

Reincarnated Avatar; I got 2 SSS-Rank Unique Skills

#Chapter 121: Skill points spree [5] - Read Reincarnated Avatar; I got 2 SSS-Rank Unique Skills Chapter 121: Skill points spree [5]

Chapter 121: Skill points spree [5]

This time, Aria truly felt like strangling Noah.

"You're the worst at gathering information!"

Noah chuckled. "I know, well, at least I'm trying".

They were uncertain of what to do, but their doubts were soon cleared. Their objective became clear when the system prompted.

[Mission: Survive the Forgotten War]

BZZZ!

It happened instantly without warning.

Enemies surged toward them; warriors clad in golden armor, wielding weapons infused with an unfamiliar energy.

They fought like specters of the past, their attacks swift and relentless.

But Noah adapted quickly, leading the charge for his team to set the tempo, Aetherforge humming as he cleaved through the vanguard.

Aria was the second to react.

As soon as she unsheathed her twin blades, she erupted into action.

BOOM!

Like a hurricane, she charged with extra energy today, cutting through enemy lines, her blades a blur.

Noah was surprised. 'She seems to be in a great mood..., what happened?'

But then he smiled. 'It's great when she's in a great mood, it means this quest will be easier to complete'.

With the both of them leading the charge, the others followed.

Benjamin's spells carved controlled chaos across the battlefield.

As for Caleb, his summons acted as an unyielding wall and Genevieve's divine magic wove between them, keeping everyone alive.

But the battle was never-ending.

The longer they fought, the more they realized; the war was looping. Each time they reached the supposed end, the event reset.

Noah narrowed his eyes. "It's not about winning. We need to break the cycle".

It was Benjamin who figured it out. "The Harbinger... we need to find him".

Diving deep into enemy ranks, Noah and Aria cut their way to the enemy's commanding figure; a general wreathed in shadow.

As soon as they struck him down, the war collapsed around them.

Like expected, the quest didn't end by striking down the general though.

That was just the first trial.

"Always". Benjamin complained.

"Stop complaining and fight!" Aria snapped at him.

Benjamin looked to Genevieve grievingly for sympathy and when he got none, he could only grumble to himself.

The landscape changed after they struck down the general.

They reappeared in a wasteland. A sky void of stars; no civilization, no life. Only endless decay.

The system message that followed was chilling.

[Mission: Escape the Event Horizon]

In the distance, an abyss loomed; an all-consuming singularity that devoured everything in its path. And every second, the terrain behind them ceased to exist, swallowed by the anomaly.

Benjamin looked back, then at Noah. "Don't tell me this is what I think it is".

Noah didn't answer, rather a voice whispered in their minds. "This is the fate of all things... unless the Harbinger is stopped".

"Sh*t!" Benjamin cursed.

They ran.

To your tents oh Israel!

They ran, sprinting across the crumbling remains of a world long lost, dodging gravitational distortions and fighting against the pull of the abyss.

It was Caleb who spotted the anomaly's heart; a single figure standing at the event horizon, untouched by destruction. The Harbinger.

They had to reach him.

"Let's go!" Noah directed.

With a combined effort, using every movement skill and buff available, they launched themselves toward the entity.

But before they could strike...

Everything froze.

And then, a single crack, which quickly turned into a large net of cracks spread through the world. The world seemed to reset.

BZZZ!

They stood once again in the ruins where they had begun.

The Harbinger faced them directly now, no longer a mere shadow but a fully realized being. Its form was paradoxical; both human and something far beyond it, something unimaginably alien.

"You have seen what was erased... and what is yet to come".

It raised a hand, and for the first time, Noah felt an undeniable weight settle on him.

"Now, show me that you are strong enough to shape your own path".

"Show me if you can rewrite history!"

"Show me if you can rewrite the stars!"

The final battle began.

The Harbinger was unlike anything they had ever fought. It bent time itself, phasing between past, present, and future.

One second, it was attacking with a blade wreathed in primordial fire; the next, it had already moved behind them, striking from a future they hadn't yet reached.

Fighting against the Harbinger reminded Noah of an old Mortal Kombat game that he once played, where the final boss was Kronika, the Keeper of Time.

Kronika was a character who possessed the ability to manipulate time and space on a large scale, extremely similar to this guy.

This was when experience came to the fore again.

Noah grinned. "You think I can't play that game?"

Activating Aetherforge's new form, he matched the Harbinger's unpredictable movements, adapting moment by moment.

And one important factor about this team was that once Noah deduced a plan, leading the step, the others know how to adapt like a fish to water.

As soon as Noah started, the others followed his footsteps.

Aria followed suit; her instincts razor-sharp.

Benjamin and Caleb bombarded the Harbinger with relentless magic, while Genevieve countered its reality-bending attacks with divine wards.

The fight was brutal. Unrelenting, and then...

Noah finally found the opening.

Trust him, he was ruthless to the core, never letting go of a chance.

BAM!

With one final strike, Aetherforge severed the paradox's hold on time, locking the Harbinger in the present.

The entity staggered, its form flickering, before letting out a hollow laugh.

"You truly are an anomaly".

Then, it dissipated, time itself resetting around them.

The system message flashed.

[Congratulations! You and your team have completed the quest, the Harbinger's Paradox!]

[Skill Points +12]

[Unique Title Unlocked: Paradox Walker]

Noah exhaled, gripping his weapon.

Aria let out a breathless laugh. "That was insane".

Benjamin wiped his forehead. "I think we just fought an actual deity. Damn, that was intense!"

Caleb adjusted his glasses. "A deleted deity".

Benjamin chuckled. "That's my line. Come on, there's a joke hidden there somewhere, definitely, right?"

Genevieve smiled. "And we won".

Noah simply smirked. "Alright. Who's up for the next one?"

"Get lost!" They all protested.

"We're not all robots like you".

Noah sighed. "Weaklings".

Chapter 122: Skill points spree [6]

The Harbinger's Paradox was the last team quest to continue their skill points gathering spree that Noah embarked on with his teammates.

This time, after fighting the Harbinger, even Noah was tired.

And eventually, they called it a day, going to rest.

The next day, after waking up, the grind continued.

With Nightingale going all out and doing so much for Club Echelon, they were now also under pressure to do their best for the club.

It was no longer just a personal dream anymore, it now encompassed much more. Club Echelon also represented Nightingale's dream and passion.

Noah and his teammates wanted nothing more than to get to the elusive level 60 as fast as possible.

And so, with Noah taking the lead, across the next few days and weeks, they continued their skill points gathering spree.

To make it more interesting, Aria created a competition to determine who'll be the fastest and slowest to clear the quests.

Of course, there were rewards for the winner and a penalty for the loser.

And so, it started.

For the next few days, Noah went berserk alongside his friends.

First, they took on the Trial of the Forbidden Kings quest, a solo quest where they each faced off against the spirits of ancient kings who ruled over the Heavenly Domain before the age of gods.

Each King specialized in a unique combat style, forcing players to adapt and counter different techniques, but trust Noah and his cohort.

Since it was a competition, they approached it with even more brutal efficiency than normal.

It was no longer just skill points and XP that was at stake, pride too.

