

Mana 91

Chapter 91 - EPIC I

It was now the morning of the fourth day in the Shadow Dukedom. Even with most of my time cooped up in the [Waterworks] dungeon, I was still able to spend some time watching the mundane and sometimes extraordinary lives of the people living here.

They weren't too different from the masses that I was used to in the Frozen Kingdom, only looking slightly more impoverished as they had access to less food.

I was standing next to a frozen field in one of the designated plots of land that were usually heavily protected. They treated the source of their food with this much importance.

Princess Adelaide had mentioned that the vegetables growing in these fields were called [White Radishes]. They were a strong plant that grew in the extremely cold conditions very well. But the soil of this Dukedom and a few others around the Frozen Kingdom had been seeing reduced crop yield on lands that were normally fertile.

I wanted to test the usefulness of [Budding Farmer] after the surprise that [Cook] brought me, so I would try the skill before I head out to clash with the strong attackers waiting for us.

A lone Princess was standing far behind me in another light blue dress, the cold winds not bothering her one bit. I could also feel the presence of Night that I had recently felt like she was watching me just a tad bit too much.

I raised my hand towards the small field that had a few hundred [White Radishes] growing and casted [Budding Farmer]. Rough winds roiled about as the essence around the field condensed and visibly changed to a tinge of green that landed on the field.

The green color shone for just a few seconds as changes on the plants began occurring. The somewhat dried [White Radishes] had their white leaves begin to extend and grow, with them sprouting from the ground so quickly that half of the body of the radishes could now be seen bunched together fighting for space.

In the next minute, the field I casted the skill on had undergone a complete change, becoming vastly different from the surrounding fields. Sparkling and robust [White Radishes] now valiantly stood in the fields.

The Princess that couldn't contain her shocked expression even with her cold face went forward to pick one up as she continued to be surprised. It turns out the new vegetable that rapidly grew under the effect of [Budding Farmer] was twice as large as normal ones. Gears were turning in the mind of the Princess as she began walking back and forth rapidly.

This skill, just like the previous [Cook], had shown extravagant effects. Especially the amazing economic use that [Budding Farmer] had. The Princess had already started to look at me with her shining dark eyes as she realised the possible impact of something like this in these frozen lands.

I casted the skill on a few more fields before leaving, with the Princess letting me know she would come up with an excuse of being blessed with a unique skill that raised the land's fertility and increased the

growth rate of produce. She would use this opportunity to expand her influence even further in this Dukedom.

This aligned with my current thoughts of remaining in the shadows while moving around, and the fact that whatever influence the Princess continued to amass in the future would also become mine. I confirmed this as I continued to spend my time with her, affirming her claims of her providing me with whatever I wanted. The time for me to take what I really wanted would come soon enough.

With the testing of the non standard skills I received from the first clears of this world's dungeon done, I moved on to the next phase that I was excited about. A collection of mercenaries with an EPIC ranked powerhouse in their midst had been patiently waiting for us in snowy lands. I didn't want them to wait much longer as the last combination of skills met the standards I set for myself before.

These past 4 days, after the constant activation of the skills, I was able to combine the rank A+ defensive skills of [Man of Steel] and [Protection of the Earth] to bring out the S ranked **[Rune of Defense- An archaic rune spreads throughout your body. +200% Defense].** [Dual Element Armor] and [Beastial Hide] produced **[Dragon Scales- Your body is surrounded by defenses that are meant for the highest beings].**

In addition to the defensive skills, the covert rank A skills were also able to become A+, with [Obscure] and [Shadow Escape] becoming **[Abstruse Cover].** [Illusory] and [Chameleon's Skin] came together to produce **[Barrier of Illusion].**

With the increased confidence of these new skills, I would move out today to see the power of someone of the next level once again. The previous time I was matched against two beings of a higher level, with me becoming gravely injured where even a limb was lost. I was going to be careful enough that even with confidence in the many skills I had active, such a scene would not make its appearance again.

The information we continued to receive from the Shadow Guards keeping track of the mercenaries set to ambush us was that they were camped near the only pathway leading out of the Shadow Dukedom. They wanted to corner the caravan the Princess was leading on the only path that could be taken.

This also meant that I knew where they were, and they had no idea I would be coming. A smile crept on to my lips as I observed the procession of carriages and wagons ready to move out of the dukedom. I would be making the move first, and meeting the attackers before this procession even reached that position.

The Princess was staring in the air with an expectant expression on her frozen face as she waited for me to return. I flew out of the dukedom with vigor, looking forward to the clash that would undoubtedly provide me with an amazing skill of the next rank.

In a cold and blistering environment with heavy snow falling, a group of people were angrily fanning the flames in a small makeshift hideout they created. Their bodies were extremely powerful, with most of them at rank S and one even being EPIC ranked. But after constantly facing the cold these past few days with their targets not appearing, their defenses continued to wane.

A group was clustered together as they talked in hushed tones while looking towards a figure that stood in the stormy cold outside with heavy armor plastered over her body. The cold didn't seem to bother her in the least as her body emanated a level of power that kept the ice elements at bay

"Hey, do you think we can at least tear the veil off after we capture her?"

"Hah, only if you wanna spend the rest of life being tortured. Keep to the assignment details, our task is to handle the guards and destroy the wagons. We leave the main target to the Commander."

"Aaah, I know I know. It's just hard not to think about it after you've seen her face once you know?"

"Tsk, focus on the mission. Visit a brothel after this if you need to, but don't let your stupidity cause your death. We act as soon as we see that woman's caravan."

Flames crackled as the snow fell. Not too far from this group, a flying figure was meeting with someone that was keeping watch of these rowdy mercenaries without their knowledge. The figure's eyes honed in at the location of the collection of mercenaries, his presence so thin that even the falling snow passed through him.

A hunter had found its prey.

[Noah Osmont][Occupation: Hunter]

[Vitality: 370]

[Focus: -]

[Strength: 380]

[Skill(s): [F][E][D][C][B][A: Flight-100, Guardian's Light-100, Instant Transfer-100, Infernal Purge-100, Arc Lightning-100, Area Expansion-22, Pain Resistance-100, Recorder-100, Language Comprehension-100, Healing Light-100, Lion's Roar-23, Water Barrier-100, Pierce-100, Executor's Speed-100, Sense Heat Source-100, Silent Communication-55, Regal Archer's Eyes-66, Cook-33]

[A+: Arctic Zone-100, Relegator's Spear-23, Immutable Regeneration-100, Abstruse Cover-2, Barrier of Illusion-2]

[S: Protection of the Wounded-100, Flash-11, Aura of Belligerence-23, Enfeeble-11, Phoenix Arrow-1, Shield Slam-1, Obfuscation-33, Rune of Defense-2, Dragon Scales-2, Budding Farmer-8]

[S+: Saint's Return-41, Devastation-45, Plague Bearer-39]

[Equipment: (3x B-Ring of Storage)(A-Ring of Storage)(S-Storage Pouch)(S-Veiled Suit)(S-Legion Armor)(S-Viridian Boots)]

Chapter 92 - EPIC II

I enjoyed the winter storm that further obscured the view as my figure silently stood in the air. I looked down towards an individual who was blatantly releasing their dangerous aura without care. A few tents were clustered under the shade of trees, with this figure standing alone outside and staring blankly towards the path leading to the Shadow Dukedom.

I focused as I prepared to move against this power of the next rank. I put everything aside as I looked to these people I would be embroiled in a battle with. I didn't know them, and they didn't know me. But they wanted to harm someone I had plans for, so I would steel my heart and fight.

My figure was fully hidden with multiple skills as well as the Veiled Suit, making sure nobody could see me coming. Even though I was confident in the defensive skills, it didn't mean I would have to be reckless. I would attack while still hidden in the dark.

I counted one EPIC ranked mercenary and 9 S ranks. My focus would mostly be placed on the most powerful one. I breathed out as I prepared for the on coming battle.

