

Domain 41

Chapter 41

Ryan had to work for two hours before he could create a massive barrier of corpses on what seemed to be the final tunnel that would lead to the end of the dungeon. Even an army of goblins wouldn't be able to destroy that wall of corpses faster than Ryan could kill the goblins, and considering that there was just a small bifurcation that the goblins could use to reach him, Ryan was certain that he would obtain enough time to increase the corpses on that barrier.

"If they hurry, only three will be able to cross that bifurcation, one at a time, would be perfect, but I guess hoping for that would be too much," Ryan shrugged.

Despite being covered in blood, sweat, and dirt, Ryan felt relaxed after working hard. On his right side, there was a pile of corpses... a very scary sight, but Ryan still decided to sleep for a while. However, it looked like he wouldn't be able to rest. Suddenly the ground began to tremble, and Ryan also started to hear the sound of footsteps.

"Oh, boy..." Ryan sighed and then got up. "Why my life has to be so difficult..."

Ryan picked the first arrow and aimed at the bifurcation, it didn't take long for the pile of corpses begun to tremble as well, and soon after, the first goblins appeared in that bifurcation, but the creature became part of the barrier when an arrow pierced its head.

You obtained four coins.

Congratulations! The skill Accuracy has leveled up.

Concentration Lv 5 → Lv 6

Effect: Increases the chance of causing critical hit by one percent per level.

You obtained 01 status point.

The next goblin soon appeared, but Ryan was already five meters away from his previous position and had picked his next arrow. When the creature had passed the bifurcation, the creature also received a warm welcome and joined the barrier. Things got a bit more complicated after that since the other goblins finally noticed that there was an enemy nearby. Three goblins suddenly appeared in the bifurcation. Ryan wouldn't be able to kill those three at the same, nor did he want to do that using his crossbow. Instead of that, Ryan shot just one dart and fired Flame Arrows. The creatures began to burn quite nicely since Ryan had aimed at the clothing instead of their faces. After that, Ryan shot another Flame Arrow at the middle of the pile of corpses where he had put all the clothes he had taken off from the goblins. The flames spread easily thanks to it, and soon all the pile of corpses was burning.

"I guess this made all the traumatic work of seeing the goblins naked worthwhile..." Ryan covered his mouth for a second since he felt a short wave of dizziness. "I feel like puking just by thinking about it..."

You obtained four coins.

You obtained four coins.

You obtained four coins.

... ρ??C??(??)???

Ryan didn't know what their clothes were made of. Probably they used the hide of some monster that was weak to fire since the pile of corpses begun to burn the goblins at an astonishing pace. However, Ryan knew he couldn't rely on that... the more the goblins passed the bifurcation, the weaker the flames got. After just a few minutes, Ryan was back to his job of picking arrows from the ground and shooting at the mad goblins running toward him.

"I guess this is better than seeing dozens of them running toward me..." Ryan smirked.

He was exhausted, and if he could, Ryan would sleep on the ground, but at that moment, he was too excited to care about his tiredness. Although he was fully aware that he shouldn't feel excited in that situation, Ryan couldn't help but do so. Even though a single mistake could lead to his death, he also

could feel more alive than any moment he could think of... the moments where he triumphed over his enemies were the moments where he could feel truly alive. Ryan's mind was bordering madness, but he couldn't care less about it.

You obtained four coins.

You obtained four coins.

You obtained four coins.

...

Congratulations! The skill Precision has leveled up.

Precision Lv 2 → Lv 3

Effect: Increases the chance of causing a critical hit by one percent per level on the targets, the longer the battle lasts.

You obtained 01 status point.

Although Ryan was excited, his mind was working enough to make him understand that little by little. The goblins were getting closer. So, he put all the points he obtained in speed. Despite that, nothing changed all that much because the enemies weren't getting faster, but Ryan was getting slower, even though he wasn't using stamina to use skills. His stamina bar was full, but it wasn't working properly since his body was at the limit. That being said, only his legs were getting heavier and slower. His upper body was still working like a machine. As if every single muscle of his arms had been oiled, every single of their movements was extremely fluid and only used the necessary amount of strength. Not only that, after nocking his arrows, Ryan immediately could see the line connecting his arrows to the heads of their targets, so he didn't have to waste time aiming.

If Ryan could have recorded that scene while watching, he would have said that he had been possessed by some kind of spirit. He didn't remember a single time where he hit so many moving targets so fast.

Still, the current Ryan wasn't worried about that. He was only thinking about picking the next arrow and shooting when it was possible.

Ryan didn't know how much time had passed, but at some point, the goblins just stopped coming. He could see dozens of arrows behind him. So, he was pretty sure that some of them were still alive. He waited for a while, but no monster came, nor could he hear their approach.

“How boring...” Ryan sighed.

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The very moment Ryan relaxed, he began to feel the terrible state his body was in. Despite that, he didn't retreat. After picking a few arrows, he followed the corpse's trail, trying to see if the goblins had dropped something.

Old Might Ring

Effect: Increases the user's strength by three points.

Durability: 20/20

Old Hard Ring

Effect: Increases the user's endurance by three points.

Durability: 20/20

Old Wisdom Ring

Effect: Increases the user's intelligence by three points.

Durability: 20/20

“No luck this time again, huh...” Ryan said and then sighed. “Well, at least the goblins had some weapons so I can trade them... later...”

Ryan reached a point where keeping his eyes open was already painful, so after picking those rings and equipping them, he headed toward the entrance of the dungeon. He needed to sleep, but he couldn't do that inside a dungeon. So, he left the place, walking like a zombie.

Thanks to his appearance, Daniel and Mia opened their eyes widely when Ryan showed himself. However, he didn't even recognize them. All he could see were some dark silhouettes. Ryan headed toward the destroyed goblins' camp and then looked for something that he could use to cover himself. The first thing he found was the top of one of the jails that had been used to lock John and the others. After falling on the ground and putting that piece of wood over himself. Ryan slept like a rock.

Ryan didn't know how many hours had passed, but the very moment his consciousness begun to work properly was the moment that he woke up and got up. The memories of the previous day were still vivid in the head of the half-asleep Ryan, but then he frowned when he recalled the battle against the goblins and couldn't feel his body was itchy. His pants were a bit dirt, but he wasn't sleeping under a piece of wood, and he wasn't covered in dirt and blood. Someone had cleaned him...