The others in the team may be less competitive maniacs, but when it came to Aria and Noah, both absolutely loathed losing.

And so the battle started.

For the Trial of the Forbidden Kings quest, like expected, Noah finished first, Aria coming as a close second.

A few days later, they took on the Abysswalker's Reckoning, another solo quest where deep within the Shadow Abyss, an entity lied trapped between mortality and godhood. That entity was the main character of the quest.

This time, the challenge was a 1v1 duel against the demi-god.

In a battle where the opponent adapts to the challenger's fighting style in real time, mirroring their techniques and countering them, Noah was the worst type of challenger for the demi-god.

The A.Is' integrated ML (machine learning) algorithm simply could not keep up with his genius and battle I.Q.

Once he figured it out, it became a one-sided thrashing.

The poor demi-god was bruised and battered. And again, Noah clinched first position in the personal contest with his friends.

Next, they took on the Duelist's Graveyard, a crazy challenge where each of them had to take on 100 warriors at a time with the difficulty increasing as they progressed through the stages.

This was a challenge that pushed them to their limits.

And this was when Aria shone. Her ultra-aggressive style worked wonders against the horde style of this quest.

Even in the Pro Alliance, Aria was always at her best when outnumbered.

And for the first time in a while, Aria bested Noah in the game.

You had to see her reaction.

"Hahahaha, I won!" Aria felt on top of the world. "Finally!"

Noah chuckled. "I accept, you win this time".

"That's not enough," she shook her head. "Write a message in the public chat and pin it that Reckless Storm won against you".

Noah stared at Aria, speechless. "For real?"

She laughed evilly. "That's the price of losing".

Well, against Aria's pestering, Noah had no choice.

He sent a message in the public chat of the 11th server, pining it and like expected, it caused a storm in the 11th server.

Afterall, Lord Doom was a big celebrity these days.

Not only was he the infamous expert of the 11th server, he was also the guild leader of guild Echelon. Not just that, he was God Noah!

Aria basked in the attention that the message attracted, enjoying the moment to the fullest. Afterall, it was not everyday that you get to beat Noah in the game called Warstar.

While Noah and his friends enjoyed themselves in the game, devoting all their time to the single-minded purpose of Warstar, leveling up their Avatars, time continued moving in the outside world.

And as the days passed, more matchdays of the English Warstar Pro Alliance came and went as the ranking in the table became more stable with time.

For the moment, Phoenix Rising was leading the line as the forerunner, leading the whole league in terms of points.

As for Cyber Squad, they truly were having a crisis of a season as despite playing more than 4 games already, they were still below 15 in the ranking.

But every game, Cyber Squad showed signs of improving.

After the first embarrassing game against Lionhearts Legacy where Harvey completely toyed with Cyber Squad's new captain, in the other games that followed, Caster managed to show far more composure.

The other clubs that faced Cyber Squad also targeted him like Harvey did, but Caster stayed composed, regaining his best form game after game.

And then, one day, suddenly, a new employee arrived at Club Echelon.

Nightingale hired a lot of employees already, so it was not shocking to see a new employee. But this time, it was no ordinary employee.

It was...

Benjamin looked at Aria, flabbergasted. "This..., this...!"

...

It was a normal morning at Club Echelon's headquarters, or as normal as things could be when you were at the heart of England's most controversial new eSports team.

Aria and the rest of the team had gathered in the common area, lounging in their usual spots.

Caleb was scrolling through stat sheets; Benjamin was unsurprisingly making yet another pun about their last quest. Genevieve was enjoying a quiet cup of tea, and Aria..., well, she was oddly focused on her phone.

Just another day.

Until the door opened.

A man stepped inside.

Tall, lean, with an air of quiet confidence.

Dressed in business-casual attire, Gabriel surveyed the room with a neutral expression, taking in each person in turn.

Then, he casually adjusted his glasses and said. "Good morning. I'll be working here from now on".

Silence.

Imagine the shock.

A full ten seconds of absolute, dumbfounded silence, then...

"WHAT?!"

It was Caleb who reacted first, stuttering. "G-Gab-I mean, brother-in-law..." He fumbled, cursing.

Genevieve blinked rapidly, completely caught off guard. "Wait..., when did this happen?"

Benjamin stared at Aria, completely flabbergasted. "This..., this...!"

Noting their reactions, Aria smirked.

'F*ck! She got us!' Benjamin cursed.

Chapter 123: Technical analyst

Benjamin, ever the comedic relief, waved a finger between Aria and Gabriel. "Hold on. Hold on". He raised both of his hands. "I know I make a lot of jokes, but this isn't one of them, right?"

He stared, totally baffled. "Did we... did we actually miss a recruitment memo?"

The subject of Aria dating was an awkward but delicate topic among the group of friends. Sometimes, they still couldn't wrap their heads around it.

Aria and dating..., it felt like polar opposites.

But here, right now, Gabriel, Aria's boyfriend was here announcing to them that he was to be working with them? How does that even work?

All eyes turned to Aria, who had suddenly found something very interesting about her phone screen.

Genevieve leaned back, arms crossed, watching her with an unimpressed expression. She had a look on her face like she was betrayed by her best friend.

"So..., you just forgot to tell us?"

Aria finally looked up, completely unbothered. "Oh, please, it's not a big deal".

"Not a big deal?!" Caleb nearly had an aneurysm. "You added a whole person to the team without telling us! That's..." He gestured wildly. "That's like suddenly adding a fifth wheel to a car and expecting it to drive normally!"

Caleb was normally very composed. Originally, he would never say all this when the person in question was standing right there but he was just too shocked and caught off-guard.

Another thing was his work description. Gabriel didn't come to work here as some unassuming chef or cleaner, no, he was working with the main team.

The main team Echelon, them, the pro players.

This was why he reacted.

Gabriel didn't take offense though. His girlfriend may have trivialized it but as a professional himself, he kind of expected this reaction.

Ever composed, he simply adjusted his glasses. "If it helps, I'll be working in technical analysis and strategy development. My role is purely supportive. I have no intention of interfering with gameplay decisions".

Benjamin, recovering from his shock, pointed at Gabriel.

First, he chuckled to lighten up the atmosphere a bit. "Sorry for the reception my man, you know, we were kind of surprised that's all".

"I know". Gabriel smiled.

Benjamin continued. "Okay, but let's clarify something real quick. You're her boyfriend, right?"

Gabriel nodded once.

By now, Aria already led her boyfriend to sit down so it was like a discussion. She was not about to have her boyfriend standing up and talking to these bastards so officially like they were interrogating him.

Benjamin nodded back. "So, let me get this straight..., our already overpowered, overaggressive Blademaster now has a live-in tactical analyst?"

Genevieve exhaled, rubbing her temples. "Oh God. The ego boost alone is going to be unbearable".

Aria smirked. "You say that like I wasn't already unbearable".

Caleb groaned, dropping back into his seat. "We're doomed".

While Aria never informed the rest of them, she did inform Noah ahead of time, including when Gabriel who report to work for the first time.

This was why a Warstar console and monitor was placed in this lounge, from where Noah listened to the conversation.

