword in his hand was also covered in a layer of mana that raised its lethality even higher.

Multiple defensive skills of the rare class [Armoured Gladiator] were also activated and only then did Manuel feel relieved. His caution was warranted since the man he was facing was one of the top five assassins in their entire kingdom.

Donte Goodman, the man who was called the one strike assassin. His legends and valour were widespread across the entire southern region of the kingdom as the assassin who never failed his mission.

Along with his powerful rare class [Eclipse Night Assassin] he was one of the few people who could take the spot of the top five assassins. So if he didn't take it seriously, Manuel knew that his head would surely fly today.

He gestured something with his hands to his subordinates in the distance and turned towards Donte to face him with his full power.

"What's with the gloomy face, Donte? You have just killed my second in command, you should be a little delighted" Manuel kept his eyes glued on his opponent. In a battle between powerhouses like them who stood at the peak of power in this kingdom, even a single mistake might cause them their life.

Thus even though to a third party it looked like they didn't move from their position, in reality, they had exchanged several metal moves that gauged for the weakness and opportunity in the other party's guard.

"Manuel you bastard... you will pay for what you have done. You have used the Horn of Voranius, the other guild must have also heard it and are surely on their way here. Don't think that you can continue acting like this for long".

Donte's angry words just fell when his figure disappeared and appeared beside Manuel like a ghost. The daggers on his hand danced as if they were alive and attacked his opponent unceasingly. They came from all sides and angles trying to break away the other party's guard.

CLANG... CLANG... CLANG....

However, it was either deflected by Manuel's sword, mana armour, armour or his defensive skills. The guy might not be the top warrior in their kingdom, but he was like a tank that could take thousands of attacks without budging.

Realising that it was useless chipping at the guard of his opponent like this, Donte stepped his attacks a notch up.

[Turbulent Blade Mastery]... the speed of his attacks became so fast that it became illusory. To a third person eye, it might even look like he had grown multiple more hands.

"Ahhh!!... so annoying. Just because your class is more rarer than mine, do you think you can look down on me? My Baskerville guild isn't an opponent that anybody can just step on. [Gladiator's Revolt]".

Manuel grit his teeth, activated [Gladiator's revolt] skill that pushed everything around him dozens of meters back and drastically increases his speed in exchange for a portion of his health.

With his boosted speed, it was Manuel's turn to go on the offensive. The advantage of a sword over the daggers could be seen in their exchange, every attack from Manuel needed two of Donte's daggers to deflect.

When it came to wide swings, slashing ability and reach, a sword was absolutely superior to a dagger. However, a sword needed some space and room to display its power which cannot be done if your speed is slower than your opponent's.

Skilled dagger users like Donte, knew this very well and hence never allowed the sword user to have that room. That is why, Manuel used the [Gladiator's revolt] to mount the pressure. He couldn't just sit on the defensive and allow his opponent to chip away at his defence.

But Donte was no pushover either... he immediately understood the intention of his opponent and closed that room.

"Ability conferment- [Greater Force], [Power Strike]"..

"What?! Dammit... [Mana Armament: Shield] [Gladiator's Halo]"...

"[One Stab Kill]"....

Manuel's eyes opened wide when he saw Donte actually closing the distance instead of retreating and using his ability conferment once again. Immediately, he used his mana to create a shield and activated his defensive skills.

The daggers in Donte's hands moved like two poisonous snakes before intertwining together and pouncing upon his opponent's neck.

CLANG... a loud clashing noise reverberated causing ripples to form in the air. These invisible ripples were filled with destructive energy and anything that it touched would either burst apart from within or get slashed in half like the trees around them.

Those guild members from the Baskerville guild who thought that they could help their guild master were forced to retreat after seeing that clash. If they jumped in between that fight, they would only be a dead weight.

The clash of two guild masters was in a realm of its own.

Puff... Donte spewed out a mouthful of blood. The damage from the Song of demise was greater than he thought. His internal organs was in a mess and his muscles were starting to tear, using his powerful skills at this moment only seemed to worsen his condition.