“Tsk...” Ryan clicked his tongue because he could imagine how he did that. “I have to learn a skill that can let me keep myself aware of the surroundings when I sleep.”

Ryan was still in the center of the destroyed goblins' camp, but someone had built a tent over him and also made put a blanket under him. Being treated nicely like that by the ones he hated was annoying in many ways, but he couldn't complain. It was their way of repaying the favor of the previous day and for the weapons.

“You woke up sooner than I expected,” John said. “I bet you are hungry... today on the menu; we have some cold sandwiches.”

Ryan turned around and saw some sleeping tents behind him. Inside one of them, Ryan saw John and other people sitting cross-legged. Two of them were the black-haired women who had been rescued the previous day. The other was the tall guy who Ryan threatened.

“No, thanks,” Ryan said and then grabbed his backpack. “I have my own food and water.”

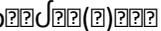
Ryan wanted to eat something warm, but he wasn’t crazy enough to make a fire in an open space like that. It was already a miracle that monsters hadn’t attacked him while he was sleeping since some colorful sleeping tents were near him, but he didn’t want to test his luck even further by making a campfire.

In any case, Ryan decided to eat only to shut up his growling stomach and not for the taste, and he did it so while he was checking his status. Even after killing hundreds of goblins, he didn’t obtain a single item that would help him considering his fighting style, so he allocated the points he obtained into luck. He didn’t know if that would increase the chance of obtaining drops, but it was the only thing he could think of to improve that situation.

Class: Hunter Lv 04 /-/-

Race: -/-/-

Rank: —

Health: 13/14 (0, 0416) 

Mana: 21/25 (0, 0416)

Stamina: 21/23 (0, 0416)

Strength: 07 (+3)

Dexterity: 33 (+14) (+12)

Speed: 24 (+4)

Intelligence: 06 (+3)

Endurance: 07 (+3)

Control: 06 (+4)

Mentality: 07

Luck: 09

Recovery: 22 (+3)

Willpower: 09

Coins: 2121

Status: 00

Skill List

Offensive Physical Skills: Power Shot Lv 05, Throw Lv 01, Dash Lv 01, Rapid Shot Lv 01,

Passive Physical Skills: Eagle Eyes Lv 06, Concentration Lv 06, Archery Lv 06, Accuracy Lv 06, Stealth Lv 03, Pain Resistance Lv 01, Perception Lv 02, Rage Lv 03, Precision Lv 02, Swordsmanship Lv 01, Alert Lv 02, Cook Lv 01, Stalk Lv 01, Art of Sniping Lv 01, Tracking Lv 01, Spearmanship Lv 01, Knife Mastery Lv 01,

Spells: Analysis Lv 01, Lurk Lv 01, Mana Transfusion Lv 02, Meditation Lv 04, Flame Arrow Lv 04,

Support Skills: Earth Resistance Lv 01, Fear Resistance Lv 02, Fire Resistance Lv 01, Heat Resistance Lv 03, Sleep Resistance Lv 02,

“Even after all that fighting, I don’t have enough coins to buy a single tome,” Ryan bit his lips, annoyed. “Magic is convenient for a reason, but the price to learn spells isn’t cheap.”

While Ryan was mumbling to himself and checking his status and skills, he felt that someone watched him. That was a bit annoying, so he turned around again and saw John, the tall and two women looked at him for some unknown reason.

“... Can I help you with something?” Ryan asked.

“It looks like you know more about what is happening,” John replied. “At least more than we do, so I would like to exchange the information we have.”

“I only know what I experienced,” Ryan shrugged. “Don’t expect to understand what is happening just by asking me. Still, I guess something like that is necessary... The others will want to hear what I know. Where are they?”

“They will return soon,” John replied. “It is their turn to train in the dungeon.”

Ryan was quite impressed that John and the other were already taking turns while training in the dungeon. However, given that they obtained a lot of weapons from the goblins the previous day, it wasn’t that unexpected.

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After ten minutes, Daniel, Mia, a red-haired guy, and two teenage girls that Ryan couldn’t remember appeared. Again, he really had a hard time controlling his feelings, but he managed to stay calm even though he saw Mia with a copy of his crossbow. It wasn’t that surprising that she had enough coins to

buy a weapon like that after the battle of the previous day, and considering that he was the one who taught her the basics of archery, it was only obvious that she would do that.

“... With the money, my parents left me, and with some savings I had, I decided to buy a hut in a mountain two hours away from here,” Ryan begun to explain the things that happened to him from there. “I needed some time alone after losing his parents... but when I reached the house yesterday morning, the dragons appeared in the sky and then that earthquake...”

Ryan told the things that he learned after that, but he decided to keep some events hidden. For example, he didn't tell them about Cole and his group, the other survivors, or even Tristan and his sister.

“So, we can get class that can make us stronger and even obtain skills by defeating the boss of the dungeons?” The tall guy asked.

“Possibly,” Ryan replied.

“... That arrow made of magic, you learned when you picked your class?” The tall guy showed a slightly annoyed expression. “Which class did you choose?”

“I wonder... which class did I pick again?” Ryan tilted his head and rubbed his chin. “I can't remember.”

“You...” The tall guy got up and didn't try to hide his anger.

“Calm down, Adrian,” Daniel said. “We are in a situation where every single bit of information about us can be used against ourselves later. It is only logical that we can't tell every single person about our skills and classes.”

“Why?” Adrian asked.

“Think about it... let's say that you choose a class that increases your health quite a bit while I choose one that increases my mana instead of health,” Daniel said. “What would happen if a group of humans attacks us? If they know about my class, they focus on killing me first and then leave you alone for a while. Not revealing this kind of information will grant us a great advantage. Eventually, we will have to

fight in a certain formation, and that will reveal a lot about us, but that can be done after surprising the possible enemies.”

“I see...” Adrian nodded.

Ryan knew about that but only answered his questions vaguely because he wanted to annoy Adrian. In any case, John and the others didn't have any valuable information... they met around noon the previous day a convoy of cars that were heading toward the opposite direction of Shreveport, and they told him that a horde of velociraptors attacked the north side of the city, but only that. p??(??)???