I started off with a small welcome of multiple casts of [Devastation]. Rifts in space opened up as wriggling destructive pillars of lightning and molten flames sn.a.k.e.d their way towards the enemy.

Barely a second passed before the mercenary reacted and took up a stance. A wild look appeared on the mercenary's face the moment she saw the rifts opening up as her body began to shine golden.

"YAAAAA!"

With a shout, a golden bell formed the moment the skills sn.a.k.e.d towards her.

BOOM!

Pandemonium ensued as the attacks connected, the golden light shining strongly and holding on as the nearby rank S mercenaries were blown away. The EPIC ranked mercenary looked around the ensuing destruction to find her attacker, but she was met with a dark aura plaguing her body as [Enfeeble] was casted. The spell ignored her defenses as it struck her and weakened the golden bell she had erected, causing the attacks from [Devastation] to connect.

OOONG!

I began feeling the exhilaration of conducting the battle in the dark as the essence around the mercenary roiled. A spectacular skill was being casted from her. The damage from [Devastation] was pushed away as a transparent figure began forming around the mercenary.

The rank S that were flung back were about to jump to block the incoming attacks when they stood back stupefied at the sight of their leader. The transparent figure of the skill she had casted held a long sword, its body boasting an incredible size of more than 8 meters.

VOOM!

The essence around us roiled as the being was fully formed. The figure of the EPIC ranked mercenary could now be seen in the transparent belly of the incarnation she had casted, each of her movements being duplicated to perfection as sharp winds came out from the large transparent thing holding a long sword. The roiling snakes of flames and lightning were all blocked as the figure stood imposingly to meet my next attack as I remained in the dark.

So this was an EPIC ranked individual. The power it let off was definitely higher than my S+ summon or the [Devastation] skill. But since I could cast them multiple times without reservation, I would make up for the lack of power in quantity! This wasn't to mention powerful support skills like [Aura of

Belligerence] that further increased my damage, making me confident if my skills weren't already packing firepower equal to EPIC, they were nearing.

As the mercenaries waited for the next attack, what met their eyes was a grotesque beast that was even larger now that it was S+ ranked. The Virulent Abomination that had become a Plague Bearer appeared with wide green wings outstretched. Poison was constantly falling off its body in blobs of green that smashed into the ground

As soon as the expanded mercenary saw the monstrosity, the large body moved with a speed that it shouldn't have as its sword struck down with a beautiful circular swing. My summon did not evade the incoming sword, its belly rumbling as its mouth unnaturally opened more than a meter wide.

[Poisonous Breath], a skill unique to the Plague Bearer was casted.

The air trembled as this skill made its appearance. Green and murky, with an unbearable stench, the noxious collection of liquid and fumes came out to cover the entirety of the rushing figure.

BOOM!

The large sword of the expanded mercenary smashed into my summon, knocking it down and nearly splitting it in half. But, like a sticky material, its two sides were slowly joining back together as [Saint's Return] was already active and healing its injured body while continuing to provide buffs.

Using [Regal Archer's Eyes], I could see the figure of the woman in the enclosed transparent incarnation move in pain. Her left arm had turned a deadly shade of green as the figure she commanded did the same. She could not completely evade the [Poisonous Breath].

I tried to remain as emotionless as possible, and casted more [Devastation], as well as giving another command to the upgraded and healed summon. Its other newly gained skill, [Defiler] could not be put to full use as there were not many corpses nearby. 2 rank S mercenaries had already met their end from being too close when the [Poisonous Breath] landed, with the rest of them going further in the distance as they tried to jump into the fight with panic

To them, only a single enemy had appeared, and even after taking a strike from the most powerful person there, it just closed itself up like it was nothing.

OOOH!

The Plague Bearer howled as its wings flapped, rushing towards the 8 meter incarnation once more. The roiling snakes of flames and lightning that completely ignored it and smashed into the enemy gave a fantastic picture of this grand battle. The EPIC ranked mercenary wasn't for show, as the incarnation holding a sword she had casted was becoming more and more solid as time passed.

Its blade became faster as it rushed towards the summon. The sight in front of me was hard to describe. The 8 meter tall figure that enveloped the EPIC mercenary was moving as if it was the lightest thing in the world, the long blade in its hands spinning beautifully in the air as the summon continued to evade the strikes. One of them finally connected.

THUCK!

The blade wedged itself deep into the body of the Plague Bearer that was now over 6 meters. It pierced from the front to the back completely, and without reservation, the summon continued forward. Its wings flapped behind it as it ignored all the damage and came close to the belly of the incarnation where the mercenary was hiding in.

Green smoke roiled out as two green bodies unnaturally appeared, flinging themselves towards the figure of the large incarnation as well. These were the two dead rank S mercenaries that fell from [Poisonous Breath]. Their arms flailed as they seemed like the fastest zombies alive, reaching and sticking to the EPIC ranked mercenary's large figure in an instant

This was the second skill that the upgraded summon could now use, [Defiler]. When I first watched this skill in action, too many grand ideas popped up as I saw the summon controlling the bodies of dead beasts and flinging them around like poisonous bombs.

A cruel smile seemed to appear on the Plague Bearer's wretched face as it reached the position it wanted. The 2 dead beings it controlled through the skill began expanding dangerously while stuck to the transparent figure as both them and the body of the Plague Bearer...exploded.

BOOM!

The impact shook the surrounding 15 meters as green muscle, pus, and bones flew out, knocking the large bladed figure backwards as screams rang out.

Chapter 93 - EPIC III

There was a sense of desolation in the air.

The rank S mercenaries were moving around avoiding deadly patches of green that were spread throughout the battlefield. One stayed near a patch of bubbling pus for a few seconds, only to feel his limbs start losing strength as he became poisoned.

"Find the attacker!"

"Reinforce the commander!"

Occasional shouts could be heard as the figures moved around the poisonous battlefield. They had what could be considered great strength, and yet they had to evade the poison this beast released with the best of their abilities just to stay alive. More and more of them fell as they tried to reinforce their Commander that continued to be swamped with constant and deadly attacks.

A rank S seasoned warrior was moving through the snowy field frightfully as he tried to evade the thick lines of flames and lightning that sn.a.k.e.d their way in the surroundings. He could feel desperation as he couldn't shake any of them off, with even the slightest lapse in concentration causing him to be poisoned by the air that was turning a shade of green. His vision began darkening as he moved, and soon slumped down.

The EPIC ranked Commander was staring at the skies as she found her figure thrown back from the explosion. She could feel a searing pain running through her body that continued to be poisoned all this time.

The recent explosion where that horrendous monstrosity as well as the dead it controlled attacked her had sealed the deal. She wanted this pain to stop. Someone of her caliber had never been subjected to this, and she was feeling extreme anger. Who? Just who had the power to hide from her sight and attack her like a coward?

She closed the eyes that were staring through the transparent figure of [Sword Saint's Incarnation], the skill that allowed her to get where she was today. She needed more energy to keep the skill active and bring it to life. The more energy she provided, the more solid the incarnation became.

The pain from the poison was taking a lot of energy from her to keep it at bay, so she was stuck in an impasse.

BOOM!

Her figure landed on the ground as she made up her mind. She didn't want to use it as there was no turning back, but she had no choice. A jewel shining in a menacing red light appeared in her hands. She did not hesitate as she brought it to her mouth, and swallowed right away.

ZING~

An uncomfortable sound spread out through the snowy field as the red light permeated her body, and the larger transparent figure that surrounded her as well. She seemed to be undergoing a transformation as a horn began appearing on her forehead.

Her opponent would not leave her be though. In the middle of this transformation, the hideous looking figure that leaked poisonous pus had reappeared and was already releasing another one of its vile breaths. Rifts continued to open up in the sky as flames and lightning struck down, not giving this powerful figure any respite during her transformation.

ARGH!

The interruption caused the energies to go berserk as the change was only half completed, and the large transparent figure now tinged in red became more visible. The moment the sword in its hands slashed towards the monstrosity vomiting poisonous material, it stopped the belching and dashed towards her body, exploding again in the next moment.