Gabriel already knew since long ago that Noah mostly communicated from inside the game. He suspected that something was not right, but he never asked since his girlfriend never took the initiative to tell him.

And now, Noah who had been silent up until now finally let out a low chuckle from inside the game. "Alright, I don't care how this happened. What matters is whether or not Gabriel can actually do his job".

Gabriel looked at the monitor screen without hesitation. "I can".

Lord Doom's smirk widened. "Good. Then welcome to Club Echelon".

Gabriel inclined his head. "Thank you. I look forward to working with you all".

Benjamin sighed dramatically. "We just recruited Aria's personal strategist. If we all die in a game because of some hyper-aggressive strategy, I'm blaming you, Noah".

Noah just shrugged. "Fair".

And just like that, Club Echelon welcomed a new worker that would be working closely with the pro team.

...

As the days turned into weeks, Club Echelon continued moving with ruthless efficiency; a team forged in battle, sharpened by trials, and led by the indomitable Lord Doom.

Noah and his team relentlessly pursued every last ounce of power the game had to offer before their inevitable rise to the Heavenly Domain.

They tore through quests like a storm.

The Harbinger's Paradox had tested their cognition and reaction speeds, forcing them to solve reality-warping anomalies while battling against paradox-born wraiths.

Chaos Gambit had thrown them into a high-stakes, unpredictable battlefield where only Noah's split-second calculations led them to victory.

The Eternal Siren's Song had nearly crushed them under the weight of an unrelenting mental siege, their wills tested against the whispers of an ancient, malevolent force.

And then the crazy game against the mad Jester.

All of them tested their wits and their Avatar's resilience, but together, Noah and his teammates prevailed every single time.

By the time they emerged, their arsenal of skills was near perfection, each player fine-tuning their abilities in preparation for the next stage of Warstar's world.

And then the rise of Club Echelon's reputation.

Word of Echelon's growth spread like wildfire. They weren't just some rogue club anymore, they were quickly becoming a serious threat.

Gabriel's tactical insights refined their strategies, turning their chaotic brilliance into organized devastation. In no time, Gabriel quickly built a close friendship with Caleb as they found a lot of things in common among themselves.

Nightingale's vision for the club was unfolding, with sponsorships already beginning to roll in, infrastructure expanding, and the organization solidifying its presence.

The eSports world kept its eyes glued to Echelon, waiting for the moment they would challenge the established titans of the scene.

And through it all, whispers of Lord Doom's dominance never faded.

While his teammates grew, Noah was undergoing his own transformation.

Stuck in the game, he had all the time in the world to play Warstar.

He had mastered the new form of Aetherforge, the Berserker's Greatsword, honing it to terrifying precision as he integrated it with the other forms.

Caster had become an unwitting sparring partner, thrown into battle after battle, gradually refining himself in the process.

And Caster's progress was showing in every Cyber Squad game.

Noah had even experimented with multi-weapon synergy, blending his past mastery of lances with the raw, explosive power of the greatsword.

It was a period of refinement, a relentless pursuit of absolute perfection before stepping into the next battlefield.

And then, finally, after countless battles, quests, and victories... a golden notification flashed before Noah's eyes.

DING!

[You have leveled up to level 60!]

Finally!

The time had come.

Chapter 124: Level 60

DING!

[You have leveled up to level 60!]

Finally!

The time had come.

In Warstar, there was one thing that was synonymous with level 60 that every lover of the game knew about... the Heavenly Domain Challenge.

In the words of the developers, the beginner domain was just as it sounded like, the beginner level of the game. Warstar truly started at the Heavenly Domain.

There, the most ruthless aspects, most adventurous dungeons and storylines, and the best players of the game all converged in the Heavenly Domain.

Another thing that made the Heavenly Domain so iconic was the fact that there, pro accounts like Gabriel's Dain Ironvalor, Jonathan's Crimson Saint, and Caster's Stinger of War roamed.

Yes, there were times that the pro players also entered the game, and their domain was the Heavenly Domain.

Afterall, at the thick of it, they were all just lovers of the revolutionary game.

Noah leveled up after killing a random Goblin in the wild.

This was because after raiding dungeons, juggling countless quests, and fighting alongside his teammates for so long, amassing XP, Caleb's calculations told him that today was the day that he would level up again to level 60.

So, instead of entering a dungeon, his teammates escorted him to the wild where they gathered monsters for him to kill for XP.

And finally, Noah leveled up.

A second or two after the level up notification, Noah got another notification. Not just one, but series of notifications.

---<Warstar>---

[Congratulations! You have met the requirement to trigger the Heavenly Domain Challenge!]

[Objective: Prove yourself worthy of ascending to the Heavenly Domain- the unified battleground of Warstar.]

[Description: The moment a player reaches level 60, they are granted access to the Heavenly Domain Challenge, a rite of passage that separates the true elite from the

ordinary. This challenge is divided into 3 brutal trials, each designed to test different aspects of a player's ability. Only those who clear all 3 trials can step into the Heavenly Domain, where the real legends of Warstar are forged.]

[NOTE: The Heavenly Domain Challenge is unique to each Avatar!]

...

[Trial 1: The Random Quests Challenge]

*Type: Multi-genre challenge.

*Objective: Complete 15 randomly assigned quests within a time frame of 1 week.

*Individual Time Limit: Varies per quest

...

Noah's eyes gleamed as he stared at the series of notifications.

He knew what this was. Afterall, he already went through all these processes when he was building up his Stinger of War Avatar.

The Random Quests Challenge throws players into 15 unpredictable missions, each drawn from an extensive pool of possible quests.

No two players will ever receive the exact same sequence, ensuring true adaptability and versatility are tested. The quests can range from high-octane battles to the downright bizarre, forcing challengers to prove that they are not just skilled warriors but well-rounded players.

The 15 unique quests for Noah's Avatar, Lord Doom were already generated. Curiously, he looked through them.

[Quests randomizing, please wait...]

[Randomization complete!]

[Quest 1: Demon's Gambit]

>Defeat a cursed warlord who revives stronger after every death, until you discover his true weakness.

[Quest 2: The Speedrunner's Trial]

>Complete an obstacle course of traps, moving platforms, and aerial combat before time runs out<

[Quest 3: The Puzzle of the Ancients]

>Solve an insanely complex mind game while being attacked by relentless phantoms<

[Quest 4: Merchant's Wrath]

>A merchant wrongly accuses you of stealing. Convince him of your innocence without violence or get hunted by elite bounty hunters<

[Quest 5: The Song of War]

>Memorize and flawlessly perform a battle hymn using Warstar's rhythm minigame, boosting your stats for the next challenge<

[Quest 6: A Duel with Death]

>Face a legendary swordsman whose every strike is an instant kill; dodge perfectly or perish<

[Quest 7: Arena of Beasts]

>Survive a gladiator match against mutated war creatures, each stronger than the last<

[Quest 8: The Invisible Assassin]

>A deadly rogue lurks in the shadows, striking when least expected. Find and defeat them before they eliminate you<

[Quest 9: The Reserve Battle]

>Your controls are inverted; up is down, left is right, abilities are randomized. Win a fight in this state<

[Quest 10: Tower of Echoes]

>Climb a 100-floor dungeon where past bosses return, stronger than before<

[Quest 11: The Symphony of Blades]

>Defeat a squad of elite swordsmen while synchronizing attacks to an evolving battle rhythm<

[Quest 12: The Jester's Masquerade]

>Identity the real Jester among a group of NPCs, each trying to deceive you<

[Quest 13: The Labyrinth of Echoes]

>Navigate a shifting labyrinth where past versions of yourself replay your previous movements as enemies<

[Quest 14: The King's Gambit]

>Lead a squad of AI-controlled soldiers in a battlefield chess match, where each move dictates real-time combat outcomes<

[Quest 15: The Unseen Duel]

>Win a duel against an invisible swordsman<

...

