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Chapter 51 Put it on Maxen Stoneheart's tab

Shadow Nine was stunned by Thor's achievements. Although he didn't know exactly what had happened, his instincts told him that Thor must be an exceptionally powerful individual. In his shock, Shadow Nine even lost track of time, staring blankly at the monitor as Thor received the tier nine Battle Soldiers badge and left the Combat Power Test room. Even Blaze Morrow on the ground twitched his eyelids and made a faint grunt, showing signs of waking up.

"What exactly happened!" Shadow Nine snapped back to reality, slapped Blaze Morrow on the forehead, causing him to pass out again. "Calm down, calm down, I'm too old for this," he muttered to himself. But the truth was, Shadow Nine had never seen anything like this before!

He tossed the three unconscious bodies onto chairs, and a swirling black mist enveloped them. Shadow Nine slightly altered their memories. In the memories of Blaze Morrow and the others, the genius had attempted the tier two Battle Soldiers test and had been disastrously defeated. Even in defeat, however, he had left a commendable impression, and Blaze Morrow particularly admired this mage skilled in wind element magic.

Shadow Nine nodded to himself, "That's enough alteration of their memories; any more might actually turn them into idiots." After doing all this, the black mist receded, and Shadow Nine disappeared from the spot, everything returning to normal as if a paused movie had been played.

Blaze Morrow, Bob, and Sam simultaneously opened their eyes, unaware of any abnormalities. Bob spoke with a hint of regret, "It's a pity he failed. He was so close to passing the Neural Response Test." Sam nodded in agreement, supporting the Director's statement. Only Blaze Morrow, rubbing his forehead, remained silent, his brow furrowed.

Bob noticed his discomfort and turned to ask, "Blaze, say something, will you?" Blaze Morrow, puzzled, spoke up, "Why does my head hurt so much, as if someone hit me?" "Cough, cough, I can't keep this from you any longer, Blaze, I'm not pretending anymore, I'm laying it all out, I'm actually a Battle Lord!" Bob said earnestly, "I not only slapped your forehead but even used a forbidden spell to alter your memory!"

To this absurd claim, Blaze Morrow had a very simple response: "Get lost! I'd rather believe Thor is my son-in-law than believe your nonsense!" After this brief comedic

interlude, the three resumed discussing the talented mage they had encountered earlier.

Not long after, Blaze Morrow suddenly stood up, his eyes glued to the monitor screen, unable to contain his excitement, "Here she comes!" On the monitor, a beautiful woman had just entered the Combat Power Test room to challenge the tier one Battle Soldiers. "Who's coming?" "My granddaughter, Bob, watch carefully what happens next!" Blaze Morrow instructed, "And please, keep it a secret that my granddaughter has awakened an S-tier talent!"

Bob: ...This old man is getting shameless! He's clearly bragging, he's emphasized it countless times! In the monitoring room, the three's attention was once again focused on the video feed.

...

Meanwhile, after finishing the Combat Power Test, Mike, holding his freshly earned tier nine Battle Soldiers badge, returned to Wolf's Den. Compared to a few hours earlier, there were noticeably more people in Wolf's Den. Mike checked the time; nearly five hours had passed. It was now 4:59 AM.

Everyone initially goes to the Tower of Truth to level up and attempt challenges from midnight to 6 AM. Afterward, they return to the Core City of Truth to resupply and take care of other matters. Mike had planned his schedule similarly.

As he entered Wolf's Den, a very burly man blocked his path. The expressionless Maxen Stoneheart stared at Mike, his feelings complex, and for a moment, he was at a loss for words. Previously, he had applied for [Guardian Shadow] protection for the other party, but the application was ruthlessly rejected. At that moment, Maxen Stoneheart was shocked.

After the shock, Maxen Stoneheart quickly realized what he was dealing with! If he couldn't guess the other party's identity now, he might as well hang himself with spaghetti! There was only one answer—Thor!!

Seeing Maxen Stoneheart's posture, Mike also understood what had happened. With Maxen Stoneheart's status, he most likely knew that the Lone Wolf in front of him was Thor! Of course, Maxen Stoneheart only recognized the Thor from inside the Tower of Truth. He knew nothing about Thor's real identity being Mike. As long as that remained a secret, Mike was safe.

"What are you looking at?" Mike suddenly blurted out, nearly scaring Maxen Stoneheart out of his wits. "Please... cough, cough, come inside!" Following the same procedure as last time, Mike followed Maxen Stoneheart deeper into Wolf's Den. "Sit down, let's have a good talk." Maxen Stoneheart proactively moved a chair for Mike and then sat opposite him. "Is the list verified for authenticity?" "100% confirmed." Maxen Stoneheart

felt awkward; the man sitting in front of him was the legendary Thor. Did such a legendary figure need to give him a fake list? Moreover, anything related to Thor wasn't just under Maxen Stoneheart's watch. At least one [Shadow] level Battle Lord, and possibly even higher-ups, were keeping an eye on Thor. For example, the supreme being, Morpheus!

"Is my bounty confirmed then?" Mike brought up the topic, and Maxen Stoneheart's face stiffened, he stammered, "That... will have to wait until the capture operation is complete to determine the final value, it might take a bit longer." "Understood, understood." Mike was just making casual conversation. He wasn't short on money at the moment, and the things he lacked couldn't be bought with money. Based on his previous interactions with supreme being Ares, he could tell that the human race's powerhouses were very united. They had made many efforts and arrangements for the continuation of their species. Thus, Mike had ample trust in Maxen Stoneheart and Wolf's Den.

