

World 1351

Chapter 1351: Victims

"You... You are Domon Fei's grandson?" Freddie asked.

"Yeah. We sparred in the past. Do you still remember?" Jack asked.

He did remember Domon's grandson who he played with as a favor to Domon, but that kid was just a little child back then. Now that he was reminded, he did see a resemblance between Jack and that little kid.

Freddie's expression softened, but only for an instant. It was soon back to a steely face again. "No! I don't care if you are Domon's grandson! Even if you are my own grandson, we will still be enemies in this place!"

"Uncle Freddie, be reasonable! I truly have a way out of here," Jack tried to convince him.

"No, stay away from me!" Freddie shouted. He gave Saddle another glance before he ran away from there.

"Uncle Freddie...!!" Jack called, but Freddie didn't respond.

Saddle came to them. She was still wary but she decided to just accept her fate in case this was a trap. Kramer and Winson looked at Jack, unsure if they should attack Saddle or not.

"Everyone, store your weapons," Jack told them. He sheathed his wrench and shortsword.

"I meant it when I said I have a way out. I can't say it is guaranteed but at least there is a chance," Jack said to Saddle.

Saddle felt Jack's sincerity through his words. She decided to trust Jack then.

"If you need my help, you have it," Saddle said.

"Thank you," Jack said.

Saddle could see that Jack was still sad that he failed to persuade Freddie. Saddle said to him, "This place turns the best people into a worse version of themselves. Freddie has been here for a very long time... So do I."

"Let's go. It's going to get dark soon," Jack climbed back on his bike and restarted it.

"So, you truly have known that we have been following you?" Saddle asked.

"Yes, but what I said about a way out is still the truth," Jack replied. Saddle believed him.

Kramer, Winson, and Saddle ran following Jack who led on the motorbike. He adjusted the bike's speed to the three's running speed.

While on the way, Jack asked Saddle a few questions.

They arrived soon at the safe house. Jack called to let the people inside know he was the one outside. Stefan opened the door. He was happy to see Kramer and Winson, but then he froze when he saw Saddle. This woman tried to kill him earlier today.

When Stefan gave Jack a questioning glance, Jack uttered, "Let's talk inside. Hurry! There is not much time!"

Jack had seen on his radar a large number of red dots appearing at the periphery of his radar. The dark creatures had come out again to hunt in the night.

Everyone hurriedly went in. Stefan closed the door and barricaded it with a cupboard and a heavy table.

Not long after, they heard a lot of crawling sounds from outside. All of them became tense from the sound. Something banged on the door, but the door was solid enough. After some time, the crawling sounds lessened until it was finally silent outside. It seemed the dark creatures didn't know that they were inside this building.

"We call them the night hunters," Saddle said. "Their number increased as this world arena shrinks each day. In the last two days, this battle royale match will become more about survival against these hunters."

"What is she doing here?" Tom finally asked. He had been agitated since he saw Saddle come in. Her team had attacked his team twice in the past, even taking out several of his team members during the first ambush. Windy and Naomi were also eyeing Saddle with hostility.

"Everyone, please calm down," Grace mediated. "Let's listen to Jack's explanation."

Jack came to the middle of the room and cleared his throat. "Ehem. Everyone, listen up. I know some of you have enmity with people in this room. Trust me, I understand how you feel. I myself want more than anything to beat up this a*shole right this moment, but I restrain myself."

Jack was pointing at Master, who scoffed in return.

"But in this place, we are all the victims. We are members from three different teams, who have been instructed to kill each other. We can choose to obey that instruction and succumb to whatever force controls our lives here. To which, Saddle here can explain what will happen."

Saddle looked at everyone in the room. She then said. "I have been here for a while. I'm not sure how long, but I think it's almost one year already. I have been on three different games until now. I've died in all three games. I came back to life and they forced me to train in a training room until I get past level 50 and then they sent me back into the game again. I'm not sure how many games the owner here has hosted, but I think they host one at least every month."

"That's not possible. I've been in captivity for two months," Stefan said. "They are still looking for participants for this game until recently."

"There are more of these teams than you think. Not just the four who were in this game," Saddle replied. "You won't believe how many people are in captivity. There are more than you know. They purposefully let some first-time participants stay in captivity longer than necessary. They probably thought this could motivate us to be more enthusiastic when the game starts. Sometimes when they didn't have enough

participants, they still run the game anyway by forcing all the old participants to play. But most of the time, they prefer the current setting. Three teams filled with new blood while one team composed of the old participants, my team."

"So... That's what they want? They want us to repeatedly play this game? For the rest of our lives?" Stefan asked.

"Some players decided to defy," Saddle said. "They stopped following the program and refused to level up in the training room... We never heard from them again."

"Did they... Were they killed permanently?" Stefan asked.

"Not possible," Master answered. "Even the Gods of this world can't do that. They most probably suffer a worse punishment."

"Worse punishment than death?" Stefan asked.

"Only an unimaginative mind thinks death is the scariest thing," Master mocked.

"There is one other thing you need to know," Jack said. "This so-called end match is not the real end match."

"It's not?" Almost everyone asked.

Jack turned to Saddle. He had heard all this from Saddle during their journey here.

"There is another match after this one," Saddle said. "If the winning team has more than one member in it, they were then placed into another smaller arena. In this arena, these team members will have to fight each other until only one remains."

Chapter 1352: Stash Room

"The final match after this end match is the real battle royale," Jack explained.

Jack then turned to Saddle and asked, "That's why your team only has five members, correct?"

Saddle nodded. "Why bother saving the ones in the sacrificial rounds when in the end they will be among the ones who try to kill you? Even the five in our team only agree to temporarily work together to reduce the number of the other teams. Once sufficient threats have been eliminated, we will go our own ways to prepare. All the tools you gather in this match will carry over to the final match's arena."

"What happens when you win this final match? Do you get a reward...? Like, maybe... freedom?" Winson asked.

"There is no freedom," Saddle replied. "You can forget to ever get it from the people in charge of this place. All the winner of this game gets is simply the right to rest while the others are forced to go through grueling and tiring training sessions to quickly get back to sufficient levels for the next game. Freddie from my team is the reigning champion in every game he participated."

Jack now addressed everyone, "You hear that, folks? All the organizers of this game want from us is to serve as their entertainment, forever! There is no escape. There is no freedom! If you want one, you have to take it yourself!"