The mercenary was full of wrath as this occurred again and pushed her back, the poison reapplying itself with even more vigor after the second explosion. Her incarnation was getting back up again when she saw the same monstrosity appear... and explode again for the second time.

BOOM!

A third time.

BOOM!

A fourth time.

She was breathing heavily as she felt the incarnation fading away after using up all her mana. Fear of the unknown person that continued to send suicidal attacks with their monstrous beast had etched itself deep inside.

Rough breathing was coming out as she saw the green monstrosity appear above her again as good as new.

"Haha, Hahaha, Hahaha!"

She found herself letting out gory laughs as the poison permeated through her at this ridiculous sight. Even swallowing that jewel for its forbidden power did not do a single thing about this attacker that didn't even bother to show himself.

She had many many decisions in her life and never regretted any, but it seemed she stood on the wrong side this time. She wanted to at least see the person capable of taking her down like this. What sort of great person are you? Why do you stand with the Princess of a small kingdom in the north? Her thoughts soon came back to the current situation as she saw the monstrous green beast in the skies.

She was baffled at the ridiculous repetition of explosions that continued to wear down her now 8 meter large body. The incarnation was slowly fading away as the monstrosity continued to explode and reappear in the next instant.

"At least give me the honor of seeing the person who would take my life!"

She found the strength to speak as her body worked to push out the poison and try to maintain the incarnation at the same time. Silence was all she received as she found the same beast appearing from a huge runic circle once again.

"Bah, pathetic! Not even enough balls to show yourself!" The large incarnation used this time to vault the huge sword it was holding into the air where the monstrosity had appeared.

SWISH!

The beast curved the rushing blade without difficulty as it only slashed air, and looked below at the transparent figure, and the mercenary still floating in it. A wicked expression could be seen as its large mouth began transforming.

The EPIC ranked mercenary looked at this and realized her journey would be ending here today. Unexplainable terror rose out as this idea spread throughout her being. Her sight was occupied by the beast's head that had its jaws opened unnaturally as it belched out poisonous atrocities towards her. A green light covered the eyes of this mercenary. In a moment, this green light turned into darkness.

I breathed out in relief as I prevented the crazy power up from continuing in front of me. Did she really think I would give her the time to transform into an even more powerful version of herself before acting?

The dark menacing light she swallowed before her failed transformation began gave out an oppressive feeling, but I stopped whatever its purpose was meant to be. The power it let out was almost twice what I felt from the EPIC ranked mercenary, and it had an evil feeling emanating. This appearance of this red light gave me a certain feeling of apprehension, and made me form some new assumptions that would be deadly if they were true. I had to move faster.

During the many explosions that occurred from the Plague Bearer carrying out its killer suicide attacks, the remaining rank S mercenaries had fallen from the constant blasts of poisons and the targeting attacks of [Devastation]

I would be blessed with another set of S rank skills, as well as something even more wondrous from the body of the EPIC mercenary that was bubbling with pus currently. I sent a command and watched as the summoned Plague Bearer absorb the poisonous fumes and liquids around us. I targeted the bodies of dead mercenaries as I started with the most powerful one first.

The body glowed in a purple light when I neared it, a large skill book, an item, and multiple glistening cores appearing in my storage pouch right after. I was surprised as this was the first time that both an item and a skill book had come out from a singular enemy

The item was [Kingslayer- A sword worthy of killing the highest echelons. Has a constantly sharpening blade edge and weighs as much as a feather]. It was a glistening golden sword that was the same size as myself. It was such an exquisite sword that I couldn't help but grab and swing it a few times. I shook myself out of this new feeling as I looked at the skill book next.

[Corrupted Sword Saint's Incarnation- The body and memories of a genius sword saint descend for as long as mana is provided. Requires caster to equip a sword to activate. When active: +300% Physical Damage, +300% Speed, +200% Defense.+Dark Slayer Sword Style.]

...I looked at the numbers shown on the skill description in shock at this new type of skill. It wasn't my usual type of skill that I learned but...I wanted to try it out so damn badly! I couldn't hold my excitement as I watched the particles of the EPIC ranked [Skill Book] fade into my body. Now, what surprises will you bring?

Chapter 94 - Ambition and a Demon King

[Adelaide]

I've been feeling a rare semblance of peace these past few days. If I could put it into words, it would go like this.

You had a constantly sharpening blade hanging above your neck, and it could drop down any minute. This blade was so sharp and deadly that it built up a fear of the approaching death and continued to fill you with anxiety and dread. You then spend the next few years just constantly trying to avoid that blade, but it still hangs over you.

Then one day, out of nowhere, you find a person that would lift this blade off your back, and make sure it never approaches you again. The blade hanging and waiting to strike down on me was lifted by Sir Osmont. The stress and anxiety I had been feeling all this time, gone.

Even now, I don't think this esteemed person knows just how much influence he has over me. I couldn't even begin to recount the amazing feats he continued to do. I expected his power to be very high for the unique skill to confirm that he would be the one to prevent the coming calamity, but I didn't know to what extent.

An adventurer taking down a rank A dungeon by himself was rare, but not mind-bending. Doing the same thing for rank S dungeons? That was a whole other level. Putting his battle power aside, something even more magical was his power that allowed him to turn a barren land fertile and cause the almost instantaneous growth and ripening of plants. This was the thing that completely cemented my trust in him and made him all the more special. I was able to put this dukedom's leader completely under my influence with the sudden abundance of foods that 'I' provided.

And now, I was waiting beside the carriage as he went to face a deadly EPIC ranked powerhouse with a smile. "Haaaa". I patiently waited as I held full trust in him, and soon saw a gold light fly in from the distance.

This was one of the secrets I held, the ability to see his light whenever he was near due to my unique skill. He seemed to have an even more amazing skill that allowed him to become completely hidden to anyone near him along with the addition of the purposefully made veiled suit. But my skill always reacted when he was near.

I smiled at his expected successful return and opened the doors to the wide carriage, overlooking the long line of wagons behind us as I gave the signal to prepare to move out. The esteemed sir silently got in the ride, with me going in last and closing the door, multiple barriers encircling the carriage soon after.

He had the same calm face as he reappeared in front of my eyes, with a hint of worry as he seemed to be lost in thought. The significance of the event that just occurred seemed to be minor in his eyes, but it was something tremendous. EPIC ranked powerhouses were a nation's deterrence, and he had just defeated one.

He had successfully taken down those that wished us harm, and the effects would be large. I would be using this event to my advantage and seek an audience with Father as soon as we get back to the kingdom.

He seemed to have made up his mind after a while and spoke,

"You asked me before what I wanted?"

Yes. What exactly did someone like this want? I had an inkling but wanted to hear it from him first. If it was what I had in mind, I would wholly give it to you. He looked at me seriously as the golden light on his body shined even more.

"If I told you that I wanted to take this whole world into the palm of my hands, what would you say?"

I could feel my heartbeat increasing when he said this. It was better than my wildest dreams. I replied as I could feel a smile slowly form on my face.

"For someone with your power, it would only be natural."

Did he finally decide on his ambitions? For him to prevent the coming calamities, he had to lead us through them. My peace-loving father would not be able to do it. My scheming older brother would fail even more.

My unique skill told me this was the person to stick to in order to pass through the coming times. If not just me, but the entire world that attaches itself to him, then naturally the whole continent will find itself with less anxiety just like me. I trusted my skill that much.

My mind had long ago been made up as I rose in the wide carriage... and bowed towards this man once again. The cold voice that I wished had more emotion rang out. My heart was pounding as the words left my mouth.

"I formally greet and show respect to Esteemed Sir. As I have said before, whatever you need, I will provide. For the prosperity of myself and many more that are suffering, I will follow the direction you lead us to."

[Somewhere in the frozen lands]

A Demon King was surrounded by scantily clad figures in a compound that seemed recently erected.

