

World 1141

Chapter 1141: State Secret

Since Jack was not targeting the boss' room, he no longer used his corporeal state. He relied on his radar to locate nearby red dots and headed in that direction.

They spent hours killing the minotaurs on that floor. More rare elites existed on this floor compared to the upper floors but the majority were still special elites. The eight players other than Jack gained tons of exp because the monsters on this floor were mostly around ten levels above their levels.

They lost track of time and farmed until they heard the notification that the labyrinth was closing in half an hour, which meant that it was almost midnight. The labyrinth closed at midnight and reopened again at dawn where its maze's layout would be completely reshuffled.

They continued to farm the minotaurs for exp until the last second. All of them increased by two levels, including Terras. Most of the exp came from the level 70 mythical gold bull boss.

Jack's two-level increase was one level to his Time Sage and one level to his Beast Monarch. If the exp wasn't shared with the other eight, he would have leveled up more. But he didn't regret it, he wouldn't have defeated the boss with such ease if he was alone.

He also got lots of mana cores, probably because he hoarded all of them. The level 70 mythical boss alone dropped 1,000 mana cores. The total mana cores he collected in this labyrinth run was around 2500, which was more than what he could get from the medium difficulty of the ancient battleground legacy dungeon. Additionally, that dungeon's medium difficulty could only be accessed once every two days, while this labyrinth could be entered every day.

When they came out of the labyrinth, the plaza where the labyrinth's entrance was located was full of players. They were all players who had been grinding inside the labyrinth until the last minute.

Some dwarven soldiers were stationed by the side of the plaza together with Diane. Because more dwarven players were there compared to human players, Jack was easily sighted. Diane and the guards immediately pushed over the crowd and came to Jack's side, forming a perimeter around Jack to keep the other players away.

"These are my friends," Jack said about Warpath's group. They were then allowed inside the perimeter with Bowler and the others.

The other players were surprised to see such treatment. They then noticed Jack's outfit and knew about his identity. Players starting to call him to look over. Some even asked for his autograph.

'What the heck? Am I a celebrity now?'

The guards told him that a carriage was waiting outside the plaza. Jack didn't stay around for long and went for the carriage. He didn't feel comfortable with this crowd who kept calling at him.

"Hey, where do you people stay? Do you want me to ask if you can stay with me in the palace?" Jack asked Warpath.

"No need. We have rented rooms at an inn," Warpath answered. Dasher and the others were visibly disappointed.

Jack didn't insist. He asked another question, "Do you people want to go into the labyrinth again tomorrow? We can go together again."

This time Warpath didn't reject, but he also didn't agree. Flowerrain answered on his behalf, "Yes! We will love to join if you will have us."

"Great. I should be coming here at noon. Let's add each other as friends to better communicate," Jack sent all five a friend request. They were already listed as his friend when he was using the Unrivaled Arcaner persona, but the friend list there was separate from his real one.

Everyone accepted the request immediately except for Warpath. It took him almost a minute before he clicked accept.

They said their goodbye and Jack went into the carriages with Bowler and the others, which then took them back to the palace.

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The next morning, Jack was brought to meet President Thelgrun as planned. Thelgrun's face seemed more beaming than yesterday, perhaps something good had happened.

Jack was wondering what socialization event the president had arranged for this morning. But out of expectation, Thelgrun said to Jack, "Your carriages had been prepared. You and your friends can leave for Daedalus Labyrinth at once."

When Jack gave Thelgrun a questioning look, the president said with a solemn face, "I've discussed with my councilors. I've treated you as a fellow native while I should have treated you as an outworlder. I understand that your kind loves to hunt monsters. The Daedalus Labyrinth is the best place to show our hospitality. So, I have made arrangements to cover the labyrinth's entrance fee for you and your friend. You can also enter now in the morning instead of accompanying me to do pointless things."

"It's not pointless things. I do enjoy the time we spent together," Jack said politely.

"No, no. It's okay. I understand, you don't need to feel bad about this, King Storm Wind. I insist! I will go with you to the labyrinth if I have to."

"No. There is no need to trouble Mister President. Since that is the case, I will accept this offer and go to the labyrinth," Jack said. In his mind, he was celebrating. He had been wishing whatever boring activity he was presented with this morning to be over as soon as possible so he could get back to farming exp in the labyrinth. He never imagined his wish would be fulfilled.

He said goodbye to Thelgrun and was walking to the exit, but stopped after several steps. He swiveled back and said to the president, "Wait a minute... Mister President, exactly how many gold coins did the labyrinth generate for your country yesterday?"

"This... Um... It is state secret...," Thelgrun replied. His face wasn't as beaming as before. He was nervous instead.

"You got lots of gold coins after I entered the labyrinth, didn't you?"

"Haha, you are overthinking it," Thelgrun laughed. His nervous expression wasn't gone despite the laugh.

Jack folded his arms and stood there giving him a hard stare.

"All right, all right. You got me. We did get lots of gold coins yesterday," Thelgrun finally yielded.

"I want half," Jack uttered.

Chapter 1142: Lightning Destroying Arrows

"Half? Are you trying to rob my country?!" Thelgrun exclaimed.

"I did all the work," Jack reasoned.

"We provided the facility," Thelgrun returned. "That labyrinth consumes a lot of mana upkeep, and I don't see Themisphere donating any mana."

"All right, thirty percent then," Jack relented.

"Nope. Still too much. I am willing to give your country ten percent of the coin income that you and your team produced."

"Dude... Aren't you a bit too stingy? Twenty percent then."

"Fifteen! That is my final offer!" Thelgrun declared. "Don't forget I am also paying for you and your team's entrance fee."

"Tsk... Okay, fine! But another condition. I want permission to build an embassy in your country," Jack uttered.

"Hm... That can be arranged. But in exchange, you also let me build one in yours," Thelgrun gave a counteroffer.

"Deal. In addition, let's sign an alliance pact as well," Jack tried to push his luck further.

"King Storm Wind, an alliance is not something that can be decided on a whim. I do like you, young king, but I do not yet see any real benefit in my country entering an alliance with yours. Even if I am willing, I still need to convince my councilors and senators, and I don't see a good prospect in them agreeing."

Jack nodded. He didn't truly expect Thelgrun to agree just like that. Getting the embassy built was already a good first step.

"All right! I will be off then. Expect to get many gold coins again. Don't forget our deal!" Jack reminded.

"Don't worry. If you can give me even half of yesterday's revenue, I will honor our deal. I will send your share as a coin gift to Themisphere," Thelgrun assured.

With that assurance, Jack took the carriage to the labyrinth's entrance with Bowler and the others. He also sent a message to Warpath's team, informing them that he could enter the labyrinth early today. They replied that they would be waiting at the entrance.

