

## World 111

### Chapter 111: Killing The Lizardman Shaman

Jack slammed onto a hut and bounced off it. He barely managed to keep his footing when he touched the ground.

Suddenly a barrage of arrows came raining from the sky. Jack was taken by surprise, but he still reflexively lifted up his staff which still had the Magic Shield on. The shield however couldn't protect all his body parts, its coverage area was not large enough. There were ten arrows coming down on him, he blocked three, while suffered the hit from two arrows, the remaining five punctured around the ground closed to him.

He did not need to take a look to know this was the Lizardman Archer's doing.

The Lizardman Chief used the time that Jack was dealing with the arrows to get closed to him. It swung its heavy axe towards Jack once it came into melee range.

Jack didn't intend to tussle with the Lizardman Chief at the moment. He jumped back to avoid the blow. When he landed, he was just about to turn around and ran again when he heard cracking sound from behind him. He looked back and saw the ground was opening up as green vines came out from it.

The damn Shaman again! Jack uttered in his mind.

He immediately did a backflip and swung his sword at the same time. It cut the vines that were lashing at him. Jack glanced at his radar to find out the position of the Shaman, it must had gotten closed in order to cast the vine spell. He made his way to the Shaman's position while utilizing his speed to evade Lizardman's Chief frenzy attacks.

Good thing was that red glow in its eyes had gone out, its speed seemed to be decreasing slightly. Jack intended to exploit this window before it used that enhancing roar again.

When the Lizardman Shaman came into view, Jack immediately ran towards it. It chanted a spell and the ground between it and Jack cracked and numerous vines came out again. It was like a long green carpet extending from Jack to the Shaman, but this green carpet was obviously not the welcoming sort.

The Lizardman Archer used another skill at this time. Its hand became a blur and shot three swift arrows from its bow consecutively.

Jack sneered, "you think that going to save you?"

He used Charge. The sudden speed burst of the Charge made the three arrows coming towards him missed completely. He cut through the vines like knife through butter. All the vines that got in his way were sliced to pieces from the Charge damaging effect. They did not even manage to slow down Jack's speed by a bit.

The Charge this time hit the Shaman as it was positioned much closer than last time. It took out another 100 HP from the Shaman's health bar. The life bar above it showed it to be around 30% left.

Jack made a fast Inspect with his monocle and found out the HP of the Lizardman's Shaman had only 866 HP left. He sent his past games' signature move of triple swift slashes and took out another chunk of health.

The Lizardman Chief had only used his Leap Strike a few moment ago, and with its buff gone, its running speed was also decreased. It was trying to come to the Lizardman Shaman's rescue but it was helpless to watch Jack continued his slashes while it still making its way over.

The Shaman tried to break away futilely while defending itself as best as possible using its staff, but Jack's speed of attacks obviously outclassed its own. The Lizardman Archer tried to disrupt Jack, but Jack either adjust his position to use the Shaman's body to block the arrow or simply ignoring the arrow attacks. The damage from normal arrow attack was after all, not significant due to his rare armor's ability that decreased 30% of range attack.

When the Lizardman Chief got close, Jack let the Lizardman Shaman go. He fired a Mana Bullet at the Chief. The Lizardman Chief use its tomahawk axe and chopped at the Bullet, destroying it, but the impact also halted its advance.

Jack looked at the fleeing Lizardman Shaman, it was running panicky for its life. Its back was towards Jack.

"I guess its time for your debut," Jack said and swung his black sword forward.

Sword of Light!

A trace of light appeared as it followed the swing trajectory of the tip of the sword. It formed a crescent shaped light that shot forward in a dazzling speed. It struck at the Lizardman Shaman's back and created an animation where the head split open and gush of blood burst out. The number appeared showed critical damage of 442 damage!

"Holy shit!" Jack exclaimed. Not only was the damage insanely high, it also created an animation where the target's head was split open!

The Shaman dropped to its knee after receiving the damage, then fell on his split face and not getting up anymore. Jack was wondering if the animation was due to the monster lost its life from that last strike or was from the skill itself. Could be both. Anyway, he was just glad that his opponent was down by one, it would make the rest of the fight easier.

The Lizardman Chief and Archer were stunned seeing their comrade fell. The Chief was trembling with rage, it then let out a much deafening roar compared to the first time. Its eyes were glowing with red again, but there was another added effect this time where its scale was also seemed to have a tint of red glow.

"Don't tell me, it will get stronger if one of its guards died?" Jack said.

"It seemed to be the case, it could have gone berserk." Peniel answered. She continued to float above Jack, following him.

The berserk Lizardman Chief lunged at Jack. Its speed was obviously faster than before, even when compared to when it was under the first buff. It arrived before Jack in an instant and made a slashing motion.

Jack was caught off guard, he did not have the time to use Magic Shield, so he used his sword to Parry instead. He could also feel the difference of the Lizardman Chief's strength from the impact. The force was much heavier. He was sent crashing to another hut. This time, instead of bouncing from the impact, the hut was destroyed instead. He just punctured through its wall and came out the other side. He fell to the ground, rolling to a stop and felt pain all over his body.

He did not just receive damage from the Lizardman Chief's attack, but he also suffered damage when crashing through the hut.

Before Jack could get up, he saw a figure burst through the same hut he punctured through. The already wrecked hut was now completely destroyed by the collision. The Lizardman Chief was flying out in mid air with its tomahawk axe raised high.

'What the...! Wasn't he just used its leap attack not long ago?!' Jack exclaimed in his mind while hurriedly summoning his Magic Shield and put it in front of him.

The axe came down and crashed with the shield. Jack stored his sword and used both hands to hold his staff, but he still felt as if the force of the impact had flattened him. The ground behind his back cracked in a spiderweb pattern because it couldn't stand the force of impact.

He suffered 126 damage even after blocking with his Magic Shield. If this enhanced Leap attack hit a common level 15 Ranger or Magician, it would most likely kill them with just one hit!

During this time, Peniel could still find the time to answer what he had shouted previously in his consternation, "the berserk effect must have rebooted the cooldown of its skills."

Jack was speechless with the Fairy, but he did not have the time to converse with her, as he saw the Lizardman Chief lifted his axe again. It then brought it down again and again with fervor. Jack was struggling to keep on blocking using his shield. When it brought down its axe for the fourth time, Jack rolled sideways out of the way. The axe struck deep into the ground, and stuck inside.

Seeing the stuck axe, Jack made a split decision whether to use this opportunity to attack or to flee. He chose fleeing. The berserk effect on the Lizardman Chief was pretty enormous, he was not going to take a risk just for a short moment for free attacks.

He ran as fast as he could while the arrow from the Lizardman Archer kept on shooting his way. Some missed, some lodged on his back. When the Lizardman Chief pulled out his tomahawk axe, peeling off some chunk of soil in the process, Jack was already some distance away.

## **Chapter 112: Hide And Seek, Hit And Run**

Most of the huts around his current area had already been demolished. He ran to the other side of the encampment, seeking to hide from the two Lizardmen first for the time being. At least until the berserk effect of the Lizardman Chief was over.

"You should have attacked just now when you had the chance," Peniel came flying next to Jack.

"Why is that?" Jack asked while running.

"During that kind of berserk state, the monster's defense is usually weakened," she answered.

Jack glanced back. No, it would still be too risky at this time, while the Lizardman Archer was still around to interfere. He asked Peniel, "please tell me that berserk skill of his got a time limit."

"It should be," Peniel answered with a smile, she seemed to be enjoying the show.

Jack had no time to comment on her expression. He weaved through the hut and trying to break away from the two Lizardmen's line of sight. Luckily the Chief's berserk version of speed was still not faster than Jack's.

When he thought they had lost him, he stopped and tried not to make any movement. He could hear the Chief demolishing every hut he got closed to out of fury, and also to reduce the amount of places Jack could use for hiding.

Jack took out another Basic Healing Potion and drank it, the cooldown for using potions had long over. He now had only two bottles left. He rested and allowed his Natural Body Recovery to heal the remaining HP.

Peniel was flying above where he was hiding while observing the two Lizardmen who were busying themselves looking for Jack. Jack looked at her helplessly and said, "lady, can you please stop flying above there? You will just expose my position. Can't you just watch from your hidden dimension?"

She flew down and replied to Jack with a tease, "tee-hee, it is more fun watching directly. I will just fly over there instead, might even fool them to give you more time."

She then went to the place she had mentioned, leaving Jack to recuperate further. Jack just remembered now that he wanted to ask Peniel how long usually that berserk would last, but she was out of whispering distance already. If he shouted to her, the Lizardmen might hear as well. So he just stayed quiet.