"Do you have a way?" Tom asked.

"Yes. Thanks to this a*shole, we have a chance to be removed from this restriction imposed on us," Jack pointed at Master, who was starting to get irritated for constantly being called an a*shole.

"Once the restriction is removed, we will have the power to fight back. I will also have the ability to sense the doorway that might bring us to the exit of this place."

Master turned to Jack with a frown. He was wondering if this guy was telling the truth or simply trying to motivate the crowd. He also had a method to find the exit but he was planning to keep it to himself.

The others, who heard Jack, had their expressions brightened, especially those from his team. They believed in Jack and they knew he won't let them down. Saddle was rather astonished seeing this level of trust. Even though she also wanted to believe in Jack, she was actually rather skeptical.

"All right, everyone rests. Tomorrow morning, I will go and find the last member of my team," Jack informed. "At noon, we will go to break this place that can give us our abilities back."

"If you are talking about the woman native from your team, there is no need to go search anymore," Saddle said to Jack. "She has died."

When Jack gave her a questioning look, Saddle added, "My team killed her."

"You, despicable murderer...!!" Winson yelled. Kerry was a native, so her death was permanent. Winson was about to lunge at Saddle when Spring Crown held him back.

"Aside from the ones in this room and Freddie, there is no one else out there," Saddle said. "The fourth team outside of the three inside here has been wiped out. My team made sure of that."

Jack looked down in sadness. "Well, what's done is done. Rest! We will depart early morning tomorrow to get our abilities back."

Jack walked to a corner of the room to take a rest while Grace and Spring Crown organized the people to take turns keeping watch. They had to make sure at least one person is awake in case the night hunters tried to break through the entrance.

When Jack got near the corner, he suddenly heard a beep from his God-eye monocle. The eight-hour duration from the equipment-free stone was not yet over. A marking appeared in his vision, denoting one part of the floor that was covered by rubbles.

Jack went over and cleared the rubble. The others were confused seeing his action. Kramer who had been following Jack closely to rest near him helped clear the rubbles without being asked. Everyone else came over due to curiosity.

After the rubble was cleared, everyone saw that the floor was empty. They wondered what was the point of clearing the rubbles there.

The marking on Jack's God-eye monocle was still there. That's why he noticed something the others didn't see. He leaned closer and saw a thin line along the floor, forming a square shape.

'A secret door!' Jack thought.

He blew hard at the floor and it turned out the dust was hiding a recess on the floor. He slipped his hand into the recess and grabbed a handle. He then pulled. It was heavy, but it was nothing for his strength. The secret door started opening.

Everyone stared at the hole in the floor with wide eyes. The inside was dark. They couldn't see what was in there. There was a vertical stair they could use to climb down.

"I will go down and check first. Everyone else stays up here," Jack said.

"I will go down too," Saddle said. "If this is what I think it is, we are in luck."

"I will go as well," Master declared. He also had an idea of what was down there.

"Then I will go too," Grace said. She won't let Jack down there without backup if Master was going.

"Well, I will be up here and take care of the others then," Spring Crown said with a smile.

So, the four climbed down the stairs with Jack in the lead.

It was pretty deep. Jack saw a dim light in the distance when his feet touched the ground. The dim light let him know he was in a tunnel. He walked in the direction of the dim light. He came into an enclosed small room with shelves. Multiple things were on the shelves.

"As I thought. it is a stash room!" Saddle said when she came into the room.

"A stash room?" Grace asked.

"It's a place where a lot of tools are stored," Saddle explained. "Throughout my three games, I've only found a stash room one time, and that was also by pure luck."

Jack wasn't exactly listening to Saddle because his eyes were fixated on one particular thing on the shelves.

He walked to the thing, picked it up, and uttered, "F*ck yeah! It is a f*cking RPG launcher...!"

Chapter 1353: The Chosen Meat Shield

"Woo-hoo! There is even a spare rocket!" Jack exclaimed when he saw the rocket-propelled grenade next to where the launcher used to be. This meant this launcher can be shot twice.

The description on the RPG said that its explosion could take out three shields. This meant this was a one-hit kill weapon, and it was even an AOE attack.

He then saw another thing that made him excited.

"Yeah! I now got my own capsule case!" Jack picked up a similar pill case that Master used to store the motorbike.

The description said that it could store tools of any size but only one could be stored at a time.

Jack moved the capsule case close to the RPG launcher and a prompt appeared asking if he wanted to store the launcher inside the case. Jack agreed. The launcher shrank and flew into the case. The capsule case then closed by itself.

"Cool," Jack uttered.

He looked around to see if there was another capsule case he could use to store the extra RPG. Saddle was also browsing the things on the shelf.

Master had been looking around the place once he entered. He had also come across one such stash room when he wandered by himself. He had found one equipment-skill stone by luck. He then used the stone to allow him to use his God-eye monacle so he could move freely around the place. As he traveled, the monacle informed him of an entrance to a stash room by accident.

Master's monacle could point out important things at a longer range than the other God-eye monacles, that's how he had easily found a stash room while Jack had to go near the entrance before his monacle notified him.

This was how Master had many tools on him.

His eyes laid on one thing he had been searching for. He now walked toward it. When he was about to grab the thing, another hand beat him to it.

"You aren't interested in the other things but you come to this one specifically, I wonder why?" Grace said. While the others had their eyes on the things on the shelves, she kept her eyes on Master.

Grace looked at the thing in her hand. She understood then after reading the texts above it.

"What's that?" Jack asked. He noticed what transpired between Grace and Master. Master only stared at them in silence.

Grace handed the thing in her hand to Jack.

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Limit-off Stone

Undo all restrictions.

Duration: 1 minute

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This could be said to be the ultimate tool. They could use all their abilities if they used this stone. Even if it was for a very short duration of only one minute, the player who used this could easily beat all the other participants during that short one minute.

"The fact that you are targeting this thing means you already lay eyes on one before," Jack said to Master. "You have one with you, don't you?"

Master kept his silence.

"You stay away from these shelves," Grace warned Master.

"Grace, you watch him," Jack said. "Saddie and I will collect and catalog all the tools in this room. We will decide what to do with them afterward."

"You trust me?" Saddie asked.

"At least more than him," Jack replied.

Master didn't resist, but he said, "Let me warn you. You have better used these tools to fight your way to the main node rather than sharing them with the others upstairs."