“Well then... I told you guys what I learned, so the conversation is over,” Ryan said. “You guys can use the dungeon as much as you want during the day, but at night, only I will use it.”

“Hah, who said that you could decide that?” Adrian frowned.

“I already decided it,” Ryan said. “Besides, you only slept soundly this night thanks to me, right? What will happen if I leave this place before you guys can obtain the necessary power to fight the goblins without taking turns? Do you think a group of nine people can kill almost one thousand goblins every day? If the goblins decided to hide again inside the dungeon, you would be able to fight against a small army of them there?”

“Ugh...” Adrian bit his lips in exasperation.

Ryan was fully aware that he was acting like an asshole, but being sociable was the least of his worries at the moment. Besides, he already did a lot of favor to them, letting them have dozens of weapons that belonged to the goblins. It was true that he had no use for them, but it didn't change the fact that they obtained useful weapons thanks to him.

“Ryan, we should work together,” Daniel said.

“You are right. We should work together,” Ryan nodded. “But do I want to work together with you? Not really.”

Daniel was left speechless after hearing that. He never imagined Ryan would say something using a mocking tune like that. Still, he couldn't just give up after hearing a single no.

"You got strong, Ryan. But this isn't a question about strength," Daniel said. "This is a matter of survival. Strength isn't anything when you need to sleep. Even if you can use magic, you won't wake up when an enemy tries to ambush you. Even if you do, you won't be able to react on time."

"What happened today won't happen again. It only happened because I didn't sleep in four days," Ryan said. "Besides, no monster would look for a human in a destroyed place like this and under a large piece of wood."

"Didn't you see the dragons? Who knows what comes next?" Daniel insisted. "Maybe you will be fine against velociraptors, goblins, slimes in a place like this. But what if all this crazy shit changes our world, maybe some worms won't mutate and become grotesque creatures, but there is a chance that there is a dungeon out there spawning giant earthworms."

"Even if that is happening at this very moment, I won't change my mind," Ryan said. "If I could choose, I would rather be being eaten alive by the equivalent of Cthulhu in this world than teaming up with you."

"Ryan, when did you become so unreasonable?" Daniel frowned. "Don't let his crazy idea of power blind your judgment!"

"Dude... are you really that interested in how many ways different ways I can say fuck off?" Ryan shrugged. "Rather than waste time doing something pointless like this, you should play with the goblins while you can. I will leave this place the exact moment I defeat the boss."

Chapter 44

Daniel still tried to convince Ryan for quite a while, but in the end, he gave up since Ryan was meditating and creating arrows. He couldn't hunt goblins while John's group was hunting, but he could always keep training.

Congratulations! The skill Meditation has leveled up.

Meditation Lv 4 → Lv 5

Effect: Restores five points of mana per minute.

You obtained 01 status point.

Congratulations! The skill Mana Transfusion has leveled up.

Mana Transfusion Lv 2 → Lv 3

Effect: Transfer three points of mana per second to objects.

Cost: 01 mana

You obtained 01 status point.

After creating one hundred arrows, Ryan marked some trees and used those marks as targets, but before doing that, he tried to transfuse his mana into those trees, but in the end, he failed.

“I guess objects that have mana aren’t the only things I can’t give my mana,” Ryan said while he was scratching the back of his head. “I guess Telekinesis doesn’t work that way...”

Ryan didn’t know how, but he wanted to learn how to produce the arrows himself. Although he could level up his Mana Transfusion just by using his bow and crossbow effects, he was quite certain that it would be much more efficient to learn the skill himself. Not to mention, he would obtain status points.

“In any case, why can we see and use the status screen, but we can’t use an inventory?” Ryan said, a bit annoyed while he was carrying his arrows. “Whoever created this system, it wanted to make humans fight, but they didn’t want to make things that convenient for us.”

Regardless, even though it was a pain in the ass, Ryan couldn't leave that area where the dungeon was since he had to kill the goblins if John's group failed while hunting. So, he would have to endure being watched by Daniel and Mia.

Before trying to test his power, Ryan decided to see how well he could fare against targets that were fifty meters away from him. Much to his surprise, ninety-five of the hundred arrows hit the targets. Ryan was satisfied, but that much wasn't enough to make him get ahead of himself because those targets weren't moving.

"Well, let's see how powerful can be my full-powered Power Shot..." Ryan said and then readied his crossbow.

With his current stamina, Ryan would be able to concentrate on the attack for seven seconds, so he did it. Unpleasant wasn't enough to describe the feeling of having stamina being drained so fast, but that had been worth the hassle. Although he only shot a simple wooden dart, his shot damaged the three quite a bit and made the branches tremble for a few seconds.

Congratulations! The skill Power Shot has leveled up.

Power Shot Lv 5 → Lv 6

Effect: Increases the dexterity temporarily by six points per second.

Cost: 3.5 Stamina per second

You obtained 01 status point.

"I see... so it is possible to train offensive skills outside combat," Ryan said, a bit surprised. "Still, even if I can, it only means that practicing against a target is more efficient."

Congratulations! The skill Rapid Shot has leveled up. $\rho_{??} \cup_{??} (??)_{??}$

Rapid Shot Lv 1 → Lv 2

Effect: You can shoot an additional arrow. The number of arrows will increase every ten levels.

Cost: 02 mana

You obtained 01 status point.

Congratulations! The skill Dash has leveled up.

Dash Lv 1 → Lv 2

Effect: Increases your speed by two points per level.

Cost: 0,6 stamina per second.

You obtained 01 status point.

In the end, Ryan spent the afternoon confirming that theory. It was a bit troublesome to spend so much energy, but since he leveled up those skills without putting his life at risk, Ryan couldn't complain.

Half an hour before sunset, Ryan decided to wash his clothes and wear the spares that he had. However, since there was no pond, river, or lake nearby, Ryan just stored his clothes inside his backpack. That would make him throw away his backpack and clothes much sooner than expected, but it couldn't be helped.

"I guess I should learn Water Arrow next..." Ryan said after he changed clothes and was walking toward the dungeon. "If I hit against a tree or rock, the water would still be usable afterward..."