"Hehe... what's wrong Donte? That was weaker than your previous attack. Are you perhaps unable to gather your strength?" Manuel remarked with a wide smile on his face. Although he acted all unperturbed, internally he knew how close to death he was.

That attack earlier from Donte, managed to pierce through the Mana shield that he had created using mana armament, his [mana armour] and his defences. If not for the fact that he had sacrificed his left hand to deflect the attack away from his neck, he would have been done for.

Blood flowed down from his pierced hand and shoulder kicking his natural recovery skills; however, it was unable to stop the blood from flowing out and wounds from closing.

"This?!... [A] tier twin daggers Proliferate. I see, no wonder my weapon wasn't able to break past your daggers. The rank of my sword was inferior compared to yours" the rank of Manuel's sword was only [B] tier, even though it was refined till refinement level [5] in terms of pure ability, it was still inferior.

"Haha, I thought we were equal in terms of power but I guess you were always hiding your powers huh? Nevertheless, it is my victory... do you know why?" Manuel raised his hand and stopped his subordinates from getting any closer.

He kept his gaze on Donte and spoke in a deranged manner "You all, don't bother with me. I will stop the guild leader of the phantom light guild, you all use this chance to deliver their guild the final blow".

With the exception of Donte, almost all of the guild members of the phantom light guild were knocked unconscious by the Horn of Voranius. If the Baskerville guild wanted to deliver them the last blow, this was the perfect opportunity.

The members of the Baskerville guild abided by their order and turned their attention to the people that were lying on the ground in the distance. The unconscious members of the phantom light guild weren't even able to perceive how they were knocked unconscious and killed.

One by one, they died, fallen at the weapons of the people who had journeyed together with them all this while.

"YOU BASTARD!!!" seeing his guild member's chest being pierced by his opponent's weapons and magic, Donte's eyes crimson with fury. He was so enraged that all of his reasoning that kept him sane, left his side at this moment and he flew into a frenzy.

He no longer bothered with the condition of his body and activated all of his augmenting skills. [Ultra Enhanced Agility], [Ultra Enhanced Endurance], [Steadfast], [Unleash], [Eclipse Engulf]...

Donte's power had rocketed up and reached newer heights. The power of a level 617 [Eclipse Night Assassin] and the guild leader of the phantom light guild were in full display.

Facing Donte at full power, even Manuel couldn't take it easy. A shadow of concern flashed over his face and the moment he blinked his eyelids, Donte was gone.

Manuel scanned his surroundings in a hurry, his senses were at full alert prepared for any attacks from any direction yet no matter how long he stood guard, Donte never appeared. Flustered, Manuel sank into deep thought and only realised what was going on when he heard loud scream coming over from the direction where his guild members was.

"It can't be...".

Manuel turned only to see Donte massacring his guild members who were trying to kill the unconscious members of the phantom light guild. Every slash and every hack of those daggers contained 100 % of Donte's strength and fury.

Chapter 568 568- Unease (3)

Even if these people were all elite and members of the primary team of the Baskerville guild, in front of Donte who was using hundred percent of his power in every swing and attack, they might just as well be unarmed ordinary people who fell from a single strike of his dagger.

In the blink of an eye, more than twenty adventurers from the Baskerville guild had fallen prey to his attack.

Donte's daggers were about to inch closer towards one more member of the Baskerville guild and take their life, when... [Great Fury Shock]. A wild slash filled with a berserk power of a level 613 [Armoured Gladiator] came hacking down at Donte.

BOOOM... dust and rubble was lifted up for a couple of meters and a great depression formed on the ground.

Manuel landed beside his sword and looked for any signs of Donte. His attack earlier didn't connect, the opponent had utilised a strange movement skill to dodge his attacks at the last possible moment and utilising their evolved [Stealth] skill they blended with the surrounding and disappeared inside the dust.

"Dammit... Fight me Donte!!" Manuel even used his taunt skill to drive Donte's attacks on him but to no avail. the latter was too fast and out of the range of his skill

Screams of his guild members dying echoed all around Manuel and he was unable to stop him.