Jack didn't say anything in reply. He and Saddie started collecting things and took notes on the stuff they found. They lay them on the ground by grouping the same type of items.

"Okay, we got nine skill-free stones, four equipment-free stones, five adhesive bandages, one bear trap, one RPG launcher with one extra ammo, one grenade, two shield-protect stones, two capsule cases, and one limiter-off stone."

"Hm...," Jack thought while studying the goods.

"These are a lot for use by one person, but they are not enough for a group," Master said. "Don't expect you can share them with many people to help you fight your way to the main node. Unless, of course, you plan to use them as meat shields by fighting together with you. Now, that is a plan I can respect."

Jack grinned at the words, which confused Master.

Jack turned to Grace and Saddie and asked, "Do you mind if I take all these?"

"You know I don't," Grace said.

"As long as you can get me out of this hell, I don't care about this stuff," Saddie replied.

So, Jack took all of them except for the bear trap and put them inside the fanny pack on his waist. The RPG launcher and its extra ammo, which were large, were shrunk into the two capsule cases so they could fit inside his fanny pack.

He didn't think he needed the bear trap but he still tied it next to his fanny pack.

Jack then took the two equipment-free tools that Master gave him earlier. He threw them back at Master, who caught them deftly.

"If anyone is going to be my meat shield, it's going to be you," Jack said.

Master frowned. "I've told you, I won't be any help to you with most of my spells sealed."

"I believe you found one of these stash rooms as well, didn't you? That's how you got so many tools. I'm pretty sure you got many skill-free tools as well. Your spells can take out a large number of enemies. Even if you can only cast a limited number of spells, they will still be useful in clearing the way. Those night hunters fight en masse, after all."

When Master remained silent, Jack added, "Even without your spells, your attributes outclass everyone else. With your equipment back, I'm sure you can afford to give those night hunters a run for their money. Don't worry, I will protect you... sort of."

When Master still didn't respond, Jack said, "Okay, let's put it this way, a*shole. You want a way out, right? I will fight my way to this node you mentioned but don't expect me to risk myself alone. If I go, you will have to come with me!"

Finally, Master replied, "Hmph! So be it."

Chapter 1354: The High-rise Building

The next morning, everyone was gazing at a ruined high-rise building. Master led them to this place. They spent several hours walking since there was only one vehicle. The motorbike had been stored back in Master's capsule case.

The high-rise building before them was heavily damaged. Two-thirds of its walls were gone, revealing its interior. Tall walls made of debris from the collapse of nearby buildings surrounded this high-rise building, making it inaccessible.

"That is where the main node is?" Jack asked.

"You said it is full of the night hunters, right? It looks empty to me," Stefan uttered.

"Hello, it's called night hunters. This is daytime," Naomi told Stefan.

"Well then, case closed. We should have no problem getting to the top of that building without those night hunters hindering the way," Spring Crown said.

"How do we get there? I don't see a traversable way," Winson said.

"Jack, maybe you can use one-free skill stone and fly over these walls," Grace suggested.

"Don't waste that stone," Master finally uttered. He just stayed silent when the others discussed the place. "You can't fly into that place. I've tried. There is a no-fly-zone enchantment around the building. Follow me."

Master approached one side of the debris walls. The others looked at each other before following him.

When they thought maybe Master knew a secret switch that could make the wall open a path, he disappeared.

"Huh?" The others were confused by this turn of events, except for Spring Crown and Grace who had a better look at what had happened.

"He just stepped in," Grace told everyone.

Spring Crown walked to the place where Master disappeared. He had one hand touch the wall. Except he didn't feel anything when his hand came into contact with the pile of concrete. His hand just went through as if there was nothing there.

"It's an illusion," Spring Crown said. He then walked in.

On the other side, he was greeted with a very different scene. The high-rise building in front of him was nothing like the one he saw outside. This one was in perfect condition with all its walls intact. But what was more intriguing was the sky above was dark as if nighttime.

There were still debris walls around the perimeter of the building, but the space around the building was clear of any rubble. The only entry into this space was through the hole in the wall he had entered from. The others also entered one by one through this hole.

"What the...? Do we enter another world?" Stefan asked.

"Crap. Here I thought we are going to get it easy by going up this high-rise during daylight," Jack said after he entered.

"Do you think I still need your help if that is the case?" Master uttered annoyingly.

"So, you have tried entering the building?" Jack asked.

"Only the first floor...," Master answered. "There is a shortcut and a long way to get to the stairs to the second floor. The shortcut is through a large hall filled with night hunters. The long way is through a series of corridors. Some night hunters roam this corridor, but it is possible to sneak past them using the monocle's radar. But after checking the situation, I don't want to risk sneaking up and getting trapped in between the floors if things go bad."

"How very cowardly of you," Jack ridiculed.

"I think that is called cautious," Tom said. "I don't think that's bad."

"Hey! Whose side are you on?" Jack said to him.

'Aren't we all supposed to be on the same side at this moment?' Tom thought bewilderedly.

"Have you tried killing any of the night hunters when you entered the last time? Do you know if they spawned back?" Jack asked Master.

"No, I don't," Master answered.

"Do you plan to brute force your way in?" Spring Crown asked Jack.

"If they didn't spawn back, maybe we can lure them to a chokepoint and kill them slowly," Jack replied.

"Or better, lure them out so we can take them out while they were going through that door. They will have to come out one at a time."

"I don't think they will follow you out of the building," Master said. "Furthermore, we don't have much time to do this slowly."

"Yeah, the world will shrink," Saddle said. "The layout of every game is not the same. However, there is never a large building on the last day of the end match when the world shrunk to ten-by-ten meters. This building will be inaccessible after two days."

"Wait, one thing worries me," Stefan interjected. "That main node is super important, right? Then won't Aglea or whoever is in charge knows when it is destroyed? If she has the power to create this constructed dimension, won't it be easy for her to take us out even if our powers are back?"

"I don't think she will know," Master said.

"Are you sure?" Jack asked.

"No, I don't," Master answered. "But remember when I said about the controller of this dimension becoming more preoccupied the larger the scale of the constructed world is? During the sacrificial selection match, Aglea could stay with us all the time. That showed it didn't take much energy to maintain that world. During the sacrificial round, she was absent. She was only present at the beginning and the end. She wasn't aware of what happened during the round but she was aware when the round ended. That's why she always reappeared either after the sacrifice was killed or saved. As for this world, the scale is incomparable to the sacrificial round. My speculation is even if we destroy the main node and take out the rune diagram blocking our powers, she won't know."

