

World 1291

Chapter 1291: Advantages of Being a Praefectrus

"Wow, so many!" Jack exclaimed. He would have to clear stage 80 a hundred and twenty-five times to get that many glory points.

Jack was excited by the gain. He immediately proceeded to the next stage.

The Strength of Hope was the same as his other inherent skills, it is reset once he entered the stage. Jack cleared that stage with no problem. When he came out, he received 162 glory points.

Jack figured this must be another benefit of becoming Praefectrus. Aside from getting bonus glory points when his rank was upgraded, all the glory points received from clearing the stages are now doubled.

He happily continued, clearing one stage after another until he hit stage 85.

At that stage, forty werewolves awaited him. Twenty-six level 80 special elites, twelve level 79 rare elites, and the last two caused his forehead to crease. The last two were level 75 mythical werewolves.

Even without access to his Time Sage and Beast Monarch's skills, he had no problem dealing with one. But two, that's another matter. Not to mention these werewolf-type monsters became more troublesome when their number increased.

He again used his high-damaging skills to eradicate the lower-grade enemies before focusing on the higher grades.

With two mythical opponents, he had trouble eliminating all the rare elite werewolves. Their coordination was very good. They used their speed and number to confuse Jack and protect the ones with the lowest HP, allowing them to last as long as possible.

In the end, Jack couldn't take out either of the two mythical werewolves after his Strength of Hope ran out of its thirty minutes duration. Once that happened, the werewolves counterattacked.

Jack came out of the stage dejected.

"Your Majesty reaches stage 85 and still dares to wear a long face? Does Your Majesty want to get whooped?"

Jack heard a familiar voice and saw Gruff there.

"Hey!" Jack called. "You call me Your Majesty but you still sound so rude. It is really weird. Just call me as usual. Don't need to add my title."

"As you wish, kid." Gruff was happy to oblige.

"If I knew you are in the building, I would have asked for you. I almost run out of challenge points," Jack said.

"Kid, do you think I'm your personal teller?" Gruff huffed. "I came here because I heard an outworlder had just beaten stage 80. This is a first. I figured it must be you."

"Of course, it is me. But seriously, I do need the challenge points. You said you have a lot of unused challenge points, right? Better give them to me rather than leave them to rot."

"Rot your ass," Gruff said. "I do have a lot to spare but don't expect me to give them to you for free. Do you want to trade them with your glory points?"

"Dude, I need the challenge points to get the glory points. If I trade them to you, what's the point of getting them in the first place? How about I pay you gold coins for the challenge points?"

"Mm...", Gruff touched his chin.

Seeing that the old warrior didn't outright reject him, Jack seized the chance. "It's a good deal, ain't it? You are not using them anyway. It's better to trade them with coins to buy stuff for yourself. Like for example, a better armor, maybe."

"Kid, are you making fun of my armor? Damn it! I can't deny yours is much better than mine. I can't believe it was a bit over one year ago when I saw you being so happy about getting my spare armor. We natives truly can't keep up with your kind," Gruff sighed.

"Come on, don't be so melancholic. So, what do you say? I will trade you 1 gold coin for 100 challenge points," Jack said.

"Kid, aren't you taking advantage of me too much? I was thinking more in the line of 1 gold coin for 1 challenge point."

"The hell, man! That means I have to pay 84 gold coins just to enter this stage 84 once. Are you kidding me? Be reasonable, man!"

"I'm being reasonable. All right, considering we are such good friends. I will sell you 1 gold coin for 2 challenge points."

"Don't make me punch you, man. Wait a minute! You still owe me a punch from that time you tricked me with your brother's quest! My last punch didn't count because it's my hand that was hurt."

"What are you talking—" *WHAM!*

This time, Gruff reeled from Jack's punch. He didn't suffer damage because Jack didn't use mana manipulation. He felt the pain, though.

"The hell, kid?! What's that for...?"

"I've told you. It's payback for when you tricked me with your brother's quest."

"I gave you lots of stuff including challenge points! Weren't we already square on that?"

"Hm... When you put it like that..."

WHAM!

It was Jack who was now reeling from Gruff's punch. The other challengers looked at the two. Were they fighting? Even the nearby guards were confused. Should they come and interfere? But the two were now back to talking like friends. The guards decided to just stay and watch for now.

"Now, we are square," Gruff uttered. He then massaged his cheek. "Damn, kid. Your punch hurt me. No wonder you beat stage 84. You are much stronger than me now."

"I can help you become stronger. Just be my royal agent, you can level up fast like we, outworlders," Jack offered.

"Tempting, but no. I don't like getting called to a battle at someone's whim. Certainly not by you," Gruff rejected.

Jack didn't push the issue. He was just joking. Gruff would have to let go of his high station in the League of Champions if he became Jack's royal agent.

"So, 1 gold coin for 90 challenge points?"

"I don't have time to play with you. 1 gold coin for 20 challenge points. Take it or leave it," Gruff said.

"Ok, deal!" Jack said. "How many can you spare?"

"How many can you afford?" Gruff asked back.

"Do you have 5,000 challenge points?" Jack asked again.

"I have way more than that," Gruff answered.

"5,000 then," Jack said, fishing out 250 gold coins from his inventory. He could afford more, but it would take some time to use up these 5,000 challenge points. So, he kept his remaining gold coins in case he needed them.

Gruff went ahead with the transaction. He transferred the challenge points into Jack's League of Champions Badge.

After finishing, he asked Jack, "You sure you don't want to become this faction's executive? You can get quite a benefit now that you are a Praefectrus."

"No, thanks," Jack declined.

Gruff shrugged. "Okay, I will leave you to it."

"Thanks," Jack said. "I will enter this stage four more times before calling it a day."

"Four? Oh, right. Just so you know, another advantage of being a Praefectrus is you can now challenge a beaten stage ten times in a day."

Chapter 1292: The Exalted Rank

So, Jack cleared stage 84 another nine times. And since he had many challenge points, he also cleared stage 83 another nine times. Adding the 3,300 glory points he originally had, he now had 17,046 glory points in his League of Champions Badge.

He happily went to the exchange counter to see what he could get with these glory points.

He could challenge the lower stages to collect more glory points but he didn't want to spend too long time here. He still wanted to go to the Order of Magi after this. He was only willing to spend one day for these league factions. He didn't want to delay his plan of leaving for the Council of Charites tomorrow.

After opening the exchange list, Jack immediately scrolled down directly to the exchange list available for Praefectrus. Jack was disheartened. Most of the items on this list were above 10,000 glory points, some even reach as high as 20,000 glory points. And here he was thinking his 17,046 glory points were a lot. He could only exchange one item from this list.

He saw two companion tokens on the list. One summoned a level 80 rare elite melee warrior, and the other one summoned a level 60 mythical-grade melee warrior. Both of these companion tokens cost 20,000 glory points.

After briefly studying the list, Jack chose a technique book for the Brave Dancer class. The book cost 12,000 glory points. The skill contained within the book was called Field of Swords. It was an AOE skill that dealt large damage to a large area around him.

