

Warlord 141

Chapter 141 Resolve

Right now, Dilan was very confused.

The value of human Essence crystals worried him a lot.

He was quite certain that the situation revolving around their race would gradually worsen.

Simultaneously, the dangers around them would increase over time.

As such, everyone had to work hard and advance as long as it was still possible. This did not only include his own improvement but even more so of the others.

Dilan was quite confident to fight monsters at the Peak of Tier-1. He would have to go all-in and enter a weakened state afterward, but if the situation demanded it, a weakened state would be a small sacrifice.

“I’m still not familiar with my abilities, their limits, and how to utilize them properly to make use of their full potential if I were to combine several abilities at once...”

Not knowing much about his abilities was not Dilan’s only issue. The few pieces of equipment he possessed could be considered quite useful and rare but they were still not enough for him.

It would be difficult to enhance his boots and gloves because they possessed additional abilities that were of great use.

However, Dilan could also wear other equipment that could improve his prowess even further..

The others would also be able to wear powerful equipment as long as Dilan procured enough Essence crystals to trade them with treasures.

But that would require time, similar to how Old Jeff required time to perfectly forge a weapon.

“Old Jeff should be able to start forging in a few days...I should enter the Krendel’s Underground Valley with a few Ascenders tomorrow.”

They had yet to procure enough ores to allow Old Jeff to start forging properly.

It was only fortunate that they didn’t lack basic resources such as coal and forging tools.

Even if it took them some effort and time to find everything they needed, Old Jeff was currently in the last phase of his preparations before he would start working.

That was also why Dilan had been quite excited before.

Unfortunately, his excitement had been washed away by the fact that there was a possibly dangerous temple inhabited by two different races.

Mankind’s stance was also somewhat questionable as they might either turn into a highly sought-after resource by other monsters, or they would overcome all struggles and keep ascending.

Dilan held high hopes for the latter but the current situation was somewhat uncertain while the true terror had yet to unfold.

He understood this and could only sigh deeply while searching for the highest building in the surrounding area.

Melanie might have told him about the temple but that didn't mean he should blindly believe her.

That was also the reason for him to get his hands on a spyglass and to take a look at the Shikan plains from an elevated position.

Even if the hospital's rooftop allowed Dilan to see a lot, Rian's tight-knit infrastructure restricted the sight and did not allow him to have a panoramic view of the Shikan plains.

Thus, when Dilan reached the rooftop of the highest building in his proximity, he immediately looked around.

There were some issues with his sight even though he had the [Nightvision] ability.

It was around midnight and the only somewhat helpful source of light was the moon.

The object of Dilan's interest was far away as well, which was why he could barely make out the outlines of a temple after more than 20 minutes had passed. If his guess was correct, it seemed to belong to the Aztecs.

His focus was on the temple.

'It must be quite large if I can see it from a distance of...more than 20 kilometers? Is that even correct?'

Dilan had difficulties determining how far the temple was located. That was why he gave up coming up with rough predictions.

Instead of gauging his current distance to the temple he tried to make out its appearance.

Its size certainly exceeded the size of pyramids. The foundation of the temple had stairs that led up to the round temple, which had a cone-shaped roof. The roof's shape was unusual but it was not something Dilan was concerned about.

Dilan also knew that round Aztec pyramids were predominantly built to worship one God; the Quetzalcoatl.

That was also why he couldn't help but feel a little bit odd. While he was wondering about this, his eyes suddenly spotted a faint reddish gleam above the temple.

A huge ball-shaped object shone like the sun for a quarter of a second before its glow dimmed at once.

The ball-shaped object made Dilan peer at it intently, which was why he realized only now that it was not connected to the cone-shaped temple but that it was levitating above it!

'How is that possible?!' Dilan wondered, only to realize that Milarn's logic didn't apply to real-life anymore.

After all, they had Gates that would transport them to other dimensions, followed by mythical beasts that were capable of spewing flames, bolts of lightning, and so on.

Even humans had now changed, turning into existences that could do things that rivaled the abilities of Gods.

As such, a levitating ball-shaped object shouldn't confuse Dilan that much.

But that was exactly what happened. It was just a few seconds but he was astonished before his mind calmed in an instant.

His worries about humans turning into a resource for other beings to become stronger deteriorated.

"Everything will be fine...even if I have to turn into a monster myself..." Dilan could only mumble. He clearly understood what kind of changes the appearance of temples and the races that inhabited the area around the temples would cause.

And even the best possible scenario Dilan could come up with in his mind was anything but good...

As such, he could only grit his teeth and clench his fist, knowing that he could only strive toward attaining more strength, and to overcome every single obstacle that was bound to be thrown in his way during his ascension!

Dilan's resolve was firm and reinforced, strengthened to an extent that exceeded mortal realms.

If someone were to see him right now, one would be able to see the first signs of a mortal existence walking down a path that was filled with dangers, pain, even death...but also opportunities and most importantly...hope!

It was a path that no mortal was supposed to walk on, yet, there was one individual, who would dare to take on all the burdens in order to achieve everything he wanted to, even if that meant he had to overcome death itself!

However, until that day would arrive, death would continue to lurk around Dilan.

Chapter 142 Change

Dilan was deep in thought as he spent more than an hour on top of the skyscraper's roof.

It was freezing cold but that was not something Dilan took notice of.

Ever since he had advanced to Tier-1, his physique improved a lot, including an increase in his natural resistance to the surrounding temperature.

This would be quite helpful for the future when he would enter Gates that brought him to places where the temperature was either extremely hot or ice-cold.

But for now he was glad that he had not turned into an ice statue while he was standing around absentmindedly.

Only after he regained his senses was Dilan able to return to the ground.

'Old Jeff's [Materials appraisal] should be more than enough to appraise the blazing marble...maybe we can make use of this treasure to increase our strength...'

Because he had slept for quite a while before, Dilan had no intentions to return to the cafeteria and rest. Instead, he was ready to return to hunting monsters.

He might be in a weakened state but that didn't mean he would turn into easy prey for the monsters.

To make a quick assessment of his strength, he lightly jumped up and down before moving in specific ways to roughly determine how much his strength had decreased.

"Halved...urgh"

Dilan knew that his strength had decreased by a lot, but after testing a few movements the final result was that he could exhibit only 50% of his strength.

In fact, Dilan was never able to exhibit 100% of his strength simply because the human body was not able to do so in normal circumstances..

His combat talent might have been high but only after he received the passive ability [True Weapon Specialist] did Dilan learn that his little talent had been wasted entirely.

It was only fortunate for Dilan to possess the passive ability [Warrior's Unparalleled Physique]. Initially, he had been annoyed at this ability because it provided him with mere 0.5 status points in exchange for half the Essence he absorbed.

This was akin to daylight robbery, and far from a fair trade.

But Dilan could understand more about this passive ability after he leveled up twice.

The 0.5 status points he received were just a bonus he received in addition to the main advantage of the ability which remodeled his body.

Before the Primordial Ascension, his physique could be said to have been above average.

Because he had been outside the house to do highly straining activities, his body was great, to put it simply.

However, only now could Dilan understand that his physique which he had carefully built was trash.

This was a harsh statement but Dilan had to acknowledge that his 'great' physique was simply trash in comparison to what his newly procured ability [Warrior's Unparalleled Physique] was capable of.

The ability fixed the flaws in his physique that Dilan had created by making trivial mistakes while working out.

But fixing his flawed physique was not everything. Instead one could say that it was just the beginning because Dilan could clearly feel how his physique was being remodeled and strengthened.

This was a process that would, most likely, never end as he was bound to keep progressing. However, this was something Dilan was perfectly fine with as long as his body's hidden potential could be unveiled.

