

Reincarnated With Three Unique Skills

- Chapter 41 – 60

Chapter 41: Chapter 41: A letter

Ethan spent the night in the Silvermoon Clan's mansion under Aria's care. His injury was minor, so it healed completely after the night's rest.

Later that night, in a small room filled with the fragrant scent of burning incense, Aria's father sat thoughtfully in an armchair. His brother, Aria's uncle, was also present, looking equally contemplative.

"Brother, how should we deal with that boy from now on?" Aria's uncle asked, "Should we still continue with our plan to separate them by force?"

Aria's father shook his head lightly. "No, I don't think so. That boy seems to have a lot of potential, and his background is also mysterious. It's as if he appeared in the city out of nowhere."

"Still, we could have separated them as planned if only the General hadn't intervened. Now, we can't even touch him."

"Moreover, I think General Leon must have purposefully revealed his talent to us, indirectly hinting that we should help him reach the capital. That's his way of telling us to take care of him."

"I see," Aria's uncle said, understanding the deeper meaning of General Leon's actions.

"Then, what about the marriage proposal by the Aristocratic Clan in the capital?"

"That marriage is not fixed yet. We have some time to think it over. Moreover, we have a ticket to the ancient treasure land now. It won't be long before we become another aristocratic clan in the capital, hahaha. So, there's no need to worry about it now."

The next morning, the Silvermoon mansion was abuzz with activity. General Leon, the figure of imposing stature and commanding presence, prepared to depart. His azure blue Wyvern, a magnificent creature with gleaming scales and powerful wings, awaited him in the courtyard.

Ethan, along with other clan members, gathered to see the General off. The sight of the Wyvern was awe-inspiring, its presence a symbol of the General's might and prestige.

As General Leon mounted the majestic beast, he glanced down at Ethan, Aria, and Drake, giving them a nod of approval.

“Remember, you three,” General Leon’s voice boomed, “the path ahead is fraught with challenges, but I have faith in your abilities. Make your way to the capital and fulfill your potential.

“And Ethan, make sure to send my money back via parcel,” the General said with a soft smile at the end.

Ethan smiled wryly. “Alright, General. We will do as you say.”

Aria and Drake nodded respectfully. “We won’t let you down,” they said in unison.

With a powerful flap of its wings, the Wyvern took to the sky, soaring high above the mansion. The General’s departure left a sense of determination in Ethan’s heart, reinforcing his resolve to grow stronger and pursue his goals. He wanted to become as powerful as General Leon and go on long, unfettered adventures. Until then, he had to work hard.

Later that day, after saying his goodbyes to Aria and the other clan members, Ethan prepared to leave the Silvermoon mansion. Although most of the clan members were not that enthusiastic, Aria walked him to the entrance, her expression a mix of concern and encouragement.

“Take care, Ethan,” she said softly. “Remember, you’re always welcome here.”

Ethan smiled. “Thank you, Aria. I’ll be back someday, stronger than ever.” he waved and went inside a carriage.

“I know, you would.” Aria muttered as he saw Ethan’s departing figure in a horse carriage. Her eyes were charming, feeling strong emotions inside.

Ethan made his way back to the inn where he had first stayed upon arriving in the city. Fortunately, he was given a ride by a horse carriage provided by the clan.

The streets were bustling with activity, and the market specialized in hunters’ needs was as busy as ever. His mind was already racing with plans on how to earn enough money to buy the mana orbs and skills he needed to increase his strength.

He needed a proper channel to sell all the synthesized items so that he wouldn’t get recognized. Only then could he do things more boldly. With over 8,000 mana points, he could do a lot of things to earn more coins.

While thinking, he returned to the inn where Emily, the little girl, was sitting at the reception desk, acting like a proper adult. Poverty makes children mature faster, and she was living proof of that.

Arriving at the desk, Ethan revealed a soft smile. "Hey, Emily, how have you been?"

Emily's attention was elsewhere, but she raised her small head and smiled brightly upon seeing Ethan in front of her.

"Big brother, you're finally here! We were really worried about you. Are you alright?" Her petite figure was tinged with concern.

"I'm fine. Where's your mother?"

"Mama is here. She'll be here in any moment. You wait here; I'm going to get her."

Before Ethan could object, she ran off hurriedly, her ponytail swaying left and right.

"This girl..." Ethan shook his head.

After a while, Innkeeper Greta arrived, her aged face relaxing upon seeing Ethan safe. As the only adult in her family, she had a lot of work to do. Despite that, she took care of Ethan personally.

Her husband had been a hunter and died on a deadly mission, unfortunately. Since then, she had taken care of the family. Raising Emily and managing the inn was her only focus, as a result her face had become wrinkled, despite being only 32.

"Ethan, thank God you're fine! I was really worried," Innkeeper Greta said worriedly. "Were you somehow present during the incident at the auction hall? I looked everywhere but couldn't find you at all."

Ethan nodded. "Yes, Aunt. I was also present there, unfortunately. But I'm fine now."

Innkeeper Greta looked relieved. "That's good, that's good. I heard a lot of unfortunate souls died there at the hands of demons. Fortunately, you survived."

Ethan sighed and replied, "Yes, thanks to General Leon."

Emily's ears perked up. "Big brother, did you see General Leon with your own eyes? Did you watch him fight? Was he as handsome as the rumors say?" Emily asked questions nonstop.

Ethan chuckled at her enthusiasm and answered, "Yes, I saw him in person. I even talked to him in person. He is indeed very handsome."

Emily's eyes gleamed with envy. "Ah, I want to see him too. I have grown up listening to his legendary feats. Mom used to read me the book 'The Ice Guardian' every night. But now the story has become very old."

Innkeeper Greta smiled warmly, recalling old memories.

"Is that so. Don't worry, Emily. One day I will take you to meet him for sure. That's my promise!" Ethan said, patting her head.

Emily smiled happily. "Really? Oh, thank you, big brother. You're the best," she said excitedly.

Ethan smiled and took some coins from his pouch. "Here, Aunt, take this. It's the money for staying here and other accommodations."

But Aunt Greta shook her head and said, "Ethan, there's no need for that. You're like my own son. How can I charge you for staying at your house? You can stay here as much as you like; you don't need to pay anything. You should use it to buy some good skills for yourself."

Ethan insisted. "No, Aunt, that's a different matter. Business is business. Here, take it. Otherwise, I will have to throw it away outside." he remained firm.

"No, Ethan. Don't!"

At last, she had no choice but to accept it. She looked and found nearly a hundred silver coins inside. She was astonished and tried to return them to him once again, but Ethan forced her to accept them.

"Aunt, I'm an E-Rank hunter now. This amount of money is nothing to me."

"An E-Rank hunter?"

"Big brother, are you already an E-Rank hunter now? Congratulations!" Emily said, smiling brightly. "And I still have 2 years to awaken myself."

"Thanks, Emily. I know you will also be a good hunter one day. I will help you become number one in the city."

"Really? Thanks, big brother!" She beamed, hoping for a better future. She also yearned to go outside the city walls and venture out.

Innkeeper Greta's expression was a little difficult as she thought about her daughter's future. On one hand, she was worried if her daughter would meet an unexpected accident like her father one day. On the other hand, she didn't want to crush her daughter's dream either. It was a hard choice to make.

She sighed and, as if remembering something important, scoured the reception desk and took out an envelope from there.

She handed it to Ethan and said, "Ethan, yesterday someone dropped this at our doorstep in the morning. I don't know who delivered it here, but it has your name written on it, so I kept it safe for you."

Arriving in his room, Ethan stared at the envelope with intrigue. "Who could have sent this to me?" He didn't recall anyone fitting this description in this world.

The envelope was still intact, meaning no one else had seen it. Most likely, it was a letter.

He opened the envelope and found a letter inside. Sitting comfortably on the bed, he began to read it carefully. There were only a few sentences, not difficult to read. The language was strange, but he could understand it clearly, most likely due to his perks as a reincarnator.

Chapter 42: Chapter 42: The Elven Princess: Ilyana Vaeloria
The content of the letter was as follows:

"Dear Mr. Ethan, I am glad to inform you that I have discovered your secret of selling all those sentient swords and buying mana orbs in large quantities. It was very astonishing to me that you're the owner of those D-Grade sentient swords because I learned that you're just an E-Rank hunter.

So, if you don't want your secret to be leaked, meet me at the Eldritch Chamber of Commerce.

But, You don't need to fear Mr. Ethan. Instead, I have a deal that you would very much like to hear.

I hope you will meet me soon enough.

From— your well wisher."

—

Ethan was tense at first, but at the later part he couldn't help but find it amusing. It was a really polite threat. Feeling intrigued, he decided to visit the place to see what awaited him.

Setting this aside, Ethan took out his Skeletal Dragon Sword from the scabbard at his waist, and another sword called Holy Elemental Sword, which was given to him by Aria.

However, he didn't take it for free, because this sword's price was astronomical.

A single sword cost 3,000 gold coins. It was just a D-Grade sword, but infused with the holy fire element. That's what make it special.

He had requested this sword from Aria just to kill demons if needed in the future, especially with the Great Demon War on the horizon, he needed to be ready.

"Coins, coins, its all about coins," Ethan muttered to himself.

Setting that aside, he began synthesize both swords to see if his sword could gain the ability to kill demons. If it failed, it would be a huge loss.

[Ding!]

[Congratulations! Your Materials Synthesis was successful]

[Your sword has upgraded to: Holy Dragonian Blade (C)]

The previous skeletal bone sword had transformed into a sharp blade that radiated purification energy of holy fire. It seemed as if it was made to purify all evils. The sword's toughness had increased significantly, alongside its sharpness.

He cast [Appraisal] to see its properties.

[Appraisal]

[Name: Holy Dragonian Blade]

[Grade: C]

[Attack Power: 105]

[Durability: 320]

[Special Abilities:]

[1. Dragon's Wrath: Unleashes a powerful fire attack that engulfs enemies in an inferno, causing massive burn damage over time.]

[2. Holy Purge: Emits a burst of holy energy that purifies and damages undead and demonic entities, while healing the wielder slightly]

[3. Holy Flame Aura: Surrounds the blade with the holy essence of fire elements, causing fear in nearby low-level undead and demonic creatures.]

Ethan was astonished to see such a large upgrade on his sword, especially on its special abilities. It had finally gained the ability to kill demons for good, relieving him a little. The other special abilities might also be useful later on.

The next morning, Ethan headed to the Eldritch Chamber of Commerce by taking a ride on a small carriage. However, the problem was that it was situated in the noble district, so he needed to pay a large sum of money and show his credentials as a hunter to enter first. Most commoners were not allowed there.

As he approached the grand entrance of Noble District, he was stopped by a guard.

“Halt. State your business,” the guard demanded, eyeing him suspiciously.

“I’m here to meet someone at the Eldritch Chamber of Commerce,” Ethan replied, handing over his hunter credentials.

The guard inspected the credentials carefully and took the entrance fee. “An E-Rank hunter in the noble district? You must have some important business. You may pass, but any trouble and you’ll be escorted out immediately.”

Ethan nodded and proceeded through the ornate gates, feeling the weight of the nobility’s gaze on him. He navigated the bustling streets, lined with lavish shops and grand buildings, until he reached the imposing structure of the Eldritch Chamber of Commerce.

Inside, he was greeted by a well-dressed receptionist.

“Welcome to the Eldritch Chamber of Commerce. How can I assist you today?” she asked politely.

“I’m here to see someone. I have received a letter,” Ethan explained, showing the letter to the receptionist.

She glanced at the letter, her expression unreadable. “Ah, I see. Please follow me.”

Ethan followed her through a series of hallways until they reached a private meeting room. She opened the door and gestured for him to enter.

Inside, a beautiful elf woman with an air of authority sat behind a large desk. She had long, pointy ears, emerald green eyes, a beautiful face as smooth as jade, and shoulder-length grey hair. Wearing a sapphire blue dress, she looked like the epitome of beauty.

Although he knew that there were demi-humans in this world as well, he didn't expect to meet one of them so soon.

Ethan was a little dazed, but he quickly recovered with a cough.

The elf woman looked up as Ethan entered, a sly smile on her beautiful face.

"Mr. Ethan, I presume. Please, have a seat," the woman said, gesturing to a chair opposite her.

Ethan sat down, his curiosity piqued. "So, you're the one who sent the letter?"

"Indeed," the Elf woman replied, leaning back in her chair. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Ilyana Vaeloria, a representative of the Eldritch Chamber of Commerce of Arcadia Branch."

"Oh! What is it that you want from me?" Ethan asked, getting straight to the point.

"Straightforward, I like that," Ilyana said, her smile charming. "I have a proposition for you, Mr. Ethan. Your secret is safe with me, but in exchange, I need your help with a certain... endeavor."

Ethan raised an eyebrow. "And what might that be?"

Ilyana leaned forward, revealing a peak of her snowy white bosom. Although, she might have done it unconsciously.

Ethan was charmed by the sight but pretended as if nothing had happened. He was definitely enjoying it a little.

"I want you to sell all your special weapons here," she said, coming a little closer. Her flowery scent drifted under his nostrils.

Ethan's raised his eyebrows. "Sell my weapons to you. That's your only condition? I have no problem doing that, but can you tell me how you found me?" Ethan was really curious about who had caught him; he acted so secretly, yet someone had seen it. It intrigued him a little.

Ilyana smiled brightly upon hearing his answer. Then, considering Ethan's curiosity, she pondered a little before calling out to an inconspicuous corner of the room, "Kai, come out."

From the shadows emerged a small boy, no older than twelve, with nimble fingers and sharp eyes. He had an air of confidence despite his young age and wore clothes that allowed him to blend seamlessly into the background.

"This is Kai," Ilyana introduced. "He has a thief class with exceptional skills. He noticed you during one of your transactions and brought it to my attention."

"Thief Class?" Ethan pondered. He had heard about classes, but unfortunately he had none. He had no idea how to achieve it either. He should have asked Aria earlier. She and her family must have assassin class with them.

Kai bowed slightly. "It wasn't easy following you, Mr. Ethan. You're very careful. But I have a knack for these things."

Ethan looked at the boy, impressed. "You followed me without me noticing? That's quite impressive."

Kai grinned. "I aim to please my mistress." He bowed lightly to Ilyana respectfully.

Ilyana continued, "Kai's skills are invaluable to us, and he will be working closely with you to ensure smooth operations. Together, we can create a profitable partnership. What do you say?"

Ethan considered the proposal. It was risky, but the potential rewards were significant. And having someone as skilled as Kai could be an asset too.

"One last question. Why do you need my help? Your shop already looks so well equipped, so what's the need of my help?" Ethan asked, intrigued as it had been floating in his mind for a while now.

Ethan, you don't understand the ramifications of your actions, do you?" Ilyana said with a twinge of mystery.

As Ethan raised his eyebrows, not fully understanding its meaning, Ilyana explained, "Do you know how extraordinary it is to make sentient weapons? It is literally like breathing life into objects. Only a Legendary Class Weaponsmith can do what you did.

"The real value is in you, not the swords. Although at low-grade weapons, it was not so apparent how a sentient weapon functions, but once you upgrade them to B-Grade or above, you will see the real miracle. The weapons become living objects in reality. They can talk to the user like a partner as well as be equipped with special abilities, making them extremely formidable and rare to find.

“I don’t know how you are able to achieve so much success in creating sentient objects, and I don’t want to know either. Maybe you have a good master teaching you with your Legendary Class, or whatever. But I need your help to complete my goal and achieve my freedom,” Ilyana said honestly.

Ethan nodded, understanding the gist of it. This Universal Synthesis skill had more potential than he thought. He had yet to discover more of its proper usage.

Ilyana mistook him as someone with a Legendary Weapon crafter class, guided by a reclusive master, saving him the trouble of revealing his secrets.

Honestly, he thought they could go on with the partnership actually. He became curious about her identity, to be assured farther. So, he used [Appraisal] on her, and it was successful. That basically meant she was less than level 50.

Chapter 43: Chapter 43: Signing A Deal
[Appraisal]

[Name: Ilyana Vaeloria]

[Age: 21]

[Level: 41]

[Affiliation: Eldritch Chamber of Commerce, Princess of the Vaeloria Kingdom.]

“Whoa! An actual princess from an Elf Kingdom? Amazing!” Ethan exclaimed inwardly.

Probably, she was from another empire altogether. Most likely, the Demi-human Empire, as there were no Elf Kingdoms in the Kairos Empire.

He got more interested in knowing her goal, so he asked, “And what is your goal actually, if you don’t mind me asking?”

Ilyana smiled as she said, “Yeah, sure..I find no problem sharing my goals with you. You’re going to be my partner, after all.” She continued, her voice calm.

“Actually, I am not from this empire, which you might have guessed from my appearance already. My goal is to earn 10 million gold coins of profit in just 3 years.

“I know you might find it unbelievable to earn this much profit in such a short time, but I have already earned 5 million gold coins in just 2 year. There are only 1 year left before my deadline come. I need to earn another 5 million gold coins within this time, that’s why I am seeking more business partnerships.”

“I am the real owner of this Eldritch Chamber of Commerce. This is just one of many branches of my Chamber of Commerce in this empire.”

She got up from her seat and explained, “We deal on various products, such as, Weapons, Armours, Skill Books, Potions, Monster Carcasses and Monster materials.” She made various hand motions as she explained all this to Ethan.

Ethan looked amazed at her professionalism, her charm was off the roof.

She looked at Ethan and continued, “I came here for a routine inspection and heard about your exploits, so I invited you here.

I can't reveal my personal circumstances, but I think we can have good cooperation in doing business. I can even supply your weapons throughout all other kingdoms in this empire, so you don't have to worry about revealing your identity if you want to stay anonymous as you're trying to be. With our cooperation, it could be really possible.

“I have 1 years left to earn 6 million gold coins, but with your help, I am hoping to progress much faster. So, what do you think?” she asked, looking directly into his eyes.

“I see!” Ethan nodded and said, “Sure, I have no problem with that. But can you tell me my profit ratio?” he asked to make everything clear from the Start.

Ilyana smiled, revealing her pearly white teeth after seeing Etham agree to her proposal.

“About that, we would be providing you with all the materials for your crafting needs, so your profit would be 70% and ours 30%. We will handle all the shipping and delivery, so you can understand.”

“Mm..hm..”

Ethan found the stake of 70% not that bad. Previously, those greedy shop owners took nearly 100% in profit while making a fool out of Ethan.

In comparison, Ilyana's 30% seemed perfect to him. Moreover, she would be providing all the materials for his needs, which would be very convenient for him.