Their awkward chat came to an abrupt end, and the air was filled with discomfort. Maxen Stoneheart really didn't know what to say to Thor. Maxen Stoneheart only knew that the person in front of him was Thor. And the person knew that Maxen Stoneheart knew he was Thor. Maxen Stoneheart knew that the person knew that he knew...

"Have you eaten?" Maxen Stoneheart finally blurted out after a long pause. "Haven't eaten, why do you ask, are you inviting me?" Maxen Stoneheart: ... Just a few hours ago, he had told the other party to eat whatever he liked. Looking back, it seemed he was the clown! Maxen Stoneheart had reasons to believe that even if he died, Thor wouldn't!

"I'm inviting! Just report my name at the front desk of Wolf's Den." With that, the topic of trying to get closer came to an end, and Maxen Stoneheart became serious, "The list you submitted is being taken very seriously, and the capture operation has already started covertly. I'll also have a mission to carry out soon." As he spoke, Maxen Stoneheart's Lone Wolf badge vibrated slightly, clearly something urgent was coming up. He glanced at the information inside the badge, stood up, and walked towards the door. Stopping at the doorway, he turned back to look at Mike, "Also..."

"Be careful." He said these words with unusual earnestness. "Even with SSS-tier talent, you're not invincible and still at risk of falling. Once a person dies... that's it." Mike vehemently denied, "Who said I'm SSS-tier? Don't talk nonsense, or I might sue you for defamation!" "Right, right, you're not," Maxen Stoneheart chuckled and shook his head as he left the office.

After Maxen Stoneheart left, Mike didn't stay long either and walked out. Sitting in a corner of Wolf's Den, he browsed through the mission panel and checked his current entitlements. Mike was now a tier nine Battle Soldier, a golden Lone Wolf, equivalent to the treatment level of a tier two Battle General. He could receive a monthly stipend of \$200,000, had the right not to respond to emergencies below level six, and could move freely during emergencies below level four. If injured during official missions, his

medical expenses would be fully covered. If disabled, he could be transferred to the [Planetary Defense Council] with a lifetime treatment of a tier two Battle General, among other benefits. Clearly, the Defense Headquarters did not skimp on the treatment of its members. Additionally, Mike could purchase items from Wolf's Den at a 9.5% discount.

Half an hour passed in the blink of an eye, and a beautiful woman wearing a Lone Wolf mask entered Wolf's Den. "Another newcomer!" Even without the Eye of Truth, Mike recognized her identity at a glance. "Jessica, she actually passed the tier one Battle Soldiers test? "

Interesting.

Mike raised his glass, his voice automatically altered by the Lone Wolf mask to prevent others from recognizing his identity. "To welcome the newcomer, I'll cover everyone's expenses!" Mike declared generously. Wolf's Den instantly turned into a sea of joy, and Jessica, experiencing such a welcome ceremony for the first time, was somewhat overwhelmed. But it wouldn't take long for her to perfectly integrate into this place and even fall in love with it. A robot brought the bill to Mike, "Sir, this is your bill for this session, totaling \$2,899,980 after the discount." \$2,899,980, nearly 3000 gold coins, Mike didn't mind spending it at all. Was he the type to be stingy? Not at all! With a grand gesture, Mike confidently declared, "Put it on Maxen Stoneheart's tab!"

"Another round of drinks, please! And still, put it on his tab."

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Chapter 52 Nyx Valoria

"This round's expenses are on Mr. Jhon!" A deep voice echoed through Wolf's Den, sparking another round of cheers from the crowd.

"Mr. Jhon?" Mike was puzzled; his name wasn't John. Could it be that Maxen Stoneheart's real name was John? Mike recalled that during his first visit to Wolf's Den, someone had also called for "Mr. Jhon" to pick up the tab.

At that moment, a beautiful woman with a graceful demeanor approached Mike. Wearing a silver-white Lone Wolf mask that obscured her face, her voice was particularly pleasant, "Sir, is this your first time buying drinks for everyone?"

"In Wolf's Den, no matter who is paying, we always say it's on Mr. Jhon. After all, the original intent of the Lone Wolf is to provide everyone with a concealed identity; we can't ask for any identity-related information from our guests."

"Oh, I see." Mike nodded, finding the explanation reasonable. Perhaps there was never a Mr. Jhon, or perhaps everyone is Mr. Jhon.

The woman spoke again, "Everyone here calls me Nyx Valoria. May I ask, how should I address you?"

Mike responded casually, "You can call me Yasuo."

Nyx Valoria glanced back at the front desk and softly said, "Put tonight's expenses on my account for Yasuo." Then, turning to Mike with a light laugh, she added, "I hope you enjoy your time at Wolf's Den."

It was clear she thought highly of Mike, wanting to make a good impression—after all, Mike's current status was that of a [Tier Nine Battle Soldier · Golden Lone Wolf]. With a bit more strength, he could become a Battle General. A Lone Wolf's Battle General typically has 30%-40% more combat power than an ordinary Battle General, and some formidable ones can even fight across tiers!

And since Mike had become a Golden Lone Wolf during his time as a Battle Soldier, his potential was certainly not limited to just being a Battle General. There was a high probability he could achieve the rank of Battle Chief. It was no wonder Nyx Valoria was willing to invest in him early.

