

## Hunter 841

### Chapter 841: Nevermore: On the Grindset

You two had a lot of fun with this one, huh? the Viper commented as he watched Jake perform Courier Job after Courier Job. Despite it not being outright confirmed yet, he had the strong impression that both Minaga and the Wyrmgod had been heavily involved with this particular Challenge Dungeon.

Fun? Do you have any idea how much work it was? Minaga said with a sigh. Out of every Challenge Dungeon, this one took by far the longest. Well, besides the Test of Character, but I wasn't much involved with that, so it doesn't count.

I take it Nevermore itself also got quite involved with the balancing? Vilastromoz further inquired.

The sheer complexity of having so many starting points, all the quest paths, and keeping it all dynamic and adapting to the Nevermore Attendee required far more work than initially estimated. The original plan was to have this Challenge Dungeon ready last era, but we had to delay it primarily due to Nevermore and the system not accepting the balancing, the Wyrmgod explained; many gods who were capable of listening in very interested in getting some insights into the World Wonder.

Not certain I would call this balanced, the Blightfather decided to chime in. Seeing Azal also doing the Challenge Dungeon pretty much confirmed the lack of critical thinking from many of the characters. They are too trusting and, in certain cases, either too easily fooled, while in other instances, getting any kind of advantage is borderline impossible.

We are well aware, the Wyrmgod sighed. However, it was necessary to do it like this. If we tried to adhere to realism too much, the time required to unlock any high-level quest path would simply take far too long, so we had to tweak the logic of the world quite a lot. With the aim of the Challenge Dungeon taking around two years on average for the high-performers, this is the solution we settled on.

Also, you cannot argue that some individuals aren't simply this trusting, even among the higher grades. People can get blinded by their goals and consider what they do so important and justified that they automatically assume everyone else will share their opinion, thus seeing no need to be critical. Having the ability to identify these people and distinguish them from the less fanatical is most definitely a skill worth learning,

Even so, it teaches many unrealistic lessons along with the healthy ones, the Blightfather insisted. Additionally, it makes little sense to remove all status from everyone. As a variant Risen of the highest echelon, Azal should have been recognized, yet the denizens of the Challenge Dungeon seem incapable of doing so, even daring to treat him like a lesser. It goes against their very Records to act like that.

Race isn't something that should give an advantage in this dungeon, same as Blessings, and even the status as a Bloodline Patriarch or Transcendant also won't offer any notable advantages, the Wyrmgod argued back.

Such a fundamental change to social dynamics for certain races shouldn't be taken that lightly. How would you view it if

Vilastromoz remained quiet, not really having much to add as the two Primordials discussed openly for all to hear. It was rare for such a lively discussion to appear, and while both of them went at each other, the Viper also knew both enjoyed it. As sad as it sounds, it was rare to find people even willing to argue back who wouldn't just take anything you said as gospel, so to get pushback was almost novel.

The Viper considered getting involved just for the fun of it but decided against it as the topic didn't overly interest him. The only thing he really cared about was the information that the Challenge Dungeon was new, and it being new meant one thing:

It was exploitable.

All the Challenge Dungeons had obvious exploits that got fixed with every new iteration. Minagas Labyrinth and how he improved his special mist was a prime example of this, with every one of the Challenge Dungeons having similar improvements and nerfs to certain Paths every new era. Seeing as this was the first, it meant many things had yet to be fully ironed out, as it was simply impossible to account for every Path without some live testing. The only reason the system accepted it despite the flaws that would be revealed was that every attendant who competed had the same circumstances and the same opportunities to take advantage.

As for what specific exploits were to be found well, Vilastromoz already had one minor oversight in mind. One he was certain Jake would be able to take full advantage of, even if he did so unknowingly. In fact, he had already been exploiting it despite not realizing it yet.

No one else seemed to have really noticed either, making the Viper smile to himself. This should be a good one

--

Time quickly passed as Jake was back on the job, on that grindset. The Courier Jobs were similar to the ones he had done before, but there was a slight twist. After Jake had done exactly twenty, he was contacted by the Infernal Baron, who informed him that an important job was upcoming and that Jake would need to upgrade his Medallion within three months to be able to accept it. So, he had some more pressure on him to get promoted in time alright, not really. Jake had plenty of time.

He completed the jobs incredibly quickly and efficiently, and he never once really ran into any problems. It was to the level where Jake questioned what was actually being tested, as the scams he was exposed to all seemed way too obvious to Jake.

Then again, maybe it was just because Jake had grown up on Earth where one could for some inexplicable reason sell through social media with little oversight or regulation, with every second seller just being a straight-up scammer. From that, Jake learned some basic lessons about making deals like this and was taught some damn common sense.

His number one rule was to always stick to the agreement, almost to a fault. Oh, did the client want to change the delivery location last minute? Nope, Jake would go to the original place. Someone else was sent to pick up the delivery? Not gonna happen; only the client would get it. While this did make people mad, Jake wasn't going to risk things needlessly. Sticking to just a few basic principles like this seemed to serve Jake very well, and in the instances where he did have to show some flexibility, he believed he managed well and showed proper caution.

In the end, the time limit indeed didn't prove an issue, as he, well ahead of time, got his Medallion upgraded along with yet another promotion at work.

[Courier Medallion (Rare)] A Courier Medallion belonging to an experienced Courier who is beginning to build up quite the renown. This Medallion will hold information related to jobs and can give general directions to your destination if those are provided (may not be entirely reliable). Will automatically upgrade as Courier Jobs are completed and your reputation grows.

Requirements: Soulbound

With his promotion, Jake could finally get Special Courier Job 3. As for this one well, things just liked to get more complicated, as the Duke of Flames was the first to give Jake a task.

There is a political conference taking place in the Phoenix Wing Empire. We of the Human Kingdom will naturally send a delegation. I need you to deliver something to someone I have working in an outpost in the Empire before the delegation arrives and work with my subordinate there to uncover any potential people related to this organization who may attend the conference. But for now, go to the organization and see if you can discover more and report to my subordinate once you arrive in the city of the conference. We will post an official job tomorrow morning for a Courier to deliver a package of important documents to the outpost, so make sure to accept it.

This tale has been unlawfully lifted without the author's consent. Report any appearances on Amazon.

Right after Jake had gotten this task, he naturally went straight to the elemental rights organization, which Jake had decided to rename the People for the Ethical Treatment of Elementals organization for no particular reason. PETE, for short. Yes, it was a very original name that Jake had thought up entirely on his own without any inspiration whatsoever.

Anyway, Jake naturally informed PETE of what the Duke wanted him to do, and they, of course, also had a task for him.

Some of our core members will also attend this conference, just as he suspects, and we will need you to ensure they are not discovered by the Duke of Flames. Go to the Phoenix Wing Empire as the Duke wants, and once there, make contact with one of the members and work with them to keep them safe, and while youre there, attempt to discover if the Duke has any allies within the Phoenix Wing Empire. Also, we believe the Duke may be suspecting some of the plants within his dukedom working with us. Try to find out who he suspects so we can extract them in time.

It was two tasks that werent mutually exclusive, and Jake naturally decided to kind of do both.

He kept up his act as an infinite loop agent as he made executive decisions as to what information he would share, giving just enough to keep both sides happy. PETE wanted Jake to help extract those the

Duke suspected? Alright, Jake would help the majority of them get away, not telling them that the way the Duke located them in the first place was due to Jake.

By the way, the city Jake had gone to for this conference was another mid-sized city, but one slightly larger than the one the infernal Baron had been at, showing Jake was truly moving up in the world. For this entire conference, only C-grades were present, likely because no country wanted a bunch of B-grades and above to be in their lands due to how big of a security risk it was. They would still communicate using projections, but all of the powerful people worked from home.

This second mid-sized city in the Phoenix Wing Empire differed vastly from what could be found in the Human Kingdom. The architecture was much more vertical, with large hollowed-out trees sometimes serving as buildings, with the general architecture taking heavy inspiration from nature. Population-wise, it was still a mix, but it was clear this Empire had a lot more beasts and beastfolk compared to the Human Kingdom.

What they also had were elementals in human form, all of which were more than antagonistic toward the Dukes people. They were oddly fine with Jake, even when he was with the Dukes people, showing how overpowered the status of a Courier was.

When it came to the job at hand, the entire conference was a bit of a mess, if Jake was being honest, but he did discover many exciting things he disclosed to both PETE and the dukedom, making them trust him even more than before. During the conference, he even completed four entire Side Jobs by sneaking around and discovering stuff others wanted to keep hidden oh, and one job where he had to convince a noblewoman not to get married by finding evidence that some guy was only after her because of her family. It had fuck-all to do with anything else he was doing, but Jake had done it for some bloody reason anyway.

After the conference was done, Jake remained in the Phoenix Wing Empire, with the Duke thinking he had successfully infiltrated PETE further, while PETE believed Jake was working with foreign agents of the dukedom to get them more information, both of which were one hundred percent true.

Seeing as Guilds were in every major city and that both sides said he should await the next time they needed him, Jake returned to doing regular Courier Jobs. Weeks turned to months as Jake kept completing jobs before the next Special Courier Job came in, which he also promptly completed, and through it, he finally met one of the higher-ups in PETE for the first time. It was the shadowy figure he had spoken to many times, and she turned out to be a B-grade Marquise from the Phoenix Wing Empire.

More and more snippets of information were revealed as Jake got further ammunition to use on either side, only letting a bit spill here and there to keep both happy with his work. Jake still wasn't certain what his endgame would be, but the more he learned about both sides, the less and less he liked them.

After about two months in this mid-sized city, Jake had done about one hundred jobs there, and with it came yet another promotion.

[Courier Medallion (Epic)] A Courier Medallion belonging to a highly experienced Courier with a strong reputation. This Medallion will hold information related to jobs and can give general directions to your destination if those are provided (may not be entirely reliable). Will automatically upgrade as Courier Jobs are completed and your reputation grows.

Requirements: Soulbound

Jake had now worked for several months, and even if he was rapidly getting promoted, he had yet to see a single payslip. He was definitely being exploited, even if things were a bit weird. PETE kept talking about rewarding Jake handsomely for his help, and the Duke of Flames said the same thing, but nothing ever came of it. This was despite even the Guild attendants sometimes noting how some jobs gave quite a lot! but when Jake turned in a completed job nothing.

So, yeah, Dungeon-fuckery galore. He sure as hell hoped the final reward would set things right, or he would have to sue for unpaid wages.

When Jake was done in the mid-sized city, he got a Special Courier Job to go to a large-sized one in yet another country. This job wasn't directly linked with the Duke of Flames or even PETE, but when he got to this new city, Jake discovered both had a presence there, primarily because PETE just followed the dukedom wherever they had any people.

More Courier Jobs followed as Jake worked his ass off, not even taking lunch breaks or accounting for unpaid overtime. He was definitely also breaking a lot of work safety rules with the way he did the Courier Jobs, but so far, he had luckily avoided a fine.

A few more Special Courier Jobs came in while Jake had an epic rarity Medallion, each Courier promotion taking longer than the last. Jake also kept learning more about his two biggest clients until he

finally discovered a very juicy piece of information that also kind of answered something he had been wondering about.

The Sealed Elemental Jake was meant to deliver had an elemental inside that PETE already knew about, despite Jake thinking they shouldnt be able to. This elemental was meant to be delivered to the Infernal Baron who would then send it back to his little sister to assist her in her Path. What Jake didnt know was that the one who had requested this specific elemental was the daughter of the Duke and that she had made the request at the behest of PETE.

In this large-sized city, Jake even came to meet with the girl, where she spilled her heart out about how she hated her familys Legacy and didnt want to consume elementals to progress, which was also why she was still only in early C-grade despite not even being that much younger than the Infernal Baron. Quite the plot twist that she was working with PETE, and definitely not something her family knew about.

Except, it turned out she wasnt really working with them but was just being taken advantage of. Despite her assisting them, PETE still hated her guts just because of her family and wanted her dead alongside everyone else in the dukedom. So she was pretty much just an idiot being fooled.

But wait! That wasnt actually true either! She had figured out they were trying to take advantage of her a long time ago and was now working with a third party, which was where Jake came into play as she also began to offer him jobs to destroy both the dukedom and PETE.

In another huge plot twist, the daughter of the Duke was the one who had gotten another dukedom of the Human Kingdom involved to take down the Dukedom of Flames as they called it. In the process, they also wanted to eliminate PETE using the Duke of Flames to do so, weakening the Duke of Flames in the process.

The mess had turned even messier, and Jake was smack in the middle, now effectively working for three factions at once. Was he still an infinite loop agent? Jake wasnt sure at this point in fact, he even considered if perhaps a fourth party should get involved.

Nevertheless, Jake kept chugging along, and soon, over nine months had passed since Jake entered the Challenge Dungeon. Hundreds of regular Courier Jobs had been completed, along with eleven total Special Courier Jobs, and who even knows how many Side Jobs and Special Side Jobs. The plot was also thicker than ever, with even more intrigue, Jake finally beginning to get a clear picture of everything. With all these jobs done, the Guild naturally also recognized his efforts.

[Courier Medallion (Ancient)] A Courier Medallion belonging to an extremely experienced Courier with an excellent reputation. This Medallion will hold information related to jobs and can give general directions to your destination if those are provided (may not be entirely reliable). Will automatically upgrade as Courier Jobs are completed and your reputation grows.

Requirements: Soulbound

With another upgrade under his belt, Jake got a Special Courier Mission to return to the capital of the Human Kingdom. He knew the leader of PETE an early A-grade would also be there, along with every other dukedom in the country along with the royal family. Powerful people from other factions had also snuck in, and Jake felt a final showdown would soon occur.

As for Jakes role in this final showdown well, that was yet to be decided, but considering he hated every faction he had met so far, he reckoned things were about to get even messier, and Jake would gladly be there to take advantage.

#### Chapter 842: Nevermore: A Twist to the Twist

The lines were drawn as the palace in the Human Kingdom capital rapidly filled up. The three Dukes would be in attendance, and not just with projections either, but their real selves. Borderline every noble of any influence had shown up, and when the king also entered along with his wife a mid-tier A-grade things got even more intense. Especially when the old man following behind the two of them was seen. He was slightly hunched over, and had a frizzled beard and no hair, with an overall weak-looking demeanor, but his aura told a whole other story.

Jake, who was also taking part in this party, if one can really call it that, stood on a balcony and overlooked as these people entered. His gaze temporarily landed on the Lord Protector, as he was called. While he was no Snappy, in the context of this world, he was definitely one of the strongest. A peak A-grade existence that Jake saw even the otherwise arrogant Duke of Flames approach respectfully as he bowed to the old man.

Now, while attending this party was wholly expected based on the trajectory of all the special missions he had done thus far, the way he had gotten his invite was a bit off. Not because he had gotten one but because Jake had ended up getting four separate invites. One from the Duke of Flames daughter and the dukedom she worked, with another one from PETE, a third from the Duke of Flames, and the final one from the Guild itself, which gave Jake a Special Courier Job to attend the party. It didnt specify what Jake had to do once there, just to attend it.



He wondered if the Special Courier Job was a failsafe if someone failed to get invited or if it was something everyone who had gone down this same quest path received. Then again, everything else revolving around the party was Side Jobs from all the different factions. So maybe he was meant to always get this Special Courier Job? In either case, Jake found it pretty funny getting all those invites, especially as he had to go through a complex vetting process before he got each, where every faction wanted to ensure Jake was truly on their side.

How the hell he had passed every single one of them, Jake had no idea. All of them used lie detectors, and Jake even ended up meeting the person who had killed those adventurers who had been with the scalekin mage. It was the Duchess of the dukedom that the Duke of Flames daughter had allied with, and an A-grade in her own right. She was a powerful karmic mage, and she also used her magic to scan Jake throughout their entire vetting process, and ended up walking away with the conclusion Jake didn't have any positive karmic relations with the other factions. She did point out how Jake didn't have a particularly good connection with her and her husband's dukedom either, but Jake easily excused that by saying he was being a professional and just working with them. They were still a bit suspicious, but after he passed a lie detector confirming he wasn't working for the benefit of any of the other factions, they approved him and gave him an invite.

This process was pretty much the same with all of the factions, though their means to confirm Jake was, at the very least, not working with the enemy varied a bit. Jake was honestly kind of lucky in this entire process because he could truthfully say he held no positive feelings toward any of the other factions and that he didn't work to support them. They couldn't ask if he was working with them, period, because as an infinite loop agent, he naturally was, so as long as he didn't support them, that had to be good enough, right?

Jake also came to learn that apparently, Couriers were even respected in royal courts. Alright, the low-ranked Couriers probably weren't, but Jake was considered a highly respected professional by now with lots of experience. Never mind the fact Jake hadn't even had the job for a year.

As he was standing and overlooking all the guests arriving, Jake considered what his next move would be. The king organized this party, but at the request of two of the three dukedoms because they all wanted to use it to expose their enemies. As for how they would expose them? Well, they all had the exact same plan that could be summed up in one word:

Jake.