On the way, Jack asked Peniel if she had an idea how many gold coins Palgrost got from their run yesterday. Peniel said she didn't know about the details. But considering that normally it took even one or two weeks for the entire thousands of players entering the dungeon to encounter only one gold bull boss, their record of killing three gold bulls in just one day must be unprecedented.

Peniel said that if Jack used his Runestone of Luck before entering the boss' room, it should increase the chance of a gold bull boss appearing. But Jack countered if he did that, he won't be able to use the runestone when they killed the boss. The runestone of luck possessed a hidden cooldown timer.

Arriving at the entrance, the dwarven soldiers again cleared the perimeter for him. Jack looked around before spotting Warpath and the others and told the soldiers to let them in.

The boss' room allowed ten people to enter at a time. Since they were nine people, they had one free spot. The high-level minotaurs on the fifteenth floor provided a good exp source, but mostly it was the level 70 mythical-grade boss on the fourteenth floor that contributed the most exp. So, Jack wanted to call one of his royal agents to share the exp.

He could have called all his royal agents to form a team but that would mean kicking out some of his friends here. He didn't have the heart to. He was not a person who sacrificed a friend for his benefit. On the opposite, he didn't mind sacrificing his benefit for a friend.

The royal agent he chose was Howard, the mythical-grade bow-wielding native. Howard was level 52 now.

Warpath and his team were rather speechless when they saw Jack had another mythical-grade helper, even if this one was lower level than them.

The nine players formed a party before entering the labyrinth together with Howard.

They did the same arrangement as yesterday. Everyone protected Jack while he did his incorporeal state. When Jack interacted with the mana of the labyrinth, he saw that the maze layout was indeed completely different than yesterday. But it didn't matter, he found the boss' room in no time.

They went down floor after floor with incredible efficiency. Since they started early, they managed to reach the fourteenth floor a bit after noon. This meant that after defeating this floor's boss, they could spend lots of time grinding on the fifteenth floor.

Too bad they couldn't return to the upper floor. Otherwise, they could go back and forth between the fourteenth and fifteenth floors to farm the fourteenth floor's boss repeatedly.

Jack asked everyone that after they defeated the fourteenth floor's boss, whether they wanted to go out and reenter the labyrinth so they could farm the bosses again.

Jack's proposal was shot down by Peniel who said that one person was only limited to entering the labyrinth once a day. If they left, they had to wait until tomorrow before they could enter the labyrinth again.

Since it was so, they could only stick to their original plan which was farming exp points on the fifteenth floor.

Unfortunately, the fourteenth floor's boss this time was not a gold bull boss. It was a mythical-grade gigantic armored minotaur. It was slightly weaker than the mythical-grade gold bull boss yesterday so they had no problem defeating it.

Howard showed off his new skill in the boss fights. When he activated his skill, his bow was blanketed by dazzling lighting energies. The lightning extended out the two ends of his bow, making his bow look as if possessing wings made of lightning.

He didn't need an arrow at this state. Every time he pulled his bowstring, an arrow made of lightning formed. When he released the bowstring, this lightning arrow shot forward with incredible speed. This arrow sought out enemies, making it almost impossible to dodge.

The arrow dealt high lightning damage, but that was not the high point of this skill. The skill lasted for one full minute. During this duration, Howard's firing rate increased. He was as if a living gatling gun. Different from the other archer's skill, Repeating Shot, he didn't have to stay in place. He could move around while continuing firing, making this skill the ultimate kiting technique.

Peniel said that the skill was called Lightning Destroying Arrows. It was a very powerful skill. It was Howard's innate skill that he got after leveling up. Not one that he learned. As a mythical grade, Peniel said that it was not strange that his innate skill was powerful. There was a chance that he would get more powerful skills as he leveled up.

Chapter 1143: Daily Grind

The mythical minotaur boss they killed on the fourteenth floor gave fewer loot, fewer mana cores, and fewer exp points compared to the mythical-grade gold bull boss from yesterday. Even so, it still provided great exp points because of its mythical grade.

Peniel also said this minotaur boss didn't give Palgrost an incredible gold income as a gold bull boss.

Throughout their run on that day, they only encountered two gold bulls. Although it was one fewer than yesterday, Peniel stated that Thelgrun should still be happy about this.

And he was. The president continued asking them to head directly to the labyrinth the next morning. So, they continued this activity daily.

On the third day, considering that he didn't get the mythical grade gold bull boss the day before, Jack decided to use his runestone of luck when entering the fourteenth floor's boss room. Then there it was. The giant golden bull.

They used the same tactic as on the first day. Since they were higher in level now, and also added Howard, the fight went even easier than the first day.

No legendary item dropped this time. Since Jack couldn't use his runestone of luck when killing the bull, that was to be expected. They could prolong the battle to one hour waiting for the runestone's cooldown to end. But by holding back against a strong opponent, many things could go wrong. Jack

didn't want to risk his friends losing a level and missing the chance of farming exp on the next floor, so he killed the bull when he could.

Peniel told him that even if he held back from killing the boss to use the runestone of luck, the chance of a legendary item dropping as it did on the first day was still extremely rare. She suspected that it got to do with that gold bull being the boss of an unconquered floor. Perhaps the chance was increased due to that special condition.

The best item from the gold bull boss this time was a unique-grade gemstone. It was even an amethyst, which contained lightning elements. The element needed by his runestone of luck.

Jack kept on glancing at the amethyst. But since he said he only took the mana cores, he couldn't go back on his words. The case with legendary-grade resurrection chapel blueprint was a special case. Not only because it was a legendary item, but also because it was a guild item. They were all Everlasting Heavenly Legends members, so he was right to take the blueprint.

Everyone couldn't help but notice Jack's constant glance at the gemstone.

After the others rolled, Warpath won the chance to have the first pick. He picked up the unique-grade amethyst. He then threw it at Jack.

Jack caught it with a baffled face.

When Jack continued looking at Warpath with the same face, Warpath said, "If not for you, we won't have been able to defeat this boss. We all know you want that thing. Just take it."

"Hehe, I had heard lots of bad things about you, but I think you are okay," Jet said to Warpath. "Well, since it's this way. Let's just consider Jack got the first roll. Warpath, you go and pick your item next. Does everyone agree?"

Everyone nodded.

"Thank you," Jack said.

While they were selecting the loot, Jack used the unique-grade amethyst on his Runestone of Luck. 2,500 elemental energies flowed into the runestone. The runestone now contained 5,650 elemental energies out of the 100,000 required to advance to its final grade. He still had a long way to go, but he figured he could only take one baby step at a time.

On the fourth day, they encountered four gold bull bosses. Jack again used his runestone of luck to trigger the gold bull's emergence on the fourteenth floor.