"Now that Thor has emerged, we are all living in exciting times. This drink is to you, may you soon become a Battle General," Nyx Valoria said, raising her cocktail and downing it in one gulp.

After finishing her drink and her speech, Nyx Valoria nodded slightly to Mike and walked away.

"Nyx Valoria, did you just meet a handsome guy you like?" teased a lady bartender with a mischievous smile.

"It's nothing, I just find a Tier Nine Battle Soldier a bit unfamiliar. He also knows Maxen Stoneheart, perhaps he's a prodigy from some Battle Lord family out on a training expedition," Nyx casually remarked. "It's a pity he wasn't in the same batch as Thor. He missed out on the benefits this time."

"Ah, is that so?" Her words drew puzzled looks from a few others at the bar, clearly unfamiliar with the situation.

"Yes, the previous three instances of supreme power have all confirmed one truth: the students in the same batch as a supreme being gain the most benefits! He's already a Tier Nine Battle Soldier, must be at least 20 years old, he must have already been to a top university, two years earlier than Thor."

With that, Nyx Valoria dismissed the matter as trivial. Even if Mike became a Battle Chief, to Nyx Valoria, it was just a minor detail. Her own family had more than one Battle Lord and even connections to a supreme being, so her perspective was naturally quite high.

...

"It's almost six in the morning," Mike stretched lazily, choosing to exit the Tower of Truth. There were no suitable missions for him in Wolf's Den. Moreover, with the threat from the fourth demon cult leader looming, he couldn't focus on other tasks. The demon cult leader had threatened to kill Mike, which was no small matter. A slight misstep could lead to a tragic end for him.

After leaving the Tower of Truth, Mike opened the curtains, letting the weak sunlight filter into the room, casting a long shadow at his feet. He looked down at his shadow, "Senior, what are you having for breakfast?" Silence, no response. "Even if you skip breakfast, coming out for a chat would be nice." The shadow remained motionless.

Mike resorted to his trump card, "That supreme being told me every Lone Wolf is protected by a Guardian Shadow, Shadow Nine sir, stop hiding." Hearing the words 'supreme being', Mike's shadow began to distort, and a cloud of black mist rose up, eventually revealing an elderly figure shrouded in shadows.

"Heh heh heh..." The figure's first words sent a chill down Mike's spine. What a villainous laugh!

When the figure first arrived beside Mike, he was already aware of Shadow Nine's presence. When Mike chose the Lone Wolf faction, the Eye of Truth had informed him of the existence of [Guardian Shadow]. Every Lone Wolf is accompanied by a [Guardian Shadow] to protect their growth on Earth and provide them with a safe space.

Mike hadn't expected that [Guardian Shadow] would assign him a Battle Lord-level protector! The encounter in the Combat Power Test room was likely with this elderly predecessor. Shadow Nine stopped laughing and spoke seriously, "A supreme being would never speak to you like that, kid. You're still too green."

[Guardian Shadow] was founded by the supreme being Morpheus. The three supreme beings do not interfere with each other. No one would discuss these matters with Mike.

"Indeed, I tricked you, my apologies," Mike admitted frankly. He just wanted to have a chat with Shadow Nine, particularly about his personal safety. "You know, there's a Battle Lord who wants to kill me."

"Yes," Shadow Nine acknowledged.

"Could you go and kill the fourth demon cult leader first?" Mike always believed in striking first. If he had to fight someone, he'd prefer to run them over with a steamroller the day before to ensure victory.

Shadow Nine's response was straightforward, "No. To kill Terenas Bloodscribe, we first need to find him. The demon gods have concealed his whereabouts."

With his assassination plan thwarted, Mike asked for another favor, "Then, could you bring a few more people to protect me?"

Shadow Nine shook his head again, "No, with the emergence of [Thor], the demon gods of the Abyssal Plane have gone mad. The human race is stretched thin across the board; we simply can't spare more hands."

"The most important thing is, if we pull out another Battle Lord, the enemy will have a Battle Lord freed up to target you."

Shadow Nine's reasoning was sound, and Mike couldn't argue. The higher-level struggles were like a tug-of-war, each side holding steady, waiting for an unexpected factor to break the deadlock.

Still not giving up, Mike suggested, "What if I pack up and move in with a supreme being?"

"Supreme beings are always in the most dangerous places. Even Battle Lords risk falling there; going there would be suicide for you."

"I understand now, maintaining the status quo is in my best interest."

Shadow Nine nodded, "Now that I've shown myself, I'll speak a bit more to give you a clearer picture. Inside Guardian Shadow, we have strict rules about when to intervene. For enemies below the peak Battle Chief level, I won't make a move; you'll have to handle them yourself."

"Thanks for the heads-up, but for some reason, I feel even less safe after hearing you say that," Mike admitted. He could handle ambushing a Battle Chief-level opponent, but he wasn't yet capable of facing one in direct combat.

"One last question, if Terenas Bloodscribe shows up, are you confident you can defeat him?"

This was Mike's most pressing concern. Being targeted by a Battle Lord was no small matter.

"I could kill him with one strike," Shadow Nine declared confidently, leaving a powerful statement before his figure once again turned into a mist and sank into the shadows on the ground.