The two red dots were moving closer, while the sounds of hut breakings were also closer. Now that Jack thought about it, the one that broke the huts was only the Lizardman Chief. The Lizardman Archer didn't have enough raw power to do it. So he could determine which dot was the Chief from the hut breaking sound.

With that as a reference, he crept in silent around the Lizardman Chief and towards the Lizardman Archer. The Archer seemed to always stay some distance behind the Chief. It must not have expected Jack to have this radar system that allowed him to pinpoint their positions even without seeing them.

Jack was now only several meters away from the Lizardman Archer, he was going to make a surprise attack once the Lizardman Chief broke another hut.

When he heard the sound, he came out of his hiding and aimed its staff at the Lizardman Archer. But his opponent's reflex seemed to be rather fast as well. It immediately noticed Jack and aimed its bow. The two of them shot their ammunition at the same time. Jack's Mana Bullet passed side by side with the slim arrow.

Although surprised by the Lizardman's counterattack, Jack still managed to duck in time to avoid the arrow. But to his astonishment, the Lizardman Archer also ducked and dodged his Mana Bullet.

Crap! This one was more agile than the Shaman, Jack cursed in his mind.

The Lizardman Archer then screeched a warning to its comrade. The Lizardman Chief immediately turned around after hearing it. Jack could see the Chief still had that coat of red glow around it, the berserk effect was not off yet. It came running towards Jack with fast speed.

Jack knew he would never be able to deal with the two of them while the Chief was still in a berserk state. So he immediately turned tail and ran away. He ran towards the place where there were still some wooden huts standing, amidst volley of arrows. His HP was continuously chipped by each arrow. He swore he would get that Lizardman Archer next.

"How long will that berserk state last?" He asked Peniel who had come flying next to him.

"I don't know, it's different for each monster," she answered. "But the longest in record was five minutes, so it shouldn't be longer than that."

Jack glanced back as he continued to run, the Lizardman Chief was still chasing after him with the eerie red glow. If what Peniel said was right, then the berserk should be coming off soon.

He immediately dashed behind a hut once he reached one, the arrows that was still chasing him stuck on the wall. Jack moved from hut to hut to get out of their line of sight. He soon heard sound of hut getting demolished again. He had to defeat the Lizardman Archer fast. If not, all the huts in this encampment would be destroyed soon, except for the giant main hut at the center. Then he would not be able to play hide and seek with these Lizardman again.

He looked at his radar and crept back again. He was repeating his previous strategy to get close to the Lizardman Archer. But now that he knew the Archer's agility, he would need to get closer to pull it into melee combat.

The berserk should be off already by now, Jack thought as he made a rough calculation on the time when the effect had started. Still, he decided to wait another minute just to be sure, while continued to stay close with the Lizardman Archer without it being aware.

Once Jack considered it to be safe enough, he came out and immediately casted Energy Bolts and Charge. Since the Energy Bolts had tracking property, the Lizardman Archer's agility was useless. The Bolts chased after it and struck its body. It managed to dodge Jack's Charge though. Jack followed up with Swing after Charge, the large area of attack caused the agile Archer to unable to dodge this time.

He then used his speed to stick closed to the Archer and continued to slash on it. It was harder to hit the Archer as it had faster movement speed compared to the Shaman, Jack roughly could hit him once out of every two attempts.

The Lizardman Chief was closing in, but its berserk state had really gone, so it took longer time for it to come to the Archer's rescue. Jack sent it a Mana Bullet to hinder it a bit. He then looked for a chance to strike a sure hit on the Archer and used Power Strike, which send the creature flying towards the Lizardman Chief.

He then ran away again to hide among the remaining huts.

He repeated this hit and run tactic again another two times, chipping another chunk of HP from the Lizardman Archer.

The Lizardman Chief was furious, he performed the spinning attack again to raze the still standing huts down. There were now only six wooden huts left apart from the giant one at the center of encampment. Jack would soon run out of places to hide.

The Lizardman Archer had also wised up after getting ambushed several times. It now stayed close to the Lizardman Chief. In this way, even if Jack ambushed it, the Chief would be able to deal with him soon.

Good thing for Jack was that after his several hit and run attacks, the Lizardman Archer only had 20% HP left. He just needed another burst of attacks to take out its remaining life. He was analyzing if he should take the risk of dealing with the two monsters at the same time in order to kill the Lizardman Archer.

### **Chapter 113: HP Race**

When another hut was razed, Jack knew he could not delay anymore. He looked at the radar and predicted which hut would be targeted next based on the Lizardman Chief's previous razing pattern. He then sneaked onto the opposite side.

When he arrived, another hut was destroyed. There was now only four left, including the one he was hiding at. So his distance with the two lizardmen was actually pretty short.

He took position as he waited for the Lizardman Chief to take action. When he heard the sound of another hut getting destroyed. He jumped out of hiding and casted Energy Bolts. He then returned to the back of the hut he was hiding at and ran out from the other side.

The Energy Bolts had taken both the Lizardmen's attention. As they were watching the bolts coming from one side of the hut, Jack dashed towards them from the other side.

Their reaction was a bit delayed due to attention on both fronts. Jack threw a Mana Bullet at the Lizardman Archer, but it managed to dodge it. However, this was intentional from Jack, as he had aimed the Mana Bullet a little to the side of the Archer, at the space in between the Archer and the Chief. So when the Lizardman Archer moved to the side to dodge the Bullet, it was also increasing its distance from the Lizardman Chief.

Jack used Sword of Light for the second time. The Lizardman Archer could not dodge as the crescent light traveled at a blinding speed. It struck at the Archer's chest, but it didn't produce critical hit this time.

Jack then got close to the Lizardman Archer, but instead of delivering slashes, he used Charge. Since he was executing it at a distance of one meter from the Lizardman Archer, it had no chance to dodge. The Charge traveled to a distance of eight meters, this meant the monster got dragged another seven meters away, putting more distance between itself and the Lizardman Chief.

After suffering consecutive hits, the Lizardman Archer's HP had fallen below 10%. With the Lizardman Chief some distance away, it had no chance to escape from Jack's relentless attacks.

The monster soon lost its remaining life and fell to the ground. Jack turned and looked at the approaching Lizardman Chief.

The Chief stopped in its track, looking at its last guard at Jack's feet. Its body trembled and uttered a low growl. It then released another soul rending roar. The berserk red aura returned to envelop its body.

Jack remembered Peniel said its defense was reduced when it was in this berserk state. Now that it was the last monster left, and there were not enough huts to play hide and seek with the monster anymore, Jack decided to just gamble on this last confrontation.

He took out one of the two remaining Basic Healing Potions to replenish his life to full. He then activated the Life Burning Art. He immediately lost 192 HP out of his full 640 HP, then he lost another 1 HP every one second. At this rate, he only had a little over seven minutes before his life ran out. This was also considering if he did not suffer any damage at all during the time.

He then activated his sword skill Overlimit to increase his sword damage output, his Storm Breaker transformed as it released energy with intimidating screeching sound. He also activated the Heightened State skill to increase his stamina and mana regeneration while reducing cooldown on all skills.

His status now could be said as his strongest condition.

The Lizardman Chief made the first move, it swung its heavy axe down at Jack's head. Jack sidestepped to dodge it. With the Life Burning Art active, all his stats had been doubled, thus his speed was much faster even with the Lizardman Chief having the berserk buff.

He made a slash at the Chief's waist. 199 damage!

It was just a normal slash. Even Jack was slightly shocked by the damage.

The Overlimit skill only lasted for 85 seconds, so Jack could not afford to let it go to waste. He utilized his overwhelming speed to deliver more slashes. All the next slashes produced damage over 200 damages. Jack figured this must have been due to Overlimit effect which reduced the opponent's defense further after the first hit.

He continued with his barrages of attack. The Lizardman Chief was not going to just stand there and let Jack hit it freely. It swung its axe to the side and started to spin its body. The berserk state had reset its skill's cooldown, so it could use that move again so soon.

Jack jumped back multiple times to put a distance as the spinning Lizardman rushed towards him. When it was about to connect, Jack turned to the side and used Charge. Fortunately, he had the Heightened State skill that reduced his skill's cooldown, so he could use the skill again so soon.

The Charge brought him out of the dangerous situation as he shot out from the Spinning Lizardman's path.