Not only was he their star witness, but he was also the guy with all the evidence. All of them had asked him to get an ancient rarity Medallion before this meeting, as with it, his trustworthiness would be even higher. Who wouldn't give a high-ranking Courier with an impeccable track record at least some trust and hear him out?

The problem was that Jake still didn't like any of them. Exposing PETE's leader, as well as the fact they worked with another dukedom that hated the Duke of Flames, seemed like the easiest solution to causing a big conflict. Of course, he could also expose the fact that the Duke of Flames was running an illegal drug and weapon trade in collusion with an enemy country to fund his endless hunger for elementals or maybe that the daughter of the Duke of Flames liked to punish those who helped her father for fun behind his back.

PETE was the easiest to deal with. They were the weakest stand-alone faction by far, and Jake had a hard time not seeing them burn to the ground no matter what he did to expose them. He had learned that nobody, not even their allied dukedom, knew the true identity of their leader, so that was something Jake could expose to get rid of them.

However, Jake had begun to form another plan.

What if he just exposed all of them at once to the king and just sat back as he watched the world burn? What if he made some false statements to involve the third dukedom that otherwise wasn't part of anything? Or maybe even a foreign country?

As Jake was still deep in thought and saw that the final guest had just about arrived, he noticed someone walk up beside him. Jake was leaning on the railing of the balcony, and this person joined him in looking at all the esteemed guests below.

Quite the gathering, the man said with a smile.

It is indeed, Jake said as he glanced at the newcomer. He gave off the aura of an early B-grade and looked on the younger side. He had long, combed-back hair and gave off a confident demeanor, and while Jake didn't recognize him, he already knew who it was as he picked up the presence the man was disguising.

Ah there it is Jake thought to himself. He had been waiting for the final twist to reveal itself, and here it was. During all this time when Jake had worked with all of these different factions, there was one place that did know everything Jake was up to. Not his thoughts or plots, but they did know he did work for all of them at the same time.

He was naturally speaking of the Guild itself.

I heard you are quite the distinguished guest today, the man stated as Jake subtly felt the area around them shift as a sound-isolation barrier appeared without anyone around noticing. Many friends in high places.

Not sure I would call them friends, but my work indeed takes me around, and I am here for work today as well, Jake said with a shrug. I am a Courier, after all. Completing jobs is what I'm meant to be doing.

And quite a Courier you are. Within a year, you went from a total newcomer to someone so highly respected, the man said with a big smile. I even heard that you have a borderline perfect track record, never really messing up any jobs, despite what hiccups you may have encountered.

Just doing my best, Jake said as he kept leaning and looking down at the crowd while talking to the man who did the same.

That I believe the question is, what will you do now?

Jake turned and looked at the man as he answered. I don't know quite yet does the Guild Founder have any suggestions?

That's right, the plot twist was that the Guild Founder was also going to at this party and approach Jake! Had he kind of predicted this would be the case? Not fully, but he did suspect there would be one more twist, and the Guild Founder revealing himself during this party would be entirely on-brand for the Challenge Dungeon.

If you discover this narrative on Amazon, be aware that it has been stolen. Please report the violation.

However, Jake didnt want to lose his agency and momentum by having the Founder reveal himself at an inopportune time. Besides, Jake being able to recognize the S-grade despite his technique to hide who he was, even from the peak A-grade, had to impress him, right?

The Founder frowned at Jakes question. Guild Founder? I apologize if I gave you the wrong impression, but I have no idea what you are talking about.

Jake smiled a bit as he turned back to look down at the crowd, who were far too busy socializing to notice the two of them. You know, none of those people down there can recognize you, so I understand why you question how I could. It wasnt anything you messed up; I just have a little something that is also part of the reason I am a good Courier: Good intuition.

So you believe I am this Guild Founder just because of some gut feeling? the man who was totally the Founder questioned.

No, I knowyou are the Guild Founder because of my gut feeling, Jake answered in a confident tone. You have hidden your S-grade aura well, good enough to fool pretty much everyone in this world but not me.

Quite loose reasoning for such an impactful statement, the man said with a light smile, seemingly not really trying to hide who he was anymore.

My instincts are more trustworthy than anything anyone can ever tell me, Jake shot back.

In that case, what are your instincts telling you to do in this situation where you look down upon the people gathered here, knowing you hold the power to upend the entire political landscape with nothing but words? the Founder asked in a serious tone, having dropped the act.

They arent telling me to do anything, but they do make me fully aware that things are, for the lack of a better word, fucked. Powerful nobles are fighting while the uninvolved people just living in their territories suffer, and everyone is doing shit under the table, trying to get one over each other all the time, never daring to openly confront anyone, Jake said with a sigh.

The Guild Founder slowly nodded as he spoke. It is shameful, but yes, things are indeed a mess. Tell me, do you know why the Guild was initially established?

Enlighten me, Jake offered as he felt another option to resolve this entire mess of a storyline slowly materialize. He remembered the dwarf attendant in the very first Guild he ever entered telling him the Founder had made the Guild around forty thousand years ago, but never the reason, so he was also a bit interested.

Back in the day, before the Guild, all of the enlightened races were united to some extent to fight back the monster factions led by the dragon tribe. The borders were open, there was free travel and trade, and friendly meetings between monarchs were frequent. Despite the constant conflict with an enemy faction, it was a more peaceful time for the regular citizens back then, living far from the battlefield, the Founder began explaining the lore of the Guild.

It was a tough time for those of us who did live close to the frontlines, though, and I grew up right on those borders. I found out at an early age I had potential and quickly rose to power with the sole intent of finally bringing peace by defeating the Dragon King and ending the war. When I made it to S-grade, I challenged the Dragon King and managed to come out on top. The dragon tribe crumbled after that, and the monsters united under the tribe scattered, some forming their own factions that stand to this day. I genuinely believed my actions would be the end of conflict but in the world of politics, there always needs to be an enemy, it appears.

Jake nodded along. Having an enemy meant you had something to unite against. In fact, Jacobs father, Arthur, had used this strategy to gather the United Cities Alliance against Jake and those with divine factions, making a boogiemans out of them.

The once peaceful alliance between the enlightened races fractured, and the lines were drawn. Borders closed, wars began to brew, and things were looking more dire than ever. No one talked. Everyone expected others to plot against them, as they, too, were plotting against someone else. I at first tried to calm everyone, but I was treated with nothing but fear and heard nothing but false promises and platitudes. Something had to be done, and in the end, I settled on making the Guild.

You did it to create a neutral faction that could operate across borders to get people talking? Jake questioned.

Precisely, the man smiled. At least at first. The scope of the Guilds dealings only expanded from there until it became the organization you see today, but the original plan was for Couriers to be wholly

neutral parties whose primary job was to travel between countries to lessen the information gap. This did help, as some line of communication was opened up between the different factions but that was then. Things have changed yet again, and it seems like the idea of what a Courier is has faded from memory. At least what the status of a Courier used to mean.

Jake remained silent, but he was beginning to get a good idea as to where this entire thing was going, and he wasn't sure he liked it.

And you you are a prime example of this change, the Founder said with a hint of disappointment in his voice. The intent was for Couriers to remain neutral, not getting too involved in politics, but now, nearly every force with any influence actively exploits the Courier system for their own gain. They make Couriers work with them despite that being contrary to what they should be doing. I was truthfully disappointed when I looked into you. Your track record was so brilliant, your word ethic impeccable, and I believed you were one of the most promising Couriers I had ever seen yet you have chosen to work with these factions and gotten yourself so deeply embroiled in their factions, supporting them and-

Wrong on that one, Jake quickly cut him off.

Hm? the Founder exclaimed with a frown. Are you claiming you haven't completed Special Courier Jobs for these factions in droves, each Courier Job submitted to further their goals?

That isn't what you said. You said I supported them. Have I worked with them? Yes, but supporting would mean I helped them more than I hurt them, and right now, I think I'm pretty even on that one with all of them.

The frown on the Founder's brow deepened. What are you saying?

Jake turned to look at him directly again. That I don't support any of them. Also, don't get it twisted; I wasn't the one who chose to work with them. The Guild did. The Guild accepted all these Special Courier Jobs. Shit, I got involved in this entire mess because of one such job, and now here we are. Or are you going to fault me for accepting jobs offered to me?

Not gonna lie; Jake was a bit offended at what the Founder said, and he got the feeling he had to dispute it. He also just didn't like the insinuation he was allied with any of the assholes in the hall but from the looks of it, this Founder didn't believe him at all.

Have you truly deluded yourself that much, or are you simply trying to fool me for whomever you support? I know why you are here today, and I know of this internal conflict in the Human Kingdom. I also know you have come to assist one of the factions present in this hall, the Founder said, shaking his head.

Before Jake had a chance to react, the man placed a hand on Jakes shoulder. Some form of magic activated as the man infused a smidgen of power into Jakes body, as Jake felt it search for something. Even if you attempt to deceive me, I am far from new to this game. Your clear karmic connection with with

The Founder just stared at Jake for a second before he cleared his throat. He lifted his hand slightly and placed it down again as another bit of energy was infused. As I was trying to say, karma cannot be hidden even if if

His words tailed off as he stared at Jake with wide eyes. How is this possible? There is nothing whats going on?

Jake was also confused for a moment until he understood what had happened, and a lot of things suddenly fell into place. Without even thinking about it, he checked out a certain skill and there it was in the description of Shroud of the Primordial.

The karmic threads in your wake, an endless web impossible to unravel

So well it turned out that no one being able to detect his karmic connection was pretty damn good when trying to hide who he had any connections to.

The Malefic Viper smiled as he saw the horrified look on the Wyrmgods face as he realized what was going on at the same time as Jake. Minaga only flashed a giant grin filled with schadenfreude as he pointed at the Wyrmgod.

I told you using karmic magic to detect faction allegiances was going to be a problem!

It is the most reliable way a person could detect something like that and with them being A-grades and above, no C-grade should be able to block or avoid it the Wyrmgod answered in a defeated voice.

Thats right in truth, what Jake had been doing this entire Challenge Dungeon was a horrible fucking idea for anyone normal. Fence-sitting and trying to get one up on everyone would have been discovered a long time ago by any of the many A-grade karma mages working for all of the larger factions. Simply lying wouldnt be enough, and the second they detected Jake sewing good karma with any of the factions through efforts that helped them in any way he hadnt been expressly told to, he would have been discovered.

But with Shroud of the Primordial, they simply couldnt see anything. Mind you, Jake formed karma just like everyone else; Shroud did nothing to block any of that. But it sure as hell did make it impossible for a bunch of mortals to see jack-shit and coupled with their simplistic and over-tuned level of trust yeah, it was a recipe for disaster, and the Malefic Viper was all for it.

Wait Minaga suddenly said. Wont this also mess up the-

No spoilers, the Viper interrupted him, enjoying this more than he probably should. Let us all just enjoy the show as you take notes for fixes in the next iteration."

#### Chapter 843: Nevermore: Best Courier Ever

Jake, of course, knew about Shroud of the Primordial. He used it all the time during this Challenge Dungeon to block so people couldnt tell when he was lying while manipulating it, so it didnt block whatever truth-telling ability was being used when he told the truth. He didnt know how to make Shroud display his lies as true answers, only to block it from giving any response at all but he did have a feeling this was something he could learn to make the skill do at some future time. But considering it took him many decades to learn how to manipulate the responses from Identify, this definitely wasnt the time or place to try and self-teach himself that ability.

However, one part of the Shroud he had borderline forgotten was its ability to block anyones ability to detect karma-related stuff. One had to remember that Shrouds primary function was to hide Jake so people couldnt find him unless he allowed them to. It was a counter to divination first and foremost, but in the process of blocking that, many other things were also included. Karma included.

In many ways, it had to be, considering karmic magic was a huge part of most forms of divination. Plus, if someone could track Jakes karmic threads, they would be able to track him simply by following them.



While the phrase karmic thread was very much used as an analogy, many karmic mages actually saw literal threads of karma using their skills. It was simply the conceptual understanding they reached, likely even because of this common phrase and the way others taught the concept of karma. That being the case, it would be pretty easy to just follow a thread from someone related to Jake straight back to him, so of course, Shroud had to block that. It had to tangle these threads into a web that no one could make any sense of, and the karmic threads never truly led back to Jake.

All of this is to say that while Jake did form karmic connections with everyone he encountered, to any karmic mage trying to analyze these threads, nothing made sense. As these threads were very much conceptual in nature, and the way most karmic mages the Guild Founder included saw them was only by looking for something particular.

As everyone had endless karmic threads leading out from them, karmic mages pretty much had to look for a specific thread or connection in mind. If they didn't, they would just see every single karmic thread a person had. In Jake's case, that would include every single person he had ever met or influenced, both directly or indirectly in other words, billions of people at the very least. The Founder was an S-grade and could search Jake for karmic connections to the limited scope of the room they were in, which was why he was so confused when he didn't see what he had expected. He had likely assumed seeing Jake have a powerful karmic connection with one of the factions while having an antagonistic one with others not simply having his skill say Jake had no positive or negative karmic connection with any of them at all.

The only way for this to be the case was if Jake truly didn't have any strong connection with any of them, either good or bad, period. Well, that, or if Jake, a mere C-grade, was capable of blocking the skill of the Founder, an S-grade, and one of the strongest people in the entire world. One of these was definitely more believable than the other, and the Founder looked at Jake with genuine astonishment.

You are truly telling the truth. No, even so, how is this possible? Some karmic connections should have been formed no matter what, yet I can't find anything, the man said with a deep frown as he considered matters further. What exactly are you? How did you accomplish this?

Beats me, I don't know anything about karma magic, Jake shrugged truthfully. He only knew what little he had read here or there about karma, which was enough to make him decide that it definitely wasn't a school of magic for him. Have you considered that I was telling the truth regarding my actions? That I heavily considered the implications behind everything I did?

The Founder was silent for a moment before nodding slowly. Now that I think about it it's true that your deceit would have been discovered a long time ago by one of the many other karma mages working for these factions if you did try to trick them. Due to their incredible abilities in the areas of

counterespionage and scouting, the Path has flourished in the last many millennia, and every faction has plenty of A-grades who would have been able to see straight through the actions of a C-grade Courier no matter how smart he tried to be

Jake kept silent, same as the Founder, while he considered these words, while internally, he had a minor panic attack. Fucking hell, I got lucky with Shroud, or things could have ended very badly

While everything Jake had done seemed like it could work out on the surface, especially considering how dumb the natives of the Challenge Dungeon were, in reality, it should have never gone as far as it did. Under normal circumstances, Jake would probably have been discovered the very first time he became an infinite loop agent if not in the job right after.

Shroud was the only reason Jake was still alive and could continue as he did. It wasn't just a matter of Shroud of the Primordial being a skill capable of hiding karma, either. Jake was sure many other factions also had abilities to hide karma-related stuff, especially those like the Court of Shadows but their skills wouldn't work for shit in this Challenge Dungeon. The skills could hide karma, yes, but if the one searching for it was an A-grade? Even if they walked around with mythic-rarity karma-hiding skills, it would be seen through simply due to the sheer difference in power.

The only reason Jake was fine was due to how Shroud worked. When someone tried to pierce Shroud, they didn't merely try to pierce the hiding abilities of a C-grade. They competed directly with the Records and power of the Malefic Viper. That was why it could hide him even from any but the most powerful of gods in the multiverse and why a bunch of A- and even S-grades didn't stand the shadow of a chance. Even if the Founder had been a Godking, he would have been unable to see anything.

Of course, this wasn't anything the Founder would ever reasonably conclude. So he went with the most reasonable conclusion he could that Jake had somehow managed to avoid any kind of strong karmic connection with any faction, meaning he hadn't chosen to side with anyone but had managed to remain one-hundred percent neutral, even to the concept of karma.

A few seconds passed with the Founder just standing there before he finally smiled, lowered his head a bit, and nodded to himself. I see I see

If you spot this tale on Amazon, know that it has been stolen. Report the violation.

He then looked up at Jake, a bright smile on his lips, with the entire mood changed as he even went as far as to bow slightly. I apologize for my offensive statements, and I hope you can forgive me. For me, as the Founder of the Guild, to offend one who truly walks the purest of Paths as a Courier its truly shameful.

Jake just stared at the man for a second before he mentally shrugged. Yeah, sure, I can roll with this.

I simply did what had to be done and acted as I saw fit of a Courier, Jake responded, trying to sound as genuine as he possibly could.

And you have exceeded all expectations anyone could ever have of you, the Founder said, looking a mix between relieved and happy. However, things are still not as they should be. Do you know why I came here today?

How could I possibly read the thoughts of the Founder? Jake responded. But if I had to guess, it has something to do with me and the way the Guild has been used and abused by many of the factions present.

Your guess is correct for the most part, the Founder nodded. I originally wanted to expose them, using you as the showcase of what they had done wrong, and set an example of what happens to Couriers who willingly assist factions, along with punishing the factions who used you but I now realize my wrongs. You truly never had any interest in politics but merely carried out the Courier Jobs that the Guild gave you. How can I possibly blame you for that?

Jake felt a bit of cold sweat on his back as he couldnt help but ask: Say when you say you would have punished the Courier who did what you thought they did, what do you mean by that?