In reality, Shadow Nine wasn't with Mike 24/7; he spent more time patrolling around Mike, assessing the strength of everyone nearby to prevent any threats before they could arise. If a Battle Lord got close, even if Shadow Nine could kill him instantly, the aftermath of the fight could still cause Mike severe harm.

"With this level of protection, it seems I don't need to worry about Terenas Bloodscribe's threat for now, but there are still many challenges I must face on my own," Mike mused, rubbing his temples. For enemies below the peak Battle Chief level, he would still need to rely on himself.

Buzz—buzz— Mike's Trade Secret Realm pass vibrated with incoming messages.

"Blaze Morrow? Oh right, I promised him I'd appraise his granddaughter's equipment."

With that thought, Mike pulled out his pass, activated the Tower of Truth mark, and entered the Trade Secret Realm.

"Jessica, the big shot is here!" Blaze Morrow had been waiting and immediately greeted him upon seeing the lightning elements. "Master, this is my granddaughter Jessica."

Turning to his granddaughter, Blaze Morrow instructed, "Call him Fourth Bro."

Jessica nodded, her voice clear, "Hello, Fourth Bro."

Mike:These relationships are getting too complicated.

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Chapter 53 I don't know what happened last night, I still have a headache

Mike and Blaze met up in the Trade Secret Realm. Blaze Morrow took the initiative and said, "Fourth Bro, my granddaughter just switched her job class to an SS-tier Divine Beast Tamer. Each summoned beast gets an extra divine blessing, and there's a higher chance of triggering a bloodline reversion..."

Listening to Blaze's introduction, Mike was slightly surprised as he looked at Jessica. An SS-tier class template? It was unexpected that Jessica could achieve this on her own.

Even though Jessica's talent had awakened to an S-tier and she had the unconditional support of a Battle Chief elder, it was still incredibly tough to secure an SS-tier class template in the class-switching realm! That required an Exploration Rate of 95% and battling a boss to the very end—extremely challenging! Even with SS-tier talent, there was no guarantee, and yet Jessica had managed it with her S-tier talent. This alone suggested that Jessica's future achievements might well exceed becoming a Battle Chief.

"This girl is stronger than I imagined," Mike thought. He never expected that a casual remark he made once could potentially add another Battle Lord to the future of humanity! While it was only a theoretical possibility and how far Jessica could really go was still uncertain, it was already quite impressive.

"Is this the allure of supreme power?" Mike mused with a wry smile, shaking his head. The source of all these storms was, ironically, himself!

Collecting his thoughts, Mike turned to Jessica and asked, "I understand the situation. What do you need me to appraise?"

Jessica was a bit nervous. The presence of Fourth Bro, as described by her grandfather, was immensely intimidating—not only was his personal strength formidable, but his appraisal skills were also exceptionally rare.

"Master Fourth Bro, I need your help to appraise what items are needed for this little bird to upgrade," she said.

As she spoke, a canary landed on her shoulder and then stood quietly in her palm. Mike glanced at it and said softly, "It has the lineage of a golden-winged roc and has enjoyed two divine awakenings. Not bad, not bad at all."

With just a casual remark, Fourth Bro had pinpointed the canary's secrets, leaving Jessica utterly amazed. Was this the level of Fourth Bro's appraisal skills? It was incredibly powerful!

"Since it has already enjoyed two divine awakenings, focusing on its development is a wise decision. You have three options." Mike continued, using the [Eye of Truth]. The upgrade paths for the canary were clear in his vision. He ignored the lower-tier upgrade methods, focusing only on those that would maximize its potential and combat power.

"You could feed it [Venomous Substances], the more potent, the better, and in sufficient quantity. Afterward, this canary will succumb to the poison. You then burn its body and bury the ashes on a diamond pile. Collaborating with a necromancer, you can summon a Venomous Bone Roc."

Hiss—

Jessica's canary trembled all over in the palm of her hand, staring at this Fourth Bro with eyes full of fear.

Are you a devil?

Is this method of upgrades really okay?

The canary's heart leapt to its throat, terrified that if Jessica nodded in agreement, its little life would be over.

"Of course, this method is a bit sinister, and the summoned creature, the Venomous Bone Peng, is very hard to control and likely to backfire."

After Mike finished explaining, Blaze Morrow made a decision,

"Fourth Bro, let's skip this method. Jessica is quite fond of this little bird."

The canary finally relaxed, but still dared not get close to Fourth Bro. In its heart, Fourth Bro was now synonymous with the devil.

Then, Mike introduced two other hidden upgrade methods.

One could enhance the canary's eyes, allowing it to scout over large areas and gather intelligence.

The other, after the upgrade, would allow the canary to have a telepathic connection with its summoner, improving their coordination in battle.

As for which upgrade method to choose, the choice was left to Jessica herself.

"Thank you. Jessica, aren't you going to thank Master Fourth Bro?"

"Thank you, Fourth Bro!"

"No need to thank me, it's all charged, and it's not cheap."

Mike was straightforward about charging for his services, as it was only natural.

Blaze Morrow waved his hand, sending his granddaughter away to think over which upgrade to choose.

Meanwhile, he stayed with Mike, wandering around the Trade Secret Realm, as they had more to discuss.

"Fourth Bro, three hidden upgrade paths, according to the market price, one hidden upgrade path is worth 250,000 gold coins, how about 1 million gold coins for all three?"