In the end, after absorbing only a few hundred Tier-1 Essence crystals, Dilan was already able to sense that his physique underwent many changes, including his increased adaptability to mana.

It was much easier for him to sense and replenish mana. This made many things easier such as the instantaneous usage of abilities, shortening the period it took him to replenish mana and perceive the surroundings.

That was also why he was not exactly scared about facing the monsters on his way back to the hospital.

In fact, Dilan was not even tired as he had slept more than enough. Rather than wasting his time resting, he was inclined to search for more Survivors instead.

The news about the temple's emergence and the freezing temperature was worrisome enough to fear that all Survivors might die soon.

This was not even without including the dangers of monsters, and vile humans, which were similarly bothersome.

'If I help Williams, Kathrine and Old Jeff to become Tier-1 Ascenders, it should be possible to forge powerful equipment.'

In the end, Dilan's mind came up with a rather simple solution to face the current situation.

Old Jeff's occupation will probably provide him with the necessary proficiency to regain his old glory, while William will be able to protect Old Jeff and everyone else when the goods will be transported from the hospital to the workshop, or the other way around.

Meanwhile, Kathrine would certainly attain more than enough power to lead a small group of Ascenders inside the Krendel's Underground Valley.

Even if it would be quite dangerous to enter the deepest parts of the mine, Dilan was confident that Kathrine was strong enough to procure enough Jadetite and Silver Iron ore!

Dilan, on the other hand, thought about averting his focus on eliminating the most powerful monsters prowling on Rian's outskirts while simultaneously searching for Survivors.

'It has only been 14 days since the Primordial Ascension... at least 1% of Rian's population will still be alive, right?!'

1% of Rian's population would only be 5000 Survivors. If that was the number of human Survivors in the city, there were still more than 4000 Survivors left behind. They could be alive either because they had learned to survive in the brutal place that the city had turned into, or they were helplessly cowering in the corner of some room without a way out!

Thus, the mission he gave himself was to find everyone who needed help and to accept them in his group as long as they wanted to.

That train of thought was something that would have never occurred to Dilan before the Primordial Ascension.

He didn't really care about other people's safety, let alone if they could survive.

After all, Dilan hadn't even valued his own life at some point in the past.

The change of his behavior confused Dilan the most. There was literally no reason for him to endanger his life for other people.

But that was what he had been doing since the beginning of the Primordial Ascension again and again. Not only was he actively helping other people but also risking his life every single time he fought humans and beasts alike.

He saved them from vile people, kept protecting them and even nurtured them.

Earlier, Dilan would have said that his actions were solely to fulfill his own selfish motives.

In order to become stronger, he needed people to do certain tasks for him.

For example, Bianne cooked, Sarah began to concoct potions, while Old Jeff would start forging quite soon.

With many powerful Ascenders by his side, it would also be possible to survive the onslaught of an army of mighty monsters.

As such, nurturing other Ascenders was not only logical but also beneficial. The exact same could be said about taking in more Survivors. Each of them would definitely procure one ability by killing their first monster.

It was still unknown how one was supposed to procure additional abilities.

So far, only once a monster had dropped an ability and that was the time Dilan got his hand on [Thunder Step].

Other than that, nobody was able to procure an additional ability yet.

That meant it was only logical to take in more Survivors to collect more abilities.

However, Dilan could tell that all of this was just a farce. Every single reason he told himself before felt like a lie.

It was not as if the reasons were truly a lie but it was more as if the reasons to help others and to protect them were an excuse he gave himself.

This was important to make himself believe that every single action of his was reasonable and not influenced by his emotions.

But was that truly the case? Dilan was not sure about that anymore.

'Bastard, you should have never been born!'

'Are you really my son, or did this bitch have an affair with another man?'

'After throwing me aside, she abandoned you as well because you are just a piece of trash!!!'

'Do you think your father ever loved you? Are you really that naive?! He just left you to rot at my feet!'

'Brother...leave...only that way you can survive. You've suffered enough, now please let us protect you...'

'Yes Sister is right, you should leave...we will take care of everything. Flee as far as possible, and...n-ne-
...never call us again...'

Even if Dilan didn't want to recall memories of his past, they simply resurfaced without any rhyme or reason.

Numerous memories flashed through his mind, entire sentences that had been long forgotten echoed through his mind, and pictures of his family...if he could even call it that, manifested in his mind.

The most apparent memories were about the last day he stayed in the place that had been his so-called home.

Dilan never felt comfortable being surrounded by those walls but he had stayed there because of his two sisters.

They had been older than him by one and three years respectively but that didn't mean they had been able to protect themselves.

His father, Arnes Cier, was already in his 3rd marriage. Dilan was born in his second marriage, while his sisters were born to Arnes' first wife.

One day Arnes' first wife was found dead in the bathtub, her wrists slit open.

Everyone believed that Arnes' first wife had been lonely and depressed because Arnes had been working hard but that was far from the truth...

The truth was only something Arnes knew about...and Dilan.

And this truth, which Dilan got to know at the tender age of 7 while he had been beaten up just like any other day, was the reason for him to stay in the Cier mansion, the place everyone wanted to stay in, except the people that lived inside.

They...just wanted to escape that hellhole, together, as fast as possible...and alive.

Chapter 143 Torture?

After Arnes' first wife had died, and her reason for death was officially announced as suicide, Arnes didn't wait long before he married Dilan's mother.

The sheer thought of his mother caused Dilan's expression to turn grim.

However, the memories and knowledge he had buried deep in his mind kept resurfacing all of a sudden and tormenting his mind.

A few months after Arnes' second marriage, Dilan was born.

Arnes Cier had been having an affair with Dilan's mother for years. As such, when she got pregnant, Arnes married Dilan's mother right away.

If the worst about Arnes would have been his affairs, everything would have been fine...but that was only the beginning of a nightmare, which followed Dilan during his day and night, whether he was awake or trying to fall asleep.

In the first few years, everything seemed to be fine and Dilan grew up with lots of love.

At least, that was what he remembered. After a few years passed, his Sisters Lara, and Marie began to spend all their time with him.

What Dilan didn't know was that they had been keeping him away from Arnes since his early childhood.

They had protected him with everything they could despite being only one and three years older than him.

Now that he recalled it, Dilan was quite impressed by the intelligence and maturity exhibited by his sisters.

Dilan didn't remember when it started but he could clearly remember the awful day when he found his mother crying in the bathroom when he was very young. She was bleeding and had several bruises all over her body.

Afterward, life went downhill for him. One day, his mother simply vanished, leaving the kids with the monster that called them his children. What was worse than Dilan's existence was blamed for his mother's disappearance. He was the reason for everything bad that happened to the monster of a father.

Arnes began to beat him up for every little inconvenience the family encountered..

Whether it was a missing point in an ordinary exam, someone daring to approach his sisters with ulterior moves, or just anything under the sun, Dilan was now his father's favorite person to torment.

To the outside world, Arnes was a loving father, and someone everyone looked up to. There were probably only a handful of people stronger than him.

However, he was said to never abuse his powers, not even against the people who accused him of being a murderer, someone who violated women whenever he wanted to, and someone who did not hold back from using violence.

There had been more than enough complaints but that was the only thing that ever went against him...people complained and the same complaints died down once again.

The public had a weak memory and they soon forgot about the complaints, which was why Dilan and his sisters felt abandoned, not only by their family that left them behind but also by public.

Dilan simply endured everything, knowing that his sisters would have to face his father's anger the moment he would run away as well.

Oddly enough his father became less violent all of a sudden when he began to speak about his third marriage.

The woman he married when Dilan turned 14 years old was also in her second marriage. She had a daughter, whom Dilan and his sisters had never seen in their entire life.