I planned on stripping you of your title as a Courier, taking your Courier Medallion, and dependent on your actions, and if you refused to truly repent and see your wrongs, ended your life right then and there. With repentance, perhaps you would have even been allowed to become a Courier once more, but you would have naturally started from the beginning, the Founder explained. It was definitely a potential scenario that Jake very much didnt like the sound of.

One had to remember that the objective of this Challenge Dungeon was to complete Courier Jobs, so if Jake was stripped of his rank, he would no longer be able to progress. Starting from the beginning would

also suck major ass, as based on what Jake guessed and what would just be logical, the higher-ranked Courier Jobs would give more Nevermore Points for a better final score and Grand Achievement.

Heh, Jake slightly laughed as he scratched the back of his head. I guess its good I am not the kind of person who would get involved politically with different factions, and definitely not the type to have my own plots and plans.

Yep, Jake would never do any of that. How could he? He was the best and most genuine Courier ever!

It is indeed fortunate, the Founder nodded. And perhaps this outcome is even better. I was the one who made the Guild invite you today for my original plan to ensure you would go. However, with what I know now, I am even happier you are here. So, let me ask you, Courier would you be willing to assist me in exposing this corruption and punish those who abused the Courier system and Guild?

Before I answer, could you elaborate a bit more on what exactly these factions did wrong in your mind? Jake questioned as one thing had been bothering him a bit. Every Special Courier Job I was given by them went through the Guild. Isnt the Guild also to blame for all this happening? The Guild accepted all these jobs and gave them to me, making everything appear official. If what the factions did was truly against the rules, wouldnt the Guild have rejected the jobs?

The Founder sighed loudly at Jakes question as he looked down. They should have if everything was working as it is supposed to. It is normal to vet every job, but that simply hasnt been done in any of these cases. The nobles used the Guild as an arm of their own factions and threatened the employees into accepting any job they wished to assign them. To make matters even worse, I even have records of them manipulating the documentation behind the jobs and falsifying reports regarding completed jobs. Let me just confirm have you had promises made to you that they would ensure you wouldnt suffer reputational damages even if you failed a job, as long as your failure benefitted them?

Jake recalled quite a few instances as he nodded. More than once.

As I expected, the Founder nodded. Perhaps it is all my fault. I have been hands-off for too long, and their respect for the Guild and what we stand for has deteriorated with the generations that have passed. Few remember who I am, and even the executives of the Guild have fallen into corruption. I plan on doing a heavy clean-up, but to start properly, we need to remind everyone what the Guild truly stands for and why we used to be so respected.

Alright, Im in, Jake agreed. He wasnt sure if this was the best quest path, but it seemed like a good idea to ally with one of only a few S-grades Jake had ever heard of in this world. Plus, the guy didnt seem all that horrible compared to the others he had met. His biggest crime Jake knew of so far was inaction and laziness in regard to addressing the problems the Guild faced, and who was Jake to blame someone for not watching their own faction properly? He sure as hell was guilty of the same crime.

While it wasnt necessarily a flaw, the Founder was also a bit of a softie, considering how he said he wouldnt even have killed Jake if he had been a willing pawn of one of the factions and willingly repented.

Thank you, the Founder said with a pleased nod.

So, whats the plan? Jake questioned.

I believe there have been enough plans and plots already. Rather than continue down this track, we shall be direct and forthcoming with our objective, the Founder said as he and Jake remained looking down on the mass of people in the hall, mulling about.

Despite them standing on the balcony and talking for so long, no one had approached them. Everyone just kept socializing below, almost as if they were waiting for Jake and the Founder to be done with their conversation before doing anything. Jake saw all of the big players already there, and he counted more than fifty total A-grades present in the room. It was an overwhelming force, and Jake doubted many regular C-grades could ever feel comfortable in a situation like this, but he felt pretty calm.

The strongest person present was the peak A-grade Lord Protector. At least, that is what people believed. The old man was swarmed with nobles, nearly as many as the king and queen, who had taken seats on two slightly elevated chairs that looked a bit like thrones.

Jake looked over and saw the Duke of Flames stand confidently off to the side, chatting with some lesser nobles. He saw the Dukes daughter talking with others, including the A-grade who led PETE. The two other Dukes were naturally also there, along with nobles from a bunch of other countries there as diplomats. Based on what Jake had heard, this was the biggest political conference in decades, so it was definitely a good spot to reveal nefarious actions taken by others to a significant and influential audience.

Of course, that is exactly what several factions in the room wanted to do none of them knew they were the ones having their actions revealed that day.

Come its time, the Founder said as he stood up straight, Jake doing the same. Let us remind them what the Guild is and what it stands for.

As he said this, Jake had a system window appear in front of him.

All Special Courier Side Jobs Failed.

Special Courier Job 10 Updated.

Special Courier Job 10: Attend the Royal Conference in the Capital of the Human Kingdom. While there, assist the Guild Founder in revealing the corruption of the noble factions and their abuse of the Guild and the Courier System.

He had failed all the quests to assist the factions and was left with only one objective remaining and he couldnt wait to see the chaos that was about to unfold.

#### Chapter 844: Nevermore: Miscalculation

Jake wondered what all the nobles he had been working with were thinking when they saw Jake walk down the stairs. He had just failed all of their Side Jobs, though they clearly didnt know this. These jobs had all been about exposing other factions than themselves and had been mutually exclusive, as each required him to betray everyone else of course, Jake didnt view anything he had done as a betrayal as he never held any loyalty in the first place.

The Duke of Flames had wanted Jake to expose another dukedom for working with PETE and even another country, as PETE was based there. This other dukedom, whom the daughter of the Duke of Flames worked with, wanted Jake to expose the Duke of Flames illegal activities and the damage caused by his incessant desire to consume more elementals. At the same time, they would also expose PETE to make themselves look like they would never have worked with such an organization in the first place.

Lastly, PETE wanted Jake to also expose the Duke of Flames, but also this other dukedom for working with the Duke of Flames daughter, as they had heard she would join this dukedom and thus continue

the Lineage of the Duke of Flames. They didnt want to see that happen but wanted them utterly eliminated.

The person they all wanted Jake to do his exposing to was the king of the Human Kingdom. He had the backing of the third dukedom fully, the Lord Protector, and the entire royal army behind him, making him the most influential and powerful person in the kingdom which shouldnt come as a surprise considering he was the king.

From what Jake had gathered, he guessed the king already had a good idea about some of the stuff going on and kind of just wanted everything to be swept under the rug to avoid any open internal conflicts in the Human Kingdom. Any dukedom falling would be bad for the Human Kingdom as their overall power would fall, and with enemy countries on all sides, civil war wasnt recommended.

However, even if the king wanted things to be resolved behind closed doors, the second things were brought forth to the public, he would have to act openly and decisively or risk losing influence and looking like he could be walked all over. This is what all the factions who wanted Jake to expose shit banked on anyway.

Based on the words of the Founder he sent to Jake as they walked down the stairs, he was willing to give the king a chance to right the wrongs in his own kingdom, primarily on account of the Lord Protector. The royal family had never abused the Guild, and what jobs they had commissioned had all been above board. Perhaps because the royal family still held respect for what the Guild stood for or because the Lord Protector had been one of the people fighting alongside the Founder back in the war against the dragon tribe and knew that risking making the Founder an enemy was a horrible idea.

As he and the Founder walked down to the main floor, they naturally attracted some attention. Jake had many friendly gazes land on him from the many factions as they each prepared for him to carry out their wish. Probably because he was the only one who publicly worked with Jake, the Duke of Flames stepped forward without any surprise from the other factions.

Ah, its great of you to finally join us, the Duke of Flames said, entirely ignoring the Founder beside Jake, who was presenting as an early-tier B-grade.

Of course. I am here hired to carry out a job, after all, Jake responded a bit curtly but still keeping it professional.

Indeed you are, the Duke smiled as he turned to address the king and queen sitting on their throne, along with everyone else present. Allow me to introduce someone. This is a Courier I have been working with recently, and that I am certain many of you have also come to know of in recent times. A true rising star of the Guild and a man with an impeccable record.

Jake remained quiet, not saying no to flattery when offered.

I originally hired him with the intent of sniffing out those who have been targetting me recently. You have all heard of them the terrorist organization that has been wreaking havoc in my dukedom and threatened the stability of this very kingdom with their actions, the Duke of Flames continued with a very holier-than-thou tone. This hiring was made with little hope but I had underestimated the expertise and abilities of this Courier, and in less than a year, he managed to uncover those behind the plot targeting our blessed country.

Muttering filled the room as all attention was now on Jake. Many scanned him using different means, with the Founder continually getting ignored despite standing right next to him. Jake especially felt the gazes of a few people present, one of whom walked forward to speak with a magnanimous smile.

The Duke of Flames speaks the truth. Those who have taken actions to hurt this kingdom and its reputation must be punished, no matter who they are! said the man. He was the Duke who opposed the Duke of Flames and another person who believed Jake was actually there as his ally.

He also got a telepathic message from the leader of PETE. Now is the time to strike topple both of these monsters from their high peaks and be the arbiter of justice. Be the harbinger of a new age where elementals can live free from the Dukedom of Flames and all those who dared allow their vile existence.

Jake would lie if he said he felt comfortable as he considered his next words carefully. He briefly threw a glance at the Founder, who nodded before Jake turned to the king and bowed slightly. Your majesty, I have indeed made some discoveries during my work as a Courier I believe are pertinent to share with the court.

Before you proceed, I need to clarify something who are you here working for? Where do your loyalties lie? the king asked, and from the queen sitting at his side, Jake detected a truth-telling skill. Those skills were really pretty damn common in this world, huh?



The king's question also communicated he indeed did know some internal conflict was going on. Luckily, Jake had an easy answer to his question.

I am here as a Courier representing the Guild. As for loyalties I have none but the loyalty I hold toward myself and my dignity. As a Courier, loyalty as a concept isn't something I see the need to consider. I am merely here to carry out a Special Courier Job, nothing less, nothing more, Jake responded. Usually, giving long answers with details and absolutes when faced with a lie-detector skill wasn't recommended unless you were capable of fully telling the truth when doing so. In these cases, it only served to strengthen your voice.

After a second or two, the queen nodded to the king who looked genuinely surprised at the affirmation Jake was being truthful.

So you are not here at the behest of any of the nobles of the Human Kingdom? the Lord Protector, who was sitting a bit off to the side, asked as he directed a sharp gaze at Jake. Yep, he definitely also knows something. Fuck I am happy I didn't try this shit all by myself without any backing

I was given side jobs by three people present to attend and carry out their will, Jake answered truthfully. However, I was also given a Special Courier Job by the Guild, which is the one I am here to carry out.

Who knew that things were a lot easier when you could just tell the truth while knowing you had an S-grade at your side, willing to defend should anything bad happen? Because damn, was something bad about to happen as Jake began to reveal a bit too much in the eyes of those who had hired him.

Jake felt three gazes on him filled with hidden bloodlust. All of them A-grades, with the Duke of Flames the most powerful of them. It was warnings no threats, to carry out what they wanted him to do and not say more than he had to.

Oh? the Lord Protector said, continuing the conversation in place of the king. And what did these three people want you to do here tonight?

The author's tale has been misappropriated; report any instances of this story on Amazon.

To reveal underhanded dealings while exposing the organization that has made moves against the Duke of Flames in recent times, including the hidden backers of this organization, Jake said, feeling the threatening gaze of the Duke of Flames lighten slightly only for it to return stronger than ever with his next sentence. This includes the illegal activities undertaken by the Duke of Flames in his attempt to continually acquire elementals to consume to fuel his own Path.

As Jake finished speaking, the telepathic messages began rolling in as Jake ignored all of them and focused only on the Lord Protector and two royals.

What the hell are you-

Shut your mouth, or-

Why would you-

The eyes of the Lord Protector narrowed as he gave the king a look. Seemingly suppressing a sigh, the king's face turned a lot more serious. These are very heavy accusations are you sure you can handle what may come from you making them? The consequences if anything you say is revealed to be a lie?

As I said, I am merely here carrying out a Special Courier Job representing the Guild, Jake answered. I am only to share the truth according to the wishes of my client.

The king didn't look all that happy with Jake's answer as he motioned with his hand. Then proceed let us hear what you claim to have uncovered.

And hear it, they did. Jake held nothing back as he explained everything he had done for these different factions. How he had worked for all of them at once, effectively infiltrating them while doing all his Courier Jobs. He even sprinkled in some of the physical evidence he had swiped during his many interactions with them, everything he said getting continually checked with lie-detector skills.

Some of his revelations sent shockwaves through the crowd. Especially when he revealed the Duke of Flames daughter had worked with another dukedom to take him down and even supported PETE. Jake felt pretty sure a good portion of the room would already have made moves to kill him if the faint

presence of the Lord Protector didn't already cover his body, signaling none was to make a move, lest they suffer the consequences.

The only real strategy Jake had in his big revelation was saving the identity of the leader of PETE for last, as he felt pretty damn sure she would make a move the moment he did. Once revealed, her chances of escaping unscathed were nil, so to at the very least get revenge and kill the Courier who exposed her was only to be expected.

A prediction that turned out to be entirely accurate as the moment Jake turned and pointed out the leader of PETE, without any warning, her aura exploded as she flew straight for Jake. The Founder stood between Jake and the woman, but he didn't even need to make a move.

Without Jake being able to detect any movement, the old man appeared right above the A-grade woman. She didn't even manage to scream as her entire body imploded while Jake felt powerful ripples of space mana from the old man as he squished her entire body into a small red ball of flesh no larger than a golf ball faster than Jake could even react to her movements. The entire debacle barely even affected the throne room due to the magic used by the Lord Protector being so limited in scope, but it did definitely set the mood to see an A-grade dying.

With everyone looking, the Lord Protector waved his hand as what looked like a spatial ring appeared in it. He infused some energy into it as Jake saw the enchantments begin to break apart, and after a second or two, the old man fished out a few items, including a notebook and some odd crystals.

This journal lays out plans made by this terrorist organization to sabotage the Duke of Flames and the crystals are those uniquely found in the Dukedom of Blades, the Lord Protector said in a matter-of-fact voice.

Wait did that dukedom seriously pay PETE in crystals only found in their territory? Jake questioned, though he kept his mouth shut, as things were going his way already, and there was no reason to ruin it. Wait maybe the PETE leader has these on purpose? So if she did die, she would at least take down some people with her using the evidence she was carrying?

That woman was also from the Phoenix Wing Empire, the Lord Protector continued as he glared at the Duke of Blades. Do you have any explanations for yourself?

Surprisingly enough, the Duke of Blades remained calm despite the accusations as he shook his head. I truthfully do not for I have never worked with any such organizations.

Are you saying the accusations of this Courier are false, despite his testimony already having been confirmed as true? the king questioned in a sharp tone.

I am not denying he believes they are true but I fear he has been led behind the light, the Duke of Blades sighed. All the truth-detecting skills can see is if the person speaking believes they are telling the truth, not what the actual truth is. I fear that the Courier may have been fooled into believing we were working with this daughter of the Duke of Flames.

And youre saying youre not? the king continued questioning.

Most definitely not, the Duke of Blades said in an offended tone. Neither would we work with some horrific terrorist organization who targets the innocents. I believe this may all be a plot by the Duke of Flames to undermine my dukedom using his daughter... or, looking at the Duke, perhaps even his own daughter tricked him?

I what are you talking about!? the Duke of Flames daughter had an outburst. You promised that-

Silence! the king yelled as he slammed his fist into his chair, sending a shockwave of energy out. The room became even more tense than before, and while Jake remained silent, he was honestly pretty confused about something...

Why are they not just using any lie-detector skills on this Duke of Blades?

It made no sense they werent unless

Duke of Flames do you have any defense against these accusations? the king asked, looking at the Duke.

Are you seriously claiming I would have hired a terrorist organization to target my own family and dukedom? That I would willingly commit all sorts of criminal activity simply to acquire some more elementals? Perhaps I have been too zealous in my pursuits, and my subordinates may have taken

things too far, and I may even have been blind to the rebellious actions of my daughter, but I am fully willing to submit everything for review, the Duke of Flames also defended himself. I want us to remember I am the injured party here

Jake saw the Lord Protector frown deeply, as the king looked like he was deep in thought. Hm this certainly is a matter that must be investigated further

Perhaps, Your Majesty, this is all a plot by this terrorist organization to cause internal strife within the kingdom? the Duke of Blades chimed in as he looked at the Duke of Flames. While I and the Duke of Flames most definitely have our differences, I am certain they are nothing we cannot solve behind closed doors with the royal family as mediators.

Without any hesitation, the Duke of Flames nodded. No one has any interest in seeing us split more than an enemy country, and I, too, am certain we can reach a satisfactory conclusion through negotiation and following proper legal procedures to find out who is truly behind this plot.

What the fuck is going on? Jake questioned as the entire mood in the hall shifted once more. However, Jake soon realized why things were going so wrong the king was resolute in sweeping things under the rug, and the two Dukes had given him a golden opportunity to. They just had to play theater, and some faux investigation could discover some fall guys to be arrested and executed while maintaining order.