It was a bit crazy, but Ryan couldn't help but think of using magic to solve that kind of miscellaneous problem. His goal was to become a magic archer, so it wasn't like that would be a total waste of time,

after all. Ryan arrived just on time to see John's group leaving the dungeon, so he headed straight to it without even stopping at their camp.

"Hey, Ryan!" Daniel shouted. "Come dine with us before you enter the dungeon."

"Fuck off..." Ryan said without raising his voice.

Ryan still had a water bottle and some cookies left to eat. It was the only things he found at Cole's house that didn't need to be cooked. However, soon he would have to worry about his meals as well. It wouldn't take long for his health to degrade if he keeps eating only cookies. Maybe he could eat monsters, but Ryan certainly didn't want to eat something humanoid, so goblins were out of the question.

"I wonder if dragons taste good..." Ryan said while he was checking the dungeon shop. "Even if the pterodactyls don't taste like chicken, I would gladly eat them if I could. They look tastier than velociraptors, at the very least."

Ryan wondered if he should buy some rings that increase his dexterity. Since he wanted to kill the boss as soon as possible, he didn't discard the idea of doing it that night. However, Ryan changed his mind when he saw the price of the next crossbow.

Iron Crossbow

Effect: Consumes five points of mana to create an iron dart. Dexterity + 8

Durability: 45/45

Price: 3500 coins

"Why is the price almost eighteen times higher than the previous one?" Ryan asked, annoyed. "Is the system trying to mess with me?"

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Ryan would be able to buy a tome with three thousand coins and thus obtain some status points, but without a new crossbow, he didn't know if he would be able to defeat the boss of the dungeon. Even if he keeps increasing his dexterity, he would need a weapon that could increase or at the very least show the same amount of power he could display, and it was clear that the wooden crossbow couldn't do it.

"The iron crossbow will be necessary..." Ryan rubbed his chin. "Not only the darts will be more durable and certainly won't break before hitting the enemy, maybe I can even reuse them."

Maybe that wasn't a good idea given that the bolts would be dirty with the blood, and the smell might lure other monsters, but considering the cost of mana, perhaps he wouldn't have any other option.

Regardless, Ryan forgot about that problem because he could hear some goblins approaching. The creatures weren't waiting anymore at the end of the dungeon; instead, they were trying to leave in groups of six, probably because they saw the mountain of corpses that Ryan left. Ryan didn't even wait for the monsters, he headed toward them, and when they finally appeared, he put three wooden bolts in their heads.

You obtained four coins.

You obtained four coins.

You obtained four coins.

...

He didn't know if it was because he put some points into luck or if it was just coincidence, but Ryan finally found an unexpected drop... a tome. After opening his eyes widely in shock, Ryan touched the tome, and then the tome disappeared, and he received a notification.

Congratulations! You have learned the skill: Herculean Strength.

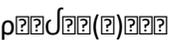
Effect: Increases your strength by one point per level temporarily.

Cost: 01 stamina per second

You obtained 01 status point.

“How unexpected, so we can learn skills like this too...” Ryan said, visibly surprised. “Well, even though this skill won’t help me all that much for the time being, it will eventually.”

In any case, that skill finally made Ryan recall that he forgot to learn martial art skills. After ten minutes, Ryan found another group of six goblins, and he decided to leave one half-dead to use as a guinea pig. At first, he hesitated in doing that, but when he recalled those creatures did the same to John and the other prisoners, his hesitation disappeared.

You obtained four coins. 

Congratulations! You have learned the skill: Martial Arts.

Effect: Increases damage when attacking by using kicks and punches by one percent per level.

You obtained 01 status point.

Ryan hoped to learn that skill soon, but he only learned when the goblins died of blood loss. It was the result of him hitting the goblin’s limbs with his bolts... Ryan once more understood that he could learn some skills after a fight. Regardless, even though Ryan tried some karate, Muay Thai, and judo moves, he only learned that skill.

“I guess it would be weird if the system could recognize every single martial art as a different skill,” Ryan nodded to himself. “In any case, maybe I should keep doing this...”

Although Ryan could defeat six goblins pretty fast, he had no intention of challenging the boss for the time being. He was heading to the end of the dungeon just to take a peek, after all. Regardless, since he

didn't know what the boss might do if the creature hears another goblin screaming, Ryan decided to begin his experiments near the dungeon's entrance.

After immobilizing the limbs of another goblin, Ryan began to train his Spearmanship and Knife Mastery. However, in the end, Ryan gave up after a single minute... trying to train his skills against a monster that couldn't defend itself was no different than torture. Although the goblins were vicious little devils, Ryan didn't have the stomach to do the same thing as them... not yet, anyway.

Ryan couldn't care less about their opinions, but John, Daniel, and Mia managed to hear the grunts and the screams of the goblins. They could easily imagine what Ryan was doing, so they also felt shivers. Still, they sighed in relief when the sound stopped because that was the sign that Ryan didn't lose his head.

"I guess I still need to improve my mindset..." Ryan massaged his eyebrows. "We are at war, monsters won't hesitate in torturing us, so I can't afford to show mercy... That is easier said than done."

Hunting animals was easy since he would do so for their meat and hide, even though he lived in times where he didn't need to hunt... Regardless, such thoughts disappeared when Ryan finally arrived at the area where he had killed the last goblin... because he didn't find anything there.

"Did John and the others get rid of the bodies?" Ryan frowned. "They didn't mention that... it is also weird that I can't see any sign of blood."

It was weird, but it looked like the goblins' corpses just vanished in the air... In any case, given the recent events, Ryan wouldn't get surprised if their bodies had turned into particles of light. However, if that happened, why didn't it happen when he was nearby?

Ryan sighed because he was forced to stop his thoughts, thanks to the appearance of another group of goblins. Fortunately, their arrival gave Ryan another idea. Ryan killed four of them and then decided to fight with his bare hands against the last goblin. That creature didn't have weapons, so it would be the perfect test subject for Ryan.

As expected, Ryan hesitated to punch the goblin's face since the creature could try to bite him. However, even though his strength wasn't impressive and Herculean Strength was at a low-level, Ryan was still heavier, and he had the advantage against the short goblins.