But the Elf woman surely knows how to do her business. If she bought the materials at a lower cost, she would be earning a significant sum from there as well. Ethan could do nothing about it.

Ethan added urgently, “One more thing, can you pay my money in exchange of mana orbs? I want every piece that you would be able to provide.”

Mana orbs were really less in Arcadia city, most likely the nobles get them right off the bat after they are revealed. So, he asked her if she could provide them, considering she had connections to other big cities and Kingdoms.

Ilyana pondered and answered, "Deal. Although mana orbs are rare, we can provide you some as a payment. But, I would need to gather them from other locations, so it might take some time.

Don't worry, I will personally send letters to gather them. It should be no problem."

Ethan smiled and said, "Alright then, we have a deal."

Afterwards, they signed a formal contract with the Kairos Empire's official insignia on it. If any party breaks the contract, they will be dealt with Imperial judiciary.

Ilyana smiled and looked at the contract. "May we have a pleasant cooperation, Mr. Ethan." Ilyana extended her jade-like hand for a handshake.

"Happy cooperation." Ethan shook her hand, feeling it warm to the touch. He quickly let go out of politeness.

But Ilyana looked as if she lost her soul for a moment as soon as he touched her hand. It was as if a bolt of electricity jolted throughout her body, leaving her numb.

"Miss Ilyana, are you alright?" Ethan asked, noticing her statue-like posture.

Suddenly, Kai stepped out from the shadows and said, "Mistress is fine, Mr. Ethan, you don't need to worry. She needs some medication and then she will be alright. You should be on your way, Mr. Ethan. It's getting dark, as you can see."

"Oh, okay..." Ethan nodded and left the building, feeling a little puzzled.

Once Ethan had left, Kai rushed to Ilyana's side, concern etched on his face. "Princess, what happened? You looked like you saw a ghost. Did your premonition ability activated once again? "

Ilyana, still recovering from the shock, took a deep breath. "Yes, It is. Kai, what I saw was far more terrifying than any ghost."

Kai's eyes widened. "What did you see?"

Ilyana closed her eyes, recalling the vision that had overwhelmed her the moment she touched Ethan's hand.

“I saw Ethan... in the future. His power had grown exponentially. He was wielding a weapon of immense strength, and the ground around him was littered with the bodies of demons. There were billions of them, all slain by his hand. His rage was terrifying, consuming everything in its path.”

Kai’s jaw dropped. “He slew billions of demons? That’s... that’s impossible.”

Ilyana shook her head. “It seemed impossible, but it was real. My premonition can never be wrong. His power, his fury... they were beyond anything I’ve ever seen. If he ever loses control, the world could be in grave danger.”

Kai clenched his fists. “We need to be careful, then. Make sure he never turns that power against us. Should we tell this to his majesty?”

Ilyana shook her head. “No need. But, we must keep a close eye on him, to ensure that his anger is never directed at us Elfs. He is not an enemy of the human’s nor the Demi-humans. His anger was directed solely to the demons? Moreover, whatever we do, the future is not going to change.”

Kai looked at her, determination in his eyes. “Then, does that means he is going to be one of those Heroes of Humanity? Or, something different else?”

“I don’t know. But I do know he had become much more to us than just a partner. So, we can’t slip a word about this in the presence of others. Do you understand?”

Kai nodded solemnly realizing Ethan was no ordinary man..

Kai resolved to be extra cautious around Ethan from now on. He would have to ensure his Princess Ilyana’s safety at all cost. That’s his sole mission.

Whether Ethan was a friend or foe, Only time will tell.

Ethan arrived at the bustling city gate in the early afternoon, where the summer sun cast long shadows over the cobblestones. Today was the day he planned to join Lenora and her friends for a dungeon raid. He missed the previous one, but this time it won’t happen.

He spotted Lenora and her party, waiting near a large carriage.

Lenora, with her fiery red hair and confident demeanor, was hard to miss. “Ethan! Over here!” Lenora waved, her voice carrying over the crowd.

Ethan made his way through the throng of people and greeted the party. Lenora was accompanied by four others: Cedric, the leader of the party with a spear in his hand,

Iris, the healer with a magical staff, Yona, the archer with a sturdy bow, and lastly Marcus, a warrior with a greatsword slung over his back.

All of them looked at Ethan with an expression of displeasure. They were reminded of the day where Ethan had missed on their previous dungeon raid.

Marcus, the dark skinned boy, was even more so. From the beginning he wasn't in favor of the idea of adding a stranger to their party. But Lenora's persistence pushed them along. And, just as he expected, the new member was a total disappointment—a guy without motivation and responsibility.

He couldn't help but feel doubtful about Lenora's claims. "What did Lenora see in this guy? Genius? Tsk..Genius my ass!" he scoffed.

The other members also seemed displeased, recalling the frustration of waiting for hours due to a single person. In the end, they had to enter the dungeon one member short.

The maximum number of members allowed in a dungeon party was six. Being down a member made it difficult for them to grind effectively, adding to their frustration.

Their previous party member had left to join another group, which was why they were now searching for a new member to fill the gap.

Then, Lenora suggested Ethan, who was oddly persistent on adding Ethan to the party, so they have no but to add him with welcoming smile. That's the story so far.

Ethan, sensing the tension in the room, decided to address it head-on. "Hello, everyone," he began, his voice steady but tinged with sincerity. "I know I messed up last time, and I'm really sorry for missing the raid. It was unprofessional, and I completely understand if you're upset. I promise it won't happen again."

He paused, letting his words sink in before continuing. "You all know I was going through some tough times that day, but I'm here now to make it up to you," Ethan added, bowing slightly in a gesture of apology.

He chose not to delve into the grim details of having killed someone and his subsequent imprisonment, but the weight of his words hinted at the gravity of his situation.

Cedric looked at the others, gauging their reactions. Iris and Yona exchanged glances, their expressions softening a bit. Lenora gave a small nod, encouraging the others to follow suit. Marcus, however, remained grumpy, his arms crossed and his face set in a scowl. He was a little hot headed.

"Alright, Ethan," Cedric said with a sigh. "Apology accepted. Let's just focus on the task ahead. We need to be at our best for this raid."

Iris and Yona followed along not finding any other choice. They would have to watch each others back at the dungeon after all. Moreover, earlier Lenora had personally pleaded on his behalf to forgive him. They couldn't dwell on it forever, could they?

Cedric and the others were all commoners, with Lenora being the sole noble in their group. Though she never shared her background, they were no fools. They easily deduced it from her refined appearance, behavior, and commanding presence. Moreover, she had extremely formidable fire related skills—bloodline skills to be exact.

From all this, they guessed she must be from a noble background or something. But, they didn't mind as their apprehension faded over time growing as close friends. Lenora neither mentioned anything about her clan, nor about her father's identity.

If she did so, she knew her friends would be distancing away from herself. She knew it very well as it happened with herself many times in the past.

Chapter 44: Chapter 44: Rock Giants Cave (1)

Lenora loves to make new friends, not just nobles, but also with everyone. The thrill of adventure and hunting while mingling with her friends was very enjoyable to her.

Ethan let out a relieved breath. "Thank you. I won't let you down."

"Alright, Everyone. Let's board on the carriage, we are getting late already," Cedric said playing his role as the leader.

As they boarded the carriage, the mood was still somewhat tense. The six of them sat opposite of each other, 3 girls 3 boys.

The carriage jolted as it set off, the metallic wheels creaking under the weight of its passengers. The carriage was rented to just drop them off. The driver operated the vehicle from the front.

The journey to the Rock Giant's Cave would take a few hours, giving them time to discuss their roles and strategies.

Cedric, always the leader, took charge of the conversation. "Alright, everyone, let's go over our roles again. Iris, you're on healing duty as usual. Yona, cover us from a distance with your arrows. Marcus will be a tank and Lenora and I will assist him taking position left and right not to get surprise attack from the Rock Giants.

He then turned to Ethan. "Ethan, what role do you want to take in this raid? You have sword in you possession, does that mean you're going to be aggressive?"

Ethan didn't hesitate. "Yes. I want to be on the front line, fighting alongside you and Marcus."

Marcus's scowl deepened, his eyes narrowing at Ethan. "So, you think you can just barge in and take my position, huh?" he said, his voice dripping with hostility.

Ethan shook his head at the misunderstanding, trying to diffuse the tension. "No, that's not it. I just think I can be most effective up front. I have some abilities that might come in handy against the Rock Giants."

Marcus grunted, clearly unconvinced. "We'll see about that."

Cedric intervened before things could escalate. "Marcus, calm down. Ethan's here to help, not to replace anyone. We'll need all the strength we can get in there."

Marcus reluctantly nodded, though his expression didn't soften a bit.

Ethan became curious about their party's strength, so used [Appraisal] to find out their Info.

[Appraisal]

[Name: Cedric]

[Age: 15]

[Level: 16]

[Affiliation: Arcadia Hunter's Guild]

...

[Name: Iris]

[Age: 14]

[Level: 15]

[Affiliation: Arcadia Hunter's Guild]

.....

[Name: Yona]

[Age: 15]

[Level: 16]

[Affiliation: Arcadia Hunter's Guild]

...

[Name: Marcus]

[Age: 16]

[Level: 18]

[Affiliation: Arcadia Hunter's Guild.]

They were in the same age group with similar power levels. Lenora was also 13 years old with level 14 power. That means she was the youngest of them all.

But that doesn't mean that they were kids. Their growth were equal to age 18 of Earth's people.

Wait, does that mean Ethan was the oldest one among the group. "Well whatever!" He shrugged in his mind.

Then his attention fixed on their levels. Levels 14-18 weren't actually a little low? Is it that hard to level up? But, Aria had reached level 40 at the age of 19. What about that?"

"Is it simply because of talent and potential?" Ethan asked himself in doubt. Only then he realised how serious the fact was.

The carriage rolled on, the scenery outside changing from the bustling cityscape to the more serene countryside. Rolling hills and lush greenery stretched as far as the eye could see, the air growing fresher with each passing mile. Ethan tried to appreciate the natural beauty, but he couldn't shake the feeling of tension within the carriage.

Lenora, sitting next to him, leaned in and whispered, "Don't mind Marcus. He's just protective of his role and a little hotheaded. Once he sees you in action, he'll surely come appreciate you more. Maybe you two could become good friends, who knows?" She chuckled.

Ethan nodded, found her explanation reasonable. "Thanks, Lenora. I can only do my best."

As the sun began to dip towards the horizon, casting a golden glow over the landscape, they finally approached their destination. The terrain became rocky and uneven,

signaling they were close to the Rock Giant's Cave. The carriage came to a halt, and everyone disembarked, stretching their legs and preparing their gears.

The group took a moment to take in the surroundings. The cave entrance loomed ahead, a dark maw set into the rocky hillside. Around them, jagged rocks and boulders created a natural, imposing barrier. It was easy to see how the dungeon earned its name.

There were a few party also present, readying their gear and stuff for dungeon dive. But it was not a problem as dungeon mechanism allows 10 separate channels to allow a lot of people to join separately. It is controlled by itself. No one else can interfere.

Cedric gathered the group. "Alright, everyone, stay focused. We need to move fast as we are late already. The Rock Giants are tough, but if we work together, we can take them down. Let's move out."

Ethan could feel the weight of Marcus's gaze on his back, a constant reminder of the warrior's distrust. He pushed the thought aside, focusing instead on the task ahead. This was a totally new dungeon with unfamiliar monsters all around. Fortunately Cedric said some of the abilities the Rock Giant's may possess.

As they approached the cave, they were asked to show their credentials by two guards stationed at the entrance. They showed their hunter ID and paid the entrance fee for the raid—600 silver coins. 100 silver coins for each.

They went inside, the air grew cooler, and the sound of their footsteps echoed off the stone walls. The party moved in formation, with Cedric and Marcus at the front, followed by Ethan, Lenora, Iris, and Yona bringing up the rear. The deeper they went, the darker it became, until they were forced to rely on the light from Iris's staff to see.

Cedric motioned for them to halt. "Alright, remember our strategy. We need to take these giants down quickly and efficiently. Aim for their weak spots—their joints and eyes. Don't let them get too close."

The group nodded in agreement. Ethan tightened his grip on his sword, feeling a mix of excitement and anticipation. This was his first real battle with the party, and he was ready to show his worth.

As they ventured further into the cave, the ground beneath them began to shake. The sound of heavy footsteps echoed through the cavern, growing louder with each passing second. The first Rock Giant appeared, its massive form emerging from the shadows. Its stone skin glistened in the dim light, and its eyes glowed with a menacing red hue.

Cedric raised his spear. "They are here! Everyone, stick to the plan!"

Ethan cast Appraisal to get some information about the rock giants.

[Appraisal]

[Stone Golem (Classic)]

[Power Level: 10]

On the first floor, the Stone golems' levels were expected to be low. However, their formidable strength lay in their hardened bodies of stone, making them formidable opponents.

Marcus charged forward first with a roar, his greatsword swinging in a wide arc. He struck the giant's leg, causing it to stagger. Cedric followed up with a precise thrust to its knee joint, weakening it further. With a final swing from Marcus's greatsword, the Stone Golem crumbled into rubble.

Ethan and the others didn't need to intervene since it was a low-level monster. However, this was just the beginning. More Stone Golems began to appear one after another.

One Stone Golem let out a bellow of rage, swinging its massive fists at the attackers. Yona's arrows flew from the back, striking its eyes and distracting it. Iris was ready with her staff to heal anyone who got injured.

"Ethan, go get him. Let's see what you've got that Lenora approves of you so much," Cedric said, looking expectant.

Lenora smiled confidently at Ethan, her eyes never failing her. There was definitely something within Ethan that made his potential so high.

"Sure!" Ethan smiled as he unsheathed his sword and charged forward with radiating confidence.

The others remained impassive, eager to watch Ethan's fight. Marcus was the same. He also wanted to see what made Ethan so special to Lenora.

Cedric, noticing Ethan's sword, asked Lenora beside him, "Lenora, what grade is Ethan's sword? Do you know? It looks very expensive and powerful."

Iris and the others also got curious after hearing Cedric's inquiry. They noticed the sword radiating some kind of magical, holy aura. It was really intriguing.

Lenora shook her head, "I don't know. I think you need to ask him yourself."

Marcus was envious of the sight of the sword gleaming in the dim light. He also wanted a powerful greatsword for himself but couldn't afford one due to his financial conditions.

“Must be some kind of scion of a wealthy family!” Marcus commented as jealousy grew within him.

Lenora denied his comment vehemently, “No. He is not any scion of that sort. He has no family. He lives alone!”

The party members, except Marcus, began to feel sympathy for Ethan and became curious about his story.

“Whoa! Doesn’t that mean he became this powerful all by himself! That’s amazing!” Cedric said, feeling impressed.

“Tsk,” Marcus snorted, not believing Lenora’s revelation. He was sure Ethan must have an impressive background. Otherwise, how could he get so much money to buy such high gear?

Chapter 45: Chapter 45: Frontline Warrior

While they were gossiping, Ethan hurried toward the Stone Golem, its eyes locked on him. The massive creature’s eyes glowed with an ominous light as it prepared to attack.

It charged at Ethan, causing the ground to shake with each thunderous step. Despite its size, its speed was impressive, making it a formidable opponent.

Ethan remained calm, raising his C-Grade sword with a steady hand. With a swift, horizontal swing, he unleashed powerful raw force against the golem. The blade sliced through the air with a whistle, demonstrating its exceptional craftsmanship and Ethan’s precise control.

“Clang!”

The sound of metal colliding with rock echoed through the cavern as Ethan’s sword struck the Stone Golem. The impact was tremendous, sending vibrations through the ground. The mighty creature, unable to withstand the force, crumbled into pieces, transforming into a pile of rubble. Unlike other creatures, the Rock Giant had no blood or organs, making its destruction appear almost clean.

“Wow!” Iris and the others exclaimed, their eyes wide with amazement. They stepped forward, genuine excitement lighting up their faces, except for one.

“Ethan, that was impressive! You managed to defeat it with a single strike. I’m impressed,” Cedric said, his voice filled with admiration. He was glad to have such a powerful ally. With Ethan on their side, they might finally clear this dungeon and increase their levels.

“Yes, Ethan, good job!” Lenora and the other two girls chimed in, their faces bright with admiration.

Marcus, on the other hand, grew more jealous and resentful. Previously, the girls would flock to him whenever he finished a battle, but now they were leaning toward Ethan. He felt his spotlight being stolen, leaving him sulking in the shadows.

“No, this can’t happen much longer. He’s just showing off his wealth and stealing all my limelight. I can’t let that happen. I will prove to them that I am better than him,” Marcus thought, his resolve growing stronger. He assumed Ethan had no other formidable abilities, only wealth.

They cleared the first floor with ease, but despite their efforts, they didn’t trigger any monster drops. With no choice, they headed to the second floor empty-handed.

“Why is it getting so hard to get monster drops nowadays?” Iris grumbled, puffing her cheeks in frustration as they descended deeper into the dungeon.

“It might be because we’ve been grinding this dungeon too many times. If we’re lucky, we might find better drops on the higher floors,” Cedric replied, his eyes darting around, alert for any signs of danger.

“Gulu...gulu...!”

At that moment, a horde of golems charged at them, their massive bodies causing the ground to tremble even more violently than before. Their eyes glowed menacingly as they approached in a tight formation.

“Get ready! A big horde is coming,” Cedric commanded, quickly assessing the situation. There were seven or eight stone golems in a tight formation, their menacing eyes fixed on the group.

Without hesitation, Marcus surged forward, eager to prove himself.

“Marcus, what are you doing? Stick to the plan!” Cedric shouted, but Marcus ignored him, his mind focused solely on showing his worth.

Holding his greatsword with both hands, Marcus charged at a nearby stone golem.

“Thunder Stream Strike!” he bellowed, activating one of his greatsword skills. His blade crackled with electricity, becoming a weapon of pure destruction. The arcs of electricity illuminated the cavern, casting eerie shadows on the walls.

Marcus’s greatsword crackled with energy as he swung it down with all his might, aiming for the nearest golem’s head. The blade connected with a deafening crash,

sending shards of stone flying in all directions. However, to Marcus's surprise, the golem staggered but did not fall.

"Huh!" Marcus exclaimed, taken aback. Even his powerful destruction skill wasn't enough to destroy a stone golem. It seemed these golems were tougher than the last he had confronted.

"What's going on? Why are they so tough all of a sudden?" he felt frustrated, asking himself in doubt.

"Bang!" Distracted, Marcus was assaulted by another stone golem from the side, sending him crashing back to his teammates with minor injuries.