The two Dukes also knew this as Jake received a message from each.

What a pathetic attempt I had high hopes for you, but it seems you are dumber than I thought, the Duke of Flames said. Did you truly think your word was enough? That a mere C-grade could lead to my downfall? You overestimate yourself. Ah, but I must thank you for exposing that I had a snake of a daughter and for getting rid of this annoying pest of an organization that has been bothering me. You have proven most useful despite your idiocy. I would recommend for you to stay and enjoy the rest of the party for this will be your last.

You have proven yourself most unwise. It is sad to see someone I was told was so promising invite his own death through sheer arrogance, the Duke of Blades also sent.

Jake had no idea what to say but he realized his plan had been fucked from the beginning. Even if he had truth and facts on his side, it wouldn't matter in the grand scheme of things, and his strategy of targeting

everyone would end with nothing but the death of a C-grade Courier as some fake investigations were carried out, with no one remembering anything about the Courier in a few years.

The king turned to Jake and nodded after the two Dukes had spoken. Thank you for bringing all of this to light, and we will be sure to carry out thorough investigations to uncover the whole truth.

And that was that the king had swept things under the rug. From the looks of it, this didnt sit well with the Lord Protector, but he didnt speak up. They had all made a decision, and Jake could do nothing about it. His protests would be viewed as nothing but contempt toward the kings decision and land him in even more trouble. Jake had entirely miscalculated how all of this would go, perhaps only highlighting his political ignorance...

Now, let us not see the day ruined, but continue to enjoy oursel-

Is this truly your decision? the man who had been standing next to Jake this entire time asked.

The king frowned at getting interrupted as the Duke of Flames stepped forward. Who are you to question His Majestys decision!?

His aura rolled out of him as the temperature in the room increased, and the Duke attempted to pressure the man he believed was an early-tier B-grade only to find his aura rebuffed as he coughed up blood from the backlash and stumbled back as the Founders aura exploded.

Jake, not missing a beat, smiled. Allow me to introduce my client for this job the Guild Founder.

#### Chapter 845: Nevermore: Legendary Courier

Considering there was only a handful of S-grades in the entire world, it didnt take long for the people present to realize who the man Jake had arrived with was. His overwhelming aura suppressed every single one of them, his power simply at a whole other level, even compared to the peak A-grade Lord Protector.

Ge General the Lord Protector stuttered as the Founders form also changed. Jake already knew he had transformed his body, so it didnt really come as a surprise when he turned into a slightly older-looking human man. It did surprise everyone else, though.

Also, Jake learned that, apparently, the Founder had been a general back in the day.

I must admit I find myself disappointed, the Founder spoke as no one else dared open their mouths. I truly, for a brief moment, believed this could be resolved without my involvement. Alas, I was proven wrong. Despite all the evidence and the testimony of a high-ranking courier with a borderline-perfect track record, your response is to do nothing.

We we will conduct a thorough investi- the Duke of Blades tried to say but was silenced with a single glance.

Do you think me a child? That I could not see through such an obvious attempt to suppress the truth by all parties involved? the Founder shook his head as he looked at the Lord Protector. Are you also going to tell me Im an idiot, Colonel?

No no, Sir, the formerly awe-inspiring Lord Protector said as he bowed. It is just as the General observed.

At least someone besides this Courier is capable of telling the truth, the Founder scoffed as he turned his attention back to the king. You, too, lived during the war. Many of those here today did yet you all seem to have forgotten what happened then and the aftermath. Why I made the Guild in the first place. Do I need to remind you, little king? Remind you of the oath your kingdom swore? The promise you made!?

The king looked down, almost ashamed. By now, the tides had truly turned, and things were not looking good for the Dukes. The Duke of Flames, who had wiped the blood off his lips, clearly also noticed this as he tried to not be fully suppressed.

Lord Founder the Duke of Flames began as he tried to get his bearings. I truly apologize for how things turned out but is the Guild not also breaking protocol by getting directly involved in an internal conflict of the Human Kingdom? While it is true we were partly to blame, we were also fooled by this Courier as he plotted against us all, and he was the one who initiated today's conflict with his widespread accusations. I can admit I hired him through the Guild to use against my political foes and to get rid of the terrorist organization harassing me but is that truly so wrong? Is that truly a crime deserving of the Guild Founders wrath?

The Founder let out a loud sigh as he looked directly at the Duke of Flames.

You just admitted to your biggest crime how you used the Guild. In truth, I do not care for the internal conflicts of the Human Kingdom. The internal disputes of any country, for that matter. But this entire thing has been made possible by exploiting the nature and good reputation of the Guild. For years, the Dukedom of Flames has pressured the Guild into accepting Courier Jobs to hide its dirty dealings, and the other dukedoms are no different. You have viewed the Guild as nothing more than a tool for you to abuse without ever considering the consequences or when things would reach a breaking point so let me just make it clear. That breaking point was well and truly reached today when you tried to make such an exemplary Courier into your accomplice, the Founder said in a loud voice with an undertone of anger. Jake even saw a few of the people present shiver as a bit of bloodlust emanated from the S-grade.

Jake had to do his utmost to hold himself back from grinning. The people who had been calling him a fucking moron only minutes ago were now shivering because the Founder had shown up. He alone was strong enough to utterly suppress every single person in the room, and in truth, his actual words barely mattered. His arguments were meaningless in the grand scheme of things.

It was the same as when Jake had spoken up. It didn't matter if everything Jake said was the truth. Before a bunch of A-grades, his words simply didn't matter as he was only some C-grade whelp in their eyes. Perhaps this wasn't the lesson one was meant to learn from this Challenge Dungeon, or maybe it was but it reaffirmed something Jake already knew but had foolishly disregarded during this dungeon. Power still came first and foremost before everything else.

As the Viper had said a long time ago, if you were strong enough, your word became truth. Your interpretation of a situation became the correct one. As a Chosen, Jake was usually capable of always borrowing the influence of the Malefic Viper, and in many cases, people even believed his opinion mirrored that of the Viper, making them take him more seriously. In cases where he interacted with his peers who didn't necessarily care about his status or had an equally high status, Jake was still considered one of the stronger people, so he could still be part of the conversation as an equal.

In this Challenge Dungeon, Jake was no equal to the Dukes he had tried to call out, and it was shown when everyone sided with the A-grades to just sweep everything under the rug. Power meant everything, which was once again shown when suddenly everything Jake had said was given a new level of legitimacy and taken far more seriously because the Founder popped up to tell them to take Jake seriously.



I the Duke of Flames began, as he looked like he tried to come up with a counter-argument, only to have the Lord Protector stop him.

Do not sully the reputation of the Human Kingdom further with your stupidity, the old man scoffed as he looked at the Founder and kneeled. I am ashamed that something like this could have happened under my watch I have been blind to what is happening for too long.

No, this is ultimately my responsibility, the king also spoke as he, too, promptly kneeled. I knew many of these crimes of the dukedoms were taking place, yet I did nothing. I even knew they abused and threatened the Guild to do their bidding and used the Guild Founders institution as if they owned it. I reneged on my responsibilities and can only be ashamed of my own incompetence and failure to do what I must. For this, I can only beg for forgiveness, and if the magnanimity of the Guild Founder allows it, try to better myself and this country.

Jake was honestly impressed at how the king handled the shit that was all the way up to his neck. He didnt make any excuses but just took responsibility while admitting things that had otherwise not come to light already. Finally, he promised to better himself and the Human Kingdom as a whole. Overall, a pretty good apology.

And how will you take responsibility? the Founder questioned.

Without any hesitation, the king stood up as he spoke loudly. Detain the Duke of Flames and the Duke of Blades along with their immediate family and close collaborators.

Your Majesty, this is- the Duke of Flames began to argue before the king threw him a sharp gaze and spoke even louder than before.

Lethal force is permitted should they resist.

For a moment, Jake thought the Duke of Flames was going to fight it out, but he ultimately didnt. Jake had a feeling that should the Founder not be present, the power-hungry Duke would have escaped, leaving behind everything to save his own hide. Even if the Lord Protector was stronger than him, the Duke of Flames was still a close second and was more than capable of getting away, even from a space mage. Of course, with the Founder also there, his chances of escape were non-existent, so he ultimately decided to surrender.

The narrative has been taken without permission. Report any sightings.

Your actions were sufficiently swift alright, I shall give you a chance, the Founder said, and it looked as if an almost physical weight had been lifted from the king and Lord Protector. However, I shall remain in the Human Kingdom for now to ensure everything proceeds in a satisfactory fashion. I take it there are no complaints?

Having you as a guest would be a great honor, the king bowed as the royal guards and Lord Protector began to escort out the two dukes along with a bunch of other nobles. All of them already had pretty bleak facial expressions, and when the Founder proclaimed he would stay in the kingdom for a while, things only got worse for them. That pretty much killed all escape plans, and especially the Duke of Flames looked like a plan he was beginning to form in his head had already fallen apart.

Throughout this entire debacle, Jake had just been standing next to the Founder. He was pretty much the only person present who hadn't bowed or full-on kneeled at some point, nor carried an unmistakable sense of reverence for one of only five known S-grades. Jake hadn't needed to say anything after he had already done his assignment and laid out the evidence, and that honestly felt pretty good.

He wondered if someone more skilled in the political arena could have handled things better and not necessarily needed the Founder's help. Perhaps it was possible, especially seeing as the Lord Protector wasn't happy with the status quo but Jake sure as hell had no idea how to make it happen. Alas, it didn't matter because Jake had managed to make a good impression on the S-grade Founder and gotten super fucking lucky the guy was even there in the first place. If not, he would have probably lost one of his lives on this day.

Thank you for your help on this day, Courier, the Founder said after a bit more discussion with the king. He said this with many nobles and the king still present as everyone looked at them. Without you, this would have been much more difficult, and your actions helped uncover the depths of this corruption. You truly are an exemplary Courier and fully deserving of the reputation you have built yourself. An example for all other Couriers.

No, I should be the one thanking you for trusting me with this job, Jake bowed as he kept up his persona as the perfect employee. And I am just happy when the client is happy.

I believe you, the Founder laughed as he patted Jake on the shoulder. I truly do.

Jake smiled in return. This definitely felt like some kind of climax to the story. He had met the Guild Founder himself and worked with him, upended the political landscape in one of the countries, and even had an A-grade killed and several imprisoned. However for some reason, Jake didnt feel like this was the end, and a feeling of dread began to worm its way into his mind as the Founder spoke once more.

Ah, but I shouldnt hold you up for too long you have completed this Special Courier Job flawlessly, and I must thank you once more, but I also know you must be eager to continue following your calling. I am certain many others out there need such an exemplary Courier and who knows, perhaps you can even reach the realm of Legendary Couriers.

You gotta be kidding me

Special Courier Job 15 Completed.

If you go to the Guild, I am sure they have many Courier Jobs available, even for someone of your skill, and as I work to restore order and remove corruption, I may even need the help of a skilled Courier once more. If I ever do need you again can I trust in your assistance?

Jake really wanted to tell the guy to just fuck off, but instead, he smiled. As long as there is a Courier Job worth doing, and I am capable, of course Ill be there to help.

In that case truly thank you once more. Now, I need to remain here and speak to these fools a bit longer, but you are free to do whatever you wish, the Founder smiled as he gave Jake another pat on the shoulder.

I shall be heading straight to the Guild then work awaits, Jake said respectfully as he gave the Founder a small bow and left the royal palace. On the surface, he was smiling, while on the inside, he was cursing loudly. He just thought, for the briefest of moments, he had beaten the Challenge Dungeon in less than a year, but it turns out he had just finished one of the goddamn story arcs.

Relax, Jake just keep going at it, and at some point, youll run out of jobs or become unable to finish them.

That could have gone worse, Minaga said with a grin. A lot worse. Jake is really freaking lucky his strategy worked out somehow or maybe its that weird instinct or intuition or whatever that helped him along. Who knows? For my own sanity, I will just call it pure luck.

Valdemar, who usually didnt bother saying much, actually spoke for once. Luck is also kind of a skill.

Vilastromoz wanted to call that out as bullshit but held his tongue. He didnt deny luck was a thing, but to call it a skill was going overboard even if Valdemar was known as someone notoriously lucky.

Luck is just when preparation meets opportunity, the Blightfather chimed in. Many of those who dare claim others just got lucky are those incapable of even taking advantage of the opportunities they gain.

But isnt someone who gets more potential opportunities considered luckier then? the Holy Mother also decided to get involved likely just to take a jab at the Blightfather.

Opportunities are more often than not taken, not given, the Blightfather shook his head. And the definition of an opportunity varies widely. For the talented, they can turn every day into a few opportunities. A powerful beast nearby may be viewed as nothing but a danger to the common person but is an opportunity for the strong to test themselves and claim Records, yet none will claim someone is lucky for choosing to face a beast they have a high chance of dying against.

Why are we even discussing the definition of luck? Minaga questioned.

You started it, the Wyrmgod simply added.

And now Im finishing it, Minaga said with a grin. Anyway, back to Jake. Man, am I looking forward to when he unlocks the final arc. Gonna be so funny.

The Wyrmgod sighed but didnt say anything, as the Viper wondered what would happen but seeing as Minaga looked so amused, he had a feeling something really interesting or stupid was about to happen. After Jake had done a load of more average Courier Jobs, of course.

Jake remembered always finding it incredibly funny in video games how none of your prior accomplishments were properly acknowledged. One could be the divine archmage and emperor of a nation, but some random farmer would still give you a quest to kill rats, and the recruiter of a new faction would still call you new blood and act as if you were a total novice.

It was a nice joke and something to laugh about when it happened, even if it could take you a bit out of the story. But surely, this kind of thing wouldnt happen in the real world, now would it? Well

Jake Thayne, Courier extraordinaire and the man who had personally worked with the Founder to expose the corruption of many nobles of the highest rank. A man who had led to the death and arrest of many A-grades, a man even the king and Lord Protector would show respect to, and even a benefactor of the Guild itself, soon found himself busy trying to convince a bunch of children who had stolen his package that the toys inside werent for them, but his client.

After Special Courier Job 15, Jake had gone to the Guild, where, despite all the kind words they had for him, they still gave him regular-ass jobs to do. Was the difficulty higher now, and did he even get into a few fights during some of them? Yes, but it was clear combat wasnt really the core of this Challenge Dungeon. It was instead just the ability to handle different annoying situations while not losing your cool or getting tricked.

Jake had hoped he would only need to do a few more Courier Jobs for something interesting to happen, and he was kind of right? After he had done only 50 jobs in the capital city of the Human Kingdom, he was contacted by a Guild employee on behalf of the Founder. Jake was given a Special Courier Job to go to a different capital city and work there for a while to audit the Guild before then reporting back after he had done another fifty to seventy Courier Jobs there

This pattern continued as weeks turned to months, with Jake traveling all over the world inside the Challenge Dungeon. Every new country had unique challenges and different cultures to navigate, but Jake thought he did pretty well as he really got into the groove. Soon enough, over half a year passed since he had gotten his ancient rarity medallion, and Jake had been to nearly every single capital city. Things were a bit stale by now, but he kept up his work ethic as he knew things were bound to end at some point.

Finally, after around eight months as an ancient rarity Courier, Jake met the Founder once more as he attended a ceremony and was given the highest honors as a Courier. His Medallion was upgraded for what he believed was the final time as he stepped into the ranks of Legendary Couriers.

[Courier Medallion (Legendary)] A Courier Medallion belonging to a Legendary Courier, a title that has only been seen a few times through history and can only be given by the Guild Founder himself. This Medallion will hold information related to jobs and can give general directions to your destination if those are provided (may not be entirely reliable). This is the highest-known rank of the Courier Medallion.

Requirements: Soulbound

As even the description of the Medallion said, this was the highest-known rank, and after getting it, Jake felt as if he was well and truly done with the Challenge Dungeon but no message appeared. Perhaps it had been silly of him to expect something known as the Endless Journey to have an end, but it had to end at some point?

After the ceremony where he got promoted, Jake was given a week off to relax. However just two days later, as Jake was chilling and doing a bit of alchemy as he had run out of potions again, a Guild employee suddenly stormed into the room.

Hurry, you must come! the attendant said in a panicked voice.

What happened? Jake asked.

Somehow, the dragon tribe returned!

Chapter 846: Nevermore: Never Easy

So dragons. Dragons were scary, and in all honesty, there was no way in fucking hell Jake was going to be dealing with one. Any true dragon was B-grade and a high-tier variant, meaning even the weakest of them could blast Jake to pieces without him ever really standing a chance.

This begged the question with dragons suddenly returning, what the hell was Jake to do? Well, he learned that only half an hour after the guild employee had gone to fetch him. The dwarven woman had led Jake to a meeting room where Jake saw quite a few influential figures already gathered. Royals from many different countries had shown up, high-ranking people not part of any country, and Jake even felt the aura of a second S-grade present beside the Founder.

When Jake entered the room, he only got a few glances from the roughly seventy people present. Not a single person there wasn't at least A-grade and either a duke, royal, or leader of some organization. He instantly questioned why he was there, but seeing as no one else did, he decided to just bow slightly and find a seat off to the side.