“Just to be safe... I should always hit their chins first before going for the kill,” Ryan muttered. “After shaking their brain, it will be safer for me to fight those vicious bastards.”

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Ryan’s plan worked even more than expected. Although he couldn’t cause much damage, punching the monsters’ chins made them turn into sandbags. They didn’t have experience in enduring damage, so it was only obvious that something like that would happen.

Congratulations! The skill Herculean Strength has leveled up.

Herculean Strength Lv 1 → Lv 2

Effect: Increases your strength by one point per level temporarily.

Cost: 01 stamina per second

You obtained 01 status point.

Congratulations! The skill Martial Arts has leveled up.

Martial Arts Lv 1 → Lv 2

Effect: Increases damage when attacking by using kicks and punches by one percent per level.

You obtained 01 status point.

Ryan had to do that more than a few times to level up the skills... Still, giving that it wasn’t his area of expertise, he felt thankful for the level-ups. However, he would have to take a break because he finally found the end of the dungeon. As expected, the last part of the dungeon was very similar to the area where Ryan fought the boss slime. The ceiling was twenty meters above the ground, and even though

the space was round, it was exactly one hundred meters long in all directions. Ryan also found a treasure box, a purple crystal, and a big goblin in front of it.

“Is that a hobgoblin?” Ryan frowned.

Ryan knew that goblins could evolve into other species that weren’t green, but he didn’t expect to see red blood-like goblin from up close. All the goblins Ryan found so far were bald and didn’t have any armor, but that one was wearing a chainmail and even had a round iron shield. He also had long black hair. As if that wasn’t enough to make the creature look terrifying, the monster was sitting cross-legged as if it was waiting for something. A long single-edged silver sword was resting on his legs, and that one looked leagues above any weapon Ryan had seen so far.

“This will be hard. Not even iron bolts will pierce his skin with ease,” Ryan bit his lips. “If I focus too much on attacking his head, he will always protect it with his shield.”

Maybe a full-powered Power Shot would do the trick if Ryan uses an iron crossbow, but then again, that would leave him vulnerable. The hobgoblin looked physically fit, so Ryan could easily see him running at a speed that would give Ryan a lot of trouble. A single mistake would cost Ryan his neck, and in the worst-case scenario, he would get split in half from head to toe. For the good or the worst, Ryan had a vivid imagination.

“Well... I have to buy the crossbow anyway, and I will only have enough coins a few hours before sunrise,” Ryan said while he was retreating. “I might as well try this tomorrow at night. It will be a pain to spend another day here, but it is not like I have any other choice. That asshole said that the idea of power blinded me. That isn’t true.”

Ryan didn’t know why the boss didn’t leave the area around the purple crystal when they did not even try to protect those objects properly. They were powerful enough to kill hundreds of humans in just a few minutes, so that fact only made things even more confusing. Still, it wasn’t like finding an explanation for that would solve the whole Earth’s problem, so Ryan didn’t have to think too much about it. He only had to focus on defeating the next boss and then obtaining his next class.

Since Ryan had some time between the battles, he also repeated some processes. He did level up Herculean Strength and Martial Arts. However, this time he trained other skills using the weapons the goblins left behind.

Congratulations! The skill Swordsmanship has leveled up. $\sqrt{22(2)}$

Swordsmanship Lv 1 → Lv 2

Effect: Increases damage when using swords by one percent per level.

You obtained 01 status point.

Congratulations! The skill Knife Mastery has leveled up.

Knife Mastery Lv 1 → Lv 2

Effect: Increases damage when using knives by one percent per level.

You obtained 01 status point.

Congratulations! The skill Spearmanship has leveled up.

Spearmanship Lv 1 → Lv 2

Effect: Increases damage when using spears and lances by one percent per level.

You obtained 01 status point.

Ryan spent the night hunting goblins while hoping that they would drop some decent item that would help him. He even increased his luck a little more in order for that to happen, but his luck wasn't that good. To make matters worse, he didn't level up the skills that would help him in that situation... he tried, but since the goblins were too weak for his weapons, it didn't work.

“I guess this is it...” Ryan said when the sun was rising. “I will have to rely on the iron crossbow and perhaps on some mana potions to kill that hobgoblin.”

Although Ryan had enough coins to buy the crossbow, he decided not to do that yet. He might have a better idea during the day, and he would need those coins if that happens. Regardless, John, Daniel, and Mia were waiting for him at the dungeon entrance, but he only nodded before leaving the place without saying a single word.

So many things happened so fast that Ryan had forgotten about the motorcycle, so he headed toward the location where he had hidden it hoping that it would still be there. Fortunately, it was... it looked like monsters were only good at tracking people and not vehicles.

“Well, if they were good at that... it would be way too weird,” Ryan shrugged, and then he began to move the motorcycle toward the dungeon.

However, Ryan suddenly stopped when he had an idea... he found a way to make the battle against the hobgoblin a little easier...

Chapter 47

After parking the motorcycle near the dungeon, Ryan returned to the high road and then followed the direction that would lead him back to Shreveport. Using the vehicle would be faster, but Ryan wanted to avoid fighting as much as possible since he wanted to return before sunset. Besides, that was the perfect moment for him to train his Stealth and Dash. By combining the two, he would be able to move without making much noise, and that kind of ability was what he needed now that the world had who knows how many dungeons spawning monsters every single minute.

Congratulations! The skill Dash has leveled up.

Dash Lv 2 → Lv 3

Effect: Increases your speed by three points per level.

Cost: 0,7 stamina per second.

You obtained 01 status point.

Congratulations! The skill Stealth has leveled up.

Stealth Lv 3 → Lv 4

Effect: Increases the chances of you causing critical damage when attacking first by one percent per level.

You obtained 01 status point.

Fortunately, Ryan managed to train his skills quite a bit in just one hour. He also found a gas station in the middle relatively small residential area a few kilometers away from Shreveport. However, something was off... Ryan couldn't tell what exactly was off, but he could feel that the place was weird. He could see some signs of blood near the houses and some... human parts lying on the ground. Again, he was having a hard time controlling his upset stomach thanks to that sight, but at the very least, Ryan couldn't see any monster nearby.

