

AS THE CALL WENT ON HOLD I FROWNED. SANDY MUST HAVE been told to be as accommodating as possible. Otherwise I couldn't figure out why she would be willing to attempt to schedule me right away, instead of going through the normal channels for these things. Probably a good thing, but odd nevertheless.

While waiting I got another call; it was an unknown number, but I had to assume it was from another guild. I let it go to voice mail. I decided to look up some starter guides for elemental magic. I'd need all the help I could get on that part of Golem Creation.

A few minutes later Sandy clicked on. "Can you get down here at three or four? If you can I can get someone to show you around today. Otherwise it will be a day or two."

"Sure, make it at four." I didn't know how many places I'd need to talk to, but I wanted to talk to a few more guilds before I left the apartment. It would never happen after that point. I tended to be far more distractible after leaving for the day.

After a few more pointless words exchanged, we hung up. I guessed I should probably call a few of the guilds and see what they had to say. At least look into getting a tour or two going on as well.

Right, there was a voice mail. Checking it, the call was from the "Darkest Days," a medium-sized guild. They had multiple guilds in SC but hadn't really spread out of the state. They were letting me know that they too were looking into a special package for me and were looking for any special needs I might have. They also mentioned the

need to verify my primary job. That was gonna happen a lot, wasn't it? I guessed it was an unusual situation.

Calling them back didn't reveal anything new. Darkest Days had some runes for Flesh and Bone, but apparently they didn't have a database like IAS did. So if I could get a connection to that database I would probably be better off officially anyways. However, the person I had spoken to had worked with a Necromancer before and claimed to know a few things from that situation. I had to admit, I was tempted by that prospect. Practical knowledge was just as valuable as runes, because it could be used to guide your choice in runes.

So a tour was set up, and I would be providing proof of my job yet again. This tour was on Tuesday; apparently no one could do the tour earlier than that for whatever reason. Honestly, this didn't bother me. Excuses for not giving anyone an answer right away was perfect. I had multiple tours, spread across multiple days. Of course I needed time to consider my options!

I set up a couple more, all on Monday and Tuesday, with other outfits. None of the others had any information that was useful for me as a Necromancer, however, so I wasn't too keen on them, except that all three of these minor guilds offered a cash bonus right out of the gate. That would be helpful in mitigating the time lost doing all the discovery work from scratch. But I wasn't certain I wanted to go down that path. Mainly because it would be long and tedious and things could go horribly wrong. A bad idea could cause me to lose days or weeks trying to make it work, while also limiting or even eliminating any

ability to make money. After all, injuries could still get you laid up for a time, even with access to divine healing.

My phone chirped and I got a text message from Dad. I flinched, both because he'd just texted me an article from a news site I had caught being deceptive with the truth and because I hadn't told them about my new job. Then again, I probably didn't want to tell them about that until later. If at all.

My parents would probably want me to ignore the Necromancer job to get something like Enchanter, as Mom had already suggested. But it took a long time to pick up your second job in comparison to your first. Usually a year or two under 90% of circumstances; only divine jobs were different, and you had to get a god's approval.

Plus, the current understanding was that your first, or primary job, was the most important one. This stemmed from both experimentation and the actual description of the primary job given by the system.

*< Primary Job*

*Description: This is the first job an individual discovers and is tied most closely to their being. All jobs are easier to gain as the primary job, though failure to do so does not lock out any jobs. >*

There were quite literally tens of thousands of articles debating the meaning of "tied most closely" and "being."

People had asked the gods and they had replied with “A person’s primary job is required to advance to the next tier.” It had been twenty years since the system appeared, and the gods had showed up a few years later, and still no one had figured out what was meant by that. The gods just said it didn’t really matter until people started moving in that direction.

The best guess was that second-tier individuals were needed to fight second-tier monsters. These monsters were usually found deep within the dungeons. In the Balltown dungeon, if you made it to the sea you would encounter, just off shore, monsters an order of magnitude more dangerous than anything that had come before. These were the second tier of monsters.

Tier-two monster outbreaks could only be contained, currently, by excessive artillery bombardment, usually for several weeks per outbreak. Often accompanied by bombs dropped from airplanes and rather large quantities of anti-air artillery. Turns out Ice Dragons didn’t show up on heat sensors, and quite a few stealth- or night-based tier-two fliers were invisible to radar as well.