After his Charge ended, he turned and casted Mana Bullet and Energy Bolts. The Lizardman Chief's spinning stopped at the time as both spells hit him. It ignored both the spells as it squatted down before

kicking the ground and pushed itself forward. It flew rapidly towards Jack, covering the distance in an instance with its leap attack.

Jack had expected the move. He jumped forward and rolled on the ground. They passed each other with the Lizardman Chief above the air while he was rolling on the ground.

The Lizardman Chief landed but still continued to strike on the ground out of frustration. It turned around but was immediately greeted by Jack with a Power Strike to its knee, which caused 394 damage. The Lizardman Chief howled in pain as its knee buckled from the force.

It still tried to strike back with a swing upward, but Jack blocked it with Magic Shield. Jack continued to dance around the monster while he slashed and blocked with Magic Shield. With an injured knee, the Lizardman Chief was having worse time dealing with Jack.

Jack continued to bombard the Lizardman Chief with attacks. He sometimes got hit as well but most of the time he could dodge with his remarkable speed. The damages he suffered added by the continual HP loss from Life Burning Art actually caused his HP bar percentage to fall only slightly behind the Lizardman Chief. It was like both their HP bars were having a race, to see who would drop to zero first.

When more than a minute had passed, Jack's Overlimit expired. His sword turned back to its original appearance. His damage plummeted, but his Life Burning Skill was still active. Hence, he was still faster and stronger than his normal self. At this time, the Lizardman Chief HP was already below 30%, while his own was around 40%.

With his damage output not as considerable as before, Jack took a more cautious approach. He could not just focus on offense anymore and hope that the Lizardman Chief's life would expire before his now.

He put on his Magic Shield constantly and used it to block in combination with his speed to reduce his damage as much as possible, while sending attack every now and then to chip on the enemy's HP. When his Heightened State ended, the Lizardman Chief's HP was below 10% while his was a bit below 20%.

However, his life percentage was not comparable to the Lizardman Chief's 10%. As his life remaining at this time was 119, the Lizardman Chief in its berserk state could kill him in one strike if it could use its skills and score a clean hit. Fortunately, it had used them when its berserk state started, so now it could only rely on its normal attacks. However, even with normal attack, two clean hits would most likely take him out.

With that in mind, Jack jumped back and put a distance. Time to switch to kiting technique. He got rid of his Magic Shield and started to send the two range spells in his arsenal, and then followed them up with standard range attacks.

The Lizardman Chief was frustrated. It tried to chase Jack but it was a futile effort as its speed was much lacking compared to his. When its HP was only a little over 300, Jack already felt assured of his victory. Just a few more hits, he thought in his mind.

But the Lizardman Chief suddenly made another angry roar, stream of red energy burst out.

"Careful!" Peniel warned.



## Chapter 114: Settlement Core

The Lizardman Chief squatted down.

"Wait! Is it gonna—" Jack was familiar with that starting move. And as his bad feeling grew, the Lizardman Chief proved his suspicion to be true. It kicked off from the ground and flew towards him in high speed. It was using its Leap attack which was supposed to still be in cooldown.

In alarm, Jack realized it was too late for him to dodge. Even if he used his Magic Shield to block, the enemy move might still kill him based on his experience the last time he blocked this skill during enemy's berserk state.

In this critical moment, he suddenly realized one of his moves had just come off cooldown. He decided to just make a bet.

Sword of Light!

The crescent light shot out and bit at the Lizardman Chief at mid-flight. The light went passed it as monster's body was sliced clean in two.

Critical damage!

Jack was stunned as the two body parts fell in front of him.

He stood there and stared at the corpse of the Lizardman Chief near his feet. He was still in a daze until he heard the voice notification that congratulated him for having defeated the Lizardman Chief.

Before he could celebrate, he heard another notification, "congratulations! You have reached level 15 for Magician class."

Jack finally relaxed his body, he didn't realize that he had been holding his breath ever since he used the last Sword of Light. He let the trapped air out. His knees lost their strength and buckled, he fell on his butt. He sat there among the ruins of the encampment and looked up at the full moon. He reckoned it was closed to midnight at the moment.

Level 15 for Magician! He could try his advanced class trial for Mage now, putting both his classes at the advance stage. But that would have to wait until he got back to the capital. Probably after tomorrow morning's dungeon business with White Scarfs was over.

"That was close!" Peniel commented as she flew to his side.

"Yeah!" Jack nodded. "I thought I was a goner in that last second. I didn't know it can use its leaping attack again so soon."

"That must have been its near-death ability, some monsters possessed that. It must have reset the skill's cooldown again... Aren't you going to pick those up?" Peniel was referring to the loots on the ground, the Lizardman Chief corpse had disappeared and dropped some items.

"Give me a minute to rest, will you?" Jack said.

"I was wrong by the way," Peniel said.

"About what?"

"About a group of thirty level 12 or 13 adventurers to be able to raid this settlement. If it was only the lizardmen you decimated in that ravine there, it will be true. But against these three elite bosses? Those thirty adventurers will get mowed down. You would need at least fifty of them, or thirty at level 15 who have changed to their advanced class."

"I am only one, doesn't that mean I'm awesome?" Jack said with a wide grin.

Peniel rolled her eyes at him, "you are abnormal! Your dual class attributes completely outclass any adventurer at the same class. And you also have many equipment and skills that the average players don't have, which give you much advantage."

Jack nodded, but then said, "but they are still not enough. Look at how close it was just now. I have to become even stronger!"

"You won't be if you are just sitting there," she said.

"Okay, okay!" Jack said as he rose up.

He looked at the loots, frowned, and picked them up.

Chief Axe, level 15/35 (Rare two-handed axe)

Physical damage: 74

Attack speed: 1

Durability: 50

Dexterity +3

Apply knock-back force to every attack

"Crap! Rare weapon, but why is it an axe? What do I need an axe for?" Jack uttered with disappointment. "I can't sacrifice this for my Storm Breaker, can I?"

Peniel shook her tiny head, and affirmed him, "you can only sacrifice one-handed sword."

Jack looked at the axe on his hands. It made sense to drop axe, the boss was using it in the fight after all. Probably he would just dismantle it, he thought. But he felt it's a pity to dismantle a rare weapon. He just stored it for now and would decide about it later.

He checked the other loots, it was 8 silver and 63 copper coins, a Scale, and a Lizard's Gland, which was described as uncommon ingredient. He stored them all, then walked to the area where he had defeated the Lizardman Archer and Lizardman Shaman.

From their loots, he had collected 11 silver and 21 copper coins, another scale, and an uncommon staff. Together with the staff he was equipping, he already had three uncommon staffs. He needed another five more and he could combine them using the Transformation Box to become a rare staff.

After collecting the drops outside, he was ready to enter the main hut to check the settlement treasury now. But before that, he took a look at the Containers of Souls in his storage bag. He had been hunting

non-stop since he departed from the Capital, and he had killed many monsters to complete his hunting quests. When he checked at the collected souls, he was astonished to find that there were already 1003 souls inside. He had had enough to upgrade one level of his basic skill.

He immediately used 1000 souls to upgrade his Magician skill Heightened State to level 2. The skill had helped him in the battle just now allowing him to keep on using battle skills continuously. He expected he would still be relying on this skill in the future.

While he was upgrading his skill, he also noticed a change to his Power Strike skill. The dim stars in the skill description had one of the stars filled up with bright yellow color. This indicated his proficiency with this skill had increased due to multiple usages. He checked on the skill's description and saw that the star had increased the efficiency on the knockback force applied to this skill.

"Are you going to enter or not?" Peniel said with impatience as she flew around the door of the main hut.

"Coming," Jack said as he walked over.

He pushed the wooden door which was actually quite heavy, then walked inside. The interior was illuminated by several candles hanging on the wall. It was a simple circular room with no furniture except for something like an altar at the center of the room.

He approached that thing. "What's this?" He asked Peniel.

"It's the settlement core," she answered. "You need to break the core in order to complete the raiding of this settlement. You will get the reward afterwards."

"Break it? How do I do it? Do I just attack it?"

"Yes," Peniel nodded.

"That's simple," Jack said with a relief. He thought he needed to do some complicated thing again in order to complete this raiding. It was late already, and he was rather exhausted after the battle. He would like to take a rest soon for the rest of the night if possible. Tomorrow, he would still have a long day as he was required to join in on the clearing of the dungeon with Silverwing and the others.

He took out his Storm Breaker and without further ado, started hacking at the Settlement Core.

The Core was unexpectedly resilient. Even with his high damage, he could only reduce it to half after continuously attacking for a full minute.