"Speculation? We are risking our lives for speculation?" Jack asked.

"The fact that Aglea put such high security around the main node is proof of my theory," Master said.

"Otherwise, she can just swoop in and undo all the damage we do. There is no need for all this security."

"I think he is right," Saddle said. "During my second game, my team won this battle royale match on the second day. Everyone from the other three teams was already dead. We thought the game would end then, but it didn't. We just loitered around during the day and hid from the night hunters in the night until the morning of the fifth day. Then only did Aglea appear and announce us the winners."

"I see. This means if we destroy this main node today, we still have one day free to look for the exit," Jack said.

"That is my plan," Master said. "You might be a fool, but I don't think you are that stupid to think destroying this main node is the end of our trouble, are you?"

Chapter 1355: Sneaking Through the First Floor

"All right, then this a*shole and I will be entering the building and securing us a path to our freedom!" Jack announced. At the same time getting back at Master for calling him stupid.

"Take this," Sadie said and handed Jack a shortsword that was hanging by her waist. That was a weapon from someone she had defeated. It's her melee weapon for supporting her slingshot. "Freddie said you are a very good swordsman. I supposed using this shortsword is better than that wrench."

"Thank you!" Jack told her. Even though his sword's heart allowed him to utilize almost anything as a sword, he was still more comfortable using two shortswords rather than using a wrench and a shortsword.

Jack accepted the shortsword. He now had two shortswords sheathed on the two sides of his waist. He offered his wrench to Master.

"If you need a melee weapon," Jack said. He remembered Master chose a slingshot as his weapon.

"I don't need a melee weapon," Master didn't take the wrench.

Since Master rejected his offer, Jack threw the wrench to Spring Crown. Spring Crown also used a slingshot as a weapon.

"Yo. Thanks, bro," Spring Crown said.

"Are you ready?" Jack asked Master.

Master took out an equipment-free stone and was about to use it but Jack said to him, "Wait! Don't use it for your armor or weapon. The armor lasted only one hour. It's better if we save them for when we truly can't avoid a conflict. You said there are corridors where we might be able to sneak to the stairs, right? We will try going through the corridors."

"I know. Do you think I'm stupid like you? I am using it for my monocle," Master said and activated the stone. A God-eye monocle appeared in one of his eyes. "My monocle is a superior version, so we will use mine. You follow me closely. When it's time to use your equipment-free stones, use them only for your armor. Save at least one stone for our weapon once the main node is in sight. Weapons last only five minutes."

"If I see the main node, I will use the limiter-off stone to go all out, stupid," Jack returned the insult.

"Why would I only use one weapon when I can use all my equipment?"

"Now, now. Play nice. You two are on the same team for now," Spring Crown mediated. "Once this is over and we are back out there, you two can go back to happily murdering one another."

"Hmph," Master looked away.

"Hmph!" Jack also did the same thing in a much more exaggerated manner.

"Well, even if I ask you two to play nice, I can't say that I'm not enjoying this," Spring Crown grinned.

Grace tapped Jack's shoulder and said, "Be careful. I wish I can go inside with you."

"No. I need you to be safe out here. Don't worry, I will get this main node, then we can go and find the exit," Jack said. He then looked at the high-rise building and started counting.

"There are twenty floors," Grace had already counted when Jack and Master were talking.

Jack nodded. "I suppose the main node will be on the top floor."

"There are no stairs to the basement and a no-fly-zone enchantment is in place. So, the top floor is a safe assumption," Master agreed.

"Let's go in," Jack said and walked toward the building's entrance.

Master grabbed Jack and pulled him back.

"Hey!" Jack protested.

"I have the monocle. You stay behind me," Master uttered and walked to the entrance.

"I'm afraid they will fight each other more than they fight the night hunters inside," Spring Crown chuckled.

"This is not funny. Our freedom depends on them," Saddle said. She was not amused by Spring Crown's chuckle.

"I beg to differ, my lady. I do find it funny," Spring Crown said, maintaining his grin.

"What do we do now?" Tom asked Grace.

"... We wait," Grace replied.

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Inside the building, Jack and Master came into an empty lobby. Master gave a signal for Jack to be silent. He then pointed at the door to the left of the lobby to let Jack know they would be using that door.

There was a large opening on the right, Jack peeked out that opening and saw a huge hall. At the far end were the stairs to the upper floor. It would be an easy reach if not for the other things inside this hall.

Around the hall were several huge mounds. At a glance, the mounds might be mistaken as heaps of refuse. But upon closer inspection, these mounds were wriggling. Jack then realized the mounds were the night hunters laying on top of each other. They just stayed there and rested.

Jack felt goosebumps from the sight. The number of night hunters inside each of those mounds was worrying. He now knew his idea of slowly taking out the night hunters was an absurd one. Unless he used AOE abilities, it would take a hell of a long time to eliminate all those night hunters.

Jack felt his shirt getting pulled. He looked back and saw Master signaling him with discontent. Master was frustrated because Jack didn't follow his instruction.

'Okay, okay,' Jack gave a signal saying he was coming now.

The two crept to the door on the left. Master opened the door silently before going in. Jack followed closely behind.

Beyond the door was a long corridor, Jack saw several intersections along the front path. The corridor had several recessed sections with benches and cabinets. Master suddenly moved swiftly to one of these recessed sections. He signaled for Jack to do the same.

Jack hid inside the one opposite Master. Master again signaled for Jack to be quiet.

Jack then heard the sounds of something crawling. Several of them. The sounds seemed to come close to them. Jack was worried that they would be found out so soon after they just entered.

Without his mana sense and radar, he could only rely on Master, and he didn't feel comfortable about it. Master gave him a sign to not move.

Not long after, the sounds moved away.

Master came out of hiding and signaled for Jack to follow.

Jack very much liked to use his equipment-free stone and activated his own monocle, but he restrained himself. He continued following Master closely.

Chapter 1356: Mana Sense

Jack continued to follow Master closely. Despite his dislike for the ethereal, Master proved to be quite stealthy.