"Marcus, why did you charge forward alone? Can't you see they are in a horde?" Cedric seemed a little pissed, while Iris used a healing skill on Marcus.

"I-I thought I could defeat them alone, just like the previous raids. But, why are they so tough this time?" Marcus stuttered, confusion evident in his voice.

Cedric rubbed his forehead in frustration at Marcus's rash action.

"Marcus, don't forget we have Ethan with high gear, so it would obviously be a little tougher in terms of fairness." Cedric glanced at Ethan's C-Grade sword as he spoke.

Ethan contemplated the situation and quickly understood. The presence of his high-level gear made the dungeon monsters tougher.

Ethan looked at his sword and said apologetically, "Sorry, guys. I didn't know you would be troubled because of me. Should I leave it outside?" He looked them in the eyes, genuinely concerned.

Cedric and the others shook their heads. "No, Ethan. Although it becomes a little tougher, the advantages will be more apparent. We are hoping to get good results from it. Marcus might have forgotten about it," Cedric explained.

"Ohh..." Ethan nodded in understanding.

This meant Ethan had to be more proactive with his sword, while the others would assist him.

Everyone nodded in agreement, as if they had known beforehand. They had no problem with Ethan taking the frontline lead, except for Marcus, of course.

Marcus seemed indignant, convinced that Ethan was the reason for his failure. He snorted and stood up, completely healed of the scratches.

Ethan took the lead, with Cedric and Marcus beside him. Iris and Lenora positioned themselves in the middle, while Yona covered the rear for any possible ambushes.

Ethan activated [Inferno Leap (D)] and charged forward, pointing his Draconian-blade downwards.

With fiery destruction, Ethan landed, causing the horde's formation to break. The impact sent flames and debris flying, disorienting the golems.

Though surprised by Ethan's skill, Cedric quickly turned his attention to another stone golem and engaged it with his spear skills in close combat.

Marcus, regaining his composure, refused to be bested by Ethan again. He increased the ferocity of his attacks, targeting another stone golem with renewed determination.

Lenora used her inherent fire skill from her Fire Crow bloodline, her fiery attacks illuminating the cavern and adding to the chaos.

Yona joined in, using her top-notch archery skills from the back, targeting the stone golems' weak points with precision.

"Dragon's Wrath!"

Ethan used one of his special abilities from the sword. In an instant, two incoming golems were engulfed in an inferno, melting under the excessive heat.

He looked around for another target and noticed a large golem ambushing Marcus while everyone was distracted. Even Marcus was unaware of the impending danger.

"Watch out!" Ethan shouted and activated [Azula Sword Strike], lunging forward.

"Swish!" The golem was cut in two, crumbling to the ground.

Only then did Marcus realize Ethan had saved him from the ambush. He finished his target and glanced at Ethan with a mix of grudging respect and lingering resentment.

"T-Thanks!" Marcus didn't forget to show his gratitude. It's not like he had a lifetime grudge against Ethan. He just wanted prove himself better. "Maybe his approach was wrong from the start?" This thought just crossed his mind.

Ethan smiled and said, "No problem. We're a team." He never took Marcus's offensive words to heart.

With a renewed sense of camaraderie, the group focused on their battles, clearing the second floor with improved coordination. Even Marcus, despite his earlier resentment, fell in sync with the team, contributing effectively to their efforts.

Unfortunately, they still didn't find any loot, but their experience points for leveling up increased slightly. This small victory kept their spirits high as they moved to the third floor.

Upon entering the third floor, they encountered Stone Golems once again. This time, there were about 10-15 of them spread across the floor, blending in with the rocky terrain. The air felt heavier, and the cavern's ambient temperature seemed to drop, adding to the eerie atmosphere.

Etham took a moment to survey the scene, his eyes scanning the golems. "Cedric, are there only Stone Golems in this dungeon?" Ethan asked curiously as he prepared for another fight.

"No," Cedric replied, adjusting his grip on his spear. "There are several types of rock giants in this dungeon, each with unique abilities. These Stone Golems are just the basic ones with no special abilities. It's going to get harder the farther we progress. After the fifth floor, we'll encounter Earth Golems. They have the ability to manipulate earth in their designated domains, which we need to be careful of."

As they conversed, the team fought with improved coordination, taking down the Stone Golems one by one. Each member knew their role, and they moved like a well-oiled machine, their attacks and defenses perfectly synchronized.

"Watch out on the left!" Yona shouted, loosing an arrow that struck a golem's weak point, causing it to stumble.

"Got it!" Marcus replied, swinging his greatsword with renewed determination, shattering the weakened golem.

"Fire Crow's Fury!" Lenora called out, her flames bursting forth and engulfing two golems, their rocky forms cracking under the intense heat.

Chapter 46: Chapter 46: Level: 12

Ethan activated [Inferno Leap (D)] again, landing amidst a cluster of golems and disrupting their formation with a fiery explosion. His movements were precise, and his attacks were devastating, each swing of his sword leaving a trail of destruction.

As they fought, the golems fell one by one until none were left standing. The ground was littered with rubble and the remnants of their foes, a testament to their hard-fought victory.

To their relief, they finally triggered monster drops this time. Ethan's keen eyes spotted three active skill books on the ground, glowing faintly with a mystical light.

"Look!" Cedric called out, picking up the glowing books. "We got some skill books!"

The group gathered around, their faces lighting up with excitement. Cedric took one of the books and examined it closely.

"Whoa! These are all active skills, and there are three of them," he said, his voice filled with wonder. "Active skill books will definitely fetch a good price. Let's see what we've got."

They carefully opened the books, revealing the skills contained within. The first book held a skill called [Rock Shield (E)], which allowed the user to summon a protective barrier of stone.

The second book contained [Earthquake Stomp (E)], a powerful ground attack that could knock enemies off balance.

The third book revealed [Stone Grip (E)], a skill that could immobilize opponents by encasing their feet in rock.

"Does anyone want to equip one of these, or should we store them in our bag to sell them later on?" Cedric asked. They all looked at each other, but no one was eager to waste their precious skill slot by equipping these.

Ethan was also not interested. The only useful skill he found among them was Earthquake Stomp; however, he already had a similar type of skill: Inferno Leap.

If he was alone, he could have synthesized them and made them more useful. But he was not alone, and everyone had a share in it.

Moreover, he was not interested in getting skill books anymore. He could just buy them from the market anytime. After the deal with Ilyana, it should be very easy for him to get a good amount of money for his needs.

Finding no one eager, Cedric put them in the cloth bag and headed deeper into the fourth floor.

After some effort, they cleared the 4th floor and the 5th floor as well.

"Ding!"

"Congratulations! You have leveled up."

"Congratulations! You have leveled up."

As the last stone golem fell, Ethan received his level-up notification once again.

After clearing the first five floors and destroying nearly 100 golems, his rank increased by two levels.

On the other hand, his party members also leveled up once.

Ethan leveled up twice most likely because of his contribution, or simply because of his talent, both of them could be the reason.

He distributed his stat points and took a glance at the system panel:

[Status:]

[Name: Aengus Degaro (Ethan Smith)]

[Occupation: Hunter]

[Race: Human]

[Level: 12]

[Class: None]

[Age: 18]

[Strength: 30]

[Agility: 27]

[Defense: 25]

[Mana: 5,950/8,070]

[Attribute points: 0]

[Skills:]

[Active: Inferno Leap-3 (D), Berserker's Might (D) Azula Sword Strike-2(E), Paralyzing Breath (E)]

[Passive: Blaze Guard-2 (E), Fire Serpent's Digestion (E), Predator's Instinct (E)]

[Special skills: Monster Breeding (Level-1), Blood Regeneration(level-1)]

[Unique Skills : Appraisal (Basic), Skill Absorption (Mythic), Universal Synthesis (Ultimate)]

[Equipment: Holy Dragonian-blade (C)]

“Let’s take a break, everyone. We need to eat and rest, and recover our mana before we continue deeper,” Cedric said, seeing the exhaustion on their faces.

“Finally!” Iris and Lenora exhaled a breath of relief, while Yona, though silent as always, looked relieved to have a chance to rest.

Murcus was also tired and strained. He looked at Ethan and found him completely fine as if he can go for a few rounds more. He found it astonishing. He saw with his very eyes that Ethan used active skills one after another, so why did he look so fine?

“How much Mana Reserve does Ethan have?” he wondered.

What he didn’t know that Ethan had barely consumed near 2,000 Mana points out his vast Mana Reserve of 8,070.

If he knew, he might had to be bedridden for a while because of the shock.

They found a relatively safe corner in the cavern and set up a temporary camp. Cedric started a small fire, and they prepared a simple meal. The warmth of the fire and the aroma of cooking food brought a sense of comfort and normalcy in the otherwise harsh environment.

Ethan sat down, his back against the rocky wall, and closed his eyes for a moment.

“Here, Ethan” Iris said, handing him a bowl of steaming stew. “You need to eat and regain your strength.”

“Oh, thanks, Iris.” Ethan opened his eyes and accept the bowl of stew.

As they ate, the conversation naturally drifted toward personal matters—family, relationships, and more. Cedric, Iris, and Marcus, all between the ages of 13 and 16, casually mentioned their romantic relationships. In this world, it wasn’t unusual for young people to start forming bonds early, as their growth and maturity rates differed from those on Earth.

On the other hand, Yona, Lenora, and Ethan remained single, a fact that didn’t escape the group’s notice.

“Ethan, don’t you have any girlfriend?” Iris asked suddenly, her question drawing the attention of the others.

“Yeah, tell us about your girlfriend,” Cedric added, his curiosity piqued.

Lenora, usually calm and composed, seemed particularly interested in this topic. Her eyes focused intently on Ethan, waiting for his response.

Ethan smiled slightly, shaking his head. “Nah, I don’t have any girlfriend yet.”

Lenora subtly relaxed, a small wave of relief washing over her, while the others looked at him in surprise.

“What? No girlfriend yet?” Cedric echoed, finding it hard to believe. “You’re so talented and handsome, yet no girlfriend? It doesn’t add up.”

Ethan gave a wry smile. As the words left Cedric’s mouth, a thought briefly crossed his mind—Aria’s face. Her gentle nature and caring personality had left an impression on him, but he quickly pushed the thought aside, not wanting to dwell on it.

“Forget about that,” Marcus interjected, his curiosity shifting. “Do you have any Class? I noticed you using three Active Skills. Does your third skill come from your special Class? How are you so powerful?”

By this point, Marcus’s previous grudge against Ethan had completely evaporated. The heat of battle had forged a bond between them, turning what was once animosity into mutual respect and camaraderie. Now, instead of viewing Ethan as a rival, Marcus was genuinely interested in his abilities.

Ethan considered his response carefully. He couldn’t reveal too much about his unique skills or the secrets behind his power, but he also didn’t want to lie outright. “No, I don’t have any Class,” he finally said. “I’ve got four natural active skill slots and a decent Mana Reserve.”

“What?!” Everyone’s eyes widened in shock.

Marcus couldn’t believe what he was hearing. He himself only had two active skill slots, while Ethan had double that amount. The realization hit him hard, and only then did he understand how foolish it was to compare himself with Ethan. Ethan was a genius—a freak of nature. Marcus looked at him with a newfound awe and respect, though he felt conflicted about not being able to be Ethan’s rival. Well, At least, they were friends now.

“Whoa, that’s incredible, Ethan. You’re going to be a powerhouse in no time.” Cedric chuckled, giving Ethan a firm pat on the shoulder. “Just don’t forget about us when you’re reach the top.”

Iris and Yona exchanged astonished glances, while Lenora seemed relieved, her earlier confidence in Ethan now fully justified.

Ethan shook his head wryly. “A powerhouse? I’ve got a long way to go. Who knows what could happen between now and then?”

“So, do you guys have special Classes? Do you know how to get one?” Ethan asked, his curiosity piqued. It was something that had been on his mind for a while.

Hearing his question, they all shook their heads, indicating that none of them had a class.

“We don’t have classes, Ethan,” Cedric replied. “But Lenora might have some Bloodline Skills.” He glanced at Lenora for confirmation.

Ethan looked into Lenora’s serpent-like eyes, waiting for her to confirm. Lenora nodded, a hint of pride in her expression.

“There are two types of classes, Ethan,” Lenora explained. “First, there’s the Inherent Class: the nobilities and aristocrats are born with these. Then there’s the Attained Class: these are granted by the system when you achieve something extraordinary, though they often come with specific conditions. Sometimes, it’s a matter of luck, and other times, it’s about courage.”

“I see,” Ethan nodded, absorbing the information.

The meal and their lively conversation lifted their spirits. They felt rejuvenated and set off deeper into the cave, remaining vigilant as they ventured toward the fifth floor.

As they descended, the air grew colder, and the darkness around them thickened. Eventually, they reached the fifth floor, where the dim light revealed moss-covered walls, and yellowish vines.

Reincarnated With Three Unique Skills - Chapter 47 - Chapter 47: Chapter 47: Earth Golems

Chapter 47: Chapter 47: Earth Golems

“Guys, stay alert for Earth Golems. They could emerge from the ground at any moment,” Cedric cautioned, prompting everyone to scan the floor for any signs of an ambush.

Ethan’s senses were on high alert, his [Predator’s Instinct] sharpening his awareness to a razor’s edge. Suddenly, he felt a surge of danger—a tingling at the base of his skull

that signaled an imminent threat. "Watch out!" he shouted, his voice cutting through the stillness like a knife.

"Clang!"

A massive Earth Golem burst from the ground, its attack colliding with the Holy Dragonian Blade in a deafening clash.

"Huala, gulu...!" The Earth Golem began to crumble under the overwhelming force, its guttural cries echoing as it fell apart.

"Phew! That was a close one. Good job, Ethan," Cedric said, relief evident in his voice.

"More incoming!" Yona shouted, her bow already drawn and aimed at the advancing enemies.

Ethan quickly used Appraisal:

[Appraisal:]

[Earth Golem (Earth Elementalist)]

[Power Level: 13]

Ethan and Marcus took the lead, running side by side, their breaths synchronized as they prepared to face the massive Earth Golems head-on.

The ground beneath them trembled with each thunderous step of the golems, and the oppressive atmosphere within the cavern seemed to weigh heavily on their shoulders. Despite the tension, both of them felt a surge of adrenaline coursing through their veins, sharpening their focus.

As they closed in on the hulking forms of the Earth Golems, Ethan and Marcus activated their damage-dealing skills in unison. Ethan's blade crackled with fiery energy, blue flames licking along its edge as he activated his [Azula Sword Strike] skill onto his weapon.

Beside him, Marcus's sword began to glow with a fierce, crackling electricity as he activated his own skill, [Thunderstream Greatsword Strike].

Together, they were a formidable force, each attack amplified by the power coursing through their bodies.

The Earth Golems, towering nearly five meters tall, moved with a deliberate, menacing grace. Their massive arms, as thick as tree trunks, rose high into the air. With a low,

rumbling sound, they summoned enormous boulders out of thin air, the rocky masses materializing with a flash of Earthen magic.

The boulders hovered for a moment, suspended in the air, before being hurled toward Ethan and Marcus with terrifying speed.

The boulders flew toward them in quick succession, each one a potential death sentence. The first boulder whistled through the air, aimed directly at Ethan's chest.

He sidestepped at the last possible second, the boulder grazing past him so closely that he felt the rush of wind against his face. The ground where he had been standing exploded in a shower of debris as the boulder impacted with devastating force.

Marcus wasn't far behind in his reaction. The second boulder hurtled toward him, and he spun out of its path, the rocky missile missing him by mere inches. The boulder crashed into the cavern wall, sending chunks of stone flying in all directions. Marcus's eyes were wide with adrenaline, but his movements remained fluid, driven by instinct and training.

The Earth Golems, undeterred by their misses, continued their relentless assault.

Ethan and Marcus dodged each of them by hairs breath.

"Let's spread out!" Ethan suggested, and Marcus nodded in agreement. The two charged forward, splitting up to cover more ground while Yona and Lenora provided ranged support to distract the golems.

"Fire Crow's Fury!" Lenora cried out, unleashing a volley of fire attacks, forming shapes of ferocious Fire Crows that erupted into cawing crows as they struck, searing the golems' stony hides.

"Arcane Seeker Arrow!" Yona followed up, her arrow shimmering with magical energy as it homed in on the golem's weak point, striking with pinpoint precision.

Ethan leaped into air using [Inferno Leap] to disrupt their formation as usual.

With the impact, the Earth golems scattered but grew even more enraged. They charged furiously toward the nearest targets.

One of them barreled toward Iris's position, but Cedric and Yona quickly intervened, diverting its attention to Cedric.

With a determined glare, Cedric raised his spear and unleashed one of his powerful spear techniques: Flameburst Explosion.

The spear's tip struck the golem, igniting with a destructive fiery essence that erupted upon impact, leaving the Earth golem with a massive, smoldering hole in its chest.

As they cleared the horde of Earth Golems, another horde appeared from once again from underground.

Once again, they began to destroy the Earth Golems who were using various Earth elemental abilities such as, Earth wall, Earth Spike, Earth Swamp etc. However, with perfect teamwork, they cleared the 5th floor in fluid motion. They triggered a few monster drops and kept them inside their bags.

Clearing this single floor took hours, a clear indication of how fierce the battle had been.

After a short break, they prepared to venture deeper. With Ethan's abilities, they were committed to conquering the entire dungeon. His versatility—combining offense, defense, and the ability to sense danger—made him indispensable to the team.

The others didn't mind; in fact, they were thrilled. The chance to level up and enhance their skills alongside him was a powerful motivator, pushing them to grow stronger together.

Ethan subtly activated [Skill Absorption] multiple times during their encounters, targeting the Earth Golems and silently extracting their abilities. He was careful, ensuring that his actions went unnoticed by the rest of the party. The Earth Golem's skills intrigued him, and he knew they could give him a significant edge in future battles.

The results were more fruitful than he anticipated. Each absorbed skill proved to be a powerful addition to his arsenal.

Active Skills:

1. Earth Spike (E): Ethan could now summon sharp spikes of earth from the ground, impaling enemies and creating a formidable barrier against oncoming attacks.
2. Earth Wall (E): With a simple motion, he could raise a solid wall of earth, offering protection or trapping enemies within a confined space.
3. Rock Boulder (E): Ethan gained the ability to conjure and hurl massive boulders, smashing through obstacles or enemies with devastating force.
4. Earthen Thorny Domain (E): This skill allowed him to transform the surrounding ground into a treacherous domain filled with jagged earthen thorns, making it nearly impossible for enemies to advance without suffering severe damage.