"Does it have to be this hard to just destroy this Core?" He complained.

"If it is that easy to break, wouldn't you think people would just try to sneak in and destroyed it in secret?" Peniel countered. "Furthermore, once the core was attacked, an alarm will sound out in the head of every monster that was from this Settlement. So unless you have killed all the monsters first, or having a solid team to protect you, it shouldn't be possible to destroy the Settlement Core."

That made sense, Jack thought.

When the health bar of the core was near its end, Jack sent Power Strike with a flourish move.

"Finishing touch!" He yelled as the Power Strike connected.

Peniel smirked at his childish display. "Was that really necessary?" She said.

"Hey, I'm a young man if you haven't noticed," Jack countered. "I'm entitled to this kind of stress-relieved once in a while. I'm just through a stressful battle if you remember."

The Core broke apart as they were arguing, bright golden light poured out from it.

## **Chapter 115: Abundant Rewards**

The blinding golden light forced Jack to close his eyes. When it became dimmer, he could open his eyes and see again. The golden light was still pouring out but not as bright as before. Jack could see now that it was not just the light that poured out from the destroyed core, some objects were thrown out as well. Some of the most eye-catching ones were tiny gold colored round discs, that kept coming out one after another.

"Are those gold coins?" Jack asked with uncertainty.

"Yep," Peniel answered.

"Hot damn! There are so many of them," Jack exclaimed, and then asked again to make sure, "are you really sure they are gold coins?"

Peniel did not bother to answer the second time. She floated around the broken core as she observed the treasures that were still coming out of it.

"You really hit the jackpot, I wonder if it's because of your high luck stat?" She mumbled half to herself and half to Jack.

Jack wasn't really paying attention to her as his eyes were glued to the gold coins that were still pouring out. There were other items as well besides the coins, but those shiny golden coins were more eye-catching for him. He was trying to count them in futility as they came out.

When the golden light finally died out, he heard a voice notification, "congratulations! You have successfully raided a monster settlement, rewarding 100,000 experience points."

Jack was elated, there was still experience reward from successfully raiding the Settlement apart from treasure rewards? And the experience points rewarded were also so much! Another notification followed soon after.

"Congratulations your Warrior class have reached level 16

Your HP increase by 40

Your Stamina increase by 30

Your Strength increae by 5

Your Dexterity increase by 3

Your Intelligence increase by 1

Your Endurance increase by 3

Your Reflex increase by 2

Your Wisdom increase by 1

You receive 2 free attribute point and 2 free skill points"

Jack was stunned, Peniel was right, the attribute increase for Warrior class completely trounced that of the Fighter class. The free attribute and free skill points were also doubled. More free points would allow him more freedom in shaping his build. He opened his attribute window panel to have a look.

Storm Wind

Class: Warrior / magician

Level 16 / Level 15

Attributes:

- HP = 690
- Stamina = 280
- MP = 250
- Strength = 71 (+2)
- Dexterity = 63 (+5)
- Intelligence = 66
- Endurance = 68 (+4)
- Reflex = 52
- Wisdom = 66
- Luck = 12 (+1)

Free attribute point = 6

Free skill point = 2/2

He was still admiring his attributes when Peniel smacked his head from behind.

"Are you going to just let those treasures lying there on the floor?" She asked.

"Relax," Jack said. "What are you so hurried for? It's not like there is anyone nearby that will come and steal them."

"Hearing you say that, I really hope there will be one. So I can just laugh about it in your face after this."

Jack rolled his eyes. "Alright, alright. Let's see the treasures."

But when he was about to close his status window, he noticed that his Magician class which had just gone up a level not long before, had its experience bar already filled up to more than 70%. The experience reward from raiding a Settlement was truly abundant, Jack thought.

He then decided to set the experience sharing for the Magician to 0%. In other words, he was stopping the growth of his Magician class and focused all experience received to his Warrior class. Tomorrow he would go into dungeon with Silverwing. He did not know how much experience he would receive, it would be a pity if his Magician class increased to level 16 before he upgraded to advanced class. Once he finished tomorrow affairs, he would return to the capital to apply for his Mage advanced class.

After finished setting his experience distribution, he closed the status window and then came to the pile of treasures. After looking at the amount of gold coins, he swallowed his saliva. He tried to count it properly this time.

"No need to count it anymore, slowpoke," Peniel said. "I am bored waiting for you so I have counted them for you. There are 56 gold coins, 12 silver coins, and 67 copper coins."

"Fi— fifty six...?" Jack was dumbfounded. It was so difficult to get even 1 gold coin all this time, and now he had 56 of them.

Afraid that someone would really show up and steal the coins, he hurriedly stored all the coins into his inventory bag. He checked inside it, combined with the coin he had originally, he now had 59 gold coins, 20 silver coins, and 55 copper coins.

He was grinning from ear to ear. He was R-I-C-H!

"What are you grinning there like a fool? There are still more stuffs here!" Peniel chided him.

Reminded by the Fairy, he immediately looked at the remaining loots. He inspected them using his God-Eye monocle. There were five common and two uncommon equipment which he had no use of, he would dismantle them when he had the chance.

Then there were three common equipment which were medium armors. One shoulder part, one belt, and one boots, he would store them for later combining using the Transformation Box. There were also two uncommon equipment, one of which he could use.

Steel Spaulders, level 15/25 (uncommon medium armor)

Physical Defense: 27

Magical Defense: 23

Durability: 40

Reflex +2

The other uncommon equipment was another Magic Staff. Since it was weaker than the one he was using, he just stored the weapon. He was now only lacking another four uncommon staffs in order to combined them into a rare Magic Staff.

The remaining things were several iron ores and three steel ores, a bunch of cooking ingredients, a couple of shiny looking objects which he had never seen before, and a dark grey cloak. He stored the rest and checked on the shiny objects, there were two reds and one purple.

Ruby (common gemstone)

Amethyst (common gemstone)

"Gemstones? What are they for?" Jack asked.

"They can be used for multiple things, but most useful is if used in runecrafting," Peniel answered.

"Runecrafting?"

"Yes, it's one of your auxiliary skills. Just keep them for now. They will come in handy later."

"Will they fetch a good price if I sell them?" Jack asked. His concept of gemstone in the real world was just for decoration, making jewelries, and transaction purpose only.

"They will," Peniel replied. "But you will be a fool to sell them."

"Okay," Jack nodded his understanding and stored the gemstones. He then inspected the last item.

Cloak of Shadow (super rare cloak)

Darkness Resistance: 30

Completely concealed from Inspection

Become invisible if not moving for 3 seconds in shadowy place. Moving or getting attacked will dispel the invisibility

A super rare equipment! Jack was shocked. It was even a cloak, the only armor piece he was still missing.

"Darkness resistance?" He asked Peniel.

"That was surprising, stats that boost resistance usually only appear in high level equipment. You are really lucky. This resistance will really help you when you met opponents that use dark magic. Its other abilities are very amazing as well. I would say this is your best find yet, even compared to those pile of gold coins you just stored."

Jack agreed with her. This cloak really looked awesome, he admired it for a bit more while, then he equipped it.

"This Monster Settlement really gave lots of experience and rewards," he commented. "People should just look for ones and raid them, their profits are insane!"

"Only a lunatic like you will storm a Monster Settlement by your own," Peniel rolled her eyes. "The experience and rewards of a Monster Settlement is indeed bountiful, but it usually also takes a complete party in order to raid one. In that case, the experience and rewards will be spread among the party members, thus reducing the portion each people get. In addition, Monster Settlements are usually rather rare, it's not easy for you to stumble into one. And when one is found, usually many adventurers will compete in raiding it. You are just lucky to find this tiny sized settlement."

"This is tiny?" Jack asked with raised eyebrows.

"Yea, this encampment can be classified as the smallest size amongst settlements. For the biggest ones, you can compare them with the size of a town."

While they were talking, the main hut was suddenly shaking. The walls and roof then crumbled from the shaking, becoming the same as the ruins of the other huts which the Lizardman Chief had demolished during the fight. He looked at the place where the remaining four huts should still be standing, they were also in ruins already.

"The core had been destroyed, so the settlement will be dismantled," Peniel informed him. "By tomorrow morning, all these ruins will disappear as well. It will be as if there is never an encampment here."

As the main hut was gone, he looked at the night sky above.

"It's late already, let's just rest here for the night," Jack said as he took out his camping tent and set it up.

After finished setting it up, he turned to Peniel with a grin, "I've not yet found a tent which has an alarm function, so you don't mind be the lookout again, right?"