The second strongest gold bull they fought on the thirteenth floor gave them a gold seed among other things. The seed was a super rare evolve seed. It was now common practice for Jack to get the first pick of the loot after he collected all the mana cores, so Jack picked that seed.

The fourteenth floor's gold bull boss dropped a piece of unique-grade equipment. But instead of taking that equipment, Jack picked up a super rare grade technique book, Wind Jet. It was a technique book that could be learned by any magic class.

Jack was familiar with this spell because he used it often using magic scrolls in the past, but magic scrolls were now harder to come by. Maybe because many people had access to the magic association shop now and they also had the coins to buy the scrolls. So, the stock on those scrolls was always low.

With this technique book, this spell was now his without needing to rely on a magic scroll

Jack stored the gold seed and the technique book to let Jeanny copy them.

Out of the four days of exp farming, everyone increased lots of levels. A majority of the exp points came from the mythical-grade gold bull bosses.

This place was originally not an ideal place for exp farming. Players could amass more exp points farming in the wilderness. This labyrinth was popular because it provided a safe environment, not its effectiveness. It was all because of Jack that he had reaped the labyrinth's benefit to its fullest.

Firstly, because of Jack's corporeal state. Other players had to waste the majority of their time searching for the boss' room before they could get to the floor ideal for their levels. Most of the time when they reached the floor, they only had a few hours to grind.

Secondly, because of Jack's high luck stat and the Runestone of Luck. It increased the chance of a gold bull boss appearing by many times. Aside from the fact that they had killed level 70 Mythical boss four times in those four days, the gold bulls also provided massive exp points and mana cores more than normal bosses.

By the end of the fourth day, Jack had collected 12,000 mana cores including the 2,500 he got on the first day. His Brave Swordsmaster's level increased to level 70. His Time Sage and Beast Monarch both increased to level 69.

Chapter 1144: Emergency Call from John

At Brave Swordsmaster level 70, Jack received a new skill.

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Dances of the Braves, level 1/20 (Active skill, melee, requires sword)

Conjures 5 golden swords that revolve around the user, attacking enemies and parrying attacks that come. Each sword deals 100% light damage.

Duration: 1 minute

Cooldown: 10 minutes

Stamina: 250

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Jack tested the skill while grinding on the fifteenth floor. Five golden swords similar to when he used Swords of the Braves appeared. But unlike Swords of the Braves, these swords didn't fly out and search for hostiles. They instead hovered and revolved around him.

The golden swords automatically slashed at the minotaur who came near. They could even parry and deflect melee attacks or projectiles.

Jack could also use his will to control the swords manually. With Hundred Synchronous Thoughts, he had no problem controlling each sword separately. He then used the five swords to perform Formless Flowing Sword Style. With his original two arms, it was like three and a half people performing the sword art.

Peniel said that if he max-leveled the skill, it would give ten golden swords. That would make it as if six people were performing the sword art simultaneously. If he added Asura, that would be two more extra people.

He was eager to increase the levels of this new skill. But before that, he checked the souls in his Container of Souls. There were around 1,100,000 souls.

The monsters in this labyrinth didn't provide many souls. Even the mythical gold bull boss provided only a few souls. Most of the souls in his container came from the time when he was in the underworld, from killing Hraghshu's demons and farming the amphipterelets.

Jack had 12 brave swordmaster's free skill points from all the level-ups. He added 800,000 souls to max-level the Dances of the Braves.

The skill now conjured ten golden swords and each sword dealt 200% light damage.

He then used 9 Time Sage's free skill points and the remaining 300,000 souls to increase Lightning Strike to level 13. Each level increased the spell's damage and range. The spell now dealt 580% lightning damage and had a range of 84 meters.

For the Beast Monarch's 12 free skill points. He spent them all on Gigantify Pet and brought it to max level. At level 20, the skill's duration lasted 5 minutes. Attributes, defenses, and resistances of the pet gained an additional 200% when the skill was used.

Out of all the level-ups, he had 21 free attribute points. He used them all on Endurance.

Several of his skills and spells also gained enough proficiency and upgraded. One that got its first star was Ultimate Beast. Each star increased an additional 3% to the pet's damage and a 3% reduction to the received damage.

Therras was now level 70, catching up to Jack's level. Howard's level increased to level 60.

Jet and The Man were level 68. Warpath and Bowler were level 67. Dasher, Bangstick, Suckit, and Flowerrain were all level 66.

They all had levels far above the average players now, which were mostly level 60 with the most expert ones around level 63.

They were very eager to continue this exp farming, but unfortunately, Jack told them that he had to stop. He had just received a message from John. Whatever emergency John was hinting at before, it was happening now. Jack was asked to return to Thereath tomorrow at the latest.

Without Jack, there was no way they could get past the mythical-grade boss on the fourteenth floor. Not to mention how long it would take them to find the way to that floor. So, they said they would be returning to headquarters as well.

Now that Warpath and the others were Everlasting Heavenly Legends' members, they also needed to do the weekly contributions as Jack didn't appoint them as core members.

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During the days Jack spent in Balgadur, he was also dealing with the kingdom's affairs. Several new affairs had popped up and some were settled after receiving the reports from Jeanny's investigative teams.

Four of the affairs were settled. Two with perfect results while the other two got good results. He received 340,000 merit points and 10 ruling powers.

His sovereign level increased to level 8 and he received another 10 ruling powers. At level 8, he got another slot for a royal agent.

Jack immediately sent an invitation to Nerd Bungie, the other mythical-grade recruit. Jack didn't know Nerd's current level. He had to go back to his throne and check using the monarch system.

Almost ten minutes passed without receiving Nerd's reply. Jack started to think the guy was not interested and was currently unsure about how to reject the king. When Jack wanted to cancel the invitation so the other side didn't feel bad about rejecting his offer, he received a message that Nerd had agreed.

'Do you have to take so long to decide?' Jack complained within.

He opened his royal agent page. Now that Nerd was his royal agent, he could check his level remotely.

Nerd was level 44. This level was also achieved because Nerd was trained in the barracks, which received 200% growth from Mass Drill.

Peniel said that this was already considered fast. Normally, it took several months to get recruits into an acceptable fighting level for the army. Their increase couldn't be compared to the power leveling Howard received. Not to mention, Jack's power leveling was way out of the norm.

Jack spent the kingdom coffer to upgrade Nerd's equipment to super rare grade. He then installed two spells on him.

Since Nerd's talent, Raging Mana, gave him a boost on offensive spells, Jack prioritized selecting such spells. The first one was Sunlight Spear, which dealt light damage to a single target from a very long range. The second one was Dark Well. This spell dealt AOE damage over time and also generated a pulling force that kept all within its area from escaping.