"If you wanna play it like that then..." His eyes turned towards the unconscious group of people lying on the floor and a crimson glow also flashed in his eyes. He was thinking about doing the same thing that Donte was doing currently.

Ignoring the guild leader and going after his members.

At this moment, the members of the phantom light guild were slowly starting to wake up and put up a fight against the guild members of the Baskerville guild.

The scene was of total pandemonium, everyone was fighting against someone, skills and magic was being shot everywhere, and spilled blood on the floor made a pool.

"What is going on?" the other teams who had arrived at the place where the scene was unfolding, couldn't comprehend what they were seeing with their own eyes.

Adventurers fighting against adventurers, there were no monsters in sight. All they could see was the bodies of people, those that were lying on the ground after being robbed of their lives and those that were still locked in a fight.

In a chaotic situation such as this, it was very hard to tell if this was the doing of any monsters or simply utter madness.

"Stop this foolishness right now!!" the grey haired man roared arriving at the scene. Following his appearance, the rest of the teams that had spread all around the floor, also gathered at this place at this time.

The words that he uttered fell on deaf ears, none of the members of the Baskerville Guild or the Phantom Light Guild showed any intention to stop. They simply kept attacking each other and shed blood.

Realising that the madness wouldn't stop, he decided to take action and jumped in between the two guild leaders who were currently locked in a life-or-death battle.

"Get out of the way"...

The two guild leaders roared, their eyes masked with hatred and insanity. It didn't look like they planned to stop their attack.

"Hmph" The grey haired man simply snorted, facing their attacks he casually raised his palms towards them and invoked two multi-tiered magic circles that flew towards the guild leaders and bound them in place.

"[Holy Bind], [Astral Prison]"...

The two guild leaders who were caught inside that magic circle, struggled to get out. But their weakened body was just too powerless against the thing that bound them. The conditions of the bodies of the two guild leaders showed how much they had driven each other to the brink of death.

Perhaps if the grey haired man didn't stop them in time, one of them or even both of them would have died from their injuries.

After stopping the two guild leaders of the Baskerville guild and the Phantom Light guild, he spread his powers and stopped the struggling members of the two guilds. The other teams also helped calm the situation by immobilising the surviving members and keeping them in check so that they do not start another fight.

All sorts of reasoning could be seen gone from inside the heads of these people by the way they were snarling and roaring when facing the other party.

"What in the world happened here?" the grey haired man asked after the situation was controlled somehow.

The other teams that have arrived at the scene earlier than him, explained what they saw but even they did not know what was the cause of that bloodbath of a fight. There was no other term to better describe this battle where more than 90% of the members of both the guilds had perished at the hands of the others.

Even now they were struggling to kill more people from the other guild. Nobody expected two guilds that came from the same region and had been in a cordial relationship for so many years to suddenly start massacring one another in the middle of the expedition.

Forget about these ordinary members, even the guild leaders of their two guilds were no different.

A gloomy atmosphere engulfed the place, the exploration had been going well up until now. Other than the time when the tertiary team made the mistake of entering a trap, things had been going well with the primary force with no casualties arriving, that was up until now.

Looking at the nauseating scene of dead bodies lying in a pool of blood with numerous cruel injuries, the other nine teams couldn't help but sigh in regret.

These adventurers that had died, were no ordinary people but the primary team of two of the top twenty guilds. They were the backbone and foundation of the guild. With them gone, it was no exaggeration to say that the Baskerville guild and the phantom light guild had lost all qualifications to call themselves a big guild and rank amongst the top twenty.

It was a loss that would be hard to offset for years to come. But the question still remained, what was the cause of this massacre?

Looking at the signs of the battle, there was no indication of the involvement of any monsters or traps. Which meant that this was all caused by the adventurers themselves.

The only ones who could give them a clear answer were the guild leaders of the two guilds. But before that, they needed to be brought back to their sane mind.

Fortunately for them, they had hunted all the Epsiloths on this floor and the effects of the mist was gone. Although they still needed to find the entrance to the next floor, it can wait given the urgency of the situation.

The grey haired man cast another magic, a pure white light dropped down on Manuel and Donte, healing their wounds and calming their frenzied mind. After a while, their grunting stopped and some lucidity could be seen appearing in their eyes.