Peniel's eyes twitched when she heard it, she then helplessly said, "fine! Fine! You are lucky us Fairies doesn't need much sleep as you humans do."

## **Chapter 116: Encountering Wicked Witches Players**

Jack woke up the next morning just as the sun started to rise. There was no ambush in the night so he had a full rest throughout the night. They had decided to meet at the dungeon entrance on 8 AM, so there were still around two hours.

He stored his camping tent and took out his Apprentice Cooking Stove to make some meals. He made five portions of Chicken Soup with haste before storing them all into his inventory bag. He also made another Whetstone to replace the one he had used last night. He set out soon after, towards the destination that had been marked on his map. For breakfast, he just ate a bread while he was on the move.

He avoided the monsters in his radar as he was in a hurry. He could not afford to waste time fighting them. He arrived soon at a grove under the foot of Mount Thenias. The destination marking was now visible as a point on his map instead of an arrow indication. He knew then that he was not far off.

He went into the grove as it was the closest distance, he didn't have the time to go around it. The grove was not so populated with monsters, he could avoid them with ease with the help of his radar.

When he was a hundred meters into the grove, he noticed a small group of blue dots were entangled with a larger number of red dots. Some players were in combat with monsters. He gave it some thought and then decided to go over to see. They might be Silverwing's team, he should lend a hand if that was the case.



He could hear the sound of people fighting and yelling when he got closer. But all the yelling were women's voices. Were they group from Wicked Witches? If so, he should just let them fend for themselves. He didn't have a good impression from that arrogant grannie, Queen Magenta. But he decided to still continue to go closer to have a look.

He lowered his posture when he was close, and sneaked into a thicket that could conceal his presence. From there, he could see the group in fighting. There were four female players battling a group of seven cave trolls. They seemed to have been fighting for quite a while.

He inspected both parties in combat. The Cave Trolls were level 12 with two at level 13, while the female players were all level 12, except for one of them, who he recognized. It was Jeanny, one of the Wicked Witches players who sat beside Queen Magenta in the meeting yesterday. The other three were unknown to him. Jeanny was now level 13, one level higher than yesterday when Jack last saw her. She was holding a spear as her weapon.

The female players seemed to have difficulty as they were outnumbered. They had been able to be on an equal footing against the Cave Trolls as their teamwork were rather good. Jeanny and one of her comrades were Fighters, while the other two were a Ranger and a Magician. They covered each other well, it was obvious that they were used to fight as a team.

However, it was also apparent that they might not be able to last long. Each of them had lost quite some HP, and the Cave Trolls did not give them an opportunity to consume a recovery potion.

The Cave Trolls were small size, only a tad bigger than Goblins. They had black fur covering their entire bodies, with long snout of a nose. They fought using a stone club on each of their hands. Their eyes were dark and wild, they looked determined to crush these four female players into mincemeat.

Jack was contemplating whether or not to intervene. If that Queen Magenta was in this group, he would have happily walked away. He might even show himself and wave to her before walking away just to show some spite. But he had no enmity with these players here. Jeanny hardly spoke in the meeting, and she had not said anything that offended him during their encounter.

While Jack was in thought, another thicket opposite from where he was hiding at was ruffling. A large humanoid monster came out of it soon. Jack noticed its feature was similar to the Horned Ogre boss he had fought before, except for it being slightly smaller and without a horn. He inspected it using his God-eye monocle.

Ogre (Basic monster, humanoid), level 14

HP: 2000

They were done for sure, Jack thought. The female players seemed to be in agreement, judging from how pale their faces became. This Basic monster Ogre didn't wield any weapon, but his fists seemed deadly enough already. He gave out a savage roar as he waved his thick arms around in an intimidating manner while walking towards the group of female players.

Jack was considering what he would have done if these female players were not associated to Wicked Witches. He figured he would have intervened already without hesitation. After a few more brief

thoughts, he had decided. He would just treat this as he was doing his hunting missions. After all, both these monsters were among the list that he had yet to complete.

He cast Energy Bolts and Mana Bullet to the Cave Trolls, he then came out of hiding as he sent Sword of Light towards the Ogre which was moving towards the female players. The two spells crashed into three out of the seven Cave Trolls, while the Sword of Light struck on the Ogre's head.

The monsters that were struck, turned their attention to Jack. The female players were also startled by this interruption.

"It's you..!" Jeanny said when she saw the one who had intervened.

"You know him?" One of her comrades asked.

Jeanny nodded.

Jack retreated out of sight when he saw the Ogre and three Cave Trolls came towards him.

"Oh no," Jeanny uttered when she saw the four monsters chasing after Jack. "We have to help him! Those four monsters are too strong for him."

"We should worry about ourselves first," her friend said. "Good things he had taken some of the monsters with him. We should be able to deal with the remaining ones here."

"Don't worry about him, he should have his friends with him," another of her friends added.

"Yes, I saw spells from magician came from the place where he came out from. Let them deal with those monsters first, we will go help once we deal with the remaining ones here."

Jeanny knew that this was the only thing they could do at the moment. "All right, let's kill these monsters fast. We should have no problem now that there were only four of them. Let's hope they could hold out until we arrive."

It took them several minutes to deal with those remaining four Cave Trolls. They were not without injury, one of her comrade Ranger had his HP bar at the critical already.

"Let's drink healing potion and go to help them, I doubt they can hold out any longer," Jeanny said.

"Wait! Pick up the loots first," the ranger on the team said as she went around picking the coins and items dropped by the Cave Trolls.

"No time!" Jeanny said as she ran to where Jack had disappeared to. Her other friends had no choice but to follow. The ranger reluctantly followed at the back as she picked up as many loots as possible on her way.

When they came out of the thicket that blocked the view, they saw Jack was bending down picking items from the ground.

"Huh?" The four of them were confused as they looked around. Where were the Cave Trolls? where were the Ogre? Where were his teammate?

Jeanny approached Jack with bewildered look.

"Have your team defeated the monsters?" She asked.

My team? Jack asked in his mind. Then he remembered that he had used Magician's spells to draw the Cave Trolls' attentions. He decided to play along.

"They have left, I'm staying behind to pick up the loots," he said.

"Your team is rather capable," the female Magician said. "That big monster looked strong."

"It was a level 14 Ogre," said the Ranger who had used Inspect when the Ogre appeared.

"Ogre? Wasn't that the monster that one of our guild team had encountered two days ago? It took six of our strong members to kill a single Ogre, and they lost two people in the process."

"Amazing, did your team really defeat that monster in such short period? It was not even five minutes," the female Fighter other than Jeanny said to Jack.

"Well, we are very strong," Jack replied without a sense of humility.

### **Chapter 117: Gathering In Front Of The Dungeon Entrance**

"Are you on the way to the Dungeon as well?" Jeanny asked.

"I am," Jack replied as he picked up the last loot on the ground.

"We are almost late, we better leave now," he added.

Jeanny agreed, they then decided to go together since they were heading to the same place.

"So you all are from the Wicked Witches?" Jack asked.

"We are," Jeanny answered.

"Will all of you enter the dungeon as well?"

"No, only a party with maximum of ten people can enter. I will be the one that enter together with Warpath and three others from our guild," Jeanny answered. "Them three will be securing the area around the Dungeon entrance."

"You are the helper for the White Scarfs' side, right?" The female Magician asked. "Why do you not come together with White Scarfs's team?"

Before Jack could answer, one of her companions had already given her conjecture, "they did come together, right? Do you not remember he was with a team that defeated those Ogre and Cave Trolls. They must have gone to the ruins first."

"I see," the female Magician said as if came to realization.

"I didn't realize White Scarfs experts could be that strong. I always thought our guild had better experts despite lesser members than them at the moment," the Ranger said.

Jack was amazed by their ability to weave their opinions into a story. They had asked him a question, but now they were happily chatting without even needing his answer. Jack had a feeling that they might

even had forget his existence there. He didn't mind thought, saved himself from trying to create an explanation. He only smiled at the situation as they walked together to their destination.

When Jack saw some red dots not far to the front, he told the girls to make a detour.

"Why?" They asked. "Our destination is straight line forward if according to the map."

"It will be faster," Jack said.

"How can taking a roundabout way be faster than going straight? You don't make any sense," the female Magician insisted.

Jack was perplexed. He couldn't just tell them that he could detect hostile monsters at the front, could he? Not that they would believe him anyway.

"Could it be that your teammates who had gone ahead first, informed you to take the roundabout way?" Jeanny asked.

