

D. of Pride 76

Chapter 76: Exploring the Western Region of the Forest (2)

To make his dungeon so that adventurers couldn't conquer it easily, Simon added six new floors to his dungeon in these past few days. He designed the 28th to 30th floors as forests covered with a thick mist that messed with your perception and sense of direction and at the same time made the visibility very low.

After the increase in the dungeon rank, some of the features have also improved. For example, the mist which only reduced the visibility previously, could now even disrupt skills such as mental map, sensor, pathfinder, and such to some extent.

It was not only the mist, even the traps had become more lethal and more varieties have been added. Simon could take his time and carefully set them up in places that would have the most effect.

The new floors spanned more than thirty kilometres and had some rare flowers and herbs growing on them. Though they are not that precious, their effects are still something that would entice quite a number of adventurers into harvesting them. Some of the herbs even had the effects which could cure minor injuries.

“But it will not be easy for the adventurers to just plunder them as large groups of Savage Warrior Monkeys and Chimera Bears spawned on these floors” Simon smiled wickedly his devious nature on full display.

The nature of these monsters is quite unique in that they are treehuggers (meaning someone who loves nature... an environmentalist). They would absolutely not tolerate someone harvesting the plants and herbs from their territory. They would die to defend it.

These are the monsters that would defend his dungeon. Of course, Simon made some time to research them.

From the 31st floor till the 33rd floor begins the desert area. Ores that generate intense heat called the Crimson Agate are produced under the sand to make the atmosphere similar to the actual desert. This was one of the new features after the rank up.

The dungeon is now capable of producing ores in some of the areas. Obviously, the areas in which they can be produced are few since the density of mystical energy inside his dungeon is still very low.

According to the memories that Simon inherited, the crimson agate was one of the popular items used as a heat source in the workshops for making weapons and armours in this world. Since they are not very rare, a sizeable amount of crimson agate can be mined from under the desert but the adventurers would also have to fend off the Desert Cactopus, Purple Poison Spider, and the numerous traps laid for them in the dungeon.

The main floor was shifted to the bottom as usual. After finishing his remodelling of the dungeon, Simon decided to visit the pond of serenity located behind the white palace. There he noticed the twenty saplings of the Tree of Manas that was growing quite well under the nourishment of the pond.

Though the analysis still identified them as saplings, they were already more than thirty meters in height. Their trunk was fairly wide about seven meters while branches and leaves have started to sprout from them. It hadn't been long since he planted them but their growth was quite astonishing.

Looking at their growth, Simon estimated that it wouldn't be long before they start to mature and begin condensing and accumulating the manas from the surrounding. The pond of serenity was starting to show its effects. He was quite curious to see what height they would reach and what changes they would bring to his dungeon.

Previously, he had only bought twenty seeds of the Tree of Manas from the [Shop] to look at the effects that they could bring, but if they turned out to be quite significant for the dungeon, then Simon was ready to invest quite a bit on them.

As these thoughts were running inside his mind, suddenly from the corner of his eyes, he noticed a beautiful figure quietly sitting by the shore of the lake. Her crystal blue hair, pearly white skin, and her demeanour made her seem like a fairy that had descended into the mortal world.

Her hands that seemed like they were carved from the purest of jade, was gently holding an ice lotus. Her icy appearance made the surrounding space to silently snow; nonetheless, this did not dampen her beauty but instead enhanced it a fewfold.

Simon who got mesmerized by the scene that lay in front of him, went into a daze for a few seconds before he hurriedly shook his head to snap out of it. 'So she was here huh' Simon thought as he marvelled at this picturesque scene as she silently sat by the lake.

At this moment, Irene had also sensed his presence as she turned towards him. Clearing his throat, Simon said, “Uhm I’m about to explore the forest outside the dungeon and at the same try to increase my level.”

It had been more than a week since he last went out of his dungeon. After the dungeon war, Simon was too busy with the construction and remodelling of his floors that he neglected his training and level. Now that he got a chance, he wanted to increase his strength. However, he realised that he wasn’t the only one who needed to level up.

When her beautiful phoenix eyes fell on him, Simon hurriedly tried to explain himself ” Uhm... what I mean is since you are still level 1, do you want to come too?”. She could level up plus explore the outside world and he could use this chance to see her abilities.