Ranked 56, he was Demon King Gremory. Two horns could be seen growing on the sides of his temple, with a face that seems to be a better fit if it were placed on a woman.

He was the holder of the Unique Skill, **{Primal Conjurer}**, which allowed him to call upon two powerful primal spirits of the same level as himself. His presence alone was the equivalent of three beings of the same rank, and he was terribly powerful.

He was not fond of the cold, and yet he was the one assigned to the weak kingdom in the north. He was currently moving one of the Demon Legions towards this place slowly, as the cold and the mountains surrounding this kingdom were the only thing slowing their destruction.

That didn't stop him from sending a few forces ahead to do what demons do best, sowing discord. Of course, someone had taken the bait. They had been hesitant at first but soon came to willingness after realizing the number of forces the Demons had on their side, as well as...other factors in the mix.

Since that time, they had slowly moved forward, taking over a few counties and duchies, their advance not slowing down.

Yet, something out of his expectations had occurred a few hours ago. One of the few Power Jewels he had procured had been used, only for its user to die a few seconds later. The protector he had sent forward to placate one of his pieces had fallen. This meant some problems had occurred. For them to be forced to use the Power Jewel and still die meant they had come across a powerful enemy.

He was already waiting for his messengers to return after establishing a line of communication, but the event made him begin taking his mission seriously. Losing a Power Jewel, as well as its user was a very big loss, and he did not enjoy taking losses.

He called forth his lieutenants as he gave the order for the Demon Legion to start moving once more, increasing their speed towards the lone kingdom in the north.

Chapter 95 - The feeling of an EPIC skill

We arrived back to the Frozen Kingdom after half a day. The ride back in the carriage was interesting, to say the least, as the Princess continued to exceed my expectations of just how much trust she placed on me because of her unique skill. She said she would do anything, and I believed her. With such a person in place, the issues dealing with the kingdom would be taken care of with ease.

The procession of carriages and wagons went inside as citizens welcomed back their Ice Princess with vigor. I talked with Adelaide about the events after this, and she was confident that nothing even remotely dangerous would happen now that she set foot back here.

Even the person scheming in the back would be crippled for a while after they lost such a big piece. She would be meeting the King after I left, a powerhouse that I was interested in seeing sometime soon.

But I was itching to test out my new skills on powerful opponents, so after escorting the Princess to the Snowy Peak and seeing all the guards surrounding the manor, I flew out and made my way over to the Skyspeak Nest. It was time for me to have fun with that EPIC beast I ran away from more than a week back.

My speed with [Flight] continued to increase as I learned and activated more support skills, but I was using it for its function of keeping me in the air as I used [Regal Archer's Eyes] and [Instant Transfer] in conjunction to disappear and appear a few miles away. Using flight at its maximum speed would get me across the same distance, but not as fast as the instantaneous movement.

I thought back to the other rank S skills I received from the dead mercenaries earlier today as I flashed towards the beast's Nest. The ones that I didn't see myself actively using but I still learned nonetheless were [Ricocheting Shield], [Bear's Fighting Style], and [Archer's Gamble]. The more useful ones were two support skills, [Lion's Heart], and [Speedster] that increased my speed and damage even further

The remaining four were two offensive skills and two standard ones that I liked. The offensive ones were [Smouldering Sword Strike] and [Earthen Spears], with the ones I called standard being [Thought Acceleration- The speed of your thought processing is raised significantly] and [Crisis Avoidance- A few extra seconds are given to you as you sense incoming danger].

The last two skills were great, especially [Thought Acceleration] that seemed like one of the best rank S skills I've received so far. I knew it wasn't all-powerful, as the person who had it previously fell under my attacks, but it was still a great supplement. Many decisions and thoughts could be made rapidly in a short time span with this skill, allowing me to assess many things quickly before moving forward.

I soon arrived near the towering Skyspeak Nest and looked to the prowling beasts below. The goal today was to fully enjoy the usage of the new EPIC skill that I gained. With the excitement that I couldn't contain, I landed on the floating landmass, equipped the EPIC ranked **[Kingslayer]** sword, and cast **[Corrupted Sword Saint's Incarnation]**.

A powerful beast was slumbering not too far from the outer fringes of the Skyspeak Nest. Ever since it felt the frequent killings of its brethren a few days ago, it had remained in the periphery of the nest waiting for those cowards that only dared to bully those weaker than them.

Days had passed with no intrusion as it thought about heading back inland where the concentration of essence was much denser. It looked like it wouldn't leave in disappointment as its red eyes opened because of the new vibrations it could feel on the earth.

An expression of glee appeared on its ferocious body as it rose up to be larger than six meters, its disproportionate limbs flinging around its sides. It went forward to see if it was the same intruder that ran away from it last time.

It slowly inched forward so as to not scare the coward away again, and came to a surprising sight of a larger figure swinging around a dark red sword at extreme speeds. The figure was more than seven meters large, with a face that had a dark red horn pointing to the skies and a body fully covered in armor. It let out ripples of power as the sword that should have been heavy in his hands moved around like a feather, smashing into the surrounding beings and causing them to explode in a mass of flesh and gore.

The EPIC beast watching this was angered as it let out a howl and went forward at full speed to clash with this intruder.

BOOM!

As if he knew it was coming, a sword met its outstretched claws as a thundering voice came out from the large swordsman.

"Haha, you're finally here again. Let's go!"

The battle started off rapidly as the two figures clashed. [Enfeeble] was casted right away as the snowy beast felt its power weaken. The beast that was proud of the speed and defenses it had trained all these years found its strikes being met with the sword every time, its claws feeling pain and cracks after every clash.

The being in front of it seemed to be letting out purely physical attacks, with shockwaves exploding after every point of contact. The large figure was moving gracefully with the sword, meeting every single attack the beast threw with extreme precision, so it casted its innate ability, **[Iceberg]**, to end the fight as soon as possible.

VOOM!

A resounding horn that seemed to signal an arrival could be heard as a tremendous landmass filled with a deadly collection of ice elements appeared above them. The iceberg was more than 30 meters long and covered the entirety of their sight as the beast wrapped its large body around the large swordsman and held him down.

BOOM!

A tremendous impact that shook the entire Skypeak Nest occurred as the iceberg smashed into the ground.

"Haha!"

A laugh could be heard as the beast felt the body it was holding down slip away the moment before its attack hit, making it furious. He clawed out of the jagged spears of ice from the fallen iceberg and found the figure mockingly laughing above it, safe and sound.

The 8-meter long incarnation remained suspended in the air, defying the laws of gravity as the body became more and more solid as the red light spread throughout the skies before deadly words could be heard from it.

"Alright, that's enough playing around for now."

The beast's body was shining as it prepared to go all out against the intruder, and it seemed like its opponent was doing the same. A green runic circle appeared as another powerful presence came out of it, and multiple cracks that let out deadly power of flames and lightning formed in the skies.

Neither was backing down as a brand new [Iceberg] appeared high in the skies. The corrupted incarnation looked up to the falling landmass and pointed its large blade up, the body becoming enveloped in red light as the Dark Slayer Sword Style was activated.

While a dark red light spread out in the skies above, a menacing green was spreading throughout the ground as the Plague Bearer triggered [Defiler] onto the surrounding bodies of beasts. The bodies unnaturally began rising as they turned a deadly shade of green, all turning into furious runs towards the EPIC beast.

The humongous incarnation shining in a red light jumped from the ground, leaving behind a crater as it rotated in a spectacular dance, spinning rapidly in the air as the figure smashed into the falling Iceberg.

BOOM!

Chunks of solid ice flew out as the large iceberg was clearly cut in half, its two portions falling on the ground below where a battle continued with a monstrosity belching out poisonous breaths towards the EPIC beast. It tried maneuvering from the snaking lines of flames and lightning as well as the poisonous beast and was becoming slowly overwhelmed.