Passive Skills:

1. Earth Perception (E): This passive skill heightened Ethan's awareness of the earth around him, allowing him to detect vibrations and movements with remarkable accuracy. It also improved his overall understanding of the terrain, giving him a strategic advantage in battle.

Ethan equipped all of these abilities, bringing his total to 8 active and 4 passive skills. Yet, despite his growing arsenal, he sensed that he was still far from reaching his true potential. Each skill he absorbed seamlessly engraved itself into his soul, without causing any strain or disruption, a testament to his unique talent.

After taking a short rest to regain their strength, the group proceeded to the 6th floor. The atmosphere grew tense as they entered a vast chamber teeming with Earth Golems. The room was filled with the rumble of shifting stones and the ominous clatter of heavy footsteps.

The Earth Golems, towering and seemingly impenetrable, gathered in swarms, ready to crush any intruders who dared to challenge them. Ethan could feel the earth beneath him vibrating with their presence, and he knew that another intense battle was about to begin.

They continued their relentless grinding, always watching each other's backs and coordinating their attacks with precision.

As time passed, they began to clear each floor one after another, with Ethan leading the charge thanks to his vast Mana Reserve.

– 6th Floor Cleared: 4 hours

– 7th Floor Cleared: 6 hours

– 8th Floor Cleared: 7 hours

– 9th Floor Cleared: 9 hours

A day and a half had gone by since they first entered the dungeon. Now, they found themselves on the 10th floor, battling the final Earth Golem of this level.

“Thunder Stream Strike!” Marcus roared, his greatsword crackling with electric energy as he swung it with all his might. The blade cleaved through the golem's stony exterior, the combined force of his strike and the party's efforts bringing the massive creature crashing to the ground, where it shattered into a pile of rubble.

Breathing heavily, Marcus and the others stood amidst the aftermath, sweat dripping from their faces. The rocky terrain around them was littered with the broken body parts of countless Earth Golems, while deep scars and craters marred the ground, a clear indication to the ferocity of their battle.

They were all utterly exhausted, their bodies and minds drained from the intense battles. Even Ethan, who usually held up well, was feeling the strain. His Mana reserves had dwindled significantly, and the physical and mental fatigue was beginning to take its toll. However, the rewards had been well worth the effort.

Ethan had gained numerous Earth elemental skills, greatly diversifying his already impressive arsenal.

Ethan quickly summoned the system panel, eager to make some adjustments and distribute his newly earned attribute points. The recent battles had pushed him to the next level, and he was now at level 13.

Chapter 48: Chapter 48: The Heart Of The Earth

“Status:

Name: Aengus Degaro (Ethan Smith)

Occupation: Hunter

Race: Human

Level: 13

Class: None

Age: 18 (30)

-Attributes:

Strength: 30

Agility: 27

Defense: 25

Mana: 3760/8,070

Attribute points: 5

Skills:

-Active:

– Inferno Leap -19 (D)

- Berserker's Might -5 (D)
- Azula Sword Strike -22 (E)
- Paralyzing Breath -5 (E)
- Earth Spike (E)
- Earth Wall (E)
- Earthquake Stomp (E)
- Rock Boulder (E)
- Earthen Thorny Domains (E)
- Mud Swamp (E)
- Earth Dive (E)
- Stone Bullets (E)
- Earthquake (E)

Passive:

- Blaze Guard-5 (E)
- Fire Serpent's Digestion-2 (E)
- Predator's Instinct-6 (E)
- Earth Perception-3 (E)

Special Skills:

- Monster Breeding (Level-1)
- Blood Regeneration (Level-1)

-Unique Skills:

- Appraisal (Basic)

- Skill Absorption (Mythic)
- Universal Synthesis (Ultimate)

Equipment: Holy Dragonian-blade (C)

—

Ethan quickly allocated his remaining attribute points, feeling a slight surge of power course through him. With a glance at his now extensive list of skills, a thought struck him. He could combine all his Earth elemental abilities to create something even more formidable. Without hesitation, he activated [Universal Synthesis].

“Ding!”

[Congratulations! Your skills have evolved into Earth Manipulation (D)]

Earth Manipulation: The user now possesses the ability to control and shape earth elements within certain limits.

“Nice!” Ethan exclaimed, a sense of satisfaction washing over him. He had just gained another D-Rank skill, and not just any skill—an Elemental Manipulation ability. This new power would surely make him an even greater force to be reckoned with, and he couldn’t wait to test it out.

“Guys, there is something on the ground!” Lenora shouted, her voice tinged with both excitement and curiosity. She pointed to the spot where the last Earth Golem had fallen.

Lying there amidst the rubble was a strange, heart-shaped object. Its surface was intricately patterned, with glowing runes engraved along its edges.

The heart-shaped object lay on the ground, pulsing faintly with a mysterious energy that seemed to call out to them. The room, previously filled with the echoes of their battle, fell into an eerie silence as the party gathered around the peculiar artifact.

Cedric stepped forward casually picked it up for everyone to look. Instantly the information about the object flowed through his mind as Ethan used Appraisal.

[Appraisal]

[Object: The Heart of the Earth]

[Description: Equipping it, the user will be granted Geomancer Class.]

[Geomancer, a rare class for the individual who yerns to master the earth’s essence, allowing them to manipulate terrain, summon earth-based creatures, and wield powerful

earth skills. This artifact is said to be a fragment of the original heart of the Earth Elemental King, bestowing incredible control over earth elements to its wielder.]

[Effects:]

[Class Unlock: Grants the user the Geomancer class upon equipping.]

[Mana Boost: Increases the user's maximum mana by 25%.]

[Earth Empowerment: Enhances all earth-based skills by 20%]

[Resilience: Increases defense by 15% when in contact with the ground]

[+1 Active skill Slot: Summon Earth Elemental: Allows the user to summon a powerful Earth Elemental to aid in battle once per day.]

[Warning: This artifact is bound to the first person who equips it and cannot be removed without severe consequences.]

“Oh my god!”

“We got a rare class!”

They recognised the treasure and their voices echoed in unison as they broke into a joyful dance, their excitement palpable. The sheer rarity of the class made this moment even more incredible—only one in a million hunters ever encountered such a treasure. They were nearly moved to tears, overwhelmed by their extraordinary luck.

The thrill of the moment was clear on their faces, each of them basking in the realization of just how fortunate they were.

However, Ethan remained composed. While his companions reveled in their discovery, he knew that his newly acquired skill, Earth Manipulation, offered similar capabilities. Though it lacked the ability to summon Earth Elementals as the Geomancer class promised, it was far more versatile in its application.

“I already have something close to this,” Ethan thought, his mind assessing the similarities and differences. Despite the class's undeniable power, he was confident in the unique strength and flexibility his Earth Manipulation skill provided.

As their initial excitement began to settle, the group faced an important decision—who among them would be the one to wield the Heart of the Earth?

The artifact held unimaginable power, and they knew that whoever equipped it would gain an incredible advantage. It wasn't just about gaining a new class; it was about ensuring the success of their future endeavors.

Cedric broke the silence first. "I think we should give this to Ethan. What do you guys think?" His voice was calm, but firm, reflecting the respect and trust he had for Ethan. Cedric knew that without Ethan's powerful abilities, they wouldn't have made it this far. Reaching the tenth floor of the dungeon had been a team effort, but Ethan had been their anchor.

The others nodded in agreement, understanding the logic behind Cedric's suggestion. They all had witnessed Ethan's contributions and skill firsthand. His contributions were undeniable, and many of them silently acknowledged that they owed their lives to his quick reaction and powerful abilities.

However, Marcus hesitated, his heart heavy with a mixture of admiration and envy. The prospect of obtaining a class as rare as the Geomancer was tempting beyond measure.

A class like this could propel him ahead of others, securing his place among the elite. The desire for power and recognition gnawed at him, making it hard to simply agree with the decision.

He took a deep breath, wrestling with his emotions. Yes, he wanted the class—who wouldn't? But deep down, Marcus knew that Ethan was the most deserving. Ethan had been selfless, putting the needs of the group above his own, time and time again. In those critical moments, it had been Ethan's overwhelming force that had led them to victory.

Swallowing his personal desires, Marcus finally nodded, though a trace of reluctance lingered in his expression. "Yeah... Ethan should have it. He's done so much for all of us. We wouldn't even be here without him." The others followed suit, voicing their agreement one after another.

It was clear that, despite any personal longing for the artifact, they valued their unity more. They knew that breaking apart over a single treasure would weaken them as a team—a risk they couldn't afford in their tough battles ahead.

Ethan could see the eagerness in Marcus's eyes, despite the latter's attempt to hide it. The Geomancer class was a rare and powerful class, something that could significantly boost the strength of anyone who wielded it. Yet, Ethan knew that his own path was already laid out before him, and this class, while tempting, wasn't meant for him.

"Thank you, guys, but I think Marcus should have it," Ethan said, his voice steady as he addressed the group. His words caught them off guard, their expressions shifting from surprise to confusion.

"What? Ethan, you've done more for us than anyone else," Cedric argued, his brow furrowing. "You deserve it."

Ethan shook his head with a smile. "I appreciate that, but I am not suited for this Class. I will wait for another powerful class in the future. Besides, Marcus has been putting in the work just as much as the rest of us. This class could really help him."

Marcus's eyes widened in disbelief. "Ethan, are you sure? This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Ethan nodded. "I'm sure. You'll make better use of it than I would. Besides, we're a team. Your strength is our strength."

The others looked between Marcus and Ethan, then slowly began to nod in agreement. Marcus hesitated for a moment, clearly conflicted, but the desire in his heart won out. He reached out and took the heart-shaped object from Cedric's hand, his fingers trembling slightly.

"Thank you, Ethan," Marcus said, his voice thick with emotion as he turned to others. "I won't let you guys down."

Lenora and the others smiled, acknowledging Ethan's decision with a sense of mutual respect and understanding. They knew that no matter who equipped the heart, the entire party would benefit from the increased strength.

Marcus, now holding the heart-shaped object with both hands, pressed it against his chest.

In that moment, a surge of energy coursed through him, and detailed information about his new class began to flood his mind. The connection between him and the earth deepened, making him feel more grounded and powerful than ever before.

Without hesitation, Marcus activated his newly acquired skill, [Earth Elemental]. The ground trembled beneath their feet as the rocks and earth around them began to coalesce into a massive figure.

A towering giant, nearly 5 meters tall, emerged from the earth, its body composed of solid rock. It had a massive head with two glowing eyes that radiated a faint, mystical light. Its arms were the size of tree trunks, and its legs were thick and sturdy, ready to follow any command Marcus gave.

"Damn!" Cedric exclaimed, his eyes wide with awe.

"Amazing!" Lenora added, her voice filled with excitement.

Their astonished voices echoed throughout the cave, a testament to the incredible power Marcus now wielded. The sight of the Earth Elemental standing before them, a testament to their unity and strength, filled them all with a renewed sense of purpose.

With this new power at their disposal, they felt more confident than ever in facing the challenges ahead.

Chapter 49: Chapter 49: Lava Giants

The group descended cautiously to the eleventh floor of the dungeon, their nerves on edge as the temperature spiked with every step. The oppressive heat was almost unbearable, and the air was thick with the acrid stench of sulfur.

The walls of the cavern glowed with a sinister red light, illuminated by molten lava that oozed through cracks in the stone. The ground beneath their feet was uneven, a patchwork of black rock and treacherous magma pools that threatened to consume anyone who lost their footing.

“This is hell,” Lenora muttered, her voice barely audible over the crackling of the lava. Sweat dripped down her face, her usually composed demeanor strained by the intense heat.

“I’ve been in worse places,” Cedric replied with a forced grin, though the beads of sweat on his brow betrayed his discomfort. “But I’ll admit, this is pretty damn close.”

Ethan led the group, his senses heightened as he adjusted to the sweltering environment. His Earth Manipulation skill hummed with energy, tuning into the volatile landscape around him. Despite the heat, he remained calm, his mind focused on the task ahead. He could feel the tension in the air, the subtle shifts in the earth beneath them that hinted at the dangers lurking nearby.

Marcus, now fully attuned to his Geomancer abilities, walked behind Ethan with a deep connection to the earth that was both empowering and unnerving. The Heart of the Earth, his new artifact, pulsed with energy, but the lava-tainted ground made him uneasy. The earth here was alive, but twisted—malleable and yet resistant, as if it had its own will.

“This place feels wrong,” Marcus said quietly, his eyes scanning the walls. “The earth here is...angry.” He could sense the Earth elements in the walls with his Earth Heart.

“It’s the lava,” Cedric replied, not taking his eyes off the path ahead. “It’s infused with fire, making everything unstable. We need to be careful.”

Cedric, carrying the group’s supply of potions, pulled out a vial and handed it to each member. “Fire Immunity Potions. We’ll need these to survive down here.”

Ethan shook his head, declining the potion. “I have a passive fire resistance skill . I should be fine without it.”

Lenora followed suit, her Fire Crow Bloodline granting her natural resistance to heat.
“I’m good too.”

“Ohh, okay!”

The others quickly gulped downed their potions, the liquid providing a temporary shield against the searing heat. As they moved forward into the floor, the oppressive atmosphere only grew more intense, the light from the lava casting eerie shadows that danced across the cavern walls.

Suddenly, the ground trembled, and the air filled with a deep, rumbling growl. From a nearby pool of lava, two massive figures began to rise, their bodies composed entirely of molten rock. The creatures towered over the group, their eyes glowing with a malevolent light.

“Lava Giants,” Cedric, his voice steady and alarming. “These things are no joke.

“Appraisal!” Ethan commanded in his mind.

The familiar holographic display appeared before his eyes.

[Appraisal]

[Lava Giant]

[Power Level: 17]

[Type: Elemental]

[Health: 5,000]

[Abilities:]

[Molten Punch: Delivers a devastating blow with superheated fists.]

[Lava Burst: Erupts streams of molten lava from its body, creating deadly pools of magma.]

[Magma Armor: A protective layer of hardened lava that deflects physical attacks.]

[Heat Aura: Radiates intense heat, burning anything that comes too close.]

[Weakness: Water-based attacks, Extreme cold.]

“Hmm.. My Unique Skill Appraisal is showing more info about its target now, did it level up somehow? Yep, That might be the it.” He had been using this skill frequently for a while now. But there was no indicators about its level up.”

Ethan quickly relayed the information to the group. “They’re only weak to water and cold. We need to keep our distance and hit them with everything we got.”

Marcus’s mind raced as he considered their options. His summoned Earth Elemental was by his side, reassuring him a little.

“We need to create some space,” Cedric said, taking charge. “Marcus, can you use your Earth Golem to distract one of the Lava giants? We can focus on taking them down one at a time.”

Marcus nodded, understanding the urgency in Cedric’s voice. He quickly commanded his Earth Elemental to engage the Lava Giant on the left, its massive form of rock and stone moving with surprising speed toward the towering creature of molten rock.

The two titans collided with a deafening crash, the Earth Elemental’s fists slamming into the Lava Giant’s molten body. However, the heat radiating from the Lava Giant began to melt the elemental’s rocky exterior, making it difficult for Marcus to maintain its form.

“I won’t be able to hold it for long,” Marcus warned, his voice strained from the effort of controlling the Earth Elemental in such a hostile environment. “We need to act fast.”

“Got it,” Cedric replied, already strategizing their next move. “Ethan, Yona, and I will focus on the other giant. Lenora, use your fire skills to keep it at bay with Marcus. And Iris, its time to use your buff skill.

Iris was not only a healer but also a Enhancer, who can buff others capability alongside herself.

“Okay.” Iris nodded and used her second skill: Greater Strength.

Greater Strength: A potent buff skill designed to significantly enhance the target’s physical power. This skill is often used to boost a person’s raw strength by 15%..

She casted the buff skill on everyone, one after another, consuming a significant amount of Mana points from her Reserve.

The effect of Greater Strength was immediate. The group felt a surge of power course through their bodies, their muscles tightening with newfound energy. Even in the oppressive heat, the boost in physical strength was undeniable, giving them the edge they needed in this deadly environment.

Marcus flexed his fingers, feeling the enhanced power in his grip. "Alright, let's take these Lava giants down," he said, his voice filled with renewed determination. With Iris's buff, he knew their chances of surviving this fight had just increased significantly.

The battle began in earnest.

Ethan led the charge against the second Lava Giant, his Earth Manipulation skill in overdrive as he attempted to stabilize the ground beneath them and use the rocky terrain to his advantage.

As the battle raged on, Ethan's enhanced strength allowed him to wield the Holy Dragonian Blade with incredible precision and power. The [Azula Sword Strike] cleaved through the air, its fiery trail slicing into the Lava Giant's magma armor. Each strike was more effective, chipping away at the giant's defenses and creating cracks in the hardened lava.

Cedric moved swiftly, his spear darting in and out with calculated strikes. The added strength from Iris's buff made each thrust and sweep more forceful, piercing through the Lava Giant's armor with greater efficiency. His attacks were aimed at exploiting the cracks Ethan had created, breaking through the magma armor and landing blows that forced the giant to stagger.

Yona's arrows flew true, her increased strength allowing her to draw her bow with greater force. Each arrow struck with pinpoint accuracy, targeting the exposed weak points in the Lava Giant's armor. The arrows imbued with her magic exploded upon impact, creating small but powerful bursts that further weakened the giant.

As the group concentrated their attacks on the second Lava Giant, the first Lava Giant, still engaged with Marcus's Earth Elemental, began to falter. The Earth Elemental's massive fists, though melted by the intense heat, managed to land a series of solid blows, causing the Lava Giant to lose its balance and stagger.

"I won't be able to keep this up much longer!" Marcus shouted, his face flushed with exertion. The elemental was slowly disintegrating under the relentless heat, but it had accomplished its task of distracting the Lava Giant long enough for the others to focus on their target.

"Hang in there!" Cedric called out, his spear flashing as he struck the Lava Giant's exposed joints. "We're almost done!"

The combined assault of Ethan's powerful strikes, Cedric's precise spearwork, and Yona's explosive arrows began to take their toll on the second Lava Giant. With a final, decisive strike, Cedric's spear pierced through the giant's core, causing it to collapse into a pool of molten rock.

Seeing the second Lava Giant defeated, Marcus breath a sigh of relief, and he quickly turned his attention to the first Lava Giant. The giant was now a little weakened, its magma armor cracked and unstable.

Ethan, Cedric, and Yona regrouped, their breaths coming in heavy gasps as they focused on the remaining threat. With a coordinated effort, they unleashed their most powerful attacks on the weakened Lava Giant. Ethan's blade sliced through the magma armor, Cedric's spear pierced the cracks, and Yona's arrows exploded on impact, dealing critical damage.