Since most of his skills were already maxed, he figured he should collect more skills. So, he went to the list for the Angusticlavian and chose one technique book there. This book also contained a skill for Brave Dancer. The skill's name was Ghost Sword. It was a melee skill that bypassed all defenses. The technique book cost 4,500 glory points.

Jack didn't immediately learn the skills. He contacted Jeanny and informed her that he would be handing these technique books for her to copy first. He would meet her later in the evening. Jeanny also hadn't left for the Council of Elpo, which was the divine faction for God of Hope. Like Jack, she had many things to take care of in the guild before she could leave.

Coming out from the League of Champions, Jack headed to the Order of Magi.

After a quick greeting with young Janus, Jack went through the portal and arrived at the challenge plaza. He entered the obelisk for stage 80.

He used the same tactic as during the challenges in the League of Champions. He used the Lightning God Barrage and Judgement of Past Kings to cull the weak enemies, followed up with Strength of Hope for the rest.

After clearing stage 80, he was promoted to the rank of Exalted and received 10,000 knowledge points.

"Congratulations on being the first outworlder to become the Exalted rank," said the other young Janus overseeing the challenge plaza.

"No reward for me being the first one?" Jack asked.

Janus simply gave Jack a smile for a reply.

"Are you interested in becoming an executive of this faction?" Janus gave Jack the same offer as Gruff.

"No, thanks. I barely have any time for myself with my current duties," Jack declined and entered the next obelisk.

When he cleared stage 81, the knowledge points he received were also doubled.

At stage 85, there were similarly two mythical-grade opponents to deal with. He tried to separate the two by using Time Realm. With good positioning, the Time Realm he conjured had its edge placed in between the two mythical grades, effectively splitting them apart.

It would be ideal if he could also keep the rare elites outside and dealt with only one mythical grade opponent, but it was impossible to create such an opportunity with all the opponents moving haphazardly. Some rare elites ended up inside his Time Realm's cage together with the one mythical-grade opponent.

He tried to finish this one mythical grade inside his Time Realm, but he couldn't do it fast enough. The other enemies outside the Time Realm broke the barrier and entered before Jack could even reduce the mythical grade's HP to half. His damage output was lacking with only his Time Sage spells.

In the end, he failed to clear stage 85 as he did in the League of Champions. He repeated stage 84 another nine times. When he came out, he tried again to enter for the eleventh time. He could enter. The Honorary Magi title gave him five extra times to reenter conquered stages. Adding his Exalted rank, he could enter a total of fifteen times instead of ten.

He repeated stage 83 another fourteenth time. With his previously stocked 2,214 knowledge points, he got a total of 17,630 after the endeavors.

He went to the exchange list and saw that the items within the Exalted section similarly needed over 10,000 knowledge points to exchange. This was a mirror faction to the League of Champions, after all, so it wasn't strange.

There were even crystals in the list here that provided special classes for classes that branched from Mage. They were all normal special classes, though. These special classes had a limited quantity of them. The quantity would decrease when someone exchanged these crystals. These crystals were among the most expensive items on the list for Exalted.

Jack thought about buying one of the crystals for Jeanny to copy for their guild members. But after some internal struggle, he decided he wasn't that altruistic. He prioritized getting items that he could use, which were spells.

There were plenty of spells to choose from the list. There were telekinesis, invisibility, and another spell he was interested in after browsing was an offensive spell called Mana Bombs. This spell was like the weakened version of his Lightning God Barrage. He wanted all of them, but he only had enough knowledge points to choose one for now.

He did need to increase the offensive capability of his Time Sage class to better beat this faction's challenge stages, but he decided the other two spells provided better versatility in dealing with the problems in the outside world.

After a long thought, he finally chose Invisibility which cost 13,000 knowledge points.

He then went back to the exchange list for the Renowned rank and bought the Lightning Mine he had been eyeing. This Lightning Mine could be fused with his Lightning Strike spell to become a different spell. This Lightning Mine cost 3,700 knowledge points.

With only 930 knowledge points left in his Order of Magi Badge, he left the place and used the Guild Return Scroll to teleport to Heavenly Citadel.

Chapter 1293: Depart to the Council of Charites

Jeanny was waiting for Jack inside the Guild Hall. She and Tip were managing the guild using the control platform.

Grace was there as well. She was chatting with Captain Whitebeard. Jack had promised her that they would be leaving together for the Council of Charites tomorrow morning.

Jack came to Jeanny and gave her the four technique books.

Jeanny looked at the books with a complicated feeling. She was happy that the guild got more arsenal to strengthen its members. But at the same time, she felt the strain on their mana core needs.

"Do you have any mana cores to copy this so I can learn them now?" Jack asked her.

Jeanny gave him an annoyed look, which confused Jack. He was wondering if he had done something wrong.

"These are all unique-grade technique books. I only have enough to copy one of them. Which one do you want to learn?"

"Oh..." Such a pity, Jack thought. His eyes turned to Grace, who caught his meaning. Grace said, "I already gave you all of mine during the war."

"I've donated all of mine to Jeanny," Tip said without being asked.

Jack accepted the fact that he could only learn one of the books before leaving for the Council of Charites. The others would have to wait until he returned.

"This one then," Jack pointed.

Jeanny stored three of the four books. She then activated her divine ability and copied the one Jack had picked. She handed the copy to Jack after completing the task.

Jack accepted the book and learned it without delay.

*

Invisibility, level 1/20 (Active spell)

The caster becomes invisible.

Will become visible again if get into combat status, being touched by players, NPCs, or monsters.

Duration: 30 minutes

Cooldown: 3 hours

Mana: 100

*

He still had 300,000 souls inside his Container of Souls. He used them and upgraded this spell to level 4. Each level increases the spell's duration by one minute. At level 4, the duration was 33 minutes.

"I don't have mana cores to copy the other books, but I have a different book for you," Jeanny said and took a technique book out of her inventory. "I copied it some time ago but never got the chance to give it to you."

When Jack used his Inspect, he found the book contained a skill meant for Beastmaster. The skill's name was Beast Tantrum.

"Thank you!" Jack said and accepted the book. He had the avenues to get Blade Dancer and Archmage's skills but not Beastmaster's. He would have to rely on kill drops or quests for that. Hence, he was happy when Jeanny gave him one.

Jack learned the skill and then opened his skill page to study its description.

*

Beast Tantrum, level 1/20 (Active skill)

Pet's attributes +100%. Pet's defenses, attack speed, and movement speed +50%.

Every 30 seconds, remove one negative status effect afflicting the pet.

Duration: 5 minutes

Cooldown: 30 minutes

Stamina: 120.

*

It's a skill that empowered Therras. This should give his pet an added edge when needed.

Jack talked with Jeanny for a while about the state of the guild before going to the Space-Time Chamber to sleep. He planned to abuse his authority again and use that chamber for sleeping.

But once he entered the chamber, he knew his plan was botched. Even with the enlarged space, there were still so many members training inside, and they were all noisy. He wouldn't be able to sleep peacefully under such a condition.

He ran to the corner where Yrin, Tenka, and the two nightmares were at. Fewer members were there since they knew they were not allowed to disturb the nightmares, but the noise was still heard. He also saw Bowler and The Man there helping the satyrs take care of the nightmares.