"Yes! They said there are monsters in front, so we will get hold up if we head straight. It is better if we avoid them," Jack immediately played along. He was thankful again for their imaginations in creating a story.

He took the lead as he guided them along the way, evading the monsters in the grove. Not long after, they were close already. They could even hear some other people chatting in the distance.

"Weird, why is it that it felt like our journey suddenly become so peaceful? We have been fighting monsters a lot before, but we didn't even see any for the last few minutes," the female Ranger commented.

"We must thank Mr. Storm Wind for leading the way," Jeanny said. "Your teammates are very kind to give you such guidance so we can save time."

Jack just replied with a smile, he did not intend to correct their misunderstanding.

"We are still late thought, it was passed 8 AM already," the Magician commented.

"Let's pick up the pace then," Jeanny said.

They were only late by ten minutes, Jack didn't think it was a big deal, but he followed them in increasing his walking speed. As they came nearer to the meeting point, they found out the chatting they had heard was not those of the merry kind. In fact, it sounded rather intense.

As Jack climbed up a sloping cliff, the ruins came into view. The ruins in front of him indicated that there used to be majestic structure in place there. Now, not a quarter of its former self was left, but he could still see its grandeur from what was left. He could see half of a ribbed vaults that implied a large hall was there in the past. Some of the walls were still standing held by several flying buttresses.

Jack could identify the dungeon entrance at one glance as it was an energy portal at the furthest part of the ruins, resting on a steep cliff. The portal had silvery surface that constantly changing, as if made of liquid material.

Underneath the ruins, Jack could see many people gathering. There seemed to be two groups which were having a discussion at the moment. Jack came over with Jeanny and the others and surprised to find out that apart from people from White Scarfs and Wicked Witches, there were also people from Death Associates. Scarface was having a talk with Silverwing and Queen Magenta. Red Death, Bigarm, Stonecleave, and also Blackjack was standing behind him.

Red Death looked at Jack when she noticed him coming. There was a glint in her eyes when she looked at him. She soon returned her attention to Silverwing and Queen Magenta. There was another person who stared at Jack, but unlike Red Death, he kept his stare on Jack with hostility. Jack ignored Blackjack's stare and he inspected the ones he knew there using his God-eye monocle.

Most of them had also increased by one level like Jeanny. Selena and Silverwing were now level 14, Sinreaper, Bluedaze, and Queen Magenta were level 13. They must have grinded for experience yesterday in preparation for today's dungeon. Warpath was still level 14 same as yesterday. There were also Honeycomb and Dashrunner who he had not met for a while, they were also level 13. Grimclaw on the other hand, was nowhere to be seen.

He then turned his attention to the Death Associates' people. Scarface and Red Death were level 14, while Bigarm, and Stonecleave were level 13. Blackjack who was hanging out with them was also at level 13.

There were several other players who Jack did not recognize, who stood beside Scarface. When Jack saw their names, he immediately knew which guild they were from. They were from another famous guild called Corporate United. This guild was unique as it required their members to change their in-game username or alias when they joined the guild, they had to add a corporate rank before their name.

The ones he saw here had the names of Manager Steelhand and Assistant Manager Ironhand, who were level 14 Fighter and level 13 Ranger respectively. Supervisor Killmonger who was a level 14 Fighter. Associate Trustaide and Associate Clearsky who were both level 13 Magician. Associate Clearsky was the only female amongst them.

"Peniel, is there any way to change your name?" Jack asked Peniel after seeing those Corporate United people.

"No, why do you ask?" She answered from her hidden dimension.

"Nothing important," Jack said with a grin. Those Corporate United would regret to have followed their tradition in this game world when they found out that they could not change their names. In previous games, they often changed their rank names when one of them got promoted or demoted. This rank names allowed them to clearly distinguish their positions in the guild. If they could not change their names, they would stay with lower rank name even if they got promoted, this would certainly create chaos amongst them.

"What are you smiling about? You have been late and you still have the guts to smile," Warpath criticized when he saw Jack's grin.

Jack frowned. The heck was this guy's problem? Did he seriously try to pick a fight whenever they met?

Queen Magenta who heard Warpath's words, turned around. She looked at Jeanny who had come together with Jack, and said with displeasure, "Why are you with that nobody? I told you to follow me to come here already this morning. Because you are hanging around with him that you become late and show lack of discipline."

"No, it's not like that," Jeanny protested. "We were attacked by strong monsters, and it was only because of Mr. Storm Wind that—"

Queen Magenta's face turned ugly when she heard Jeanny was defending Jack. She cut her in mid-sentence, "you should choose the people you hang around with more wisely. If you hang around with rubbish, you will also become a rubbish. You are only in this guild because of your family. Do not flatter yourself as if you are an important person in the guild!"

She did not bother to hear Jeanny's explanation anymore as she turned back her attention to the people of Death Associates and Corporate United.

Warpath gave a mocking smile after Queen Magenta's insults on them. Jack ignored him. He said to Jeanny, "Don't bother about that granny, she must be having her period today."

## **Chapter 118: Monopolizing The Dungeon**

Jack didn't bother to say his words in low voice, hence Queen Magenta heard his words. She turned around and hissing angrily, "what did you say just now?"

Jack pretended to not hear her and just walked towards Bluedaze under her glare. Jeanny was having trouble trying to stifle her giggle.

"What's the matter with those people from Death Associates and Corporate United?" He asked Bluedaze.

She looked at him for a moment then made a glance at Jeanny, "What's the deal between you and those Wicked Witches girls?"

"Nothing, I just met them on the way," Jack said honestly.

Bluedaze eyed him for a moment longer before answering his question, "Those two guilds had found out about this dungeon. We don't know how they knew, probably the same as us through the info in the library. Anyway, now they were also trying to clear this dungeon. And similar to us and the Wicked Witches, those two guilds have partnered up in order to pool their experts together for clearing this dungeon."

"So what's the commotion?" Jack asked. "Is the dungeon can only be entered one at a time? Have they entered first and now we have to wait until they come out?"

"No, there is no limitation to how many groups that go in. Just a limitation of one group at maximum of ten people."

"Then what's the problem? Just go in and see who can clear the dungeon before the others."

"You are thinking this too simply," Bluedaze said. "With so many of us big guilds making a move, there were sure to be people watching. Probably soon there would be many other guilds finding out about this dungeon and will be making their way here. When that happens, our chance of getting the item we want will go down even further. Now we are discussing about putting a joint security team, to prevent the others from going into this dungeon, at least until we got the thing we had come for."

"So you are monopolizing the dungeon?" Jack frowned. "That's rather tyrannical, don't you think? What happens to fair competition?"

Bluedaze rolled her eyes at him, "haven't you heard the saying might makes right? Even if we don't agree to it, the other three guilds will cooperate to monopolize the dungeon. If that happens, we will be the one to suffer. If those small guilds and independent players want to complain, then they should just complain for them being weak."

Jack was reminded again why he hates being in a guild. It just did not feel right. Gaming was supposed to be fun, but those overcompetitive guilds had made it into some kind of live or die experience. They were fighting over in-game resources and sometimes bullying weaker players who had come for the same resources, completely ruining those small players' enjoyment within the games.

Jack had had several confrontations with such guilds in his past games. He was tempted to just say goodbye to them at this moment and to just leave this mess behind. But then again, this world they are currently in couldn't be completely regarded as a game. Still, being a bully did not sit right with him. He figured he would just help them this one time, seeing it as repaying the favor Silverwing had given him before. After this, he would put some distance from them.

'Peniel, do you know what is the item these guilds are trying so hard to get?' Jack asked the hidden Fairy in his mind.

"I could make an educated guess if it is the first clear reward from this dungeon," Peniel answered him.

'What is it?'

"It should be the Guild Creation Token."

'Guild Creation Token?'

"Yes, it was an item that allow you to form a guild without paying the fee to Guilds Association."

'There is a Guilds Association? But I thought they were already a guild? What's there to create?' Jack asked with confusion.

"They are calling themselves guild, but it's only a gathering. They are not yet real guild recognized by this world." Peniel replied. "To form a real guild, you would need to go the Guilds Association to fill in applications and pay a certain fee. You also need to have at least thirty members that are willing to be the guild members. Once everything is fulfilled, then the guilds will be formed. There will be benefits for being members of this world-approved guild, and the benefits will be more as the guild leveled up."

'There is also level for guilds?' Jack asked with a surprise.

"Of course," Peniel answered. "The most obvious difference in guild level is the number limit of their members. First level guild can have at most five hundred members. After it upgrade to level 2, it will

double up and can hold one thousand members. Guilds will also be able to receive special quests that are only available for guild members. And they will also have the chance to purchase lands and build guild specific structures provided that they have the funds."