Finally, with a final, devastating blow from Ethan's blade, the first Lava Giant collapsed, its molten form dissipating into a smoldering pool of molten rock.

"That was intense," Cedric said, wiping sweat from his forehead. "Great job, everyone."

"Yeah," Lenora agreed, giving Iris a nod of appreciation. "Your buff skill was a big help, Iris."

Chapter 50: Chapter 50: The Final Challenge
"Ding!"

"Congratulations! You have leveled up."

"You have received 5 attribute points to distribute freely."

Current Level: 14

Ethan's heart raced as the familiar notification chimed in his mind. Another level gained, another step closer to clearing the dungeon. It had taken them another grueling day to clear floor 11th to 15th, but they had finally finished off the last of the Lava Giants. The heat of battle had been intense, but the spoils were worth the effort.

As the group gathered around the scattered loot, Ethan's attention was elsewhere. His eyes glinted with focus as he mentally reviewed the new skills he had acquired from the Lava Giants: "Molten Punch (E), Lava Explosion (E), Heat Aura (E), and Magma Armor (E)."

He could feel the potential within these skills, the raw power just waiting to be unleashed. Without hesitation, he initiated the process to synchronize them, aiming to enhance their power.

"Ding!"

[Congratulations! Your skill synthesis was successful.]

[Your skills have evolved into: Lava Juggernaut (D).]

A rush of power surged through Ethan as the new skill took form within him.

—

[Lava Juggernaut (D-Rank)]

[Type: Offensive/Defensive]

[Description: Lava Juggernaut transforms the user into an unstoppable force of molten rock and fire, granting immense power and resistance. This skill is perfect for charging through enemies and overwhelming them with sheer force.]

[Abilities:]

[Juggernaut's Charge: The user's Molten Punch evolves into a full-body charge. Covered in molten lava, the user can break through enemy lines, scattering opponents with sheer impact.]

[Explosive Rampage: With each step, the user triggers a Lava Explosion beneath their feet, leaving a trail of molten destruction.]

[Molten Juggernaut Armor: A dense layer of Magma Armor and Heat Aura surrounds the user, making their defense much tougher. The armor deflects physical attacks and burns anything that comes into contact with it.]

[Volcanic Impact: The user can release all stored energy in a massive, ground-shaking stomp, creating a wave of molten lava that knocks back enemies and deals severe damage.]

[Weakness: Lava Juggernaut excels in overwhelming force but lacks finesse and precision. The skill rapidly drains Mana and makes the user a large target for ranged attacks. It is also vulnerable to being cooled or solidified by water or ice-based skills, which can trap the user mid-charge.]

—

“Whoa! A transformation skill? Nice!” Ethan thought, grinning inwardly. The new skill was a game-changer, offering both offensive and defensive capabilities, but it came at a cost. The Mana consumption was significant, and he would need to work on increasing his Mana reserves after they exited the dungeon.

However, Ethan knew he couldn't reveal the full extent of his new abilities to his party members. Having four D-Rank skills would make anyone suspicious, perhaps even afraid of him. For now, he decided to keep his new power a secret, continuing to use

only three skills openly: Inferno Leap (D), Azula Sword Strike (E), and Paralyzing Breath (E), though the latter was used sparingly due to its limited utility.

There was also his Berserker's Might skill, a powerful but risky ability that left him vulnerable after use. He hadn't yet found a situation dire enough to justify using it.

After distributing his attribute points, Ethan and the others packed their loot-filled backpacks and headed for the exit to the 16th floor. Their spirits were lifted by the substantial rewards they had collected.

From the 16th to the 19th floor, the group faced a relentless onslaught of Stone Golems, Earth Golems, and more Lava Giants. The sheer number of enemies, each with their own unique abilities, made the battles arduous.

They took frequent breaks, rationing their supplies carefully as they fought their way through. By the time they cleared the 19th floor, their potions were depleted, and exhaustion was setting in, but they had managed to avoid any catastrophic situations.

In the midst of these battles, Ethan leveled up again, reaching level 15 and was already halfway to level 16. As he checked his status, a sense of accomplishment washed over him.

—

[Status]

[Name: Aengus Degaro (Ethan Smith)]

[Occupation: Hunter]

[Race: Human]

[Level: 15]

[Class: None]

[Age: 18 (30)]

[Strength: 34]

[Agility: 33]

[Defense: 30]

[Mana: 2980/8,070]

[Attribute Points: 0]

[Skills:]

[Active: Inferno Leap – 34 (D), Berserker’s Might- 5 (D) Earth Manipulation -2 (D), Lava Juggernaut (D), Azula Sword Strike – 30 (E), Paralyzing Breath -7 (E)]

[Passive: Blaze Guard-5 (E), Fire Serpent’s Digestion-2 (E), Predator’s Instinct-6 (E)]

[Special Skills: Monster Breeding (Level-1), Blood Regeneration (Level-1)]

[Unique Skills: Appraisal (Basic), Skill Absorption (Mythic), Universal Synthesis (Ultimate)]

[Equipment: Holy Dragonian-blade (C)]

—

Finally, they reached the 20th floor, where the ominous exit loomed before them. The air was thick with tension as they approached the final challenge, the sense of foreboding growing with each step.

“Cedric, do you know what’s waiting for us on the other side?” Ethan asked, his voice low as they moved cautiously toward the entrance to the 20th floor.

Cedric scratched his head, his brow furrowed in thought. “Honestly, I don’t know. There’s no information about it on the market. My guess is, no one has cleared this floor before. If we manage to do it, we’ll be making history.” His voice held a hint of excitement, though it was tinged with uncertainty.

Lenora, ever the voice of caution, quickly intervened. “Cedric, don’t get ahead of yourself. We don’t know what kind of monstrosity is waiting for us. We can’t rely solely on Ethan’s strength. We all need to stay sharp.”

Marcus and the others nodded in agreement, their faces set with determination as they prepared for the unknown.

The air grew denser as Ethan and his party descended into the 20th floor of the dungeon. The temperature climbed steadily, and a deep rumbling reverberated through the ground beneath their feet.

Each step felt like walking into the heart of a volcano, the heat almost unbearable, but the party pressed on, knowing that this final challenge would be their greatest test yet.

The tunnel eventually opened up into an enormous cavern, its ceiling lost in the darkness above. The walls glowed with a dull red hue, magma flowing like rivers along the rocky surfaces.

The sheer size of the chamber was daunting, and a sense of foreboding settled heavily on them as they stepped forward, their eyes scanning for any sign of the threat that awaited.

Then they saw it.

At the far end of the cavern, partially embedded in the stone, stood a colossal figure, its massive form towering over them like a mountain. The creature was nearly twenty meters tall, its body a terrifying fusion of earth and molten rock.

Huge slabs of stone formed its core, while rivers of lava pulsed through the cracks, giving it a living, breathing appearance. Its eyes glowed like twin suns, burning with an ancient fury that sent shivers down their spines.

“Oh my god. It’s... huge,” Lenora whispered, her voice barely audible over the crackling of the molten rivers around them.

Cedric swallowed hard, his earlier excitement drained away, replaced by the cold grip of fear. “That thing is a Rock Titan... and it’s infused with lava. This is way beyond anything we’ve faced before.”

Ethan’s gaze remained fixed on the titan. His heart pounded, but he forced himself to stay calm. He had faced powerful foes before, but nothing like this. Still, there was no turning back now.

[Appraisal]

[Rock Titan (Elite)]

[Power Level: 25]

[Health: 20,000]

[Abilities]

[1. Molten Core: The Rock Titan’s body is fused with lava, granting it immense heat-based attacks and high resistance to fire and physical damage. The core generates heat that can melt most metals and scorch the ground beneath it.]

[2. Lava Wave: The Rock Titan can release a devastating wave of molten lava from its core, flooding the battlefield with intense heat and molten rock. This attack is both long-range and covers a wide area, making it difficult to avoid.]

[3. Earthquake Stomp: With its massive size, the Rock Titan can cause localized earthquakes by stomping the ground. This attack destabilizes the terrain, causing cracks and fissures, and can knock down or trap opponents.]

[4. Magma Burst: The Titan can create geysers of molten rock erupting from the ground at will, targeting enemies from below. This ability is particularly dangerous in close combat as it can catch opponents off-guard.]

[5. Lava Shield: The Titan can encase itself in a protective barrier of molten lava, greatly increasing its defense and burning anything that comes into contact with it. While the shield is active, the Titan's offensive capabilities are somewhat reduced.]

[6. Rage of the Titan: When the Rock Titan's health drops below a certain threshold, it enters a berserk state, increasing its power and speed significantly while also becoming more reckless. In this state, the Titan can rapidly cycle through its abilities with increased ferocity, though its defenses are slightly lowered.]

—

The realization of what they were up against settled in. This was no ordinary boss; it was a true force of nature. They would have to use every ounce of their strength, strategy, and teamwork to survive this battle.

Ethan tightened his grip on his sword, feeling the threat it conveyed.

Chapter 51: Chapter 51: The Final Challenge (2)

Iris swiftly began casting her buff skills on the party, enveloping each member in a protective aura that bolstered their strength, agility, and resilience.

Though they felt the surge in power, it wasn't enough to fully calm their nerves.

"Any strategy, Cedric?" Ethan asked urgently, his gaze locked on the colossal figure before them. The ground quaked as the Rock Titan began to move, its every step sending tremors through the cavern walls.

Cedric glanced at the looming behemoth, his usually composed demeanor betraying a flicker of panic. "Strategy?" he echoed, his voice strained. "No strategy is going to work against this thing. We have to throw everything we've got at it, or we're done for." His eyes frantically scanned the chamber for any advantage.

But the sheer size and intensity of the Rock Titan made approaching it nearly impossible. The heat radiating from its molten core was far more intense than anything they had encountered with the Lava Giants, making their previous battles seem almost trivial in comparison.

The Rock Titan towered above them, easily four times the size of the Lava Giants they had fought before. Its body was a fortress of hardened rock and magma, each movement grinding stone against stone with a thunderous roar that echoed through the cavern. The air around it shimmered with unbearable heat, distorting the space as if the creature itself were warping reality.

Cedric's words sent a wave of unease through the group. Fear gripped them as the gravity of their situation sank in.

"What do we do now?" someone murmured, their voice quivering with panic.

Ethan could feel the tension rising, threatening to break the team's resolve. He knew hesitation could be fatal. With a heavy sigh, he stepped forward, determination hardening in his eyes. If they were going to survive this encounter, someone needed to take charge, and it was clear the others were too paralyzed by fear to do so.

"I'll take the lead," Ethan declared, his voice cutting through the rising panic. He knew that defeating the Rock Titan would require more than just the skills he had openly shown. It would demand the revelation of some of his hidden abilities, ones he had kept secret to avoid alarming the others.

But there was no other choice. If they were to emerge victorious, he would need to reveal a part of himself that he had kept in the shadows.

Ethan closed his eyes for a brief moment, mentally steeling himself for the battle ahead.

"Stay back and support me from a distance," Ethan instructed, opening his eyes as fiery determination blazed within them. "I'll draw its attention and weaken it. When the time is right, you all will strike together."

Marcus and the others found Ethan's courage commendable.

"Alright, Ethan. Just... be careful," Cedric sighed. They knew they had no choice but to rely on him, recognizing he was their most capable member.

"Ethan, please retreat if it becomes too much for you," Lenora called out from behind, her snake-like eyes filled with concern. She watched Ethan's unyielding back, committing this moment to memory forever.

Ethan felt a surge of energy as he prepared to unleash the Lava Juggernaut skill. The heat around him intensified, but it was nothing compared to the force he was about to release. He knew that once he activated the transformation, there would be no turning back. This was the moment that would determine their survival.

But before activating Lava Juggernaut, he decided to first use Berserker's Might to amplify his power further.

Instantly, the transformation began...

“Berserker’s Might,” Ethan murmured, as his eyes turned red, feeling a surge of raw power flood his body. His muscles bulged, his senses sharpened, and a primal energy filled him with the urge to charge headlong into battle. The world seemed to slow around him as his mind focused solely on the Titan before him.

Without hesitation, he layered the second skill on top of the first.

“Lava Juggernaut (D),” he overlapped, and immediately, his body began to glow with intense heat. His skin hardened into a layer of molten rock, glowing with fiery veins that pulsed with power. His entire form seemed to expand, becoming a juggernaut of lava and stone, ready to meet the Rock Titan head-on.

His size surged to an imposing 7 meters, and a sense of near invincibility coursed through him. With his fiery vision locked onto the Rock Titan, Ethan prepared to strike.

“Oh Lord! What kind of skill is Ethan using?” Iris gasped, witnessing the incredible transformation unfold before her eyes.

Marcus was equally stunned, though a spark of excitement lit up his expression. “Amazing! A transformation skill! But why does it resemble those Lava Giants?”

Cedric and the others watched in awe, a collective realization dawning on them—Ethan was far more unfathomable than they had ever imagined, cloaked in layers of mystery they hadn’t begun to unravel.

Lenora’s eyes were glued to the scene, her Ember’s Eyes revealing the full extent of Ethan’s abilities. She could see the fine details others couldn’t, understanding that Ethan had seamlessly used two powerful skills in rapid succession.

This revelation meant that Ethan didn’t just have four active skills as they had previously believed; he had far more hidden beneath the surface.

The Rock Titan, sensing the shift in power, turned its massive head toward Ethan, its molten eyes narrowing in recognition of the threat. With a roar that shook the cavern, it began to move, each step a cataclysmic event that sent shockwaves through the ground.

Ethan, now fully transformed into the Lava Juggernaut, felt no fear. He was ready.

The Rock Titan sent a Lava wave toward him, while moving its massive body forward.

Ethan's magma-armored body stood unhindered and charged forward with Juggernaut Charge. His body became a blazing projectile as he rammed into the Titan's side with full force.

"Boom!"

The impact sent a shockwave through the cavern, and for the first time, the Titan staggered, molten rock flying off its body from the sheer force.

But the Titan was far from defeated. It recovered quickly, its eyes glowing with rage as it unleashed a concentrated fire attack from its core. A torrent of blazing fire hurtled toward Ethan from close range.

"Earth Wall!"

Ethan used Earth Manipulation to block the fire attack. The two collided, destroying the earth in mere seconds, but it weakened the attack completely, which was then deflected by Ethan's body armor alone.

Then the creature raised its legs and used Earthquake Stomp with its sheer weight alone.

The ground rumbled as it sent a shockwave causing Ethan to be off balance.

The Rock Titan moved its massive fists for crushing Ethan into dust.

Ethan, ever alert, made some distance between them and then activated [Inferno Leap] while overlapping it with Juggernaut Charge.

Like a small meteor, Ethan's body collided with its body with incredible force, sending it backward against the wall. It struggled to move while its defensive abilities were all broken upon impact.

Ethan still didn't stop attacking, knowing full well that his health was remaining by a large amount. It could recover and charge at him again.

So, he continued his relentless assaults as he got on top of the Rock Titan.

With a roar of his own, Ethan activated Explosive Rampage, triggering a series of Lava Explosions beneath his feet as he charged again. The ground beneath him erupted in flames and molten rock, creating a path of destruction that further weakened the Titan's defenses.

Ethan's movements were swift and precise, each blow calculated to inflict maximum damage. The Titan, despite its size and strength, was being overwhelmed by the sheer ferocity of Ethan's assault.

But the battle was far from over. The Rock Titan, fueled by its ancient rage, mustered its remaining strength and triggered Rage of the Titan ability, instantly sending Ethan's large body into the air with a shockwave.

Then it sent Lava bursts from its molten core, targeting Ethan in mid-air.

Realizing the danger, Ethan quickly used Molten Juggernaut Armor, a dense layer of magma and heat aura enveloping his body. The armor deflected the molten pillars, but the force of the attack still pushed him back, his movements slowing under the relentless assault.

The Titan, sensing a moment of weakness, raised its massive arm for a final, crushing blow. Ethan, however, was not finished. He still had one more card to play.

As the Titan's arm descended, Ethan channeled all the remaining energy within him into a single, devastating attack. He activated Volcanic Impact, releasing the stored energy in a massive, ground-shaking stomp. The resulting shockwave sent a tidal wave of molten lava surging forward, crashing into the Titan with the force of an erupting volcano.

"Guulu... Growl..."

A guttural growl rumbled through the floor as the Titan's agonized cries echoed in the cavern. Its massive 20-meter-long body was now riddled with cracks, a shattered mess of stone and rubble.

"Finish it off, guys," Ethan said weakly, deactivating his skills and succumbing to a period of weakness. He wanted to give them a chance to earn some experience points as well. The Rock Titan was no longer a threat.

Chapter 52: Chapter 52: Level: 17

His shocked party members quickly regained their composure, exchanging glances filled with admiration and respect for Ethan. They nodded in agreement and moved to finish off the Rock Titan, feeling a deep sense of gratitude. Although they knew they hadn't truly earned this victory, they were taken the opportunity in order to stand beside him as equals in the future. If only possible that is.

However, before joining the others, Lenora rushed to Ethan's side to check on him.

"Ethan, are you alright?" she asked, her pretty face etched with worry.

Ethan smiled reassuringly. "Yeah, I'm fine. No need to worry. Go and join them."

"But..." Lenora hesitated, her concern evident.

Ethan's expression grew stern. "No buts. Go."

Reluctantly, Lenora nodded and went to join the others, though she kept glancing back at him with concern as she walked away.

Ethan watched her actions and shook his head. "This little girl!"

After a while, as the dust settled and the echoes of the Rock Titan's final cries faded into silence, the cavern returned to an eerie stillness. The only sound was the labored breathing of Ethan and his companions, each of them trying to comprehend the magnitude of what they had just accomplished.

"Ding!"

"Congratulations! You have leveled up."

"Congratulations! You have leveled up."

"You have received 10 attribute points to distribute freely."

"Nice!" Ethan exclaimed as he reached level 17. The level up notification was really soothing to his eyes, because these attribute points makes his body stronger little by little. They strengthen the vessel where all those Mana were kept, and skill engraved on the soul. Otherwise, if they used such powerful skills without strengthening the vessel, they would had been crushed long ago because of their own skill's drawback.

Ethan's party members stood in awe as they processed the aftermath of the battle. The notifications of their level-ups chimed in their minds, signaling not just an increase in strength but also a validation of their efforts.

Each member felt the rush of power that came with their hard-earned experience, but they knew deep down that it was Ethan's overwhelming might that had secured their victory.