Even now Dilan didn't know what she looked like.

However, that was not something memorable that flashed through his mind right now. Rather, it was the period between Dilan's 16th and 17th birthday.

In that one year, the mansion had turned into Satan's den. Not only did Arnes' third wife, Beatrix, seek pleasure in watching Dilan get beaten but she also forced his sisters, Lara and Marie, to keep looking.

They should have been wary of Beatrix the moment they heard rumors about the death of her first husband.

Unfortunately by the time they heard about that, it was already too late. Arnes, who was in truth, someone who loved abusing his authority, alcohol, and causing pain to those weaker than him, had turned into the reincarnation of the God of Torment.

Simultaneously, the mansion they lived in turned into Tartarus, the dungeon of torment and suffering...with Dilan being the person who suffered the most...for an entire year.

After one year, his sisters were unable to endure it anymore. They had already been told that they would be married off to some influential family that ought to support the Cier family's plans.

However, this was not something Lara and Marie rejected as it would usually be the case. Rather, they would pack their things in an instant the moment they were told to leave.

But before that, Dilan would have to leave...otherwise he was destined to die!

This was even more true because he found out one of his father's secrets that nobody was supposed to know, neither the public, nor Dilan and his sisters...especially not his sisters, Lara and Marie!

The secret he found out was something he would never reveal, not because he liked his father, or that he wanted to protect him.

Instead, it was for the sake of his sisters, who were more important to Dilan than anyone else.

For their sake, he would even never meet them again if necessary.

Thus, the last day Dilan and his sisters spent together, everyone went their own separate ways.

Yet, instead of being afraid, all of them were relieved to escape the hell of their father's wrath, even if that meant that it would be close to impossible to meet each other ever again.

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Dilan was not even sure why the memories flashed through his mind. He could only see his crying sisters' faces making him relive the worse days of his life yet again.

Dilan had a sour taste in his mouth and could only frown deeply, feeling disgusted knowing that his father was a piece of trash.

Even calling it as such was probably an insult to trash but that didn't make things better in any way.

Rather, Dilan was more frustrated the longer he thought about it.

'Why are these memories resurfacing now?' At first, he had no idea about the correct answer.

It was almost as if his mind wanted to ridicule Dilan for having been too weak to go up against his father. He was frustrated about how weak he had been, and what kind of loser he was at that time.

Maybe that was also one of the reasons for him to seek an adrenaline rush, to build up a proper physique, and to learn martial art techniques...to ease his mind and make himself feel less like a loser.

But that was not something Dilan could tell for sure because there was literally no reason for him to stay alive anymore.

Without the desire to keep living, no ambitions, or any kind of other desires, the only way to make himself feel alive was...indulging in activities that would distract him enough.

As such, until recently his life had been filled with attempts to make life more exciting and to find ways to stay alive.

And that was exactly what the Primordial Ascension brought.

Dilan was not sure what exactly had changed in his mind but every single day of the last two weeks was filled with excitement.

This even included the days he didn't fight against powerful monsters, or when he was on a hunt to collect Essence crystals of weak monsters.

Being surrounded by others had been a hassle in the past, but now it was something Dilan could enjoy.

Of course, it was impossible to avoid situations he hated or information that made living harder but life was never supposed to be easy.

That was something Dilan could clearly understand because his life had been a living hell in the past.

As such, everything he was facing now was incomparable to the time he had been living in his father's place.

Even the pain he felt by severely injuring himself over and over felt like a light breeze compared to what he faced in the past.

'I wonder if Lara and Marie are fine...I hope they are' Dilan suddenly wondered, thinking about his sisters for the first time in a long time.

He had overcome the most painful experiences because of them but as he didn't want to recall all the pain of the past, his mind had buried those memories deep inside so as to cut off everything that had belonged to his past.

As such, while Dilan's steps slowed down, he couldn't help but feel a little bit burdened by the thought of his sisters' well-being.

His mind was a mess, yet, even when he thought about his sisters and the past, Dilan was still unable to figure out why he would help other human survivors willingly.

Dilan's steps halted in the middle of the street. He looked towards the sky that was filled with countless bright shining stars.

“Just who am I?”

This question reverberated through Dilan’s mind but he didn’t have an answer to this. He was not even sure what type of person he truly was.

Could he be considered kind and gentle, was he cruel and violent, or did he have more of a rational character?

Dilan was not sure about that. It was odd but he was not exactly worried about this.

Right now, he felt free and capable of thinking about everything with a calm mind.

With his heart and mind at ease, everything got easier, whether it was thinking or striving to keep living and to keep getting stronger.

Yet, even then, Dilan was not able to spend too much time regaining his composure as he found himself surrounded by a group of Kobolds.

“Am I not even allowed to have some time for myself, to think about the purpose of life, who I am, and so on?!” Dilan’s growling voice resounded through the surrounding.

He was fuming in rage and his presence was enough to scare the monsters that had encircled him!

Tightly grasping the Gray Slayer, Dilan took a deep breath while his eyes hardened.

“If you guys are not patient enough...I might as well take care of the lot of you at once!”

Dilan disappeared the moment he finished speaking. He appeared right behind one of the kobolds, a distinct glint emerging in his eyes, just for a gray flash to cut through the darkness.

A moment later, the head of a Mutated Kobold Warrior was detached from its body, falling to the ground with a sickening thud.

However, the other kobolds couldn’t spot him.

He merely left behind a purple flash and a thunderous sound that echoed through the street.

What followed suit was not even possible to be considered a battle... Rather, it was a bloody slaughter feast...

Chapter 144 Security or...?

Despite his weakened state, Dilan killed every single monster that had surrounded him.

He had already been enraged about the resurfacing memories of his painful past.

As such, there was no way that he could show them any mercy, not in his current mental state.

After collecting more than close to 100 Essence crystals, Dilan stored them in the featherlight backpack before he continued his way through the outskirts of Rian.

The potency of his abilities and stats was halved but that was still not worrisome enough for Dilan to hide somewhere until he recovered from his overly exhausted state.

Rather, he wanted to test his limits and get more familiar with the memories and knowledge the passive ability [True Weapon Specialist] had imprinted in his mind.

Doing so while fighting all kinds of monsters was quite useful.

If he could search for more Survivors at the same time, it was even better.

Killing three flies with one stone was what Dilan attempted to do.

Thus, he kept marching forward and hours passed in which he found several locations where he presumed Survivors to be hiding.

Simultaneously, he hunted monsters in the outskirts. The massive numbers of ordinary and tierless monsters slowly began to dwindle.

They were replaced by ordinary Tier-1 existences, or Bronze monsters as their strength slowly increased..

'In a few weeks, there won't be many ordinary Tierless monsters left. Only newly emerging monsters might remain ordinary that way...'

Dilan could tell that monsters from within Gates were mostly gathered in groups of only a few different types.

The situation on Milarn was different as all beasts were thrown into a limited space with humans and mutating animals, forcing them to fight, advance, and evolve.

This was why Dilan predicted that the importance of Gates would keep rising. They provided the opportunity to procure treasures and came with a rather stable supply of ordinary monsters.

For now, this was not of immense importance but this could change in the future.

But instead of minding this too much, Dilan took a glance in his backpack consisting of hundreds of Essence crystals before he made a mental note about another building.

Dilan didn't want to trespass the territory of another group while it was still night. This could lead to misunderstandings that might be hard to solve.

That was why he was only creating mental notes about all the buildings he would have to visit in the following days while calmly continuing to hunt monsters.

When it was nearing sunrise, Dilan noticed that his weakened state had dispersed.

He regained his strength and his abilities retrieved their might, increasing his combat prowess by several times.

In the end, Dilan had spent five hours killing monsters and running through the surroundings, yet, the number of overly powerful monsters he faced was rather low.