Noah cracked his knuckles, looking at his teammates. "I'm gonna have a very busy week ahead of me".

"I can't believe you're level 60 already". Genevieve lamented.

She was still level 57!

"Work harder". Noah laughed.

Apart from Noah, the highest leveled in the crew was Aria who was already level 59. She looked at him with all seriousness.

"You beat me to it, but not for long".

"I'll catch up soon enough".

With that, she turned around, returning to level up.

Noah chuckled. "Well, umm..., I'll be waiting for you!" He yelled.

Aria gave him the middle finger.

The others didn't dawdle though. Noah hitting level 60 made them feel like they were freeloading and wasting Nightingale's money, and so they left to continue the grind for XP.

With them gone, Noah focused on the series of notifications again.

Afterall, he was yet to look through all of them. There was still the skill challenge and the arena challenge in the Heavenly Domain Challenge.

[Trial 2: The Skill Challenge]

*Type: Individual skill test

*Objective: Overcome a unique combat trial tailored to your class and combat style.

*Difficulty: Scales to the challenger's personal skill level.

The Skill Challenge is a one-on-one confrontation against a system-generated opponent, designed to expose a player's strengths and weaknesses.

The enemy AI is adaptive, learning from the player's movements, strategies, and attacks. This is where raw talent is separated from true mastery.

The Skill Challenge had certain unique features, the first of which is the class-based trials. A Warrior will face a relentless berserker, a Mage will battle an archmage of equal cunning, a Summoner will have their own summons turned against them.

There was also the adaptation mechanic. If a player relies too much on one strategy, the opponent counters and forces a shift in tactics.

And no easy wins. If the system deems the player's performance unsatisfactory, the challenge resets, requiring true mastery to pass.

The victory condition was to defeat the system-generated opponent at their peak strength.

And lastly, the Arena Challenge.

[Trial 3: The Arena Challenge]

*Type: PvP Survival Gauntlet

*Objective: Win 100 consecutive duels

*Restrictions: No outside help, no breaks, only one chance.

[System Remark: Goodluck, challenger.]

Noah took a deep breath, and then he chuckled. "Seeing all these..., I can't help but feel young again".

He grinned. "Heavenly Domain Challenge, here I come!"

Chapter 125: A busy week [1]

The Arena Challenge..., the final and most grueling trial of the 3.

Challengers must step into the arena and engage in a gauntlet of 100 consecutive fights against fellow players who have also reached this stage without a single defeat.

It was the most difficult of the 3 trials of the Heavenly Domain Challenge.

Each opponent scales in difficulty, ensuring that only those with endurance, adaptability, and sheer willpower survive.

And there were also some crazy rules that accompanied it.

The first rule is that there is no rest between matches. The moment a battle ends, the next begins immediately unless there is no opponent in the Arena lobby.

The second rule and second most cruel is that there are no second chances. Lose once, and you are eliminated. You have to restart from zero.

The final and most cruel rule is the final duel rule.

The 100th match is against an Elite Challenger, another player who have also amassed 99 straight wins in the Heavenly Domain Challenge.

It was cruel but it was the reality of the game, and it was why the Heavenly Domain Challenge was so notorious among Warstar communities.

Only the best of the best gets to play in the Heavenly Domain.

Not everyone had the skill to complete the challenge, which meant limited players could actually make the great leap.

But trust player communities. When there is a will, there is a way.

In recent years, a new job among elite players was the Heavenly Domain Challenge farming. By helping other players control their Avatars, play and complete the challenge for them, players with great skill could earn a lot of money.

The developers knew about this, but there was nothing they could do about it and so they let it be.

Noah didn't need anybody's help for this though, he was good enough.

Besides, even for those who engage in Heavenly Domain Challenge farming, to complete a single Avatar domain challenge, they needed to make a lot of preparations and planning since challenges were different for each Avatar.

Not just preparations, a lot of trial and error is also involved which meant the challenge that was meant for 1 week could quickly extend to weeks and even months.

Noah had no intention of spending so much time though.

'Let's complete it in 1 week!' He thought to himself.

This was going to be a very busy week for him.

He started immediately.

...

Noah started by taking on Trial 1 and its 15 missions.

Since the system did not indicate that he must complete each mission in chronological order, meaning he could skip the order, Noah set his eyes on all the combat missions first.

If there was one thing that he was best at in Warstar, it was combat.

To others, the combat missions of the random quests challenge was the difficult part but to him, it was the easy part.

Noah quickly rounded the combat missions up, writing them in a to-do list.

[Combat Quests:]

*Demon's Gambit.

*A Duel with Death.

*Arena of Beasts.

*The Invisible Assassin.

*The Reverse Battle.

*Tower of Echoes.

*The Symphony of Blades.

*The Unseen Duel.

Out of the 15 quests, 8 were pure combat quests.

And so Noah started.

Completing Demon's Gambit wasn't too hard for him. Defeating a cursed warlord who revives stronger after every death until you discover his true weakness may seem like a daunting challenge.

But it wasn't so daunting anymore if you refuse to play to the whims of the system and not kill the warlord till you discover the true weakness.

With Noah's experience, finding the weakness was easy.

He completed Demon's Gambit in less than a dozen minutes.

A Duel with Death was much more daunting, since just one strike from the legendary swordsman meant instant kill which was directly proportional to failure.

For this quest, Noah had to be extra careful.

It took him a long time, but he finally managed to put down the swordsman, winning the duel after an insane flawless victory display.

For the Arena of Beasts quest, Noah lasted through 20 waves of mutated war creatures, each stronger than the last for hours. Only after the 20th wave did the system finally notify him of completing the quest.

On the first day, Noah only managed to complete these 3 quests.

The next day, he continued.

For the Invisible Assassin quest, it was easy for Noah. He simply waited for the deadly rogue lurking in the shadows to strike and when he did, he retaliated, quickly gunning down the paper-class boss.

To casual players, the Reverse Battle may seem like another daunting challenge but as a pro player, one of the basics that Noah had a good grasp of was learning to play in multiple scenarios, including in a reverse battlefield.

Completing this quest was even faster than the others.

And then again, another quest that took a long time to complete. Climbing the 100 floors of the Tower of Echoes was incredibly grueling, but Noah persevered, killing every last monster that he encountered and completing the quest.

And then came the Symphony of Blades quest.

This time, Noah had to defeat a squad of elite swordsmen while synchronizing attacks to an evolving battle rhythm.