Ethan quickly allocated his 10 attribute points, feeling the familiar sensation of his body becoming stronger, more resilient. The level-up notification was more than just a reward—it was a reminder of how far he had come and how much further he could push himself. The extra strength would fortify his body, allowing him to wield even more power without fear of the physical toll.

[Level: 17]

[Strength: 37]

[Agility: 36]

[Defense: 34]

As he finished, he glanced at his companions, who were still marveling at their own advancements. He checked and found out that they had powered up by 4-5 levels since they started grinding in this dungeon. It was really a significant progress to them, when they were stuck at a bottleneck.

Lenora, who had been reluctant to leave his side earlier, was now engaged in animated conversation with Iris and Marcus, discussing the significance of their achievement of conquering the dungeon.

Ethan couldn't help but smile as he found joy seeing them so excited. Only then he felt truly alive.

"Ethan," Lenora called out, her voice breaking through his thoughts. She approached him with a smile. "We've all leveled up, but I think it's time we started thinking about what comes next. We've got some spoils from the Titan's drop, but we need to figure out how to distribute them."

Cedric and others also approached holding the spoils in their hand.

Ethan looked at the glowing treasure with intrigue.

Skill Books:

1. Lava Shield (D)
2. Earthquake Stomp (D)
3. Lava Wave (D)
4. Rage of the Titan (D)

Items:

1. Rock Titan's Armour (D) (Physical)
2. Titan's Ring (D).

Among the spoils, there were also three Mana orbs of varying grades.

After some discussion, they distributed the spoils and skills. Since they had all reached level 20 and gained a new empty skill slot, the new gained D-Rank skills would be

especially useful for them. They were eager to fill their slots with these newly acquired skill books.

Marcus chose the Earthquake Stomp skill, while Lenora took the Lava Shield. Iris, not finding a suitable skill, claimed the Titan's Ring to further boost her magical abilities. Cedric opted for the Rock Titan's Armor, fitting his close combat style. Ethan acquired the best skill: Rage of the Titan. Lastly, Yona, finding no other choice, temporarily took the Lava Wave skill.

These skills weren't permanent like bloodline skills—they could be replaced at any time.

Ethan quickly equipped the skill, and looked at skill's description feeling more confident than ever.

"Passive- Rage of the Titan (D): When the user's health falls below 30%, it activates automatically, increasing user's overall power by 200%.

It was lifesaver skill, which can be proven very useful at critical times of life and death. It was similar to Berserker's Might skill, but not completely.

Ethan also got a Mana Orb as a share. It was D-Grade and he quickly absorbed it, increasing his Mana Reserve by 120 points.

His party members also did the same and glanced at him as if they were watching something incomprehensible.

Despite not reaching level 20 like them, he casually equipped another D-Rank skill so casually. They labeled him as 'Monster' in their mind.

Ethan shrugged, understanding It's was inevitable.

After a while, Ethan and his party were expelled from the dungeon in a flash, instantly reappearing outside. The warm sunlight contrasted sharply with the dark, cavernous depths they'd just left behind.

They expected to be greeted by the familiar sights of the forest and the distant chirping of birds, but what met their eyes was far more horrifying, making their blood freeze.

Scattered across the rocky terrain were countless bodies, some half-devoured, others dismembered beyond recognition. The ground was slick with blood, and the air was thick with the stench of death and decay. The once serene forest had been transformed into a grotesque tableau of carnage.

A silence fell over the group, their triumphant smiles fading into expressions of shock and horror. Iris let out a small gasp, her hand instinctively flying to her mouth to stifle a scream.

Cedric's eyes widened in disbelief, while Marcus gripped the hilt of his sword so tightly that his knuckles turned white. Leonora stood frozen, her previous excitement drained from her face, replaced with a look of dread.

Their reaction was understandable considering they have never seen such a massacre of human before.

Ethan, however, remained calmed. His eyes scanned the scene, quickly assessing the situation. His years of experience from his previous life had hardened him, although the site human dead bodies were a little grotesque, he felt nothing else. He himself had killed one human before.

"What happened here? Is this another attack from the demons?" Iris asked, her voice tinged with panic.

"No, this isn't the work of demons," Ethan replied, examining the bodies. "Judging by their injuries, it looks like they were attacked by some kind of ferocious beasts."

"Ferocious beasts?" Marcus questioned, doubtful. "But the wilderness is far from the city, how did they enter in the city? And what about the city walls?"

As they pondered his questions, a sense of foreboding settled over them. Something was definitely wrong in the city. Ominous premonitions gripped their hearts as they began to worry about their families and friends. The earlier jovial mood was replaced by deep-seated fear.

They hurriedly searched for any means of transportation to reach their district, but found none. Every vehicle was broken, their drivers lying dead nearby.

"Screech!"

Suddenly, a sharp cry pierced the air as a Griffin swooped down from the sky.

Their attention snapped upwards as they watched the Griffin land swiftly before them. A middle-aged man, dressed in the official attire of the city government, dismounted and hurriedly approached, specifically kneeling before Lenora.

"My lady, thank the heavens you're safe. My Lord is extremely worried about you. I need to take you to his side immediately!" the man said urgently, his tone serious.

"Wilbert?" While the others were surprised, Lenora recognized the middle-aged man immediately. He was one her father's trusted men.

She asked anxiously, "What's happened, Wilbert? Is my father alright?"

Wilbert stood up and replied, "He's fine, but the city isn't. The city is under siege from a beast rampage, escalated by the demons. Let's go, my lady, we don't have time."

"But... my friends..." Lenora hesitated, glancing at her companions.

"Don't worry about us, Lenora. We'll be fine," her friends reassured her, understanding the urgency of the situation. The revelation of her noble background was clear to them now, but this wasn't the time to dwell on it.

Ethan also urged her to go, and after a moment of hesitation, Lenora climbed onto the Griffin gracefully, holding tightly onto its feathers.

Before departing, Wilbert glanced down at the group and said, "Little fellas, you should head to the relief camps if you don't find your families at home safe." With that final piece of advice, he ordered the Griffin to take off, soaring swiftly into the sky.

However, Wilbert's last piece of advice couldn't make the situation any worse, their anxiety grew more while thinking about their loved one's safety.

Chapter 53: Chapter 53: Perfect Use of Earth Manipulation

Observing their worried glances, Ethan felt a sudden inspiration spark within him. Despite the tension lingering in the air, he couldn't help but think of a way to lighten the mood and surprise his teammates. An idea formed in his mind, one that was both creative and entirely unexpected given their circumstances.

With a smirk, Ethan activated his Earth Manipulation skill, his hands moving with practiced ease as he began to shape the earth beneath him. The ground rumbled softly as the raw material gathered, molding and twisting under his control. Slowly, a lustrous and polished structure began to take form, emerging from the rough stone and dirt.

Before long, the shape became clear. A modern-day car, crafted entirely from strong and sturdy earth elements. The surface was smooth, glistening under the bright sunlight that filtered into the cavern.

Its design was sleek and shiny, with polished curves and sharp lines that made it stand out amidst the rugged environment. The car, despite being made of earth, looked almost lifelike, as if it had just rolled off an assembly line.

"Nice!" Ethan exclaimed, stepping back to admire his handiwork. The creation looked surprisingly realistic, a perfect blend of practicality and imagination.

The others stared in astonishment, their eyes wide with disbelief and curiosity. The sudden appearance of such a strange structure, especially in a place like this, left them momentarily speechless.

“Huh! What’s this thing, Ethan?” Marcus asked, his voice filled with both awe and confusion as he approached the car, running his hand along its smooth surface. Iris, Cedric, and Yona gathered around as well, their earlier tension replaced by a sense of wonder.

Ethan paused, a thoughtful expression crossing his face as he considered how to explain his creation. He realized that in this world, the concept of a car was completely foreign to them, a relic from his past life that had no real equivalent here.

“It’s called a car,” he began, choosing his words carefully. “In the place I come from, it’s a vehicle used for transportation. People would sit inside it and drive to different places, much faster and more comfortably than walking or riding a horse carriage.”

Their faces lit up with fascination as they tried to imagine such a thing. “You mean this... ‘car’ could move on its own?” Iris asked, her voice tinged with excitement.

Ethan nodded, a smile playing on his lips. “Correct, but not completely. It was powered by something called an engine, which ran on fuel. But here, I just used Mana to power it up. However, its Mana consumption is really high.”

Fortunately, he had the proper knowledge how a engine works, that’s why he was able to make it, though it was not perfect.

He replaced the fuel section to run it by Mana alone. Mana could be said raw energy here, it could be used on various sections. Just a few slight modifications, and it was ready.

Ethan quickly showed how to enter and sit on the back while explaining various functions. They nodded in understanding and put their seatbelts on.

Ethan hurriedly went the driver seat and started the car with a deafening roar. Mana flowed from his hand, channeling enegy to the car to move.

Ethan sped up, understanding everyone’s urgency, while crossing numerous rocky terrains and long trees with precise control.

They were impressed by the speed of the strange vehicles, while marveling Ethan’s side profile, full of focus.

They enjoyed the outside view through the opened window, putting their mind at a little ease.

—

After several minutes of travel, they began to approach the outskirts of the city. The sight that greeted them was far from what they had expected. The towering walls of the

city, which had once stood as a symbol of protection and safety, were now cracked and crumbling. Large sections of the wall had been completely destroyed, leaving gaping holes through which the wild forest could be seen.

Ethan's expression grew serious as they neared the city's perimeter. "It's worse than I thought," he muttered, his grip on the wheel tightening as he thought of Emily and Innkeeper Greta's safety.

The others fell silent as they took in the devastation. The city, once bustling with life, now seemed eerily quiet. The streets were deserted, and the only movement came from the occasional flutter of torn banners in the wind. The air was thick with the stench of smoke and ash, a grim reminder of the recent battle that had taken place.

"So, guys, do you want to part here and look for your own family and friends by yourself? Or should we move together to search them one by one?" Ethan asked breaking the silence.

Cedric and others pondered and answered, "I think the first option would be great. In that way, we could search for them more efficiently."

"Yeah, I also think so," Marcus added.

Everyone agreed with the plan and got of the car while taking their backpacks.

However, Iris didn't move, and neither do Ethan. Ethan looked at her perplexed, and Iris answered in return, "Ethan, please help me find my family. I am actually a little scared." She said while shivering.

Ethan noticed the vulnerability in Iris's voice and saw the anxiety written on her face. He gave her a reassuring smile, his earlier seriousness softening. "Of course, Iris," he said gently. "We'll find your family together. You're not alone."

Iris didn't have any individual fighting capabilities, which could be very dangerous amidst this crisis of uncertainties. So he decided to help her while feeling pity.

The rest of the group, already gathering their belongings and preparing to head off in different directions, paused for a moment, catching the quiet exchange. Marcus, Cedric, and Yona exchanged brief, understanding glances before turning back to Ethan.

"Yes, Ethan, please help Iris find her family," cedric said looking at Iris.

"No problem. Stay safe, everyone," Ethan replied to the group as they began to disperse. "If anything critical happens, head to the relief camps. We will regroup there."

His tone carried the weight of responsibility, but also a confidence that seemed to bolster the spirits of his teammates.

“Same to you, Ethan,” Marcus replied, his voice filled with resolve. “We’ll find them and meet you at the camp.” With that, they each set off into the city, moving with a mix of urgency and caution.

Ethan turned his attention back to Iris, who was clutching her bag tightly, her eyes scanning the broken walls and desolate streets.

“Let’s get going,” he said softly, leading the way as they moved deeper into the city. The makeshift car behind them dissolved into earth particles as it was made for temporary use. He had to use a lot of Mana to maintain its form thus far.

As they walked, the devastation around them became more apparent. Buildings that once stood tall were now reduced to rubble, and the silence of the streets was almost oppressive. Ethan kept a watchful eye on their surroundings, his senses heightened as they navigated through the debris.

“Iris,” Ethan began after a few moments of silence, his voice low but steady. “Do you have any idea where your family might be? A place they might go to for safety?”

Iris blinked her big eyes as she pondered and hesitated, her eyes distant as she thought. “They might have gone to the old house on the outskirts near the Verdant River,” she said finally. “It’s a bit secluded, and we always considered it a safe place.”

Ethan nodded. “We’ll start from there, then. Stay close to me.”

Iris nodded and stepped closer, feeling secured by his presence. She looked at him gratefully and continued on their journey.

Ethan and Iris set off towards the outskirts of the city, heading in the direction of the Verdant River. As they navigated the broken streets, Ethan kept his senses alert, guiding Iris through the desolate terrain.

After a while, they encountered a ferocious beast called Shadowfang Wolf.

The Shadowfang Wolf emerged from the shadows of a crumbling building, its eyes glowing with a predatory hunger. Standing slightly taller than Ethan and Iris, its dark, black fur bristled with menace, and its razor-sharp fangs gleamed as it snarled, revealing a mouth full of deadly teeth.

The beast’s powerful muscles rippled beneath its fur, and its movements were both graceful and intimidating, like a dark wraith prowling through the ruins.

Ethan instinctively moved in front of Iris, his hand tightening around the hilt of his sword.

[Appraisal]

[Shadowfang Wolf]

[Power Level: 17]

[Health: 1,000]

[Abilities:]

[Shadow Step: Allows the wolf to move swiftly through shadows, becoming nearly invisible and reappearing at will.]

[Razor Claws: Enhanced claws that can slice through most materials with ease.]

[Regeneration: The wolf can heal minor wounds rapidly, making it difficult to wear down in prolonged combat.]

Despite its impressive abilities Ethan was unmoved, clearly confident in his abilities.

As the wolf lunged at him, he casually swung his sword, severing the wolf's head cleanly with swift motion.

While Iris sighed in relief, Ethan approached the dead body and used Skill Absorption, finding its abilities interesting.

[Congratulations! You have acquired a new active skill: Shadow Step (E).]

[Congratulations! You have acquired a new active skill: Razor Claws (E).]

[Congratulations! You have acquired a new passive skill: Health Regeneration (E).]

Chapter 54: Chapter 54: Finding Iris's Family

After a little bit of walking and sprinting, the duo neared the Verdant River bank, their breaths steady and their senses alert. The sound of the flowing water grew louder with each step, mingling with the rustle of leaves and the soft crunch of gravel beneath their feet.

As they moved forward, following Iris's direction, a small wooden house gradually came into view. The structure was modest, nestled between the trees and partially hidden by the overgrown vegetation that had begun to reclaim the area. It looked worn by time, with patches of moss clinging to the wooden planks, but it was still standing—a beacon of hope amidst the devastation.

Iris's eyes lit up with excitement as she spotted the old house, recognizing it instantly. Her heart quickened with a mix of anticipation and relief, seeing that it was completely intact despite the chaos that had befallen the surrounding area.

The duo picked up their pace, their footsteps quickening as they approached the house. The closer they got, the more Iris's emotions swirled inside her. She had been so worried about what they might find—or not find—but now, standing just a few steps from the door, she allowed herself a glimmer of hope.

They arrived at the front door, which was shut tight from the inside. Iris hesitated for a moment, her hand hovering over the wood as a flood of memories and fears rushed through her. What if they weren't inside? What if something had happened to them?

Her heart felt like it was stuck in her throat, pounding with anticipation and fear. But she forced herself to move, to act, to find out the truth that waited just beyond the door.

"Knock! Knock!" Iris rapped on the door, trying to calm her racing nerves. The sound echoed in the stillness of the moment, each knock a plea for an answer, for reassurance.

For a moment, there was silence. Then, slowly, the door creaked open just a crack, enough to reveal the small head of a child peeking out cautiously. The little girl's eyes, wide with apprehension, scanned the surroundings before they landed on Iris.

"Iris sister!" the girl exclaimed, flinging the door wide open and rushing forward to embrace her.

Iris knelt down, tears of relief welling up in her eyes as she wrapped her arms around the child. "Luna, you're safe!" she whispered, her voice trembling with emotion.

Ethan stood back, giving them a moment as Iris held her sister tightly. He could feel the tension in the air dissolve, replaced by the warmth of a long-awaited reunion.

"Luna, where are the others? Are Mom and Dad inside?" Iris asked gently, pulling back just enough to look at her sister's face.

Luna nodded quickly, wiping away her own tears with the back of her hand. "Yes, they're all here. We were so scared when everything started happening, but we stayed together like you said we should. Mom and Dad didn't want to leave the house because it felt safe here."

Iris let out a shaky breath, relief washing over her. "Thank the stars," she murmured, standing up and taking Luna's hand. "Let's go inside. I want to see them."

Luna led the way, pulling Iris into the house. As they entered, Ethan followed behind, his eyes scanning the small but sturdy wooden structure. The interior was simple, with a

few pieces of well-worn furniture and a fire crackling in the hearth, casting a warm glow over the room.

Iris's parents were seated by the fire, their old wrinkly faces lined with worry and exhaustion. But as soon as they saw Iris, their expressions shifted to disbelief, then overwhelming relief.

"Iris!" her mother cried out, rushing forward to embrace her daughter. Her father followed closely behind, wrapping them both in his arms. It was a scene of love and reunion that tugged at Ethan's heartstrings, reminding him of his lack of own family to return to. Then, Emily and Innkeeper Geeta's face came to his mind, reminding him that he should find them soon.

For a few moments, the room was filled with the sound of happy tears and whispered reassurances. Ethan stood quietly near the door, watching the scene unfold with a gentle smile.

After a while, Iris pulled back slightly, looking around at her family. "I was so worried about you all," she said, her voice still thick with emotion. "But I knew you'd be safe here."

Her father, a 45 years hunchbacked old man, nodded, his hand resting on her shoulder. Despite being at their forties, their hair turned grey and face wrinkled due to poverty and tension for their daughter's safety all day long.

"Daughter, we didn't know what to do at first, but staying here seemed like the best option. We've been waiting and hoping that you'd come back to us."

Iris glanced back at Ethan, who gave her an encouraging nod. She turned back to her family and said, "Mom, Dad, This is Ethan. He's been helping me search for you. I wouldn't have made it here without him."

Her parents looked over at Ethan, gratitude shining in their eyes. "Thank you, Child," her mother said softly. "Thank you for bringing our daughter back to us."

Ethan shook his head modestly. "I'm just glad I could help. Iris is strong, and she was determined to find you. I just tagged along." he said this to reassure them further.

Luna, who had been clinging to Iris's side, looked up at Ethan with wide eyes. "Are you a hero, Mister?" she asked innocently.

Ethan chuckled, kneeling down to meet Luna's gaze. "I don't know about that," he said with a grin. "But I'm here to help, just like your sister."