The city's outskirts were one of the places he could gain and maintain control over as long as he wanted to.

But that was not what Dilan planned. Being in charge of the Rian mountainside hospital was already more than enough for him.

With the hospital in mind, he returned to it when the sun started to rise over the horizon.

A few rays of sunlight shone through the windows on the first floor. This allowed Dilan to see how dozens of people kept themselves busy by working hard as he walked towards it.

The entrance of the hospital was bustling, and several Ascenders could be seen walking out of the cafeteria.

When Dilan entered the hospital, his arrival immediately attracted everyone's attention.

It was known that Dilan had been out hunting monsters. However, it took him much longer than anyone expected, which was why many people sighed in relief.

His current appearance could be described as a mess but that was nothing new to see when looking at Dilan.

After all, it was almost as if he was bathing in blood on a daily basis.

Dilan just smiled when he saw the relieved expressions on everyone's faces. He returned to his room and took off his clothes before using a freshly filled bucket of water to take a quick bath.

Some survivors were told to refill the water inside the buckets in everyone's room on a daily basis. They didn't have a water shortage anymore, after all.

After he had washed and scrubbed himself, Dilan cleaned his equipment before putting on a fresh set of clothes.

When he was done, he returned to the first floor, and Oliver was the first one to take note of him.

Ailee, Xenia, and a few other leaders were currently holding a meeting to talk about their current situation, what they should focus on, and other important topics.

With Dilan's presence, this would be even better as they knew about his attack against the Death Beatles gang.

Only a few were aware of what Dilan had done the day before. As such, they couldn't know how happy Oliver and the others were when they heard that Dilan was back and totally unscathed.

"Dilan, we're here!" Oliver even shouted while waving his hand.

Dilan couldn't help but smile at this sight and approached the small group before he took a seat at their table.

They looked over Rian's map, where a few areas were already marked.

Either huge crowds of zombies or extremely powerful monsters were situated in these areas.

Other than the monster marks, there were a few other places that had been marked as dangerous, such as the supermarket near the hospital.

Dilan was quite intrigued about the map, which led him to pick up one of the pens before he added a few more marks.

“In that area is a group of Tier-1 monsters... Around here is a large group of more than a thousand zombies, with more than 20 being Tier-1... this area gives me the chills, so I wouldn’t go there if not necessary...”

He kept pointing out areas between the outskirts and inner areas of Rian, only to pick up a different marker before he marked several buildings.

“There should be survivors in each of these buildings. After sleeping for a few hours, I’ll bring them to us as long as they want to join our group.”

Dilan had already come up with his schedule for the day. The others wanted to say something at first, but rescuing more survivors sooner rather than too late was always a better option.

Oliver kept quiet and merely nodded his head while Ailee smiled faintly. She liked the fact that Dilan didn’t even have a second thought about leaving the groups of human survivors alone.

He had given them the chance to join his group and they could simply reject.

For some time, Ailee had feared that leading a group was too much for Dilan. That was why she wanted to give her best to support him with everything she could.

However, this was easier said than done.

Williams was of a similar opinion but his mind was currently somewhere else. His gaze was still fixated on the city’s map, and a frown appeared on his face.

“There are too many large monster groups in our surroundings... we need more weapons and other equipment, otherwise, the Ascenders will have to fight bare-handed against the swarms of zombies the moment they get note of us!”

It was only obvious for Williams to be worried. The more humans in a group, the more noises they would make.

Furthermore, the scent of living, moving humans would attract zombies much easier the more humans they were. Their smell would be much more intense as well.

Thus, it was quite dangerous to take in more human Survivors while they had yet to strengthen their group’s security.

Dilan understood Williams but he was not really worried. He picked up the featherlight backpack and smiled confidently before he said,

“Of course, it’s important to provide enough security for everyone, and to find a solution to the scarcity of equipment but that can be solved easily.

After all, if I help you to advance to Tier-1, it shouldn’t be an issue to procure the necessary resources for Old Jeff to take care of the equipment shortage, right?”

Saying so, Dilan emptied the backpack right in front of everyone, causing thunderous clinking noises as hundreds of Essence crystals landed on the table.

Chapter 145 Exchange Plaza

“Other than providing you, Kathrine, and Old Jeff with enough Essence crystals to advance to Tier-1, I want the remaining towers of the hospital to be cleared.”

Dilan stated in a rather simple tone while he revealed the contents of his Featherlight backpack as he emptied it on a table.

Seeing the massive pile of several hundred Essence crystals, nobody was able to prevent their heart from palpitating.

Some Ascenders, who saw the pile of Essence crystals while walking past Dilan and the others, gasped in shock, clearly sensing the energy radiating from each of the Essence crystals within the pile.

There was even a handful of Silver Tier-1 Essence crystals in the pile.

“Furthermore, I will exchange high-ranked Essence crystals with Essence crystals from zombies.

Please tell everyone about it. I want to upgrade one of my abilities and I require many infected Essence crystals!

That being said, I’m even willing to exchange Tier-1 Essence crystals if necessary.”

In order to upgrade his Immunity ability, Dilan required a total of 2,000 Essences of infected monsters, amongst which 100 had to be Bronze Essences!.

This was merely the requirement to upgrade the Tier-0 ★ability to Tier-0 ★★!

The upgrade requirements for the Immunity ability would increase drastically with each upgrade. As such, he needed as many infected Essence crystals as possible.

Satisfied with the expressions on the others’ faces, Dilan smiled.

Only Oliver showed a trace of disappointment, which caused Dilan to nearly burst into laughter.

“I know that everyone wants to advance to Tier-1 but Williams and Kathrine were the first to reach Level 10. They have already accumulated lots of Essences as well.

Even if the pile of Essence crystals on the table looks like a lot, there won’t be much left after Williams, Kathrine, and Old Jeff advance to Tier-1!”

Adding Old Jeff to the bunch of Ascenders that had to advance to Tier-1 early on was only obvious.

They had to provide the blacksmith with the best possible environment to receive the most benefits from him as well.

As long as he advanced to Tier-1, Old Jeff would receive abilities focused on the occupation he chose.

This occupation was ‘The Wise Blacksmith’, and as the name suggested, Old Jeff would become the said Wise Blacksmith.

Abilities related to the words 'Wise' and 'Blacksmith' were pretty self-explanatory and bound to be helpful.

That was also why nobody said anything against Dilan's decision to nurture Kathrine, Williams, and Old Jeff first.

"If we're already talking about upgrading our abilities...should we start helping others in leveling up their abilities as well? We can either use Essence crystals as currency to start helping one another, or we can start exchanging them.

For example, some abilities might require an Ascender to absorb the Essence of fire-type beasts, or lightning-beast Essences.

Meanwhile, others would just require the high potency of Essences to level up or amass more Essences to fill their Essence pool with.

Your example is probably the best, Dilan. You want infected Essence crystals and the other Ascenders want more Essence!"

Sven felt that it would be a great opportunity to use Dilan's example to allow Ascenders to increase their strength.

As long as some Ascenders could strengthen their ability, their combat prowess would increase tremendously.

Some abilities were able to make up for the gap between the difference between a high level and great strength.

One of such abilities was Kathrine's [Lightning Strike], which allowed her to kill a Level 9 War Krendel even though her level and stats had been far lower!

Sven recalled similar abilities that were simply extremely powerful, including William's [Psychokinesis]. He had been strong enough to defeat dozens of low-leveled zombies while being rather low-leveled as well.

By now, his control over the [Psychokinesis] ability had increased a lot. This made it possible for Williams to kill even more and stronger monsters without any difficulties.

Imagining the boost in strength William's ability would receive by upgrading it, Sven felt that his idea was simply too great.