The nightmares themselves seemed larger than the last time Jack saw them. Considering they spent all their time inside this chamber, it was not weird. The time difference had them practically living for more than two years already since then.

Jack asked Yrin if she or the nightmares were bothered by the noise. He would use this excuse to chase out the players from this chamber if so.

Unfortunately, Yrin said that she didn't mind. She even felt like the cacophony of sounds from the members training here made her feel like they were back in their village. She informed Jack that satyrs were a noisy race. Jack didn't know since he didn't spend much time in their village during his visit to the underworld.

Yrin assured Jack that the nightmares were also comfortable with the noise.

Jack was dejected. Since he couldn't find a reason to abuse his authority, he didn't push it. He introduced Grace who had followed him to Yrin, Tenka, Sol, and Fira. Grace easily became friends with the four, especially the two nightmares.

After chatting for a while, Jack excused himself to retire to the lodging quarters. Grace stayed to play with Sol and Fira a while longer. Jack reminded her to not stay too late. They would be leaving early tomorrow morning.

Before he left, he looked at Bowler and The Man. Those two seemed awfully close to the two nightmares and their custodians. He wondered what they were up to. But as long as they stayed respectful to these four guests, he didn't mind. He forgot about the two and left.

*

The next morning, Grace was already waiting at the guild courtyard.

Jeanny and Paytowin were there to send them off. The two would also leave for the Council of Elpo the next day, Jeanny still had some matters to attend to today.

Jack checked the coordinates John had given them for the location of the Council of Charites. It was located in the Sylvan region, which was the border region between Aurebor, Liguritutum, and Hydrurond. They practically had to cross the enemy territory to reach there. It shouldn't be a problem since it was only the two of them.

They would not enter any of the territories occupied by the enemies. Instead, they would cross through the Dorwin region, another no man's land. In this way, they should avoid detection.

Chapter 1294: Fun

This was not the first time Jack and Grace went through the Dorwin region. This region was where the Lost Forest was located.

This region was also where Oswald spent his time before he was called into Greed's chamber. Oswald now stayed behind in Thereath. He was no longer a fugitive.

The previous Council of Virtus was no more. The only grudge the new council under Mihos and Pallas was interested in was against the Cult of Phobos. Abdu was no more, and Abasi was not among the orcs in charge of Verremor anymore. So, Verremor also no longer after him.

The only one who still had a bounty on him was his previous employer, the Assassins Guild. But Jeanny had helped smooth the matter over with that faction. Their status as a national guild entitled them some respect even among the native factions. After paying a few gold coins, the bounty on Oswald was lifted.

Oswald was enjoying his freedom in Thereath, which was now a bustling megalopolis.

Grace asked him to not get over-indulgent in his celebration. She expected his level to continue increasing so he could be of use when she needed him.

Jack rode Pandora and traveled on land instead of flying in the sky. Pandora's speed in the sky was faster than Grace's unique-grade unicorn so Pandora ran on the ground to match the unicorn's speed.

The unicorn could release an aura from its horn that calmed all the monsters in its surrounding, making them consider the unicorn as their ally, but this ability had a cooldown. There was a half-hour gap where this ability expired and before it could be used again. With it running alongside Pandora, there was no need for the unicorn to use this ability.

The unicorn itself was unaffected by Pandora's fear. It ran close to Pandora without a problem, which actually made Pandora feel a bit offended. She continued to huff while running. Grace's unicorn paid her no mind.

The Dorwin region was extremely vast. It was almost the size of one country, and they were traveling the elongated path along this region to get to the Sylvan region.

With Pandora, they traveled without the worry of being interrupted by monsters. Except at some certain areas where extremely high-level monsters existed, Peniel guided them to take a roundabout way.

They were not exactly in a hurry. So when they saw new monsters, Jack still made the time to hunt those monsters. The wooded topography of the region made the two steeds unable to move at full speed. Thus, even with their exceptional steeds, it still took nine days before they entered the Sylvan region.

The wooded landscape of the Dorwin region changed to terrains filled with rocky hills and trees. The trees were not as large as the ones in the Dorwin regions, but they still gave the region a feeling of lush nature.

The two saw lots of flying monsters above, more than what they saw in any other areas. Peniel informed them that this region and the Daflue region were the two regions crowded with avian-type monsters. The Daflue region was where the Council of Elpo was located, where Jeanny and Paytowin were heading. It was between Liguritutum, Hydrurond, and Palgrost.

These two places were the ideal spots for those with the bloodline that needed avian monster essences, like what Fierce Flame had. Jack sent the message to Tip so he could inform their guild members.

Jack transformed into his supreme dragon form and flew up to slay at least one new avian monster for his monster book. Grace followed Jack to the sky by using angelic possession.

When Jack realized Grace had been following him in the sky for a period longer than the duration of angelic possession, he noticed the wings behind Grace were different. The wings were silvery green.

"You have wings too?" Jack asked.

"It is a gift from God Greed," Grace answered.

"He is truly nice to you," Jack remarked.

"Are you jealous?" Grace teased.

"Nope," Jack uttered and flew away to hunt nearby monsters while Grace giggled.

The coordinates John gave were not too far from where they entered the region, so it was only three days before they arrived near the coordinates.

The two stared at the thick mist that covered the trees ahead.

"Do you sense it?" Jack asked.

"Yes. This mist is unusual," Grace answered.

The two sensed that the mist ahead of them was formed of mana. They had been staring at the mist for a while. It didn't diminish nor did it move. It just stayed there as if it was stuck in place.

"The location John gave is behind this mist," Peniel said.

"Let's circle the place. See if there is a way to reach there without going through this mist."

So, they walked in a circle while referring to the coordinates on their maps. After making one full circle, they understood that the mist covered all the paths into the coordinates. The mist covered even the canopies of the trees. Grace flew up using her wings tool and surveyed from the sky. They would still have to enter the mist if they entered through the sky.

"What should we do?" Grace asked.

"It is pretty obvious this mist is intentional. If the Council of Charite's base is behind this mist, then I bet this mist is its entrance."

"So, we just enter...?" Grace asked.

"Of course," Jack said.

When he was about to walk into the mist, Grace held him and asked, "Are you not afraid something bad will happen if we just enter like this?"

"This is the base of one of the good Gods. One represents joy, even. I bet they have all the fun stuff waiting for us. We just need to show them that we are Hope's representatives and we are here with good intentions, I'm sure they will receive us with open arms."

"I'm not sure... I have a bad feeling about this mist," Grace said.

"You worry too much. Look, all we need to do is just announce our intention before we enter."

Jack then shouted with a loud voice, "Good people of the Council of Charites! My name is Storm Wind, and this is Grace. We come in peace! I repeat. We come in peace! We carry Hope's sanctification and we are here to warn you about a possible threat. All we want, is just a talk. We will be entering now!"

Jack gave Grace a reassuring look before saying, "I will be entering first."

He then walked into the mist.

"Sometimes I admire his boldness, sometimes I just want to smack him," Peniel said. She was staying behind with Grace. "Let's hope he is—"

Peniel's words ended when her body was suddenly yanked and she vanished.

Grace had seen such a thing happening before. This meant that Jack had entered another dimension within the mist, rendering his distance from Peniel too far and Peniel was forcefully teleported to where he was.