We knew this because some of the first attempts to control dungeons included militaries attempting to wipe out all monsters within a dungeon in one go. This didn’t end well, as the tier-two monsters moved forward. Needless to say, no one lived anywhere near those dungeons.

In other words, if the assumptions were correct, and they probably weren’t, humanity was still under threat unless we could break into tier two. And most people saw that as the duty of all who have the chance. I’d feel like the

lowest kind of asshole if I didn't at least try to grow my primary job to that point.

And I swear, this has nothing to do with wanting to delve deeper into dungeons and finding out just what is down there. Or the prestige of being one of the first to get to tier two. Or the bragging rights. Or the theories about what is required that could still be proven. Or the utterly insane spells that...

For all these reasons, I just sent some generic reply and moved on with the night. My parents were pretty used to that kind of thing from me by now. Especially Dad and his weird articles. So it shouldn't arouse too much suspicion.

Hopefully I would figure something out today. That way if they caught me out I could say I had it all in hand. It wouldn't help much with the lecturing, but it would hopefully prevent them from freaking out too much.

I'd be a little early, but it was time to head out to the Sanctified Devils Guild. No need to waste time here. My apartment was on the opposite side of town from the Guild District. This was where all the dungeon diving organizations had their local headquarters.

Once it had been mostly residential, but when the Rat Way Dungeon appeared in unused sewer systems, that changed. Dungeons "announced" their presence with a wave of monsters similar to a dungeon break, and these monsters had appeared right around 6 pm. The wave killed hundreds, if not thousands, before anyone knew what was happening. At the time Balltown, far outside of the city, and the Asylum, on the edge in an abandoned building, were the only dungeons in the area, and the

current defense systems weren't in place to properly react to a new dungeon.

Needless to say, after days of fighting no one wanted to live in the region again, but it was far too close to the city to leave be. Making matters worse, the Rat Way had multiple entrances and was the second dungeon in the USA confirmed to work this way, meaning a simple wall-like fortification similar to the Asylum wasn't going to work either.

The entire section of the Columbia, several square miles at least, was closed off in walls, but they weren't sufficiently fortified to completely contain a dungeon break. As those defending the budget the city spent on the wall liked to point out, it really only existed for the city's peace of mind. And that could only happen if it looked like it would work.

The building codes for this section of the city took the risk of area-wide dungeon breaks seriously. As a result, every building, or group of buildings, had walls surrounding the entire parking lot and enough room for a helicopter to land, either in the lot or on top of the buildings.

Small guilds had firing slots in their walls and basically expected any guild members who happened to be nearby to fall back and use the fortifications to survive. Larger ones, like the Sanctified Devils, were more sophisticated, though they tended to converge on a few specific designs.

The SD's building was tall enough that the top story peeked over the forty-foot-tall walls. As I walked through the gate I could see the walls were clearly thick enough to stand on, and they had those zipper-looking pieces on top

of the walls that provide cover to the defenders and, despite being made of metal, definitely looked like medieval castle walls.

The “gate” was more like an airlock, with two gates surrounded in walls that could be used to fire down on monsters that got through one. I could see that as a useful measure if you wanted to get people through without risking monsters following them all the way into the parking lot.

It was an intimidating sight, but on the inside it became clear a lot of thought had gone into the design. The building itself was only three stories tall but sat on top of what had to be an artificial hill in the middle of a massive parking lot. The building itself looked like it could be used as a final point of defense. This was definitely designed to be an evacuation zone for aerial evacuations and even a staging ground for retaliation.

The plan labeled “in case of Rat Way outbreak” relied on the hope that places like this in the region would absorb enough of the monsters to give the outer wall enough relief from all the monsters fighting various guilds and guild-related businesses to do its job. Needless to say, very few business outside of guilds and those run by former Divers were willing to build inside the wall. Even with the incentives.

I could see why people believed this would help. I had a hard time seeing this falling easily to monsters, even given the videos I’d seen of monster breaks. And if memory served, there were no flying monsters in the Rat Way. Which made the use of walls far more practical.