The only issue was that it might be a little bit early to start an exchange system. After all, most survivors had yet to leave the hospital after they had found shelter there.

It would take a while until more survivors would dare to go outside, much less hunt alone or in small groups.

Thus, the demand and supply of Essence crystals would be out of balance. This was the only worry Sven had for the time being.

Nonetheless, he mentioned what was on his mind in order to let the others know what they could do in the future.

“So it would be like an exchange plaza...sounds good. But I doubt that it will be helpful to start creating a complex exchange system.

It should be easier to create a bulletin board where everyone can pin down their demands and what they can offer in return.

I like the initial idea you have in mind, but I don't have the time to focus on thinking about how to make it work properly without any conflicts.”

Dilan just shrugged his shoulders. He had too much to do, which was why he was even considering pulling an all-nighter today.

As such, Dilan didn't even notice that his idea with the bulletin board was great.

Even if they had yet to create a properly working society or anything that was remotely similar to the way it had been in the past before the Primordial Ascension, it was possible to let the survivors share what they needed and what they could offer in return.

“Please tell Kathrine to prepare a team of Ascenders that can venture into the Krendel's underground valley.

A few days ago I told her the way to the cavern entrance. As long as she advances to Tier-1, there shouldn't be a problem for her to protect a few Ascenders, who can mine Jadetite and Silver Iron ore.”

After Dilan said this, he turned to Williams as he smiled faintly.

“I don't think it's necessary for me to tell you what would be the best for you to do. Old Jeff's safety and that of the Ascenders, who'll transport the goods between the hospital and the blacksmithing workshop, is our responsibility.”

In the end, Dilan trusted his people far more than he wanted to acknowledge.

That was also why he left behind the pile of Essence crystals, knowing that they would take care of everything.

Dilan was merely getting his hands on a bunch of high-ranked Essence crystals he had another purpose for and one particular item that had landed on the table, slowly burning through it.

It was the blazing marble that Dilan had spotted earlier before he chose to search for the only person capable of appraising it- Old Jeff!

Chapter 146 The Wise Blacksmith

“Old Jeff, here are the Essence crystals you need to advance to Tier-1! Even if it might be too much Essence, absorb everything!” Dilan suggested with a smile while revealing the Tier-1 Essence crystals in his hand.

Dilan hadn't wasted any time running over to the workshop where Old Jeff was working.

After digesting the Essence that had allowed him to reach Level 10, Old Jeff's appearance was less haggard than before.

It looked like he was aging backward, which was a great sign as Old Jeff's vigor was constantly increasing.

In his current state, Old Jeff appeared fit to be able to forge which made Dilan feel hopeful as he pushed the Essence crystals he was holding in the old man's hands.

They crumbled a moment later. Old Jeff was not someone who stood on ceremony. He knew that he had to repay Dilan for everything he received from the young man.

Even if it looked like Dilan was doing everything for his own sake, it was obvious that Old Jeff was the one who gained the most from the support he received.

What was the value of a few forged goods in comparison to aging backward, and being able to continue pursuing one's dream?! It was simply priceless.

When Old Jeff finished digesting the Essence he absorbed from the Essence crystals, his eyes shone brightly.

He was overflowing with vigor and was ready to advance to Tier-1.

However, Dilan suddenly stopped Old Jeff when he recalled something.

"Before you advance to Tier-1 can you use your ability to appraise this marble, please? It manifested after I defeated the Death Beatles gang's leader. He possessed an Origin ability that allowed him to manifest and control fire at will."

Old Jeff knew about Dilan's conquest against the Death Beatles gang. As such, there was no need to hide anything.

Thus, Old Jeff quickly threw a short glance at the small blazing marble that radiated a terrifying heat. His eyes lit up the moment he finished his appraisal with his [Material inspection] ability.

"Exceptional, truly exceptional!! This marble is called [Orb of Pyromancy] and it can be used for various purposes. However, from what I can decipher, it is an extremely great forging material that can be embedded on wands to amplify fire-based attacks.

With enough mana used, it will even be possible to create fire-based attacks without the need to possess an ability related to fire.

For this, you might need a high control over mana but with lots of practice this should be no problem!!"

Old Jeff's excitement was quite obvious. The moment he finished reading through the description of the orb, he wanted to get it in his hands.

However, this was not in order to steal it from Dilan. He would never do something like that.

Instead, it was the forging material that attracted his interest and the fact that it could be used to forge a powerful weapon with it.

As long as the wielder of the weapon he had in mind was able to control both the weapon and the Orb of Pyromancy, it would be possible to elevate the lethality of the wielded weapon manifold!

Dilan was unable to hide a smile as well. His sky blue eyes shone brightly and he could not help but ask, "Would it be possible to embed the Orb of Pyromancy in the Serpentine Blade?"

The Serpentine Blade's characteristics were already quite complex, to begin with.

However, the thought of wielding a fire-engulfed Serpentine Blade caused Dilan's heart to beat wildly.

'Great minds think alike.' This was the only thought that flashed through Old Jeff's mind as he smiled confidently.

"I hope I will be able to find that out once I advance to Tier-1! Brat, even I am now excited to start experimenting with everything you brought to me during the last few days!"

When Old Jeff finished his words, he didn't even think of continuing to speak with Dilan.

Instead, he immediately chose his Ancient Path of Advancement before he ascended to Tier-1.

[The Wise Blacksmith] was Old Jeff's occupation and ancient path of advancement which was why Dilan could only look at the old man while being slightly baffled.

'You're even less patient than I am...Aren't blacksmiths supposed to have patient hearts, and an iron will...or something like that?"

Dilan smiled wryly before shrugging his shoulders while his eyes remained fixated on Old Jeff.

The old man sat down, closed his eyes, and began to accept the changes that happened within his body.

His senses enhanced, and every single inch of his body began to itch and a searing heat surfaced from the depths of his body.

Knowledge, abilities, and experiences were imprinted in Old Jeff's mind and his Essence crystal that was embedded in his brain.

This was rather painful but Old Jeff didn't even sense this anymore as his entire being was overwhelmed by the sensation of his mind being flooded with knowledge while every single receptor in his mind was being flooded with the information of the itching sensation.

For several hours, Old Jeff was oblivious to what was happening to his body.

But he was not worried in the slightest. Instead, he smiled faintly and accepted everything.

It was not difficult to perceive that Dilan had already undergone his advancement to Tier-1. The pressure his sheer presence radiated on those around him was more than enough to understand this.

As such, Dilan would be able to help if something were to go wrong.

However, nothing serious happened. There was no trace of an incident and everything went by smoothly.

While Old Jeff hadn't been able to feel much after some time had passed since he initiated his advancement to Tier-1, Dilan had been unable to see much either.

Shortly after the advancement had been initiated, Old Jeff's body was shrouded in a whitish cocoon-like layer of fog.

Instead of a fog, Dilan presumed this to be the Essence Old Jeff was requiring to advance to Tier-1.

A part of it had been released to protect the advancing individual for a short period while simultaneously tempering the body from outside as well.

Dilan could only faintly sense Old Jeff within the cocoon, however, it was impossible for him to figure out what exactly was occurring within the cocoon.

He was forced to wait, which Dilan did diligently.

But after four hours had passed without even the slightest bit of change, he couldn't help but worry.

'Old Jeff will be fine, right?'

Another hour had passed since Dilan started to worry about Old Jeff's well-being.

However, it was impossible to get through the Essence cocoon. It didn't look anything special but the cocoon was quite sturdy.

And even if it was possible for Dilan to break the cocoon, it might do more harm to Old Jeff who was inside it, than it would help.

As such, Dilan could only continue to wait.