After finishing with the setting, Jack sent Nerd an instruction to meet with Jeanny. He then called Jeanny to set up another team to power-level Nerd.

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The next morning after receiving John's call, Jack let Thelgrun know of his intention to leave. Thelgrun was visibly sad after hearing the news. The original plan was that Jack spent another two days before leaving.

Thelgrun asked if there was any way for Jack to stay and continued going into the labyrinth. This enthusiasm made him wonder how many coins Palgrost got from his excursion into the labyrinth. Jack replied to Thelgrun that he was unable to because he had a national issue to take care of.

Jack said that if their country were allies, he would come to visit more often to enter the labyrinth.

Thelgrun promised that he would discuss it with his people. He then gave Jack a bottle.

"What's this?" Jack asked.

"You don't really think that the statue I gave you on the first day is truly my welcome gift, do you?" Thelgrun asked.

"Actually, I truly think that," Jack replied.

"Hah! I like you, Themisphere king. You are honest," Thelgrun clapped Jack's back. "This potion will be more fitting to exchange for those adamantine ores. I know you outworlders enjoy braving dangers. I hope this can be of help in your time of need."

Jack checked the bottle in his hand.

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Divine Might Potion (Unique consumable)

All attributes +300%

Increase damage by 100%.

All damage received is reduced by 50%

Recover 100 HP every second

HP +10,000

All skills' cooldowns decreased by 30%

Duration: 2 hours

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The effect of this potion reminded him of the Godly Might Goddess Serenity bestowed on him in the past. This should help when he encountered a foe much stronger than him.

Jack thanked the president and bid him farewell. Jack was then escorted to Balgadur's zone portal. From there, he teleported back to Thereath.

Chapter 1145: The Seed of Rebellion

Two days before Jack returned to Thereath, the age of his human age increased to sixteen months. His human race's passive skill, Limitless Potential, increased to rank 10. At this rank, his HP was +2600, his stamina and MP +280, and all his attributes except for luck +10.

Jack went directly to the throne room after returning to the palace. John was not there but said he would be arriving soon. So, Jack waited for him while doing the mass pay function using the monarch system. His kingdom coffer was reduced again.

He also went to Foreign Overview and clicked the option to build an embassy in Palgrost. The action cost 100,000 gold coins. Luckily, this was also the day he received 100,000 gold coins from the Boundless Cache. So, that covered the embassy's cost.

He then used 10 RP to increase Thereath's population. The city was past 9 million population now. It should not be long before it became a megalopolis.

Jack also checked in with Viral Cora and Life Runner whom he sent to Verremor to negotiate with Four Winds about the mithril. Thereath had magicite ore mines for special resources. These mines produced magicite ores regularly.

Jack gave the two players some of these ores to exchange with Four Winds' mithril ores. Magicite ores were of a higher grade. No reason for Four Winds to reject them. But of course, Jack told them to exchange one magicite ore for ten mithril ores. Exchanging one for one would be a loss on their part.

If the negotiation became tough, Jack permitted them to lower it to one magicite ore for five mithril ores, at least for the first one thousand mithril ores. They needed that quantity for the arcane forge that was still being researched.

John came in an hour after Jack started sitting on the throne. He was accompanied by Duchess Isabelle, Thaergood, and Lord Commander Armstrong.

Jack was wondering why Armstrong also came. The commander rarely came to the court.

Thaergood went and activated something that made a round platform appeared from the ground in front of the throne. It was the same one that Jack saw in the past when they were here discussing the strategy to face the orc invasion.

John came beside the platform and interacted with it. A 3D map of Themisphere appeared above the platform.

"What is it? Don't tell me we have another invasion coming?" Jack asked.

"Not an invasion," John said. "It's more like an inside thing."

The map on the platform zoomed into a region. A city was displayed at the center, Themelot. This settlement was not yet a metropolis and thus not a main city.

"Inside...? Are you talking about a rebellion?" Jack asked.

John nodded.

"How do we know? I didn't hear any notification. If that city segregates itself from us, shouldn't the world system or at least the monarch system informed us?"

Jack was asking as he opened the monarch system and went to the city overview to check on that city. He could still give commands to that city, so it was still part of the kingdom. But then he noticed something odd.

"Hey! Why does this city have such low stats on security and happiness compared to other settlements?"

Ever since John took over managing the settlements, Jack didn't bother checking on the details of every settlement. He only checked the eleven main cities from time to time and saw that their stats were improving, so he left it at that.

"That's because it is intentional," John answered nonchalantly.

"The f*ck do you mean by that? If you intentionally lower them, then it is no wonder if a rebellion happens there."

"That is exactly the purpose," John said, still wearing his indifferent expression.

Jack knew the guy was annoying, but the stability of a kingdom was not a plaything.

"You have better properly explained," Jack said with a serious face.

"Of course, Your Majesty," John replied with an exaggerated bow. "Now, we all know that there will always be some discontent from the natives for an outworlder sitting on the throne. Our kingdom can be said as the most stable among the three countries with such monarchs. From the reports, Liguritudum and Aurebor lost more than half of their officials. They were forced to fill up those country posts with outworlders. We are much better than them because most of the previous officials stayed in their posts. But it was also because of that, we have a problem that they don't."

"What problem?" Jack asked.

"Every native that is discontent with Master and Mistress' rules, they left. They were no longer part of the officials that held power in the government or the military. The ones who remained are those who are afraid of losing their power or simply don't care who has the reign of the country. We, on the other hand, have almost everyone staying. Even if said officials are discontent about your rule. They are hiding their feelings. This hidden discontent is dangerous if we let it fester. We need to fish them out and flush them as early as possible before it turns into a real problem."

"So, this is your solution? By inciting them?"

"It's better to have their seed of rebellion grow on our terms than letting it grow where we can't see it."

"Why this city?" Jack asked as he left his throne and come near the platform to have a better look at the map.

"I checked the positions of the officials with the lowest loyalty, thirty percent of them were stationed in this city. I don't find it strange considering the one person who lives in this city."

"Who?"

"Arther Pendrake, the Lord Marshal who joined Therribus' army during the siege of fort Garadhor. If there is anyone who has the power and reputation to lead the resistance against your rule, he is the most ideal candidate."

"Arther Pendrake...", Jack contemplated. There was still an empty portrait among the three portraits reserved for Lord Marshall's position. He had thought about finding Arther and persuading this past country hero to rejoin the kingdom, but one thing hindered his intention. The guy shared the same dislike for outworlder as Prince Therribus. It was most likely a fool's errand to try persuading the man.

"So, what happens that warrants your emergency? Did they show their fangs already?" Jack asked.

"They are about to," John answered. "It is easier to monitor when you know where to look. I have sent many of our guild members to that town to gather intelligence."

"So are my spies," Duchess Isabelle added.