Grace took a deep breath and entered the mist.

As she did, Grace felt as if she had fallen into a bottomless abyss. She couldn't see anything. She realized then that she was closing her eyes. When she opened them, she found that she was in a dimly lit dungeon. She tried to move but discovered that her arms and legs were bound by chains.

"What...?" While she was trying to make sense of what had happened, she saw there were others in this dungeon. They were similarly bound.

A hoarse voice greeted her from above. She looked up and saw a grinning face that was formed of vines.

"Well, well. It looks like we have another participant. Excellent! Let's wait for two more. Then we can finally begin our game and have some fun!"

Chapter 1295: The True Leader of Death Associates

At Death Associates' new guild headquarters in Aurebor, Red Death and Blackjack stood outside its gate entrance.

"This is Death Hall?" Standing beside them was an elderly draconian female. She was Black Death, the original leader of Death Associates.

"Yes, it is originally in Themisphere. White Death relocated the headquarters here because he offended the Themisphere kingdom. It has been a mess since he took over leadership. With Aunt Clara back, we should be able to get the guild back on track."

"I doubt that...," Black Death said.

Her gaze was on the wall of players formed outside Death Hall's gate entrance. The expressions on their faces didn't show delight or relief for having their leader returning to them. Neither she nor Red Death even recognized most of the faces that formed this human wall.

But as more players came out of the headquarters, some familiar faces with friendly expressions finally grazed them.

"Leader! Red!" Blue Death called and pushed past his guild members. Several players followed him, including Scarface and Stonecleave.

"Where have you been all this time?" Blue Death asked Black Death.

"It's a long story," Black Death answered.

"It's good to see you back again, ma'am," Scarface said. The other members that came with the two expressed the same sentiment.

Blue Death turned to Red Death and said, "You've finally returned."

Red Death simply nodded at the remark.

"Don't worry, we will sort this misunderstanding," Blue Death assured her.

"Misunderstanding? She is a traitor to our guild. That fact is crystal clear!" Killingred, who was amongst the players forming the wall, exclaimed. "What are you people doing buddying up with a traitor? Do you lot plan to betray our guild as well?"

"Watch your mouth!" Scarface scolded. "You are before our true leader!"

"True leader?" White Death's voice was heard. The players forming the wall split to provide a path and White Death walked out. Beside him were Yellow Death, Green Death, Violet Death, Bigarm, Earmouth, and Grimclaw.

"I'm afraid that is not what this world system acknowledges," White Death said with a faint smile.

"Sir... But, she is our leader," Blue Death uttered.

White Death ignored Blue Death. He instead asked everyone. "Those of you who think of her as the leader of Death Associates, you're welcomed to stand over by her side."

None of the players who formed the human wall moved.

Black Death shook her head. "Wayne, I know you've always been ambitious. You are just too cautious that you never vie for the top place out of fear of becoming a main target. Have you finally grown a pair that you dare to show your fangs?"

Wayne was White Death's real name.

White Death grinned wider at the mockery. "Madam Clara. You might think that is shameful, but I believe being the second-in-command allows me to better survive. That, of course, as long as you choose the correct leader."

"So, what makes you change your mind?" Black Death asked.

"I don't," White Death answered. "I've simply chosen to follow another leader. A better one. A stronger one. Someone who can finally give us a piece of a world, so that our guild can become one that we have always aimed to be. With my guidance under this new leader, our guild will reach a height that is never achievable when you are in charge."

"So, you choose to downgrade from a second in command to a lackey of another organization? This is the height you say will elevate our guild?" Red Death mocked.

"I don't need to listen to a traitor's words," White Death returned. His smile never diminished.

"You, people! Have you all forgotten who your true leader is?!" Blue Death shouted. He couldn't believe that everyone supported White Death. "Have you forgotten how we all fought together under Black Death's guidance and grew to become one of the most feared guilds in gaming history?!"

No one from the opposite side showed any reaction to Blue Death's words.

"This is absurd! Black Death is the true leader of Death Associates. Certainly, there is a way to get her acknowledged," Blue Death uttered.

Scarface sighed. "I think he has made preparation. Look at the guild's high-rank positions," he said.

A guild's high-rank positions consisted of the leader, co-leaders if any, councilors, and officers. For the main leader to be ousted, a unanimous decision is needed from all the players in those positions except the leader. Currently, all the players who held these ranks were players loyal to White Death.

Even Scarface and Blue Death weren't included in these ranks. They considered these ranks as superficial so they didn't truly care when White Death demoted them. Now only did they understand the reason. White Death had known all along that they never truly accepted him as their true leader.

"Honestly, I never expect you to just hand over the reign after you taste the power of being the main leader," Black Death said. "I'm here simply to call those who are still loyal to me, which I must admit, are much fewer than I hoped for."

Less than two hundred players were standing next to her.

"Never mind. When I built Death Associates, it is with fewer members than this. I will make do. Let's go," Black Death said.

She turned around and started walking. Scarface and Blue Death looked at one another. They looked at Black Death who was walking away. They made their decisions then. They opened their guild page and quit Death Associates. They then followed after Black Death. The others who had followed them did the same after seeing their leads.

"Hold!" White Death called, which caused Black Death to stop.

Black Death turned back and asked, "What is it? Have you changed your mind?"

"Hehe," White Death's grin turned wicked. "I've been preparing for this. I've been waiting for you to show up. All so that you can help me pluck out these members who are just loyal to me on the surface. Now, this guild can truly be mine. I thank you. But I, of course, cannot just let you all go just like this."

The players who formed the human wall spread out. They were getting into a formation that surrounded Black Death's group.

"I know you will never get over me for taking the guild from you. You will certainly devise a plan to get back at me," White Death continued. "To eliminate future problems, it is better that I reduce all of you to level one today."

Chapter 1296: True Death Associates

Red Death brandished her twin crimson daggers. Every Death Associates member knew that she would be the most troublesome opponent. Both her weapons and armor looked like set equipment. Her class' description was also not the standard elite class, which indicated she had a special class. Her level was also at the very top of most expert players, level 69.

Aside from her, the two she came with also possessed unusual classes. Black Death was a Mad Demonologist class, a first-class special class from Warlock. Blackjack's class was Wild Slayer, a second-class special class from Assassin.

After Wrath released Black Death from captivity, Black Death helped Red Death carry out the Goddess' tasks. Red Death also called Blackjack over to help her. Blackjack had been waiting for Red Death in a nearby settlement.

Seeing how efficient the three were when they worked together, Wrath granted Black Death and Blackjack special classes. Specifically for Black Death, she let her use a special dimension in her sanctum designed for training.

Using that dimension, Black Death leveled up fast. She had lost a lot of time during her captivity, so her level was very low when she was released. Even with the fast-leveling speed from the special dimension, her level was still below the average player's. She was currently at level 61.

As for Blackjack, he was level 68.

Red Death used her companion token and summoned Rayne, her level 78 rare elite companion.

"Since they want a fight, let's force our way inside and destroy the guild core inside. This headquarters will then be ours!" Red Death exclaimed with fervor.