It took Old Jeff another hour to finish his advancement to Tier-1. Afterward, the Essence cocoon dissolved slowly, revealing Old Jeff's outlines.

Yet, what Dilan saw the moment the cocoon had disappeared astonished him greatly.

With a disbelieving look, he simply stared open-mouthed at Old Jeff, whose appearance made it seem as if he was in his 50s.

He had aged backward quite a bit but that was not everything!

Rather than his relatively younger appearance being the most impressive, Dilan was able to sense that he was in the presence of a powerful being.

This power did not only include physical strength but also intellect. Old Jeff's demeanor had changed quite a bit, which made it look like he was a scholar teaching his students.

Even if Dilan had expected a lot from Old Jeff's advancement, he was still baffled. A bright smile emerged on his face as the final result was far better than he could imagine.

Meanwhile, when Old Jeff opened his eyes, they encountered Dilan's excited sky blue eyes.

Fiery vigor gleamed within Old Jeff's eyes, only for a bright smile to blossom on the old man's face.

"So it's like this..."

Chapter 147 Source flame of the Dawn

Old Jeff could clearly understand why Dilan wanted everyone to advance to Tier-1 as quickly as possible.

While it seemed like a small difference from Tierless Level 10 to Tier-1 Level 0, in truth the difference between being Tierless and having advanced to Tier-1 was simply too huge.

This only increased the stronger an occupation one chose as an Ancient Path of Advancement!

Dilan, who understood this quite well, could only smile at the sight of Old Jeff's realization.

"How is it? Did your overall stats increase? What benefits are you receiving from your occupation?"

He might be frowned upon because he was asking Old Jeff to reveal the secrets of his occupation.

This could be deemed rude as it meant unveiling the abilities and advantages that could allow him to escape dangerous situations if kept as a secret.

Unfortunately, Dilan couldn't care less about others' privacy right now. He wanted to know the difference between a [Rare++] occupation and his [Divine] ranked occupation.

He would ask Kathrine and Williams to provide him with more information later. After all, he had to be able to roughly estimate how important it was to prioritize creating an Elite group filled with rare combat occupations.

The second option would be to let everyone choose a Common path simply because it was not worth nurturing a small number of high quality warriors.

Of course, Dilan wanted to know what he had to pay attention to while facing other Tier-1 Ascenders. He couldn't simply assume that his strength would be greater than everyone else just because he had a high-ranked occupation.

That was not how fighting worked. A single mistake could cost his life and Dilan wanted to prevent this by all means.

As such, being prepared beforehand was the most important!.

To Dilan's misfortune, Old Jeff was not even listening to him.

Instead, his eyes shone brightly and his smile continued to grow wide the longer he focused on a particular spot in front of him.

Dilan may not be able to see Old Jeff's system screen right now but it was not difficult to tell that he was looking at his occupation's abilities and the other advantages he had gained.

Because Old Jeff was too focused on the holographic screen in front of him, he didn't even notice that a reeking stench wafted off him.

Small areas of Old Jeff's body were covered with a black reeking mass. When Dilan noticed it first, he immediately recalled the intense reeking mass of impurities he had expelled when he had advanced to Tier-1.

'So it means that everyone releases impurities while advancing. The body gets purified during the advancement procedure and the higher the level of chosen occupation the stronger the purification?'

The more Dilan tried to make sense of this the more intrigued he became.

He was making mental notes about everything he had sensed which made his expression turn serious.

There were a few things he noticed about his body that had changed after the Tier-1 advancement procedure.

His body was able to move much smoother than before, he required less energy to fight, and his need for sleep had decreased rapidly.

All of this was exceptionally helpful for combat purposes, which was why Dilan wanted to find out the reason for this.

Thus, Dilan kept observing Old Jeff. However, the moment he heard Old Jeff's disappointed voice, which resounded in his ears, Dilan's eyes went wide.

"My blacksmithing mastery and material inspection have disappeared from my status. Both of them merged with my occupational abilities and strengthened them even further!"

Old Jeff didn't even realize that he was speaking out loud. He was simply too shocked about the changes that had occurred within his body.

Not only did his Material Inspection turn into [Blacksmith's Appraisal] Tier-1 ★★ but his Basic Blacksmithing mastery turned into [Wise man's Blacksmithing mastery] Tier-0 ★★★★★

Furthermore, he had gained two more active abilities and two additional passive abilities. All of them focused on improving the forging process and allowing Old Jeff to create better weapons.

Knowledge, talent, and practice were required to become a good blacksmith. For the best blacksmiths, it was possible to turn even bad ingredients into a proper weapon.

It may be a disgrace for them to wield trash materials but they would be able to unleash the materials' full potential using their skills and knowledge.

On the other hand, while using high-quality materials the true value of master blacksmiths would be unveiled.

And that was something Dilan wanted to witness soon.

The more he heard Old Jeff mumble, the greater was his curiosity about Old Jeff's gains.

However, he also knew that it was not good to be too straightforward.

"I shouldn't go overboard, calm down, idiot!" Dilan scolded himself before turning quiet once again.

Old Jeff was still speaking to himself while assessing the enhancements, unaware of Dilan's presence, or so it seemed.

"I even got a new stat? Dexterity was added to the Log of the Ancient, and I can allocate my status points to it? That's great!"

'Dexterity?' The moment Dilan heard this, he frowned. Before, he had already been sure that some hidden stats must exist.

One of his titles enhanced his Charisma. Thus Dilan had simply presumed that Charisma was a hidden stat.

However, hearing that Dexterity was directly added to Old Jeff's Log of the Ancient astonished Dilan a little bit.

It was certainly not bad, but Dilan began to wonder whether he would be able to gain an additional stat as well.

Dexterity was not only great for forging purposes, but for wielding specific weapons as well.

For example, the Serpentine Blade would require quite a bit of talent to be wielded. If he were to have the dexterity stat, it would help him quite a bit.

After all, improving one's fluidity while using a weapon and one's sense would certainly bear great results!

At that moment, Dilan didn't notice that Old Jeff had already regained his senses. He had finally been able to overcome from the shock he got after advancing to Tier-1.

He thought about something for a moment while looking at Dilan. His gaze slowly moved to the Orb of Pyromancy.

However, it was just a moment later that Old Jeff turned to the table beside him.

The blueprint for the Serpentine Blade was lying on the table and Old Jeff took another glance at it.

Numerous pieces of information had yet to be digested by Old Jeff but he wanted to figure out something.

His eyes began to gleam brightly, and mana was subconsciously released from his body that engulfed the blueprint. Several minutes passed without a single sound being issued.

Dilan had been a little bit astonished about Old Jeff's sudden move but he was curious to find out what was about to happen.

"Alright, I know what to do now! I only need the necessary ingredients and I can start!"

It took Old Jeff merely a few minutes to understand every single component of the Serpentine Blade. This even included the parts and the working mechanism he hadn't understood before.

This was beyond shocking and truly unexpected.

Dilan had expected Old Jeff to require an hour or longer to understand some things he was clueless about before.

However, the confidence with which Old Jeff said that he only required the materials to start forging the Serpentine Blade made Dilan aware of the thunderous noise of his thundering heartbeat.

“Does that mean you can add the Orb of Pyromancy as well, or will you have to forge the Serpentine Blade a few times before you can tell whether or not they’re compatible with each other?”

Old Jeff had expected this question, which was why he could only chuckle lightly.

“Dilan...you should understand that an occupation is solely supporting one’s already existing capabilities. They’re just a means of support, though an extremely powerful one.

Even though I feel confident in forging the Serpentine Blade thanks to the enhancements and upgrades I received by advancing to Tier-1, I’m not omnipotent, you know!”