"After our coaxing by increasing the discontent of the public in this city, this public support emboldens them to accelerate whatever plans they have. As expected, they have been in secret talks with other discontented officials. Several days ago, we had caught sight of several officials from out of town arriving for a meeting inside Arther's mansion. Then yesterday, we received news that the private armies of these officials were marching to this very city."

After hearing those explanations, Jack received a kingdom faction quest from the system, Deal with the Rebellion.

Chapter 1146: Two Weeks

"How long before those armies arrived?" Jack asked.

"For all of them to arrive, around five or six days," Isabelle answered. It was her spies that had gathered information about these armies.

"How many soldiers do these rogue armies have?"

"Including the ones already inside the city, around 200,000."

"Even if they gathered, they won't make their moves at once," John said. "They are still doing this under the assumption that we don't know anything. Most of their armies carry light equipment for fast travel. They also broke into several units to make their march look less suspicious. Most likely their real equipment was transported using another means. Whatever it is, this is our chance. Lord Commander Armstrong had prepared a 500,000-strong army so we can move out at a moment's notice. We attack once they gathered inside the city but before they are ready. We will take them out all at once!"

"Taking them out? Do you mean slaying them?" Jack asked with a frown.

John shrugged. "Well, if they surrender, I guess we can spare them. But the high-ranking officials will have to spend the rest of their lives in jail even if they surrender. Otherwise, they might become a problem again."

Jack turned to the others. "Do you three agree with this?" He asked.

Thaergood and Isabelle were silent. Armstrong said, "It is necessary to stomp out attempted rebellion. If we can stop it before it turns big, we can stop further conflict which will certainly cost more lives."

"If we fight them inside that city, innocent citizens will also become casualties," Jack said.

"They are not exactly innocent, many of them show support to the rebellion," John said.

"Because you forced them to!" Jack returned.

John sighed. "Look, the burden of leadership is always to choose between difficult choices. We have a real chance here to pull out the weeds of rebellion in one swift action. Don't waste it."

"Are you saying I'm not a good leader?!" Jack asked with a stern face.

"I'm saying you are a kind leader. A kind leader is not necessarily good," John replied, not intimidated by Jack's tone.

The three natives looked at the two outworlders, unsure of what to say. They could feel the intensity between the two.

"Other officials and other settlements will see me as an iron hand ruler if we attack Themelot before they formally declare their rebellion," Jack argued. "This will affect the other loyal officers."

"Our guild members on the streets of Themelot had already reported discontent talks among the citizens," John said. "Some of them had even talked publicly, unafraid of their talks being heard by patrolling soldiers. They talked that it was a mistake letting an outworlder sit on the throne. They said it is because of you that king Themos and Prince Alonzo died. It is also you who drove away our country's guardian, and we are now a weaker country because we no longer have a guardian. That you are just a weak outworlder. That Arther should have been the king instead after King Themos and his descendants passed away."

"Some of those claims are true but the fact that they dare to say those out in the open shows that this rebellion is inevitable. We can snuff it out now. We then broadcast the news and reports about this rebellion, calming the public. Or, we wait until they are ready and declare their intention. But by then, it will be a harder struggle. More soldiers will die, both on our sides and on theirs."

"Weak...", Jack muttered while pondering John's words. He then asked John, "If we go with your plan, when do you plan to attack?"

"The plan is two days after the soldiers gathered with the officers already inside the city. We will sneak into the vicinity and then rush into the city before they can close the gates. We also have someone inside to stop them in case they try to close the gates."

"Around one week from now then," Jack muttered. He then said, "Lay a siege on them. Give me one month. I want to try a different way."

"Different way? What different way? There is no different way," John said.

"There is, you just don't want to see it."

"If you are trying to stop this rebellion without bloodshed, you will just invite greater bloodshed."

"If I fail, you can do it your way. We are locking them down with a siege. They won't be able to do anything."

"Going against a 200,000 army with just 500,000 is not a sure win in a siege."

"Then we just call more troops. By then, they should have made their rebellion clear. We cut all transport into the city. They won't get proper equipment. We also have people continuing in hiding inside the city. We can use them when we attack. We can still win when it comes to that."

"But as I said, that will cause more casualties on our side. Though they are not properly equipped, they are ready by then," John argued.

"One month!" Jack announced. His mind was made up.

"If we have to wait. Then two weeks! If you can't stop this rebellion by then, we will attack!" John wasn't backing down.

The three natives were speechless. There had never been a royal advisor who dared to go against the king's wishes with such openness.

When they thought this would draw the rage of the king, Jack said, "Fine, two weeks. Don't do anything before then!"

"In that case, I will go readjust the troops for siege purposes," Armstrong said. "We will need to prepare some siege weapons to be transported."

After a few short discussions, Thaergood and Isabelle also left following Armstrong, leaving only Jack and John in the throne room.

Jack let out a heavy sigh as he slumped onto his throne.

"Care to shed some light on your plan?" John asked.

Jack shook his head. "I don't know if this will work. But even if it can, I can only do this alone. I will be leaving by noon. I will leave the siege preparation to you."

"If it truly comes to a siege, there will be more innocent civilian casualties, you know."

Jack didn't say anything in response.

Chapter 1147: Unhappy

Jack sighed again. His body felt heavy. He knew he had limited time and should leave now, but he didn't feel like getting up from the throne. He had known from the start, that being the sovereign of this kingdom was not a fun task, but he didn't expect the moral burden to be this heavy.

He looked at John who didn't show any expression. The guy didn't flinch making a plan that could cause the death of innocent civilians. He wasn't sure if that was good or bad. He was just glad that this guy was on his side.

"What?" John asked when he detected Jack's glance.

"I'm sorry. I know your plan is for the benefit of this kingdom. I just can't be comfortable about being a king who let his people die even if it is to stop further bloodshed in the future."

John just looked at Jack for a few seconds before saying, "I don't think that is a bad thing. I lack what you call a moral compass. Maybe that's why I can be a good tactician. I rarely let emotion affect me from thinking of a solution. But I understand that it is not a good thing. I am glad you are here to be that compass. That being said, you've better mentally prepared yourself in case whatever you want to do doesn't work. There will also be a time in the future when we storm into enemies' cities. There will be civilians there. There will be collateral damage."

"Sigh... I prefer it if this is all a real game...," Jack said.

"I don't disagree with you on that point," John said.

"All I want to do is have fun and be happy. Sitting on this throne, I'm not sure if that is possible anymore."

"Be happy about the little moments. Then again, being unhappy isn't bad. It drives us to success."

"Another one of your strange philosophies? Ain't we all strive for success so we can gain happiness?"

"People who said that is the most idiotic person in the world," John exclaimed.

"Damn it, dude. Did you just call me idiotic?" Jack asked.