"Unfortunately, that is not possible," Scarface said. "We have done extensive research on guild headquarters. If a guildless player destroys the guild core, that player only has two options. Destroy the headquarters or loot the vault within. You have to be in a guild to take over another guild's headquarters. All of us are guildless at the moment..."

"Hahaha! Impressive confidence, but we far outnumber you. Or do you think you are that Storm Wind a*shole?" White Death asked. He also took out a companion token. He activated the token and a level 70 rare elite elven mage appeared beside him. That token was a gift from Mistress for their assistance during the battle in Hydrurond.

White Death himself was a Reaper, a second-class special class from Reaver.

The two deaths behind him, Green Death and Violet Death, also had special classes. Greed Death was Tree Shepherd and Violet Death was Earth Lancer. Both were normal special classes.

Green Death also had a companion token, which summoned a level 67 special elite dwarven warrior.

Although Red Death still wore a spirited expression, the others didn't share her enthusiasm. Thousands of opponents were surrounding them. They were not even two hundred. They were fully aware that they were not Jack who could take on a force with such a large difference in number.

"You think you can take us on with that pitiful number of yours? Try it then," White Death said and gave the command. "Crush them!"

When Death Associates players were about to lunge, a powerful voice stopped them.

"HALT...!!!"

Everyone's ears hurt from the voice. Red Death sensed strong mana accompanying that voice. She controlled her mana to protect her ear.

Everyone turned to the source of the voice and saw a draconian in a battle monk garb sitting atop Death Associates' entrance gate. Everyone wondered when did this Draconian climb up there? Nobody saw him when they walked out the gate.

"Mis... Mister Long...," White Death uttered. After Wong left, Long was free to hang around Master's inner circle. White Death had seen this draconian and knew that he was one of Master's heavenly enforcers, which meant he was one of Master's top combatants.

"Anyone who lays a hand on my martial sister will have to answer to me," Long said.

"Mar... Martial sister?" White Death asked.

Instead of answering, Long jumped down. He then walked forward. The low-level players might not recognize Long, but seeing how their leader acted so cautiously around this man, they knew he was not someone they could offend. Hence, Everyone moved aside and let him pass.

Long walked past them toward where Red Death was. Blackjack who was beside her shrunk away when Long approached. Blackjack was also one of Wong's disciples. During his time in Wong's dojo, he didn't have a good memory of Long. He was always bullied by this man.

"Hey, auntie," Long greeted Black Death. Black Death replied with a simple nod.

Red Death once brought Long to join Death Associates when it was just established. That was before White Death and the others joined. Long quickly learned all the game mechanics but didn't stay for long. He was not interested in gaming. To him, beating up his opponents in real life was much more satisfying than beating them in-game.

"I don't need your help," Red Death said.

"I know. I am helping Aunt Clara," Long said. "Let's go."

Long lead them away. Red Death glanced in White Death's direction before following. Though she wanted very much to stab that man, she knew all the others with her would mostly die if a fight ensued, including her aunt. So, she held herself back and followed the others.

Death Associates' players turned to White Death with uncertainty. 'Are we truly letting this people go?' Their expression asked.

White Death's face was dark. He didn't expect one of Master's top followers to support Red Death. Didn't Red Death help Storm Wind, who was Master's nemesis? Why did this Long fellow help Red Death?

White Death was not aware of Red Death assaulting Jack and killing him once during the battle on the cliff. He thought she was still Jack's accomplice.

Whatever the reason, he didn't dare defy a heavenly enforcer. He just stared with gritted teeth as Black Death and the others moved away.

Once they were out of danger, Long said, "They shouldn't dare to attack you all for some time, but try not to antagonize them until you lot are strong enough. I won't bother to help a second time."

"Thank you, Long," Black Death said.

"I just happen to be in the neighborhood, consider yourself lucky," Long replied.

"Long, where is Master Wong? I heard he quit your guild?" Red Death asked.

"He did, after I beat him again," Long answered.

Red Death frowned. "Why did you do that?"

"Because I like seeing his miserable face when he lost. Do you have a problem with that?"

"Why don't you just be honest with him? What happened was an accident," Red Death said. "He pushed you too hard and you just want to prove to him that you can meet his expectations and surpass him. You simply got carried away and unintentionally broke his legs. If you are willing to explain to him, I'm sure he will—"

"Shut up...!!" Long bellowed. His eyes were staring at Red Death with strong killing intent. As willful as Red Death was, she couldn't deny that she was terrified at that moment.

"You, people, take care of yourself," Long said and left. He didn't look back.

Red Death was silent as she watched Long's back.

After Long was gone, Scarface asked Black Death, "What should we do now?"

"We will go to the guild hall and form a guild. We will then go and get ourselves headquarters," Black Death answered.

"How do we get headquarters? All the available spots have been taken," Scarface asked.

"Although I didn't expect White Death to be so heinous that he tries to eliminate us, I do expect him to not step down from the current guild. I come here simply to recruit members who are still willing to follow me. I've already made plans. We have two options."

"Two?"

"One is easier than the others. Recently, one of Themisphere's settlements has become a main city. A bandit outpost should appear near that city. If we can defeat it before another guild does. We will get our headquarters."

"No. Not Themisphere," Red Death uttered.

Black Death didn't ask her why. She continued, "The second option is harder, but reaps more reward. If we get headquarters by defeating a bandit outpost, we will start from scratch. But if we defeat another guild's headquarters, we can keep the headquarters and its surviving guild army will become ours."

"Can we do it with our number?" Stonecleave asked.

"We will go to Hydrurond," Black Death said. "That country had just undergone a regime change. Everything is in chaos. I've studied the guilds there. There is one we can exploit and defeat even with our small number. We will take over their spot as one of the guilds with headquarters in Hydrurond."

"As expected of our true leader," Blue Death uttered. "We will regain our glory and then we will show those traitors back there who are the true Death Associates."

"What a coincidence," Black Death chuckled. "That is what I intend to use for our guild's name, True Death Associates."

Chapter 1297: Another Participant

Inside a dimly lit and damp dungeon, Jack was sitting on the ground. His arms and legs were chained. He tried using his skills to break free from the chains but he couldn't activate any of them.

They must have entered a constructed dimension where preset rules were enforced to restrict the usage of skills.

However, it was not only Jack's skills that were inaccessible. All his equipment had also been forcefully stripped and sent back into his inventory. All he wore now was a ragged shirt and pants. He could check his inventory but he couldn't take anything out from there. He also couldn't access his status window or send messages.

All he could rely on was just his own body. Jack tried using mana manipulation to try to break his chains, but the chains were too strong.

"Can you please stop that? The noise is irritating," A man who was chained next to Jack said.

Jack was not the only one in this dungeon. There were eight others like him. He couldn't use his Inspect skill but he could identify using his mana sense that five out of the eight were players. The other three were natives.

"I'm trying to break free," Jack said to the man, who was a player.

"I can see that. You are just wasting your time. Don't you think we would have done so if we can?"

"I have a much higher strength stat than normal players," Jack said and tried to yank the chain another time, unsuccessfully.

The man huffed mockingly at Jack's words.

A woman from Jack's other side joined in the conversation. She was also a player. "Look, I am an orc and I have the berserker class. I also greatly invest in my strength stat. Even I can't break these chains."