By saying this, Old Jeff clearly told Dilan that he had no idea whether the Orb of Pyromancy would be compatible with the Serpentine Blade or not.

However, that was perfectly fine with Dilan. After all, Old Jeff would have to start forging first in order to regain his proficiency, and improve it further with the help of his blacksmithing mastery ability.

Afterward, he could start experimenting a little bit before he even started considering merging materials he had little knowledge about.

But even if all of this was the case, Old Jeff didn’t seem too worried. Rather, he was confident and with a smile he opened his hand wide as a blazing flame emerged in his palm.

A bright smile appeared on Old Jeff’s face as only now did he accept that everything was real and not just a beautiful dream.

“Let me introduce you to the Wise Blacksmith’s personal flame, the Source Flame of the Dawn!”

Chapter 149 Destructive force

“I had never expected the difference between Tierless and Tier-1 to be so big. We have to work harder, otherwise, the gap between us and our leaders will only increase!”

“Kathrine is so powerful and beautiful. No wonder everyone looks up to her...”

“Our Leader is the strongest! Williams’ demonstration was not only mesmerizing but also overflowing with power. Maybe he is even stronger than Leader Dilan!!”

“Stronger than Dilan...are you still asleep? Leader Dilan provided Williams and Kathrine with the remaining Essence crystals which they required to advance to Tier-1. Do you think he would have done so without having the required strength to subdue them if necessary?”

Furthermore, I heard that some Essence crystals were Silver Tier-1 Essence crystals! Even if Williams and Kathrine are far stronger than before, I don’t believe that they’ll be able to reach Dilan’s prowess!”

Dilan was able to overhear a heated debate when he entered the hospital once again.

Lunchtime was already over and both Williams and Kathrine seemed to have undergone their advancement to Tier-1 as well.

If he understood the situation correctly, the two had even demonstrated how powerful they had become after advancing.

'That is a good idea to motivate more Ascenders to improve faster and to provide more security to the easily scared survivors. Not bad, at all!

Was that Sven's plan, or did they come up with this on their own?'

Dilan just smiled faintly while walking past the survivors. They were still discussing Kathrine and Williams' demonstration of power after advancing..

The more he heard, the more interested Dilan became in finding out just how much the two had improved.

Thus, he headed to the permanent Gate before stepping through it without a moment of hesitation.

Once he emerged on the other side of the Gate, Dilan took a quick glance at his back.

Before he had been unable to see in the darkness. That was not the case anymore owing to his passive Nightvision ability.

The darkness behind him spread further and enveloped more than a dozen meters behind him before he saw the faint outlines of the wall.

It was nothing impressive but it still made Dilan smile.

'Nightivison is truly powerful after being enhanced by just two ranks.'

Dilan recalled the way to the cavern entrance he had told Kathrine and her people to make use of.

It wouldn't take long for him to reach them, even less after he activated [Thunder Step].

When the thunderous sound of the ability's activation originated from him, Dilan shot through the small part of the 'valley'.

Horned rats, Krendels, and both their mutations and evolutions could be seen everywhere.

There were far more War Krendels and Tier-1 existences than before. This made Dilan confused for a moment because it was not supposed to be like this.

However, he also recalled that the Gate's notification had changed.

Dilan began to think that not only the Gate in the hospital had been altered but the same must have happened to the other Gate, and maybe all Gates connected to Milarn.

Of course, he was not sure about that but once he was to start researching the truth, Dilan would be able to figure out how much he had to tweak his plan.

Passing by the monsters he had once fought with his life on the line, he kept moving forward and his speed never decreased.

Dilan didn't waste any time killing monsters, with the sole exception of when he encountered those which he presumed to be Tier-1 Bronze monsters!

While Kathrine and the others had to collect all the ores and the Graphene, Dilan had to ensure to have enough Essence crystals for Old Jeff to create Molten Tier-1 Essence.

Because he wanted the Serpentine Blade to be of a higher quality, only Bronze Tier-1 Essence crystals were barely made the cut.

If possible, a Serpentine Blade made of the highest quality materials and Silver Tier-1 Essence crystals would make him the happiest.

However, Dilan knew that hunting down dozens of Silver Tier-1 monsters would require way too long and even then he couldn't be sure of the benefits it would bring.

Maybe it was not even worthwhile to hunt Silver Tier-1 monsters so as to forge a Serpentine Blade out of their hide.

That was highly unlikely but in the current times, Silver Tier-1 monsters were simply too rare. Even Bronze Tier-1 monsters were rarely spotted.

Only ordinary monsters could be seen roaming around everywhere but the Essence they provided was not exactly high, even less if one required 20 times the Essence others needed to level up once!

Thus, Dilan didn't spare any of his valuable time to hunt monsters that obstructed his path.

It took him only a few minutes to reach the cavern entrance. He immediately spotted all the different colors of the Lumina crystals followed by small deposits of Jadetite and Silver iron ore.

Earlier, many horned rats and Krendels could be seen working as a big team to mine and transport these ores and the Lumina crystals.

But now, only corpses littered the ground. Dilan was not even able to see any lizards, bats, Earthworms or armadillos that were alive.

This astonished him a little bit, and not long after huge bolts of lightning pierced through the surroundings. They destroyed huge rocks and remnants of former ore deposits.

A painful squeal reached Dilan a moment later before it quieted down at once.

'That was Kathrine, wasn't it?'

His mouth twitched at this thought and excitement spread through his entire body.

It was not as if he underestimated Kathrine's power but if she was truly able to manifest the said bolts of lightning, his worry about their group's combat prowess would decrease rapidly.

Dilan knew that his occupation did not grant him the ability to fight in an overly magnificent way. That was quite obvious as he was merely able to manifest a blueish shield and create a slash made of compressed mana.

Some may say that this was already extraordinary enough but Dilan knew that wielding elements while moving around dozens of objects at once and so on was more interesting.

That was, if one was just an ordinary spectator, and one wanted to look at a fight instead of actively participating in it.

Dilan jumped on top of a stone, where he could see that Kathrine was breathing heavily. She was standing next to a few Ascenders, who looked at her in both fear and admiration.

“Good fight!”

Dilan spoke in a voice loud enough for Kathrine to hear him.

His voice attracted everyone’s attention. Some instinctively grasped their weapon even tighter than before, only to calm down the moment they saw that it was Dilan who had complimented Kathrine.

However, instead of feeling elated at Dilan’s praise, Kathrine could only frown. She had fought a Bronze Tier-1 monster with all her might and barely defeated it after shooting her highly enhanced Lightning strikes at it.

She had to use up all her mana in order to defeat the monster, which Dilan could defeat easily.

Even if Kathrine had yet to see Dilan defeating such a monster, having seen the Essence crystals Dilan had brought back was more than enough for her to understand Dilan’s might and strength, or, at least, the fact that she was unable to reach him for now.

Smiling bitterly, she nodded her head while thanking him for the praise.

“I gave my best. Why are you here? I thought you told Williams that you have something else to do...”

In the end, Kathrine was correct. Dilan had planned to visit every single of the buildings he had marked early in the morning.

He had been ready to bring all survivors to the Rian mountainside hospital and give them shelter if they were willing to accept his help.

Unfortunately, his excitement and a weird feeling had brought him to the Krendel’s Underground Valley.

And from the looks of it, his decision to come to help Kathrine wasn’t wrong.

After all, the monsters in the Krendel’s Underground Valley had grown stronger.

Something had changed. This ‘something’ was nothing else than the influence of the [Universe’s Faith] but that...was not what Dilan would be able to comprehend, not today, nor in the near future.

However, what Dilan was bound to witness soon as the true extent of the [Universe’s Faith]’s influence because EVERYTHING was about to change once again!

Chaos was about to descend...