Irene calmly looked at Simon, her silence lasted for a while before she nodded. Seeing that she was willing, Siimon was surprised a little. “In that case, ill open a teleport gate outside the dungeon” as he said that, he quickly opened his [Main Menu] and quickly formed a teleport gate using the [Dungeon] function.

A dungeon master can easily conjure a teleport gate using the menu even without using Space magic. This function allows the dungeon master and the ones allowed to use the menu to teleport to any of the floors inside the dungeon.

Of course, the function has its disadvantages, that is you can only teleport near the vicinity of the dungeon. Once you leave the vicinity, you can no longer use the teleport function unless one learns to use Space magic, one of the four rare forms of manas.

Chapter 77: Undercurrents

The dungeon menu is meant to be used and serve inside the dungeon. hence the teleport function wouldn’t work outside the vicinity of the dungeon. However, one thing was bugging him, Simon did not know what changes had occurred to the teleport function after the dungeon menu merged with the [Main Menu].

Would the teleport work just like usual or would there be some new changes? Opening the [Main Menu], he called out to the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse who was lazing around in the forest area of the 30th before teleporting out. Feeling the breeze blowing past him, Simon felt quite relieved. Next up, he experimented with his dungeon function and quickly found out that...

“As I thought even after the merge I can only use it to teleport near the vicinity of the dungeon” Simon crossed his arms as he pondered. Suddenly, he noticed a strange thing that was he could still call out the menu even when he went a few distances away from the dungeon.

The dungeon menu was only accessible to him when he was near the vicinity of his dungeon. However, it seems like that was not the case anymore.

“It looks like after the merger, I’m able to call out the menu wherever and whenever I want” a content smile on his face. Ever since the dungeon menu merged with the [Main Menu], he was always anxious and trying to find a way to split the two, but after he found that all the functions performed as usual, he could finally put down this heavy burden from his mind.

Looking around, Simon saw the spiral tower underneath which his dungeon was located, had grown over a hundred meters tall. The spiral tower was distinctive in that it was quite wide about thirty meters and the designs and carvings on it had more impact than before.

It stood out quite a lot inside the eastern region of the forest and the mana that gathered near it was quite thicker. Simon believed that it wouldn’t be long before adventurers who dive inside the forest spot it.

As he was marvelling at the growth of his dungeon, an alluring figure donned in azure clothes came out of the gate. Her icy pupils looked around the dungeon in curiosity. Her mesmerizing jade white legs stood on top of an ice lotus that was hovering in the air. The figure was none other than Irene.

Before long another figure rushed out the gate, it was the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse. The warhorse was a [B] rank subordinate and was as sentient as a human. It had already been tamed by Irene a few days after she was summoned. It was to the point where Simon had to doubt whether the Analysis was wrong about the demonic warhorse being very difficult to tame.

Even when Irene restrained her aura, it could still feel the vast, majestic presence coming off of her. It gave a low neigh to announce his presence before flying towards Simon.

Simon made an awkward face as he saw the subdued appearance of the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse. He patted it to lift its spirit before riding on top of it. In a natural motion, he extended a hand towards Irene and was about to say something, when he realized the meaning of his action.

‘What was I trying to do?! Was I trying to make her sit behind me?!’ he thought as looked at his outstretched hand and Irene. Though the Bloodthorn Demonic Warhorse was quite big, if the both of them sat at its back, their bodies were bound to come in contact a few times.

An awkward silence descended~~~~

Irene looked at Simon and his outstretched hand. Understanding the meaning behind his action, her eyes frosted over before she turned over and swiftly flew on her ice lotus. Simon slowly pulled back his outstretched hand and gave an embarrassed laugh as he looked at the alluring back of the figure.

He hurriedly beckoned his warhorse as they dashed towards the forest after her.

Far east from the City of Mountmend, was the barony of Morgress. Sixty percent of its land borders the tall Alps of the Snow Valley located in the demon continent.

The city of Morgress deals in slave trading and lives off from its various underhanded business with the surrounding cities. The entire city was a lawless area and the streets were plagued by muggings, thefts and assaults.