Master was patient and cautious. He only moved when he was sure the path was clear. He watched all the red dots on his radar and memorized their movement patterns.

Master's God-eye monocle was special compared to the others. While Jack's one had the dots on different elevations all moving around in his two-dimensional radar, Master's one could be set to different elevation levels. He could set it so the radar only showed the ones currently on this level. He could also set it to show what's on the level above or below if there was any.

In addition, his radar also worked as if sonar. The layout of the corridors around him was mapped out on his radar as he moved.

In this way, Master wasn't confused by the red dots from upstairs. He could properly track the ones existing on this floor and thought of an effective route through these corridors with perfect timing to not bump into any of the wandering night hunters.

It took them some time, but in less than ten minutes, they arrived at the base of the stairs to the second floor. The two looked at the mounds scattered around the huge hall as they stepped on the first flight of stairs. Those mounds didn't move.

They climbed the stairs stealthily.

Arriving on the second floor, they found the floor setup was more or less the same. Hence, they took the corridor's path again.

They continued sneaking up using this method. Jack wasn't aware of it, but Master had learned that the number of night hunters patrolling the corridors increased with each floor. The complexity of the corridors also increased. More intersections and more turnings. It began to look like a maze once they reached the sixth floor.

Thus, the time it took them to sneak past increased with each floor they climbed.

By the time they reached the stairs that led them up to the tenth floor, they spent almost twenty minutes on one floor. Master wondered if his monocle eight-hour duration was enough to let him sneak up to the twentieth floor. He could use another equipment-free skill, but that would be wasting a precious and limited resource.

When they arrived on the tenth floor, they noticed the setup was different. This time, the lobby only had one exit. No side door that led to the maze of corridors.

Jack peeked out of the lobby. It was similar to the huge hall from the other floors, with many night hunter mounds scattered across the hall. But the hall here was even larger, considering it also took up the space where the corridors were downstairs.

"Seems like we have to fight our way," Jack whispered.

Master didn't disagree. One thing he noted about this faction was its excessive obsession with games. It probably set up the floors down there following gaming rules that gave trespassers the chance to slip through as long as they were careful or lucky enough. But here on this floor, the pretense was stripped. It was pure security. The trespassers would have to fight through these night hunters. He wondered if the floors after this one were the same.

Master turned to Jack and asked, "You are an Archmage, aren't you? Have you gotten the Invisibility spell?"

"What a coincidence, I got it just before I came to this place," Jack answered.

"We are in luck then. Use one of your skill-free stones to cast Invisibility," Master instructed.

"What about you? You are not an Archmage," Jack asked.

Master answered by bringing out a new tool that Jack hadn't seen before. The tool was item-free stone. However, the items that could be used with this stone are only consumables. So, an artifact like the Necronomicon was inaccessible.

Master used the item and a magic scroll materialized in his hand. The magic scroll contained the Invisibility spell.

"Tsk. You and your tools," Jack commented. "I will go first, give me a one-minute head start. It will be a problem if we bump into one another because we can't see each other and ends up ending our invisibility in the middle of the hall."

"Don't you have mana sense?" Master asked.

"No, my mana ability is also sealed," Jack answered.

"Sealed? How?" Master asked. "Didn't you say you punched me with mana manipulation during the first sacrificial round?"

Jack didn't want to waste time explaining to Master. He distanced himself from Master before using his skill-free stones to cast the invisibility spell. He vanished after the spell formation was completed.

Master followed Jack's instruction and waited one minute before he activated the magic scroll in his hand. He also vanished.

After a few minutes, Master had sneaked through to the other side. Since he didn't see Jack, he whispered, "Are you here yet?"

"Oh, I was waiting for you," Jack's voice was heard. "I thought your slow ass needs a longer time."

"Cut the crap. Let's head upstairs while our Invisibility is still working," Master said. "We might need this invisibility for the next floors as well."

"All right. I will go up first," Jack said. "Wait five seconds before you go up. I will take the right side of the room. You take the left."

Upstairs, Jack found that this lobby had a side door the same as the floors before the tenth floor. After several seconds, he heard Master's whisper.

"Using the corridors will take too long. Since our invisibility is still active, let's just go through the hall as we did downstairs. You go first."

Jack complied. They continued crossing through the halls while being invisible. They cut down a significant amount of time compared to if they used the corridors. Jack made a rough calculation. If they were fast enough, they should be able to reach the sixteenth or seventeenth floor while being invisible.

Master's invisibility should be level 1 since he was using a magic scroll, but it was only three minutes fewer than his level 4 Invisibility.

On the fourteenth floor, Jack was distracted by a nearby mound since he was taking the shortest route possible. A night hunter happened to twitch during its rest and its arm flailed in Jack's direction. Jack hurriedly jumped back. If that arm touched him, his invisibility would disappear.

As he did, he heard a gasp and the sound of some steps moving away. Jack turned back and saw nothing.

Jack resumed heading to the stairs.

'Crap...', Jack uttered in his mind.

'What's wrong?' Peniel asked.

'You know what that means just now?' Jack asked.

'What?' Peniel didn't quite catch Jack's meaning.

'That a*shole has mana sense,' Jack said.

Chapter 1357: The Last Floor before the Top Floor

'Are you sure? He always called you out before the stairs and at the lobby to make sure about your position,' Peniel said.

'He is pretending. He doesn't want me to know he has the ability,' Jack said.

'But he is not a martial artist,' Peniel said.

'One doesn't truly need to be a martial artist to utilize mana, especially in this world rich with mana,' Jack said.

This reminded Peniel. Many high-grade natives of this world also had mana sense and mana manipulation even when they didn't know martial arts. She herself had mana sense even if not too proficient. She had spent too much time with players that she got used to associating mana abilities with martial arts.

Jack thought perhaps Master was similar to John, who was not good when learning martial arts but excelled in learning mana sense and mana manipulation. Master probably self-taught himself after seeing Long and Wong exhibited these abilities.

Jack was crestfallen by this revelation. Aside from his speed, the other things he could exploit to beat Master were his martial arts and mana abilities. If Master had mana abilities as well, this put his already few advantages even more limited.

Even so, he felt lucky he found out about this now rather than later. It would be a disaster if he only found out during a critical moment when he was fighting Master. He wondered if Master could also do mana manipulation.

As Jack had predicted, they managed to reach the sixteenth floor in less than half an hour since they started using invisibility. Jack still had enough duration to go up another floor, but Master's spell had less than three minutes left.