The quest was not as straightforward as Noah expected though, there was a twist.

The enemy's attack patters follow a musical tempo that speeds up over time. Missing the beat weakens the player's attacks and defense.

But once again, Noah adapted.

He defeated all the enemies without falling out of sync for more than five seconds, eventually completing the quest.

'Nightingale would love this quest'. He thought at the end.

And lastly, the Unseen Duel.

This time, it was a combat/perception challenge since he was supposed to win a duel against an invisible swordsman.

It was complete invisibility. The swordsman can only be tracked through sound, environmental shifts, and subtle air disturbances.

And yet once again, Noah's experience prevailed.

Another of the basics that every pro player must learn was the ability to discern and accurately judge and attack just from sound.

Afterall, this was how pro players learned to counter the blind ability of Brawlers that is an effect of their Sand Toss skill.

The quest was made a bit harder by the fact that the player cannot use any direct detection skills, only pure instinct and reaction speed.

Even at that, Noah won a crushing victory against the invisible swordsman.

In 2 days, he managed to complete all the combat quests that he selected.

The next day, Noah moved on to the last 7 quests of the random quests challenge, where he expected to meet the most difficulty.

He was up for the challenge though.

'Bring it on!'

Chapter 126: A busy week [2]

[You have accepted Quest 2: The Speedrunner's Trial!]

[Countdown: 04:59]

The moment Noah accepted the challenge, the world around him blurred and he found himself standing at the starting line of an impossible course; a vast, surreal landscape suspended in the sky, composed of floating platforms, collapsing bridges, spiraling tunnels, and gravity-defying pathways.

A booming voice echoed across the expanse.

"Welcome to the Speed Runner's trial. Reach the finish line in under five minutes. Failure to do so will result in elimination. Goodluck!"

Hearing this, Noah finally understood what the countdown stood for.

"Well... I'd be damned!" He chuckled.

And then, it started.

The moment the trial started, the platforms ahead started disintegrating, forcing Noah to move immediately.

His eyes showed no hesitation as he moved.

His reflexes kicked in as he surged forward, using every movement technique at his disposal.

This was a contest of speed!

The first section of the quest was a high-speed sprint across a shifting terrain. The ground beneath Noah constantly changed; one moment its solid rock, the next it's a crumbling bridge.

With each step, platforms fall away, leaving no room for hesitation.

Hollow sounds filled the terrain as wind currents blasted from the sides, threatening to throw him off course.

Obstacles emerged without warning, from falling debris to energy walls, and even illusionary dead ends designed to make runners second-guess their path.

Ghostly afterimages of past challengers also appeared, following different routes. Some succeeded, most didn't.

All of it was to confuse the challenge.

Noah had to trust his instincts to find the fastest way forward.

Besides, he noticed a worrying trend as he continued. If he hesitated for too long at one spot, the platform disappears beneath him.

Noah felt cold sweat fill his forehead. 'These guys...'

He didn't stop though.

And then, Noah crossed the first section of the quest, arriving at the second section, a part of the track where the trial warps reality itself.

BZZZ!

Suddenly, Noah was thrown into a gravity-shifting maze where walls, ceilings, and floors rotate and swap positions at random intervals.

Jumping too early or too late results in getting flung into the void.

Gravity wells pulled him in unexpected directions, testing his reaction speed and forcing him to adjust mid-air.

Mirage paths made it difficult to tell which platforms were real and which were there only to cause instant failure.

Noah was on edge.

But keeping his composure, with precise aerial controls, he leapt, flipped and dashed through the course, adapting to the unpredictable changes.

He managed to not get trapped in an endless gravity loop and he also managed to not fall out of bounds.

This quest was a thriller throughout, he felt like he was riding the edge of a cliff with a bike and it left his blood pumping fiercely.

And finally, after minutes of keeping at it, he arrived at the last stretch.

The last stretch pushes speed to the absolute limit. The platforms stretched into an endless light tunnel, and Noah was given a simple instruction.

"Break through the speed barrier".

A golden finish line shone in the distance, but between him and victory were certain obstacles like expected.

First was an ever-present and relentless wind force pushing him back, making normal movement impossible.

Second were the speed rings scattered across the path. Hitting them provides a temporary boost, but missing one meant losing precious seconds.

And the last were lightning-fast enemies, manifestations of past challengers who failed, now reduced to shadowy figures trying to drag him down.

Noah grinned, relishing the challenge.

Luckily, due to his 10x skill points unique skill, he had more than enough movement boost skills to push his Avatar to the maximum speed.

Without hesitation, he poured everything into his acceleration, chaining together movement skills, air dashes, and perfectly timed jumps.

Lord Doom erupted!

In that moment, living and feeling it with such vivid clarity, Noah felt like his body was about to break under the sheer force of speed, but he didn't stop.

His heart pumped blood rapidly, fueling him with adrenaline.

The world blurred into streaks of light.

And then..., he broke the sound barrier!

KABOOM!

Noah felt weightless, unfettered for a brief unforgettable moment.

And then in one final burst, he crossed the finish line, his surroundings freezing for a second before a golden notification appeared before him.

[Congratulations! You have completed the Speed Runner's Trial!]

[Your reaction speed, adaptability, and movement mastery have reached new heights!]

[You have received the following rewards:]

*+4 Skill Points.

*New Passive Skill: Momentum Flow.

>Momentum Flow: The faster you move, the more fluid and efficient your actions become, reducing stamina consumption while in motion<

Breathing heavily, Noah smirked.

"That was smooth".

...

[You have accepted Quest 3: The Puzzle of the Ancients!]

Of course, Noah aimed to complete all 7 of the random quests remaining in one day if possible.

As soon as he accepted the quest, the world around him faded and he found himself standing in the heart of a colossal ruin, an ancient temple lost to time.

The air was thick with dust, and eerie golden runes glowed faintly on the massive stone walls. Towering statues of forgotten deities loomed over him, their blank eyes watching in silent judgement.

A deep, resonant voice echoed through the temple.

"Welcome, challenger".

"This is the Puzzle of the Ancients".

"You stand before the Trial of Mind".

"Only those who possess wisdom, intuition, and an unshakable will may proceed. Solve the puzzles ahead, or be lost within these halls forever".

The heavy stone doors behind him slammed shut, leaving only one way forward.

Noah looked forward one last time, and then he decisively moved forward.

He stepped into a vast chamber where the floor was a shifting labyrinth of glowing glyphs. Each step he took caused the symbols beneath his feet to shift, changing the layout of the maze.

The familiar voice rumbled.

"Phase 1, the Glyph Maze".

The goal was simple, reach the other side.

The challenge?

False paths, shifting routes, and mimic walls.

Noah smiled. "Puzzles can be fun too".

Chapter 127: A busy week [3]

It was a maze, and mazes were never straightforward.

There were false paths in the maze. Stepping on the wrong glyph teleports Noah back to the start or activates a trap.

There were also shifting routes. Every ten seconds, the maze reconfigures, forcing Noah to memorize patterns and predict changes.

And then there were the mimic walls. Some passages looked open but are actually illusions, leading players in circles.

He smiled. "Puzzles can be fun too".