Blaze Morrow, a veteran Battle Chief, was generous, offering 1 million gold coins, worth \$1 billion!

At the Battle Chief level, owning millions in gold coins was indeed a reality, but it was rare for someone to spend so much on their juniors!

"Gold coins are not a necessity for us, Elder Blaze, I'd prefer to barter."

Mike spoke slowly,

"Fire-related equipment, skill books, items, materials, all valued at 800,000 gold coins would suffice."

Now practicing in wind, fire, and lightning elements, Mike's needs were more than triple that of a mage of the same tier!

He had already established channels for procuring materials for each element and was gradually building up his stock.

"That's easy to say... but are you training a junior?" Blaze Morrow asked tentatively.

Previously, Fourth Bro had asked him to imprint two curses, Sea of Flames and Flame of Life, which Blaze thought were for self-defense for a junior.

"That's right."

Mike nodded, he was indeed training a junior, but that junior was himself...

"So these items need to be high-tier but low-level, hard to find on the market, I think only you could dig up such treasures."

"Easy to say, easy to say!"

Blaze Morrow didn't mind Fourth Bro making demands, what he feared was him having no demands!

If Fourth Bro really chose to take the 1 million gold coins, Blaze Morrow would be disappointed.

Fourth Bro's appraisal skills far exceeded anyone Blaze Morrow knew!

Whether for Jessica's future development or for Blaze Morrow himself, connecting with Fourth Bro and maintaining a good relationship was all benefit and no harm!

"I had prepared quite a bit of fire element materials, thinking Jessica could follow the same path as me. Now that Jessica has found her own way, these items are just sitting idle, might as well trade them with you."

Saying this, Blaze Morrow took out a list of materials and handed it to Mike.

The list clearly marked the tier of each item and included the latest trading prices from the Mystic Market to ensure a fair and just transaction.

In the end, Mike picked a pair of S-tier fire element boots and a high-tier fire element core, totaling a value of \$820,000. Blaze Morrow rounded down the figure, and the deal was struck.

Equipment: Flame Rhythm Boots (Lv.25)

Tier: S

Attributes: Agility+65

Perks:

[Flame Rhythm]: When moving at high speeds, fire element spell effects +15%

[Dance with Fire]: Can instantly teleport next to a flame, within a range of 0.6 miles, cooldown time 600 seconds

Upgrade Perks:

[Enjoy Parkour]: When chased by monsters above your own level, flee for 1500 miles

Upgradeable times: 2

Upgraded times: 1

"What kind of upgrade perk is this, might as well throw me in the subway for parkour..."

What Mike valued most about the Flame Rhythm Boots was that they could still be upgraded twice, enough for him to use for a while.

The effects of the [Flame Rhythm] and [Dance with Fire] perks were also very powerful, the former increasing Mike's sustained output capability, and the latter giving Mike more diverse movement options.

As for the high-tier fire element core, it was one of the materials for crafting Battle Chief-level weapons.

Ares had agreed to contact a master smith for him, but Mike needed to provide his own materials.

With both items in his pocket, Mike parted ways with Blaze Morrow, staying a bit longer in the Trade Secret Realm before returning to Earth.

"What a night of gains!"

Mike quickly calculated the gains from his trip.

"100% Exploration Rate, SSSS-tier completion of the second layer, turned Stormweaver from one element to three elements!"

"Also passed the ninth-tier Battle Soldiers test, upgraded the Golden Lone Wolf, oh, and mooched two bottles of wine from Maxen Stoneheart!"

"Flame Rhythm Boots, high-tier fire element core..."

Mike's total gains for the night, measured in gold coins, were in the millions.

"Plus the reward from the whistleblower list, and the two skill books Ares promised me!"

These two items were the most valuable gains of Mike's night, though they hadn't yet been delivered to his hands.

Now, even without using Charge Up, Mike could hold his own against a Battle General-level pursuer!

"But the guy who wants revenge on me, he's not a Battle General, he's a Battle Lord!"

Mike shook his head with a wry smile, being targeted by a Battle Lord was not a pleasant experience, he needed to quickly enhance his own strength.

"Just maintain the current pace, give me a little more time..."

After sorting everything out, Mike pushed open the door, ready to head to school.

"Young man, good morning!"

The door across opened, and workers were moving furniture, a kindly old grandfather stood in the stairwell greeting Mike.

"I just moved in, I used to be an instructor, just call me Instructor Blaze, we're neighbors now, let's look out for each other."

Mike: ...Nonsense, I not only know you're called Blaze, but I also know you're Blaze Morrow, just fifteen minutes ago you were affectionately calling me Fourth Bro!

Unfortunately, these words Mike couldn't say out loud.

This old guy moving in across from him was mostly because of Jessica!

Jessica's talent had awakened a second time, she wasn't very discerning, couldn't see the essence.

But Blaze Morrow could see through it at a glance, Mike definitely helped Jessica!

For this, Blaze Morrow didn't mind hiding his identity, moving across from Mike to keep a close watch on this young man.

Mike smiled and greeted him, "Instructor Blaze, good to see you!"

"Young man, you look well, you must have had quite a haul last night at the Tower of Truth."

"Just so-so, it's all thanks to Thor, I did indeed gain quite a bit. Instructor Blaze, you look spirited, must be having good luck lately!"

"Not at all, I don't know what happened last night, I still have a headache. You're going to school, right? I'm just going for a walk, going to see where I used to work."