A dozen or so more people arrived over the next half an hour, all of them also A-grade. No more S-grade appeared beside the Founder and a woman Jake recognized from a poster he had seen in the Phoenix Wing Empire. The Phoenix Wing Empire was the only empire in the world solely because they were the only faction with an S-grade ruler, and the Phoenix Empress stood proudly side by side with the Founder, giving off an aura that, while inferior to his, still outshined everyone else present. Alright, Jake could also try and enter the race, but he didn't really feel like attracting any attention.

Good, we are all here, the Founder said after a few more minutes passed and everyone had gotten settled. I believe you are all aware why we are here, so let us not delay needlessly. Our world faces a crisis, and we will need the help of everyone present to weather this storm.

Murmurs filled the room, but no one asked any questions. From the looks of it, everyone indeed knew what this was about as the Founder began to elaborate with a bit of lore and what exactly they were dealing with.

Forty thousand years ago, I killed the Dragon King, yes but the queen still managed to flee along with her whelpings and other survivors. No one knew where they went, and despite searching everywhere on the planet and all the local solar systems, not a single trace was discovered. We believed they were gone forever or had perhaps died but as of a few hours ago, a group of dragons was confirmed in a neighboring solar system, rapidly heading this way. They are led by the Dragon Queen, the now S-grade Dragon Prince, and three other S-grades, with hundreds of A-grades and over ten thousand B-grade True Dragons, while the number of C-grade dragon spawn, wyverns and dragonkin are impossible to count as they are all being transported in secured barges.

Moreover, the Phoenix Empress added, we have reason to believe that some dragonkin and dragon tribe sympathizers have already arrived on the planet and have been here for a while, preparing for the return of the dragon tribe. Now, many of them have begun to make their moves, and we have strong reason to believe even some nobles are supporting them.

The Founder suddenly turned to Jake and motioned toward him. Recently, as I am sure you all know, there was an internal struggle in the Human Kingdom where some nobles went too far and exploited the Guild. This was all discovered through the valiant efforts of this legendary Courier. During the following interrogations with the Duke of Flames, we discovered that the Duke had not only been committing

many crimes and exploited the Guild two centuries ago, he also entered an alliance with the dragon tribe who offered him an S-grade Dragon Flame Elemental for his cooperation in toppling the Human Kingdom and weakening the Guild. It was only due to the efforts of this Courier we were able to learn this and even get an early warning, giving us more time to prepare.

Jake just sat in the corner as all the A-grades and even two S-grades gave him respectful looks for his contribution to the war efforts. He tried to look humble but honestly had no idea what to do or say, so he just nodded solemnly, which the Founder luckily took as an opportunity to continue.

What followed was a long explanation of their war efforts, and to sum it up, things weren't looking good. The plan was for all of the B-, A- and S-grades that could possibly be gathered to come together and face the dragon tribe in space before they even reached the planet. However, even if they gathered a powerful army, the dragon tribe still simply had more powerhouses. From what the Founder said, this Dragon Prince was also more powerful than the Dragon King had been, so even if the Founder had continued to make some progress in the last forty thousand years, he was unsure if he could win. If the other four S-grades were factored in, things were bleak for sure with their side only having two S-grades.

I wonder if I had sided with the Duke of Flames completely and continued to assist him, could I have ended up on the side of this dragon tribe? Jake considered as all the talks continued. They still had a while before the dragons arrived the early warning courtesy of Jake uncovering the crimes of the Duke of Flames and during this time, all the preparations that could be made would be made.

As the meeting began to wind to a close, the Founder asked Jake to follow him to a private office. Jake could already feel another Special Courier Job coming as he closed the door behind him, and he saw the Founder activate some magic to seal off the room.

Courier things are even worse than I presented them out there, the Founder began as he sighed. If things continue as they are, we don't stand a chance. While we may be able to defend for a while, we simply do not have the power to beat them in a straight-on fight not unless we get more allies.

Oh this trope,

Jake thought as he already knew what was coming next.

The Phoenix Queen and I are the only ones who can fight the S-grades among the ranks of the dragons, but there are also others from our world who can. Two old comrades from back during the war, known



as the Blademaster and the Nine Seals Demon. The problem is, I am not entirely sure where they are; all I heard was that both went off to train many, many years ago.

You need me to help find them? Jake asked the obvious question.

Yes, the Founder nodded. While I do not know where either of them are, I do know someone who at least is aware of the location of one: the Blademaster. He sealed himself away for isolated training about ten thousand years ago, but his wife should still be living in the Elven Kingdom, and if anyone knows where my old friend went, its her. Seek her out, and ask and try to do this without raising any suspicions. I am certain that I am currently being tracked, the same as all the other A-grades, and I have to head to the frontlines soon to establish our defenses. As a C-grade courier, you should be mostly inconspicuous, but be warned there will likely be many pursuers anyway.

Alright, Jake nodded as he got yet another Special Courier Job.

Special Courier Job 20: Locate and recruit the Blademaster.

Sweet, short, and simple. With a mission that just had to be the start of the final arc of this Challenge Dungeon, Jake headed off to find the wife and convince her to tell him where the Blademaster was. He expected a lot of difficulty during the journey, as he found out that the woman lived far away from any of the major cities on a small farmstead, meaning he had to travel a lot on foot without any teleportation circles available. At least he could get to the closest city pretty easily.

As Jake left the city, he saw that things were really busy. Everyone knew an attack was incoming, and while the normal citizens couldn't do much, they helped those with power as much as they could. Powerful defensive formations were set up, and people charged what looked like big mana batteries to send to the frontlines to power massive defensive barriers to assist the fighters up in space. No one even tried to flee, as they knew doing so wouldn't help with anything... if the dragons returned, their living in a city or hiding out would mean nothing.

The tale has been stolen; if detected on Amazon, report the violation.

Jake was certainly noticed as he left the city, but surprisingly, no one followed him. As he kept flying, Jake wondered when these people the Founder warned him about would show up, but he didn't see anyone. Well, not with his eyes, anyway. He did spot a group of people roaming around with a Pulse of

Perception a few hours from the city and promptly made sure to be in stealth as he flew around them. He did the same with whatever else he got the feeling could be an enemy on the way. He honestly didn't want to meet or talk to anyone but this wife, so he stayed clear of everything possible. This was not a combat-focused Challenge Dungeon, so he had no reason to fight when unnecessary, right?

Now, if he could get experience, things may have been different but alas.

Due to his careful and stealthy approach, Jake reached the farmstead about a week after leaving the elven city without meeting any trouble on the way. As he got closer, he saw many powerful formations already defending the place, so Jake stopped right outside and he yelled as loud as he could.

Excuse me, but I'm looking for someone known as the Blademaster! Asking for a mutual ally! I was hoping you could give me a moment of your ti-

Before Jake was even done yelling, he was rudely interrupted as his entire body turned into an ice statue, and even the air itself froze all around him. He physically became unable to let out any sound or even move a muscle as his insides were entirely frozen over. Yet he didn't feel any danger at all, despite the less-than-pleasant sensation of being a popsicle, showing the one who had frozen him wasn't aiming to kill but simply capture him.

An A-grade elven woman appeared in front of Jake a second later as she observed him closely. With a wave of her hand, she unfroze his head. Speak. Who are you.

Courier here on a job directly from the Guild Founder to ask you for the location or a method to find the Blademaster, Jake answered in his usual polite tone. Even if the woman was being a bit rude by freezing him, he wouldn't lose his professional attitude.

The woman looked surprised as she narrowed her eyes. A bit carefully, she melted all the ice on Jake's upper body, allowing him to move freely. Just as she did, Jake took out his Courier Medallion and showed her before she could demand for him to prove his identity.

She looked at the Medallion carefully for a second. A legendary Courier this must not be a small matter why do you need the Blademaster?

I take it you are pretty isolated out here and dont get news that often? Jake questioned.

I enjoy the solitude when my husband is not here, the woman scoffed as if offended by the question.

Well, to bring you up to speed. The dragon tribe is back, currently fighting the Guild Founder, Phoenix Queen, and many others in the neighboring solar system. Things are not looking good, and they need the help of the Blademaster, Jake quickly updated her, offering the news delivery service completely complimentary.

This is she muttered. Alright, Ill take you to him.

Great, Jake smiled as the woman entirely unfroze and dragged him along as they flew to a nearby mountain range. Once they entered it, Jake felt that they entered a vast system of formations, likely set up by the S-grade to defend himself during his isolated training. Looking around, there were hundreds of caves spread around the mountains.

He is here, with one of these caves leading to his location however, I am unsure which one, and seeing as each has defensive formations, we will need to carefully search each of-

That one, Jake pointed after he was done scanning the result of his Pulse of Perception.

The A-grade woman looked at him. You speak with such certainty how would you possibly know which one it is?

Now, it was Jakes turn to scoff as he looked offended. What do you mean how do I know? Im a professional Courier.

Half an hour later, Jake and the wife stood in front of a huge gate leading into a sealed chamber as they knocked a few times. With the wife by Jakes side, the Blademaster soon opened when he noticed her, and after a brief talk where Jake flashed his token and said he was working for the Founder, they had a second S-grade in the back. Powerwise, he was somewhere between the Phoenix Queen and the Founder, so he was definitely a good addition.

Jake did ask if he knew where any of the other S-grades were, as the Blademaster frowned.

The Phoenix Queen sure knows where the Nine Seals Demon is. Last time I checked, those two were an item.

For a moment, Jake considered if this was yet another plot twist that the Phoenix Queen was actually with the dragons all along, and that was why she had kept hidden that she knew where this Nine Seals Demon was. That didn't feel quite right, though, so he would have to confirm.

With the Blademaster recruited, the S-grade quickly helped Jake get back to a major city, where he promptly went to the Guild and reported his success as the Blademaster and his wife headed toward the frontlines. In the Guild, the employee gave him a token from the Phoenix Queen.

Seeing no reason to delay, he headed to a nearby room and infused some energy into it.

The projection of the Phoenix Queen appeared in front of Jake a few seconds later as she spoke in a grave tone. I heard you found the Blademaster good. You have proven your skills are indeed worthy of respect, and if anyone can do this, you can. I did not hide the location of the Nine Seals Demon maliciously; I just had to make sure you may be skilled enough to find her. While I do not know where the Nine Seals Demon is, I know a way to get her to come to us. She left the planet a long time ago, but before she left, she set up a trial to find any prospective students worth teaching, meaning it can only be entered by C-grades. Inside this trial, I also know she placed a teleportation circle for her to return from borderline anywhere in the galaxy. Pass her trial and tell her we need help and we need it fast. The location of the trial is already known by the Guild, so get it from them.

I will head there straight away, Jake confirmed as he received yet another Special Courier Job.

Good, but be warned. The Nine Seals Demon is a master of traps and formations, and her trial will be filled with them. I wish you luck for the sake of us all this task will not be easy.

to make a long story short, Jake would put this trial at the difficulty level of a moderately hard Minagas Endless Labyrinth Section. Far below the best Jake could do for sure, which made for an easy Special Courier Job.

At the end of the trial, Jake indeed found a large chamber with a massive teleportation circle in the middle, as well as an orb that one could infuse power into. Jake didn't really think much as he went and did just that as a projection appeared soon after.

A woman with red skin, barely wearing any clothes and covered in tattoo-like markings, stood before him soon after. She looked down at Jake for a moment before she spoke.

Ten thousand years and someone has finally passed my trial and it turns out to be a mid-tier C-grade. A bit unexpected but not unwelcome. Now tell me, why did you pass my trial? the Nine Seals Demon said.

Oh yeah, Jake had changed his level to show his actual one a while ago. He also didn't wear his mask anywhere, as he came to learn that it only had a detrimental effect when dealing with clients. Not that he could blame them.

Greetings, Jake bowed. I apologize, but I am not here for anything strictly to do with the trial. I am a Courier here to inform you that your homeworld is getting invaded, and I was tasked by the Phoenix Empress to contact you. She told me this place houses a teleportation circle to bring you back from wherever you are.

The Nine Seals Demon was quiet for a while before she sighed. Tell me has the Phoenix Empress gone to the frontlines to fight?

Yes, Jake quickly answered, as he got an odd feeling from her question.

I see, the Nine Seals Demon said, sounding a bit concerned. Very well. To activate the magic circle, take the crystals in the adjacent room and place them in the four focal points of the formation, and I shall return promptly to meet her.

Jake looked at the projection for a moment as he nodded. Alright, but one question first since when did you side with the dragon tribe?

The projection stopped as she stared down at him. What do you mean?

Yeah, that being your response pretty much confirms it, Jake shook his head. Seriously you didnt ask any questions, didnt ask me to elaborate about anything, and instantly asked about the frontlines despite knowing nothing of whats going on. Thats suspicious as hell. If you didnt already know what was happening, that is.

The projection kept looking down at him as she sighed. Too clever for your own good, huh? Tell me, if you are so clever, how much do you truly know about this entire conflict? Why there ever was a war, to begin with? You are on the wrong side of history. The planet you stand on was originally inhabited by the dragons and beasts. We who dare call ourselves enlightened arrived much later as nothing more than refugees, but the dragons took us in. Helped us rise to power and once we did, we turned around and betrayed them. Killed their leader and forced them from their own home while rewriting history to make us look like the victims. All the dragon tribe is doing is setting things right, and-

Maam, I dont care, Jake interrupted her, truly not giving a shit. Just here on a job, and seeing as you arent an ally, Ill be taking my leave.

And here I thought you would see sense very well, if that is your choice, so be it. But dont think for a second you are leaving here alive.

With those words, her projection exploded as magic formations on the walls activated, and everything around him rumbled as a collapse was imminent. Seeing as he was over a hundred kilometers below the ground in a heavily fortified trial, this could definitely be a problem. Whats more, in the distance, he heard several explosions as all the traps he had passed began going off, and from the sounds of it, these explosions were getting closer, making Jake swear internally.

Bloody hell, why cant this shit ever be easy and I dont even get hazard pay.

Chapter 847: Nevermore: "What a twist."

Jake sighed as the entire trial was rapidly coming down on his head. Usually, a collapsing cave wouldnt really be a problem, and it would, at most, annoyingly trap him for a while, but this place was a bit different. It was clearly rigged to explode and kill whoever was inside, and releasing a Pulse, Jake saw that the pathways he had taken to enter the chamber were rapidly collapsing. If he really hurried, there was a chance he could still make it out the way he came, though it would be far more dangerous than the way down there. Even then, it was a risk, and he predicted he would get trapped at quite a few points and would have to do his fair share of digging.

He could do all that or he could just go straight up and not waste any more time than he needed to. Summoning his wings, Jake began to rapidly infuse energy into them before he had an enchanted rock fall on his head. A green mist began to come out as he manipulated it to slowly surround him. Jake's body soon enough began to turn a dark green color as he took a deep breath before activating the emergency escape ability of Wings of the Malefic Viper.

Shooting upwards, Jake had little control of his movements, as he just focused on going up. He felt himself pass through solid matter as if nothing could stop him. Even the enchantments placed on the chamber didn't manage to impede his ascent, as they were ultimately made to strengthen the material, not stop someone using a skill like Jake's to travel straight through.

Everything was warped as Jake wasn't sure exactly where he would end up. After a few seconds more, Jake figured it was good enough as he deactivated the skill and appeared in the real world once more. Once his eyes and body refocused, he found himself standing in mid-air, above the clouds, with the ground far beneath him.

The wings on his back slowly withered away, and Jake felt the backlash as he could no longer activate the skill. He probably wouldn't be able to for a good while at least a few days. Jake had purposefully not kept the skill going for longer than necessary to avoid the cooldown being too long, even if he could have continued for a good while.

Well, the Nine Seals Demon was a dud, Jake sighed again. He had honestly been lucky he had discovered she was a secret ally of the dragon tribe because that had definitely been a risky gamble. Had Jake known for sure she was an ally of them? No, he just felt like things felt a bit off with her responses and lack of surprise when Jake mentioned the world getting invaded. Almost as if she had expected it to happen. Her concern also felt completely fake.

When he then accused her of being an ally, her response had also seemed off. She had frozen and just looked at him before asking what he meant. If she truly was an ally of the Founder who had fought the dragon tribe, wouldn't she be extremely offended that some C-grade accused her of working with her hated enemy?

Nothing was definitive proof, but Jake had risked big and won. The fact she had crumbled so quickly and confessed everything had been very lucky for sure. As for her explanation about how the dragon tribe was actually the wronged party and the entire you're actually working with the baddies spiel yeah, Jake honestly didn't care. He was the Chosen of an evil snake cult. If he cared about being associated with the bad guys, he would have had a faction change a long time ago.

The conversation did bring up one more annoying question he had to ask himself, though was the Phoenix Queen an ally? The Founder had mentioned this Nine Seals Demon as an ally before, so there was a chance she had switched sides recently, and the Phoenix Queen had no idea. It could also be that the Phoenix Queen was also an enemy who would stab them in the back, which could be disastrous if the Founder trusted her. At this point, there was no way to determine her allegiances, and Jake had no idea how he would go about things.