"Are you angry about being called one?" John asked back.

"Uh... Not really," Jack said. He never truly cared about such labeling. "But why did you say that? Is that expression wrong?"

"Let me ask you something. What do successful people have in common?" John asked.

"Um... They are smart."

John snickered, "Heh! Many smart people work for less smart people. Take, for example, me and you."

Jack couldn't tell for sure if that was a mocking or a compliment.

John continued, "There are also plenty of smart people who live in mediocrity and spent their entire lives without achieving any meaningful success. The reason is, they lack the drive."

"Drive?"

"To answer my question. What successful people have in common, is that they are never content with what they have! They might have one dream in the beginning which they tried to achieve. When they achieve it, do you think they will be content? No! They might celebrate for a moment or some shit like that but then they will place new goals on the horizon. And they will not stop doing it. If you want to give it a good name, call it a deep passion. If you want to call it for what it is, then call it bottomless greed. Whatever you call it, that is the drive one needs to be successful. To be discontent. And you know what is the other word for discontent? Unhappy!"

"Uh... This is a bit heavy, man. You know I'm still reeling from all that inevitable collateral damage thing, don't you?"

John acted as if he didn't hear Jack, he continued rambling, "A person who said that you need to be successful to be happy? Pah! What a moron. Happy is a state of mind. You can be happy anytime you want. It is as easy as flicking a finger. You don't need to be successful to be happy."

"Um... There can be many external situations that make us unhappy. For example, the death of loved ones. Or, worrying about what to eat tomorrow because of having no money. It is not as easy as you said."

Again, John was ignoring Jack. "Those morons. They don't realize that the goal they are aiming at is the very reason that preventing them from being successful. If your target is to be happy, then you will stop after getting your objective. You will be content about it and you won't have any more drive to achieve more goals. If I give you two pictures. One is a picture of a person lying leisurely on a sunbed doing nothing except watching the sunset. One is the picture of a person who stares into his laptop intently while typing. Which one can be described as happy?"

"Uh... Is this a trick question? Um, the sunbed guy watching the sunset," Jack answered.

"That's right. I think anybody with half a brain will agree. But what do you think can be achieved by sitting and doing nothing? Exactly nothing! Being happy means that you just stop, do nothing, and just enjoy the moment. That picture of a guy hammering on his laptop. No sane people will describe that as happy. But I think you will agree that achievement is more likely to be acquired by someone working on his laptop than a person who just lays on a sunbed and do nothing except watch the sunset."

"Well, I don't know... I considered myself rather happy and also successful," Jack said.

"Really? What is your level now?" John asked.

"Seventy," Jack answered.

"So high?! How the hell do you... Never mind that. So, are you happy with level 70?" John asked.

"I certainly am!" Jack declared.

"So, since you are so happy about it, how about staying forever in level 70 then?"

"Of course not! I still have many levels to increase."

"Then, you are not happy with level 70?"

"Uh... I'm sure this is a trick question now."

"So, what will be the level that makes you happy?" John asked.

"What's our max level?" Jack turned to Peniel, who had been enjoying the two's discussion.

"99," Peniel answered.

Jack turned back to John and said, "Level 99."

"What if the world gets an update and the level cap is increased to level 200?"

"There is no update. This world is not a game, remember?"

"I said, what if," John insisted.

Jack shrugged. "Level 200 then."

"What if another update and it is capped at 300?"

Jack gave John an annoyed stare.

"See what I mean? You will never be happy as long as there is a higher level to attain. That's how you drive yourself to keep improving. It's because you are unhappy!"

"I don't know why, but your weird pep talk has somehow made me feel less depressed," Jack stood up from his throne. "As much as I disagree with your warped thinking, I thank you for your rant. I will now go and get that one thing that will make Arther and the other officials in Themelot submit. Wish me luck!"

John stared at Jack's straight back that was leaving the room. 'That's how it should be,' John thought. 'That straight back is more suitable on him than his slumped one just now.'

Chapter 1148: Visiting a Past Acquaintance

Jack first went around town shopping and picking up his shares from Amy's Bakery and Ellie's Restaurant. He collected 200 gold coins out of the three-week shares from the two establishments. He did that under his Unrivaled Arcaner disguise. It was too much of a hassle if he walked around town as a king.

Afterward, Jack used the city's zone portal to teleport to Heavenly Citadel. He passed the Resurrection Chapel Blueprints to Tip, who was very excited to receive the legendary-grade blueprints. He promised to get this chapel up and running in no time.

Jack also gave Jeanny the gold seed, Wind Jet technique book, and Divine Might Potion to be copied.

He then used the guild's teleportation chamber to teleport to Eridrus, one of the main cities in the Hydrurond Dominion.

He maintained his mage disguise in this city. He had offended this country's emissary not long ago. He doubted he will be treated with hospitality if the authority knew that he was in this country.

Jack didn't dwell long inside the city. He went out and summoned Pandora after getting a certain distance away from the city.

He changed back to his real self as he mounted Pandora. He let the steed know where he wanted to go. Pandora then took to the sky. She left a fiery trail as she cut through the sky.

With Pandora's current speed. He arrived at his destination in less than two days, which was a large mountain he had visited in the past.

The mountain was none other than Mount Draygetos. Unlike before, Jack flew directly to its summit.

He circled the summit until he saw the familiar hut with a small lake and waterfall. He had Pandora land right next to this hut.

Jack knocked on the door to the hut while shouting, "Darmos...! Hello, mighty Darmos! Are you home?"

No sound from inside. Jack didn't sense anything from inside. There was also no dot on his radar. But if Darmos was whom Jack suspected to be, he could make himself not appear on the radar.

So, Jack knocked again. This time, he called, "Mighty Broidrireg, excuse my rudeness. Are you inside?"

Still no answer.

Jack stopped knocking. He was considering going to the cave where he met Broidrireg when the cloud above rumbled. He looked up just in time to see the white clouds parted. Out of those clouds appeared an enormous dragon head with majestic antlers and two long whiskers.

The enormous dragon descended, revealing his long serpentine body covered with dazzling blue scales. His two large wings were folded as the dragon took a nosedive.

Jack watched as the huge dragon came down at high speed right above him. He turned into a panic when the dragon didn't slow down. He tried to move away but the dragon's descent created a strong pressure on the air around the ground and this pressure made Jack feel his body to be extremely heavy. He couldn't move away.

The blue dragon abruptly stopped just a few meters above Jack, causing an air explosion that forced Jack to fall flat onto the ground.

While laying flat on the ground, Jack looked at the dragon's big face directly above him. The dragon was flashing his sharp teeth menacingly.

But after further observation, he realized that the expression on the dragon was not a snarl. It was a grin.