Jack stopped yanking. Not because of what the others said. It's because he had tried and the chains were indeed extremely sturdy even for his strength.

'Peniel...?' Jack asked in his mind. He didn't see the fairy.

'I'm here,' Peniel's voice answered.

'Where?'

'Inside my hidden dimension. Somehow, I can't get out. It must be because of this constructed dimension. I'm considered a skill, so you can't summon me.'

'I see... Do you know whether this dungeon is the base of the Council of Charites?'

'Nope,' Peniel answered.

Jack asked Peniel a few more questions in his mind, but the fairy was as clueless as him.

Since he was bored, he tried to converse with the people there. "How long have you all been in here?"

The man who first spoke to Jack answered, "Very long, I can't even remember." He turned to the side, "Hey, Richard. Do you remember how long we have been locked here?"

The player who was called Richard shrugged. "Two months, I think?"

'Two months?' Jack thought with worry. He couldn't afford to get locked up for that long. Many things needed his attention out there.

"Do you know what this place is?" Jack asked again. "Is this the base for the Council of Charites?"

"The Council of what...? I have no idea what you are talking about, man."

Jack looked at the others and saw that most ignored him. The woman berserker shook her head indicating she didn't know as well.

He didn't see Grace among these people. Did she not follow him in? But then he thought about when he was trapped inside Greed's sanctum. No, Grace definitely followed him in. Even if she couldn't at first, she would try to find her way in. Which meant she would get trapped too.

Jack sighed. Perhaps he had been too reckless. But this was supposed to be the base for one of the good Gods. Why did it become a place that trapped people?

Jack looked up and called loudly, "Hey, vine face!!"

The others were startled by his sudden yell.

"What the hell are you doing?" Richard's friend asked, alarmed.

Jack ignored him, he continued to call with a loud voice. "Vine face! Are you there? I have something to ask!"

"Stop it!" Richard also joined in the warning.

Jack ignored them and continued shouting. The vines creeping along the ceiling of the dungeon started moving. The others moved away when it happened. They pressed themselves onto the wall, trying to get as far away from those vines. Their eyes were terrified.

The vines gathered and formed the face which had given them the announcement when Jack first appeared here. The face was grinning as it was before.

"Yes, participant? What do you want to ask?" The face asked with a cheerful tone.

"Is this the base for the Council of Charites who worship the Goddess of Joy? I wish to speak to one of its divine priestesses. Aglea, Euphosine, or Talia."

Those divine priestesses were the joined leaders of the Council of Charites. John imparted this knowledge to Jack before he left.

The face on the ceiling had a moment of surprise that lasted only briefly. It was back to its cheery expression in an instant. "Interesting. One of our participants seemed to know this place. So, you've come here on purpose then. Unfortunately, our divine priestesses are occupied. They can't attend to you, but you will meet one of them when the game begins."

"What game? When does it begin?" Jack asked.

"Once we get two more participants. The game can only be played when all the spots for the four teams are filled up."

"Four teams, does it mean we here is one team? What do we play in the game?"

"Everything will be explained when the game starts."

"You should tell us more about it so we can prepa—"

"WAIT FOR WHEN THE GAME STARTS...!!!" The friendly vine face suddenly turned into a horrifyingly scowling face. One of the vines forming the face snapped at Jack.

Jack's reflex and mana sense allowed him to dodge this attack but the chains restricted his movement. He couldn't avoid a second vine that followed and it entangled Jack's neck.

"Ack...!" The vine tightened its grip and strangled Jack.

Damage number popped up as the vine tightened its grip. Jack's HP bar decreased slowly due to his high pool of HP. The vine probably wanted to let go when Jack's HP reached a critical state, but it lost patience because it took too long and released Jack by smashing him into the wall.

Jack coughed from the punishments.

The vine face returned to its cheery version again as if nothing had happened. "Please sit tight and enjoy your time with each other before the game starts."

The grinning face was deconstructed and the vines returned to crawling randomly on the ceiling.

"We have warned you, man..., " Richard's friend said.

"It was not a total loss," Jack said. "We learn that this place is truly the Council of Charites."

"You are nuts, man. What's good is it to know what this place is?"

"By the way, what's your name? I am Storm Wind," Jack asked the player who first talked to him. They couldn't use Inspect so they had to resort to old-style Q&A.

"... My name is Stefan," That player answered.

"Richard," Richard said but Jack already knew him.

"I'm Naomi," the Berserker woman informed.

Most others ignored Jack's question. When one of the natives was about to introduce himself, a flash of light happened right beside Jack. When the flash ended, an ethereal player was there in chains.

The vine face appeared again and announced, "We have ourselves another participant! So soon since the last one. Perhaps we can begin this game soon. One more and we are a go!"

Jack wasn't paying attention to the announcement because his attention was all on the newly arrived ethereal player. The player was not wearing any armor and ethereals' faces looked almost the same from one another. Still, Jack recognized this player.

This newly arrived player was Master.

Chapter 1298: Locked Up with a Nemesis

Stefan, Richard, and Naomi watched Jack who was staring at the newly arrived ethereal like a statue. What's the deal with this guy? Had he never seen an ethereal before? There was indeed no one from the ethereal race in this dungeon before this newcomer, but this region was right next to the country filled with the ethereal race. Additionally, many players could cross countries now, it was unlikely if Jack never saw an ethereal before.

Jack continued to stare at Master, or at least an ethereal he thought to be Master, for a very long time.

Master's eyes showed surprise when he saw Jack here, but he ignored Jack after that first glance. He continued ignoring Jack but Jack had been staring at him for so long that it caused even him to become uncomfortable.

"Knock it off!" Master scolded.

"Holy shit! It truly is you!" Jack exclaimed. Now that he heard Master's voice, he was sure. Even though ethereal's voices were transmitted directly into the interlocutor's mind, different ethereals still had their distinctive voices.

"Why are you here?!" Jack asked, to which Master was back to ignoring him.

The native, who Jack thought was about to introduce himself before being interrupted by Master's appearance, spoke now, "You said just now your name is Storm Wind. Are you King Storm Wind? Our king?"

That native who spoke was a human.

"If he is a king, then I'm a Pope! Haha," Stefan laughed.

Richard joined the laugh.

Jack ignored them. He answered the human, who looked to be a teenager. "Yeah, I am. What's your name? How do you get trapped here?"

"I am Kramer," the teenager answered. "I'm here with a group of adventurers. We were lost when we enter a mist inside a forest. I just found myself in this place afterward. Please, my king, free us from this place!"

"Come on, kid. Do you truly believe him to be the king? You are plain dumb if you do," Stefan said.

"But I did hear that the current king of Themisphere is an outworlder named Storm Wind," Naomi said.

"Then he just happens to have the same name," Stefan replied.

"I heard we can't use the same alias as others," Richard said. "A friend of mine told me before that he tried entering the alias 'Hero' when he got his starting class, but the system told him that the alias was already taken and he had to choose another alias."

"Then he is just borrowing the name of a famous person!" Stefan exclaimed, annoyed for everyone second-guessing him. He turned to Jack and uttered, "Didn't you?"