However, the next second when the two saw each other, hatred welled up in their hearts again and they started struggling and fighting to come out of their bindings.

"You bastard"...

"Kill... Kill all of them"...

As soon as their minds became a little sane, they started throwing slang at each other. Their disgraceful behaviour was nothing like their status would suggest. Looking at them, no one would be unable to associate them with the reputable guild masters of two big guilds and not just some street thugs.

"Enough you two!! Do you not see how much trouble and damage you have caused already?" The grey haired man snapped, he flicked his finger and the both of them were separated.

"Now who is going to tell me what happened here?".

The behaviour of the members of these two guilds was clearly very unusual, it was as if they were under some mind encroachment skill. He thought that they had fallen prey to some kind of ability of a monster; however, the answer that he received betrayed all of his expectations.

"It was him, his guild and he were the ones that attacked us first. He sneaked attack me and started killing members of my guild with some stupid excuse. That fucking psycho even used his guild treasure, the horn of Voranius against us.

"How could I just watch my people get killed like that? So I killed their members before they could kill ours... haa... haa" Donte roared in resettlement like a wounded animal. His words were so shocking that they caused the others to frown their brows in consternation.

"Calm down, you are not making any sense right now. Tell us what happened after your team went towards the northwestern direction" the grey haired man questioned.

Donte aggrieved and furious at the loss, told them the whole incident and asked the grey haired man that he released him. But the grey haired man did not release him immediately and posed the same question to Manuel.

"Kuahaha" the leader of the Baskerville guild, instead of answering started cackling, his chortling soon turned into thunderous laughter as if the situation was extremely funny.

"Why did I do such a thing you ask? Isn't it obvious... it was to avenge my son. He was buried inside that mysterious ruins on the 34th floor forever and all you said was it cannot be helped. Well if you cannot help me then I will take action myself".

Chapter 569 569- Unease (4)

"But why the Phantom Light guild? The ones that are responsible for the death of your son is the dungeon and the demon who controls it" The grey haired man reasoned. The guild leaders of the other guilds also found his reasoning baffling.

"I... am punishing the ones that are responsible. Donte don't think that I don't know, before entering the mysterious ruins, your disciple and my son had a scuffle. How is it that your disciple was able to reach the central chamber while my son didn't?"

"You want me to believe that they simply disappeared inside those ruins? Like hell that could happen... it's clear that he was targeted and only the people from your guild have the reason to do so. The tertiary team of your guild was also the last one to arrive at that chamber, why is that? Kuhaha... isn't it because they were held up by the ambush they set up for my team?"

Manuel spoke with an almost maniacal smile on his face.

"Damn you fucking lunatic, I told you already that it was not my people that ambushed your guild. The disappearance behind your son is not related to us" Donte retorted back.

"Haha, as if I will believe your words. You all too... do you really think the incident on the 34th floor was simply an accident? Don't you all suspect something in your heart? Hehe, in the first place, we cannot trust each other, it was our biggest mistake to leave our backs to another guild. Sooner or later you will find out that my actions were right... hahaha".

Manuel gave a maniacal laugh. His words may be out of line, but none of these guild leaders could refute it since all of them had their own concerns inside their hearts.

Even though it was not something tangible, the link that held this expedition force together could be seen snapping at this moment.

"Enough..." the grey haired man sighed "Brutus call the secondary team, ask them to look after these people. We will proceed forward without them".

It was a pain to get involved in the muddy waters of the top guilds of the kingdom. The grey haired man believed it was better to leave these people here than to take them along in this expedition forward.

It was still unknown how many floors and dangers lay ahead of them thus leaving them here so that they do not start another trouble was the best choice. or so he thought at that moment.

Inside the main hall of the white palace. Everyone was looking at Simon in shocked silence. That action of his that manipulated the minds of the people without even lifting a finger was downright... "demonic".

Well, he was a demon so Simon took it more like a compliment.

"No wonder you didn't place any predatory monster on that floor. You were waiting for them to turn against each other, weren't you? This is also why you asked the Ogoraths to bring back all those armours and weapons belonging to those people right?" Irene muttered analysing Simon's action.