Jack told Master that he could go up first and waited for Master up there. Master replied that they needed to stay together. If fighting occurred, he needed Jack to take care of the melee confrontation.

Jack was just joking. If he went up first, what if Master decided to stay back and let Jack do all the work? Master originally wanted Jack to go after the main node alone. He came along because Jack forced him to, so Jack had to keep him close.

They communicated using whispers and took the side door to enter the maze of corridors. It took a few seconds for Master's God-eye monacle to do its sonar magic and map the corridors' layout around him, but he could see the red dots from the start. The number of night hunters roaming around this floor's corridors was alarming.

After spending several seconds pondering and studying the red dots' movement pattern, Master touched Jack and ended their invisibility.

This further proved Master's mana sense ability. Master probably knew his secret was revealed when Jack almost bumped into him on the fourteenth floor. There was no need for him to pretend anymore.

Jack thought the reason Master needed to end their invisibility was so Jack could follow him properly. Jack had no mana sense at the moment and it was not practical to keep on using whispers to communicate. However, Master instead signaled for them to return to the lobby.

Back in the lobby, Master whispered to Jack, "The corridor pathway is getting too complicated and there are too many patrols. If I am alone, I should be able to sneak past with enough patience. But with two people, the difficulty increased significantly."

"Then what do you propose?" Jack asked.

"I bet before we reach the top, we will encounter another floor with no corridor pathway," Master replied. "When that happens, we will need to use invisibility to pass through the hall again unless you want to fight those night hunters."

"But the spell is still on cooldown," Jack reminded. "Even if we activated the spells using tools, the cooldown system still applies."

"Who do you think you are talking to? Of course, I'm aware. The cooldown of Invisibility is three hours. With how complex the corridors are, I suspect it will roughly take us the same time to sneak through the remaining floors. Doing that has a very high risk of us getting found out, so I suggest we wait here until the cooldown ends."

Jack thought about Master's suggestion. It made sense. He just didn't like waiting and doing nothing, but he guessed it was better to be prudent. He agreed to Master's plan. They waited inside the lobby.

The two sat on opposite sides of the lobby. They didn't talk to one another.

Jack would love to practice mana manipulation or his sword art while waiting, but he couldn't because the first was sealed while the latter might cause noise and attract the night hunters' attention. So, he just spent his time meditating and practicing the sword's heart.

Jack opened his eyes and peeked at Master. That guy seemed to also be meditating. Jack wondered if that was the case, he couldn't know for sure since he had no mana sense at the moment.

After three hours passed, Jack took out another skill-free stone while Master took out another item-free stone. Another magic scroll appeared in his hand.

"You have a lot of those, huh?" Jack asked.

Master didn't respond. He activated the scroll and vanished.

Jack used his stone and cast the invisibility spell. Now that he knew Master had mana sense, he didn't need to ask Master to wait and let him go first. Master would take care to avoid bumping into him.

The same as he did on previous floors, they passed through the hall without alerting the night hunters. They continued until they reached the nineteenth's floor lobby.

'One more floor,' Jack thought.

In this lobby, Jack saw that there was no side door. This lobby was the same as the one on the tenth floor. The only path was through the large hall. Master's prediction had been correct.

His invisibility spell was still halfway through its duration. There was plenty of time, so Jack walked through the hall without rushing. He took care to not make a mistake when he was so close to his destination.

The stairs to the twentieth floor were already in front of him.

He was about to step onto the first step of the stairs when he bumped into what felt like a solid wall. He reeled back from the collision and saw that a layer of bluish light appeared around the stairs.

"Ba... Barrier...?" Jack muttered.

Due to the collision, his invisibility ended. He heard growling voices. He turned and saw the night hunters from various mounds staring at him with hostile eyes.

Chapter 1358: Sea of the Elementals

The night hunters didn't waste any time once they realized an intruder was in their lair. The closest ones lunged out of the mounds. Some that were more deeply stacked inside the mounds clawed their brethren on top of them, trying to claw their way out.

They hissed and shrieked, making a cacophony of voices that eerily sounded very much like humans but also not.

Jack had known that these night hunters had a rather fast crawling speed from the last time he fought them. But it turned out they were faster. When he fought them inside the house with Grace and Spring Crown, the hunters didn't have much space to develop their speed. Different from then, this hall was large. Once the night hunters separated themselves from the mounds they were in, they crawled toward Jack and developed faster speed the longer they crawled.

Jack didn't dare to engage them directly when they came barreling at him with such speed. He jumped to the side and rolled on the ground. At the same time, he fished out three equipment-free stones and equipped three out of the seven Themisphere Royal Battle Armor. His head, upper body, and lower body were now covered in glamorous armor.

With the two shortswords in both hands, he lunged at the group of night hunters that had just stopped their charge. His two weapons danced among the night hunters, slashing and slicing as he moved in their midst.

Unlike the battle in the house, this place had enough space and he didn't have to prevent the night hunters from getting past him, so he was free to move as he wished. His eight diagram illusory steps let him move fluidly among these hunters while his formless flowing sword style cut them whenever he passed them by.

He didn't have mana sense, but his improved sword's heart let him translate all input from his traditional five senses and responded accurately using his swords. Each of his slashes cut into the night hunters' necks. Most of these slashes scored critical damage.

The night hunters weren't durable monsters. They were easily killed. After just a short time since they started clashing, around ten dead night hunters were already down on the floor.

Yet, more and more came. The ones Jack had killed were not even a fraction of the number within this hall.

Without any skills or buffs, he couldn't completely dodge all the attacks just by relying on his movement art. Some of the night hunters managed to hit him. His three armors mitigated the damage. Normally, a shield was broken with one clean attack. This time, even if it was clean, the shield was just cracked.

As Jack received more hits, the cracks were getting worse. After six hits, one of his shields was finally broken. That shield was able to sustain so many hits all thanks to his royal armor's high defense. If it was any other player's armor, their shield could probably defend mostly three hits.

Jack tried his best to not get swarmed. He kept moving away from where the night hunters were overcrowding, but that was difficult to do without mana sense. Peniel tried to help by giving him warnings about incoming attacks from his blind spots, but there were too many. He couldn't do much

even with those warnings. Many times he almost got surrounded and he had to brute force his way out. This was the time when he received the most hits.