It howled defiantly as it looked up to see its attack sliced apart, and could only see the figure of the large swordsman rushing towards it, the sword in hand already pointing towards its chest.

BOOM!

The impact of the large body smashing into the ground resounded, as the pained howl of a beast rang out. The red sword had pierced all the way through to the back of his chest, going even further to pierce into the ground. Strength began leaving its body as it could feel deadly power from the sword ravaging all his being.

It didn't help at all that the poisonous beast was commanding the bodies of its dead brethren to continue exploding and cause more virulent poison to pierce into its hardened skin armor and leave its deadly attacks on it too.

HOWL!

It struggled at the sword that nailed it to the ground and tried to move out, but it was unsuccessful. The struggles gradually became less and less as ragged breaths came out. It watched the large figure of the

solid swordsman with the horn rising from his head continue to pull its fists up and smash them into its body. The tremendous strength of the strikes was purely physical damage that was causing searing pain wherever they landed.

The combination of a giant figure with a sword, roiling snakes of flames and lightning, as well as a poisonous monstrosity slowly dwindled the life force of the EPIC ranked beast until it could no longer move.

Silence prevailed as the body of Noah surrounded by the sword saint's incarnation looked further into the Skypeak Nest. Multiple powerful auras in no way less than the beast he just took down had become active at the center of the Nest and were making their way here.

The large incarnation could be seen devilishly smiling as it reached out to the body of the dead beast, and then flashed away into nothingness. Three tremendously powerful auras arrived not too long after, but the only thing that met them was a poisonous battlefield with the mangled body of their brethren.

Chapter 96 - The King in the North

King Roark Belmont.

The powerful figure that led the Frozen Kingdom into prosperity. Or so many people thought. Roark was overlooking the lands beneath him as he stood in the highest castle of the King's Crown peak. He thought of the memory of his dear wife as his aged eyes moved with longing.

'Annalise...do you know how much I want to be with you right now? So many things are happening, and I don't know how to pass through them. Where is your wisdom when I need it the most?'

A sigh could be heard as the powerful bearded man stretched. He was getting old, but still had the same power of LEGENDARY rank.

The thing that caused him the most stress was overseeing every single department to make sure things continued to go smoothly in the kingdom. But resources continued to dwindle with every passing day as the war raged on.

What tired him even more were the soldiers he was taking away from their families, with many of them never able to see their loved ones again.

'When does it all stop Annalise?'

The grand man seemed lost as he continued to gaze below. He thought about the only person that seemed to be lifting some of the weight and helping with the stabilization of the kingdom. It was at this moment that he heard the sound of footsteps that were very familiar

'Speak of the devil.'

The father smiled as he turned around and found his daughter entering the terrace. He looked fondly at this girl that didn't always show emotion on her face, but he knew how much she cared.

"Your trip was a success?"

"Relatively, Father. Although not without extreme complications."

Roark's face changed as he heard this. She was back here safe and sound with no commotion being caused. What could have happened? His face became cloudy as he asked,

"What went wrong?"

"On the way back here, there was an ambush waiting for me that consisted of an EPIC ranked powerhouse and a collection of rank S. Here is a memory stone that was able to capture the faces of these ambushers."

King Roark's face had become dark as he caught the Memory Stone that could record and replay a scene when a certain amount of mana was put in.

"A Shadow Guard that was lucky enough not to be noticed took this at the risk of their lives. Can you recognize the people on there?"

Her voice seemed to be getting colder and colder as she spoke, bordering on the line of disrespect that nobody should cross with their father. But King Roark was sullen as he saw the recording of a woman under the command of a special someone. He looked at the blank face of his daughter and was glad she was safe and sound as he asked,

"How did you make it out? And...what happened to the attackers?"

"If I told you a prince in shining armor appeared to save the life of the princess and kill those that wished her harm, would you believe me?"

The exchange between father and daughter stalled after this, with the daughter proceeding forward.

"When I was 11 years old, I came to you and told you that I didn't feel comfortable with how my own brother stared at me. You brushed it off as the ramblings of a child and told me to be more approachable."

Adelaide walked as she stood near her father, overlooking the buildings below them as she continued.

"When I was 15 years old, I began hiring even more guards to escort me after I was almost kidnapped. You allowed this and gave me more power as you didn't want that to ever happen again. I told you who the mastermind that orchestrated this whole act was, yet you did not believe me."

Her gaze turned from the buildings back to her father, the same voice ringing out.

"The years after that, I continued to protect myself and rarely left the kingdom, and here we are today. I am telling you once again. My own older brother, your son, orchestrated all of this to get his hands on me. I wonder what you will choose to do now, Father."

Silence pervaded the area as those that stood at the peak echelons of the Frozen Kingdom stood next to each other. A sense of anger and betrayal could be felt from the icy face of Adelaide as she laid out her grievances to someone who should have been her biggest protector. King Roark was looking down in sadness, his eyes not being able to meet the person next to him.

"He is my son."

The words were difficult to start, but he began anyway. "My firstborn son, and I thought he would change in time. I promised him the kingdom in the hopes of it. I also did my best to give you everything you wanted."

He gave a tired look to his daughter as he said this. "Under the veil of a thriving kingdom, the house that leads it is fractured with stupidity and unneeded conflicts. When was the last time you went to see your younger brother?"

Adelaide turned away after hearing this question. She recalled the face of someone she had hoped would stand with her at one point. "He was the biggest loss I have ever taken. Someone that I thought would be worth helping, and he too let me down."

"A horrible son, a calculating daughter, and another son that could never choose what he wanted to be."

A difficult decision seemed to have been made in the mind of the King, as he raised his chest up and commanded with a powerful voice.

"Very well, convene a Grand Assembly."

The tone was powerful, one that could not be questioned. The girl by his side bowed after she heard this.

"Yes, Father."

A commotion was occurring in the four floating peaks as the relevant people got word that a Grand Assembly was convening in a few days. Nobles panicked as they began preparing the moment they received notice, fearfully questioning what had prompted such an abrupt call for an assembly.

In a large manor at the center of Summit Peak, an extravagant prince was fuming with a face full of anger. He had made a bet and lost terribly. He thought the chance was too sweet to pass up, that his opponent would never make such a mistake like this in the first place. But it was actually a trap? She had played him?

"Haha, Hahaha!"

Rueful laughs came out as his head was raised up furiously. "Who? Who exactly did you whore yourself out to? Which powerful helper did you find for yourself, little lamb?"

He wondered about the defeat he had faced as his face regained its calm and he pondered. A setback was a setback, he would get over it. What he did from now would define how his plans continue to unfold. He could feel the communication medallion he received from a few special beings that had been ringing for a while. He moved around the room as he shifted from moods of pondering to rage.

The area was filled with anger and malice as the man paced back and forth. He felt as if a knife was closing in on his neck, and he did not know where it was coming from. She and everyone else in this kingdom had no idea of the things he was doing to keep them safe. They didn't understand now, but they would all come to be grateful in the future. As for this knife pressing down? Hmph, let's see just how sharp you are.

Chapter 97 - A storm in the making

I was still relishing the excitement of moving in an 8-meter tall body as I floated a few miles away from Skypeak Nest.

The three powerful presences were most likely some of the powerful EPIC ranked beasts that almost always stayed in the center of the nest. I was told that a possible reason the beasts continue to stay in the nest was due to the deterrent of the powerful individual that was the king of the Frozen Kingdom.

The common knowledge currently was that only after more EPIC ranked beasts were born in the nest or the momentous rise of one of a higher rank beast occurred would they grow courageous enough to lead their packs out of the nest again.

Even though I was pretty confident of coming out in one piece even while taking on all three beasts, I would still over prepare if I can. I looked through the loot from taking down the disproportionately sized white-furred beast. I found EPIC ranked cores to start absorbing as well as two skill books.

One of the skill books was the spectacular [Iceberg] that the beast was casting. It manifested a freezing and nearly solid mass of ice that was more than 30 meters. Such a skill was already tremendously powerful in the hands of the beast, but to me who could cast it multiple times?