Jack pondered about this information. No wonder they were so desperate to clear this dungeon.

'What's the cost for starting up a guild using fee in the Guilds Association?' Jack asked.

"Ten gold coins," Peniel answered.

'That's cheap,' Jack said.

Peniel had the urge to come out and slap the guy on his face. He had the guts to belittle ten gold coins just because he was lucky enough to have successfully raided a Monster Settlement and got himself a large stack of gold coins. Otherwise, it would take him a very long time to gather such an amount.

"It seemed like the talk is over," Bluedaze said when she saw that Silverwing and Queen Magenta came towards them. Scarface and Manager Steelhand had also turned away with their entourage.

"How does it go?" Bluedaze asked when Silverwing approached.

"Each of us will provide twenty people for security detail around the dungeon entrance," he said. "Each of us will also only send one group at a time. We can partner up among our four guilds, but if one of our members enter the dungeon in a group, then the next one can only enter after the first one comes out. This will take effect until one of us get that item."

Bluedaze nodded her understanding.

There was a commotion from the dungeon entrance, they looked over and saw three people came out from it. The three went towards the Death Associates group after exiting.

"Those are Death Associates scout group," Bluedaze informed. "They had been sending scout parties non-stop since they found out about this dungeon yesterday. It seemed like their determination on getting the item is not weaker than us."

"That is true, and they seemed to be ready to send their main force in now," Silverwing commented when he saw Scarface and Red Death getting ready while listening to the scout group's report. "Just as us who will be entering with Wicked Witches, they will be entering with the experts from Corporate United. It might be a race between us two groups when we entered."

"Even if they fail, they can come out from the entrance?" Jack asked, hinting at the three people who came out a moment before.

"Yes," Bluedaze answered, "the ones who died will be sent back to the capital. But if you are sure to not being able to proceed, you can safely exit again from where you entered."

"You already planning to escape before you go in?" Warpath was intent on picking a fight with Jack.

"That's what happened when you pick a newbie," Queen Magenta joined in, then he turned to Silverwing and said seriously, "I have to say this, if we fail because you bring useless member, I will partner up with Death Associates or Corporate United next. I have no intention to waste my time."



Silverwing who usually smiled was now wearing a somber face instead. This Wicked Witch woman had kept on acting as if they were the one needing her help, while it was actually a mutual partnership. Adding the fact that two new strong competitors had appeared, and that bloody Grimclaw was still nowhere to be found! He had the urge to scold back at Queen Magenta, but he kept his calm, and said instead, "there is no need for you to worry, we've always been giving our best."

Queen Magenta glanced at Jack, "it doesn't seem to be the case."

"The three gold coins bet is still on, right?" Jack shot back at her.

She replied with a smirk, "of course, I have the chance to get a free income, why shouldn't I?"

"Likewise," Jack retorted.

### **Chapter 119: Deciding The Boss Loots**

Queen Magenta was clearly unhappy that Jack still dared to mouth back at her. She said heatedly, "If we fail because of you, not only will White Scarfs pay for the coins. Our Wicker Witches experts will also be hunting you down, as a punishment for you wasting our time."

"I will join the hunt for free," Warpath added with a wicked grin.

"Can we not fight among ourselves?" Silverwing said with annoyance. "The other group was already about to enter."

They turned and saw Scarface, Red Death, and Manager Steelhand leading seven other players walking towards the dungeon entrance. Blackjack was also among them. One by one they disappeared into the portal. Its liquid-looking surface produced ripples each time a person passed through the portal.

From the grim expression that Silverwing and Queen Magenta exhibited, Jack could see their worry. The players that had went into the dungeon were well-known experts, especially Red Death, Scarface, and Blackjack. From the Corporate United side, he had not fought any of them, but he had heard about them from his past VR games. Especially Supervisor Killmonger, he was a young man below twenty of age, but he had gained great fame from the last popular VR fighting game.

"We should get ready," Silverwing said to the others.

Queen Magenta was clearly concerned about the other group as well as she no longer continued with her bickering. She sent out orders to her group to prepare for entering the dungeon as well.

Silverwing approached Jack and asked, "are you ready?"

"Yes, but I wouldn't expect much cooperation from their side," Jack said as he indicated to the Wicked Witches people.

"Don't worry about them," Silverwing said. "We have agreed on a formation where they would be the vanguard while we covered the rear and side. So we will cover our own area, there would not be much need for cooperation."

"Really? Why do they want to be vanguard? They will suffer the brunt of monster attack then, won't they?" Jack asked.

"They want to get higher rankings," Sinreaper answered. "From our past few skirmishes into the dungeon, we could deduce that each monster kill contributes to the ranking points."

"I see, no wonder they were willing," Jack chuckled. "But then wouldn't it be bad for your team if they got the high rankings?"

"It might, at first," Sinreaper said. "But since our several dives into the dungeon, not once did we reach the boss. From the info in the library, we will need to kill the boss in order to clear the dungeon. Our hypothesis is that the boss will provide more points to the ranking compared to killing the minions. We will let them exhaust their strength to clear the minions while we preserve our strength to go against the Boss. This way we will score higher in the ranking."

"It's a bet then," Jack said.

"It's an educated bet," Sinreaper replied as he adjusted his glasses.

"All right, I don't mind either way. Just tell me what you want me to do."

"You can just lay low at the back at the start," Silverwing said. "When we reach the boss, I hope you can do your best to deal as much damage as possible."

"All right," Jack nodded. "But I think you should be preparing to hear some more critics from that granny again when she sees me slacking at the back."

"Don't worry about her," Silverwing said again.

"By the way, here are the potions you requested," he handed Jack five bottles of Basic Healing Potions.

"Thank you, I will pay you the coins for these."

"Nonsense," silverwing waved him off. "you are helping us in this dungeon, the least we can do is provide you some support items."

Jack nodded his gratitude and accepted the potions.

"I have to arrange the rest of my people first before we enter the dungeon. You can relax here while waiting," Silverwing said, then he walked away with Sinreaper.

When Silverwing was out of earshot from Jack, he asked Sinreaper, "Can you see his level now?"

Sinreaper shook his head. "Actually, not only that I still cannot see his level, this time I cannot even see anything, including his name."

"How is that possible?" Silverwing was astounded.

Sinreaper shook his head again. "I don't know," he said. "He probably wears something that masked his information."

"That guy is full of surprises," Silverwing said as he took a glance at Jack. "I really think that inviting him for this dungeon is the right call."

"I agree," Sinreaper said.

"Are you guys ready?" Selena asked from a distance not long after. The others from the Wicked Witches had gathered near the dungeon entrance.

Silverwing looked around, then asked Bluedaze, "Still no news from Grimclaw?"

Bluedaze shook her head.

"Damn! Where the hell is he?" Silverwing cursed. "No choice then, Honeycomb, you come with us."

The woman called Honeycomb nodded. They then walked over to the large silvery portal that was the dungeon entrance. When they arrived, Queen Magenta scanned over the group and immediately complained, "are you kidding me? Where is Grimclaw? Are you telling me you are leaving your strongest member behind? Are you really being serious about clearing this dungeon?"

"I apologize, he is indisposed at this moment," Silverwing replied. "Don't worry, Honeycomb here is also a capable Fighter."

Queen Magenta gave an ugly expression as she said, "that girl? Are you kidding? Never heard of her before. First a useless nobody, now another nobody. It will be a miracle if we clear the dungeon."

"At least we will get 3 gold coins," Warpath commented from the side.

Queen Magenta felt much better after hearing it. They were about to enter before Jack called out, "wait!"

Queen Magenta glared at him, "what now? Are you going to offer another bet?"

"Sort of," Jack said with a grin. "we all know you are all interested in the first clear item, but what about the Boss loots? How are you planning to distribute them?"

"Certainly none of your share," Queen Magenta replied mockingly.

Silverwing was more reasonable, "what do you propose?"

"There will be ranking right? I propose the player with the highest ranking had first priority to pick the loots."

"Hahaha," Warpath laughed. "You are talking as if you are sure that you will be the highest ranking. Was that lucky coincidence during the tutorial period had caused your head to grow too big? That you can't even differentiate between reality and fantasy? You are not even gonna survive until the Boss!"

"Mister Warpath's words is exactly what is in my mind as well," Queen Magenta added.

"Well, if that is true. Then what are you both afraid of?" Jack countered.

"Who is afraid?" Warpath shot back.