Either way, shit was messy, and Jake was definitely not equipped to handle it. He considered what to do but ultimately decided to return to the Guild. Whenever in doubt, he returned to the core objective of this Challenge Dungeon: to complete Courier Jobs. So, if he could trust anyone, it had to be the Founder who made the Guild.

Luckily, the trial hadn't been that far from a major city, and a few hours of using One Step later, he arrived back in one. After a few more teleports, Jake was back in the capital city of the Human Kingdom, where he headed to the Guild to hopefully contact the Founder directly.

He ended up having to wait half an hour inside the Guild office before he could finally talk with the S-grade.

A projection appeared, and Jake saw the form of the Founder. He looked a bit worse for wear and was sitting with his legs crossed, likely also using this conversation to restore some energy. Courier, thank you for helping get the Blademaster here. I heard from the Phoenix Queen you went to recruit the Nine Seals Demon? Her abilities would be a great help in fortifying our defenses.

Yeah, about that turns out the Nine Seals Demon is on the side of the dragon tribe, Jake said with an apologetic look. I luckily discovered this before summoning her here, so a crisis was temporarily averted.

What?

the Founder asked, confused. Impossible she was no, I believe you, you have yet to lie to me. What exactly happened when you contacted her?

Jake began to explain everything about their conversation and how he had to escape the collapsing cave, sprinkling that in to make it clear she had tried to kill him, likely to bury what he knew. The Founder frowned even more deeply than before when Jake told him she said that the dragon tribe were



the planets original inhabitants, and the enlightened races were nothing more than refugees who took over. His interpretation of history was a bit different, though.

Refugees? While it is true some were, many were brought here by the dragons as slaves after their homeworlds were destroyed by the tribe. It was no rebellion toward a benevolent ruler but a revolution against a tyrannical one that took place over centuries. We did also get some help from other enlightened who arrived, but to paint us as the aggressors and not us simply defending ourselves either the Nine Seals Demon has been utterly fooled, or she tried to fool you, the Founder said after Jake was done with his explanation.

Jake wanted to tell him that he still didnt give a shit about the history of the world, and he kind of assumed both of them to be full of crap when it came to telling him what actually went down, but he held his tongue. Instead, he waited for the Founder to give him some time to think. As this happened, Jake also saw he had completed the Special Courier Job to find the Nine Seals Demon, so that was nice.

You have once more done us a huge service. If the Nine Seals Demon had been summoned to the planet and attacked from behind, dismantling our defenses, the consequences would have been disastrous. I also understand your concerns about the Phoenix Queen, and I will make sure to confirm if she is also a spy but I doubt it. For now, do keep what happened with the Nine Seals Demon hidden, though. I will tell her if I believe that best while subtly investigating.

That was definitely a flag of some sort, and Jake quickly interjected.

I believe it would be best to tell her now. There is a good chance the Nine Seals Demon joins the invasion force at some point, and if the Phoenix Queen is actually on our side right now, the shock of seeing someone she was once close with may turn her to the side of the dragons. If, on the other hand, you already discussed this with her first, she will not be shocked and be far more likely to refuse to listen to anything the Nine Seals Demon says.

Stolen novel; please report.

It was pretty common knowledge that people were incredibly biased toward the first side of any story they heard. If the Phoenix Queen already had the interpretation that the Nine Seals Demon had either gone insane or been tricked, she was far less likely to be convinced. This all assumed she wasnt a traitor right now, of course.

Hm, perhaps you are right, the Founder agreed. Very well; I shall discuss it with her as soon as possible.

One potential disaster avoided there or I accelerated her betrayal, Jake told himself as he continued.

How are things going at the frontlines? And is there anything more I can do to assist?

Our defenses are holding for now, but it is only a matter of time the Blademaster has been a massive help and bought us a lot of extra leeway. However, nothing has truly changed. We need more allies and

The Founder looked like he was hesitating a lot, unsure if he wanted to continue. Jake felt like he had to press him.

Please, if there is any way, it is my responsibility to try and assist. So if there are any jobs, never hesitate to give them to me, Jake insisted.

Still clearly unsure, the Founder considered for a bit before finally sighing. Very well, you have yet to fail so far. There is one person you could approach, but it is no ally or an old friend. What I am about to tell you is not something many know, and not even the Phoenix Queen is aware. Around twenty thousand years ago, I discovered an unknown aura. I noticed as the sole S-grade and went to investigate. It was another S-grade, and I foolishly got in a fight. I barely held on for a few minutes and nearly lost my life, but I was spared in the end. That is when I came to learn who I had been fighting the brother of the Dragon King, who had been thrown out as his mother was a human.

Yep, Jake had definitely unlocked some more hidden lore and a very special job. More special than the regular Special Courier Jobs.

Back in the big war, he was not involved, as while he despised his brother, he still didn't want to kill his own kin. The reason I am hesitant to try and make contact is that, truthfully, I do not know what his intentions are now. I do not know if he will even side with us or perhaps even choose his own kin and be our end. All I know is that without him, our chances are slim, while with him on our side, our victory is assured. Of course, our destruction is also unquestionable if he joins the enemy side, but at this point, it is simply a risk we have to take.

I understand, Jake nodded. A huge risk with a potential enormous reward. How am I to find this dragonkin?

Once more, I must be truthful I am not entirely sure. All I know is that he is either on this planet or one of the inhabited moons. When it comes to his exact location, all I have is a runic horn he left me with when I encountered him back then. He claimed that the runes on it could be deciphered to find his exact location, but I never really even considered messing with it, as I feared he would know if I did, and admittedly, I fear this dragonkin. Now, my fear is no longer a consideration. Also, while I respect your skills, you won't be able to decipher it, as you are ultimately still only C-grade.

Jake felt a bit disrespected, but the Founder was probably right. Jake's chance of deciphering something made by an S-grade was borderline impossible, especially if he was on a bit of a timer.

Instead, you must find experts capable of doing so. I have a few names in mind and shall include their locations when I transfer the Special Courier Job. Pick up the horn from my vault before you leave, and guard it with your life. Oh, and finally due to the nature of the runes on the horn, it cannot be put in spatial storage, and with its draconic traits, I do not doubt for a second it will release an aura recognizable to dragons or their allies so be careful as you travel, alright? There is a good chance the dragon tribe is also aware of their lost prince, so I doubt this will be a smooth journey. I would ask someone else to do it, but you are the only one I trust this task with. Now hurry, I must go; time is not on our side may you succeed and win us this war.

The projection disappeared again as Jake had gotten yet another Special Courier Job. At least, he thought it was just another Special Courier Job, but he was proven wrong as he read it.

Final Special Courier Job: While carrying the Horn of the Forsaken Dragonkin, seek out different experts capable of deciphering the runes on it. Once the runes are fully deciphered, meet the Lost Dragonkin and convince him to join the war against the dragon tribe. While carrying the horn, you will be repeatedly pursued by allies of the dragon tribe. This Special Courier Job must be completed before the frontline falls.

That's right, the final Special Courier Job of them all. Just one more left and Jake would be done though he got the feeling this one wouldn't be all that easy or fast. Without hesitation, he went by the Founder's Vault, and using his legendary Medallion with the Final Special Courier Job inside, he unlocked it, finding only the horn within.

The horn was about the size of a goats horn and slightly curved. It had a brownish color but was covered in golden runes all over. Picking it up, Jake tried if he could analyze the runes at all, but after just a brief scan, he shook his head. Fuck no, I cant solve that shit I doubt even Arnold could.

Using Identify on the horn, he quickly confirmed it was at least also the real item.

[Horn of the Forsaken Dragonkin (Legendary)] the horn of the ousted son of the deceased Dragon King. This horn is covered in runes that must be deciphered in order to unlock its true function. Cannot be put in any kind of spatial storage. Gives off powerful draconic Records, making it an item easily tracked by the dragon tribe.

Oh well, Jake muttered as he took the horn, and on the way out of the Guild, he took a small over-the-shoulder bag to carry it in. It was a bit too big to eat, so this would at least make it not too annoying to carry around.

Checking the location of the first expert, Jake frowned a bit. Of-fucking-course, it was placed in the middle of nowhere. With no reason to delay, Jake hurried out of the Guild and went on his way, not wasting any time to get this final job done. He just hoped that whatever the dragon tribe and their allies were cooking up wouldnt be too annoying.

Within a hidden mansion, ten figures sat. Nine of them were C-grade, all giving off auras of the late-tier, while the final one was a true A-grade powerhouse. They were positioned at a round table with a large crystal ball in the middle.

The C-grade Courier is on the move, one of the C-grades, a human, said. He has the horn.

These people were all of different races, each representing different countries on the planet, except for the A-grade, who showed strong draconic traits. Unsurprising, considering he was a dragon in human form.

With a large smile, the A-grade in the room spoke. Good... the royal prince was right. In their desperation, they will lead us straight to him. Now, we just need to capture this Courier, and victory shall be ours. My movements are sealed, but you all should be able to act freely, so this task falls to you. Mobilize your forces and track him down.

Waving his hand, the crystal ball began to glow. Nine smaller crystal balls emerged from it as the A-grade did his magic. The horn is linked to the Dragon Prince, and using it, we shall track this Courier easily. These artifacts will all show you the location of wait a moment.

The A-grade frowned a bit as he cast his magic again. He tried two more times as he sneered and looked at the C-grade who had spoken earlier. You said a C-grade had taken out the horn from the vault!

He he did, the human confirmed. I have an insider in the Guild who confirmed it

Well, then tell me, you bloody moron, why the hell is the tracking spell not working on the horn! No wait ah, I see. Clever of them, the A-grade said after a while as he nodded confidently. There is no way a mere C-grade could hide both himself and the horn from me which can only mean one thing. He is a decoy meant to throw us off while the real horn remains in the vault. That, or someone powerful enough to hide it from me, has taken it for transport.

Everyone around the table nodded in recognition. Truly a brilliant deduction, a beastfolk chimed in, the dragon nodding, satisfied.

Seeing as he is nothing more than a decoy, dont bother with the Courier carrying the fake horn. If you have any agents that are in his path anyway, feel free to try and detain him and interrogate him for information, but there is a big chance that even he believes he is carrying the real horn, so I am not sure there is much to be gained.

Once more, everyone nodded at the brilliant analysis from their leader. Truly, he had seen through the ploys of the Founder and Guild.

Minaga just grinned as he looked at the Wyrmgod.

The Primordial didnt say anything but just looked at the livestream quietly as he held a stoic expression on his face.

Vilastromoz also smiled to himself as he watched Jake running around, wondering why the hell no one was bothering him.

Minaga leaned slightly forward as he looked at the Viper with the subtlety of a rampaging behemoth. Psst did you know Jake actually does have the real horn, but due to his totally fair Divine skill, they falsely believe he doesn't?

Wow, the Viper responded with totally genuine shock. What a twist.

#### Chapter 848: Nevermore: Forsaken Dragonkin

Maybe it was Jake's fault for expecting too much, but he had very much assumed he would meet some kind of opposition during all his travels. He had set out to find people to decipher the runes, but on the way to the first one, he didn't get intercepted by a single enemy. Were there times when something looking like an ambush was hidden in the most obvious flight path? Yes, but Jake had just easily avoided that or kept his stealth skill active to pass by unnoticed.

After his visit to the first rune-reading person, he was told that she alone couldn't decipher everything, but she managed to make some progress before sending him off to the next person with her notes. At this second person's place, a bit more deciphered, and at the third, a bit more than that.

Days turned to weeks, and soon Jake had spent over a month traveling between these rune decipherers. Each of them, for some fucking reason, liked to live in bum-fuck nowhere, meaning Jake had to travel a lot to get to them. With time, he did notice the search parties looking for him increasing, but with a mixture of Pulse of Perception, a legendary stealth skill, and probably also Shroud of the Primordial doing its stuff, Jake remained undisturbed for the most part.

It did annoy him that some of the rune deciphers were stereotypical shitty quest NPCs that would only help Jake if he helped them first by doing some dumb side job, but Jake didn't really have a choice. In total, Jake spent nearly three months before he finally met the final rune decryptor. The old man looked at the notes done by the others who had looked at the horn, and after about an hour, he succeeded in solving the final rune.

Right as he did so, all the golden runes covering the horn gave off strong light as they warped and changed. Jake quickly reached out and took hold of the horn, and the moment he did, two things happened. The first was that he suddenly knew exactly where he could find the Forsaken Dragonkin and that a giant beam of light shot into the sky as the full aura of an S-grade dragonkin blasted out.

Jake was pushed back slightly as he saw the old decipherer fall to the ground, knocked out by the blast. This wave of aura spread further than Jake could see, and with how big it was, they could likely feel it all

the way to the frontline far up in space. Quickly running outside, Jake stared up as the sky rumbled, and he didn't doubt for a second that many powerful beings were approaching. What's more, he got a feeling things had suddenly turned for the worse elsewhere, too, confirmed as he got a notification.

Final Special Courier Job Updated: While carrying the Horn of the Forsaken Dragonkin, meet the Forsaken Dragonkin and convince him to join the war against the dragon tribe. While carrying the horn, you will be repeatedly pursued by allies of the dragon tribe, who are now aware of your location. The frontline is rapidly falling, and time is not on your side.

Yep things were definitely a lot worse now than before, and Jake didn't delay for a second as he headed straight to the teleporter in the city. He was lucky that the horn had only given off that one giant blast of aura and didn't continue to give it off, but it had still pinged every single person on the planet to this location.

However, Jake soon met another problem the second he activated the teleporter to a new city and went through to the other side, a whole new blast of aura shot out of the horn. Due to how many people were near the teleportation gate, Jake knocked out over ten thousand people with his first teleport alone.

Fucking hell,

Jake cursed, but he didn't stop as he teleported again three more times to get as close to his destination as possible. Tens of thousands, if not far more, were knocked out in Jake's wake as he sent off a sequence of pings to whoever was pursuing him, informing them of what direction he was heading.

When Jake had finally done his final teleport, he stormed off immediately. His wings were naturally available once more after he used the escape skill before, and he quickly summoned them and used One Step for maximum speed. He quickly got a bit away from the city, found a quiet place, and went down to activate his stealth skill. With it active, Jake continued his journey as he used Pulse of Perception every thirty seconds or so for the first period of travel despite the headache it induced as he was feeling pretty damn paranoid.

And for good reason. Powerful beings were coming his way, no longer limited to just C-grades either. With the fall of the frontlines rapidly approaching, those on the planet who had been lying in wait were now moving far more openly. Through Pulse, he did spot some people also fighting against them, as the war had pretty much broken out everywhere, and shockwaves of energy from B-grades fighting could be felt in the distance.

Jake had to fly more carefully than ever as he slowly approached a mountain range in the middle of nowhere. There were no towns anywhere close to it, and he had to cross a desert-like plain just to reach it, with nothing living there. Even the mountains were entirely bare rock, with not a single plant growing anywhere.

Yet the horn responded as he got closer and closer to his destination. When Jake entered the mountain range, yet another blast of aura was released, making Jake grit his teeth as he knew everyone was coming his way now. Things were really out of hand, and before anyone had a chance to catch up, Jake reached a small cave at the foot of one of the mountains.

Entering, Jake walked through it for a while until he reached its end. There, he found a heavily enchanted stone gate with a slot in it that looked very similar to the horn he had been carrying around all this time. Briefly inspecting the cave walls and the gate, Jake quickly recognized everything here had been fortified to a level where he doubted even the Founder could break through with force. Taking out the horn, Jake slotted it in as all the runes activated. Jake felt like he was on some treasure-hunting expedition as the golden runes spread to the rest of the door before it began to slowly sink into the ground, allowing him passage.

Walking through the open gate, Jake entered a long, bricked hallway as torches lit on both sides. He had already scouted ahead and knew he was in the right place and that there were no traps, so after walking calmly for a few minutes, he reached a large chamber unimpeded.

There, right in the middle of the large chamber, was a single figure. The floor was covered in a large magic circle that seemed to be feeding this person power, and he didn't even react when Jake made his entrance. Yet Jake felt the attention of this being upon him and he knew it was the strongest creature he had met in this Challenge Dungeon so far, and not by a little. He didn't even dare use Identify as he was pretty damn confident the being would be aware if he tried to.

If you discover this tale on Amazon, be aware that it has been unlawfully taken from Royal Road. Please report it.

Probably at the level of Viridia and I heard she is close to the peak of S-grade

Greetings, Jake said with a polite bow as he stopped a good distance away, not entering the range of the magic circle.



The dragonkin slowly opened his eyes as two red irises looked Jake up and down. That horn I had nearly forgotten I even gave it out. Tell me, what is a mere C-grade doing here, interrupting me? It wouldn't have anything to do with the little scuffle outside, now would it?

You are correct, Jake nodded, seeing no need to hide anything. The planet is facing a crisis, and I was tasked by the Guild Founder the man whom you gave the horn - to seek you out and request your assistance.

Right as Jake said this, a notification appeared in front of him as the Final Special Courier Job had changed once more.

Final Special Courier Job Updated: Successfully convince the Lost Dragonkin to assist you.

As Jake read the objective, he cursed internally. He had a bad feeling about this one.