But then with narrowed eyes, he carefully started his work, studying the pattern of shifts. Rather than relying on trial and error, he deciphered the logic behind the glyphs, finding the hidden formula that governed the maze's movement.

After weaving through the puzzle with calculated precision, he was able to reach the exit just as the entire floor reset.

A deep rumble echoed through the temple, indicating that the first phase of the puzzle was complete.

And then the familiar voice echoed again.

"Phase 2, the Pillars of Memory".

The next chamber was lined with six towering stone pillars, each covered in intricate carvings depicting forgotten battles, fallen empires, and celestial beings.

At the center of the room is an ancient pedestal with a single inscription.

>Only one of these tales is true. The others are mere echoes of history<

Noah understood his goal immediately.

He was to examine each pillar's carvings and determine which represents real history. The catch?

Some carvings contradict one another, meaning they can't all be true.

The correct history must be pieced together from subtle details; dates, attire, battle tactics, all hidden within the imagery.

Choosing the wrong pillar activates a trap, forcing Noah to start over or face an enemy manifestation of the false history.

Noah sighed. "Having Caleb would have made this so much easier".

He didn't sulk though; he didn't have the time for it.

And so he started, studying the carvings closely, recognizing a hidden emblem on one pillar that matched ancient Warstar lore.

Trusting his instinct, he placed his hand on the correct pillar.

DING!

The temple rumbled in approval.

[Phase 2, complete!]

The familiar voice reverberated again.

"Phase 3, the Final Enigma, the Time-lock mechanism".

The last chamber is a grand hall with a massive door sealed by an intricate mechanical lock; a combination of rotating rings, shifting tiles, and luminous sigils.

At the center of the room, an ancient hourglass slowly empties, marking the time limit that Noah had.

And the voice reverberated again.

"Align past, present, and future. The lock will open".

Noah's eyes gleamed. 'A three-part puzzle'. He thought.

He could make the connections immediately.

'If I'm not wrong, past will encompass rearranging sigils into a forgotten language to form a coherent message'.

'Present should be adjusting the mechanical rings to match the correct planetary alignment'.

He rubbed his chin in thought. 'While future should be predicting the correct sequence of tiles before they finish cycling through randomized patterns'.

Noah's mind raced as he deciphered, adjusted and predicted, working against the relentless ticking of the hourglass.

With seconds to spare, he managed to make the final adjustment.

And then...

CLICK!

The mechanism clicked into place.

The door shuddered, then slowly creaked open.

A golden system notification appeared before him.

[Congratulations! You have completed the Puzzle of the Ancients! Your intellect, pattern recognition, and logic have reached new heights!]

[You have received Rewards:]

*+8 Skill Points.

*New Passive Skill: Analytical Insight.

>Analytical Insight: Your ability to recognize patterns and solve complex problems is enhanced. You now have the ability to see hidden clues, making puzzles, illusions, and strategy-based encounters easier to navigate<

Noah exhaled, stretching his fingers after all that mental exertion.

"I swear, that was harder than fighting a boss".

He felt mentally exhausted but his inner fighting fire was not dead yet, Noah wanted to keep on going and that was exactly what he did.

He went up to the 3rd quest among the 7.

...

[You have accepted Quest 4: The Merchant's Wrath!]

BZZZ!

After accepting the quest, the world shifted around Noah for the 3rd time today and he found himself standing in the center of a grand bazar unlike any he's ever seen before.

Stalls lined the streets, filled with exotic wares; gleaming jewels, enchanted weapons, and delicacies from across the realms.

The air hummed with haggling voices, the scent of spices, and the glint of gold. But there was an underlying tension in the air.

Noah groaned. 'I already know this is going to be a headache'.

Still, he moved.

The moment Noah stepped forward, a robed merchant with piercing golden eyes appeared before him.

"Welcome, challenger".

"You have entered the Merchant's Wrath test, a trial that measures not your strength, but your wit, persuasion, and cunning".

"You stand in a city where fortune and ruin are decided by trade".

"Prove your mastery of negotiation, deception, and business acumen, or be left penniless and powerless".

Noah deadpanned. "Are you telling me to go about scamming people".

The merchant didn't respond to him. Rather, waving a hand, a golden contract appeared before Noah.

[Quest Objective: Amass 10,000 Gold within the time limit.]

[Rules:]

*You begin with 100 Gold.

*You may buy, sell, trade, and haggle as you please. If possible, you can scam customers so long you're not caught.

*You may manipulate the market through rumors or strategic investments.

*The test ends when the time limit expires or you reach 10,000 Gold.

*Failure means bankruptcy... and a humiliating system-wide announcement of your failure.

Noah raised an eyebrow. "Still feels like I'm being told to scam..., but I guess this is a battle of wits, huh?"

Thinking of something, he sighed. "Is this what it feels like to go to business school?"

"Damn, I always hated merchants in games!"

He had no choice though. He was already in it, and Noah had no intention of stopping till his Heavenly Domain Challenge was completed.

'These developers are truly playing with us players, aren't they?'

Without hesitation, he moved, doing the first and most important thing that he realized, securing his stall in this city-wide market.

"Let's do business!"

Chapter 128: Noah, the shrewd Merchant

Noah wasted no time.

After securing his stall in the massive bazar, he scanned the market, identifying key trends.

He first identified the high-demand items in the market. The rare herbs, enchanted materials, and relics that were put up for sale.

He also noted the undervalued goods, an overlooked stash of 'worthless' stones that he instantly recognized as unrefined mana crystals.

Noah may have never played as a Merchant throughout his time playing Warstar, but still, over 10 years of experience playing one game insinuated that he knew the game like the back of his hand.

Experience was again playing a big factor in his process.

And then he also identified the market influencers, the powerful NPC merchants who control the economy with their influence.

To Noah, everyone of these things that he identified was a pawn in his chessboard that he intended to use to conquer the market.

Once his observation and analysis phase were over, he quickly entered the implementation phase of his plan.

Noah started by spending.

Afterall, to make money, you need money.

Instead of buying high-priced goods, Noah invested his capital into cheap, overlooked materials. Then, he started spreading rumors, subtly manipulating the market to drive demand sky-high.

Within minutes, merchants were already scrambling to acquire the items he already stockpiled, and Noah sold them for triple their original value.

DING!

[You have made a profit!]

[Current Gold: 2,500]

Noah grinned. 'I'm just starting!'

And then, the catalyst that Noah needed to push his strategy into the next phase was triggered as an event.

A grand auction was announced, featuring legendary items and secret treasures.

The moment Noah heard of it, he knew this was his opportunity to shake the market and profit from it.

He didn't have enough gold to bid on the rarest items outright, but he doesn't need to. In business, sometimes, its not all about money too.

Sometimes, all that was needed was the quick wit to outsmart your rivals.

Afterall, like Jose Mourinho said, if we're competing in a race and I have a Mini Cooper while you have a Ferrari, to win, I can't play fair.

To win, I'll have to burst your tire or fill your fuel tank with sugar.

Noah took a tip or two from the ways of the legendary football coach.

His strategy to make profit? He artificially inflated the price of worthless items, raising their value in the process due to his bold bidding, tricking rival bidders into wasting their funds.