I couldn't wait to use this as soon as possible as I looked towards the next skill. It was [Absolute Zero- The heat near you is sapped away as ice elements reinforce your body and attacks. When active: All attacks carry the Freezing Touch effect. +100% Ice Element Resistance]

I had a wide grin as I viewed the two skill books disappear into particles of light. With even more editions of EPIC skills, I wanted to badly go back and have a go at the 3 new EPIC beasts that popped out, but there were still too many unknowns. I would find out more about just how many beasts of high rank were in each nest before finding myself surrounded. I had already taken down one of them, they wouldn't make it that easy for me to continue taking down more.

Another point was that I received the first EPIC skill that I could activate at all times and would continue to grow stronger as time passed, or so I thought. The moment I activated [Absolute Zero], the surroundings of 5 meters became deathly cold with ice being condensed all around visible to the n.a.k.e.d eye.

Soon enough, a storm of ice elements could be seen rotating around me as just the outward effects of this skill were this powerful. I stopped myself from rushing back into the nest and went back to the Frozen Kingdom. I had to find out the new developments that occurred, as well as prepare for big moves soon.

I deactivated [Corrupted Sword Saint's Incarnation] and [Absolute Zero] as I neared the kingdom, and looked at the grim looks of guards that had vastly increased on the large fortress wall as well as the closed doors. Things seemed to be moving along as I passed the fortress wall and thought about the first EPIC skill I received.

The 'corrupted' in the skill name made me think quite a while as I replayed the scene of the mercenary swallowing that menacing red jewel, but I would solve the mystery in due time. My figure covertly

passed through many buildings below, passing by the moving humans and beastmen as I went towards Snowy Peak.

Even the EPIC ranked beastman standing guard at the entrance of Snowy Peak was not able to catch a glimpse of my aura with the many covert skills I had active. It didn't take too long until I came across the huge manor at the center of the floating landmass and I found the Princess giving out commands to a few Shadow Guards.

I smiled at the fact that even with many skills that made it so that an EPIC individual wouldn't notice me, she was still able to see me the moment I came in through the use of her unique skill. This made me look forward to when I met the individuals who held such skills and they stood against me.

The Shadow Guards were quickly sent away with my appearance, and I got the chance to hear about the developments after she went to meet with the king. One of the major takeaways was how King Roark finally seemed to be acting against his crappy son after all this time. Being given clear proof didn't allow him to use the excuse of fatherly love anymore, and he had to bring to account everything else.

The other takeaway was the Grand Assembly that would be convened in a soon. The princess had an inkling of what things would be mentioned as she talked about her aging father, and the toll the war was taking on him. My mind was filled with curiosity as I thought of this man who was a rank above anything I have met so far.

LEGENDARY.

That was the rank that many of the top powers had in this large continent. The type of strength that they held made me extremely hopeful and excited to reach it myself. The only issue that presented itself was the Demon Kings that were running rampant across the continent of the Beast World currently.

Their powers were most likely LEGENDARY, or even worse, along with their strength being boosted by their Unique and sometimes Ultimate Skills for those that are of higher rank.

I was looking forward to possibly matching their strength with my continued stacking of many skills that have worked well to allow me to defeat people of the next rank so far. Would it be the same when they are of the next rank and also holding powerful categories of skills and magic?

This brought us to the other takeaway today, a Demon Legion that was slowly making its way towards the kingdom was now advancing at full force. This was why fear was in the air, with the battalions of the kingdom being put on standby, soon set to be sent to the defensive positions across the cold mountains to hold back the advancing demons.

I had to continue to move faster with this new information, and amass as many EPIC skills as I could before the clash. I thought about how I might not be the most powerful figure taking the role in this fight as the King himself would be moving, but only time would tell.

My blessing of nearly endless energy to work with made it so I could skip ranks, but I didn't know how wide the gaps were as I continued to rise higher and higher. So, while people are preparing for war by convening assemblies and troops, I would prepare by obtaining more loot from EPIC beasts.

The talks and discussions about possible ways everything could go continued as I found myself roasting a few types of meat to enjoy at the same time. The day finished like this, fairly fun and eventful.

The skills combined today were:

Guardian's Light + Healing Light ~ A+ Paladin's Blessing

Infernal Purge + Arc Lightning ~ A+ Pursuing Infernal Lightning

[Noah Osmont][Occupation: Hunter]

[Vitality: 375]

[Focus: -]

[Strength: 388]

[Skill(s): [F][E][D][C][B][A: Flight-100, Instant Transfer-100, Area Expansion-22, Pain Resistance-100, Recorder-100, Language Comprehension-100, Lion's Roar-23, Water Barrier-100, Pierce-100, Executor's Speed-100, Sense Heat Source-100, Silent Communication-55, Regal Archer's Eyes-66, Cook-33]

[A+: Arctic Zone-100, Relegator's Spear-23, Immutable Regeneration-100, Abstruse Cover-23, Barrier of Illusion-23, Paladin's Blessing-1, Pursuing Infernal Lightning-1]

[S: Protection of the Wounded-100, Flash-18, Aura of Belligerence-31, Enfeeble-22, Phoenix Arrow-1, Shield Slam-1, Obfuscation-45, Rune of Defense-11, Dragon Scales-11, Budding Farmer-8, Ricocheting Shield-1, Bear's Fighting Style-1, Archer's Gamble-1, Lion's Heart-8, Speedster-8, Smouldering Sword Strike-, Earthen Spears-1, Thought Acceleration-8, Crisis Avoidance-8]

[S+: Saint's Return-69, Devastation-51, Plague Bearer-65]

[EPIC: Corrupted Sword Saint's Incarnation-8, Iceberg-1, Absolute Zero-3]

[Equipment: (3x B-Ring of Storage)(A-Ring of Storage)(S-Storage Pouch)(S-Veiled Suit)(S-Legion Armor)(S-Viridian Boots)(EPIC-Kingslayer]

Chapter 98 - A line of communication

Calm had returned to Aeneas's face as he sat down on a luxurious couch and took out the medal that had been blinking all this time. He had a sufficient period to think and prepare before having this very dangerous conversation.

Mana flowed into the medal and it shone briefly, a strong voice coming out not too long after.

"What happened?"

Hearing this voice, Aeneas's eyes turned into thin slits as the next words rolled out of him calmly.

"I underestimated someone I thought I had full information of. None of the plans we previously discussed have been disrupted."

"...Your underestimation was the cause of the death of an EPIC ranked powerhouse?"

Slight anger could be felt in the voice, causing a similar reaction to the listening Aeneas.

"Is it my fault that you sent me such a weak powerhouse? You boasted that as long as she wasn't besieged by multiple EPIC individuals, she would be a pillar I could rely on."

"Tsk. She was a powerful mercenary, and even used a treasure I provided her before she died. She should have been at her most powerful when she fell, so I need to know which enemy you made that has so many individuals who likely besieged her to take her life."

At these words, Aeneas stalled as a dangerous light shone in his eyes.

"The enemy is not one you have to worry about. You just have to keep your side of the bargain. I do not want any deaths for the common people in this kingdom, and my father...as well as my siblings will be left untouched."

Yes. He had struck a deal with the devil for the preservation of his home. Months back, he had received a memory stone that showed terrifying things. Multiple Demon Legions under the commands of powerful Demon Kings that had powerful and unknown magic.

The Mythical Beast Kingdoms were the ones receiving the brunt of the attention of these Demon Kings as they held many powerhouses. But what about the small kingdom in the north? The safe haven that housed humans without persecution only had a single LEGENDARY individual in the lead.

How could they stand against a force that took down the strongest Draconic Kingdom in the span of a few months? Under such immense strength, would it not be better to swallow their pride and just wipe their chins?

His father knew they would fall as time passed, yet he did nothing. He fought a losing war, with soldiers continuing to die as time passed. He was a staunch man who considered honor and honesty, and they would all die because of it.