Chapter 150 Lightning Warrior

After Dilan told Kathrine that Old Jeff was ready to start forging and that he was only waiting for the first batch of forging ingredients, she hurriedly completed all the preparations to start mining.

Because they didn’t possess any mining tools, they had to use their weapons that were either coated with mana, or strengthened by their abilities.

Dilan helped in a rather simple manner and used [Mana Slash] with the least Units of Mana to cut through the large ore deposits that he could clearly see jutting out of the ground.

Collecting Lumina crystals, Jadetite, and Silver Iron ore was the most important step to start with as Sarah would be able to finally begin concocting the mana replenishment potion while Old Jeff could start testing how the forging process of mana-enriched materials would differ from the usual process.

After Kathrine defeated the Bronze Tier-1 monster, no other monster dared show up. However, that was mostly the case because the monsters in the cavern tunnels were lurking in the shadows, cowering in fear at the prospect of facing Dilan.

Dilan was able to see some monsters in the darkness but he didn't bother about them because most of them were quite weak.

But once a few hours had elapsed, Dilan chose to change his point of view.

They had already gone up and down the street several times while carrying huge bags filled with numerous materials. This was great but far from enough and Dilan felt that they were too slow.

Kathrine and the others acted very vigilant in the huge cavern entrance and expected to get attacked at any moment.

Dilan was glad that they were vigilant but this was only due to the fact that a single Silver Tier-1 monster would be capable of decimating them all.

The Ascenders around him and Kathrine were not at Tier-1 either.

With fear making them take every step with extra care, their efficiency dropped drastically.

That was more than enough reason for Dilan to change his way of thinking once again..

'If they're too afraid to mine the ores without worries, how about I give them enough reason to feel reassured and confident?'

Dilan's thoughts and the plan he had in mind were quite easy.

He wanted to hunt for the next few hours and decided to make use of the deeper parts of the mineral cave as his hunting ground.

There might be monsters that were even stronger than Dilan but this was something he would be happy to encounter.

After all, his weakened state had long since elapsed and he was ready to go all-in once again.

His hands were itching to fight and kill again, which was evident as Dilan proposed what he had on his mind.

"Instead of continuing to mine, we will enter the mineral cave's tunnels! There are many monsters inside but we will kill all of them. I want everyone to give their best! If a monster is too powerful for you to handle alone, team up with your comrades, or ask for help!"

Dilan didn't even mention allowing the Ascenders to stay behind. That was up to them to decide.

It was not an option Dilan offered them but something they had to speak up for on their own. If they were too afraid to fight powerful monsters and had only reached level 10 in order to enter the Gate and help in mining that was fine with him.

However, they should speak for themselves if they were uncomfortable with an order. That was also something Dilan wanted to imprint in the minds of his people- they were free to voice out their concerns and share their opinions.

As long as it was not an unjustifiable reason he would listen to them.

But oddly enough, none of the Ascenders wanted to say anything. He did not see fear in their eyes, which was contrary to what Dilan had expected.

‘Weren’t they vigilant because of the fear of getting attacked?’

He was confused for a moment and didn’t realize that his activated title [Beyond the Stars] influenced the minds of the Ascenders in his immediate proximity.

-Allies in the range of 100 meters gain courage through the Title wielder’s presence!-

That effect was something Dilan had completely forgotten about. Even right now, he was ignorant to the true extent of the influence a title could have on the people around him.

Being oblivious to the truth, Dilan could only look around in confusion. But there was no reason to feel bad about the behavior of the Ascenders around him.

With a satisfied expression, Dilan told everyone to activate the Lumina crystals they had harvested not too long ago.

Afterward, they entered the first cavern tunnel with equal parts of excitement and fear in their minds.

The darkness was not fully dispelled even though the Lumina crystals had been activated.

That was something even Kathrine couldn’t ignore. However, Dilan’s confidence reassured her that everything would be fine.

The tension in her body decreased, visibly calming down the other Ascenders the moment they noticed this.

All of a sudden, without giving them any prior warning, Dilan shot forward. He disappeared in the darkness the moment he dashed out.

Following this, one could only hear something cutting through the air, accompanied by squeals of pain.

The mana that circulated through the surroundings slowly became unstable but stabilized the moment the screams of pain died down.

However, the darkness in front of Kathrine and the Ascenders didn’t disappear. Instead, it was as if Dilan had just awoken all the living beings within the cavern tunnel that was marked by numerous overlapping sounds that reached them at once.

“Dozens of monsters...no they’re at least hundreds and are on their way towards us??” One of the Ascenders suddenly mumbled, shock visible in her eyes.

As her first ability, the young woman gained a passive ability that enhanced her hearing sense drastically. Despite not being prone to fighting, the last two weeks had been more than enough to change her mind.

Many were still unwilling to fight and that was the case even though they knew that Milarn had changed.

Peace was not an option anymore...that was something even pacifists should have understood by now!

Worry could be seen in Kathrine’s eyes the moment she heard the noises made by the footsteps of the huge number of monsters that approached them.

But Dilan’s disappearance made her feel even worse because she was not able to tell whether he was fine or injured.

Dilan was perfectly fine and completely unscathed. This was something Kathrine should have understood by now. She roughly knew how strong he was and that the horde of monsters posed no threat to him.

Yet, even then, it was as if her gut had been twisted the moment Dilan fought in the darkness, all alone at that!

He returned just seconds after he had disappeared with blood trickling down the Gray Slayer, and a faint grin blossoming on his face as he pointed at the darkness.

“The strongest monsters have been taken care of, the rest is on you guys!” The smile that was seemingly gentle at first glance turned into the sly smile of a devil in the view of all Ascenders.

They swallowed their saliva in fright but readied themselves without commenting about Dilan’s way to force everyone to fight.

Facing a numerical disadvantage despite being stronger in terms of the average stats wouldn’t determine victory.

One had to pay attention to their team, work together, and make use of their abilities in combination.

In fact, Kathrine was not even able to use her enhanced [Lightning strike] in the cavern tunnel simply because of its high destructive force.

Even if the cavern tunnel was large, the bolts of lightning were likely to hit the Ascenders, who fought in the front.

She would either have to be in front of everyone else and fire her bolts of lightning at the monsters or severely restrict the power of her ability.

Both options were possible for Kathrine with the latter being the most difficult as she had just advanced to Tier-1.

Kathrine had yet to get adjusted to the abilities she received through the Occupation she chose. At the same time, the upgrades her [Lightning Strike] had received were a bit similar to what Dilan had received.

However, instead of all abilities receiving an upgrade in force, Kathrine would only receive an amplification of her lightning-attributed attacks.

This was owed to the occupation she chose, which was also one of the reasons why Kathrine could easily fight in the front without being worried about getting injured!

<Lightning Warrior> a Rare+ occupation that focused on providing guidance to the wielder in fighting close combat using the lightning element.

Despite 'only' being a Rare+ occupation, Kathrine's destructive force was even higher than Pyro's which was a notable achievement as he was in possession of a powerful ability that was perfectly suitable for his Origin ability!

She was the first one to rush past Dilan and threw several activated Lumina crystal shards ahead before initiating the fight as the head of her group.

With the use of the Luminar crystal shards, it was possible for her and the other Ascenders to see the monsters in the deeper parts of the cavern's tunnel.

No hesitation could be seen in Kathrine's movements as she brandished her sword, slicing apart a bunch of Tierless monsters in the blink of an eye.

Kathrine didn't stop at that, rather she kept advancing further, leaving a pile of corpses behind.

The sight of her fighting without hesitation provided the necessary push to the other Ascenders. They tightly grasped their weapon before following Kathrine in a battle against monsters that were ten times higher in number than their entire group!

"Maybe they're not that bad..."