The grin then turned into a laugh. "Hehehe, I got you."

"Damn it! I forgot how you love pranks," Jack said as he got up. He glanced at the hut while doing so, amazed at how it withstood the air explosion caused by Broidrireg.

"Why do you come back here? What do you want?" Broidrireg asked.

"I said I hope we can meet again, didn't I? Here I am. Don't say that you are not happy to see me," Jack replied.

"I don't," Broidrireg replied curtly.

"Tsk, still like to mask your feeling. So, I reckon you don't want to taste my cooking?" Jack said as he showed his cooking tools and some luxurious ingredients.

He had bought those ingredients and recipes during his shopping in Thereath. He had also gotten a new cooking tool from Ellie, something that she bought from the House of Culinary faction at Jack's behest. It was a rare-grade expert cooking tool, which provided extra benefits to the cooked food.

"Hm... Maybe tasting the food is okay," Broidrireg said.

"Can you please turn to Darnos? It is very suffocating talking to you in your mighty form," Jack said.

Broidrireg continued staring at Jack for a few seconds before his body turned into a twister of blue wind and water. The twister converged onto the ground before turning into the small grumpy draconian that Jack was familiar with.

With this, it was confirmed Darnos was Broidrireg's disguise.

"Hehe, I know he is you," Jack said.

"Don't act so smart. I let you see the clues intentionally," Darnos said.

"Like hell you did!" Jack returned.

Jack was setting up his cooking tools and preparing the ingredients. Darnos just sat on a chair by his hut and watched.

"Aren't you going to help?" Jack asked.

"Nope," Darnos replied. He took out a cigar and started smoking.

"Where the heck do you get that thing?"

Darnos replied by blowing a perfect O-shaped smoke.

Jack let the draconian enjoy his cigar in peace as he started cooking. Not long after, four dishes were served. Jack knew Darnos eat a lot so he prepared more food than one person could typically eat. All four dishes also contained varied food.

Darnos almost couldn't contain his drool after smelling the aroma of the food. All the food also looked pleasant visually. These four dishes were suggested by Ellie and Jack also had some short practice preparing them under Ellie's supervision. He went through all these troubles so he could impress Darnos.

Jack didn't join the meal. All four dishes were for Darnos. Jack left him to eat in peace as he trained mana manipulation by the side of the lake.

Although Darnos was eating ravenously, he was still aware of Jack's training. He was rather astonished to learn that Jack could do mana manipulation to such a stage already. The last time Jack was here, he only barely touched the realm where he showed the mana concealment technique.

After finishing the meals, Jack came to Darnos and asked, "How were the meals, do you like them?"

"Cut the crap. I know you want something. Spill the beans. I don't like a roundabout way."

"Hehe," Jack smiled awkwardly. "Do you mind being my country's guardian?"

Chapter 1149: The Greatest Guardian

"Country?" Darnos asked with a puzzled expression.

"Uh, you are not aware of my regal outfit?" Jack asked while making a gesture at his armors.

"What you mortals wear all look the same to me," Darmos replied. "Are you saying you are the sovereign of the human country now?"

"I am the king of Themisphere," Jack confirmed.

Darmos was secretly astonished, but he kept his indifferent face. "Hmph, king, peasant, they are all the same to me. But doesn't Themisphere have Tiemezzys? Where does he go?"

"Um... He left. He was angry because I killed the previous Themisphere's king," Jack answered honestly.

"What?!"

Before Darmos misunderstood, Jack hurriedly recounted the story which ended up placing him as the Themisphere's king. Darmos listened to the story without interrupting.

"Tiemezzys is indeed an emotional dragon. You better pray you don't encounter him when Goddess Serenity is unavailable. Hm... Considering Themisphere is now without a guardian, it is indeed vulnerable."

"So... Are you willing?" Jack asked.

"Willing to do what?" Darmos asked back.

'Damn it! This lizard is playing hard to get,' Jack grumbled within, but his face maintained an amiable smile. "Willing to become the greatest guardian in the greatest kingdom!" Jack announced.

Darmos burst into a laugh after hearing it. "I must admit it is always entertaining whenever you are around, but get that greatest butt of yours and roll it down my mountain."

"Come on, man. Don't you feel bored being alone on this mountain doing nothing? Come with me to the greatest kingdom and we can have fun together."

"What greatest kingdom? Themisphere is just one of the seven main countries. They are all equal in strength. And I'm not bored. I got my duties here!"

"With me as its king, it will be the greatest in the future!" Jack declared.

"Bold words," Darmos mocked.

"It's not bold. It's a promise!" Jack exclaimed. "And you just sit here doing nothing. What duties?"

"The dragonification trial, of course," Darmos replied.

"No outworlder even knows of this place except for me. There is no one coming here for the trial."

"Who says that? I already have people taking the trial aside from you!"

"Really? How many people?" Jack asked.

"... One," Darmos answered.

Jack almost fell hearing it. The guy had the gall to use the word 'people' instead of 'person'.

"I bet that person just stumbled upon this place by mistake," Jack said.

"Stumble your head. He came asking specifically for the trial," Damos replied.

"Really? Was he an outworlder? What race? Did he pass?"

"He is an outworlder, a draconian, and he passed. I might say in flying colors as well. If I hadn't given you the supreme dragon form, he probably would've gotten it. But then again, I don't like the guy. So, he won't get it. All he got is the enhanced dragon form."

"Really? He is that good?"

"Remember the trial where you have to carry me while fighting through monsters without letting any of them touch me?"

Jack nodded.

"He passed that trial without using any cheap trick like you."

"I could also have done it. I just want to save time," Jack reasoned.

"Excuses, excuses," Damos said with a mocking tone.

"What's the guy's name?" Jack asked.

"... I don't know," Damos answered.

"How can you not know the name of the person who takes your trial?" Jack asked in disbelief.

"I didn't ask. He never told me. So, I don't know."

"Didn't you use Inspect?"

"Why would I be interested in a mortal? He came to take the trial. I gave it to him. He passed, and he left. End of story. Only you who are so noisy and hang around here unnecessarily."

"Forget about him. My offer, are you interested?"

"Of course not," Damos answered. "Did you forget already how I scoffed at Syndrillis for involving herself with mortals' affairs? And here you are asking me to do the same?"

"Please, consider it as a favor to me. Both my country and I need your help," Jack said as he knelt before Damos and then prostrated himself until his head hit the ground. This gesture surprised Damos.

"I know although you feign indifference, you are a caring dragon. Please know that currently, Liguritutum and Aurebor have already fallen to outworlders by force."

Damos frowned upon hearing it.