Then, when they've burned through their reserves, he swoops in and buys valuable items at a fraction of their worth.

It was risky strategy, but it was working.

To Noah, that's all that mattered.

As the auction progressed, one particular item caught his eye; a mysterious locked chest.

The crowd dismissed it as worthless, but Noah's instincts honed through over a decade of playing the game told him otherwise.

By now, he already had a sixth sense for treasure in the game.

He won the bid, cracked open the lock only to reveal a hidden stash of ancient Warstar coins that are highly valuable to certain collectors.

DING!

[You have made a profit!]

[Current Gold: 6,700]

Noah licked his lips. 'On point!'

His progress was staggering.

And just as he was closing in on his goal, the Golden Merchant appears again, his face darkened with fury.

He shook in rage.

"You dare manipulate my market? You have done well... too well even. I cannot allow this to go unchallenged!"

'This...!' Noah's face darkened.

From that point, everything went south.

The market itself turned against Noah. Prices started fluctuating wildly, merchants refused to trade with him, and a faction of rival traders attempted to scam, rob, and outmaneuver him.

Problems came from everywhere. His start-up business seemed about to crumble from the pressure, but Noah was unfazed.

'This is just like everything else in Warstar, a battle'.

'And when you're attacked, you retaliate'.

Noah retaliated.

He pitted rival merchants against each other, spreading targeted rumors to crash their investments.

Not just that, he exploited a secret loophole in market regulations, forcing NPC traders to accept his terms.

And his last card was a big risk. He used all his remaining capital to monopolize a critical resource, forcing competitors to buy from him at inflated prices. In essence, this was a gamble.

Noah only tried it because he learned from one of the best in Benjamin.

From Benjamin, he learned that if you wanted to win big, you have to grow the balls to bet big.

And that was what he did.

And it paid dividends.

With a final, ruthless move, Noah made a single trade that pushed him past the 10,000 Gold mark.

DING!

[You have made profit!]

[Current Gold: 10,800]

A familiar golden notification quickly flashed, shining before his eyes.

[Congratulations! You have completed the Merchant's Wrath Test!]

[You have received rewards:]

*+15 Skill Points.

*New Passive Skill: Master of Commerce.

>Master of Commerce: All future trades, negotiations, and business dealings favor you. Prices of goods decrease, and your ability to identify market trends is heightened<

The Golden Merchant grinned, nodding in respect.

"Congratulations, Master of Commerce".

"You have bested the market, challenger".

"Fortune favors the cunning. Spend wisely".

As the bazaar faded away, Noah smirked.

"Damn, I never knew playing a Merchant could be this fun".

"Might have to start a business after all this".

Originally, after completing the Puzzle of the Ancients quest, Noah was mentally tired but after the different type of thrill that playing as a Merchant gave him and the dopamine it induced in his brain, Noah felt refreshed again.

His original thought was to continue tomorrow, but now...

He paused, the thought of continuing lingering in his head, then. "Why not?"

Noah did not hesitate; he jumped to the next quest in his agenda.

[Quest 5: The Song of War]

This quest was one of the weakest that Noah took on yet.

It took him less than 5 minutes to complete, after which he set his eyes on another target again, emboldened by the speed of completing the Song of War.

[Quest 12: The Jester's Masquerade]

Chapter 129: Quest 12- The Jester's Masquerade

[You have accepted Quest 12: The Jester's Masquerade!]

BZZZ!

The moment Noah accepted the quest, the world warped around him in a swirl of colors, laughter, and eerie music.

"Hihihihihhi!"

"Muahahahahaha!"

When his vision cleared, he stood in the middle of a grand masquerade ball inside a lavish yet unsettling palace.

The walls were lined with massive, distorted mirrors, their reflections twisting and shifting in ways that defied logic.

The guests, masked figures in elaborate costumes twirled and laughed, their movements just a bit too perfect, their voices just a bit too hollow.

A sinister energy hummed beneath the surface of their merriment.

At the head of the ballroom, lounging on a gilded throne sat a grotesquely grinning figure, the Jester King.

His long, mismatched limbs rest lazily over the armrests, his fingers adorned with golden rings that glinted in the dim candlelight. His jester's hat writhe unnaturally as if alive.

He leaned forward at the sight of a new challenger, eyes gleaming with mischief. "Ahh, a new player enters the game!"

He grinned. "Welcome, welcome, oh masked wanderer".

"Do you seek the prize?"

"The game is simple. Survive my little masquerade until the final bell tolls".

"Make the right choices, solve the riddles, and perhaps, just perhaps, you'll leave with your mind intact, hihi!" He chuckled in an eerie voice.

[Quest Objective: Unravel the secrets of the Masquerade and escape before the final bell tolls.]

'Another puzzle, huh?' Noah sighed. 'I'm beginning to hate puzzles'.

It already started though.

A masked noblewoman glid toward Noah, offering her hand. The moment he took it, the music swelled and he was forced into a waltz.

Ballroom music played.

Every step synched with the pulse of the palace itself, as if reality was forced to bend to the rhythm of the dance.

Each of the masked guests spoke to him in riddles, mixing truth and lies in every single sentence.

Noah realized the rules of the Masquerade.

'I must identity the liars and the truth-tellers to progress'.

'Wrong choices alter the ballroom itself, shifting walls, twisting reality, and summoning grotesque masked phantoms'.

All the while, the Jester King watched with amusement, occasionally interfering with cryptic hints or maddening laughter.

'These hints..., is it my Analytical Insight passive skill in action or its just part of the game?'

Noah was not sure, and he didn't care to confirm, focusing on what was important which was breaking this puzzle.

With keen observation, he navigated the game of deception, recognizing subtle gestures that betrayed the liars.

Once he pointed them out, the game came to an end.

All the while, the Jester King had the same amused look on his face, then...

BZZZ!

The walls slid open, revealing a hallway of countless mirrors. Each reflection there moved slightly out of sync, distorting in eerie ways.

The Jester's voice echoed.

"Ah, but who are you, really? Find yourself before you lose yourself".

Noah almost rolled his eyes in exasperation. 'Ah shit, here we go again'.

He focused and observed, and then he noticed the patterns.

Some reflections mimic him perfectly, others grin when he does not, while some distort into monstrous forms.

If he interacted with the wrong one, his true self begins to fade, distorting his movements in the real world.

To pass, he must identify the one true reflection before the ticking clock in the background stops.

'What a devious game'. He thought.

Noah was already moving though.

By using his sharp instincts and his ability to notice inconsistencies, Noah managed to choose the correct reflection, causing the others to shatter into black mist as they faded away.

And once again, he progressed through this jesterized maze, moving on to the location of his final test.

With only minutes left before the final bell tolls, Noah found himself back in the ballroom. The guests have stopped dancing.

Instead, they stood perfectly still, heads tilted, their masks grinning unnaturally. As for the Jester King?

The Jester King rose from his throne, clapping.

"Oh, you've done so well! But one final choice remains, my dear guest!"

In response, a massive roulette wheel appeared in the center of the ballroom, divided into two halves, gold and black.