Honor. Would such a thing give them the sudden strength to withstand a rampaging Demon King or the many horrors that will come before it? This was why he both hated and loved his father. He was a powerful man that created a beautiful place for all people to live in, but he was a 'good man'.

Good men never win. It is not good men that conquer kingdoms and build legacies. It is merciless people that wage war and kill millions before they etch their name for the dynasties to come. With them in the rule, history is theirs to write.

The genocides they caused to obtain the lands and their resources? Erased and forgotten.

The natives they conquered to enslave them to work under them for hundreds of years? Just backward people who needed to be led to the prospering direction. This was how history always went. History was written by the victors, and it did not matter how cruel they were as long as they obtained victory and made the world what they wanted.

That was why he shook hands with the devil. To preserve the lives of his family and the many people that would face death at the hands of these demons. He would not be one of the droves of good men that valiantly die upholding some stupid beliefs.

He would not watch as the kingdom his father has created these past decades goes up in flames. Even if a few people had to die to achieve his goals, history won't remember that. During all this, if he can also get his hands on someone he's wanted all this time...well that was a thought for later.

The voice of the stern Demon King rang out once more.

"The terms we agreed on will certainly be adhered to. You just need to make sure that you continue administering the poison so that...unexpected casualties do not occur."

At the mention of this, a difficult expression showed on the Crown Prince's face. Feelings of shame and sadness could be seen on his face as he thought about his actions. He was weakening his own father.

This was something he found hard to do in the beginning, but as he continued to hear about the demon's continuing victories as they tore down more defenses of the beast kingdoms, he affirmed his beliefs.

'I will apologize to you later, but at least we will both live to see another few decades after this.'

He fought back against the feelings of shame and weakness as he replied to the waiting Demon King with a strong voice.

"I will keep my end of the deal, period. When will your forces be arriving?"

A few seconds of silence passed before a reply came, "A week at most, a few days at least."

The Crown Prince nodded as he confirmed this, rising up from his seat and preparing for the oncoming assembly as he cut off the communication medal.

Demon King Gremory had a wicked smile on his face as he finished conversing with a pitiful prince.

This was what he loved to do the most! A gleeful m.o.a.n escaped him as he was lost in his own fantasy. Yes, they had strong forces that would easily take over this small kingdom in the North. His power was equivalent to three LEGENDARY individuals because of his Unique Skill {Primal Conjuror} would be more than enough to take down the kingdom's forces, and yet he still made plans to lessen his work even more.

He created a play by showing a prince of this kingdom the deadly power that was coming for them, and making them fold into weakening their own forces on the promise that they would all not be killed or enslaved, leaving him to rule in the end.

The memory stone the prince received was tampered with long ago by a powerful Demon King who was a master of illusions and emotions. While the prince thought he was just watching the scenes of powerful Demon Legions, his mental defenses were torn down as he became completely susceptible to the communications after that.

A measly prince that was ranked S, how hard was it to put one under your influence? All that he did after was place a guard to watch him, but this guard had unexpectedly fallen.

There was still a question that many people would have asked this Demon King who went through all of this trouble when he had the power to easily take down the target. Was any of this necessary?

The answer was...No!

Gremory gleefully thought of the faces he would see at the end of this play. The encroached prince could only believe in a promise as they would face destruction anyways, and the lives of his people depended on it. Gremory couldn't wait to see their faces at the end of all of this!

He imagined the face of the king. Would he be saddened and depressed by his son's betrayal after the poison in his body is activated and he finds his power reducing? Would the prince be filled with despair when he finds all the promises made being broken? Even better, what expression would he have when he sees his family humiliated? Ah!

The Demon King had to cool himself down as he was getting too heated thinking about the conclusion of his play. The only thing he had to keep in mind was the possible disruption from an enemy that the prince chose not to mention.

After that, he could just sit back and watch the drama he created to play out.

No, he didn't have to do any of it. No, it would not affect the eventual end result. Yet, he did it anyway. Why?

Because it was fun!

Chapter 99 - A Tremendous Opportunity I

I kept in mind the Grand Assembly that would be taking place sometime later today as I made plans to go back to the Skyepeak Nest.

The full information I received let me know that the last time a LEGENDARY beast arose in the nest and led an insurrection was decades ago when the kingdom was in its early beginnings. It took the strength of the powerful king along with the help of the EPIC Battalion Commanders to quell the beast's insurrection and slay the most powerful one, pushing the beasts back onto their floating landmass.

The only beasts currently propagating the dungeons were EPIC ranked, their numbers most likely not that high. The other two nests that were located further away from the kingdom were between frozen mountains that had a similar level of beasts, but were worried less about because of their locations.

Occasional checks were still made to be sure that no powerful beasts were rising and consolidating forces. Since I had already taken down one of the powerful beasts in this nearby nest, it would be easier to take down more of them, so this would continue to be my target. I would get as many EPIC skills as I could before all hell broke loose.

As for the assembly that I would most likely be missing, I could make better use of my time getting stronger than listening in. I'll know all about what was discussed when I got back anyways. Amassing more strength before the battle fully starts was crucial.

Now, my full focus was placed on how to utilize the EPIC ranked skills I had to efficiently and safely hunt down the beasts that I could sense yesterday. I had already absorbed the EPIC cores that the beast dropped, giving me a significant boost in my attributes. The skills I liked the most currently were [Corrupted Sword Saint's Incarnation] and [Absolute Zero]. This was simply because their combination was killer.

My body received a huge buff and became exceedingly huge after calling down the incarnation, and I couldn't even begin to explain the thrill of moving around in it. As for why the skill had the corrupted tag in front of it, this was likely due to the powerful jewel the mercenary absorbed before she was about to transform.

I was not at all hesitant to use the skill when I saw the red light and long horn pointing out from the head, as strength was strength, no matter which forms it came in. Now, with the addition of [Absolute Zero], a piercing layer of ice elements danced on the surface of the large body, with even more of them collected on the edge of the outstretched long blade.

[Iceberg] was another killer skill with a tremendous amount of damage, and would work best to clear large droves of enemies. With this in mind, I neared the Skypeak Nest with full concentration. The death of even a single EPIC beast should have put all the other ones on the island on the edge.

Sure enough, [Crisis Avoidance] showed me that there were multiple powerful figures waiting to strike not too far inland of the Nest. Well, the threat was not showing to be too high, just that it would take a significant amount of work. I could feel a smile forming on my face with this thought, this little bit of work was nothing to grab more EPIC skills!

Before even landing on the floating Nest, the poisonous Plague Bearer was summoned, and [Corrupted Sword Saint's Incarnation] was cast as my body began to be enveloped all around. I could feel the tremendous boost of power rushing in as the Incarnation fully formed, making me enjoy this feeling just a tad bit too much.

[Absolute Zero] was cast next as the air around me began forming cold crystals and my body gained a white layer on top of the red one. Hexagonal columns of icy white crystals spread all around me, snaking their way to the outstretched sword as well. A storm of ice elements then formed around me as the skill fully formed. My figure was striking as I floated grandly in the air.

I was fully prepared and began the fight by sending my summon over. The instant it landed on the Nest and attracted the attention of a few beasts, the dangerous auras I had been feeling all this time moved.

The three BOSSes that appeared varied in shape. The one standing at the forefront was a 6 meter tall [Emperor Penguin]. It had sleek black feathers on its head and back with a white-yellowish belly that shone in the light. A ferocious expression was on its face as it looked towards the Plague Bearer, and then to my figure hidden in the skies.

To the right of the [Emperor Penguin] was a large white wolf of exactly the same size. It seemed like an [Arctic Wolf] with its dangerously glowing yellow eyes and bared sharp teeth. To the left of these two was something even larger than them, a nearly 10-meter tall beast that seemed very similar to a walrus. It had powerful tusks pointing down from its mouth with an extremely ugly face that was looking at me angrily.