His Themisphere King's Scale Pants could automatically heal 30% of his HP when his HP fell below 50%. So, when he lost another shield, his pants automatically recovered one of his shields.

Still, as the battle continued, he couldn't help but lost that shield again. Not long after, his last shield also cracked. He quickly used one shield-protect stone to avoid getting any more damage. During the time he was invulnerable, he used two adhesive bandages to recover the two lost shields.

"Damn it! I can't go on like this!" Jack said to himself.

The best spell he could use right now was the Perpetual Lightning Judgement. That spell would nicely obliterate this swarm of night hunters. However, to cast the spell, he needed to equip a magic staff first. Most offensive spells required a magic weapon to cast because they required the damage count from the weapon to calculate the spells' damage output.

He only had one equipment-free stone left, he wanted to save it for his Storm Breaker.

He took one skill-free stone out. He was ready to use Lightning God Barrage. The divine skill didn't cover as much area as the Perpetual Lightning Judgement, but it should still reduce the enemy number by a huge portion.

But before he used the stone, he heard Master's voice.

"Don't waste that on your offensive skill!"

Jack then saw the air on one side of the hall getting distorted. Energies of lightning, ice, and fire filled that space. These energies then swept across the hall with terrifying force.

The night hunters were still attacking Jack. He didn't dare to be careless. He activated the skill-free stone and used his best defensive skill, the Lightning God Suit. Lightning covered his entire body and electrocuted the night hunters close to him.

The Lightning God Suit protected Jack until the elemental flood arrived. He felt himself getting swept in this torrent of energies along with the night hunters. He saw them get electrocuted, burned, and frozen at the same time.

He was experiencing the same thing as the night hunters, tumbling around helplessly within this elemental flood. However, his shields were completely fine. This was because the current spell was cast by a teammate.

When the elemental flood receded, he looked around the hall. All the night hunters were laying on the floor, unmoving.

Jack knew Master's intelligence stat was insanely high and these night hunters were not that durable, but he wondered if he could have survived the spell just now with only three pieces of armor and the Lightning God Suit. He couldn't properly gauge the spell's power without his mana sense.

'What the hell is that spell just now?' Jack asked Peniel in his mind.

'That is Sea of the Elementals,' Peniel answered. 'It is the spell from the Elemental Master class. Master's Elemental Master has reached level 70.'

Chapter 1359: Wrong Place?

Jack saw Master near the stairs to the upper floor. He was holding a magic staff in his hand.

The magic staff lasted only five minutes. Master didn't plan to waste it. He pointed the staff at the barrier surrounding the stairs and cast Cancel Magic.

The barrier broke.

"Took your sweet time to help," Jack said to Master.

"I was conflicted about whether I should just let you die," Master replied. "But I figure we still have one more floor. I'm unsure of the threat above so keeping you around serves my purpose."

'Damn! That's brutally honest,' Jack thought.

"Let's go. My staff can only last a few more minutes and I have only two skill-free stones left," Master started climbing the stairs.

Jack first used another adhesive bandage to recover his shield so that he was back to having three full shields. He then followed Master upstairs.

When they arrived at this topmost floor, they were stupefied to find the entire floor was a large open empty hall. There was no lobby, no corridor maze, no night hunter mounds. It was just a big large space with nothing in it.

"Dude... Did you make a mistake in reading the position of the main node?" Jack asked Master. "Because if this is a mistake, it is not an excusable one. We spent hours and fought like hell to get up here. Not to mention wasted our resources."

"I don't make mistakes...," Master replied. He took one of his two remaining skill-free stones and used it.

A third ominous eye appeared on his forehead.

"It's not invisible...," He muttered. "... I don't understand. It should be here."

"Serves you right for acting like you know it all," Jack scolded. "We have been had. If you are sure the location is correct, then this building probably has a hidden basement. Damn it! Now, we have to go all the way down back to the ground floor."

Master was unwilling to believe it. Were all the securities preventing them from coming up here just distractions? Was the main node instead hidden under a secret basement?

Jack was about to head back down when Master shouted, "Wait!"

"What?" Jack asked annoyingly.

"That protrusion over there," Master pointed. With his demonic true eye, his vision range increased.

Without his dragon eye, Jack couldn't make out far objects. "What about it? Looks like a simple pillar in the wall."

"Do you see any other pillars around this place?" Master asked.

Jack looked around. Master was right. The other parts of the wall were devoid of any pillar or protrusion. Only the one Master pointed near the far corner had this feature. Jack agreed it might be something noteworthy, or it might not. Anyway, he thought it was worth it to go check. They were already up here, after all.

"Let's go see it," Jack said. The two started walking toward it.

When the two reached midway, the building started to shake. They also heard a rumbling sound.

"What the... What is this...? An earthquake?" Jack asked.

Master had no answer.

The shaking stopped. The two stayed at their spots for a few seconds, checking if there were any changes to the hall. It looked the same.

When the two were about to resume walking, the floor in front of them suddenly exploded.

They instinctively jumped back as debris flew all over. A giant monstrosity then filled their views.

The floor in front of them now had a huge hole. From the hole, a mass of a wriggling giant emerged. It was a blob with arms. Upon closer inspection, Jack realized the blob was formed of a heap of night hunters. It was like the mounds he saw on the lower floors, except larger and moving.

The night hunters forming the blob were alive. They flailed their arms around and made weird noises, but they couldn't detach from each other. It was like they were glued together.

This blob was coming for Jack and Master. It lifted one of its arms high and slammed down. Jack and Master jumped to opposite sides as the arm slammed into the floor, cracking it.

"Final boss?" Jack uttered. He was both dismayed and glad at the same time. Dismayed because they had to fight this giant monster with limitations. Glad because if there was a final boss, it meant they didn't come to the wrong place.

Master used his last skill-free stone. Earth pillars came out around the blob and converged on it.

"Earth Prison Wyrms!" Jack recognized the divine skill.

The blob was not fast so the pillars didn't need to go into their wyrm form. The pillars hit the blob and started to encase it.

But as it happened, the glue that held the night hunters seemingly came off. The night hunters separated from the mass while the rest was trapped inside the earth prison.

These night hunters then came together and entangled each other, forming another blob. It was half the size of the original, but still intimidatingly large nonetheless.

"Damn it! Give me one of your skill-free stones!" Master shouted. "I have no more."