"Instructor Blaze, take it slow, the stairs are steep, may I help you?"

"Thank you, young man, not many warm-hearted young people like you around these days!"

"..."

An old and a young 'fox', each with their own schemes, pulling each other along, slowly heading towards the school.

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Chapter 54 Jessica had just entered a lounge alone with Mike

Florida, Magic High School, Dean's Office.

"Mr. Blaze, what brings you here!" The dean stood in front of the sofa, somewhat flustered, his hands waving aimlessly in the air, as unsettled as his mood.

Blaze Morrow sat on the sofa with a calm demeanor, his usual geniality replaced by a sudden, imposing aura of authority and unspoken power. "What, I can't come? After all, I am the Lifetime Honorary Dean of Florida Magic High School."

Blaze Morrow's words nearly made the dean's legs buckle in fear! "Of course, of course, Dean Blaze, about Jessica, I am very sorry..."

The dean's panic stemmed entirely from one person—Jessica! As the most cherished granddaughter of a Battle Chief, her unexpected awakening of an F-level talent cast a shadow over her future prospects. Even Blaze Morrow, the Battle Chief from the distant Abyssal Plane, had dropped everything to rush back to his family.

The dean was deeply worried that Blaze Morrow would take his anger out on the school. The wrath of a peak Battle Chief was no small matter! His heart was in turmoil, a tormenting ordeal. Just then, the dean heard Blaze Morrow's voice. "You've handled Jessica's situation well."

"We didn't handle it well... What?" The dean was stunned, surely he had misheard! An F-level talent awakening equals a job well done?! If anyone other than Blaze Morrow had said this, the dean would have suggested a mental health check.

Blaze Morrow ignored the stunned dean and continued, "I heard that the selection for the summer camp is being held earlier this year?" "Yes, yes, yes!" The dean quickly nodded, explaining, "Because the supreme power has already unfolded, the higher department informed us that this year's candidates will progress much faster than in previous years. Starting the summer camp earlier will allow us to filter out the talented students and provide them with more resources for development, and facilitate their competition with each other..."

The SAT Summer Camp, organized jointly by top high schools, gathers talented students from various regions for concentrated training and assessment. Those who perform well can earn extra SAT points and even secure early admission to prestigious superpower universities.

Selection for the summer camp is internally conducted by high schools and reported upwards. In previous years, the camp would convene a month before the SAT, by which time most talents had already emerged, some even possessing Battle Soldiers' strength.

This year was unlike any other, even vastly different from previous supreme powers. The previous three supreme beings, even if they broke through the Tower of Truth at SSS level, mostly received rewards focused on their personal development, without

affecting the entire human race. They mostly used their post-rise abilities to fight for the human race, compete for resources, and extend their influence.

Thor, however, did not follow the same path. Or rather, Thor performed even better! An SSSS rating, before Thor, was an unprecedented score in the history of the Tower of Truth! More crucially, Thor, with his own strength, significantly boosted the entire human race with powerful buffs! This elevated everyone's strength and potential by a notch!

Even Florida Magic High School could feel the change, with the dean's data showing that already a dozen students had reached level 10. Among them, standout students like James had even completed their job change, obtaining an A-level Class template. And this was just within three days!

After listening to the dean's report, Blaze Morrow asked again, "Does the summer camp selection start today?" The dean's nervousness eased, and he spoke more fluently, simply answering whatever Blaze asked. "Yes, we're collecting the class lists this morning, and the official start is this afternoon, beginning with basic tests, and the final rankings will be based on combat test results."

"Good, I plan to observe this selection, is that okay?" "Having Blaze Battle Chief as an observer is an honor for us!" The dean's face lit up with joy. Today's Blaze was a bit strange, but he couldn't quite pinpoint what was odd. Could it be...

A thought suddenly struck the dean, perhaps related to James? James possessed an A-level talent and A-level Class template, and reportedly, he was a fire element, which matched very well with Blaze Morrow. If Blaze Morrow came for James, perhaps to assess him and possibly take him as an apprentice, it seemed plausible...

Realizing this, the dean's joy intensified, and he quickly said, "Master Blaze, this year's Rising Star of Florida is likely right here at Magic High School!" "I think so too." Blaze Morrow was confident, well aware of his granddaughter's level. An S-level talent with an SS-level Class template, nurtured tirelessly by a peak Battle Chief! If not her, then who else could be Florida's Rising Star?

Just then, a name flashed through Blaze Morrow's mind—Mike! Could it be this kid, Mike?

...

"Mike, are you signing up for the summer camp selection?" Cain came back with two application forms, handing one to Mike. "I heard the school's increasing resources for this selection. Anyone who makes the top 50% gets a reward worth \$100,000!"

Cain was egging Mike on to join him; both were D-level talents, at least they could be embarrassed together. "Sure." Mike took the application form, and they filled it out together. As Cain wrote, he whispered, "Mike, did you eat the roast beef I gave you?"

At the mention of beef, Mike couldn't help but think of the minotaur that had been turned to char by a Lightning Arrow. He observed a moment of silence for the minotaur for 0.01 seconds, hoping there was no lightning in heaven.

Mike nodded, "I did, it tasted pretty good. Got any more?" "If I had more, I would've eaten it already. That stuff boosts your Strength attribute, it's quite valuable!" Cain swallowed, then added mysteriously, "You know, half of that was from Jessica!"