Ten years ago, the guild called the Seven Swords, subjugated a newly found [D] rank dungeon which was located at the Snow valley at that time and presented the dungeon core to the kingdom of Ellesmere. The royal family thus decided to give the guild master of the Seven Swords a peerage and the surrounding lands near the Alps of the Snow Valley as a reward.

Thus, the barony of Morgress came under the rule of the Seven Swords guild.

The city of Morgress was neither big nor small and its population was around three million. Sixty percent of the population lived in the slum areas and the remaining forty percent which comprised of nobles, adventurers, and merchants lived in the white areas of the city.

The law here was quite crude as the adventurers ran rampant and the merchants would indulge in unethical tradings. Likewise, the ruling authority in the city, Baron Morgress did nothing to stop all this and made money through all these underhanded tradings.

New slaves for auction would be brought here every day. Man, women, monsters of every race would be collared and enslaved if subjugated by the adventurers of the city. Even citizens here were not spared if they failed to pay their monthly taxes.

Every day, someone from the slum would be enslaved because of accumulating too much debt from those loan sharks before being sold to the slave traders for money. A gloomy atmosphere lingered over the slum areas all around, in contrast to that, the white areas looked quite vibrant as the people went with their daily lives.

Morgress mansion, the biggest mansion that was located at the centre of the city. The mansion was quite grand with lots of guards patrolling the area, the halls were decked with various luxurious items that reflected the tastes of the person that it belonged to.

Inside a meeting room that was closer to the balcony on the second floor of the mansion, sat a group of five people. Each of them wore a light or heavy warrior outfit which was by no means ordinary and made it clear that the profession of the attendees were adventurers. Their presence was just like their weapons giving of a black-gold sheen.

At the head of the seat, sat a man wearing casual clothing. The man had a built of a warrior, a shapely brown beard, and an average-looking face. His eyes were as sharp as a tiger, and his body bore numerous scars from the numerous battles he had gone through. His presence completely shadowed all the other people inside the room and was quite tyrannic. Two women with suggestive clothing and a collar on their necks sat at each of his sides.

Chapter 78: Undercurrents (2)

The girl on the right had elf-like ears and short blonde hair, while the one on the left had cat-like ears and a furry tail, indicating that both of them were demi-humans. The Central continent was mostly populated by humans. However, there are still some clans and species of various races that can be found occasionally in the central continent.

At this moment, the hands of the man roamed freely around the bodies of the two girls, but it did not evoke any emotions from them as their eyes seem to be vacant and hollow. Just like lifeless dolls, they quietly sat beside him, the collars in their neck establish their identity as slaves.

The man fondling the bodies of the two women was none other than the lord of the mansion, Baron Morgress, and also the guild master of the Seven Swords.

At this moment a thin man with black attire and a hood covering his face stood up from his seat and gave his report. "Guild master Morgress it seems that the information provided by that man Miser was indeed real. We have found the location of the Forest Spring Spirits. From my intelligence

report, it appears that Laris and his party finally found their settlement in the Ghastly Winding Forest”. The man gave his report and looked towards Morgress who indulging in his own activities.

“They are at this moment trying to subjugate the Forest Spring Spirits, which made taking few big movements unavoidable as a result several monsters have charged out of the forest and fled towards Mountmend”. The man in the black garb finished his report and sat down on his seat.

The others seating around the table digested the information. Indecent noises sounded across the room; However, nobody paid attention to Morgress’ actions as they were already used to it.

Listening to the report from his associate Boris, Morgress stopped his philandering activities before he smirked and replied “It’s alright, that pathetic mayor of Mountmend, Alfred should clean up some of our mess. Make sure to tell them not to reveal their identities”. He disliked people such as Alfred who worked not for himself but for the people of his domain.

Morgress believed that people born with privilege should use their power for themselves. There was no meaning in helping the weak. However, Alfred didn’t seem to agree with his ideas and even rejected his proposal of slave trading in the city of Mountmend. Now when the time came to get back at him, Morgress was naturally happy.

He laughed at Alfred’s misfortune before suddenly adding “Ah, I remember you giving me a report saying that a new dungeon has emerged in the Ghastly Winding Forest?!”.