"It didn't look like things could become even worse..." Ryan muttered while looking where Shreveport was supposed to be.

Ryan couldn't see the city per se, but he could see from that distance several smoke screens rising to the skies until they all found themselves in a single place and then headed in the same direction. Ryan was fully aware of where the smoke screens were coming from. They were coming from several gas stations in the middle of the city... maybe that was why Ryan was feeling weird while observing that one.

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After a while, Ryan concluded that he was being watched. Even though some of the houses nearby had been destroyed, others looked pretty much fine and closed tight. If humans were watching him, it wasn't a problem as long as they didn't try to do anything to get his weapons. However, Ryan couldn't confirm that... He had some skills, but none of them could help him confirm that.

“Oh, well...” Ryan shrugged. “I can’t spend all day here worrying about what might happen or not.”

Gasoline doesn’t have a long shelf-life, and given that dragons were prioritizing for some reason destroying gas stations, Ryan made a mental note to use that kind of fuel as much as possible. With his current speed, he could move a little faster than most vehicles, but he couldn’t keep that speed for even a minute. So, it was only obvious that he had to rely on other vehicles.

Ryan approached the gas station and the convenience store near it. As expected, the place had been ravaged by what seemed to be giant bees. Ryan couldn’t see signs of them, but he didn’t find food either, so he concluded that it was their fault. He would have to find food and water somewhere else, and he would prioritize anything that wasn’t cookies.

“Why did they even take the water bottles and even soda?” Ryan frowned.

Based on what Ryan heard from Tristan, giant bees could eat humans. Still, they also could eat human’s food... which was very suspicious since other monsters like velociraptors and pterodactyls only hunted humans. Besides, they were focusing on storing food more than anything else.

“I don’t like this...” Ryan muttered.

Despite his worries, Ryan decided to finish the job he came to do. After collecting some plastic bottles, he filled them with gasoline. Although he couldn’t suddenly increase his Flame Arrow’s power, he could make the flames last longer by using that fuel.

Suddenly, Ryan began to hear something approaching. He looked in all directions, but he didn’t see anything. Despite that, the sound was increasing, and Ryan began to sweat cold, imagining himself have to fight an invisible enemy. However, such thoughts disappeared when Ryan saw a remote-control car crossing the street and moving toward him.

“What the hell...” Ryan frowned.

Ryan had played around with remote control cars in the past, but that one made him recall those that were used in competitions. The speed was pretty impressive, and as if that wasn’t enough, he could see four small cameras at the top of the toy. It had been custom made... and considering the four cameras, it

had been made rather recently by someone who was aware of the monsters' existence. It was only obvious that those who were still alive were aware of their existences, but...

The remote-control car stopped in front of Ryan, and then its cameras moved to the left side two times in forty-five degrees. Since before moving the second time the cameras returned to the original position, Ryan concluded that whoever was controlling that toy wanted to make Ryan follow it. However, Ryan ignored it.

“No sense in meeting a weirdo...” Ryan said.

With the world in that state, humans had to stay together whenever possible to fight the monsters. Ryan wouldn't mind helping a few other people like he helped Tristan and his sister. However, those who were too afraid to leave their homes when the world was in such a state wouldn't be of any help.

That was cruel; indeed, Ryan was fully aware of it. However, he already had decided that he wouldn't die trying to play the role of the hero and saving people. Again, he would do his best to help the human side, but only the things that he judges necessary.

“Do-don't ignore me... pipsqueak!” A kid's voice came from inside the remote-control car.

## Chapter 48

Ryan was a bit surprised when he heard the voice of a kid, but such thoughts only lasted for a fraction of a second. Without a hint of hesitation, he approached the remote-control car and stepped on it with all his might, and only stopped when the toy had been completely destroyed.

“It is too late to notice that, but I don't really like being called short...” Ryan frowned. “It is not like this is the first time this happened, but in the past, I never took that too seriously... Anyway, I guess I went too far. What kind of adult destroys a kid's toy after hearing something like that?”

In any case, it was a bit too late to worry about that. After storing the plastic bottles in his backpack, Ryan began to look for a house that had cameras and quickly found a big one. He used the tall walls of that one to observe the gas station early and he didn't notice that that place had vigilance cameras.

“Good grief... being a decent person is a massive pain in the ass,” Ryan sighed.

Despite being in what seemed to be an ordinary residential area, that house really stands out. The walls were five meters tall and Ryan could see two vigilant cameras in all corners of the terrain. There were no blind spots... not only that, but the house also had three floors and seemed pretty new. The owners were probably rich and their kid was the person who was controlling the remote-control car. Regardless, it was close to a miracle that that house hadn't been destroyed by monsters. Even though the walls were tall, Ryan was pretty sure velociraptors could find a way to climb it and there are also the pterodactyls.

“Hey, can you hear me?” Ryan said while he was waving to one of the cameras. “Those cameras look pretty expensive so they can capture sound. What do you want from me? As an apology for breaking your toy, at the very least I will hear you out.”

“... I want you to find someone for me,” A voice of a girl came out from the cameras. “... My parents... they left two days ago... and didn't return.”

Ryan massaged his eyebrows because he imagined something like that. The monsters didn't attack that house because they didn't feel any presence there. Since she was a kid, her presence was weak. In any case, Ryan didn't even have to ask, he already knew that her parents worked at Shreveport. However, he had no intention of going there and if they didn't return in two days, that means that they will never return.

“Oh man... what should I do here? Tell the inconvenient truth or lie to a kid?”

Ryan looked around and saw the marks of blood even in front of that house. He didn't have to lie because that kid had seen with her eyes what the monsters were capable of. It was unfortunate, but even kids would have to grow up a bit faster if they wanted to survive with the world in that state.

“The chances of your parents being alive are low, and you know that...” Ryan said and then sighed. “Unfortunately, I can't look for them, I don't want to die yet and unless you have lived under a rock in the last few days, then you know why I don't want to go.”

“... My parents have money... if you protect them, they will reward you...” The girl insisted after a few moments of silence.