You are asking me to help the man who killed my father? What's more, what he wants my help with is to kill my half-brother and other family members? the Forsaken Dragonkin asked as he tilted his head and flashed a toothy grin. Now, why would I ever want to do that?

Alright, it was clear the dragonkin already had full knowledge of what was going on, which did make his opening line kind of weird. However, it meant that simply explaining the situation in detail wouldn't get him on Jake's side, so he had to actually do some convincing. The problem with that was Jake had no idea what to say. Doing all he could to not show his uncertainty, Jake simply nodded as he kept up his professional demeanor.

Yes, that is exactly what I and the Founder are asking of you, Jake answered. He had to gamble on the Forsaken Dragonkin, having a somewhat positive view of the Founder. If not, why had he left him alive back then and even given him a horn to find him with? It wouldn't make any sense if he actually gave a shit about his family, so Jake would gamble on the Forsaken Dragonkin not liking them, considering them forsaking him and all. As for why I would ask why not. You are clearly no ally of the dragon tribe nor your so-called family.

The Forsaken Dragonkin looked at Jake with some amusement as he chuckled. You're not wrong, but why would that make me want to help you? The dragon tribe doesn't matter to me much anymore. If I

wish to see them wiped out, I may as well do so after they have exhausted some of their strength in this war. Wouldn't that be more efficient and just make more sense?

As the dragonkin talked, Jake got more and more confused. Why are we even having this conversation?

It sounded like the dragonkin wanted Jake to convince him or something. Like he needed convincing. As an S-grade, why else would he bother talking to some random C-grade? If he had already made up his mind to not help, he could just be doing this for his own amusement, but Jake really hoped a high-tier S-grade wasn't that bored. Plus, the Courier Job had to mean convincing him was possible somehow.

If that is what you want, then surely no one could stop you, Jake answered. But I would still try and do my utmost to convince you to assist us, so please, is there anything I can do to sway your mind? I am most certain the Guild Founder and all those who oppose the dragon tribe would be more than willing to compensate you in any way they can if you save them.

Hey, if Jake had no idea how to convince the guy, why not ask him how to? Who knows, maybe it could even work.

The Forsaken Dragonkin smiled as he tilted his head before standing up. Now that you mention it, there may just be one thing you could do to convince me.

Without any warning, the dragonkin appeared beside Jake as he spoke. You know, I've been watching the happenings of this world for a while. Ever since my dear brother contacted me a few centuries ago and informed me of his return while asking for my help, I kept an eye on things. Considered if this world even stood a chance and if either side would rule, who I would be able to tolerate the most. I do not care about ruling anything I am merely pursuing whatever lies beyond my current level of power. What comes after S-grade: the mythical realm of godhood.

Understandable, Jake answered as the dragonkin stood beside him with an amused look.

That is to say, I need whatever side wins to stay out of my way when I want them gone and support me when I want anything, the dragonkin continued.

As aforementioned, I am sure that can be arranged and that the Guild Founder and all other factions would be more willing to do whatever they can for the one who saved them. Even if that includes doing your every bidding until the day you ascend, Jake said. Hey, no one said he couldn't make unrealistic promises as long as they beat the dragon tribe, right?

Ah, but wouldn't the dragon tribe do the same? In fact, that is exactly what they offered already when I spoke to my dear brother. The thing is, my impression of them isn't the best, so if both sides are equally subservient, I see no reason not to side with this Guild Founder of yours and choose the side you represent.

Wait, things are actually going kind of well? Jake asked himself as he smiled and nodded.

While I am unable to make any definitive promises on account of everyone, I can swear I will do my utmost to convince them to assist you in attempting to reach godhood, and with the authority and trust given to me by the Guild Founder, I am highly confident in my success, Jake said as he felt like a deal was pretty much struck.

Oh, I believe you, the Forsaken Dragonkin said as he stood right in front of Jake. You have made quite the impact ever since you appeared out of nowhere in this world. You weeded out corruption, became chummy with the most powerful people, and rose to a position second only to the Guild Founder within his little Guild as far as I can tell impressive for a C-grade. Almost too impressive.

I am merely doing my best as a Courier and carrying out all jobs given as perfectly as I possibly can, Jake answered, hoping that being professional would be enough. Still, his bad gut feeling only kept getting worse.

Now, that that is where I begin to question things, the dragonkin smiled. Why? Why are you carrying out these jobs as best as you can? Why are you seemingly so loyal to the Guild? Why do you risk your own life carrying out their bidding? To this point, I have yet to figure out what you get out of it. You are clearly competent, yet if I go purely by your actions, you seem like nothing but a thoughtless slave doing as his master wants.

Jake narrowed his eyes as he looked directly at the S-grade. I have my own reasons for doing what I'm doing.

I think this is the first time youve been wholly honest with me, the dragonkin said. You just keep making me more and more curious. You stand before me now, yet I sense no fear. No reverence. Nothing. Are you truly only a C-grade?

Does it matter? Jake questioned. What would anything regarding me as a person matter when it comes to your choice of who to support?

Oh, it matters a lot. You have influence. Your voice matters, and as I said, I cant quite figure you out, the Forsaken Dragonkin continued. There are few things I actively dislike, but at the top of that list is doubt uncertainty. Elements I cannot with confidence control. You are an uncertainty, and I am not sure if I can control you so I have an offer. A task you can do for me, and if you accomplish it, I will help the Guild Founder and his allies wipe out the dragon tribe for good.

Jake really didnt like where this was going. What do you want?

Its simple prove to me your professionalism and dedication to your job as a Courier. Prove to me you will truly do everything in your power to carry out your duties.

The Forsaken Dragonkin looked entirely serious as his smile faded, and he pulled out a dagger, pointing the handle toward Jake.

Kill yourself.

Chapter 849: Nevermore: The Art of the Deal (Aka Lying)

Jake stared at the Forsaken Dragonkin as he, more than anything, just wanted to yell, What the fuck did you just say to me? but he managed to hold himself back. However, his face did reveal his distaste for the question, showing that he should have maybe worn his mask for this entire thing.

Oh? Did the question offend you? the dragonkin asked in an amused tone.

I merely fail to see how my death would change anything, Jake answered.

It would convince me to help. You don't need to know anything more than that. Now, why the hesitation? With every passing second, more people die, and the chance of the Guild Founder falling only increases. You can end it all by simply ending yourself a small sacrifice if I say so myself.

Jake's eyes narrowed as he actually considered the proposition seriously for a moment. Not because he actually considered doing it, but more to try and understand why it was even offered within this Challenge Dungeon.

One had to remember that Jake had three lives, so that could make one think that killing himself would just be the smart thing to do. However, the rules of the Challenge Dungeon made things a bit more messy as he clearly remembered the text.

Should you die, you will return back to wherefrom you originally accepted the most recent Courier Job. The Courier Job you died in the midst of will no longer be available. You have three total lives.

There were a few things here. It only said Courier Job in the description, never specifying anything about Special Courier Jobs. Jake had just assumed that since Courier Job was in both names, both counted. There was also the part about returning back to where he accepted the Courier Job after failing it. Did this mean Jake was just teleported and revived there? Or did it turn back time to the moment he accepted the job? Jake once more assumed it meant turning back time, but he would fail no matter the case.

Unless the Special Courier Job was completed before Jake was returned. In that case, what would happen? Would Jake just die and exit the Challenge Dungeon while also completing it at the same time? Would he see a nice epilogue slideshow as if he had just finished an RPG?

There were many interpretations, and there even was a chance that killing himself would actually lead to a good ending for the world. Of course, there was also the option that it just fucked Jake over completely and sent him back without having done the Special Courier Job at all.

Finally, this could also simply be a test. The kind of thing where Jake would take the dagger, but just before he actually killed himself, the S-grade would stop him and say he had proven his determination simply by showing he was willing to do it.

Now, no matter the case, Jake's answer would still be a solid fuck no.

It wasn't even a question of if this would work to complete the Challenge Dungeon. The dragonkin had simply asked Jake to do something he wouldn't ever do. To kill himself would go as directly against his Path as anything could, and even if it probably wouldn't really matter, Jake didn't want Records of him choosing to kill himself like this associated with him.

Also, Jake didn't even think he could try to genuinely do it. Chances are the S-grade could detect if Jake was faking it or not, so the he will stop me at the very last moment option wasn't even valid. If it required Jake to truly be willing to kill himself, how was it different from actually killing himself? Truthfully, Jake simply valued his life too much to even fake it. He wouldn't even willingly kill himself to save all of Earth, so why the hell would he ever do it for some random world in a Challenge Dungeon?

Last but not least, this simply couldn't be the solution. To even get to this point of the Challenge Dungeon, one had to be pretty damn good. One had to be a multiversally recognized talent, and someone often called a genius, and while Jake could see the logic in teaching these young geniuses how not to be assholes to others by using their status, he didn't see a world where the Wyrmgod thought teaching them to be doormats willing to kill themselves was a good idea.

You are awfully quiet for someone on a timer, the dragonkin said, as Jake hadn't said anything for a while. Are you truly in a position to be considering the offer that deeply? Why do you even need to consider it when I thought you were such a loyal and dedicated Courier, willing to do anything to get the job done?

Jake clearly heard the mockery in the dragonkin's tone, making him lose his cool for a brief moment as he replied in a snarky tone. Oh, I'm sorry. I was thinking the joke had already run its course and was waiting for you to stop fucking around.

The Forsaken Dragonkin's smile only grew as Jake said this. And there he is. The one hiding beneath the mask. Are you now going to tell me now what you really are and what you're doing here? Because I don't believe for a second you just appeared out of nowhere and suddenly found your passion by being a Courier.

I think I already told you my matters are my own, but true, I'm not just doing this work out of the goodness of my heart, Jake said, having already decided.

Clearly, any usual strategies for convincing the dragonkin wouldnt work, so he tried to switch up the tactic a bit and act more like he usually did.

But you do genuinely need my help, the Forsaken Dragonkin pointed out.

Need your help? No, not really, it would just make things easier for me, Jake shrugged. The people fighting up there do need you, though. If not, theyre fucked for sure.

And what would happen to you if they all die?

I would probably just leave, Jake said honestly. No reason to stick around if everything is just a burning mess. But dont misunderstand, I do want to complete my current job, which is to have you help the Guild Founder and the others, so how to make you do that? And no, Im not fucking killing myself.

I see so what if I just kill you instead? the Forsaken Dragonkin asked as his aura was released. It pressed down on Jake with actual energy, making his knees slightly buckle, but Jake quickly responded by infusing stable arcane energy into them meaning that rather than bend, they would get squashed like under a hydraulic press if the pressure got high enough.

That would also be highly annoying, Jake said as his lips tore just from moving while under the pressure.

Annoying? What an insignificant word to describe the end of your Path with, the Forsaken Dragonkin scoffed as he kept up the pressure. Youre telling me you wont kill yourself, but dying to me barely matters?

You cant kill me at least not for good Jake said as he kept staring the dragonkin in the eyes despite his own body repeatedly taking damage.

The Forsaken Dragonkin tilted his head as the pressure severely lessened. Now you got me curious. I dont need a lie-detector skill to know you truly believe that what gives you such confidence?

Tell you what Jake said as he popped both his shoulders back in place after they had been dislocated from the aura. Ill tell you after youve dealt with that dragon tribe.

Heh, the dragonkin shook his head. I may be curious, but at this point, I am inclined to believe you are just insane rather than there being any actual reason.

Fair, fair, Jake nodded as he took out and drank a health potion. But isn't it worth the gamble? From how I see it, you have four choices. Either you wipe out the dragons and side with the Guild Founder, you help the dragon tribe and kill the Founder, or you wait for both to fight it out and swoop in to beat down the winner and have them serve you. That winning side very likely being the dragon tribe. Fourth, you just kill all of them and don't bother with any factions.

Unauthorized usage: this narrative is on Amazon without the author's consent. Report any sightings.

The dragonkin kept looking at Jake as if he were some interesting specimen, and he seemed more and more amused. And now you talk about wiping out everyone with such casualness

Jake shrugged, partly to roll his shoulders and make sure they were correctly popped into place, and partly to, well, shrug. Not my first time seeing a world be destroyed. But I can't recommend it unless you really hate everyone here.

If your goal is to intrigue me more, you are doing a good job, the Forsaken Dragonkin said with interest. I already had the belief you didn't originally come from this planet or even any of the nearby solar systems, and seeing as I believe you have seen the fall of a world and that I am aware of any planets falling nearby, that only enforces it. So, where do you actually come from?

If I told you, it would stop being such an intriguing mystery, now wouldn't it? Jake answered with a smile.

Alright then how about this. Have you ever met a god before?

Raising an eyebrow, Jake was a bit surprised by that question. Partly because this felt like people with connections to gods would have an advantage with this one. Alas, Jake saw no reason not to tell the truth.

Obviously.



So a god sent you here?

In a roundabout way, you can say that, Jake nodded. Now, not going to answer more, but I am kind of getting the feeling what you wanna ask about you want to know how to achieve godhood, dont you?

We all do, dont we? the Forsaken Dragonkin shrugged as he asked without an ounce of seriousness. Why? Got any tips or tricks?

No, of course not, Jake said with a deadpan expression. But I may be able to help you after you help me.

And how exactly will you help me? the dragonkin said, looking even more amused than before, and from the look in his eyes, Jake knew the path he was going down was correct because he saw a small smidgen of hope.

I cannot tell you directly how but I can show you instead, Jake said as he took a deep breath. Please, I would stand back a bit; this isnt something I can easily do.

The thing Jake was about to do had come to him as they spoke, and in all honesty, it was a huge gamble. Even if things seemed to be going well, Jake had the feeling the dragonkin still wasnt going to actually help him. He was beginning to realize he truly didnt care what happened, and Jakes guess he was just fucking around by talking with Jake was actually mostly correct.

Would he have still helped if Jake had killed himself? Maybe, maybe not. Again, it didnt matter, as Jake firmly believed it hadnt been a real choice unless one was maybe on their last life or something. So Jake had cooked up this little ploy instead. He would, for a moment, convince the dragonkin in front of him he was actually the avatar of a god, just long enough to get him to help Jake. Genuinely help Jake.

The Courier Job was to convince the Forsaken Dragonkin. Jake believed there probably were things you could say to make him side with you, and maybe someone like Miranda could have done it by offering him things or making good arguments why assisting the Founder would be wisest but Jake wasnt able to do that. He had kind of tried but failed badly. So, he would just go with something only he was capable of by lying and deceiving using his special abilities.

Alright, Ill bite, the dragonkin said as he raised both hands and backed away a bit. But lets make this your last chance. If you fail to be convincing Ill kindly throw you out of here because, honestly, that fourth option of wiping out everyone does actually sound quite appealing.

Jake didnt say anything as the words of the dragonkin pretty much served as confirmation. That had probably been his plan all along. To have the two sides fight it out, and then rather than make the winner his servants, he would just kill them all. It made sense he was Forsaken, after all. He hadnt bothered making anyone his servants before now, despite being capable of all this, so why would he even bother now? Plus, the dragon tribe had clearly betrayed and thrown him out, while the human side, even if they served him for a while, would all despise him simply for his herriage. Simply put, he had no love for either side, but Jake still believed he could be convinced to at least tolerate the enlightened races.

Sitting down, Jake crossed his legs as he took a deep breath, and the S-grade observed him with interest. Entering Soul Meditation, Jake dove into his Soulspace. There, he saw the shadowy figure that looked a bit like himself representing Eternal Shadow, some other collections of energy here and there and a shitload of arcane energy covering the skies.

However, right in the middle of the world floated a small black object. A single droplet of dark blood. Jake approached this blood drop as the intense aura of the Malefic Viper could be felt from it. This was the blood Jake had absorbed all the way back in the Trial of Myriad Poisons just following the Tutorial. It wasnt just regular blood either, but blood containing Records and energy from the Malefic Viper. A fragment of his power.

Jake hadnt really messed with it much, even if he did study it when using Sagacity of the Malefic Viper. It was still filled with knowledge for him to unlock, but doing anything forcibly with it simply wasnt possible. The only reason it was even dormant and that having such a fragment inside of him didnt kill Jake outright was because of his Bloodline being able to suppress it, and the Viper never actively trying to take it back.

Throughout time, Jake had many theories as to how he could maybe use this small droplet but never dared. Jake had no idea what messing with it could even help him with, so there had been little reason to even try before. He was already slowly absorbing it, and with time, he would make all the Records inside truly his, so trying to mess with it directly was high-risk, borderline zero reward.

Now, things were different as Jake was going to try one of the things he had theorized was maybe possible. Something that, even if he could do it, would be utterly useless outside of this particular

Challenge Dungeon. Besides, with it being a Challenge Dungeon, even if Jake messed up, he wouldn't actually die.

Approaching the drop of blood, Jake carefully reached out and stopped just before touching it. Controlling himself as best as he could, Jake lessened the suppression of the drop ever-so-slightly as it passively began to fight back, and its Records began to run rampant, not unlike the time he had absorbed all the cursed energy from the Root of Eternal Resentment.