"Um... This guy is the ruler of Ligiritudum," Jack pointed to Master.

"See? What is the odd the sovereigns of two powerful countries get trapped inside here with the rest of us? I mean, how stupid are they? No way that they are sovereigns!"

"Haha," Jack laughed awkwardly. "I think I deserve that. You, on the other hand..."

Jack turned to Master. "You are after the divine heritage here, aren't you?"

Master's eyes returned to Jack for the second time. Jack saw a hint of surprise again inside those pupilless eyes.

"You want that thing to make another Godkiller, aren't you?" Jack continued. "I won't let you."

"How do you know all that?" Master asked. "Is it because of that high fairy? Where is she?"

"You don't need to worry about her, just know that you won't get what you come here for," Jack said.

"Hmph," Master harrumphed and turned away.

"Why are you here alone? You don't strike me as someone who does the dirty work yourselves. Why you didn't send your lackeys?"

Master was back to ignoring Jack.

Jack tried asking him again a few more times but Master acted as if he didn't hear anything. Jack finally gave up and back to converse with the other captives that were here before him.

With Master, there were ten of them. Stefan and Richard were draconians. Stefan was a Hidden Weapon Specialist, while Richard was a Reaver. Naomi was an orcish Berserker as she mentioned before. The other two players were Winson and Dina, both were of elven race. Winson was a Bard, while Dina was an Archmage.

The three natives were Kramer, the human teenager, Glover, a male orc, and Kerry, a female elf. All three were adventurers from different teams.

They talked, then slept, then talked again. Around one day passed since Jack arrived. He couldn't tell for sure since there was no night and day inside this dungeon.

Throughout the chatting, Jack threw Master some questions. Master just ignored him.

"I must say, this place turns much livelier after you are here," Richard said to Jack.

"Noisy is what it should be called. You all are disturbing my rest," Winson uttered. He acted like those typical grumpy old men.

"Dude... You are chained. You are practically resting all the time," Jack said.

Jack then turned to Stefan and Richard. "You two truly have been here for two months?" Jack asked.

"Yeah," Stefan answered. "Some of them were already here even when we arrived. That means they have been here longer."

"I have been longer," Dina said. "I can't remember exactly. One or two weeks earlier than the two of them, I suppose? Winson was here before me."

"Wow, no wonder he is so grumpy," Jack remarked, which caused Winson to throw him an irritated glare.

The three natives were mostly quiet except for Kramer. Kramer still thought Jack was his king even though the others continued to persuade him otherwise. Glover and Kerry only answered when they were asked. They were gloomier than the players. It was understandable, considering they were not immortal.

"Uh... Anyone has tried killing themselves to get free of this place?" Jack asked.

"How? We can't damage ourselves without our weapons," Stefan uttered.

'Oh, right. None of them is a battle monk,' Jack thought. Jack also didn't think any of them know mana manipulation.

"You can ask the natives to hit you," Jack said. "Kramer here can do it. Who wants to volunteer?"

"It's your idea, you go ahead and try it then," Stefan said.

"It won't work. You will just reappear back here," Master said.

Everyone turned to him.

"Finally can't help to join in, can you?" Jack said to him playfully, which caused Master to turn away again.

'He is right, though,' Jack heard Peniel's voice in his head. 'See the rune diagram hidden behind those vines? The diagram is obscured, but I think it is the type that forces every outworlder who dies here to rebirth at this place.'

Chapter 1299: The Reason

Jack continued chatting with the prisoners to pass the time. He also diverted his attention using Hundred Synchronous Thoughts to practice mana manipulation and the sword's heart. These were the only things he could practice while being chained.

He never stopped teasing Master once in a while. When Peniel asked him why he did that, Jack answered because he knew that annoyed Master.

There were only so many things to talk about. Silence descended after a while.

After a long time of uncomfortable silence, Jack turned to Master and resume his routine pestering. "Hey, it seems like we will be here for a while. Are you truly just going to keep mum all the time?"

Master didn't even move.

Every hour, like clockwork, Jack did that. It finally irked Master enough that he finally responded, "Are you doing this deliberately."

"It's obvious, doesn't it?" Jack grinned. "I'm about to shorten it to every half an hour if you continue playing statue. I promise to leave you alone if you converse with me properly."

"What's the point of conversing with your enemy? What we should be doing is give it our best to eliminate one another."

"We can't do that now, can we?" Jack pulled at his chains. "Furthermore, I believe most of the conflicts of this world come from not enough conversation, or people conversing poorly. I bet if everyone can converse heart to heart, we will find a middle ground to live peacefully together."

"Pfft...! That's what you think? You are even more of a dummy than I thought," Master said.

"I prefer it if you call me an idealist," Jack said.

"I received reports where a lot of times you go beat first and ask questions later," Master added.

"As I said, idealist, but sometimes things just weren't ideal," Jack replied.

Master looked away. "Ask your questions. Do not expect to be answered, though."

"Okay, Um... Aren't you supposed to know all there is about this world? Do you know that you will be trapped when you came here? Are you doing this on purpose?"

"No," Master answered.

When Jack continued staring at him, giving him the signal to elaborate. Master sighed and said, "This faction behaves unexpectedly. Something has gone wrong within. I don't know what."

"And you didn't send scouts to check first?"

"I did. None of them returns or sends reports. The last scout I sent is Spring Crown. He is also missing."

"Everyone failed and you decided you should come and see for yourself? Some genius you are," Jack ridiculed.

Peniel, who was listening from her secret dimension, wished she could come out and give Jack a hard slap. This guy just recklessly barged into an unknown territory without sending any scouts and still dared to criticize others who did.

"If you want things to be done right, sometimes you have to do it yourself," Master said.

Jack was reminded again when Master came alone to capture him the first time they met. Although Master mostly schemed behind his forces, Jack could see that this person was also a man of action.

"Okay, that question just now is only a warm-up. Let's go real now. Why do you do the things you do?" Jack asked.

When Master was silent, Jack pushed, "Why do you want to become what you want to become?"

Master snickered. "That is a foolish question. Isn't it everyone's desire to stand on top of others?" He asked back.

"Not everyone's," Jack replied.

"Hmph. I guess it's everyone's except for fools," Master mocked.

"Being on top meaning being alone. There is only one spot. It's a very lonely place."

"I prefer lonely than a world where everyone has to grovel at everybody."

Jack again gave Master a face that asked him to elaborate.

Master ignored Jack for a full minute before he finally said, "Do you know the problem of our past world? We need others. Everyone has to try to win everyone else's affection to even have a chance of success. Even when one is fully competent, it doesn't matter. One needs to be popular. It doesn't matter if you have a brilliant mind. It doesn't matter if you have a great vision. All those are a waste if you cannot find supporters who are willing to back you up.

"You have to grovel at less-intelligent people's feet just so they give you funds for your experiments. You don't know how humiliating that is! Even if you explain your ideas very well to them, if you can't make them like you, they won't spend a dime on you. That's the world we have been living in. All those celebrities, the social media. Everyone is obsessed about how many likes or how many views they get because that's the most important thing. Getting more people to like you. The more it is, the more successful you are. It's disgusting!"

This was the first time Jack heard Master say such a long sentence. He figured he must have hit a nerve there.