"So, we all agree with my proposition? First rank gets the priority?"

Warpath and Queen Magenta looked at each other. They were not afraid that the boss loots would be taken by Jack. They were just annoyed to agree to an idea that came out from him.

"I think that arrangement is quite reasonable," Silverwing gave his opinion, then added, "unless of course if your side is not confident to get the highest ranking."

"Who is not confident!?" Both Warpath and Queen Magenta said at the same time.

"Fine, we will distribute the loots based on ranking," Queen Magenta said finally. "Are we done? Let's enter already!"

She then turned and walked right into the silvery portal. Warpath, Selena and another level 13 female Ranger entered after. Jeanny looked back at Jack and said to him before entering, "good luck, let's cooperate inside."

"At least there is one who is friendly," Sinreaper commented to Jack with a smile.

"Before we enter. Here, I have a meal that boost stats for everyone," Jack said as he took out the Chicken Soups he had prepared before.

"How much stat does it boost?" Silverwing asked.

"10% for every stat."

"Then you better eat ours, here, for everyone," Silverwing said as he took out five pieces of chicken wing and offered to everyone.

"So, you have also have prepared stat-enhancing foods?" Jack said as he received the chicken wing.

"Of course, I was just about to share them when you offer yours first. I'm sure those of Wicked Witches group had also eaten a meal that gave them a buff before they entered."

## **Chapter 120: Giant Ants**

Jack scanned the chicken wing using his monocle.

Honey Garlic Chicken Wing (Apprentice grade)

Recover 100 HP

Increase Damage by 10% and decrease damage received by 5% for the next 5 hours.

"This food has good effect!" Jack exclaimed.

"You bet, we bought the recipe from a shop's special wares. It costed us 1 gold coins just for a recipe," Bluedaze said as she started munching on the chicken wing.

"It's rather expensive for an apprentice grade recipe," Jack commented while eating the food as well.

"Yes, but it was no ordinary apprentice recipe," Sinreaper said. "Only someone with cooking skill of Advanced Apprentice can manage to cook this recipe."

"You have someone who had become Advance Apprentice Cook?" Jack was amazed.

"Yes, he is our member who specialized in cooking. He just focused on improving his cooking grade since he arrived here."

Jack had forgotten, this was the strength of a guild. They could have members that specialized in particular field. Success in VR RPG games was not only dependent on leveling. There were many aspects that players could improve and be successful in. With each member became strong at one aspect and worked together, that's how they became the backbones of a successful guild. He must admit that this was something that he would not be able to achieve as independent player. After all, no one could become a master of everything.

"I got another thing that could improve our damage further," Jack said after he finished his meal. "but it is only for melee players."

Jack took out his three Whetstones and gave two of them to Silverwing and Honeycomb. Silverwing checked out the Whetstones. "Good stuff, where do you find the recipe?" He asked.

"A monster drop. I just got lucky." Jack said simply.

The three of them applied the Whetstones to their melee weapons, further increasing their damage output.

"Okay, let's us enter then," Silverwing said.

"Although it didn't take long for us to eat the Chicken Wings, I can imagine Queen Magenta was pouting already behind this portal," he added with a chuckle before walking right through the portal.

Sinreaper, Bluedaze, and Honeycomb followed soon. Jack was the last. He touched the portal, the liquid like surface trembled at his touch. It felt like touching a gel, and it was cold. He then moved forward and passed through the portal.

The feeling that Jack got when passing the portal was very much like when they moved through dimension from the Tutorial world into this Main world, but much more brief. When his vision returned, he found himself to be in a dark but spacious cave. The other nine people who came before him was at the front, while behind him was a portal door that looked exactly like the one he just came through.

This portal must be the way if they decided to exit the dungeon, Jack thought.

"You certainly took your sweet time," Queen Magenta said with a hint of annoyance.

"We are all here now," Silverwing said with a chuckle. "Let's move out then. We will go into the formation which we have discussed."

"Just make sure that useless nobody stayed out of my way," Warpath uttered without hiding the fact that he was referring to Jack.

Jack just pretended to not have heard it as he got into formation with Silverwing and the others. Warpath and the four Wicked Witches players were around five meters at the front. While on their side, Honeycomb took the left wing, while Silverwing took the right. Sinreaper and Bluedaze who were both Magicians were positioned at the middle, while Jack was behind them guarding the rear.

There was one person in each team that held a torch, Queen Magenta held the torch of the vanguard team, while Sinreaper held the torch for the rear team. The torchlight produced by it was not too bright, but it covered sufficient distance around them. Each of the ten who entered had been given a torch prior to entering, just in case if they got separated.

They all took out their weapons to be ready for actions at a moment notice. Besides Jeanny who was using spear, the others with unusual weapon setting were Warpath and Honeycomb. Warpath was holding two swords, one at each hand. While Honeycomb was holding a shield on her off-hand and a hammer on his main hand.

Looking at them, Jack was thinking, normally he would be holding his magic staff on his off-hand. But since he didn't want to expose his dual class, he couldn't take it out at this time. He did not have any one-handed weapon other than Storm Breaker, he had sacrificed all the ones he had gotten in order to increase his Storm Breaker's level.

But he got a shield which he had received from Lizardman Blood Guard. He took out that level 12 Guard's Round Shield and equipped it on his free left hand. This will afford him better defense in melee fight.

They walked slowly while paying attention to their surroundings.

"Be careful, see those holes by the walls?" Bluedaze pointed. "The Giant Ants and Giant Ant Warriors could come out of those holes without a sign. Everyone shall not lower your guard even if you have not seen any monsters around yet."

Everyone nodded their understanding. Bluedaze and Sinreaper were among the ones that have come into this dungeon before, so everyone heeded their advices.

They walked along the tunnels for a few minutes, still without any monster in sight.

"Is it always this quiet at the start of this dungeon?" Honeycomb could not help but ask. She had been fully focused of their surroundings since the start, but being tense all the time without anything happened could be particularly tiring.

"No, in my last excursion here, we met monsters already in the first two or three minutes," Bluedaze replied.

"Our reports from other scouts also indicated the same," Sinreaper added.

"Why is it different this time then?" Honeycomb asked.

"Doesn't matter, do not let your guard down," Silverwing said.

Jack was the most relaxed among them, simply because he would know if a monster was approaching from his God-Eye's radar. In fact, he had seen a few red dots from the direction of the holes, but strangely those red dots stayed inside. They did not come out to pounce on the intruders that had so brazenly came into their lair.

After walking a few more minutes deeper into the cave, they came to a fork. The path on the left was slightly smaller than the path on the right.

"Which way should we go?" Jeanny asked.

"Don't know, the map always changed randomly every time we enter," Selena said.

"Let's take the left one," Jack said from the back.

When Warpath heard the suggestion, he immediately spat, "Don't you try to act smart! On what basis to take the left one? The right cave was larger and obviously provide more space to move. I say take the right one!"

"I agree with Mister Warpath," Queen Magenta said.

Jack admitted that he had forgotten about these two's animosity against him. He had honestly tried to lead them to take the correct path, as he could see in his radar that the number of red dots on the right path was much more numerous than the left one. But even if he told the truth, he doubted that those two would listen to him, so he just stayed silent and leave them to their fate.

"Let's go," Queen Magenta said and moved to the right cave without even waiting for the others' agreement.

Bluedaze and Sinreaper looked at Silverwing, who said, "it's not good for us to separate. Let's follow."

They then continued onward into the right path. Things seemed to be progressing smoothly as they delved deeper, but Jack knew it was not so. The red dots that were crawling unseen inside the walls had become more active since they passed through. They seemed to be collecting their masses before converging towards the intruders' position.

"Stay sharp," Jack said to Silverwing and the rests as he readied his weapon.

Warpath who heard him, scoffed, and was about to make a remark, but then he heard buzzing sounds and saw some movements in the darkness along the wall.

"Contact!" Selena cried as she casted Energy Bolts.

The bright light from the energy bolts further illuminated the dark spaces where the torchlight could not reach. The bolts automatically tracked the nearby enemies, when they reached the wall, the players could see grotesque bodies covered with dark hard carapace, with multiple appendages attached on their middle section. Their heads had two large compound eyes each, which gave out red glow when the light hit their surfaces. At their mouth were two large mandibles which regularly made clacking sounds.

Most of the girls in the group subconsciously retreated from those disgusting sights. Even those who had seen the monster before were still repulsed by the monsters' appearance.

"It's Giant Ants! Prepare to engage!" Queen Magenta shouted.