It was just as she had said, after the Ogoraths destroyed the tertiary teams of Baskerville guild and a few other guilds, they brought back their gears and didn't leave any evidence for the primary team to find making it look like they had disappeared.

A dungeon can only absorb the bodies of the adventurers, their gears and other materialistic things are left behind and becoming the possessions of the dungeon or the other adventurers. Usually it was the adventurers who pocketed the gears of other adventurers since they were valuables after all.

So to the primary teams, the disappearance of even the gears of the Baskerville guild and a few other guilds felt completely out of place and rose many suspicions.

If they were attacked by monsters, their gears would have been left behind; however, the primary teams couldn't even find a single gear much less any survivor outside of those seven doors that could tell them what had happened there.

In the first place, the pit and the mysterious ruins were designed in a long and winding way. So even if it was the survivors of the tertiary team who were personally involved in that incident, they couldn't say with certainty that no fight occurred among the teams.

"Correct" Simon nodded his head "My intention was to create discordance within the expedition force. They might look like a solid opponent to face at a glance, but they have many weaknesses and faults that we can take leverage of. For example, their prejudice against each other and their greed. Well, it seemed that the 40th floor had worked out quite well in my favour".

Everything that he knew about the expedition force and the guilds it was comprised of, was from the time he spent at the capital and the knowledge that he gathered there. The rest was from his experience as a game developer and a human.

Just as a famous war general and strategist had once said, if you know your enemy and yourself, you need not fear the results of a thousand battles.

Simon was aware of how capable the expedition force was and knew the ability of his dungeon. Thus he wasn't very bothered by the fact that he was currently facing the strongest guilds from the kingdom of Ellesmere.

"My lord, the other teams have stopped the fighting. Should we do something about it?" Coleus asked.

"Hmm... we will do something about it, but not now. The secondary team will look after the surviving member of those guilds. For now, let us enjoy and watch how the remaining members of the primary unit fare against our other floors and traps" Simon spoke with a smile.

Of course, he wanted to see how long this superficial bond that was holding the expedition force together would last. The upcoming floors were set up in a way that would challenge their fortitude and mental strength at every turn.

Starting from the 41st floor it was all deeper floors, and the monster that spawned there were all powerful. Many of them were mutated species or monsters that were brought from the northern and the western region of the forest.

Their powers were unlike the monsters on the middle and upper floors of the dungeon. With their numbers and strength, even the powerful expedition force would suffer some casualties.

The dungeon was also no doubt suffering some loss from the monsters that were being cleared on every floor but compared to the gains he was getting every hour, it was not even worth mentioning. That is why Simon's goal from the start was to delay the expedition force for as long as he could and milk every last profit out of them before ultimately killing them.

40th floor, after taking an hour long break to recompose their minds, the expedition army started moving once again. It didn't take them long to find the entrance to the next floor and dive deeper.

The 41st floor was a huge jungle covered in mist much like the 40th floor. However, it was not inhabited by Epsiloths and the mist here did not have any properties that could mess with your senses or navigational skills.

Though that may be the case, it couldn't be said that the 41st floor was any less troublesome. Due to the existence of Trihorns, monsters that looked like lions with three flaming horns on their heads. It took the expedition force quite some effort to clear it.

Trihorns were powerful predator monsters that could be classified as Super class beasts. Although their strength was under level 400, they moved in a pride and were quite the hunters. Plus they were also very intelligent, they knew how to take advantage of their habitat and attack the adventurers when their guard was relaxed the most.

The horns of the Trihorns worked as a radar using which they communicated with each other, so in a way, the 41st floor was like an ideal environment for them where these canines could display their full abilities.

Perhaps because what Manuel said was still in their minds, many of the members of different guilds made silly mistakes that they would never commit usually. These involuntarily led to injuries and finally to a casualty.

This was the first time the primary unit of the expedition force had suffered a loss from the monsters. It is true that after becoming an elite adventurer hardly anyone died in a low ranking dungeon but there has been some precedence before.