The Jester grinned. "Spin it! If you land on gold, you walk free with your reward. Land on black... well, let's just say you'll be dancing here forever".

But Noah wasn't fooled, he noticed something.

While the Jester spoke, he noticed his fingers twitch ever so slightly when gesturing toward the wheel. He also noticed that the masked guests were tensed, as if waiting for something.

And lastly, Noah noticed a subtle magical pulse that was coming from beneath the Jester's throne.

Noah smirked. 'Almost got me there'.

Rather than playing the Jester's game this time, Noah instead dashed forward, vaulting over the roulette wheel and striking the Jester's throne.

The moment he does, the illusion shattered.

CRACK!

The palace warped, revealing a dark, crumbling theater. There, the Jester let out a delighted cackle, then a disappointed sigh.

"Oh, fine! You win, clever one". He grinned. "But next time, play along, won't you?" He chuckled.

A system notification flashed before Noah's eyes.

[Congratulations! You have completed the Jester's Masquerade!]

[You have received rewards:]

*+6 Skill Points

*New Passive Skill: Trickster's Insight.

>Trickster's Insight: You are now more resistant to illusions, deception, and trickery-based effects. Your ability to see through falsehoods has increased<

The Jester tips his hat, grinning as he faded into the void.

"Farewell, oh masked wanderer. May our games continue another time".

As the world faded, Noah exhaled.

"That guy was almost as annoying as Benjamin..."

...

Noah was tired after dealing with that Jester, but still, so close to completing all the random quests already, he felt a motivation to continue.

And then he took on the Labyrinth of Echoes.

This time, since it was a quest that partly involved combat, Noah was faster than normal, finding his way through the labyrinth and quickly dispatching all the enemies before the time frame hit.

And then, he focused on the last quest.

[Quest 14: The King's Gambit]

Chapter 130: Quest 14- The King's Gambit

Noah was tired.

He was moving forward through sheer willpower, the single-minded determination to complete the last of the random quests.

[You have accepted Quest 14: The King's Gambit!]

BZZZ!

The moment Noah selected the quest, the system notification appeared and then the world warped around him, dissolving into a grand chessboard battlefield floating in an endless void.

This was one reason why Noah decided to push on, he was good at chess.

Towering statues of kings and queens stood at the edges of this grand battlefield, their stone eyes watching in judgement.

A massive, obsidian throne sat at the far end of the battlefield, pulsing with a dark, regal aura.

And at the center of the board, a king in black armor arose, his form half-shadow, half-metal, with a flowing crimson cape.

His eyes burned like dying embers.

On his hand was a long, runed greatsword, its blade humming with an ominous presence.

The king's voice was deep and unyielding as he spoke.

"The throne is never safe. If you desire its power, you must seize it by force, defend it by cunning, and rule it with wisdom".

"This is the law of kings".

The chessboard rumbled and spectral figures emerged, knights in blackened plate, rooks with shifting, stone-like bodies, bishops cloaked in ethereal mist, and a swarm of pawns armed with serrated blades.

The game had begun.

Noah's reaction? The first thing that came to his mind was the fact that he had once watched something similar in a Harry Potter movie.

'I swear the developers got inspiration from that'. He thought.

Even as he thought of an old movie that he once watched, his eyes never stopped moving, observing and analyzing the test.

He quickly discovered his objective. To win this game of chess, he had to reach the throne while navigating the battlefield.

The chessboard is divided into squares, and stepping on certain tiles triggers traps, shifting terrain, or summoning new enemies.

The enemy pieces move according to real chess rules. Knights leap in L-shapes, Bishops strike diagonally, Rooks bulldoze forward, and Pawns swarm aggressively like a mob.

To win, Noah must predict enemy movements, using strategy to outmaneuver and defeat them to arrive at his destination.

Without hesitation, after confirming the basic rules, he started.

He may have started without hesitation, but he was not reckless. Using a conservative approach at first, Noah managed to learn more to confirm a few more details, realizing the key mechanics of this quest in his head.

If Noah stepped into a controlled zone without a plan in the chessboard, he quickly gets overwhelmed.

However, if he cleverly baits out movements, creating weaknesses in the formation, he can carve a path forward.

Also, the throne pulsed with power, subtly influencing the board.

Noah realized that he could manipulate the energy of the throne to shift pieces or freeze certain moves.

Once Noah realized all the pieces, the puzzle in his head was complete.

And then, without stopping once, he moved.

After an intense series of maneuvers, he finally reached the throne but there, the real challenge began.

Notifications appeared before him in ominous red.

[WARNING!]

[Defend the throne against an overwhelming assault!]

Noah's eyes gleamed.

The moment he sat on the throne, the battlefield shifted. Now, he is the king and he had to defend his throne from invaders.

Bzzz!

A massive army of spectral warriors emerged, led by a powerful White King in gleaming platinum armor.

The rules flipped.

Now, Noah commands the black pieces, positioning them to counter the movements of the invading forces.

He now truly engaged in a game of chess.

He can issue strategic orders, commanding Rooks to form barriers, Knights to flank, and Bishops to cast area-wide spells.

However, he cannot move freely anymore. He was the king and the throne bound him; he must now rely on his tactical skills to win.

Noah's eyes flickered as he felt the thrill. 'I'm now loving this!'

The White King himself is a formidable foe, wielding a holy greatsword and unleashing devastating light-based attacks.

The battle is a test of leadership, forcing Noah to think multiple steps ahead but that was how every game of chess was in the first place.

Using quick thinking and precise strategy, Noah orchestrated a perfect defense, eliminating the enemy King's last major pieces until only the two rulers remained.

It was an overwhelming victory.

And then, a new notification, this time in yellow font appeared.

[New Objective: Defeat the White King in single combat.]

CRACK!

The throne shattered, releasing Noah from its constraints as the battlefield cleared. Now, it was a one-on-one duel.

The White King, now wielding both his greatsword and the last remnants of his army's power strode forward.

His eyes glowed golden. "To rule, one must have strength. Show me yours!"

He moved.

Whoosh!

The duel was brutal.

The White King is incredibly fast, using a hybrid of knight-like agility and overwhelming power. He mixed precise swordplay with holy magic, forcing Noah to react with perfect timing.

But luckily, this time, there was no restrictions on Noah.

He was back in his Lord Doom's full glory.

With a combination of Aetherforge's 6 forms, his combat intuition, and his mastery of counterattacks, he finally delivered the decisive blow, shattering the king's armor and bringing him to his knees.

The White King let out a soft laugh, gazing at Noah in approval.

"Well played, challenger. The throne is yours".

With those words, the White King faded into golden dust, leaving behind his crown.

A new system notification flashed before Noah.

[Congratulations! You have completed the King's Gambit!]

[You have received rewards:]

*+7 Skill Points.

*New Passive: King's Authority.

>When fighting against multiple enemies, you gain increased presence, reducing the effectiveness of their coordination against you. Tactical awareness improved<

[You have received an Exclusive Title: The Checkmate Monarch]

>A title granted only to those who have bested the King's Gambit. NPCs will recognize your strategic prowess<

As the chessboard faded into darkness, Noah found himself back in the real world, exhaling deeply.

"Well, that was one hell of a game".