A dark green aura spread from the drop of blood as it mixed with Jake's Bloodline, and with full focus, he projected it outwards. At the same time, he released his Bloodline aura fully as he opened his eyes out in the real world.

His aura exploded with the presence of his Bloodline as it blanketed the entire room. However, his presence was different from usual as it faintly mixed with that of the Malefic Vipers from the drop of blood, giving it a slight divine quality.

For the very first time, the Forsaken Dragonkin looked at Jake with genuine shock. Jake saw his legs slightly shake from the mixed presence, but before anything more happened, Jake had to pull it all back as he fully suppressed the drop of blood once more. As everything returned to normal, Jake coughed as blood filled his glove, and he made damn sure the dragonkin saw it.

What was the dragonkin muttered.

A preview, Jake said as he wiped the blood away and looked at the dragonkin.

A preview of what exactly? the Forsaken Dragonkin said with intense interest.

Godhood, Jake just smiled. And if you want to learn more you know what to do. Help me to succeed in my task, and I'll be sure to help you afterward.

The Forsaken Dragonkin looked at Jake for a moment, and Jake knew he had deployed plenty of magic to see if Jake was telling the truth. Perhaps he detected some of Jake's words were half-truths, but he had never really outright lied, so in the end, the dragonkin simply nodded.

Very well you have a deal.

Final Special Courier Job Updated: Await the outcome of the war.

Pleasure doing business, Jake smiled. You can find me back here when you return.

Ill make sure of it, the dragonkin said as he teleported to the entrance of the hall, and as he did, Jake felt the entire place seal off.

Jake just shook his head as he released a Pulse of Perception. He saw that outside of the mountain he was in, hordes of people had gathered, ready to strike at any moment. With a second Pulse, he saw the Forsaken Dragonkin appear in the air outside. The third showed not one of his pursuers left alive, with only wayward ashes falling.

Pretty scary.

Leaning back, Jake lied down as he put his hands behind his head as he looked toward the ceiling of the cave. Now, all he had to do was wait for the outcome of the war just as the quest said. As he was lying there, Jake felt pretty satisfied if he had to say so himself. He had pulled off the damn bluff of a century.

Jake had initially considered trying to bluff using his Bloodline alone, but he knew that wouldnt have worked. The dragonkin knew about him, and nothing Jake did would make sense if he was actually some godlike being already. Sure, there was a minuscule chance Jake was just some immortal monster playing a delivery man with self-imposed rules for fun, but Jake wouldnt bet on the dragonkin reaching that conclusion.

However, by mixing in the aura from the drop of blood, Jake changed his presence slightly, and the divine quality it added was unquestionable. He knew any S-grade could sense it and know the sheer difference in grade between that energy and their own. Plus, the aura of the Vipers clearly wasnt the same as Jakes, communicating that there indeed was some god backing him.

Now, one may ask why Jake had never tried this kind of bluff before, and the reason was pretty obvious this shit would only work on anyone who had never actually met a god before, much less the Malefic Viper. If Jake tried to blast the aura from the blood in the wider multiverse, it would easily be detected

as off, and Jake would get bitch-slapped for trying to fake it, while probably getting a heresy charge slapped on top.

Plus why the hell would Jake need to do this kind of bluff when he had a True Blessing to blast people with if he wanted to intimidate them based on his connection to the Malefic Viper? It wasn't like blasting the aura from a fragment of Records from the Viper made Jake's connection to the Primordial any less recognizable.

No, the only reason it had worked here was because of the rules of the Challenge Dungeon. Jake had effectively found a way to still flaunt his Blessing despite being unable to, which felt pretty damn good. Now, he just had one minor problem.

I hope I don't actually have to give that dragonkin tips on how to become a god

#### Chapter 850: Nevermore: The True Path to Godhood

The gods watched the screen as Jake just relaxed on the floor while yawning lazily. In space, the Forsaken Dragonkin was rampaging, truly motivated by a promise of a potential Path to godhood. No one in the room really said anything as they simply observed events unfold until, finally, Minaga chimed up.

So another note in the development log?

Yes, the Wyrmgod simply responded.

Alrighty then, Minaga smiled, clearly not upset with the situation. Looking at Vilastromoz, he couldn't help but give a big thumbs up.

I fail to understand how did your Chosen even do that? the Blightfather questioned the Viper after a bit. The Wyrmgod had shown the screen to everyone in the inner circle the Primordials, Nature's Attendant, and Artemis so he was fully aware of the shenanigans Jake had been up to. This was naturally with the Viper's permission, as he found their reactions very amusing, and what was better than bragging to old acquaintances?

Do what? the Viper asked, feigning confusion.

Project your aura or at least a cheap imitation of it.

Oh, that yeah, Jake ate a drop of my blood infused with my Records and power a while back and has thus far not volunteered to give it back, Vilastromoz answered nonchalantly.

There were a few raised eyebrows around the room as the Holy Mother also joined the conversation for once. Impressive. To be able to handle such Records without seeing his own Path broken is not something you see often, and it truly shows his dedication. It isn't something I would expect many mortals to be capable of, much less a C-grade.

C-grade? No, he ate it in E-grade, and my guy didn't even ask, the Viper sighed as he shook his head.

Eyebrows were raised even higher than before at the revelation. The only one that seemed entirely undisturbed was Valdemar. Unsurprising. He and Jake had many similarities in this regard, as Valdemar was also known for eating stuff he really shouldn't be capable of while he was still a mortal. Even now, as a god, he would just gobble down natural treasures other Primordials were wary of nonchalantly.

In any case, Jake did pretty damn well, Minaga said, carrying along the conversation. He even gave us so much good feedback on the Challenge Dungeon, outlining many things to address for the next era. Of course, most of the stuff he pulled off was things I wouldn't really expect many others to be capable of, but there were some good data points anyway.

Minaga was in a great mood, and the Viper couldn't help but take a jab. Feels good to see another Challenge Dungeon be utterly exploited after your labyrinth, eh?

I have no idea what you are talking about, and such accusations are utterly unfounded and unwelcome, Minaga tried to shut him down with a deadpan face. Minaga's Endless Labyrinth is a marvel of dungeon engineering that is perfectly balanced with no exploits.

Right, right, the Viper nodded as he kept smiling.

You speak as if the Endless Journey Challenge Dungeon was an utter mess, but I believe its self-correcting mechanisms did well. The Viper's Chosen also adequately adapted to the situations he was in,

and even if he had unique advantages, he also faced some extra challenges due to them. Ones he overcame, mostly due to these same unique advantages, true, but if one can say one thing, it is that he is good at exploiting said advantage, the Wyrmgod finally said after a while.

There were a lot of problems, though, Minaga pointed out. Admit it, this entire Challenge Dungeon was a bit of a mess and not the most successful launch.

While some would argue that nothing truly scenario-breaking happened, and the overall performance was fully acceptable. A few individuals being able to exploit a Challenge Dungeon does not make the entire project a failure. If it did, we would have had to decommission your entire labyrinth many eras ago, the Wyrmgod said in his usual dry tone as he verbally murdered Minaga.

No need to bully the poor Unique Lifeform, the Viper shook his head. But hearing you talk about how it isn't a total failure I wonder, how are Jakes team members doing in this Challenge Dungeon? Or if they've already completed it, how did they do?

The Wyrmgod briefly threw a glance at Nature's Attendant, and after the god nodded, the Wyrmgod turned back to the Viper. Three of them have already completed it, with only the Unique Lifeform yet to be done. As for how they all did or are doing see for yourself.

With a wave of his hand, the Primordial summoned four new screens. Each showed one of Jakes party members inside the Endless Journey in a highly sped-up fashion, showing their entire runs in mere seconds in Realtime, which was more than slow enough for the gods there.

Now, let's see how they did, the Viper thought as he looked at the four screens one by one.

The first screen showed the Sword Saint standing on a podium in what looked like a conference hall, talking to the many figures present. Among them were dragons in human form, the Founder, and a few other S-grades, including beings Jake had never encountered or even knew existed. This was clearly the end of his run, and the mere fact he had gathered all these individuals was impressive in its own right.

After days of debate and division of land, an accord was struck, as peace at least temporarily was established. A clear political victory, achieved in an entirely intended way by a man who had been ruling a massive clan and navigated politics for close to a century before the system.

Even if the swordsman had repeatedly said he wanted to distance himself from politics and focus on his Path of swordsmanship, that didn't mean he had to throw away the political abilities he already had. Skills that were borderline second to none.

Needless to say, the Sword Saints performance was considered exemplary, as he ended his Endless Journey run with a Legendary Medallion, still a good distance away from getting a mythical one. Perhaps he could have done slightly better if he had not lost two lives trying to set up this political meeting and if he hadn't had to make as many concessions in the final negotiations as he did.

On a second screen, Sylphie chased around an entitled customer while pecking him on the head until guards came to arrest her. She then proceeded to peck them, too, until more powerful people came, and she had to run away and flee from the very first starting city in the Phoenix Wing Empire.

Her first Endless Journey Challenge Dungeon life ended with her getting fired as a Courier on her second job with a lengthy criminal record, something she didn't like, which got her killed as she tried to fight an entire city's worth of guards.

With her second life, she managed to do a bit better but still got mad when a woman tried to scam her, making Sylphie retaliate by having a tornado rip a small village to pieces. In the Courier World, this was considered bad business and Sylphie failed her job. This she did not like and raised a ruckus in the Guild, and ended up getting chased away from the city again. Having decided to just explore a bit, Sylphie eventually ended up in a too-dangerous area while searching for something tasty to eat, which got her killed.

If you discover this narrative on Amazon, be aware that it has been stolen. Please report the violation.

After these two deaths, she got a bit more serious and even did a number of jobs, but she barely did one a week as she got bored and just flew around. That is until she got a Special Courier Job that ended up getting her in contact with the son of the Infernal Baron. The difference here was that this man didn't want to recruit Sylphie but had detected her elemental heritage and now wanted to consume her. This was how Sylphie ended up joining what Jake had called PETE, and Sylphie ultimately ended her Endless Journey while taking down the Duke of Flames in a political act of mutual destruction that also got the hawk burned to a crisp.

Sylphie's overall performance in this entire Challenge Dungeon was what many would be considered pretty damn substandard for what one would expect of a genius. Sylphie was happy enough, though, as



she did manage to scam some natural treasures out of PETE before she left. She ended up with a Rare Medallion only, despite having spent quite a while in the dungeon, mainly just messing around.

A third screen showed Dina walking on a vast grassland as the plants swayed with her steps. The entire land was alive, pulsing with power, reaching the very peak of S-grade as the living planet allowed her presence. All across the massive planet, portals had opened as the enlightened races entered, the Guild Founder and many others among them as they prepared to establish themselves anew, knowing they could not face the dragon tribe in combat without facing total destruction.

Things had been especially bleak after the Nine Seals Demon returned and managed to get the Forsaken Dragonkin on their side with promises of telling him of a place in the universe that could give him the final push to godhood. Luckily for them all, Dina had managed to work with a seed sent out from this new planet that had landed on the main Courier World one and made a deal, relying on her Bloodline.

Her Endless Journey had been far from a conventional one, as she had relied on her Bloodline perhaps more than Jake and used plenty of summons to carry out tasks. Annoying customers and those trying to scam her were also easily dealt with, mainly through a few compliant-making spores in the air.

As for the larger political issues she faced well, all the conversations she had with the Sword Saint about the art of Leadership had really come in handy there. This all led to an ultimately great performance, even if she did make a lot of mistakes, netting her an Ancient Medallion, just shy of a legendary one.

On the fourth and final of these new screens, the Fallen King was still doing the Challenge Dungeon, as he had done the same as Jake and saved this one for last. He had struggled a bit with being treated like a mere Courier in the early parts but had quickly suppressed his own pride to simply follow the objective and focus on getting a good reward.

Using his soul magic, he did better than most would expect from someone who rarely had to use words to get their way. Also, while it was a skill he rarely used, being able to detect lies of those a lot weaker than him was no difficult feat, and liars and scammers utterly failed to get one over him. When it came to the Special Courier Jobs, he also performed great. In fact, he even had many advantages, as the Fallen King managed to leverage his identity as a system-recognized king to get his way in certain situations. One had to remember that while Jake was also a noble, he didn't really integrate this fact into his Path, nor did he openly project his nobility rank.

The Fallen King, on the other hand, did this openly, acting as if he were some high-level diplomat working for another massive faction far away. This did seem to get the job done for the most part, as he

progressed steadily and kept everyone on their toes while making them hesitant to make aggressive moves toward him. This status as a king would also have its very own note in the Endless Journey Exploits Log, but ultimately deemed a non-issue as C-grades with the system-recognized title of king wasn't really a thing, and making changes just to address the uniqueness of a Unique Lifeform wasn't worth it in any way.

One big weakness the Fallen King did have in this Challenge Dungeon was his lack of speed when delivering goods during the regular Courier Jobs, and while he did alleviate this a bit through different means, this was ultimately still his big limiter as he continued his Endless Journey. However, even with this, his final result should be more than acceptable.

In the final Challenge Dungeon the gods observed, Jake soon enough had visitors. The Forsaken Dragonkin was returning, but he was not alone. With him were several others, including the Guild Founder, Phoenix Queen, and even the Nine Seals Demon, who looked a bit worse for wear while leaning on the Phoenix Queen.

Jake stood up as these figures approached the chamber. The barrier sealing him in naturally faded as Jake stepped forward and saw the S-grades approach. I take it matters have been settled?

They have, the Guild Founder said with an exhausted but happy smile. It will take a long time to rebuild but with the dragon tribe no longer lurking as a threat, I have hope our future will be a bright one now, let us return to the Human Capital. While there are many losses to mourn, there is also your unquestionable achievement to celebrate, and-

Before any of that you have a promise to keep, the Forsaken Dragonkin interrupted as he looked at Jake with narrowed eyes. Or did things change?

The Forsaken Dragonkin did not hold back as he used a skill to make completely sure Jake was telling the truth. It was certain that should he try and bullshit his way out or lie, the situation would not turn out well, especially considering Jake had yet to be told he could leave the Challenge Dungeon. So he did the only thing he could. Jake told the truth.

I am still a bit spent from the preview I gave you earlier, Jake said completely honestly. But I swear to you that I will share with you the true Path to godhood soon. The method every single one of the dozens of gods I am aware of have in common.

Jake had some time to think as he was waiting, and he had gone over what all the gods he had ever spoken of had in common. He had considered their Paths and what they had done to reach godhood and realized one universal truth about them all that he would share with the Forsaken Dragonkin was ready.

There were some amusing reactions from the Guild Founder and other S-grades when Jake mentioned gods, but none of them said anything. The Forsaken Dragonkin had looked skeptical, but at Jake's reassurance, he simply nodded. He did seem like he planned on staying close to Jake for the time being, though.

In that case let us return and celebrate as the Courier recovers, the Guild Founder said as the group of S-grades and Jake departed back toward the city.

Once back, they held a nice celebration and ceremony. The deaths of those who fought were honored; the Forsaken Dragonkin was called a hero that all of the nations would support, and the fighters who stood their ground were rewarded. However, despite all the S-grades, Jake was the main character as he was celebrated in a big ceremony put on by the Guild Founder.

Jake was praised, and in the end, the Guild Founder decided to do something unprecedented, as the first-ever Mythical Courier was crowned. Throughout this all, Jake just smiled and waved as he seriously hoped the system message would soon appear before he had to fulfill his promise to the Forsaken Dragonkin luckily, it did right as Jake had his Medallion upgraded and officially got his final promotion.

Congratulations! You have completed the Endless Journey Challenge Dungeon!

You have risen to an otherwise unknown realm of Mythical Courier. A Courier rank that only you possess, granted to someone recognized by all in the land. As a Mythical Courier, you can choose to stay in the Endless Journey and continue completing regular Courier Jobs, or you can choose to retire and end your journey for good.

Exit the Endless Journey?

Seeing this message, Jake smiled but he still had one more thing to do. After the ceremony was over, Jake and the Forsaken Dragonkin went to a chamber by themselves, as it was time for Jake to teach the S-grade how to become a god. He wouldn't be bullshitting either because Jake had truly figured it out.

You should be fully aware of what will happen if you have attempted to fool me, the Forsaken Dragonkin said as Jake took a seat across from the dragonkin.

I know, so Im not going to bullshit you, Jake said as he took a deep breath. Do you know what godhood is?

Surprise me, the dragonkin said with narrowed eyes.

While you may see godhood as your ultimate goal, in reality, it is just another step on your Endless Path. Its the hardest one by far, but far from the end. From what Ive heard, some call it the moment you truly realize your Path and prove it, so to say, but in the end, it all boils down to simply staying true to yourself and dedicated to your Path.

He spoke only truths, as the Forsaken Dragonkin seemed more receptive than before. But the question is how what tangible methods can one deploy to reach godhood?

Jake took another deep breath as he looked upwards. The how is simpler than you think. From all the gods I have observed, and how they followed their Paths, I realized they all did one thing that those who failed to reach godhood didnt.

What is it? What do I need to do?

With a serious look on his face, Jake quickly prepared himself to leave the dungeon as he answered.

Get good.