“What am I doing here...” Ryan sighed again. “This is a waste of time... Look, your parents won’t return anytime soon. In fact, as I said, the chances are that they won’t return. I will say this just once. You won’t last long here... the dragons will eventually destroy all the big cities and then they will continue their work in areas nearby those cities. I won’t guarantee that you will find them someday, but you won’t find them by dying here... just leave a message behind and then come with me. I know some people that can look after you... while you wait for your parents.”

Class: Hunter Lv 04 /-/-

Race: -/-/-

Rank: —

Health: 13/14 (0, 05)

Mana: 21/2 (0, 05)

Stamina: 21/28 (0, 05) p??J??(?)???

Strength: 07 (+3)

Dexterity: 33 (+14) (+12)

Speed: 24 (+4)

Intelligence: 06 (+3)

Endurance: 07 (+3)

Control: 06 (+4)

Mentality: 07

Luck: 13

Recovery: 27 (+3)

Willpower: 09

Coins: 3721

Status: 00

Skill List

Offensive Physical Skills: Power Shot Lv 06, Throw Lv 01, Dash Lv 02, Rapid Shot Lv 02, Herculean Strength Lv 02,

Passive Physical Skills: Eagle Eyes Lv 06, Concentration Lv 06, Archery Lv 06, Accuracy Lv 06, Stealth Lv 03, Pain Resistance Lv 01, Perception Lv 02, Rage Lv 03, Precision Lv 03, Swordsmanship Lv 02, Alert Lv 02, Cook Lv 01, Stalk Lv 01, Art of Sniping Lv 01, Tracking Lv 01, Spearmanship Lv 02, Knife Mastery Lv 02, Martial Arts Lv 02,

Spells: Analysis Lv 01, Lurk Lv 01, Mana Transfusion Lv 03, Meditation Lv 05, Flame Arrow Lv 04,

Support Skills: Earth Resistance Lv 01, Fear Resistance Lv 02, Fire Resistance Lv 01, Heat Resistance Lv 03, Sleep Resistance Lv 02,

Ryan didn't receive an answer, but he still waited for a while checking his status and allocating the status points he obtained. In the end, after five minutes of waiting, Ryan gave up. He had hoped too much

waiting for a kid to understand the current situation. It was a pity to leave a kid to rely on her own luck, but Ryan couldn't do anything more than that. Force her to leave her house and then leave her in John's hands? That was insane...

However, the very moment Ryan began to walk, the gate of the house opened. Ryan approached but didn't see anyone there. He didn't know how the gate could work when he couldn't see any sign of electricity in that area, but those thoughts disappeared from his head when he began to hear the sound of a wheelchair coming from the house.

## Chapter 49

As if the world in that state wasn't dangerous enough for a kid, the girl also couldn't walk. Ryan looked to the sky for a moment and asked why everything was happening. Not even when his parents passed away, he asked why something like that had to happen to him.

Regardless, the girl had short blond hair, was wearing glasses, and she was pale like a ghost. Ryan didn't know why, but it looked like she didn't leave her house all that much. To confirm that, her limbs were thin, so thin that Ryan couldn't help but wonder if she had a decent meal in weeks. Her parents had a good house, and she was worried about them, so it was hard to believe that they mistreated her. Besides, she had some expensive toys. Speaking of toys, she only left the house carrying the clothes she was using, a laptop, and an exact copy of that remote-control car.

"My name is Ryan," Ryan said. "I guess I'm a former PE teacher. What is your name?"

"Zoe... I'm twelve years old," Zoe said, avoiding looking at Ryan in the eye.

"Sorry about the things that I said earlier..." Ryan sighed while he massaged his eyebrows. "Anyway, did you leave the message to your parents? I also think that you should carry with you some things more useful than that."

"I didn't leave the message because I don't know where you are taking me," Zoe said. "Besides, these can be useful. Even though you managed to avoid the monsters of the area, you didn't notice being followed by it."

Ryan frowned, he thought he felt weird because of the cameras, but it was because of those toys. Regardless, he didn't know how Zoe could use them considering the current state of the world. Still, if she could use her laptop and that remote-control car to investigate some areas without putting herself at risk, then those weren't totally useless.

"There is a dungeon a few kilometers away from here," Ryan explained. "A group of people who lived in Shreveport is currently taking refuge there... they are good people, so they can help you while you wait for your parents. There are monsters nearby, but they are strong enough to keep the monsters away from you."

"How can they protect me? How humans fight those monsters?" Zoe asked with some tears in her eyes. "If that were possible, my parents would have returned by now..."

"Well... it's complicated," Ryan scratched the back of his head since he didn't have any idea how to explain the system to a kid.

"Are they using those statuses and skills to fight monsters?" Zoe asked.

Ryan got caught off guard but soon recovered from the surprise. In the end, Zoe looked like a smart kid, so it wasn't that surprising that she could connect the dots. Besides, if he had done anything that could be recognized by the system, she probably learned a skill or two.

"We can talk while we move toward the camp..." Ryan said and then began to push the wheelchair. "Just don't scream if we find a monster, I can deal with them... probably. Anyway, did you learn any skill in the last two days?"

"Yes... I learned Craft and Blacksmith when I was creating this one," Zoe pointed at the remote-control car in her lap. "After that, building others became easier, and the skills also leveled up. Both Craft and Blacksmith are at level ten."

"Level ten?" Ryan asked, shocked.

That was surprising. At some point, Ryan decided that he would learn those, but since he was too focused on getting his next class that he totally forgot about it. Regardless, Ryan couldn't understand

how Zoe could have leveled up those skills up to level ten so fast. Based on his experience, skills leveled up faster by fighting against monsters while others were slower. Besides, it was just weird that she could learn Blacksmith by making a toy. However, soon Ryan understood the meaning behind it. It was because she did everything by herself... she even managed to make the circuits and made it work in a frequency that her laptop could control the toy.  $\rho \approx \int \rho(\rho) \rho \rho$

“I didn’t think kids learn this kind of thing at elementary schools nowadays...” Ryan frowned.

“... I didn’t learn at school,” Zoe said. “I learned by myself.”

“I guess this is even more, impressing that you have time to learn this while going to school,” Ryan said.

“... I don’t go to school,” Zoe said.

“Home-schooling, huh?” Ryan said. “I don’t have much experience as a teacher, but... oh well, if you and your parents are fine with it. Who am I to question? Anyway, haven’t you wondered how is frequently a school?”