Jack didn't ponder long. He threw the stone. At this time, it was better to work together.

"Keep it busy!" Master caught the stone and started moving away from the monster.

"Shit, is he going to let me fight by myself again?" Despite not fully trusting Master, Jack stayed his ground.

When the second blob approached Jack, he used a skill-free stone. Twenty large lightning balls appeared and struck the blob. The lightning explosion covered the monster's entire body. But when the lightning energies dissipated, he found that the HP bar above the blob only reduced by less than five percent.

"This is going to take some time," Jack said dejectedly.

Jack continuously retreated as the blob came for him. His speed was faster so he could afford to kite the monster. He made sure to not retreat in Master's direction. He saw Master start forming a spell formation. It was a mega spell. Master probably didn't want to waste the last minute of his magic staff.

Jack was thinking if he should use the limiter-off stone, but the main node was not in sight yet. If he wasted his most precious resource and found out later that the main node was not here, it would be tragic.

He decided he at least have to try out the other cool thing he found in the stash room.

He took out a capsule case and opened it. The RPG launcher appeared in his hands. He aimed at the incoming blob and opened fire.

Unfortunately, it didn't go as Jack hoped it would go. Jack aimed at what seemed to be the blob's head because he thought that might be its weak point. The blob simply duck when the RPG came. This RPG didn't seem to have tracking ability so it just went past the blob and struck the ceiling.

A huge explosion happened and Jack saw a large hole appeared in the ceiling.

Chapter 1360: Locating the Main Node

Jack was surprised by the hole in the ceiling. When he used his Lightning God Barrage, the explosions were large and they hit the floor the blob was standing on, but the floor was just fine.

'Does this mean this RPG is even more powerful than my divine skill?' Jack thought.

He missed, but he still had another ammo. He took the other ammo out from the other capsule case and loaded it into the launcher while running away from the blob.

Seeing that its current prey was just too slippery, the blob changed its mind and headed to the other prey who seemed to be stationary.

"Oh, crap," Jack uttered and was about to head back to draw the blob's attention. But he didn't need to, because Master had finished his casting. The speed of Master's spell-casting was irrational. He used a normal one-rune-at-a-time casting, but his speed rivaled Jack's multi-rune casting.

Three large eastern dragons of three distinct elements burst out from the completed spell formation. The three elemental dragons rushed to the blob. The dragons were too fast for the blob to dodge. Additionally, the dragons were as if alive, they would just fly back if they missed the first time.

The fire and ice dragons bit the blob's two arms while the lightning dragon bit what seemed to be its head. The three dragons formed a chained reaction which resulted in an elemental explosion.

When the explosion ended, Master noticed that his mega spell also drained less than five percent HP from the blob.

"This is going to take some time," Master said the same thing as Jack. "Give me another skill-free stone! ...What are you doing?"

Jack had run to Master's side when the blob was incapacitated by Master's dragons. He now placed the bear trap from the stash room on the floor.

"What can that small trap do against that large monster?" Master ridiculed.

"You underestimated this place's tools. I think some of them are made to be even more powerful than our skills."

Jack had finished arming the trap. The blob was now heading to them as well.

"Move back! But keep a straight line between this trap and that blob!" Jack instructed.

Thankfully, the blob was oblivious to the small trap in front of it. The blob was not walking with legs because it didn't have any. It was slithering on the floor, so there was no chance it won't touch the trap as long as it was moving on top of it.

A sharp clicking sound was heard when the blob's slithering belly hit the bear trap.

When Jack saw the blob stop moving, he exclaimed triumphantly, "Ha! See how you dodge this one now!"

Jack was ready with his RPG launcher. This was his last RPG, so he had to make it count. Different from before, this time he aimed it at the blob's belly, near where the bear trap was.

The RPG hit the blob this time. The explosion from the collision wasn't as impressive as his Lightning God Barrage nor was it as spectacular as Master's mega spell, the tri-elemental dragons. However, the RPG's result beat the two seemingly more powerful skills.

The blob's belly part that was hit by the RPG exploded into a huge cavity. The night hunters forming that part of the belly was ripped out due to the explosion and they fell lifelessly around the blob.

The blob didn't lose any HP. No damage number appeared above the blob. However, its HP bar shortened significantly. It was now only two-thirds from before. The RPG had reduced the blob's max HP instead of reducing its HP.

The effect was not only a reduction of max HP. The blob now rearranged the night hunters in his body mass to cover the cavity. This resulted in the blob becoming smaller and weaker.

Jack celebrated the result. At the same time, he was pitying the waste of the first RPG. If both of them hit the blob, the monster would be down to only one-third of its original HP and become even weaker.

Jack didn't let himself dwell in the past. What's done was done. He was about to use another skill-free stone and engage the blob when something drew his attention.

"Hey, a*shole. What does the main node look like?" Jack asked Master. At the same time, he shifted to the side.

Master planned to ignore Jack since Jack called him an a*shole, but Jack's next words caused him to be unable to do that.

"Is it a large black box covered by glowing runes?"

"I don't know about it being a black box, but yes, it will be covered with glowing runes. How do you know?" Master asked Jack. At the same time, he traced Jack's gaze, which was on the hole in the ceiling. He saw a part of something that had a glowing surface.

He shifted his position to where Jack was and the glowing thing was better seen from the hole. It was as Jack mentioned. A tall black box that has glowing runes covering all its surfaces.

"That is the main node!" Master exclaimed. He was not wrong. The main node was indeed up here. Except it was not on the top floor but on the roof! That pillar he saw at the corner of this hall must be hiding the stairs going up to the roof.

"What should we do with that main node? Simply destroy it?" Jack asked.

"Yes," Master answered.

"Okay, here's what you asked for," Jack threw Master a skill-free stone. He then used the limiter-off stone.

The blob had finished rearranging its body. It was now moving toward the two again.

With the restrictions off, Jack's body was fully covered in full armor. Storm Breaker and the mana leech staff were in his hands. He transformed into supreme dragon form.

"Take care of yourself," Jack said to Master and flew toward the ceiling before the blob arrived.

Master looked at the skill-free stone that was given by Jack.

"Hmph!" He harrumphed and threw it to the floor. Now that the main node had been located, there was also no need for him to hold back. He used his limiter-off stone and re-equipped all his armor and weapons.