"Oh?" Under Mike's puzzled gaze, Cain briefly explained what had happened. "I'm telling you, that Warrior was so cool, just swoosh, and all the monsters on the road were wiped out!" Cain's vivid storytelling made it seem as if he had witnessed it himself.

Mike knew the Warrior Cain was talking about was himself. He casually asked, "Did you see that Warrior in action?" Cain shook his head, "No, but that doesn't stop him from being my idol!" True, Mike thought, if Cain had seen him in action, he would have recognized him by now. "Isn't your idol the supreme being Ares?"

"Supreme beings are too distant, I've decided to idolize this mysterious Warrior instead. Once I save up enough money, I'm going to buy the Windstride Slash skill books!" When he mentioned Windstride Slash, Cain even picked up a book and mimicked drawing a sword, charging forward, utterly joyful. "Face the wind! Hasaki!"

Indeed, joyful souls always attract each other. Windstride Slash was not some low-tier skill; it was highly sought after by Warriors and priced very high. Mike had bought it from Foreskin, spending 7,000 gold coins after a discount, equivalent to \$7 million!

With Cain's talent and level, he might never save up enough money in his lifetime. Mike finished the form and tossed it to Cain, "Submit this for me, I'm going to the restroom." "Mike, why have you been running to the restroom so often lately? I know a urologist, should I make you an appointment?" "Get lost!"

Skillfully entering the restroom and locking the door, Mike took out his Trade Secret Realm pass and contacted Foreskin. "Windstride Slash skill books, another one." "Yasuo, the price has gone up recently, but we'll still go with the previous 7,000 gold coins. Don't forget to hit me up if you have more business!" Foreskin responded quickly, and after receiving the 7,000 gold coins from Yasuo by mail, he immediately shipped the skill books.

A Windstride Slash skill book, for Mike's current net worth, was nothing significant, giving it to Cain was just a small favor. Cain had risked his life in Thunder Valley to pick up that beef, yet he generously shared two-thirds of it with Mike. That beef genuinely boosted the Strength attribute, and Cain could have kept it all to himself, even if he shared with Jessica, there was no need to share with Mike. Cain, planning to choose the Warrior Class, needed the Strength attribute the most. Yet, he chose to share without any hesitation. In his view, good things should be shared with good friends, as it should be. Just this attitude alone said it all. Maybe letting others know about this would

make them laugh at Cain's naivety. But seventeen or eighteen-year-old boys sometimes really do retain this kind of naivety, talking about friendship and loyalty.

With the skill book in hand, Mike faced a new problem: "This thing is worth millions of dollars, how can I give it to Cain with a reasonable excuse?" Mike was just a poor student, suddenly producing a highly valuable skill book was totally unreasonable. He needed a plausible explanation to avoid suspicion. Who should he ask...

Mike stepped out of the restroom, troubled by this issue, and ran into Jessica. "Got it!" Mike called out to Jessica, "Hey! Beautiful." "Huh? Mike... are you calling me?" The term "beautiful" took Jessica a moment to adjust to. Mike stopped Jessica and pointed to a quiet lounge nearby, "Got something to talk to you about." Saying this, he didn't wait for Jessica's consent, took the lead, pushed open the door, and walked in. Jessica, on impulse and not quite understanding her own thoughts, actually followed him in!

Half a minute later, explosive news spread throughout Florida's Magic High School: School beauty Jessica had just entered a lounge alone with Mike!

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Chapter 55 Check your gear, get ready to fight

Inside the lounge.

"Relax, I'm not here to rob you or anything." Mike said, facing Jessica who was visibly tense, her face stiff and her hands fidgeting aimlessly.

For some reason, she always seemed as nervous around Mike as a mouse would be around a cat, completely overwhelmed by his presence.

"I need a favor from you." Jessica was so nervous she almost stuttered, "You, you say."

"You gave me a [Windstride Slash] skill book, understand?" Mike stated.

"Ah? Windstride Slash? I think they have it at the Mystic Market, I'll go buy one right now..." Jessica said as she pulled out her Trade Secret Realm pass, ready to shop.

"You're missing my point." Mike explained patiently, "I accidentally got this skill book at the Tower of Truth, heard it's quite valuable. I was thinking of selling it to improve my living situation. But Cain mentioned he really likes the Windstride Slash skill, so I thought I might as well give it to him."

"Oh, then... why say it's from me?" Jessica was confused.

Mike giving Cain the skill book directly would have been simpler, so why involve Jessica in the transaction? "I only have a D-level talent, suddenly pulling out an expensive skill book could cause trouble, and I hate trouble. Besides, Cain might not accept it directly from me."

Mike provided a seemingly reasonable explanation and decided, "Let's settle it this way then!" With that, Mike prepared to leave the lounge, but not before adding, "I heard from Cain about your trip to Thunder Valley, thanks. The roast beef was really good."

As Mike stepped out of the lounge, he was surprised to find the entire corridor of the academic building crowded with people. A sea of heads leaned over the railings, necks stretched, all curious.

All eyes naturally fell on Mike. "Don't you guys have classes to attend? What happened to discipline?" Mike shouted, and the crowd quickly dispersed, rushing back to their classrooms.

"All of you should study hard if you want to join me in conquering the Abyssal Plane someday," Mike muttered as he climbed through a window back to his seat.