It was quite a shock for various reasons; nevertheless, the primary unit kept moving forward. Although it was a big loss for the guild that adventurer belonged to, but ultimately an adventurer's life was full of dangers and it was not an unusual scene.

It took the expedition force more than ten hours to clear the 41st floor and descend to the next. The 42nd, 43rd and the 44th floor was similarly filled with dangerous monsters and traps but in the end, it was still cleared by the expedition force.

Nonetheless, it came for a price and that was the life of several adventurers. Due to the thing in their mind weighing them down, the group was starting to become dysfunctional and everybody could see it but no one wanted to address it. After all, it was a sensitive topic and if it was approached with carelessness, the incident that occurred on the 40th floor between the Baskerville guild and the phantom light guild might occur again.

Although it couldn't be seen at a glance, with two of the big guilds missing, the efficiency and power of the primary unit have decreased by a lot.

Chapter 570 570- The 45th Floor, The Treasure Chests And The Chaos.

The floors that should have taken the expedition force a day, ended up taking more than two days.

A temporary camp was set up near the entrance to the 45th floor. After diving for more than two days continuously, it was decided that the expedition force would take a couple of hours of break before moving forward.

Inside one of the tents that was occupied by the Sea god's trident guild. The high ranking members of the guild participating in this expedition were currently gathered inside one and were intently discussing something on a table, when the tent was opened and a person stepped in.

"Sir Dalton" the adventurers greeted.

The person that walked in, was none other than the former vice guild master of the Sea god's trident guild, Dalton Lance. Currently, he just came back after attending the leader's meeting.

"Sir Dalton, what decisions were taken during the meeting?" one of the adventurers who was a senior ranking member of the guild, asked.

"It looks like we will proceed as it is. There was a motion to have some of the members of the secondary team to join us. However, it was rejected since they would just be slowing us down instead of helping" Dalton replied finding himself a seat to sit.

"I see then when will we move?" another adventurer asked.

"The craft smiths with the secondary unit, are currently tending to our weapons. We will move as soon as they repair our weapons" ..

Fighting hordes of monsters had abused their weapons quite a bit. No matter what their rank or whatever materials they were made of, they needed to be restored a bit by the blacksmiths to work like usual.

"Understood... but sir Dalton, we have already dived more than 44 floors. How deep do you think this dungeon is?" ...

"Wasn't it supposed to be a newly emerged one? But the more we dive deeper, the bigger the floors becomes" ...

"Also, have you noticed the concentration of mana here? It is so dense that it has far outclassed the level of the capital which is sitting on top of a large mystical vein" ...

"Right, I feel like all my pores have opened and I have levelled up by three levels since descending the 40th floor. If I stay here a little longer, I think that I will level up once again" ...

The adventurers inside the tent were discussing how amazing the dungeon was and how many levels each of them had gained. Perhaps only Dalton and a few others had realised how unique the dungeon was.

According to the information he has gathered, it hasn't even been two years since the dungeon emerged. Yet in that time frame it had not only ranked up to [D] tier, but was fast approaching the level of a [C] rank.

'Has it already become a [C] rank? No, it can't be, when the rank of a dungeon increases, it causes a unique phenomenon in the outside world. According to the words of the adventurers living in the tower town, no such phenomenon was spotted.

Which means that this dungeon is still a [D] rank' Dalton wondered. His line of thought made him further believe that all of the usualness of the dungeon was related to the item that the Demon had gotten from the forbidden grounds.

"I think that we are not far... the density of mana here is proof that we are closer to the dungeon. Maybe a couple more floors before we find that demon. I hope that everybody knows what we are here for?"

"Our goal is not the forest spring spirits living here but the item that the demon possesses. While everybody is blinded by the treasure in front of them, we will swiftly hunt the demon and take that item from him. Well once we have the item in our hands, I will not stop you guys from hunting them after all, it was our guild that have discovered this news first and our guild master was the one who informed that guy about it. I'm sure he wouldn't mind if we hoarded a couple of spirit orbs" Dalton ordered.

The allure of the spirit orbs was so incredible that forget about them, even the mainland would be shaken if this news was brought to light.