Luna smiled brightly, her earlier fear completely gone. "But, You're a hero to me," she declared, earning a soft laugh from everyone in the room.

“Haha..”

As the warmth of the reunion settled over them, Ethan stood up and addressed Iris’s parents. “Uncle and aunt, I think you shouldn’t stay here any longer. This place is also not safe anymore. We have encountered a ferocious beast on the way here. Moreover, the city walls have also collapsed. We need take you to the main district to Safety.”

Iris’s father nodded solemnly. “You’re right, son. We’ve heard the sounds of battles in the distance. We knew It’s not safe here for long. But, we wanted to wait a little more for Iris to arrive.” (AN: Here ‘son’ indicates an affectionate address)

Ethan’s eyes met Iris’s, and she gave him a grateful smile. “Thank you, Ethan. For everything.”

Ethan nodded, feeling a sense of fulfillment. “Let’s take a moment to rest, then we’ll make our move.”

The atmosphere inside the small house was one of relief and gratitude, the kind that only comes after surviving a harrowing ordeal. As Iris’s family settled back into the warmth of their home, the tension that had been weighing on them for days began to lift. The fire’s gentle crackling filled the room, providing a soothing backdrop to the reunion.

Iris’s mother began preparing a simple meal, her hands moving with practiced ease as she worked. The aroma of warm broth and freshly baked bread soon wafted through the air, adding to the feeling of comfort that now permeated the house.

Ethan watched the scene unfold with a soft smile. He was glad to see Iris with her family again, safe and sound. But his thoughts couldn’t help but drift back to his own closed Ones. The faces of Emily and Innkeeper Greta flashed in his mind, reminding him of the connections he had formed in this new world.

“Should he head there alone? But, what about Iris’s family?” He sighed and decided to wait a little before departing with her family as soon as possible.

As they sat down to eat, Iris’s father, now more composed, turned to Ethan with a serious expression. “Son, you’ve done more for us than we can ever repay. But I have to ask—what’s happening out there? The sounds we’ve heard, the tremors... It felt like the world was coming apart.”

Ethan took a deep breath, considering how much to reveal. He didn’t want to alarm them more than necessary, but they deserved the truth. “The city has been under attack by a beast rampage,” he began, choosing his words carefully. “Ferocious Beasts, the likes of which most people have never seen, have breached the walls. The situation is

dire, but there are still places of safety. The main district is one of them, and that's where we need to go."

Iris's mother looked worried, her hands pausing over the food she was serving. "And, will we be safe there?" she asked, her voice trembling slightly.

Ethan met her gaze with calm reassurance. "Aunty, It's safer than staying here. The main district should be fortified, and many people are gathering there for protection. We need to move soon, while we still have a clear path.

On the other hand, Iris hurriedly began to pack their belongings with the help of her little sister Luna.

Iris's father nodded in agreement, his face full of urgency. "Alright, son, We'll go as soon as we're prepared. We can't afford to wait any longer. You might also have a family to take care of." Her father already heard about their exploit in the dungeon and his daughter's progress, and how Ethan directly came here to help them first, without caring about anything else.

Her father was just a ordinary farmer, not having talent to awaken his system, unfortunately. Otherwise, they wouldn't have to rely on others save them. But, what could they do? Fate had made a cruel joke out of them. Even their firstborn son had died in an unfortunate accident at the tender age of 16, leaving them solely rely on their daughter for the living."

Chapter 55: Chapter 55: Settling Them In

As they stepped outside, the late afternoon sun filtered through the trees, casting long shadows across the ground. The air was thick with the scent of earth and foliage, mingled with the faint hint of smoke—a reminder that the peaceful moment they had just shared inside was only a brief reprieve from the chaos outside.

Ethan, sensing the urgency of their situation, quickly conjured a car using his Earth Manipulation Skill. With a few practiced gestures, he crafted a vehicle sturdy enough to comfortably seat five people, its structure formed from the earth itself.

Iris's parents and Luna stared in awe at the vehicle before them, their eyes wide with wonder. The concept of such a thing was entirely foreign to them, unlike anything they had ever seen. As Iris gently guided her family toward the car, she explained its purpose, her voice calm and reassuring.

"This will take us to safety," she said, helping them climb inside. "Ethan created it so we can move quickly and avoid any danger."

The family of four quickly settled into the back seats, though Luna couldn't help but grumble as she squirmed on the hard, rocky seats. "It's so uncomfortable," she complained, trying to find a softer spot while moving her small butt.

Ethan, hearing her, glanced back with a light-hearted smile. "Sorry about that, Luna. I can't exactly create soft mattresses out here, but I promise it's better than walking on foot."

Luna pouted for a moment but eventually settled in, understanding the necessity of their situation. Her parents exchanged a grateful look with Ethan, silently thanking him for his quick thinking and resourcefulness.

Once everyone was secure, Ethan focused on the path ahead. With a deep breath, he channeled his Mana into the car, bringing it to life. The vehicle began to move smoothly, carrying them away from the small wooden house and back into the thick of the forest.

As they traveled, the landscape around them shifted, the shadows deepening as the sun dipped lower in the sky. Along the way, they encountered various fierce beasts, creatures that prowled the forest in search of prey. But each time, Ethan skillfully avoided them, accelerating the car with a surge of Mana, the vehicle responding instantly to his will.

The car sped through the rough terrain, the tires, formed from compressed earth, started rolling over rocks and roots with ease. Ethan's focus remained sharp, his senses attuned to the slightest hint of danger. He knew that he couldn't underestimate the fierce beasts, because among them there could be high level beast as well.

If that happens, he would struggle to face it head-on while trying to protect them. The commotion could even attract more beasts to their location. So, it's best to avoid them whenever possible.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, they began to see signs of civilization—the emergency walls of the main district where they could find shelter from the dangers.

Atop the walls, a few guard posts were strategically placed for security. Even the slightest hint of danger would prompt them to alert the entire city immediately.

As an unfamiliar vehicle approached the entrance, one of the guards cast a curious glance. Feeling a bit uneasy, he nudged his companion.

"Hey, George, look at that!"

"What is it?" George turned to see what had caught his fellow guard's attention.

They both watched as several commoners stepped out of the strange vehicle, which promptly dissolved into the ground.

Ethan and the others gathered their belongings and made their way toward the gate.

“Halt!” George’s voice rang out from the top of the wall, firm and commanding.

Instantly, everyone froze in their tracks just before the imposing metal gate.

Sensing their wariness, Ethan quickly spoke up. “Peace! We’re just seeking shelter, nothing more.”

The two guards seemed relaxed and asked, “If you seek refuge, then show some credentials of your identity.” They said to cast away their suspicions. They heard rumours that some high ranking demons could even disguise themselves as humans nowadays, which made them extra alert.

Ethan and Iris quickly showed their hunter badges as credentials and the guards examined them by using a device that could detect if it true or false.

They found the badges real, both of them are original E-Rank hunters.

“Alright, you may enter. Your strength maybe be needed in the near future.”

They opened the gate letting them enter inside. As soon as they crossed the gate, they saw various shelter camps in the distance.

They continued forward, realising that was their destination next.

As they arrived at the campsite, they were greeted with a bustling scene. The camp sprawled out before them, a patchwork of tents and makeshift shelters that housed thousands of refugees. The atmosphere was crowded with the murmur of voices, a low hum of despair and hope mingled together as people sought refuge from the chaos that had upended their lives.

The camp was enormous, with rows upon rows of tents neatly arranged in columns. Some were large enough to accommodate entire families, while others were small, barely providing enough space for a single person. The tents varied in color and material, some made of sturdy canvas while others appeared to be hastily constructed from tarps and blankets.

Ethan led Iris, her parents, and Luna through the camp, their steps slow as they took in the sight before them. They passed by clusters of people huddled together, some tending to the injured while others prepared simple meals over open fires. The scent of burning wood and cooking food filled the air, mingling with the faint tang of sweat and fear.

Children ran about, their faces streaked with dirt, their laughter a rare sound in the midst of the somber atmosphere. Some played games with rugged toys, while others clung to their parents, their eyes wide with confusion and worry.

The refugees were a diverse group: farmers, merchants, craftsmen, and even a few nobles who had fled the safety of their manors. All had been brought low by the same catastrophe, and now they shared this temporary home, united by their struggle to survive.

A group of officials in uniforms moved through the camp, accompanied by knights clad in armor. They walked in pairs or small groups, their eyes watchful as they ensured order was maintained. Occasionally, they stopped to speak with a refugee or to offer assistance, their presence a small comfort in an otherwise uncertain times.

Ethan noticed the weariness etched into the faces of the officials and knights. They had been working tirelessly to maintain order, to provide for the thousands of people who had suddenly found themselves homeless and vulnerable. It was a monumental task, and despite their best efforts, the strain was beginning to show.

Iris's parents and Luna stayed close to Ethan and Iris, their expressions a mixture of awe and apprehension. They had never seen so many people gathered in one place, nor had they ever witnessed such a large-scale relief effort. The reality of their situation was sinking in, and it was clear that they were struggling to come to terms with it.

As they walked, a knight approached them, his armor clinking softly with each step. He was a tall man with broad shoulders and a serious expression, his helmet tucked under one arm. His gaze swept over the group, lingering briefly on Ethan and Iris.

"Welcome to the camp," he said, his voice calm and authoritative. "I'm Sir Gerald, one of the knights in charge of security here. If you're seeking shelter, I can direct you to an available tent."

Ethan nodded in appreciation. "Thank you, Sir Gerald. We could use a place to rest. We have elderly and a children with us."

The knight gestured for them to follow him. "This way, please. I'll take you to a quieter area where you can settle in."

As they followed Sir Gerald through the camp, Ethan couldn't help but notice how organized everything seemed, despite the sheer number of people. The knights and officials had clearly put a lot of effort into ensuring that everyone had what they needed, though it was evident that resources were stretched thin.

"Sir Gerald, may I asked about the casualties?" Ethan asked cautiously.

Sir Gerald answered without hesitation, "Till now we have lost nearly 10,000 human from the commoner district and 500 from the noble district. We were caught off guard by their sudden assault, otherwise we could have reduce the casualties a lot.

"Nevertheless, we managed drive them away from the city, however our territory have been shortened greatly. They are still tens of thousands of Fierce beasts gathered outside the walls, their intention clear. They're going attack again after the night fall. It's all because of those abominable demons. Many unfortunate souls have died in mere moments. May the creation god bless them."

"Ethan grew worried as he noted that the city's population was only about 200,000, and already 10,500 had died. "Are Aunt Greta and Emily alright?" he wondered.

Although their inn was situated nearby, he felt the need to go and find out for himself.

Chapter 56: Chapter 56: The Parasites of Humanity

They passed by an emergency infirmary where healers and medics worked tirelessly to tend to the wounded and sick. The tent was large, with rows of cots occupied by people in various states of distress. Some groaned in pain, while others lay motionless, their eyes closed as they fought off fever or exhaustion.

Iris glanced at the infirmary, her expression filled with concern. "There are so many people in need of treatment," she murmured. "It's heartbreaking to see them like this."

"You can help them later on, Iris. Right now, you need to get your family settled in, and then we can focus on everything else," Ethan said calming her nerves. He understood her mentality a little.

Sir Gerald led them to a quieter section of the camp, with fewer tents and a bit more space. The area was near the edge of the camp, where the forest began to encroach on the makeshift settlement. It was still within the camp's perimeter, but the trees offered a sense of seclusion and calm.

"This should suit your needs, young man," Sir Gerald said, pointing to an empty tent. "It's not much, but it's safe, and you'll have some privacy here."

Ethan nodded in gratitude. "Thank you, Sir Gerald. This is perfect."

The knight inclined his head. "If you need anything, don't hesitate to ask. The officials are making rounds to distribute food and supplies, so someone will be by shortly."

With that, Sir Gerald turned and left.

After settling them inside, Ethan turned to leave, but Iris called out from behind.

Ethan looked at her curiously, wondering what he might have missed.

“Ethan, I told you about my boyfriend, right? I didn’t see him anywhere. Can you find him if possible?” Iris asked hesitantly.

Ethan sighed. “Alright. What’s his name again?”

“His name is Allen. He’s a bit tanned and also a commoner like me. I’m worried about him. You’re going to the central area, right? If you recognize anyone by that name there, please tell him to come here. I’ll try my best to find him here.”

Although it was uncertain if her boyfriend was alive or not, she forced herself to remain positive.

Ethan nodded in understanding. He cast a sympathetic glance at Iris, assuming she was holding onto a fragile hope.

—

Ethan sprinted through the devastated streets, his heart pounding with fear and urgency as he headed toward Innkeeper Greta’s inn. He prayed inwardly, hoping against hope that they were safe. As he passed through the remnants of the hunter’s resource market, he could barely recognize the once-bustling area.

Buildings lay in ruins, reduced to charred stone and splintered wood. The aftermath of the beast rampage was catastrophic—a clear reminder of the destruction brought by the rampaging beasts.

The atmosphere was filled with despair. The familiar faces of shop owners and vendors, once lively and welcoming, were now twisted with grief. They stood amid the wreckage, crying over their shattered livelihoods, their faces etched with the hopelessness of the dark days ahead. Their eyes held a vacant, hollow look, as if their very souls had been crushed beneath the weight of the catastrophe.

When Ethan finally reached the site of the inn, his worst fears were realized. The small, cozy inn that had once been a sanctuary for weary travelers was now nothing more than a pile of splintered wood and scattered debris.

“Was he late already?”

The warm glow of the hearth, the comforting smell of freshly baked bread, the friendly chatter—all of it was gone. The inn had been utterly obliterated, reduced to a heap of rubble that seemed to mock the hope he had clung to.

Frantically, Ethan scanned the surroundings, his eyes darting from one pile of debris to the next. His heart raced as he searched for any sign of Emily and her mother. Each

second felt like an eternity, the fear gnawing at him with relentless intensity. He tried to push away the terrifying thought that they might have been buried beneath the ruins, but it loomed over him like a dark shadow.

And then, finally, he saw them. At a distance, from the devastation, Emily and her mother were huddled together. But something was terribly wrong. Even from afar, Ethan could sense the danger they were in. His heart sank as he took in the scene. A group of menacing figures surrounding them, their intentions clear from the lecherous grins plastered on their faces.

A Few Minutes Earlier...

“Please, Let go of my mother!” Emily’s voice was hoarse from screaming, but she continued to struggle, trying desperately to free her mother from the clutches of a man with a stone-like grip on her arm.

Emily, though young and fragile, fought with every ounce of strength she had. But against the large, muscular thugs, her efforts were futile. Her small hands slapped at the man’s arm, but it was like striking a stone wall. Tears streamed down her face, her voice breaking with despair as she pleaded for her mother’s release.

Surrounding them were a group of hooligans, their faces twisted with sadistic glee as they watched the girl’s futile struggle. They were scums, reveling in the fear and helplessness of the innocent people, even in these tough times.

“Haha, let go of such a juicy meat? We’re definitely going to enjoy her tonight,” the leader of the group jeered, his voice dripping with lewdness. His eyes roamed over Innkeeper Greta’s unconscious body, lingering on her voluptuous figure. She lay motionless, blood pooling beneath her where her right arm had been severed at the shoulder, the wound still fresh and seeping.

The man’s underlings chuckled darkly, their eyes glinting with perverse anticipation as they envisioned the night’s horrific plans in bed. The stench of alcohol and sweat clung to them, mixing with the iron scent of blood in the air.

“Yes, boss. Let’s move quickly. If other city officials see us, we’ll be in big trouble. Even bribes might not save us then,” one of the underlings warned cautiously, glancing around nervously.

“Hmph, let them come. I’m not afraid of them,” the leader spat, arrogance seeping from every cell. “First, get this stupid child out of my sight. Kill her or whatever, just get it done.”

“Okay, Boss!” The thugs grinned wickedly, one of them stepping forward and grabbing Emily by her hair. He yanked her up roughly, lifting her small body off the ground as she screamed in agony.

“Ahh...!” Emily’s cry was a piercing wail of pain, the sensation of her hair being torn from her scalp was unbearable.

“Let go...!” Her voice was strained, her throat raw from screaming. But her words were cut off as another thug wrapped his hand around her throat, squeezing tightly. Her breath hitched, her vision blurring as the pressure increased. She clawed at his hand, her small fingers struggling to pry it away, but her strength was fading fast.

As the world around her began to dim, Emily’s thoughts drifted to the one person she had always believed would protect her—Ethan. “Big brother, where are you?”

Ethan’s timing could not have been more critical. The moment he arrived at the scene, his heart turned to ice. He saw Emily dangling helplessly, her life hanging by a thread as the thug’s grip tightened around her throat. His blood boiled with rage as he witnessed the depths of cruelty these so-called humans could sink to. They were worse than demons, the parasites of humanity.

Chapter 57: Chapter 57: Clearing The Parasites

Ethan’s eyes flashed with a dangerous light as he activated [Shadow Step], his form blurring as he appeared beside the thug in an instant.

Startled by the sudden interference, the hooligans fumbled for their weapons, but Ethan was already moving with lethal precision. His only focus was on saving the little girl.

The thug holding Emily barely had time to react before Ethan’s hand transformed into deadly claws, a result of his Razor Claws skill. His fingers elongated into sharp, gleaming blades, resembling the talons of a ferocious wolf.

“Slash!” With a swift, decisive motion, Ethan severed the thug’s hand at the wrist. Blood spurted from the wound as the severed hand fell to the ground, freeing Emily from its deadly grip.

As Emily began to fall, Ethan caught her gently with his left hand, cradling her against his chest.

“Ahh... my hand, my hand!” The thug screamed in horror, clutching the bloody stump where his hand used to be.

“Too noisy!” Ethan’s voice was cold, devoid of any emotion. With another few casual strikes of his claws, he sliced through the thug’s body with ease, the blade-like claws

tearing through flesh and bone as if they were paper. The thug's body crumpled to the ground in a lifeless heap, his guttural roars silenced forever.

The remaining thugs recoiled in fear, their faces draining of color as they stared at Ethan in horror. To them, he wasn't human—he was a monster, a force of nature that had descended upon them with the fury of a thousand storms.

The leader, who had been so confident moments ago, felt a cold sweat break out on his forehead. His hands trembled as he instinctively released Innkeeper Greta, taking a cautious step back.

Emily slowly opened her eyes, blinking as she found herself in Ethan's protective embrace.

"Big brother, you're finally here... I knew you would keep your promise. Please, save my mother," she whispered, her voice weak but filled with trust and hope.

Ethan looked down at her, a gentle smile breaking through the cold mask he had worn. "Don't worry, Emily. Everything will be alright. I'm sorry I took so long." The thought of what could have happened if he had been even a second later sent a chill down his spine.