He hadn't been sitting for three seconds when Cain approached him. "Mike, be honest with me, what exactly did you and Jessica do in there?"

The total time Mike and Jessica spent in the lounge was barely three minutes. If anything significant had happened in those three minutes, Mike's sexual performance would be rated below F-level.

"Nothing much, she just thinks I'm handsome and gave me a gift," Mike said as he tossed the [Windstride Slash] skill book in front of Cain. "I initially refused, but she insisted on giving it to me. I noticed it's the skill you wanted to learn, so I brought it back for you."

"What?" Happiness struck Cain so suddenly that he didn't know how to react. He immediately threw the skill book back onto the desk as if it were too hot to handle. Then, he quickly picked it up again, the words [Windstride Slash] making his heart flutter. After a few seconds of admiration, Cain handed the book back to Mike, shaking his head, "Mike, I can't accept this!"

"It's too valuable!" Mike had anticipated Cain's reaction. He picked up the book again, "If you don't want it, then fine, I'll give it back to Jessica."

"No, don't!" Cain panicked, grabbing Mike, "Why can't you learn it yourself?"

"I'm a mage, have you ever seen a mage learn Windstride Slash?" Mike countered, leaving Cain speechless.

Mike took the opportunity to add, "Even Thor wouldn't do something like a mage learning Windstride Slash, right?" Cain hesitated, then nodded, "You do have a point... But even if you don't use it, selling it could fetch a good price, right?"

"It's a gift from someone else, how could I sell it? I wouldn't do such a thing!" Mike left the decision to Cain, "If you want to learn it, keep it. If not, I'll return it."

After a moment of hesitation, Cain finally decided, "I'll learn it!" Holding the [Windstride Slash] skill book in his hands, he couldn't help but admire it. Soon, he remembered something, pulled out paper and a pen from his messy desk, and quickly wrote a few lines.

"May 2146, Cain owes Mike \$10 million, as proof, if I can't pay it back, I won't; if I can, I will..." After writing, Cain signed his name and was about to press his thumbprint.

"Childish." Mike snatched the IOU, stuffing it into his pocket. "Alright, remember to pay me back when you earn \$10 million! Wait, is this thing really worth \$10 million? Cain, give the skill book back, I'm having second thoughts..."

After passing the basic tests, it quickly moved on to the combat ranking stage.

"I'll announce the rules for the combat test!" The Berserker Instructor stood at the forefront, his voice booming so everyone could hear clearly, "To give everyone more opportunities to showcase their strengths, each participant will have three chances to fail, not just one!"

"No way, I'm using it right now! Too late for regrets!"

...

Afternoon.

After passing the basic tests, it quickly moved on to the combat ranking stage.

"I'll announce the rules for the combat test!" The Berserker Instructor stood at the forefront, his voice booming so everyone could hear clearly, "To give everyone more opportunities to showcase their strengths, each participant will have three chances to fail, not just one!"

"Opponents will be randomly assigned to you, and after two losses, you can choose your own opponent. A third loss, and you're out."

"Got it?" After receiving affirmative responses, the Berserker Instructor began calling names.

Students called up donned their protective gear and entered the specially designed combat room, where the fight would commence under the supervision of a referee and a priest. Only weapons provided by the school were allowed; the use of items, scrolls, or puppets was forbidden. There were no other restrictions.

The first to have their protective gear breached would be declared the loser. Losers would exit the combat room and wait for their next call. Winners, after receiving treatment, would fight in the next round.

This round-robin rule ensured that the last person standing would be the strongest overall. Good luck might win you a fight or two, but not the entire competition. Similarly, bad luck might cause a loss or two. You can choose your opponent for the third fight, and if you lose then, there can be no complaints.

In such a system, when pushed to the brink, everyone would inevitably choose the opponent they perceived as the weakest to continue advancing. It was a harsh but true reality.

The gymnasium was packed with students from Magic High School. Mike and Cain were positioned towards the back. They had been waiting for over ten minutes and still hadn't heard the Berserker Instructor call their names. Cain was growing impatient.

Some students had already fought two rounds, and Mike hadn't even been up yet! However, Mike wasn't in a rush; he only needed a spot for the summer camp, not necessarily the first place.

...

A boy with naturally curly hair, looking distressed, walked out of the combat room. He was frantically pulling at his hair, muttering, "It's over, it's over, I've already lost two matches, and I'm a B-level talent. If I lose one more, I'm out!"

He had faced two B-level talents, and both matches were intensely close. Luck was not on his side, resulting in two consecutive losses. He had to seize his last chance!

The curly-haired boy thought to himself, he must choose a sufficiently weak opponent. "Choose your next challenge," the Berserker Instructor handed him a list, which briefly noted each candidate's class and talent level.

"F-level talent, Jessica... forget it, she's the Battle Chief's granddaughter." He immediately ruled out the weakest, Jessica.

Students with E, or F-level talents wouldn't normally sign up for such a test. Their talents were too weak, and participating would only bring humiliation.

"Look for a D-level talent, preferably a mage. I'm a Warrior with anti-magic abilities, which makes me particularly effective against mages." The curly-haired boy scanned the list of names and indeed found a target.

"I choose this one!" He declared resolutely, pointing at a name, his eyes already gleaming with the prospect of victory.

The Berserker Instructor glanced at the list and called out loudly, "Mike, step forward!"

"Check your gear, get ready to fight!"