How could their Sea God's trident not take a share of this big delicious pie? From the information their guild master got from the man who had discovered this secret first, there were more than a hundred spirit orbs to be harvested.

Just a single spirit orb was like an ultimate treasure that could refine and purify one's bloodline allowing them to reach heights that they could have never believed was possible in their life. Imagine hundreds of them just lying in wait inside this dungeon.

Truly, this dungeon had far more secrets than what could be seen from the surface.

On another camp, Brutus Sarge, the guild leader of the savannah beast guild flumped to his seat exhausted after coming back from the meeting.

"How was the meeting guild master?" inside, a couple of high ranking guild members were waiting for him.

"Yeah, it looks like we still have to descend a few more floors before we can conquer this dungeon. It was decided we will continue on with our current numbers, covering our ranks with members of the secondary team will only just slow us down. Everyone was on the same page when it came to finishing this expedition as fast as possible".

Brutus told them about the various decisions that were taken in that meeting in an exhausted manner. The reason for his exhaustion was none other than the meeting and the people who attended it.

All that constant argument and accusation was starting to become a huge pain to deal with. Ever since what happened on the 34th and 40th floor, the meeting was becoming more and more stifling to attend.

As the expedition leader, this annoying thing fell on his shoulders to deal with.

"Haa..." Brutus gave another sigh and downed a bottle of liquor that was set on the table. Everybody could see how exasperated he was, so they left him alone to give him some moment of silence.

As Brutus was left alone in the tent, he fell flat on his back and stared at the ceiling of the tent blankly.

"That fool... he really went and did it" it was obvious who he was calling a fool. He knew the man had something planned the moment he came to ask his son about the affairs of the mysterious ruins.

However, even he didn't think that Manuel would just straight up start a war with the phantom light guild. Because of him, the expedition force was the way it was, his words had made everyone paranoid.

"Sigh, the best thing to do in this situation would be to clear the dungeon as soon as possible".

The grey haired man had estimated that the dungeon has 50 floors or more. That is to say, they still have a lot more ways to go.

Seeing the current condition of the expedition force, Brutus was more concerned if the group would last that long. The tension among the guilds was building and after what Manuel did, it had deeply ingrained itself into everyone's mind.

Every guild was cautious against the others while they marched and did not leave their backs to the team next to them. It was as if saying they cannot trust anyone. Because of this their march had been slow and injuries and deaths appeared on every floor they descended.

If this went on for long, it wouldn't take time for that spark to develop into a wildfire that consumed all of them.

SIGH... Brutus sighed and played with the drink in his hand "Was the relationship between our top guilds really this fragile?" he questioned to seemingly no one.

He was wondering how the situation came to this; however, even he couldn't have imagined that it was all incited by the demon of this dungeon. The demon that they had underestimated, knew their guilds very well and was precisely taking advantage of that delicate balance that was holding them together.

"That aside, this dungeon is really a handful. I thought bringing the top twenty guilds to join an expedition to a low ranking dungeon was an overkill. But who would have thought even after ten days since entering the dungeon, we would still be unable to conquer it?" Brutus mused to himself.

"I guess Xandros really was right, this dungeon is really very unusual".

He recalled the words that Xandros, the vice guild leader of the tyrant mountain guild told them on the 20th floor. However, at that time all of them took his words very lightly as a result of which, the

tertiary teams of all their guilds suffered a disastrous defeat, the guilds started fighting one another and the distrust between them grew.

Even the primary unit comprised of the primary teams of all the guilds was starting to incur losses the further they went. Nevertheless, the most surprising thing about this dungeon of all was the monsters that spawned here.

Unlike the other low ranking dungeons, the monsters that could be found here are unique so much so that they could even be branded as new species. It was not just one or two, but many new species popped up the deeper the floors they went.

These unique monsters were far stronger than what could be found in any other low ranking dungeons. Brutus could proudly say that he had dived inside a lot of low ranking dungeons; however, none of the dungeons was as big, mysterious and dangerous as this one.

This dungeon was not conforming to any of the common sense and knowledge they had about the low ranking dungeons.