The man in the black garb who just gave the report was named Boris, he was also one of the Seven Swords of the guild. He nodded at those words and replied “That is true guild master. A month ago when Laris and his team went into the Ghastly Winding forest, they accidentally discovered a dungeon. After that news came to my ears, I dispatched some of my underlings to scout that dungeon. According to them, it was a newly emerged dungeon located at the eastern side of the forest.”

Morgress laughed in derision after hearing that it was a newly emerged dungeon, after all, not counting some of the exceptional ones, most of the new dungeons start from the lowest [E] rank. It takes years for an average dungeon to rank up, not to mention that the newly emerging ones are always hidden in places that are difficult to tread or find.

Other than some exceptional cases, the fate of the newly emerged dungeons which have been discovered too early, always ends up with getting subjugated and their dungeon cores destroyed by the adventurers.

It was nothing new to him, after all, he and his guild had similarly subjugated a newly ranked [D] tier dungeon a decade ago. It was also because they presented the remains of the destroyed dungeon core to the royalty of the kingdom of Ellesmere, that they were given this territory to reign.

Although he did not know what use the remains of a destroyed dungeon core had, it must have its usefulness for them to even bestow him a peerage and a domain. However, he was not interested in that.

Suddenly as if an idea struck him, Morgress gave a fierce smile as he asked “Which Adventurers guild did Alfred request the commission to?”.

“It was the branch guild of Sea God’s Trident” Boris replied. Right after saying that, the man frowned and took out a small shell before a serious expression descended on his face.

Seeing Boris hold a small conch, the other members seated immediately knew that the man had received a sound transmission from his underlings. But what surprised them was immediately after listening to the message, Boris’s expression became grave.

“What’s wrong?” they asked curious about the message Boris received.

“Hm? About that, a report just came in from my underlings placed in the city of Montmend that Godwin and Raven from the Sea God’s Trident arrived at the city a few days ago” Boris shared the content of the message.

“What!!!” Morgress got up from his seat as he pushed the two women away. Shock and fear that was as clear as the day was plastered on his brawny face.

Surprised by the intense reaction of their guild master, Boris and the other three seated didn’t understand why the report would evoke such emotions from their guild master. Boris hurriedly asked, “What is the matter guild master?!” he couldn’t understand why Morgress had such an intense reaction after hearing his report.

But he was a cunning man, he immediately understood the reason was because of the names of the two men he just mentioned.

To induce such reaction from Morgress who was a level 500, Grand Lightning Warrior, Boris was shocked, to say the least not to mention the other three members of the Seven Sword.

Realizing his actions, Morgress calmed his mind and sat back in his seat. But no matter how much he tried to calm his mind, the turbulent thoughts wouldn't let him settle down. "I can't believe that those two would appear in this extremely remote corner of the Kingdom of Ellesmere. Damn... why now of all times. If it goes on like this, things would become dire and my plans will all be thwarted. No... it can't be".

Chapter 79: Undercurrents (3)

Listening to their guild master blabber on, all four of them realized that the situation was not looking good. A man wearing a gaudy robe, leather armour and a wooden staff with a gem inlaid on top, couldn't help but ask "Guild master what is with these two names, why are you so afraid... I mean why are you so concerned about them?".

The man had a crafty looking face and wrinkles around his forehead. He was thinly built and his posture was a little crooked. Realising that he had made a mistake choosing his words, a droplet of sweat trickled down his face.

Boris looked at the man who asked the question, he was one of the Seven Swords, Sable the [Crimson Scorching Sage].

Morgress glared at Sable with bloodlust flooding out of his body, which put a formless pressure on all the four members present as he said "Mind your words, I'm not afraid of anyone". One could imagine the kind of presence a level 500 [Grand Lightning Warrior] had.

"Forgive me guild master, this foolish one had spoken too rashly" Sable apologised, his robe drenched with sweat. The pressure earlier was targeted towards him and bore down on him like a mountain.

The invisible pressure disappeared after a while and Morgress added "These two are very troublesome people. As you all might know that the Sea God's Trident is one of the top five guilds in the kingdom of Ellesmere. Their top-level officers are called the three tridents..." he paused here for a while before continuing "Boris are you sure that their names are Godwin and Raven? Because they are the names of two of the three tridents".