"I know about these outworlders' plans," Jack continued. "They are going to send their forces and take over all seven countries. The leader of these outworlders even has the plan to reach Godhood. If he succeeds, all of us will be his slaves. You will also not be spared. I become the king of Themisphere to stop his plan from coming to fruition. But I know I can't do it alone. I need the greatest dragon to help my country win. That's why I come to you."

"Flattery won't get you anywhere," Damos responded. "But you are not wrong about the greatest dragon. I might not be the strongest, but I'm the greatest."

"So, will you help?" Jack asked.

"No," Damos replied flatly.

"Please! We truly need your help," Jack maintained his pose.

"Get up. It's pointless. I won't join your country," Damos said.

"I'm not getting up until you agree," Jack said.

"Stubborn fool," Damos said. "Suit yourself! I'm going inside to sleep."

Damos stood and entered his hut, leaving Jack alone outside. Not long after, a loud snoring sound was heard from inside the hut.

Jack didn't move. He remained in prostration.

Although Damos' snoring was heard, he wasn't truly sleeping. He was just pretending to. His mana sense was locked onto Jack. He was wondering how long that kid could stay like that.

He waited for so long that he ended up sleeping for real. When he woke up, it was nighttime already. His sense told him that Jack was still in the same spot with the same pose. He was honestly astonished.

He went out of the hut to tell the kid to stop this pointless request. He won't do what Jack asked, but he also didn't feel good letting Jack stay like that. Without realizing it, he had grown a soft spot for Jack.

When he came to Jack's side and was about to pull him up, he heard a snoring sound. He looked closer and saw Jack drooling as he slept while prostrating on the ground.

"Bloody hell! Just stay like that then!" Damos cursed and went back into the hut.

Chapter 1150: An Impossible Request

The next morning when Damos came out of his hut, he saw Jack was awake and was still prostrating. Damos just sat on his chair without saying anything.

Jack also remained silent.

It went on for hours. Damos was astonished by Jack's ability to not speak all the time. He thought that Jack would at least strike up a conversation even if he was still stubborn about remaining in that position.

It was Peniel who ended up conversing with Damos. But after a while, Damos finally felt uncomfortable staying there. He rose and walked away as if he was going out for a leisurely walk.

When he was out of sight, he transformed back into Broidrireg and flew up into the cloud. From up high, his sight pierced through the thick cloud and look at Jack. He was sure that Jack would stop prostrating when he was not around.

He just floated up there in the cloud and waited. He waited an entire day. It was nighttime again, but Jack didn't move at all.

He was secretly touched by Jack's determination. He thought perhaps helping the kid was all right. Perhaps involving himself in the matter of the world again was okay. Perhaps being a country guardian was not bad.

He shook his head. No. He didn't want to get into the mess that was the power plays between mortals again. He wasn't changing his mind.

He flew back down and transformed into Darmos. He then walked back to his hut, whistling all the way. He walked past Jack and then entered his hut without any words.

*

This went on for days. Jack didn't rise or say any words. He didn't drink or eat. He felt hungry and thirsty but his game body didn't truly need sustenance. So, he just endured.

Darmos just did his stuff and treated it as if Jack was not there. He fished by the lake, cooked and ate, took leisurely walks, occasionally chatted with Peniel, fly around as Broidireg above his hut, and did other things.

After several days, Darmos noticed that although Jack was not moving, he was not exactly doing nothing. He was training his mana manipulation. Darmos continued ignoring him.

Ten days passed.

Darmos sat on his chair in front of Jack who was still prostrating. He was studying Jack's mana manipulation training.

Jack had been doing nothing but focusing on his mana manipulation these past few days. His degree of control was getting sharper. He could also condense the mana to make it even more heavy, increasing its power. He was reviewing all that he had learned in terms of mana.

Some special places like the Village of Peace and Daminos Square Garden appeared to have denser mana, but the mana was the same. They simply behave differently. Even in the underworld. What Peniel called corrupted mana was the mana adjusting themselves to synchronize with the intensity of the place.

Out of all these thoughts, he concluded that mana was alive. Not alive in the sense of living, breathing, and growing like normal living creatures. More like a primitive cell that contained the most basic of functions, but was still conscious enough to respond to instruction.

What he did when he performed mana manipulation was talk to mana, in a language that mana understood. The more proficient one was in this language, the better the mana responded. Yet, this language was not spoken like normal languages. It was more like a connection of minds. A feeling. A sensation. What he needed to do to be more proficient in the language was improve this connection. Making his thought more aligned with mana. Making him one with mana.

Jack was submerged completely in these thoughts. He let himself drown in it. He could feel the vastness of mana. He could feel their liveliness. They were neither good nor evil. They were lifeforce that transcended all morality. They were simple energy. Living energy.

Darmos, who was watching Jack, could sense Jack's grasp on mana manipulation improved tangibly. He couldn't believe one could understand mana at such a fast pace. He always felt the kid was special. Now, he knew his feeling was not wrong.

"Shouldn't you agree to him by now?" Peniel asked. In between their conversations, she persuaded Darmos on Jack's behalf. "Are you going to let him stay like that forever?"

"It's his choice. It got nothing to do with me. I never asked him to prostrate before me," Darmos defended himself.

"What are you so afraid of anyway?. It's not like you will be ordered to do this or do that all the time. A country guardian mostly stays in the lair. Mount Thenias is a much better mountain than this one. I'm sure you can build a better lair there."

"As I've said many times, I have duties here."

"Those who want dragonification trial can take their trials at Mount Thenias. If you like these duties so much, we can even help you broadcast your whereabouts so everyone knows that they can take the dragonification trials there."

"No, no. Finding out about where they can take the trial is also part of a trial," Darmos said. He was not keen on a crowd of people coming and asking him for trials.

"Excuses, excuses," Peniel mocked.

Darmos was annoyed. Peniel was mocking him using his own words.

"You sound more and more like him, you know," Darmos said to Peniel while pointing at Jack.

Actually, he was truly conversing with Jack. What Peniel said was what Jack asked her to say through their minds. Since he was playing a determined person to not do anything until Darmos agreed, he had to ask Peniel to convey his thoughts.

"How long are you going to be stubborn? A lot of innocent people in Themisphere are going to die if you are still unwilling to help," Peniel uttered. Only four days left until John went ahead with the plan to attack Themelot.

"Don't you lay this on me, fairy. He is the stubborn one! I already said from the start that I don't want to be a country guardian," Darmos said.

"Just give it a chance! If it truly doesn't work. You can quit anytime."

"You think a guardian's bond can be easily cast away just like that? Don't be absurd."

"How about the bonds between friends? Are you going to just let your friend be on his own when he comes here asking for your help?"

"Who ever says that I am his friend? Argh... You people are so nagging! All right, tell you what. If he can do an impossible request for me. I will be his country guardian."

"Impossible request? What impossible request?" Jack asked as he lifted his head.