“I... went to school, but then I stopped when I was nine,” Zoe said.

“Why?” Ryan asked.

Ryan couldn’t help but wonder if he wasn’t a hypocrite. As of late, the last thing he wanted to involve himself with other people, so it wasn’t his place to question that any further. However, even though he didn’t have much experience, he learned that some social interactions were important, even more, when someone was as young as Zoe. One had to experience many things before deciding if that was good or bad, after all. Otherwise, kids could turn into adults that would hate things without a logical reason.

“I was bullied...” Zoe replied.

Ryan sighed. No wonder Zoe barely could look at him and the eye, and she had to make some long pauses between sentences. Since she didn't mention it, she probably was alone in that house and stayed like that for the whole day while her parents worked.

"Aren't you going to ask why?" Zoe asked.

"No... I already know why," Ryan said.

"It wasn't because of my legs..." Zoe said.

"I didn't think it was because of that," Ryan frowned. "I thought it was because you were a smart kid who liked to stay alone messing with your laptop instead of playing with other kids."

"... It was because of my eyes," Zoe said and then looked at Ryan for the first time.

Zoe had light blue eyes. It was a pretty tone, so Ryan couldn't understand why she would be bullied because of that, but then he noticed that her right eye was slightly pointing toward his ear instead of his eyes.

## Chapter 50

"... Kids these days sure can notice the small differences and be cruel about them," Ryan said. "Don't worry too much about it, ok? It is barely noticeable. Besides, you are probably smart enough to understand that some kids only have bad temperaments because they are stupid."

"... I know that, but..." Zoe hesitated. "Is that something a teacher should say?"

"I'm a former teacher..." Ryan shrugged.

Ryan was a bit too sincere while talking with a kid, but in the end, that was for the best. For the time being, Zoe couldn't look after herself, but she would have to learn how to do that eventually, and she

had to start that as soon as possible. Conveniently enough, Ryan began to hear a buzz... a giant bear was approaching even though they were about to leave the residential area.

"If you didn't use any of the status points you obtained, I recommend to use them to increase your dexterity and control," Ryan said and then passed his crossbow to Zoe. "Here, use this. The kick isn't strong, but you still should use your shoulder. That will help you to stabilize your aim."

"What?" Zoe asked, dumbfounded.

"A giant bee is approaching, and you need to kill it," Ryan said. "Instead of waiting for your parents, you can also obtain the power to look for them... it will take a while, but it isn't impossible to achieve it."

Ryan knew that he was a bit irresponsible. Maybe that was an understatement. However, instead of trusting her life to the hand of strangers, it would be better for Zoe to obtain the power to defend herself. Ryan doubted that John would let her fight the goblins, but the skill might help her when the time comes.

"What are you waiting for?" Ryan asked. "Prepare yourself... if you saw the dragons, then you know that all humans must have to fight to survive from now on. Calm your breathing and cool your head. If you do so, you will be able to aim with more ease."

Suddenly the giant bee appeared from the tall grass on the tall grass on the highroad side. Zoe panicked and soon forgot about Ryan's words. Fortunately, she still grabbed the crossbow and tried to aim but failed miserably since she trembled like a leaf.

"Wh-what if I miss?" Zoe asked when she saw the monsters approaching in a straight line.

"Then shoot it again," Ryan replied.

"What if I miss again?" Zoe raised her voice.  $\rho_{??} \int_{??} (??)_{??}$

"... With that kind of attitude, there is no way that you will hit the monster," Ryan sighed. "I'm here for that. Still, I won't kill the bee until you try."

Although she was trembling like a leaf, Zoe pulled the trigger, and the wooden bolt passed two meters above the bee. The creature slowed down when it noticed that it couldn't dodge the attack but eventually accelerated again.

“See? If you aim properly, an enemy of that level won't be able to dodge the bolt,” Ryan said. “Since the target can't escape, you can defeat it... as long as you focus and don't get afraid, you can do it.”

Zoe was about to shout and ask who she would do that when the crossbow didn't have another bolt, but then suddenly she felt her energy being drained, and another wooden bolt appeared. Despite her fears, that alone made her so surprised that she forgot about the fear of death... something magical just happened in front of her, after all.

Zoe recovered from the surprise, and this time, she aimed properly without trembling all that much. However, she didn't hold her breathing, and a sudden movement of her shoulder changed the bolt's trajectory. Still... the wooden bolt still hit the right-wing of the creature. The giant bee began to fall, but the creature managed to keep itself flying.

“Finish it,” Ryan said. “It should be easier now.”

“... Isn't it enough?” Zoe gulped. “That thing can't attack us anymore.”

“...” That thing would think twice before attacking you or your parents,” Ryan said after a long sigh. “Knowing that, would you still leave that monster alone?”

Ryan's words made Zoe imagine with a scary precision the scene of her parents being killed by a giant bee... the creatures pierced their heads with their sharp sting. Even though that scene only passed inside her mind, it had been enough to make Zoe tremble even more than before.

“Cool your head and just think of this...” Ryan said. “By defeating that monster, not only will you be protecting yourself, but you will also end up protecting other humans who might have been killed by that monster. You don't want to do this; most people don't want to do it either. However, you are only pulling the trigger because you want to prevent your death... it is okay to fight for your life. Don't feel bad about this.”

Ryan felt a bit worried, wondering if he was going too far in teaching a kid how to kill monsters, but then again, it was better to teach someone how to fight than not do anything and regret later if she dies. Zoe still hesitated quite a bit since she was a good kid, but she pulled the trigger when she felt that she wouldn't miss it. The bolt pierced the chest of the bee, and eventually, the creature stopped moving.

“You can rest now... I can carry the crossbow,” Ryan said and then took back his weapon. “You need to practice a lot more, but crossbows aren't that difficult to use... as long as you have mana.”

Ryan saw Zoe getting even paler when they passed by the giant bee's corpse, but at the very least, she didn't cry. She was only scared that now she was living in a world where she had to do that, and she had no idea if her parents were still alive. Ryan was almost one hundred percent sure that they weren't, but he wouldn't be the one to crush her hopes.