Among all of these three, the fat [Walrus] seemed to be letting out the most dangerous vibes. I felt the extended EPIC sword in my hands as I breathed out dense cold air, and my figure blurred down towards the beast. I tried to keep my excitement in check as I found myself fighting against beings as powerful as these in equal standing.

I didn't forget where I came from, and just how weak I was just a few weeks ago. From the dilapidated apartment in Outer Bank X, to the quick rise from rank F and above. There had been many changes and progress, and they all brought me here today. In a completely different world where beings of all powers were present, and I was closing in on those same levels.

My reminiscing came to a stop as the blade on my hands struck the thick skin of the dark walrus.

THUCK!

Like it met a layer of fat, the sword sank in just a bit, the Freezing Touch effect from [Absolute Zero] activating and causing a blooming flower of ice to bloom from the struck location, but its damage was reduced with the tough body of the beast that had the cold as its home.

The walrus retaliated with a quick swing of its hairless flippers that condensed cold spears as they smacked into my large body. Even with [Flash] still activated and my large body maneuvering in the air, the speed was too fast to evade.

BOOM!

The impact sent me to the side, where the large white wolf was waiting with its jaws spread wide open. Terrible energy was being collected in its mouth as a blue beam shot out towards me.

[Instant Transfer] was quickly activated as I faded away and appeared in the air, looking to the three beasts below. The Emperor Penguin that should have been kept busy with the Plague bearer had formed a hazy gray light on its flippers and smacked them into the body of my summon, and I watched with a surprised expression as the Plague Bearer disappeared from sight, the connection I had with it informing me it was now a few miles into the nest.

[Saint's Return] was already healing the damage my large figure received from the walrus and the blue beam of destructive energy that barely grazed me as I cast [Summon Plague Bearer] to call back the summon, when the Emperor Penguin on the ground shouted with a stern expression...and disappeared from my sight.

An alarm rang out as I felt [Flash] automatically activate to move my body out of harm's way as the large penguin appeared in the air. A hazy gray light was already covering its entire flipper as my body couldn't avoid it in time. The light just barely grazed me, but it was more than enough as I felt my body disappear, and it wasn't due to [Instant Transfer] this time.

When I reappeared again, I found myself in an extremely large and dark environment with barely any light. Ancient frozen and broken structures were all around me, but that wasn't the point that gave me the biggest surprise. The biggest surprise was in this large environment I was transferred into with that attack from the [Emperor Penguin], I was not alone. Multiple auras that were in no way less powerful than ones I had just been fighting honed in at my position.

Chapter 100 - A Tremendous Opportunity II

My mind moved rapidly as I counted the auras I could feel in the surroundings. My eyes shifted with [Regal Archer's Eyes] active as I tried to look into every nook and cranny of the dangerous locations. More than twelve powerful auras were in the large clearing, their bodies emitting stupid levels of power as they began to circle around me.

I calmed my breathing at this unexpected and possibly perilous situation as my large incarnation grasped the long blade tighter, my skills ready to move at the slightest movement. [Instant Transfer] could be used to move me to another location I could see, but the entire area was enclosed with no exits in sight.

There were dense foliage and frozen surfaces all around as I could make out the varying sizes of beasts circling me. Their menacing eyes honed in as I felt movement once more, this time I watched the beasts I had been fighting with appearing one after another. The extremely fat [Walrus] materialized first, with the [Arctic Wolf] after, and finally, the [Emperor Penguin] that had the skill that allowed for all of this to happen.

The air was palpitating with roiling essence as I prepared to fight for my life and find a chance to slip through this encirclement. The penguin looked towards me with its head raised disdainfully when a clear voice suddenly rang out in the surroundings.

"You are a peculiarity."

My eyes searched to see where the voice was coming from as my thoughts rapidly moved, but I could not find the source of the voice.

"When you first appeared on this Land, you were very weak and surrounded by others just like you. Yet, every time you returned after that you had grown significantly stronger, strong enough to even take out one of the contenders here. What exactly are you?"

The voice was sonorous and strong, being seemingly feminine. I didn't reply and only continued to keep my focus at the many surrounding beasts. If I saw the slightest signs, I would summon the Plague Bearer and turn this entire area into a land of poison and try to make an escape for now.

I didn't know what other powerful skills these beasts had in their arsenal, the skill that teleported me here making me extremely cautious. The voice rang out once again.

"Oh well, it doesn't really matter. You taking down one of the contenders with your own power qualifies you for the trial currently taking place."

At these words, my tension slightly calmed as I wondered just exactly what I had gotten into. I probedly asked,

"A trial of what?"

The beasts around me reigned in their wild auras as a disdainful voice came from the [Emperor Penguin] this time.

"You humans do not know of the secrets and intricacies of the special locations of the Beast World. These Spiritual Lands you call nests and routinely come to bully those weaker than you are trial grounds meant to give birth to the toughest beasts."

What? My mind absorbed this brand new information as I continued to listen. I was finally able to find the source of the first voice as it rang out once again, this time from a transparent red figure materializing in the air.

"Yes, this is one of the Spiritual Lands where the most powerful beasts appear from. I underwent the strenuous task of upgrading this Tier 1 Spiritual Land into Tier 2 by using quite a bit of treasures for the possibility of creating another powerhouse in this era of war with the Demons."

The transparent figure had a fiery red color with the most exaggerated curves, taking the appearance of a human. She didn't seem to let out any aura of power, but she gave off the feeling of extreme danger. I continued to listen as I watched her move closer, her figure becoming extremely clear with every passing second.

"I have found no success so far, with talented individuals not being borne in these past few decades, and that did not change even with the coming of demons. Yet you...dear human, you hold promise."

The red figure floated in front of me with an air of elegance, and I could barely make out its exquisite facial features that seemed to be screaming nobility. Her next words became increasingly stern and cold as [Crisis Avoidance] sent me the loudest signals for the first time ever.

"Especially seeing this ability of yours that seems to stem from a source similar to the Abyss Magic of demons. I'm going to need you to explain very clearly how you came about this, or the next few minutes will be your last. Oh, and if you say any words other than the truth, I will know right away."

My body that was enclosed in the large figure of the corrupted sword saint could feel the piercing gaze that broke past the outer cover and came to land on me. The corrupted tag of this skill that was most likely due to the jewel that woman ingested was actually going to give me trouble now?

I calmed myself down and carefully thought things through. The words left my mouth slowly as [Thought Acceleration] worked at full speed to put everything into account.

"I gained this skill after...defeating and ingesting the essence of a mercenary that was intending to harm the Princess of the Frozen Kingdom I was escorting. The only thing I could note that might have any relation to demons was a jewel that the mercenary ingested during the fight. I myself, have no ties with demons and am working against them."

An eerie silence pervaded after my words rang out, both the beasts and the figure of the red woman not saying a thing. The next moment though, I was surprised to hear the stern voice speak out with a tinge of excitement.

"Haha, no lies in your words! Wow. A human was actually blessed with a Devour Class unique skill? Good! This explains your fast progress and power. Alright, this might not be a wasted trip after all."

Rumbling began to occur around us as the transparent red woman raised her hands. I watched with rapt attention while repeating the words she said and wrapping my head around them. Behind us, an area of a few miles was lit up as the uneven frozen ground was made visible.

A powerful force was compressing the earth as the jagged rocks evened out and the miles around us became flat surfaces. The clear voice that was now tinged with excitement rang out once again.

"I have a kingdom to focus on, so we will make this quick. An opportunity lies in front of you. In this Spiritual Land, you can undergo the Trial of Supremacy. If you are talented enough, rewards you cannot even imagine will be yours."

I tried to keep my breathing under control as I passed this ordeal and it seemed like my life was not under a threat for the time being. My thoughts moved rapidly as I asked,

"This trial that is normally meant for beasts, what rewards can you gain from it?"

"Oh? Well for starters, this Tier 2 Spiritual Land will guarantee the champion of the Trial of Supremacy a safe advancement to the LEGENDARY rank."

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