Boris gulped, his face extremely serious after he heard the question from Morgress, before replying "Yes, guild master these are precisely the names my subordinate had reported me".

Morgress made a complicated face while clenching his hands into fists “I see, then that means out of the three, two of them are present at the city of Mountmend at this moment. But for what reason?”

Listening till here, all four of them stood up from their seats as they couldn't believe what they just heard. Shock, anxiety, and even fear could be seen flashing intermittently on their faces.

The name Sea God's Trident was already quite impactful but it didn't have the power to cower them. After all, the main guild of the Sea God's Trident is located in the capital city of Ellesmere. there was no way their influence would reach here.

Not to mention that there was no other guild stronger than their Seven Sword's guild in the neighbouring cities of this remote corner. However, it was a different thing altogether when the three words 'The Three Tridents' came forward.

Just those three words were enough to keep them on edge, their face distorted with distress.

Watching the reactions of the Four of the Seven Swords, he didn't feel like he could blame them. After all, he had the exact same reaction when he heard these two names come up in the report. them reacting like that was within his expectation.

Raven one of the three tridents was rumoured to have broken through the 500 level barrier and have entered the renowned [Phantom Night Assassin] Class. Morgress himself was stuck on the level 500 barrier unable to go any higher for more than five years.

In these past years, he had come to a realisation that this was his limit and no matter how hard he tried, he wouldn't be able to break past the restraints placed on him by his bloodline.

Even Raven's class the [Phantom Night Assassin] was a fabled class of the legends, it is said that when an assassin reaches the night assassin class and gain complete mastery over their skills and weapon, they could have a glimpse of reaching an even higher class and that was the Phantom Night Assassin class.

What is a class? Just like how demon have their rank-ups, monsters have evolution. Similarly, humans have their class change. When a human increases his level and decides on the path he wants to walk or is suitable in, he/she receives a class based on their abilities.

As they gain more levels and accumulate and refine their skills, they have a chance to increase their class to a higher and stronger one. Similar to how a demon's stat and skill increases with their rank-up, class change does the same to humans.

As with all the beings living on Althaea, those who have inherited the bloodline of their ancestor strongly, have a higher chance of getting stronger, and those who did not, get stuck after reaching certain levels. This was the unwritten rule of the world.

The same applies to humans, those with a pure bloodline can attain powerful classes and increase their levels reaching a realm unimaginable to most people. And those who do not have a pure bloodline, get stuck in the same class after reaching certain levels. Just like how Morgress had reached the limits of his prowess.

Raven attaining a class that was in a completely different realm was a shocking event that shook many big names in the capital city of Ellesmere. The news quickly travelled to the other region of the kingdom and reached their city of Morgress.

Attaining a class that was inaccessible to many was a big event for the Sea God's Trident, after all, each class change drastically increases the limit and stats that one could reach. At the same time, a genius rising in their guild would make them even stronger than their competitors. Raven's talent was so high that he was quickly elevated to the ranks of the Three Tridents in his guild.

The presence of Raven in Mountmend was a big reason which made Morgress worried, but what made him alarm was the other name that came up in the report.

Godwin, a man of a much higher calibre. The guild master of the Sea God immediately recognized the hidden talent within Godwin early on when he was just a child and hurriedly recruited and trained him personally.

It was told that after only a few years of joining the guild, he became one of its powerhouses and later went on to become the vice guild master of the guild. Subsequently, after becoming the vice guild master, he raised the status of his guild to become one of the top five guilds in the entire kingdom of Ellesmere.

Chapter 80: Undercurrents (4)

Godwin was also the man that saw the potential that Raven had and scouted him early.

That is not all, a rumour came from the capital city that he carries an unusual bloodline and his talent is so great that he is expected to join the status of the Rankers after a few years.

The word 'Rankers' sounded like a heavenly bell into Morgress' ears, he could only dream about achieving such a status. But Godwin was different, he had the potential to join the Rankers, and when he does, the Sea God's Trident won't just be in the top five of the Kingdom of Ellesmere, but would become renowned across the whole central continent.

That was how much weight the word 'Ranker' carried. It symbolised strength and authority that one would wish for even in their dreams.

What is a 'Ranker'? Ranker is a title awarded by the Adventurers Guild to the top adventurers who have limitless potential and skills. The adventurers guild is the authority that monitors and regulates all the guilds across the Central continent.