"That is indeed the way of the world," Jack said. "I think it's natural. That's why we need to be good to each other. I don't see why it's a problem. Numbers have always been king. An individual won't beat a corporation, a corporation won't beat a government."

Jack was repeating what Four Winds said to him in the past.

Stefan, who had been listening by the side, joined the conversation, "That is bullshit. My country, before I come into this game world, is controlled by a corporation. That is a fact!"

"Then your government is weak," Master uttered. "This fool is right but he left out some details. A determined individual can win against a divided corporation, the same way a united corporation can win against a divided government. Your government is weak because it is divided. Try picturing that corporation in a dictatorial country. Do you think it can do what it does to your current government? Its asset will be forcefully seized, the organization disassembled, and its leaders executed. Do you think they can resist? To whom are they going to complain about such unfair treatment?"

"Did you just say a dictatorship government is better? Are you for real?" Jack asked with disbelief.

"I didn't say it is better. I said it is strong! A dictator sucks the blood of the people to fatten the elites in power, thus forming a united group that supports the dictator. None within this group will want to lose their power after tasting it, thus further cementing the dictator's position."

"Then they will be taken out by the people they enraged!" Jack exclaimed.

"If the people are united. Why do you think dictators rely so much on propaganda? To keep the people divided. As you said, number is king. The only thing that wins against a united government is a united people. But the larger an organization is, the harder it is to unite them. Uniting the people is the most difficult endeavor. But if that happens, nothing can stop it!"

Jack's mind inadvertently went to those zombie apocalypse movies he used to watch. In those movies, the zombies who only fought with claws and teeth were always portrayed to topple governments that had tanks and nuclear bombs. No one ever thought that was nonsense. He supposed those zombie swarms could be seen as what happened when the people were truly united. When everyone strived for a single purpose without a care for their own. No government even with their powerful weapons would be able to stop such a swarm. But of course, that was just a fairy tale. Everyone had fears and desires, they won't be able to act like those mindless zombies.

"Do you see now?" Master asked. "This is the reason I want to become a God, so I'm no longer bound by this stupid rule that prioritizes numbers!"

Chapter 1300: The Participants are Complete

The others were staring at Master. This ethereal had always been silent. His unexpected outburst drew everyone's attention.

"A god...?" Naomi asked.

Jack said to them. "No need to listen to him, especially what he said about that dictator shit. He is a megalomaniac who tries to conquer the world and imagines himself as a God enslaving everyone. You can just treat his words as farts."

Stefan rolled his eyes at Jack. 'Wasn't it you who baited him into this conversation?' His eyes said.

Master realized he had let his emotion get the better of him. He harrumphed and leaned back onto the wall. He turned his face away from Jack.

"Hey, we just starting to know each other. Don't stop when the conversation starts to get interesting," Jack said to him.

"I've conversed enough. Are you going back on your words?" Master said.

"Ugh, fine. I will not bother you... for a few hours," Jack said.

Five minutes later, Jack asked him, "Hey, you are a genius, aren't you? Do you have any idea how we can get out of our current situation?"

Master was peeved. He wanted very much to cast his spells on this chattering fool, but he also couldn't access his spells. He was indeed thinking about a solution to his current predicament. But with this noisy man beside him, he was unable to think properly.

He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He had suffered through such fools his entire life. People who didn't know what they were talking about. Even when he tried explaining to them, they still didn't understand. That's why he had learned to not bother explaining anything to such people. Their limited intelligence rendered them unable to comprehend his train of thought.

He was concentrating. He shut himself off from all outside noises. His thought was only on the problem at hand. His mind was focused. Solid as a fortress that repelled all the clatters from the outside world... Then this fortress was shaken.

Master opened his eyes as his body shook. He looked down and saw the hand that was responsible for the shaking. That hand belonged to Jack.

"Hey, I'm asking you. Do you have any idea? It will be better if we work together," Jack said while continued shaking Master's body.

"You...! You, insufferable, obnoxious piece of a pestering buffoon! You, vexing..."

His rant was interrupted when a loud voice boomed from above, "The last participant has arrived...! We finally have four full teams! Ladies and gentlemen, the game will begin shortly! Take your time to say your goodbye and maybe some prayers. Some of you might not make it. But hey! It's all worth it as long as we have fun, isn't it? The game will begin in ten minutes!"

The vine face had formed without anyone noticing. After delivering its announcement, the vines broke up and returned to its natural state. The dungeon returned to being silent.

"Last participant...? That participant must be in the other teams. By the way, does anyone know what this game is about?" Jack asked.

Everyone shook their heads.

Jack turned to Master. "Do you know? Oh... You were saying something just now. What did you say? I didn't quite catch it," Jack asked.

Master's face twitched. He didn't know if Jack truly didn't hear or if he was pretending. The result was the same, he was infuriated.

He gave Jack the silent treatment again. Just ten more minutes, he thought. Whatever this game was, he hoped he got separated from Jack. Or better yet, let him fight Jack. He would very much like that. Thinking of that possibility, his mind didn't even have the room to process an escape plan.

Since Master ignored everyone, Jack took the initiative. He said to the others, "Well, whatever this game is, the vine face said four teams. We must be one of those four. There is a high chance we will be pitted against the other three teams. I don't know what happens if we lose. But from what that vine face said just now, I don't think it's anything good. We will have a better chance of winning if we all work together. So, we need to be of one voice! We need a leader. I propose that..."

"All of you should listen to me!" Master interjected.

Everyone was startled by his sudden declaration.

Master was surprised himself. He didn't truly care who was the leader. He planned to study the situation and find a way out for himself. But he somehow just couldn't accept letting Jack be the leader. Anyone else except this buffoon was fine, even though the said leader was only figurative.

"Dude... Chill down," Jack said to him. "I was about to propose you as the leader."

Master thought he must have heard wrong.

"I hate to say this, but among us, you have the most knowledge of this faction or any secret mechanism at work. I know you won't share any of them with us, but you should be able to direct us properly with that knowledge."

Richard asked, "Why does he know more about this faction than any of us?"

"Trust me. He just does," Jack said.

Richard gave him a face that said, 'What kind of explanation is that?! Why should I trust you?'

Jack ignored Richard and turned back to Master. "But of course, if you give us instruction that purposely harms any one of us. Prepare for retaliation. Don't think you can take all of us on without your spells. Even I am confident I can deal with you in this condition."

"Then why do you not? This is perhaps your only chance to defeat me," Master asked.

"Your overconfidence will bring you down," Jack said.

"Right back at you, moron," Master returned.

"Never picture you to be so foul-mouthed," Jack remarked.

Master thought the same. He didn't seem to be able to keep his cool with this guy.

The others didn't truly understand the two's conversation nor were they fully listening to the two. They were at the moment very anxious about this game that was about to start. On one hand, they were glad they no longer had to wait endlessly inside this dungeon. On the other hand, what if this game was worse than they thought?

"Ten minutes are almost over," Jack said. He had been keeping tabs on the time by counting in his mind.

When the counter in his mind reached zero, a flash of light enveloped all ten of them. They felt themselves become weightless. When the flash ended, they were gone from that dungeon.