He gently set Emily down beside her mother, placing a reassuring hand on her shoulder. "Stay here for a moment, Emily. I'll take care of these scums first."

Emily nodded, her gaze fixed on her mother's pale, unconscious face, worry etched in her young features.

Ethan turned his attention back to the remaining hooligans, his expression hardening as he drew his sword from its scabbard. Each step he took toward them echoed like a death knell in the silent evening, filling the air with a sense of impending doom. The leader's heart pounded wildly in his chest, the sound of his own fear drowning out all else as Ethan closed the distance.

The leader studied the young man before him, noting the intensity in his eyes and the deadly calm in his demeanor. Despite Ethan's youth, the leader felt an overwhelming sense of danger radiating from him, a threat that was impossible to ignore.

As the leader scrutinized Ethan's features, something clicked in his mind—a flash of recognition. His eyes widened in shock as he realized who he was facing.

"Y-you? Why are you here? Shouldn't you be in jail?" The leader's voice quivered with disbelief as he finally remembered the boy he had encountered before the Fire Toad's dungeon nearly a week ago.

Ethan's gaze narrowed as he looked at the leader's face and then at his prosthetic right arm. The realization hit him like a bolt of lightning—this was the same man who had led the group of thugs, the one who had tried to steal his sword and his locket. The memory of that encounter sent a chill through Ethan, and his resolve hardened. This time, he would not show any mercy.

The underlings exchanged uneasy glances, sensing the tension in their leader's voice and the palpable hostility radiating from Ethan. Unlike their leader, they had no personal history with this young man, but they could see the fear in their leader's eyes, and it made them nervous.

They weren't the same underlings who had been with the leader during the previous encounter; those men had abandoned him, unwilling to risk their lives for a man who seemed to attract danger like a magnet. But the leader, driven by pride and a thirst for revenge, had not learned his lesson.

He had even bribed some officials to send Ethan to prison forever. However he didn't know all of his efforts had turned into vain long ago.

As Ethan continued his slow approach, the leader took an involuntary step back, his bravado crumbling under the weight of Ethan's silent fury. The realization that he was facing the same boy he had underestimated before, now stronger and more determined than ever, filled him with dread. He knew in that moment that there would be no escape.

He turned to his subordinates and barked, "What are you waiting for? Go Kill him, or we'll all be dead!"

But his men were no fools. They exchanged nervous glances before turning to flee for their lives.

However, Ethan couldn't let them escape. He knew if they were spared, they would do this heinous acts once again.

In an instant, he activated [Shadow Step] repeatedly, swiftly decapitating them one by one.

The leader of the group was paralyzed with fear.

The thug leader's mind raced as he watched Ethan effortlessly cut down his men. "How... How is he so strong? Just a week ago, he was nothing more than an F-Rank hunter, and now... he's slaughtered my men like they were nothing, and they were nearly D-Rank!"

Despite being a D-Rank himself, the leader found it impossible to track Ethan's eerie, swift movements.

“D-Don’t come any closer! You demon... You must be using some kind of dark arts. I-I warn you, if you step any closer, I’ll call the Knights!”

But Ethan remained unfazed by the desperate threats. In a blink, he was beside the leader, his presence like a looming shadow.

Goosebumps crawled over the thug leader’s skin, his instincts screaming at him to act. Fueled by adrenaline and sheer terror, he gripped his sword and swung it down at Ethan with a manic grin. “Die, demon... Die... Hahaha!”

His crazed laughter echoed in the silent evening, until it was abruptly cut off. In the span of a heartbeat, Ethan’s blade flashed, and the leader’s body was severed cleanly at the waist. As his vision dimmed, the manic grin faded, replaced by the haunting realization of his sins. He saw the faces of the innocents he had tormented—children, the elderly, young girls—all flashing before him as he fell into the abyss, the gates of hell welcoming him to an eternity of torment and repentance.

Ethan looked at the dead body without a trace of remorse. Instead, his mind weighed the decision of whether to use Skill Absorption.

“Ahh, forget it,” he muttered dismissively. “He was trash; his skills must be as worthless as he was.” His expression twisted with disgust as he turned away, walking toward Emily and her mother.

When Ethan reached them, his gaze softened as it fell on Innkeeper Greta. Her severed arm lay lifeless, the same arm that had once provided warmth and comfort to those she loved. Deep, angry slap marks marred her aged face, telling a silent story of brutality.

Emily, standing beside him, stared at the scene, her tears falling silently as she processed the horror before her.

With a heavy heart, Ethan turned to Emily and asked, “Did those thugs do this too?” He was talking about the severed arm. From its look, it didn’t seem so.

Chapter 58: Chapter 58: The Call For Emergency

Emily shook her tiny head, her voice trembling as she spoke. “No, big brother. My mother’s arm was cut off by a big monster. She... she tried to protect me, and she became like this... It’s all my fault.” Tears welled up in her eyes as she remembered the terrifying moment.

She sobbed quietly, continuing, “Fortunately, there was a powerful guest at our inn who saved us from that monster. But after he left, we encountered these bad people.” Her

voice quivered with fear and anger. "They stole all our hard-earned coins, and then they tried to do bad things to my mother."

Ethan nodded, his expression filled with sympathy as he looked at the mother-daughter duo. They had endured so much pain and suffering. As he listened to Emily's words, a pang of guilt stirred within him, a gnawing regret for not being able to protect them in time. "If only he was present at their time of need."

He knew that he couldn't change what had happened, but he could make sure they were safe from now on. "I'm sorry I wasn't here sooner," Ethan said softly, his voice filled with resolve. "But I promise you, no one will hurt you again."

Emily felt the sincerity in Ethan's words, and her trembling began to subside. With a hesitant nod, she left his embrace and hurried over to her mother, checking her condition with anxious hands.

Ethan stood in the midst of the carnage, his cold gaze sweeping over the lifeless bodies of the thugs. After a moment, he knelt down and quickly collected the coins they had stolen from Emily and her mother.

Without wasting any time, he lifted Innkeeper Greta's injured form and, with a sense of urgency, carried them both back to the campsite, determined to get Greta the help she needed as soon as possible.

As soon as they entered the tent, Iris looked up, her eyes widening with concern. "Ethan, who are they?"

Ethan gently laid Innkeeper Greta down on an emergency bed and let out a weary sigh. "They're the closest people I have in this world," he replied, his voice heavy with concern. He then quickly recounted the incident, explaining who they were and how Innkeeper Greta had gotten injured. Meanwhile, Emily and Luna, noticing that they were around the same age, began to bond. Luna offered Emily some food and tried to cheer her up, easing the tension in the air.

Ethan turned to Iris, his expression serious. "Can you use your healing skill on her wound? I've already given her some healing potions, but they don't seem to be working."

Iris nodded and quickly began to examine the injury, focusing on the torn flesh on Greta's shoulder. As she inspected the wound, she noticed dark remnants of an ominous aura clinging to the injury.

Despite her uncertainty, Iris cast [Rapid Heal] repeatedly, but the wound refused to close, the dark aura resisting her efforts.

With a sigh, Iris looked up at Ethan, concern etched in her features. “Ethan, it looks like her wound has been inflicted by a demonic aura. Healing potions and regular healing magic won’t work. We’ll need to find some holy water to cleanse the wound.”

Ethan’s brow furrowed. “Holy water?”

Iris nodded, explaining, “Yes, holy water has purifying properties that can cleanse demonic energy. Without it, the wound will continue to fester, no matter how much healing skill we use.”

“You can find holy water in churches, though it’s usually quite pricey,” Iris explained, her tone serious.

“I see...” Ethan nodded, deep in thought, “Now where is this church?”

“Purifying demonic energy... Purify... Holy!” Suddenly, a realization struck him like lightning. He remembered that his Holy Dragonian Sword had a similar ability.

He quickly unsheathed the sword, recalling its unique power: Holy Purge—an ability that emitted a burst of holy energy capable of purifying and damaging undead and demonic entities, while also healing the wielder slightly.

Ethan’s eyes lit up with hope as he read the description carefully. “Yes, there it is,” he muttered, a hint of excitement in his voice. Without hesitation, he activated Holy Purge, directing the purifying energy toward the dark remnants clinging to Greta’s wound.

Seeing Ethan draw his sword and carefully place its tip near Greta’s injured shoulder, Iris’s eyes widened in alarm. “Ethan, what are you doing?!” she exclaimed, her voice tinged with panic.

But her words caught in her throat as she witnessed what happened next. A soft, radiant light began to emanate from the sword, enveloping the wound in a warm, golden glow. The dark, ominous aura that had been resisting their efforts started to dissipate, burning away like shadows in the face of the morning sun.

Iris watched in astonishment as the wound on Greta’s shoulder began to heal before her eyes. The torn flesh knitted itself back together, the purifying energy not only banishing the demonic taint but also accelerating the healing process. The once stubborn wound now closed, leaving behind only a faint scar where the dark energy had been.

Ethan let out a relieved breath as he sheathed his sword. “It worked,” he murmured, a small smile of satisfaction crossing his face.

Iris stood there, speechless, as the realization of what had just happened sank in. She had known Ethan was strong, but this... this was something else entirely. "What kind of sword is this?"

Emily and the others watched the scene unfold, their curiosity evident, while Emily let out a breath of relief.

"Big brother, can my mother's arm never grow back again?" she asked, her young face etched with worry.

Ethan smiled reassuringly and said, "Of course! Your mother just needs a health restoration potion, and she'll be as good as new in seconds."

Emily blinked in surprise. "A health restoration potion? I've heard they're really expensive. We could never afford one in our lifetime. Where will we find all that money?" She quickly fumbled through their backpacks, taking out the small pouch of coins Ethan had recovered from the thugs. "Here, big brother. This might not be much, but it will help a little, at least."

She offered the coins without a moment's hesitation, fully aware that it was all they had left.

Ethan felt a warm sense of gratitude, knowing he didn't help anyone ungrateful or selfish people.

He gently placed a hand on her shoulder and said, "You don't need to do that, sweetie. I'll take care of it. You don't need to worry about the money. Now, why don't you get some rest? You have dark circles under your eyes. Please relax; your mother is going to be just fine."

Emily hesitated for a moment but then nodded, her trust in Ethan clear. She returned to her mother's side, comforted by his words, and finally allowed herself to close her eyes, the weight of the day's events lifting slightly as she drifted into sleep.

"Emergency! Emergency! Calling all hunters for help at the frontline. This is not a drill, I repeat, this is not a drill! A beast rampage has broken through the outer defenses. All available hunters are to report to the frontlines immediately. Civilians are advised to seek shelter immediately. This is a high-level threat!"

As Ethan reassured Emily, the campsite was suddenly filled with the distant but unmistakable sound of an emergency call. The horns blared through the air, echoing across the city, signaling another beast rampage. The city's hunters were being called to assist, and the urgency in the air was undeniable.

The message repeated itself, the desperation in the announcer's voice clear.

Chapter 59: Chapter 59: The Battle Of Survival
Ethan's eyes narrowed as he listened intently.

He knew that such a call meant the situation was dire, and time was of the essence..

He decided to go and check the situation for himself. What if the beasts breaks in and threaten their Safety once again?

"Iris, I should go and check the situation," Ethan said, his voice calm and measured. He glanced at Iris and the others. "You should stay here and watch over them.

Iris started to protest, concern etched on her face. "No Ethan, you shouldn't go alone. Let me..."

But Ethan shook his head firmly. "No, it's better if I go alone. I can move faster on my own, and there's no time to waste. If this is as bad as it sounds, we'll need to move out of form here quickly as possible."

Ethan's determination to protect those he cared for pushed him to act quickly. As he made his way toward the source of the emergency, the urgency of the situation weighed heavily on him.

The possibility of the beasts breaking through and threatening the safety of his companions and the people in the city spurred him on.

Iris, left behind, was conflicted. Watching Ethan disappear into the distance, her thoughts drifted to her own aspirations. She had always dreamed of becoming a Saintess, inspired by the legendary Radiant Saintess Lumenaria—a goddess of beauty and grace.

But now, doubt crept into her heart. Was she truly on the right path? Could she be of more help if she focused on something else?

As the evening sky dimmed, Iris pondered her future, wondering if she could ever reach the heights of her idol or if her current path would lead her to the same greatness.

Ethan hurried toward the source of the announcement, weaving through a crowd of hunters who were also heading in the same direction. The group was diverse, composed of people from all walks of life. Some were young like him, eager and determined.

Others were middle-aged men and women, seasoned by years of experience. Finally, there were the elderly veteran hunters, their faces lined with the scars of countless battles. Despite their differences, they all shared the same purpose—to protect the city with everything they had.

In moments of extreme danger, personal differences faded away, replaced by a unified mindset and spirit. Each hunter was ready to sacrifice their life to ensure the safety of their loved ones.

As Ethan pushed forward, a familiar voice cut through the noise. “Hey, Ethan, slow down a bit.”

He stopped and turned, scanning the bustling environment. He soon spotted Cedric, Yona, and Marcus approaching from behind, their steps hurried, their faces a mix of worry, anxiety, and determination.

Ethan furrowed his brows as they caught up. “You guys?” he asked, surprise evident in his voice. “Don’t tell me you’re planning to join as well? What are you doing here? Don’t you have family at home? It’s going to be incredibly dangerous out there.”

He eyed their gear, noting how prepared they seemed. The ferocious beasts they were about to face were unlike anything from the dungeons, which were designed to train humans for the real threats outside. These beasts were in a league of their own—unpredictable, powerful, and armed with abilities no one fully understood.

According to the latest information, there were tens of thousands of them. Not even Ethan was certain if he could handle the coming battle, so seeing his friends ready to join took him by surprise.

Cedric, who usually wore a carefree expression, looked at Ethan with a seriousness that was rare. “We know the risks, Ethan,” he said firmly. “But we’re not just going sit alone, while you fight alone. We knew you would surely join in this, that’s why we came.”

“Don’t worry, Our families are at the camp, and that’s exactly why we’re here. We have to do everything we can to protect them.”

Yona nodded, her usual calm demeanor replaced by a steely resolve. “Ethan, besides that we are also here to take revenge for Marcus.” She said while eyeing Marcus, who seemed really angry and frustrated for some reason.

Ethan brows furrowed. “Revenge for Marcus? What happened? Did something happened to his family?”

Cedric replied shaking his head, “No, It’s actually.. How should I say it.. His girlfriend had died at hand of the beasts. It was really brutal.” He whispered slowly to Ethan in low voices.

“His girlfriend died? How unfortunate!” Feeling sympathetic, Ethan sighed and patted on Marcus’s shoulder.

“Marcus, I know your rage is justifiable, but you need to stay calm. Don’t get your hate consume you,” Ethan advised.

It sounded so hypocritical coming from someone’s mouth who couldn’t control his own emotions in rage.

Marcus looked at Ethan despairingly. “H-How Ethan? How can stay calm? They took my everything from me. She was the light of my life. Her laughter still echoes through my ears.” Marcus’s eyes turned red while remembering the the past.

“How can I forget her warmth? The last time I saw her, she was so happy and cheerful, but now...” Marcus’s tears began to fall like a dam being broken.

“I am going to kill all of them!” He said fiercely, as he wiped his teardrops that was about fall on the ground. “Ethan, are you not going to help me?”

“Sigh..!” Exasperated, Ethan replied, “Of course, why not? All of us wants to do the same. But, you need to calm down.”

Ethan recalled the kind Innkeeper Greta’s severed arm, and resolved himself to kill those fierce beasts — especially the demons who were behind this attacks.

Afterward, they quickly resumed their pace and reached the frontline within minutes. As they approached, they were met with a formidable sight: rows upon rows of knights, archers, and hunters, each organized by their rank and ready for battle. The air was thick with anticipation, and every combatant’s weapon was at the ready, their eyes locked on the horizon where the enemy would soon appear.

The army was arranged into three distinct defense lines, each reflecting the combatants’ skill level and experience. At the forefront stood the S and A-Rank powerhouses, forming the first line of defense. These were the most powerful beings, known for their exceptional strength and battle prowess.

At the front stood the sole S-Rank powerhouse of Arcadia City, Longus Emberion, the city lord. His imposing figure commanded immediate respect and attention. Beside him were the representatives of the five great noble clans—clan leaders and esteemed elders—each adorned in their clan’s regalia, signifying their high status and authority.

Among them were also several notable A-Rank powerhouses, distinguished individuals who, although not affiliated with any noble clan, had earned their place through

extraordinary achievements and formidable prowess. This elite assembly formed the foremost line of defense, embodying the pinnacle of strength and leadership in the city.

Their position at the front was no accident; they were there to take on the most formidable foes and absorb the heaviest blows. Their weapons were finely crafted, their armor reinforced, reflecting their status as the elite. This front line was designed to be an impenetrable wall, capable of withstanding even the fiercest onslaught of the high level beasts.

Behind them, the second line consisted of B and C-Rank hunters. These hunters, though not as powerful as those in the front, were still formidable in their own right. Their role was to provide crucial support to the vanguard, reinforcing the line where needed and ensuring that any breaches were quickly sealed.

Aria and some of her fellow companions were present in this section, and Ethan noticed her immediately because of her striking features. She was like a crane amongst a flock of chickens, standing out with her beautiful white combat dress. Although she didn't notice Ethan yet, her eyes were darting around as if in search of certain someone.

They were arranged in a staggered formation, allowing them to easily move forward or back as the situation demanded. This line of defense was also responsible for maintaining the momentum of the battle, pushing forward when the opportunity arose or holding the line if the enemy attempted to break through.

Finally, the third rank was made up of D and E-Rank hunters. These hunters, though less experienced, were far from insignificant. Positioned at the rear, their role was to protect the flanks and ensure that the army's formation remained intact.

They were also responsible for providing support to the ranks ahead of them, ready to step in if casualties occurred or if additional strength was needed.

This rank served as a reserve force, their primary task being to maintain the integrity of the army's structure and to provide a final line of defense should the enemy break through the higher ranks. Ethan and his friends were organized in this last section, due to their low ranks.

The formation was a testament to careful planning and strategy. By positioning the strongest warriors at the front, the army ensured that the most dangerous threats were met with the greatest force.

The B and C-Rank fighters provided essential reinforcement, while the D and E-Rank warriors ensured that no gap went unguarded. This layered approach allowed the army to adapt to the ebb and flow of battle, with each rank ready to step up and take enemies head on.

This strategic arrangement maximized the strengths of each rank, ensuring that the army could withstand the enemy's assault while minimizing the risk of casualties because of their own power gap.