Unlike the other guilds, Adventurers guild does not indulge in the same activities and is only there to monitor them. Although it does not vie for supremacy like the other guilds, its authority extends to all.

In this whole central continent, there are only a handful of adventurers who could reach the realm of Rankers. At current, there are only a little over ten thousand adventurers in the entire central continent to have achieved the title of a Ranker. And most of them are associated with the Adventurers guild.

Each of these Rankers are geniuses who have outshined various other geniuses and each and every one of them were a peerless talent. When a person is titled as a 'Ranker', they will have an unimaginable amount of authority and would also raise the status of the kingdom or empire they came from.

These Rankers are categorized in numbers, and the lesser the digit they belonged to, the mightier they were and exercised more power and authority across the central continent.

Even the king and Emperors of a kingdom have to show them adequate respect and fulfil all their needs. After all, the more rankers a kingdom or an empire had, the more militaristically powerful it would become and wouldn't have to fear the neighbouring kingdoms to move against them.

The presence of a Ranker made a huge difference in status between a kingdom that had one and a kingdom that did not. One ranker is enough to cower an entire kingdom into submission.

A Ranker in an itself was a powerful tactical weapon for each kingdom, and every kingdom would show its utmost respect and try its best to curry favour the Ranker. At the very least they would try their best not to incur the ire of the Ranker.

Their Kingdom of Ellesmere did not have a single Ranker for the past hundreds of years and was one of the bottom tier kingdoms amongst the thousands of empires in the central continent.

However, with the appearance of Godwin, the Kingdom of Ellesmere would finally be able to cast away its status as a bottom tier kingdom. One could imagine the amount of attention, the royal family of Ellesmere was giving towards the Sea God's Guild or to be more precise towards Godwin.

The arrival of such a man was by no means good news for Morgress and his guild. Especially now when he was only a few steps away from accomplishing his goals.

The atmosphere around the meeting room was very tense as all the participants had grim and anxious faces. No matter how much they tried to act calm, their wildly beating heart and the anxiousness in their eyes gave themselves away.

Morgress pondered for a while before issuing a command "Boris, I want all information regarding their objectives and reason for coming to Mountmend. You hear me? Assemble all your underlings if you must. but you must find out the reason behind their arrival here. I refuse to believe that they had found out about our plans, it can be that they have a totally different purpose for coming here".

There was no way that their plan was leaked until unless there was a spy inside their guild. Just as this thought came to his mind, Morgress looked towards the four members while squinting his eyes.

Simultaneously, the same thought ran through the heads of the other members of the Seven Swords that were seated as they hurriedly shook their heads, trying to shake off the accusation.

Boris who had a pensive look all this while felt some relief after he saw that their guild master was not doubtful of them anymore. He immediately replied "Rest assure guild master, I shall personally investigate this matter. It would be impossible to tail those two, but I think the guild members from the branch that they have in Mountmend, might have an inkling to their motive of coming here".

Just as Boris' body began blurring and melding with the surrounding, Morgess hurriedly spoke "Wait, you told me that the guild investigating the mass outbreak of monsters from the Ghastly winding Forest is the Sea God's Trident?".

Boris' body which had partially dissappeared, appeared once again "Indeed the report says that the guild issued for investigating this matter was the Sea God's Trident branch. Is something the matter guild master?".

Morgress caressed his beard for a while before saying "Tell Laris not to make any more flashy moves. If need be, he is to camp there in the forest for a few more months and send Dale's team to back them up. As for the members of the Sea God's Trident, lure them towards that newly emerged dungeon".

Boris who was quietly listening to the orders, suddenly had a crafty look in his eyes as he said "I see, the dungeon works as a perfect excuse for the displacement of the monsters in the forest. It could stall the members of the Sea God's Trident for quite a while until we finish subjugating the Forest Spring Spirit Clan. The guild master is wise"

The other three members suddenly understood what their guild master meant after Boris explained it to them. With awe in their eyes, they said "As expected of the guild master. If the guild master wants he could easily play the Sea God's Trident even without them realizing".

Another one said, "True. What top five guilds? Nothing comes close to guild master's shrewdness".